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## Getaway: As weather warms, Houston beckons

by Cheré Coen

There is always a good reason to visit Houston. As America's fourth-largest city, Houston is home to world-class museums, theaters and shopping, and it's only four hours away.

Spring ups the ante even more, with azaleas in full bloom, parks brimming with activities and special events scheduled one after the other.

For starters, Houston's annual Livestock Show & Rodeo began this past week and continues until March 22 in Reliant Park. In addition to the competitive rodeo and horse shows, there will be live music every night, featuring superstars such as Brad Paisley, Clint Black, Keith Urban, Brooks & Dunn and ZZ Top.

For tickets and more information, visit [www.hlsr.com](http://www.hlsr.com).

The Bayou City Art Festival, an annual juried fine art show featuring 300 artists working in 19 mediums, occurs 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. March 27 through 29 in the city's Memorial Park. In addition to the unlimited artwork, there will wine cafes and restaurants, an interactive "Creative Zone" for children and performing artists presenting multicultural works, including the Houston Arts Alliance dancers. Memorial Park stretches throughout the middle of Houston, five miles from downtown and two miles from the Galleria. Its acres of woodlands, parks, playgrounds and hiking and jogging paths create an oasis in the heart of the city.

For information, visit [www.bayoucityartfestival.com](http://www.bayoucityartfestival.com).

In addition to visiting Houston's newest park, Discovery Green, to fly a kite, walk your dog, enjoy the fragrant scent garden or watch your children play in the fountains — weather permitting — there are special events happening almost every day throughout the spring and early summer. This week, for instance, visitors can learn tai chi or yoga, enjoy Extreme Wii, a performance by Jaguar Sun (Young Audiences of Houston) and celebrate at an after-St. Patrick's Day Parade party. From now until June, events include film screenings, live music and special events such as Earth Day Houston, among much more.

The park offers the Lake House, a casual dining spot for hamburgers and sweet potato fries, but one of the best places to relax, enjoy company or watch the sun set is The Grove, an upscale restaurant nestled within a grove of live oak trees. The second-floor deck makes for a great place to sample drinks, such as the pomegranate margarita, and enjoy items from their light menu, such as the roasted



Photo by Cheré Coen

**Discovery Green, the new green space downtown bookended by Minute Maid Park, the George R. Brown Convention Center and the Hilton of the Americas, offers theme gardens, performance spaces, lagoon, picnic lawn and children's areas.**

chicken tacos topped with corn relish.

To learn more about Discovery Green and to check out the almost daily happenings, visit [discoverygreen.com](http://discoverygreen.com).

## Happy birthday, state parks

Louisiana's state parks turn 75 this year and special anniversary events will occur all year at various parks throughout the state.

The Louisiana State Park System was created in 1934 and began operating three existing sites, Camp Moore in Tangipahoa, Fort Pike/Fort McComb State Historic Site near New Orleans and Longfellow-Evangeline State Historic Site in St. Martinville.

During the days of the Depression, the Civilian Conservation Corps worked to build new state parks — while providing jobs. This weekend, Chicot State Park in Ville Platte will honor the CCC's work with an anniversary event. Chicot may be the largest CCC project within the park system.

Other reasons to visit Louisiana's state parks this month:

- March Market and Craft Fair, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, Longfellow-Evangeline State Historic Site
- "Sprouts, Shoots and Roots," 2 p.m. Saturday, Nature Center at Sam Houston Jones State Park near Lake Charles
- Wildflower walk, 10 a.m. March 28, Louisiana State Arboretum in Ville Platte;  
Pontoon boat tour, 3 p.m. March 28, Chicot State Park.

For more information about Louisiana State Parks, visit [www.crt.state.la.us/parks](http://www.crt.state.la.us/parks).

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