

HIT THE ROAD

ADD THESE QUIRKY STOPS TO YOUR SUMMER ROAD TRIP

By Cindy Brzostowski



PHOTOGRAPHY BY BEN SHANKS; OPPOSITE PAGE: COURTESY OF THE DINOSAUR PARK;
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What's a road trip without some unusual pit stops along the way? Rather than only breaking up long hours on the highway with the necessary coffee and bathroom breaks, taking a quick detour to a quirky attraction or two can make for a much more memorable drive. As you depart Austin for your intended destination this summer, see if you can squeeze in a visit to one of these unique spots.

SAY HELLO TO A SUPERSTAR SQUIRREL

Drive down Highway 71 toward Bastrop and you won't be able to miss Berdoll Pecan Candy & Gift Company. All you have to do is look for the giant squirrel statue! Ms. Pearl, as she's called, stands at 14 feet tall and has been attracting curious travelers since 2011.

Come take your picture with the Texas landmark, and then pop into the shop to sample Berdoll's famous pecan pies and candies. If the store is closed when you swing by, you can still sample their treats thanks to a 24-hour pecan pie vending machine.

2626 TX-71 / Cedar Creek, TX
berdolldpecanfarm.com



PRETEND YOU'RE IN PREHISTORIC TIMES

Sure, you could check out some dinosaur fossils or skeletons in a museum—or, you can walk among realistic, life-size dinosaur statues in a natural environment. The Dinosaur Park in Cedar Creek is a family-friendly outdoor museum that seeks to offer visitors a better understanding of what dinosaurs were like when they were alive.

Walking along the park's trail, you'll come across various dinosaur replicas with scientifically correct sizes and features, from the chicken-sized Compsognathus to the 123-foot-long Diplodocus. Yes, there's a T. rex here too! Along with the statuary, the Dinosaur Park has a fossil dig and playground.

893 Union Chapel Road / Cedar Creek, TX
thedinopark.com



SEE A TEXAS VERSION OF A GLOBAL ATTRACTION

You may not be able to visit the real-deal Stonehenge in England right now, but did you know there's a Stonehenge II just past Kerrville? This version of the megalithic circle is 90 percent of the height and 60 percent of the width of the original.

The origins of this Stonehenge are better known than that one across the pond. This one was created as an art project by the late Al Shepperd and his neighbor Doug Hill more than two decades ago before it was moved to the Hill >>



Country Arts Foundation campus. It's free to visit and open from dawn to dusk. While you're there, keep an eye out for the two replica Moai (Easter Island heads) also at the site.

120 Point Theatre Road S. / Ingram, TX
hcaf.com/stonehenge-ii

GO WILD AT AN EXOTIC ANIMAL ZOO

The Animal World & Snake Farm Zoo in New Braunfels is home to more than 500 different animals—from exotic mammals to plenty of snakes and reptiles. Some of the most exotic inhabitants are the white lions, lemurs, jaguars, fennec foxes, a Burmese python, and a black mamba.

Particularly avid animal lovers might want to book an animal encounter with the “animal ambassador” of their choosing, facilitated by a zookeeper. Whether you can hold the animal depends on the “ambassador” you choose. Keep an eye on the zoo’s calendar for other visitor events and photo opportunities.

5640 IH 35 S. / New Braunfels, TX
awsfzoo.com

SEARCH FOR THOUSANDS OF HIPPOS

Hutto's mascot is probably not the animal you'd expect. Calling itself the “Hippo Capital of Texas,” Hutto claims to

be the only community in the country with the hippo as its mascot. There are said to be 3,000 concrete hippos around town, each one painted in a unique style. The heavyweight champion is 14,000-pound Henrietta, who moved in (who's going to stop her?) in 1982 at a spot near the town's Chamber of Commerce office.

While the origins of this hippo obsession are still shrouded in a bit of mystery, one popular local legend tells of a time a hippo got loose during a circus train's layover.

East Street / Hutto, TX
ihutto.com/huttohippos

ADMIRE THE WORLD'S LARGEST COWBOY BOOTS

If your road trip brings you down to San Antonio, take a detour to North Star Mall to see the World's Largest Cowboy Boots. Originally displayed near the White House, these 35-foot-tall concrete boots have been standing tall at the mall for just over 40 years.

The iconic boots were made by Bob “Daddy-O” Wade, a Texas artist famous for his giant, whimsical sculptures. In 2014, the *Guinness Book of World Records* recognized it as the “largest cowboy boot sculpture.”

60 Northwest Loop 410, #18 / San Antonio, TX
roadsideamerica.com/story/7815