

Texas, Naturally

By Sue Mayfield Geiger and Jean West Rudnicki

When making travel plans this summer, think about the road less traveled and those out-of-the-way spots that you know are out there, but can never seem to find. Forget LaQuinta and expensive B&Bs and turn your attention to some natural highs where the price is right and more importantly, the outdoors rule.

In this article, we share a few spots that we, ourselves, have been to and now pass on so that you can see the stars a little brighter at night and experience nature up close and personal. The best part is that you won't have to travel far to get there.

Quebe Farm, Brenham quebefarm.com

Can you come home to a place you've never been? You can at Quebe Farm. Tucked away amid gentle rolling pastures, far from the city lights and traffic roar, this is the country home you've always imagined—small, yet spacious; simple, yet elegant. Built in 1887, the home exudes the love and warmth showered upon it by four generations of Quebes. Here, find a slower, easier slice of life, and a front porch that beckons, "Come sit a spell." Grab an iced tea or lemonade and settle in for a lazy afternoon reminiscent of another era. Enjoy the soft breeze, the shade of a majestic oak, and the distinctive chatter of a family of cardinals. Or bring a bike and take a ride down the winding, two-lane country road. Tastefully furnished with vintage antiques, Quebe Farm sleeps six.

Rates start at \$175. (JWR)



Mountain View Lodge, Wimberley mountainviewlodge.com

With just 16 rooms located atop a hill off Ranch Road 12, this little jewel of a place offers a majestic view from every balcony. Right outside your door is The Nature Trail—shorter than a walk around the block, but full of native plants and trees, this hilly-descending climb is an education in botany. A printed guide is available in every room for you to take along so that you can identify species like Jujube, Agarita, Sumac, Devil's Shoelace and many more. Be sure and take advantage of one of the rustic hiking sticks provided as you will need it. At night, wander over to the observation deck and gaze upon a trillion stars that light up the dark hill country sky. Rooms start at \$94. (SMG)



Canyon Sunrise, Wimberley canyonsunrise.com

For total solitude and rugged surroundings, these three cabins (Mariposa, Sundance and Dragonfly) are secluded yet accessible off County Road 176. Each cabin has its very own hot tub, swimming pool and fireplace, and is hidden from view of the other cabins. For a memorable romantic get-away or a weekend of Zen bonding with your soul, check out the extra amenities available that include massage, champagne and catered dinners. Or bring your own groceries and throw a steak on the outside grill or whip up something inside; each cabin has a fully equipped kitchen. Rates start at \$170. (SMG)



Canyon of the Eagles, Lake Buchanan canyonoftheeagles.com

A blanket of twinkling stars punctuate the night sky (a rare and welcomed site in this era of light pollution) as a young astronomer points out forgotten constellations and star clusters. Welcome to Eagle Eye Observatory located deep in the heart of Texas Hill Country and within the 940 acres of nature reserve that is also home to the star party's host, Canyon of the Eagles (a Calibre Resort). Just three and a half hours from Houston, the resort offers a virtual smorgasbord of Outdoors Texas—hiking trails, kayak and canoe rental for exploring the Colorado River Canyon, eco-tours aboard the Vanishing Texas River Cruise, bird watching, star gazing, and spectacular views. Perched high above Lake Buchanan, the resort is designed and patterned after 1920s hill country homes, with porches, native stone and rough board-and-batten siding. The facility includes a full service restaurant and Park Store. Some rooms are equipped with mini refrigerators and microwaves. RV and camp sites are also available. Rates start at \$149. (JWR)



Chanticleer Log Cabin, Spicewood chanticleerlogcabin.com

Located near Marble Falls, this turn-of-the-century log cabin has quite a history. Originally a seed house in Bertram, Texas, it was purchased and moved to a ranch in Blanco. Later the present owners purchased the logs and roof rafters, reconstructed the cabin and added a bathroom and kitchenette. Now all spruced up with cotton linens, claw-foot tub, homemade soap, and cushy pillows, the cabin also has a screened porch with fireplace and a view that includes watching the deer roam and hummingbirds fly. The owners have other restored farmhouses available for rent on separate acreage.

Rates start at \$150. (SMG)

