

GLEN ROSE

FOSSIL RIM WILDLIFE CENTER (food+)

Take a scenic drive along US 67 out to [Fossil Rim Wildlife Center](#), a 1,700-acre conservation site that's home to over 1,100 animals — most roaming freely in near-wild conditions. Education, research, and conservation — particularly of endangered species — are the goals here, so the animals are kept in as peaceful an environment as possible. Visitors can drive along a nine-mile loop over hills and through plains to spot residents like sable antelope, kudu, gazelle, bison, cheetah, rhino, zebra, and giraffe; pick up food pellets to feed the friendly ones along the way (the giraffe are the only ones who will eat out of your hand.) Guided tours are also available, and there's a Children's Animal Center on site. Grab a sandwich or a salad and enjoy the view from the Overlook Cafe with its breathtaking views from the surrounding deck.

DINOSAUR STATE PARK

Head back towards town to [Dinosaur State Park](#). Over the eons, the Paluxy River wore paths through the layered rock formations of the region, ultimately revealing an impressive collection of dinosaur prints along the riverbeds, and some of the best preserved examples of these tracks can be found here. The first footprints were discovered in 1909, with later examples — including a double set of sauropod tracks — found in the 1930s. Today, along various trails in the park, you can spot prints from three types of the species, each print a different shape and depth. Note that most of the tracks can be found along the riverbeds, so check the water conditions before going to make sure they will be visible.

BARNARD'S MILL & ART MUSEUM

Head back towards town to [Barnard's Mill & Art Museum](#), where you can learn a bit about the area's history — and its current art scene. Built in 1860 as a water-powered gristmill, Barnard's Mill churned out high-grade flour and cornmeal until it was turned into a cotton gin in 1895, then a hospital around World War II. Nowadays, the restored mill and adjacent buildings contain 12 rooms filled with over 200 original works of art, culled from the Fielder Foundation and private collections.

PIE PEDDLERS (food)

Before leaving Glen Rose, pop into [Pie Peddlers](#) to pick-up one of their famous baked goodies — voted among the best in Texas. Owned by two former teachers, the cozy cafe is the go-to spot in town for holiday pies, but also draws crowds all year with signature flavors like Every Berry, Coconut Caramel, Strawberry-Rhubarb and Buttermilk — most are available whole or by the slice.

HAMMOND'S BBQ (food)

Hit the road towards Granbury. On your way there, stop for lunch at [Hammond's BBQ](#), located on US 67 just outside of downtown. Decorated with a wall of colorful license plates and Texas-themed knick-knacks, the barnlike space is beloved for its classic plates of (your choice) sliced or chopped brisket, turkey, pork ribs, or sausage, plus savory sides and — of course — iced tea.

GRANBURY —

HISTORIC TOWN SQUARE

Once in Granbury, park around the [historic town square](#) to get a feel for what's often called one of the Best Small Towns in America, and what has served as a model for National Trust town preservation programs in Texas. The seat of Hood County, Granbury started out as a collection of log cabins around a square, but soon grew into a prosperous Western town full of shops, saloons, and even an Opera House built in 1886. The famous Victorian-era Courthouse was the first to be added in its entirety to the state's National Register of Historic Places. While walking around the square today, you'll spy these monuments, along with plenty of places for modern-day retail therapy.

EIGHTEEN NINETY GRILLE & LOUNGE (food)

Enjoy a leisurely dinner at [Eighteen Ninety Grille & Lounge](#). A relative newcomer to the town square (it opened in 2012), the bi-level restaurant serves quality meats like certified Angus beef, French-cut pork chops, and a 32-ounce porterhouse for two, along with seasonal sides, salads made with produce from local farmers, homemade

banana pudding, and Bloody Marys featuring a mix of hand-roasted peppers and tomatoes. The places hosts live music (usually jazz) on Saturday nights.

LAKE GRANBURY & CITY BEACH PARK

Soaking up the Texas sun at [Lake Granbury and City Beach Park](#). Numerous parks and recreation areas ring the lake, most offering access for swimming and water sports, but if your time is limited, head for this beach, created in 2008 with sand imported from South Padre Island. The sandy strip is just a one-minute drive from the town center, and features a boardwalk, kids' water area, concessions stands and — in high season — a Tiki Hut.

NUTSHELL EATERY & BAKERY (food)

Head to the [Nutshell Eatery & Bakery](#) (137 E. Pearl St.) for a lunch of chicken-fried steak, sandwiches served on homemade bread, or one of the signature burgers (the John Wilkes Booth — named for the notorious assassin who is said to have hidden-out in Granbury — is topped with cheddar and chopped bacon.) Don't miss a slice of buttermilk pie, made from a 30-year-old recipe.

HOOD COUNTY JAIL & MUSEUM

Stop in to the [Hood County Jail and Museum](#) (208 N. Crockett St.), located one block from the square (note that it's only open from 1 pm to 4 pm on the weekends). The stone jail was built in 1885, and still includes the original cell block and (some say haunted) hanging tower; the adjacent museum features Granbury and Hood County artifacts and memorabilia.

WINDMILL FARM

Visit Windmill Farm, a drive-thru museum on 26-acres displaying 37 loving preserved distinctive vintage windmills. The rustic remnants at the museum—samples of windmills manufactured by some three dozen of 700 companies in business between 1854 and 1920—survived the great scrap-metal drives of both world wars.

WACO—

HOMESTEAD HERITAGE

Driving into Waco, stop at [Homestead Heritage](#), located off 1-35. At

this 510-acre homesteading community, residents live and work in a traditional manner. Visitors are welcome to watch as they create quilts, furniture and pottery in the crafts center, grind wheat in the 19th-century gristmill, and work the ranch and farm. There's even a deli/bakery serving lunch items and baked goods, all homemade using ingredients from the farm; grab some pies or pastries for a snack.

DOWNTOWN RIVERWALK

Enjoy a stroll along the downtown parts of the [Riverwalk](#), a seven-mile, sculpture-lined, lighted path that runs along both banks of the Brazos River, connecting the Baylor Campus with Cameron Park. The path winds under the historic Suspension Bridge, so take a detour and cross the structure, built in 1870 as part of the Chisholm Trail Crossing. You'll find Indian Springs Park on the bridge's west side, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Park on the east.

GEORGE'S (food)

Enjoy a casual dinner at [George's](#), a mainstay for chicken-fried steak and free-flowing brews since the 1930s. Despite the college vibe, the place caters to everyone with its menu of Tex-Mex classics, steaks, stuffed baked potatoes, and creatively-topped burgers; save room for homemade key lime pie or fruit cobbler.

CAMERON PARK ZOO (food+)

Drive out to [Cameron Park Zoo](#) for a light breakfast in the Plaza or Treetop Cafe, followed by a visit of this excellent attraction. Set on 52 acres along the Brazos, in the midst of the 416-acre Cameron Park, the zoo — named one of the best in the U.S. by Wildlife Conservation Magazine — specializes in re-creating natural habitats for all its creatures. Spy elephants, rhinos, and giraffes in the African Savannah, primates on Gibbon Island, and Komodo dragons and orangutans in the Asian Forest; kids can even slide on a glass tube through the otter habitat.

WACO MAMMOTH SITE

After looking at today's wildlife, learn about their ancestors. In 1979, a large mammoth bone was discovered in a ravine near the Bosque River, setting off 30 years of excavation work. The [Waco Mammoth Site](#), opened in 2009, details all the exciting discoveries in the area,

including evidence of the largest-known concentration of Pleistocene mammoths dying from the same event, and the only recorded discovery of a nursery herd. Walk along bridges in the dig shelter to spot the giant remains below.

UNCLE DAN'S (food)

Head back into the town center for lunch at [Uncle Dan's](#), a local haunt that's been serving "barbecue as tender as a mother's love" since 1978. Dine on brisket, smoked ribs, and catfish, along with sides like mac-n-cheese, mashed taters, and four kinds of beans. Burgers and sandwiches are also on the menu, along with salads, cobblers, and pies.

MAYBORN MUSEUM / BAYLOR UNIVERSITY

Head to the [Baylor University](#) campus for your next three stops. First up: The [Mayborn Museum](#) complex, a family favorite for its interactive exhibits. The main building features sections on natural history, from prehistoric times to the Native American and pioneer eras, plus 16 hands-on Discover Rooms (don't miss walking through a giant model of the human heart.) Outside, there's a Historic Village with 15 original wood frame structures from the region. Tip: The museum offers cell phone audio tours for certain sections; ask for details at the front desk.

TEXAS SPORTS HALL OF FAME / BAYLOR UNIVERSITY

Next, stop into the nearby [Texas Sports Hall of Fame](#), a tribute to local teams and distinguished athletes at the high school, college, and professional levels. Watch replays of classic moves in the Tom Landry Theater, browse photos and memorabilia, learn famous fight songs, and trace the evolution of the tennis racket. The museum is divided into three sections: the Texas High School Football Hall of Fame, Texas Tennis Hall of Fame, and Texas Sports Hall of Fame, honoring professional athletes (it's the first of its kind in the U.S.).

TEXAS RANGER HALL OF FAME & MUSEUM / BAYLOR UNIVERSITY

The last stop is the [Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum](#), an

interesting homage to the state's oldest law enforcement agency, which is tasked with solving difficult crimes and tracking down fugitives. The various exhibits detail Ranger history, showcase their signature boots and badges, display police equipment through the ages, spotlight women in the Rangers, and give you insight on famous Ranger cases, such as the capture of Bonnie and Clyde. Of course, the hat from Walker, Texas Ranger is also featured in the movie and TV memorabilia room.

SERGIO'S (food)

Dive into a Tex-Mex feast at [Sergio's](#). Formerly known as El Siete Mares (and a favorite with the White House staff and press corps during George W. Bush's presidency), the noted eatery serves Veracruz-style seafood dishes, from octopus marinated in lime and white wine to crab-stuffed avocados, plus favorites like marinated pork tacos; it all starts off with chips and Sergio's famous homemade yellow salsa.

ELITE CIRCLE GRILLE (food)

Legend has it that when Private Elvis Presley was stationed at nearby Fort Hood, he would often stop in for a meal at the [Elite Circle Grille](#), a Waco mainstay first opened in 1919 (known as the first restaurant in town to have refrigeration and air conditioning). Start the day with a late-ish brunch of salads, burgers, chicken sandwiches, Shiner Bock beer-battered onion rings, and signature Dr. Pepper wings.

DR. PEPPER MUSEUM

No trip to Waco is complete without a visit to the [Dr. Pepper Museum](#). Texas' favorite soda (and the oldest major soft drink in the country) was created in Waco in 1885, by Dr. Charles Alderton. The 1906 bottling plant now houses the museum; inside you'll find a celebration of all things soda, with tons of memorabilia, vintage commercials, workshops for kids — and, of course, a gift shop and classic soda fountain.

SPICE VILLAGE (food+)

Stop at [Spice Village](#) to pick up a Waco souvenir. Set in a century-old former hardware store in downtown Waco, this retail collective features dozens of stalls peddling a variety of products, from exotic spices and stylish home decor pieces to handcrafted cowboy boots, custom artwork, and women's accessories. There's a restaurant on

the ground floor.