

TRAVEL

# SAN ANTONIO: America's unique city

By AILEEN ADAMS  
SAN ANTONIO, Texas — The brochures of San Antonio say it is one of America's four unique cities. But, personally, I cannot imagine anything more unique than San Antonio.

The city is full of complexity, history, musicality and yes, sensuality.

The complexity begins with its founders. To take them alphabetically — the Afro-Americans, Anglo-Americans, Belgians, Chinese, Czechs, Danes, Dutch, English, French, Germans, Indians, Italians, Irish, Japanese, Jewish, Lebanese, Mexicans, Norwegians, Polish, Scots, Swedish, Swiss, Syrians and Welsh — all of whom became Texans.

The very first European settlers were 50 farmers sent out from the Canary Islands by the king of Spain. Their descendants now form the old aristocracy of San Antonio and contribute much to its color and charm and its sense of festivity.

This is all dramatically illustrated in the Institute of Texan Culture. Here,

on the sprawling main floor, there are vignettes of the life and history of the settlers — their clothes, their stories, boots, guns, guitars, patent medicines and photographs — all made more vivid by guides who are dramatically interested in their work.

There, if you tire of walking, you can just plop down on the carpeted floor, lean back on your hands and arms, stretch your legs and look up at the ceiling where a vast circular screen brings back vividly the early days of Texas.

The institute is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. from Tuesday through Sunday and admission is free.

Then there is the Alamo, a vivid reminder of the violent past. We all know the battle cry, remember the Alamo, which was used as late as the last war. But the battle of the Alamo, (originally a mission) was virtually a massacre when the 188 defenders (Davy Crockett was one of them) fought and died, hopelessly outnumbered by 5,000 Mexicans.

Today, the Alamo stands serene, its battered walls bleached by

the warm sun. Its surrounding park is bordered by great trees and many flowering shrubs, its silence punctuated only by the song of birds. But I am sure that any Texan walking here hears the sound of guns and senses the acrid smell of smoke.

Although much of the fibre of San Antonio is woven with threads of the past, the city today is vibrant with life.

There are so many fiestas you are almost sure to partake of one. Fiesta San Antonio is held in April; Fiesta Noche del Rio is one of several music shows scheduled during the summer months. And on St. Patrick's Day, the beer and San Antonio's river both flow green. September is Mariachi Month when musicians stroll everywhere in the core of the city, providing toe-tlingling entertainment.

In October there is a Greek Festival and in December, many celebrations of Christmas.

Perhaps the greatest pictorial asset of San Antonio is the Paseo del Rio, the river walk.

The San Antonio river was once a hazard to the city because it overflowed its banks and only 50 years ago it was suggested that it be covered in concrete and the bed become a sewer.

Fortunately for the residents, and the visitors, San Antonio was blessed with some foresighted conservationists, architects and developers who created the Paseo del Rio, one of the world's unique waterfronts.

The river, flowing into the heart of the city, is shaped like a tea apron, the flood control lagoon forming the ties.

You will stroll endlessly in the area, cross back and forth across the river over hump-backed bridges, mount stairs to the many restaurants and boutiques, or simply sit on the grass-covered tiers of the Arneron River Theatre to listen to one of the numerous free concerts.

In September, just at dusk, I sat on the grass seats to listen to a mariachi band. In these bands the sensuous beat of guitars is heightened and lightened by trumpets. The music is fast and happy and often, singers and dancers add to the merry melody.

The hilly amphitheatre seats are divided by banks of begonias.

As dusk deepened to dark, the leafy trees were lit by the lights of restaurants and high-rise hotels. Paddle boats and tour barges slipped silently by and then, around a bend, came another festive barge in full panoply of candles and white dressed tables where a party was dining most elegantly.

These dinner parties can be booked through one of the local restaurants. And on the river walk you can choose Mexican tacos to eat while strolling. Sidewalk cafes offer seafood crepes and Texas-size steaks. Overlooking the river and gourmet restaurants such

as The Fig Tree and the Rhein Steakhouse.

Close by, and bordering the river is La Villita, a cluster of restored adobe buildings housing working craftsmen.

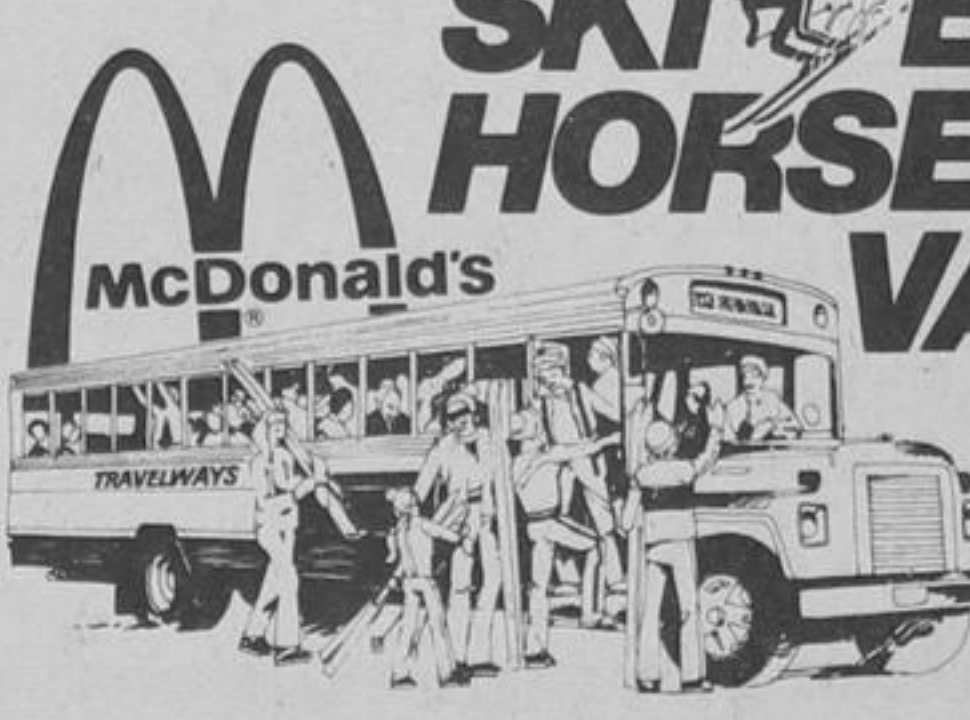
Further out from the river is the former Ursuline convent, now also a craft centre with active classes and an open shop. Incidentally, or maybe importantly, the very excellent cafeteria is open to visitors as well as students, and it's reasonable.

Accommodation in San Antonio ranges from campsites and motels to luxury hotels. One of the most beautiful of these is the Four Seasons Plaza Nacional, a member of the Canadian Four Seasons chain.

The Plaza is built in Spanish style, around a treed courtyard with many fountains. Service is superb. San Antonio is so varied, so full of life's pleasures, it would take a book to do it justice. But in true San Antonio style,

**Buffet Luncheon**  
For Only **\$3.65**  
AT THE  
**HOUSE OF LORDS RESTAURANT**

**HOP ON A McDONALD'S SKI BUS TO HORSESHOE VALLEY**



**VOUCHER FOR AN EGG McMUFFIN WITH YOUR SKI BUS TICKET!**

Breakfast at McDonald's then take a Travelways SkiBus for a full day's skiing at one of Ontario's finest resorts.

Bring the whole family or get together with a bunch of friends. No reservations necessary — buy your tickets right on the bus!

SkiBus departs every Saturday and Sunday morning from December 1, 1979 to March 30, 1980:

THORNHILL McDONALD'S	departs 7:30 a.m.	*16 alpine/10 cross country
RICHMOND HILL McDONALD'S	departs 8:00 a.m.	*16 alpine/10 cross country
AURORA McDONALD'S	departs 8:15 a.m.	*15 alpine/9 cross country
NEWMARKET McDONALD'S	departs 8:30 a.m.	*15 alpine/9 cross country

Travelways also operates a daily SkiBus service to Horseshoe Valley, Mount St. Louis, Medonte and Blue Mountain from convenient pick-up points around Toronto. There are also exciting weekend and 9-day packages to Mont Sutton, Quebec and Jay Peak, Vermont — call for details.

For Thornhill/Richmond Hill information, call (416) 298-0663.  
For Aurora/Newmarket information, call (416) 895-6681.

\*Price includes transportation by Travelways Econabus, lift/trail ticket and, during December only, a voucher redeemable for an Egg McMuffin.  
All day parking not available at McDonald's

**TRAVELWAYS**  
We're going places... Join us!

Travelways Tours,  
30 Heritage Road, Markham,  
Ontario L3P 1M4



The Four Seasons Plaza Nacional Hotel in San Antonio is built in Spanish style, around a treed courtyard. Here is superb.

**Think First**  
OF  
**THE Liberal**

**FLY TORONTO AIR COMMUTER NON-STOP TO**

**TORONTO'S AIR COMMUTER NON-STOP TO**

**KINGSTON IN 50 MINUTES**

**BROCKVILLE IN 60 MINUTES**

**ELLIOT LAKE IN 80 MINUTES**

CONVENIENT SAME-DAY RETURN FLIGHTS FROM BUTTONTVILLE AIRPORT LOCATED ONE MILE NORTH OF HIGHWAY NO. 7 AND THE DON VALLEY NO. 404 EXTENSION

FOR INFORMATION OR RESERVATIONS  
PHONE — (416) 297-3735  
OR (TOLL FREE) — 1-800-268-5525  
OR CALL YOUR LOCAL TRAVEL AGENT

**MAYFAIR GIFT SHOPS INC.**

INVITE YOU TO THE OPENING OF OUR NEW STORE

MAYFAIR GIFT SHOPS open their spacious new Toronto store on Friday November 30th, 1979, at 80 Steeles Avenue, West.

The conveniently located store with its own more than ample parking is just 600 feet West of Yonge Street, on the North side of Steeles Avenue.

The large tastefully designed store offers an array of sought after items of both gifts and interior decor. Literally hundreds of brass and copper items for the home or office as well as Dolls, rocking Hoppers, Wooden Ware, Pottery, Pictures and all your Christmas needs may be found at the MAYFAIR GIFT SHOP.

The parent British Mayfair Group of companies make possible a tremendous selection of British as well as European and Canadian Gift items.

Specialists in select gift and decor objects in four countries, MAYFAIR GIFTS will be an instant obvious success in the new commanding location.

Staffed by former managers of two of the most successful gift and jewellery retailers MAYFAIR GIFT SHOP offers a highly personalized as well as specialized service to customers.

**80 STEELES AVE. WEST, THORNHILL 889-1176**


**IT'S SUM TIME**

TIME FOR A WINTER VACATION...  
**FLORIDA CIRCLE TOUR FOR 28 DAYS** BOOK NOW TO AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT

DEPARTS FEBRUARY 15

INCLUDES: Gulf and Ocean visits, all accommodations, full escort throughout tour. Optional side trips: Disney World, Marine Land, Busch Gardens, and much, much more for 28 fun filled days.

Transportation by deluxe W-R A-C Motor Coach



Join us this winter for a wonderful holiday with a companionable group of fellow travellers.

FOR MORE INFORMATION  
**CALL 451-4776**  
OR WRITE  
**PARKINSON TOURS**  
10 Kennedy R. N., Brampton L6V 1X4

Wind-up the season with a great banquet.

It's "Do It Yourself" buffet month at Kentucky Fried Chicken. And there's no better way to wind up sports and community group activities than with a party. Call your nearby Kentucky Fried Chicken Store manager 2 hours ahead. Then pick it up. It's a real feast with 3 pieces of chicken and generous helpings of salads for everyone. Plus everything you need for serving up a great banquet for 15 people or more.

**Scott's chicken Villa.**  
Call your local manager for details.

**Kentucky Fried Chicken**  
Colonel Sanders' boys and girls make it "finger lickin' good."

**Colonel Sanders' do-it-yourself buffet**

**Good chicken!**

