

HAVE FUN AND LEARN ALONG THE BRAZOS

The Brazos River basin covers more than 42,000 square miles across the state of Texas. The Brazos and its tributaries have long provided a home for countless people and animal species. The region's natural and cultural history is rich and diverse.

For those interested in learning more about the Brazos, its people, animals and history, opportunities abound. Wherever you are in the basin, you can likely find a place nearby to expand your knowledge about the Brazos and have a little fun in the process. Here are some possibilities:

Science Spectrum Museum

You can take a journey down the Brazos and see examples of its diverse wildlife, without leaving the Lubbock city limits. "Texas Alive! The Brazos River Journey," features more than 30 aquariums and terrariums, featuring animals you can find in the Brazos basin. The critters range from rattlesnakes and snapping turtles to largemouth bass, gar and even sharks and stingrays.

The permanent exhibit is co-sponsored by organizations including the Brazos River Authority, which donated \$50,000 to build a giant model of the water cycle near the entrance.



Jacie Hood, Science Spectrum

"Texas Alive!" is loaded with science and history activities. Hands-on interactive computer exhibits and video ranger stations let you experience the sights and sounds of the river. You can also catch one of the daily live animal shows at the Bait Shop Dock.

To learn more about the museum and exhibit, please click [here](#).

Dinosaur Valley State Park

Have you ever walked in dinosaur footprints? You can in the bed of the Paluxy River, a Brazos tributary near Glen Rose.



Earl Nottingham, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

About 113 million years ago, the Gulf of Mexico came up to the area around what is now Glen Rose in Somervell County. Dinosaurs would travel through the area in search of food, leaving their footprints deep in the mud of the tidal flats. Over eons, sediment covered and protected the prints as the mud hardened to stone.

Today you can find contains some of the best-preserved dinosaur tracks in the world at Dinosaur Valley State Park.

The footprints likely are from creatures including the paluxysaurus, which weighed up to 45 tons and is the Texas state dinosaur. Other prints are probably by the acrocanthosaurus, a meat-eating predator, and the plant-eating iguanodon.

The tracks can be seen in several locations in the 1,523-acre park, which encompasses a scenic bend in the river. One especially popular viewing site is along a rock ledge next to the Blue Hole, an old-time swimming hole.

The park includes 12 miles of hike and bike trails, an equestrian riding area, a day-use picnic area, group picnic pavilion with picnic tables and fireplace, and an outdoor amphitheater. The visitors' center includes a store where you can buy souvenirs of your trip.

Dinosaur Valley also offers numerous campsites with electricity, water and nearby restrooms. For the more adventurous, the park has primitive camp sites that require a 1 to 2 mile hike.

For more information, including fees and hours, call the park at (254) 897-4588 or go to the park's Web site, [here](#).

Cameron Park Zoo

Located in Waco's beautiful Cameron Park, along the banks of the Brazos, this zoo features the "Brazos River Country" exhibit. Visitors can tour the Brazos in the footsteps of Spanish explorers starting at the river's mouth and going upstream.

Entering through a recreated Spanish galleon, one first experiences a 50,000-gallon aquarium that features fish common to the Gulf Coast.

Moving through the exhibit, visitors travel through simulations of the Brazos' regions, including the piney woods, blackland prairie, cross timbers, and the high plains. Along the way one can see many of the animals common to those regions, from alligators to black bears and otters frolicking in a pond. Jaguars, ocelots, bison and a colony of bats are among the many critters one might spy.

There are plenty of educational displays scattered throughout but also numerous places for the kiddoes to have fun. They can explore the inside of a teepee or examine a Huaco Indian hut. Nearby, children can climb a ladder into a forest ranger's station to slide down a clear acrylic tube through the river otter habitat.

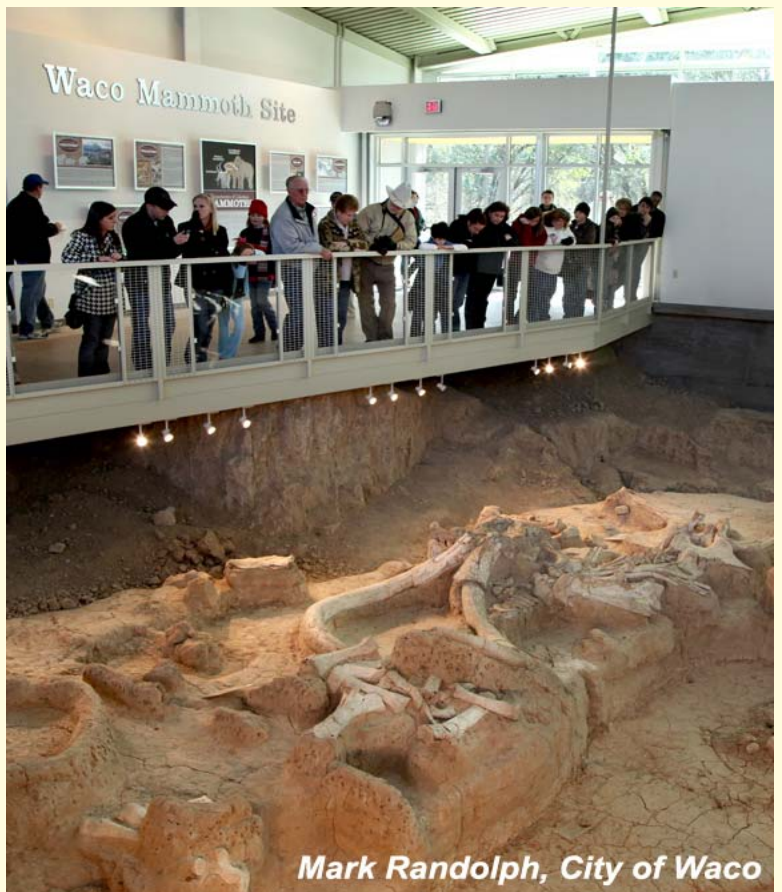
To learn more about the exhibit and the rest the zoo has to offer, please go to this [link](#).

Waco Mammoth Site

Just up the Brazos, near its confluence with the Bosque River, is the spot where in 1978 two men searching for arrowheads and fossils found a large bone sticking out of a ravine. Scientists identified the bone as belonging to a Columbian mammoth, a species of elephant that has been extinct for thousands of years.

In the years since, workers have excavated 22 mammoth fossils from what is the only recorded discovery of a nursery herd of Pleistocene mammoths.

Also found in this spot was an extinct camel, part of a saber-tooth cat and another unidentified animal. While the cause of the animals' death remains a mystery, at least some of them are suspected to have died in a flood.



Mark Randolph, City of Waco

The site remained closed to the public until 2009, when a public park was opened on the 100-acre property. The park's centerpiece is its dig shelter, which allows visitors to view the mammoth fossils from walkways suspended above, inside a closed, lighted building. The park also features a walking trail and welcome center with a gift shop.

The site continues to evolve, and officials hope to expand it in the coming years. A bill pending in Congress would turn the site into the Waco Mammoth National Monument, and would make it part of the National Park Service.

For more information about the site, call (254) 750-7946 or visit the Web site, [here](#).

Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site

Located in the Brazos River's lower basin, this site is closely tied to Texas fledgling days of independence from Mexico. Not only can visitors learn about the state's early history, they can also get a glimpse of settler life along the Brazos.



Rob McCorkle, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Washington-on-the-Brazos was the center of several significant events in Texas history. It was the site of the signing of the Texas Declaration of Independence in 1836. It was also the capitol of Texas from 1842 to 1845. Each year on March 2, Texans from all over gather at the site to celebrate Texas Independence Day.

While at the park, one can visit the 10,000-square-foot Star of Republic Museum. The star-shaped museum contains exhibits, presentations and displays on the history of the Texas Republic.

Visitors to the park are encouraged to participate in the history at the Barrington Living History Farm. Here one can find the home of Anson Jones, the last president of the Texas Republic. Visitors can experience political,

social and economical aspects of the Republic on this working farm. After visiting the historic sites and working on the farm, visitors can take a break on the beautiful park grounds and relax and picnic along the Brazos River.

For more information about Washington on the Brazos, please go [here](#).