

San Antonio WOMAN

January/February 2015

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HILL COUNTRY
Family Fun in
New Braunfels

2015
Summer
Camp
Guide





NEW BRAUNFELS & GRUENE

*Why this mid-sized Texas town
is a big draw for San Antonio*

By JANIS TURK

Photography Courtesy of THE NEW BRAUNFELS CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU

It's not uncommon for people from a small town to drive into a big city for food, art, entertainment and family fun. However, it is unusual for locals to leave the big city and seek out a smaller town for those same reasons.

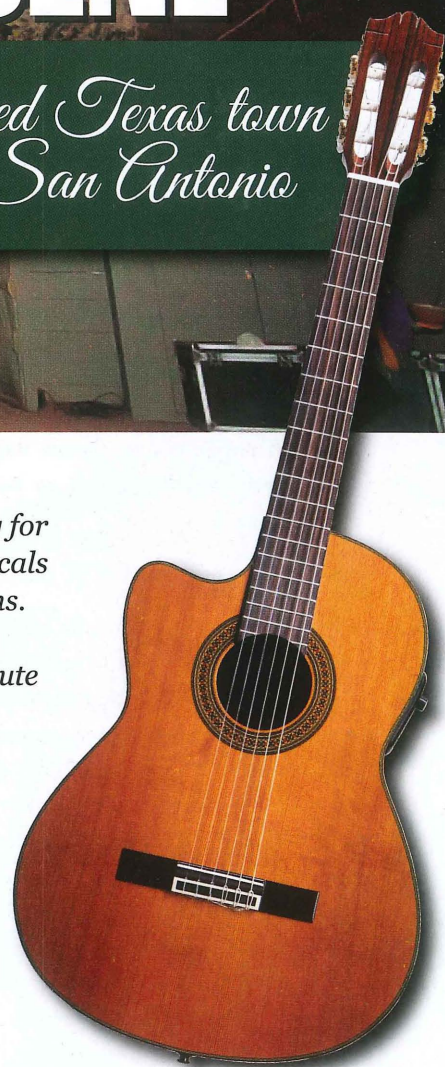
But that's what happens here: San Antonio folks often make the 20-minute drive from downtown up I-35 to New Braunfels for everything from fine dining to shopping, music, art, entertainment and water play.

Want to know why this former German settlement (which, by the way, is growing so fast it's really not a small town anymore) is such a draw? Think about all the good times to be had here!

HOLD ON TO HISTORY

Historic buildings in and around downtown New Braunfels include spaces that are still used every day, like the historic Faust Hotel built in 1929 and the 1898 Prince Solms Inn, an elegant Old World-style small brick bed-and-breakfast inn. Several other downtown buildings have been repurposed and restored to create popular restaurants and bars—like the former federal post office building, erected in 1915, which is now McAdoo's Seafood Company and Bar.

Likewise, the old Palace movie theater building that still stands on North Castell Avenue is home to Myron's Steakhouse. Myron's has a second restaurant in San Antonio these days, but the New Braunfels location came first. Even the former City Hall was once home to a restaurant. The historic Brauntex Theatre, also a former cinema, stands next to the old train depot, which now houses a small train museum. The oldest dance hall in Texas can also be found on the outskirts of the city in the historic entertainment district of Gruene.





SAVOR THE SAUSAGE AND STRUDEL

From German sausage at iconic spots like the New Braunfels Smokehouse, Oma's Haus and Friesenhaus Restaurant and Bakery, to house-made German baked goods at the still-operating historic 1868 Naegelin's Bakery, to the sizzling prime cuts at Myron's Steakhouse, to the Napa Valley-inspired menu of the popular Huisache Grill, New Braunfels has become a destination for foodies. With other popular spots like Gruene's Grist Mill, McAdoo's Seafood Company and Bar, and the Pour Haus, New Braunfels offers a diverse array of great eats and epicurean delights. Our new favorite? Restaurant 188 South, an upscale Italian spot that just recently opened on South Castell Avenue, downtown.

BUC-EE'S IN LOVE

It might be odd for people from a big city to drive to a small town for entertainment, but it's even stranger that they might drive there just to visit a gas station. However, that happens here, too. Buc-ee's Travel Center is a phenomenon exploding across Texas that defies logic and eludes explanation, a \$74-million gas station and convenience store that has become a tourist destination. Believe it or not, the New Braunfels location is the largest convenience store in the world at 68,000 square feet, and it features 120 fuel pumps, 83 toilets, 31 cash registers, four Icee machines, 80 fountain dispensers and tubing gear, barbecue grills, fire pits, hunting, fishing and water gear, and a farmer's market that carries Grade 1 fruit and produce. Located at I-35 and FM 306, it also sells fudge, barbecue, "beaver bites" and more, along with home furnishings and even Buc-ee Beaver pajamas.



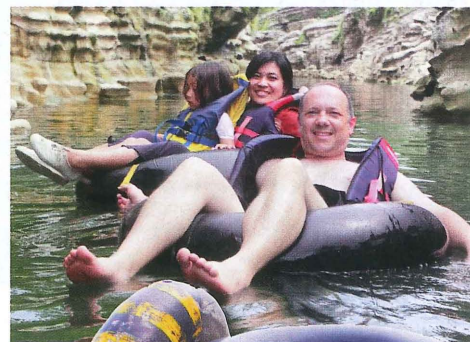
Schnitzel

is usually pork or veal that has been breaded and fried. It is usually served with French fries, potato mash, or wedge potatoes. The dish has been extremely popular since the end of the Second World War.

DIVE IN TO WATER FUN

Home to Schlitterbahn Water Park and "tubing" on the Comal and the Guadalupe Rivers, the New Braunfels area swells with a flood of visitors each spring and summer when warm weather rules in Texas. With shuttle buses and inner-tube rental stands and bathing-suit shops all over town, wet and wild water fun is a favorite pastime here. And who wouldn't like to make a big splash at Schlitterbahn on a hot summer day? It's one of the country's largest water parks, where waterslides and man-made pools flow together, and one even runs into a real river to create unforgettable fun. With humble beginnings back in 1966, Schlitterbahn, "the hottest coolest time in Texas" water park and entertainment complex, has grown to an enormous state-wide attraction.

Besides Schlitterbahn, there are even more opportunities to cool off and swim in New Braunfels. **The town's Landa Park Aquatic Complex (LPAC) is the combination of three bodies of water in one complex: a spring-fed pool, a zero-depth pool and the Coach E.E. "Bud" Dallman Olympic Pool.**





It features full restrooms and changing and showering facilities, so it's easy to cool off in the water and then jump on the park's miniature train. It's also a great place to picnic and play on any of the numerous playscapes.

ART APPRECIATION

New Braunfels Art League continues to keep art front and center in the community, and today it has a cheerful, well-lighted gallery space where it showcases the work of local artists downtown at 239 W. San Antonio St. Drop in to enjoy fine art and even purchase a few items made by local artisans.

Theater and performing arts are also celebrated in New Braunfels. The Circle Arts Theatre in Landa Park is known for its high-quality theatrical productions each season. And downtown, just off the main circle at the edge of the railroad tracks, the Brauntex Theatre (an old art deco cinema) offers a full calendar of music concerts, performances and more throughout the year. Across the street, kids and adults alike can have hands-on art fun as they paint ceramics at the Bisque Bistro.

Oompah -pah
Oompah -pah
That's how it goes...

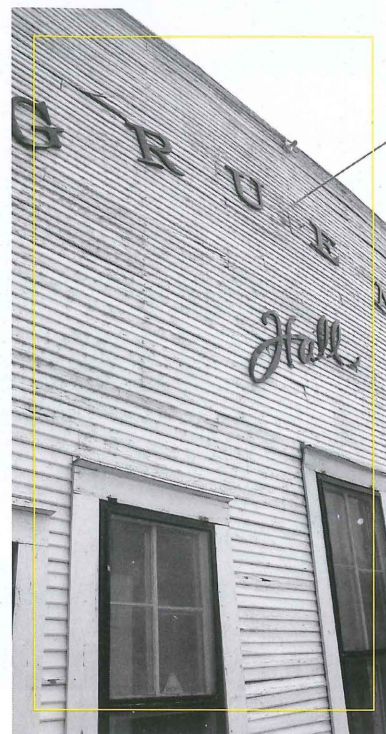


OOMPAH-PAH

New Braunfels was first settled by Prince Carl Solms of Germany in 1845, and Texas land grants allowed lots of German settlers to follow him here throughout the 1800s. Today, the town's German heritage is still celebrated in the food, music and culture of the city, and many residents still speak some German. Many still call their grandparents Oma and Opa, too. The biggest and most famous way that their German roots are remembered is with the town's annual Wurstfest celebration, a 10-day Bavarian-style salute to sausage held each autumn on Landa Park's Wurstfest Grounds. It's like a big state fair with carnival-style midway rides, food halls and lots of dancing to oompah bands. Be sure to wear your lederhosen, and save room for sausage on a stick and hot German potato soup!



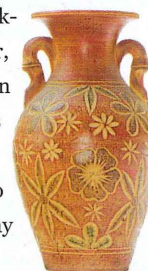
Don't miss
Naeglin's Bakery
The oldest bakery in Texas |
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GO GRUENE

Many visitors come here and head straight to the Gruene Historic District at the edge of town along the Guadalupe River. In the 1800s Gruene (pronounced Green) was a quiet little village with an old general store, a saddle shop and a dance hall. Today, Gruene is a dynamic tourist destination. It is also still home to Texas' oldest and perhaps most famous dance hall, Gruene Hall, where country music stars like Willie Nelson still play, popular Texas bands like Cody Canada and the Departed draw big crowds, and movies are sometimes made. By the way, John Travolta once danced here, too, while filming the movie *Michael*.

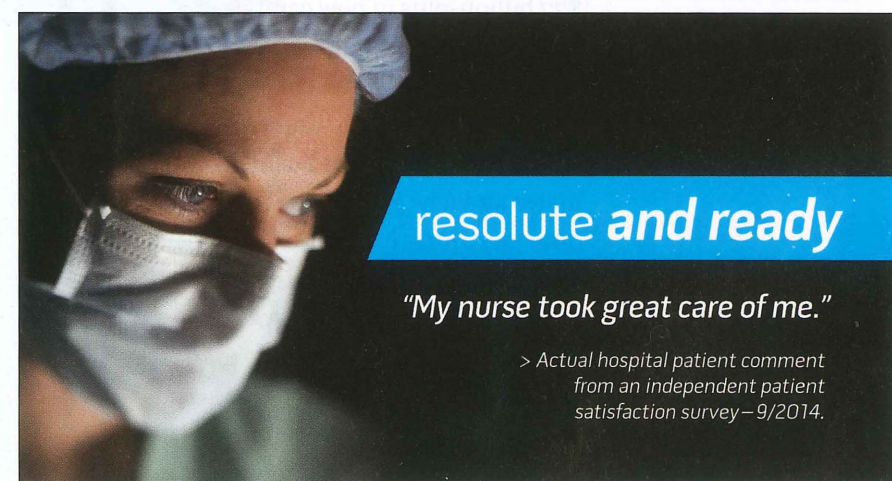
The Grist Mill Restaurant, a winery, coffee shops, a tearoom, a pottery shop and more line the tree-shaded streets of Gruene on a bluff overlooking the Guadalupe River, and trade-day booths often line the streets and byways of this enchanting place — just another reason to leave San Antonio for a day of small-town excitement.



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