

## New #TexasToDo's Winter 2015

Newly opened hotels, highly anticipated restaurants, and sunny winter days. Here are just a few reasons why the Lone Star State is an exciting place to be this season. Add these top activities to your #TexasToDo list to experience Texas like never before!

### New Eats

With every new season comes new eats and treats, and the Dallas metroplex has a few coming its way! [Wayward Sons](#) will hit Greenville Avenue in Dallas near Blue Fish and across from the Granada Theater. The restaurant is a partnership between bar and restaurant gurus Brandon Hays, Phil Schanbaum and Graham Dodds, and promises to be "a progression of chef Dodds' hyper focus on local, seasonal and Texas cuisine." The menu includes dishes like sardines on toast, purple potato tostones with cabrito, a clever riff on the classic Waldorf salad with celery root and roasted grapes. Beef hails from 44 Farms and more unusual proteins include lamb brisket with duck chicharrones.



[Rock & Brews](#), a family-friendly restaurant concept from Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley of KISS, held its grand opening at the AT&T Center in San Antonio on Friday, December 11. The Rock & Roll Hall of Famers' restaurant is located on the west side of the Plaza Level and will be open during all events at the AT&T Center. The energized, indoor/outdoor dining and entertainment concept will feature American comfort food and a broad selection of craft and international beers in a rock-inspired environment that includes concert lighting, a ceiling dedicated to some of the biggest names in rock history and music-themed art that pays tribute to past events at the AT&T Center.



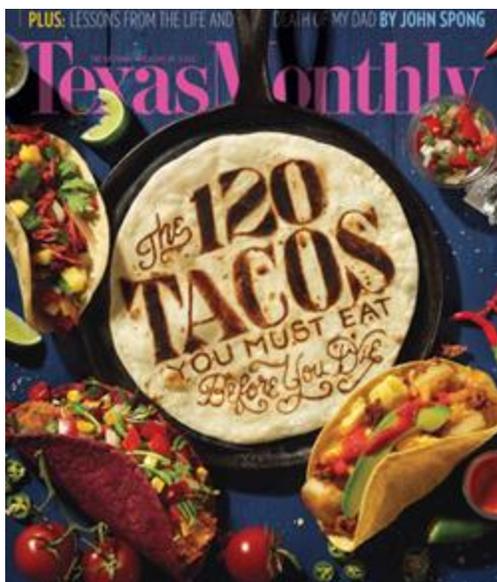
The [South Congress Hotel](#) opened in Austin on September 7, but sushi lovers will have to wait until January for Paul Qui's 12-counter-seat omakase restaurant, [OTOKO](#). Tucked away in a windowless room accessible through a staircase in the hotel's courtyard, the menu will feature Tokyo-style sushi and Kyoto-style seasonal kaiseki.

*irene's*

At [Irene's](#), the upcoming Austin spot has the soul of an unpretentious dive bar but manages to keep a firm hand on service and a keen eye to hospitality. Diners can partake in counter-window breakfast, classic lunch, and dinner dishes like Philly cheesesteak and cast-iron steak while enjoying boozy punches on the patio along Shoal Creek.



[Torchy's Tacos'](#) new flagship restaurant on South Congress Avenue is expected to open during the second week of January. Taco connoisseurs should expect a full bar, indoor and outdoor seating, and of course, delicious tacos.



### Top Tacos

A thirteen-person taco team from [Texas Monthly](#) fanned out across two dozen cities in Texas, eating more than a thousand tacos over a period of four months in order to compile a list of the top tacos in the state. Austin's [Valentina's Tex Mex BBQ](#) made the top 10 with its smoked brisket taco which includes sea salt lime guacamole and tomato serrano salsa. Dallas also landed in the top ten with

[Urban Taco's](#) Taco al Pastor a la Tuma. Not too far from Dallas, the [Revolver Taco Lounge](#) in Fort Worth claimed a top spot with the Pato taco made of seared duck breast, roasted poblano peppers and caramelized onion.

El Paso represented the best in the west with H&H Car Wash and Coffee Shop's Potato and Egg taco. The Gulf Coast claimed a spot on the list with Brownsville's [Vera's Backyard Bar-B-Que](#) Barbacoa Taco which boasts the "only commercially available barbacoa in Texas that's still cooked in the ground."

Houston and San Antonio topped the list with both cities landing two tacos each in the top ten. In Houston, [Picos'](#) Chilorio Taco and [Gerardo's Drive-in's](#) Cachete taco were team favorites, while the Chicken Cilantro Taco at [Chela's Taco's](#) and Avocado Puffy Taco at [Ray's Drive Inn](#) won over the team's taste buds in San Antonio. The full list of the Lone Star State's top tacos can be found in Texas Monthly's December issue.

### **New Routes**

Starting in mid-December, Air New Zealand will begin flying to Houston, giving the carrier its first new U.S. destination in 11 years. Houston will be the airline's fifth destination in U.S. and Canada, joining Honolulu, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Vancouver. The carrier will launch nonstop between Auckland, New Zealand, and Houston Bush Intercontinental and will fly five round-trip flights a week between the cities.



### **National Video Game Museum**

Gamers will have the chance to experience the [National Videogame Museum](#)

in Frisco this December. The museum's mission is to document, first hand, as much information



about the creation and evolution of the videogame industry as possible and preserve physical artifacts for generations to come.

Many of the museum's displays come from the founders' personal collections as they came together and formed a traveling museum that toured gaming conventions before deciding to set up at a permanent location. The exhibit features 50 game consoles, going back to the first ever released. Visitors can learn the history of each one through a physical timeline. Those who want a more hands-on experience can visit Pixel Dreams, a retro arcade, where they are given five free NVM tokens. The collection includes Pac-Man, Dig Dug, Space Invaders, Mortal Kombat, Punch-Out!!



Centipede, Asteroids Deluxe and Donkey Kong Jr. The museum's collection includes a rare example of an Atari Mindlink, an unreleased controller for the 2600.

### **Giraffe Ambassador Program**

The [Giraffe Ambassador Program](#) is an animal science workshop held on January 9 and February 7 offered by Natural Bridge Wildlife Ranch in San Antonio on the biology and care of giraffes. Participants will

learn about giraffe biology, feeding habits and habitat. They will also learn about why giraffes are rapidly vanishing from our planet and what they can do to help. It's a fun, interactive presentation with video elements from giraffe researchers who are working in Africa today. Each participant receives a field journal, t-shirt and certificate as well as an opportunity to interact with "Buddy" (aka Nakato), one of the Wildlife Ranch's giraffes, up-close!

Twin Reticulated Giraffes, Wasswa and Nakato (aka Buddy), are the only living set of twin giraffes in the United States. Born at Natural Bridge Wildlife Ranch on May 10, 2013, the first-born female calf, Wasswa, weighed 95 pounds and was 4.5 feet tall. The second-born male calf, Nakato, weighed 125 pounds and was 5.5 feet tall.

Their birth was the second set of living giraffe twins in North America, and the ninth set born in the zoos of the world. The rare twin giraffes became super stars, and their birth became a call-to-action for biologists worldwide to raise awareness of the decline of giraffe in the wild and the care of giraffe in zoo's worldwide.

Visitors to Natural Bridge Wildlife Ranch can see giraffes near the entrance, opposite the Safari Camp Grill and in Tower Creek, the newest section of the drive-thru safari that opened in 2014.

### **Dallas Farmers Market**

The [Dallas Farmers Market](#) will soon be completing at least one phase of the ongoing revitalization of the property. On December 11, The Market, the indoor shed that previously housed restaurants and food vendors alike, will re-open to the public and is in the final stages of the construction process. Once complete, the renovated space will feature more than two dozen storefronts featuring a mix of veteran Dallas restaurateurs, new dining concepts, food artisans and local merchants.

Among the merchants getting a permanent home at The Market are outposts of [Rex's Seafood](#)



(complete with an oyster bar), a third location of [Taqueria La Ventana](#) and a brick-and-mortar space for Korean food truck and coffee shop Nammi/Coolhaus. The Market opens on December 11 and vendors are expected to open on a rolling

schedule as spaces are completed through January.

### **The Crusader Bible: A Gothic Masterpiece**

For a limited time, beginning December 12, [The Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas](#)



[at Austin](#) presents The Crusader Bible: A Gothic Masterpiece, an exhibition of over forty unbound pages from the one of the most celebrated French illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages. On loan from the Morgan Library & Museum in New York, the Crusader Bible

features Old Testament scenes in medieval settings, with brilliantly colored illustrations attributed to seven anonymous artists. To provide historical context for the Bible, the presentation features medieval arms and armor from New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. Also included are sixteenth-century Persian illustrations from the Metropolitan, and the Ardashīr-nāma, a seventeenth-century Judeo-Persian manuscript of Old Testament stories from The Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York.

### **Martin Creek Lake State Park**



Ring in 2016 at [Martin Creek Lake State Park](#) with the [First Annual First Day](#) Stargazing event of 2016. Pack hot chocolate, a flashlight and a blanket and meet at the park at 11:30 p.m. on New Year's Eve. Prepare to make a star wheel and learn how to use it to locate the constellations in the night sky. Visitors will get a view of the first night sky of the

year through a telescope for a memorable New Year's Eve.

### **Morgan's Wonderland**



In San Antonio, [Morgan's Wonderland](#) broke ground for a multi-million-dollar expansion this winter. Morgan's Inspiration Island, the world's first ultra-accessible splash park, enables guests of all ages and abilities can have fun together. Morgan's

Inspiration Island, which will be situated between Morgan's Wonderland and the STAR (South Texas Area Regional) Soccer Complex, will overlook the theme park's 8-acre catch-and-release fishing lake. The River Boat Adventure ride will twist and turn more than an eighth of a mile through a jungle setting with bird and animal sounds in the background. Five water play areas – Hang 10 Harbor, Rainbow Reef, Shipwreck Island, Castaway Bay and Calypso Cove – will offer a variety of splashy elements such as raintrees, falls, pools, geysers, jets, water cannons and tipping buckets. Just like Morgan's Wonderland, every element will be wheelchair-accessible, and waterproof wristbands with RFID technology will be available so parents can go to a Location Station and easily ascertain the whereabouts of their children and other members of their party.

Meanwhile, Morgan's Wonderland, which is celebrating its fifth birthday all year long, is preparing for

“A Wonderland Christmas” with special entertainment and holiday decorations on select evenings beginning November 27. Morgan’s Wonderland will begin its 2016 season February 26 with a new wheelchair-accessible ride – the “Whirling Wonder” Ferris wheel – that will take guests up high for a panoramic view of the unique theme park and surrounding family destination known as Wonderland, Texas. Whirling Wonder will join three other wheelchair-accessible rides – the Wonderland Express train ride, the Off-Road Adventure SUV ride and a colorful carousel – plus more than 20 other attractions.