



Galveston Island Major Story Angles: 2017-2018

What's New?

Tall Ships Challenge Coming to Galveston in 2018

For the first time in history, Tall Ships America will bring its TALL SHIPS CHALLENGE® Series of Tall Ships® races and port festivals to the Gulf of Mexico, starting with Galveston Island. TALL SHIPS GALVESTON® will make its debut April 5-8, 2018 with a fleet of visiting tall ships to Galveston's historic waterfront. This new festival will include ship tours, sail-away excursions, music, food and other special events in a family friendly environment. Galveston Island will serve as the first of four port stops in the 2018 challenge. For details, visit www.tallshipsgalveston.com.

Galveston to Host New Third Coast Music Festival in 2018

Galveston will host the new Third Coast Music Festival in 2018. The festival will take place April 26-29 featuring 40 bands and 50 shows representing numerous genres and venues across the city. This isn't a festival in a field; it's a unique experience for guests to hear some of the nation's best live music while interacting with various venues and locations in Galveston. Also, the 10th annual Galveston Island Beach Revue will return on Saturday as a festival highlight with a free afternoon of vintage-inspired music, and the world famous Bathing Beauties contest. www.thirdcoastmusicfestival.com

New Extended-Stay Luxury Suites to Open at The Tremont House in 2018

The Tremont House hotel has begun construction of its new extended stay option, The Quarters, which will be available for guests in early 2018. The Quarters will feature 14 luxury, extended-stay suites in both 1- and 2-bedroom options. Each suite will include king-sized beds, fully-furnished kitchens, and high-end furnishings for living and dining spaces. The rooms will be located across the street from The Tremont House in the historic, 1858 Berlocher Building at 2311-2313 Ship's Mechanic Row. The Quarters will be added to The Tremont House inventory, targeting extended-stay guests planning a 5-day to month-long visit. www.thetremonthouse.com

Galveston Offers New Birding Tours

Did you know more than 300 species of birds reside or travel through Galveston every year? Or that the island is located on the trans-Gulf bird migration route? Indeed, these are a couple of reasons the island is one of the top locations for bird-watching in the United States. Beginning in fall 2017, visitors have a new way to explore this fascinating aspect of the island with birding tours offered by the Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council. These tours feature the island's top birding hot spots and take visitors to see, learn about and photograph rare and unique birds up close and personal. www.birdingforfun.com

New Shops in Historic Downtown Galveston

Galveston's historic downtown is welcoming new shops and restaurants on a regular basis. New dining options include HubCap Grill, Shucks Oyster Bar and Bubba's at Galveston. New shops include RELAX Life Wear, Emboldened Boutique, BLU Boutique, The Tea & Spice Exchange and Play on The Strand. A new brewery, called Devil and the Deep Brewery, is slated to open in fall 2017. Galveston's Historic Downtown Strand Seaport District is a nationally recognized historic district filled with majestic Victorian architecture that houses shops, restaurants, museums, The Grand 1894 Opera House and other attractions. www.downtowngalveston.org

Moody Gardens Aquarium Now Open after \$37M Renovation

Galveston's Moody Gardens completed a \$37 million renovation on its Aquarium Pyramid in May 2017, offering new exhibits including the addition of jellyfish and tropical penguins. The Moody Gardens aquarium features marine life from four regions of the world including the Gulf of Mexico to South Atlantic, the South and North Pacific and the Caribbean. Moody Gardens is a family entertainment complex featuring a tropical rainforest, aquarium, 3D and 4D theaters, a ropes course and zip line, Palm Beach water park, a golf course, the Moody Gardens Hotel and more. For details, visit www.moodygardens.org.

Galveston Sporting New Beaches along Seawall

Galveston is sporting several miles of new beaches following two major beach expansion and nourishment projects. In spring 2017, the island welcomed four miles of new beaches after a \$19.5 million nourishment project that widened beaches along the seawall between 12th and 61st streets. During the summer of 2017, the seawall also underwent a beautification project and received new restrooms and outdoor showers. In addition, a new 15-block beach, named "Babe's Beach," opened along the seawall west of 61st Street in 2016.

www.galvestonbeachinfo.com

Cruising

New Cruise Ships Coming to Port of Galveston in Late 2017, 2018

As the fourth busiest cruise port in America, Galveston will offer several new cruise ships and schedules in 2018, including the addition of a second Royal Caribbean ship as well as the newest ship in the Carnival Cruise Line fleet. Starting Nov. 6, 2017, Royal Caribbean's Vision of the Seas will homeport in Galveston, offering 4- and 5-day itineraries to destinations in Mexico through April 16. In June 2018, the Vision of the Seas will then be replaced with the Enchantment of the Seas. Royal Caribbean's Liberty of the Seas also sails from Galveston year-round, offering 7-night itineraries to destinations in Mexico and the Caribbean. In addition, Carnival Cruise Line will make updates to its offerings from Galveston in 2018. Carnival offers year-round itineraries on three ships that sail from Galveston. In September 2018, the Carnival Vista will begin sailing from the island to replace the Carnival Breeze. The Carnival Vista is currently the newest ship in the Carnival Cruise Line fleet. Finally, the Disney Wonder will continue to offer seasonal sailing from Galveston November through January in 2017 and 2018.

Galveston Home to 4th Busiest Cruise Port in U.S

Travelers from across the country will head to Galveston in 2018 for cruise itineraries departing from the fourth busiest cruise port in the U.S. Carnival Cruise Lines and Royal Caribbean both offer year-round itineraries and Disney offers seasonal itineraries departing from the Port of Galveston. Offering four-, five- and seven-night schedules, cruise ships in Galveston travel to

destinations in the eastern and western Caribbean, including Mexico, Belize, Honduras, Jamaica, The Bahamas and more.

Extend Your Vacation with Pre- or Post-Cruise Fun in Galveston

With amenities and attractions minutes from the harbor, Galveston Island is the perfect place to extend your cruise vacation. With most cruises departing between 4 and 5 p.m., you can easily add some Galveston fun to your cruise vacation – whether you have a half day, full day or longer. Arrive a day or two early and check in at any of the island hotels that offer port shuttle services and free parking during your cruise when you book at least a one-night stay. For a stay near the port, try Harbor House Hotel & Marina. For a stay on the beachfront, try the San Luis Resort or Hotel Galvez. For a stay on the West End, visit the Moody Gardens Hotel. While on the island, you can check out 32 miles of beaches, plenty of historic sites and adventure attractions like Moody Gardens and the Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier amusement park. To view a suggested pre- or post-cruise itinerary, [click here](#).

General

Small Beach Town Tranquility Meets Big City Thrills

Imagine an island with miles of beaches lined with palm trees, spectacularly restored Victorian homes, charming historic districts and world class adventure attractions. Now, imagine it in ... Texas? A world away from the stereotypical idea of a Texas vacation, Galveston Island offers a truly unique and picturesque view of the Lone Star State on the Gulf Coast. And, while Galveston offers all the views and relaxation anyone could want, it's just a 45-minute drive from Houston. The fourth largest city in the nation, Houston offers big city amenities like luxury shopping, professional sports and some of the country's best cuisine, arts and culture. The close proximity of Galveston and Houston makes it easy for travelers to capture the benefits of both destinations during one vacation.

Family Travel

Family Travel in Galveston

Families looking for a vacation experience where everyone – from grandma to grandchild – can be satisfied will head to Galveston Island this year. With a wide variety of attractions, Galveston is a family vacation destination that offers adventure, relaxation and education all in one place. Galveston is home to 32 miles of beaches and thrilling attractions like Schlitterbahn Galveston Island Waterpark, the Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier amusement Park and family adventure resort Moody Gardens – home to a living rainforest, aquarium, Discovery Museum, 3-D and 4-D theaters, a golf course, water park, ropes course and zip line, historic paddlewheel boat and the Moody Gardens Hotel. Historic downtown Galveston offers unique shopping and entertainment, dolphin tours and a variety of museums. While the island's center is full of activity, the island's West End is a peaceful paradise where an abundance of beach house rentals are available to accommodate families of all sizes.

Outdoor Recreation

Hit the Beach on Galveston Island

With 32 miles of beaches for sports and recreation, Galveston Island truly is the outdoor playground of Texas. The warm weather and cool Gulf breezes found on Galveston Island make enjoying the outdoors an amenity you can count on all year round. Many of the island's beach

parks offer special amenities, such as free concerts, outdoor showers, restrooms, delicious treats and more. Water sports are a popular draw to Galveston's beaches, where people come to surf, swim, boat, dive, play beach volleyball, fly board, parasail, go horseback riding and more. The island is also home to a variety of annual beach events, including the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Sandcastle Competition held the first weekend in June.

Tour A Sunken Flower Garden off the Galveston Coast

When you think of Galveston, images of sun and surf or the island's many exciting attractions might come to mind, but you probably never imagined a sunken treasure called the Flower Garden Banks – a spectacular coral reef nestled 100 miles off the coast of Galveston. This untapped undersea wonder received its name when discovered by fishermen in the early 1900s. Today, divers travel from across the world to see this abundant, colorful reef, which contains more coral than what is found off the Florida Keys. Deemed a national marine sanctuary, the Flower Garden Banks is one of the healthiest coral reefs in the western hemisphere. Private dive charters are offered out of Galveston May through October. For more information and details on dive charters, [click here](#).

Galveston Island – Nature Tourism & Birding Hotspot

Because of Galveston's natural resources and year-round warm weather, the island is one of the top locations for nature and birding enthusiasts in the United States. Located on the trans-Gulf migration route, Galveston is a central location for novice and expert birders, offering more than 300 species of birds that reside and travel through Galveston during fall and spring migrations. Many birds find rest on Galveston Bay, a productive estuarine eco-system with busy harbors and salt marshes. Nature tourists exploring Galveston can go birding, dolphin watching, fishing, kayaking, and camping or tour national wildlife refuges and nature parks. An annual event, FeatherFest (www.galvestonfeatherfest.com), attracts birders from across the country to Galveston each April for birding and nature photography workshops and field trips.

Seaside Golfing on Galveston Island

For a relaxing golf escape, Galveston offers two unique golf courses complemented by lush scenery and picturesque waterside views. The Galveston Country Club – the oldest country club in Texas – is located between Galveston Bay and the Gulf of Mexico and features an 18-hole course lined with palm trees and beautiful greenery. Off Galveston Bay, you'll find the Moody Gardens Golf Course, an award-winning, links-style, par-72 course offering gorgeous bayside views. In 2010, the Moody Gardens Golf Course was named one of the best golf course remodels in the country by Golf Digest. The course was designed by renowned golf course architects at Jacobsen Hardy Golf Course Design.

History

Historic Galveston Island's Comeback as the Playground of the South

At its Golden Era in the late 1800s, Galveston Island was known as the "Playground of the South" – a booming tourist destination built on its attractive beaches, convenient location, high-traffic port and numerous attractions. In recent years, Galveston has reclaimed that title, boasting 32 miles of replenished beaches, an influx of new attractions and the fourth busiest cruise port in America all while holding on to so much of its historic charm. Galveston is filled with history, from housing one of the largest collections of well-preserved Victorian architecture in the country to the dozens of museums that chronicle its encounters with the infamous pirate Jean Lafitte, its growth into one of the wealthiest cities in the nation in the 1800s, its place as

the second busiest immigration station in U.S. history, its devastation after falling victim to the Great Storm of 1900 and its resurgence as an elite early to mid-20th century tourist destination visited by the likes of Frank Sinatra, Duke Ellington, Sammy Davis Jr., General Dwight D. Eisenhower and President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Today, Galveston's historic roots are driving the emergence of new attractions on the island, such as The Bryan Museum, which houses the world's largest collection of Southwestern artifacts, and the Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier, an amusement park that stands over the Gulf of Mexico in the same location a similar pier stood in the 1940s. In addition, Galveston is home to a variety of adventure and family attractions, like Moody Gardens and Schlitterbahn Waterpark. Coming to the spotlight as an underdiscovered gem, Galveston has recently been named a TripAdvisor "Destination on the Rise" among other accolades.

Discover Old-World Charm in Galveston's Historic Districts

Boasting one of the largest collections of well-preserved Victorian architecture in the country, Galveston is a charming tropical destination reminiscent of a bygone era. With four nationally recognized historic districts, Galveston is home to several magnificent structures, such as the 1838 Menard House, 1859 Ashton Villa, 1880 Garten Verein, 1895 Moody Mansion and the 1892 Bishop's Palace, cited by the American Institute of Architects as one of the 100 most important buildings in America. Several of these structures are open for tours daily, in addition to the island's historic downtown district whose majestic iron-front Victorian buildings house coastal-inspired shops, restaurants, museums and other attractions. Within the island's quaint neighborhoods, such as the East End Historical District and Silk Stocking District, colorful historic homes line the streets, featuring Victorian, Greek Revival, Queen Anne and other architectural styles dating back to the mid-1800s to early 1900s. While strolling or bicycling through these neighborhoods is a year-round pleasure on the island, the first two weekends in May bring a special treat when the Galveston Historical Foundation hosts its annual Galveston Historic Homes Tour, where private home owners open their doors to the public for tours.

www.galvestonhistory.org

Discover World's Largest Collection of Southwestern Artifacts in Galveston

Discover Texas history at Galveston's Bryan Museum. The museum houses the largest collection of Southwestern artifacts in the world. With 70,000 items spanning 12,000 years, it includes treasures ranging from ancient Native American cultural artifacts to 21st century pieces – rare German, French, Spanish, and English documents; exquisite saddles; spurs; antique firearms; exceptionally rare maps and books; fine art; religious and folk art; portraits; and documents. The museum, which opened in June 2015, even features original correspondence from the infamous pirate Jean Lafitte. www.thebryanmuseum.com

Explore Immigration History at Galveston's Texas Seaport Museum

Second only to Ellis Island, Galveston served as the second busiest immigration station in U.S. history. This fascinating history is chronicled at the Texas Seaport Museum, located at Galveston's Pier 21. Here, you can look through the museum's extensive immigration database and see the names of millions of newcomers who passed through Galveston on their way to a new life in the southwestern region of America. Galveston's immigration stations were open during the early 1800s through the early 1900s.

Galveston's Haunted History Comes to Life with Historic Ghost Tours

As the location of the 1900 Storm, the deadliest natural disaster in U.S. history, Galveston is a thrilling place to encounter the paranormal. The island's ghostly past makes it one of the nation's top destinations for haunted travel, with a 106-year-old "haunted" hotel, storied

harbor, cemeteries and Victorian mansions from a bygone era. Year-round, visitors can explore Haunted Mayfield Manor in the historic downtown district or go on chilling ghost tours with resident supernatural expert, Dash Beardsley. In October, the spooky thrills are even bigger with ghost tours offered by the historic Hotel Galvez, said to be haunted by a ghost bride, as well as the Galveston Historical Foundation, which offers spooky events and tours through the island's many historic sites and mansions.

Explore Military History in Galveston

Few destinations have weathered the test of time through war, colonization and natural disaster and lived to tell the tale like Galveston. Steeped in American history, the island offers veterans and history buffs alike the chance to discover remnants of its fascinating past. Those interested in aviation history can explore one of the finest and most rare collections of restored war aircraft in the world at the Lone Star Flight Museum. For a bit of naval history, guests can visit Galveston's Seawolf Park, the berthing place of the USS Stewart and USS Cavalla, which is best known for sinking a Japanese ship involved in the Pearl Harbor attack. Also visible from Seawolf Park is the SS Selma, a concrete ship launched the same day Germany signed the Treaty of Versailles, officially ending World War I. Military history can even be uncovered at Galveston's magnificent hotels, like the San Luis Resort, which was built on top of the former government reservation Fort Crockett. Fort Crockett's four batteries are still visible today, one of them now home to a public park located along the beachfront on the iconic Seawall Boulevard.

Health & Wellness

Health + Fitness Attractions on Galveston Island

Vacationing on Galveston Island often means fun in the sun and surf, cold drinks and tasty eats. But enjoying a little island time doesn't always have to mean lazing around for hours on end. Galveston is the perfect spot for a wide variety of exciting activities for those who enjoy an active lifestyle. At more than 10 miles long, Galveston's seawall is the nation's longest continuous sidewalk and is a great spot for your daily run, walk, jog, skate or bicycle ride with its scenic view of the Gulf of Mexico. You can also enjoy yoga on the beach, paddle boarding, kayaking or challenge yourself on the Moody Gardens Ropes Course. Refuel at downtown Galveston's green-friendly Oasis Juice Bar & Market, which offers a delicious menu of vegan and vegetarian offerings, including fresh juices, smoothies, kombucha and eats.

Relax at Galveston's World-Class Spas

After watching a Galveston sunrise over the Gulf of Mexico, there is no better way to kick-start your day than with a relaxing trip to any of the island's' world-class spas, offering a unique array of Asian and European massages, body scrubs, wraps, hydrotherapy baths and more. To experience Galveston like Jennifer Lopez did while filming an episode of American Idol in 2012, visit Spa San Luis at The San Luis Resort, which offers a signature Shirodhara Therapy Massage – an ancient Ayurvedic ritual. For an equally luxurious experience, visit The Spa at Hotel Galvez, known for its tranquil relaxation room and Eucalyptus steam rooms. And, for a unique experience, visit the Moody Gardens Hotel, which is home to a world-class adult spa that was completely redesigned in 2015 as well as the Secret Garden Teen Spa.

Luxury

Experience Luxury at "The Villas at The San Luis Resort"

For a truly luxurious experience, book a stay at The Villas at The San Luis Resort. This development opened in late 2015 and includes five private 800-square-foot villas nestled in a

quiet corner of the iconic San Luis Resort. The Villas offer a discreet residential setting complete with private in-room check-in. Every villa suite is accessible only through an exclusive entrance and features a king-sized bedroom, three TVs, a deluxe five-fixture bathroom outfitted with a large shower and soaking tub, a private veranda with a hot tub, separate pool area and personal butler service. Unique to The Villas, guests have the option to upgrade their travel arrangements and arrive via luxury helicopter, limo or Bentley. www.sanluisresort.com/thevillas

Food

Explore Galveston's Culturally Rich Cuisine

With its history as the second busiest immigration port in the U.S., Galveston is unsurprisingly a melting pot. And this pot has boiled over into the island's vibrant food scene. Although tucked deep in the heart of south Texas, Galveston's culinary flair is influenced by nearly every part of the world. And, for lovers of fresh Gulf seafood, your taste buds will never get bored because no two restaurants prepare this island specialty the same way. In this historic beach town, independent, family-owned restaurants are the majority, offering unique flavors you can only find on the island. The award-winning Gaido's Seafood Restaurant has been family-owned and operated on the island for more than 100 years and serves up some of the best seafood on the island plus the best pecan pie in Texas (which is featured in the Neiman Marcus catalog). Other award-winning restaurants include The Steakhouse, Shearn's Restaurant and Rudy & Paco Restaurant – known for its Central American twist on steaks and seafood. Rudy & Paco is included on OpenTable's list of top 100 "Best Restaurants in America."

Galveston Food Festivals & Events

Being located on the Gulf of Mexico where fresh seafood abounds, Galveston offers plenty of reasons for foodies to visit to the island. For those looking for food celebrations, Galveston kicks off each year with its annual Galveston Restaurant Weeks (January), followed by the much anticipated Galveston Island Food & Wine Festival in spring (April). The summer months bring the Yaga's Wild Game & BBQ Cookoff (May), the Galveston Cajun Crawfish Festival (June) and the Galveston Island Shrimp Festival (September). Labor Day weekend brings the Brew Masters Craft Festival, the largest craft beer festival in Texas.

Arts & Entertainment

What Makes Galveston Artsy?

The Texas Commission on the Arts recently announced the designation of the Galveston Downtown Cultural Arts District as an official cultural district. Downtown Galveston is home to a thriving arts scene for both the visual and performing arts. The district is home to two theaters – The Grand 1894 Opera House and the Island ETC Theater – as well as more than 20 art galleries, displaying fine art, sculptures and photography in beautifully restored historic buildings. The area is also home to a wide variety of antique shops, boutiques, museums and culinary gems as well as year-round festivals and art events, such as ArtWalk – held every six weeks.

Experience Mardi Gras at the Beach

If you're looking for a unique Mardi Gras experience in 2018, grab some beads and hit the beach! *Mardi Gras! Galveston*, the third largest Mardi Gras celebration in the United States, offers the unique chance to experience sand between your toes and gorgeous beach sunsets while taking in the revelry and lavish parades known to dominate Galveston Island during carnival season. The island's 107th Mardi Gras celebration will be held Feb. 2 through Fat Tuesday Feb. 13 and is expected to draw more than 300,000 attendees for 30+ concerts, 22

parades, and dozens of balcony parties. And, this island-style Mardi Gras has plenty of personality, including traditional Mardi Gras revelry, family friendly events, lavish formal balls and parties, and DJ laser shows. www.mardigrasgalveston.com.

Meetings & Conventions

An Affordable Beach Destination for Meetings & Conventions

If the views from your meeting space consist of traffic, concrete or other buildings, the answer to your problem is simple. It's island time! Leave the stiff and boring behind for the excitement of Galveston Island's beachfront facilities in one of Texas' top tourism destinations. Located just 50 minutes from Houston, this 32-mile-long island offers more than 5,000 sleeping rooms, replenished beaches and a variety of world-class attractions to make meetings and conventions far from ordinary. And, those on a budget can join the more than 5 million visitors that flock to Galveston annually to experience the laidback lifestyle of a seaside city without the high price tag of most beach destinations.

Weddings

Texas' Premier Destination Wedding Location

In Texas, you can have a tropical destination wedding on the beach without losing the crowd. Located just 50 miles from Houston, Galveston Island is the state's premier location for destination weddings, offering 32 miles of beaches and beautiful event venues that are easily accessible on the U.S. Gulf Coast. The island is home to AAA rated four-diamond hotels such as the historic, beachfront Spanish Mission-style Hotel Galvez & Spa, the beachfront San Luis Resort and the Moody Gardens Hotel off Galveston Bay as well as the elegant European-style Tremont House in downtown Galveston. In addition to hotels, the island is home to well-preserved historic venues – such as Moody Mansion and Garten Verein – beach homes and other sites that make perfect wedding and reception venues.

Victorian Conservatory Now Open at Bryan Museum Wedding Garden

The recent opened Victorian-style Conservatory at The Bryan Museum is a magnificent European design of intricate metal ironwork and beautiful emerald-green colored glass. An impressive 2,000 square foot structure nestled in lush gardens, the Conservatory opens onto an expansive stone terrace and vine-covered gazebo. The perfect setting for a private party or wedding, the Conservatory can accommodate parties of 250 standing, or 150-200 seated. An adjacent Pavilion provides a luxurious custom-designed Bridal Suite and a Groom's Lounge.

For more information on Galveston Island visit www.galveston.com or call 1-888-GAL-ISLE.

Note: Members of the press can access downloadable information, images and video of Galveston Island by visiting the Galveston Island Convention & Visitors Bureau's online pressroom at <http://pressroom.galveston.com>