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THE MAKING OF
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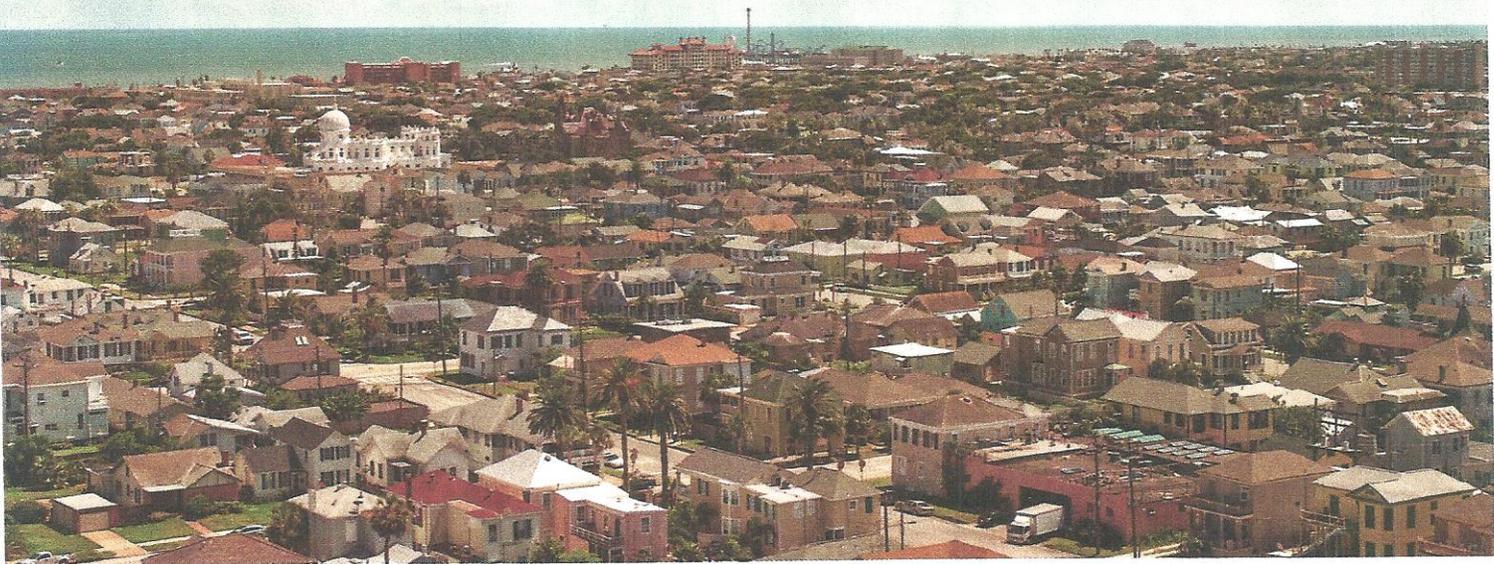
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travel

Beyond the Beach

➤ Cruises bring nearly a million visitors to Galveston each year, and any of those passengers who jump right on the ship are missing out. It takes just a glance down The Strand Historic District to know there's so much more to the island than its 32 miles of beaches. Take a break from the sand and waves for a cultural and historical exploration. *Cont. page 88.*





A Wave of History

Skip Galveston's beaches for a step back in time

BY BECCA HENSLEY

The doyennes of the Victorian age referred to it as the “Playground of the South.” Galveston’s modern residents sometimes call their home “The Republic of Galveston Island,” a nod to its elegant-tropical, multi-textured ambiance. With 32 miles of beaches along the Gulf of Mexico and a major cruise port, Galveston is a beach town but its centuries of history offer plenty more to discover than how to ride a wave.

The story of the city dates back to the 16th century, when the Akokisa and Karankawa Indians had the island’s marshy landscape to themselves, and is full of twists, turns, drama and intrigue. When Spanish explorer Cabeza de Vaca shipwrecked on Galveston’s shores, for instance, the Karankawas enslaved him, but they also allowed him to act as a medicine man among their people.

Long after French and Spanish explorers tussled over the area, Victorian magnates came to build their mansions along the seashore. One of the most glamorous homes available today for architectural buffs to tour is Bishop’s Palace, a turreted, castle-like structure, awash in Gothic elements and considered one of the most important Victorian structures ever constructed. The Historic Homes Tour takes place the first two weekends of May, giving the public a chance to peruse some of the island’s other historic residences.

Everything changed in 1900, when a Category 4 hurricane, still known as the “Great Storm,” made landfall. Resulting in apocalyptic destruction and loss of life, it left opulent Galveston crippled. Learn all about the devastating storm as well as our state’s seafaring history at the Texas Seaport Museum. Visitors can also search the museum’s database to

see if their relatives came to America via Galveston, which was known as “The Ellis Island of the West.” Then grab a bike and explore Galveston’s whimsical tree sculptures. As an homage to renewal, the contemporary public artworks were carved from trees killed during Hurricane Ike in 2008.

To gain even more historical perspective, be among the first to visit the Bryan Museum, which opens this summer. Showcasing one of the world’s top private collections of Southwestern art and artifacts, it displays rarely seen items, some dating back more than 400 years.

Even those not enthused by history will find lots to do in Galveston in May. There’s the Corvette car show (May 29-31), the Galveston Island Beach Revue, a vintage swimwear contest (May 15-16) and the AIA Houston sandcastle competition (May 30). And of course, there’s always the beach. ★

WHEN YOU GO

DRIVE 246 miles east on I-10 and I-45 south.

STAY Experience history up-close at the **Hotel Galvez & Spa**, which was constructed in 1911. hotelgalvez.com

EAT Gulf shrimp and Texas Blue Crab are on the menu of **Gaido’s**, which has been serving fresh seafood for over a century. gaidos.com

DO Visit the ornate **Moody Mansion**. Once the home of magnate W.L. Moody Jr., it showcases period furniture and more. moodymansion.org