

A painting of two people from behind, a woman with red hair and a man with dark hair, looking up at a large, ornate maroon sign hanging from a blue wooden structure. The sign has gold trim and reads "SMALL TOWN CHARM" in large letters, with "8" in the center of a decorative oval. Below that, it says "HILL COUNTRY DESTINATIONS WHERE WE LOVE TO SHOP, EAT & PLAY".

# SMALL TOWN CHARM

8

## HILL COUNTRY — DESTINATIONS — WHERE WE LOVE TO

### SHOP, EAT & PLAY

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# Dripping Springs

EAT, DRINK AND ENJOY NATURE WHETHER YOU'RE VISITING FOR A FEW HOURS OR A FEW DAYS



74 MILES  
from downtown



Hamilton Pool  
and Preserve

6 HOURS

For a Dripping Springs day trip, there's no better place to start than **Hamilton Pool and Preserve**. This Central Texas gem offers a 50-foot waterfall, picnic areas, hiking trails and a wide variety of rare birds and plants. The natural pool's water levels remain consistent, but visitors are advised to call the public information line, as it occasionally closes and swimming is sometimes restricted.

After you've taken a dip, enjoy the frosty provisions of **Twisted X Brewing Co.** Their tasting room brings out small batches of limited edition and seasonal craft brews every Thursday through Sunday, with brewery tours on Saturdays and Sundays.

Finally, before you've tapped out your time there, put a cap on the day with dinner at **Proof & Cooper**, the Hill Country lovechild of the Austin talents behind The Blackheart and Little Barrel and Brown. Enjoy upscale picnic foods (think Frito pie and fried chicken) and artisanal cocktails.

**EAT** Hamilton Pool and Preserve, 24300 Hamilton Pool Road, parks.traviscountytexas.gov

**EAT** Proof & Cooper, 18710 Hamilton Pool Road, proofandcooper.com

**DRINK** Twisted X Brewing Co., 23455 W. Ranch Road 150, twistedxbrewing.com

Treaty Oak  
Distillery



24 HOURS

If you have more time to spend in the Springs, there are plenty of libations to discover. On your way into town, stop by **Deep Eddy Vodka Distillery**, where their 500-square-foot tasting room offers tours, tastings and food trucks—to balance things out, of course.

Keep the fun flowing at **Treaty Oak Distillery**, which relocated to the Hill Country in early 2015. Kids can explore the play area while adults can sample the on-tap cocktails or enjoy the onsite food trailer that serves creative comfort food to satisfy your tipsy cravings.

If you can stand another sip, have your designated driver get you to **Barber Shop Bar**, located in a former garage-turned-barber shop in the heart of downtown specializing in a well-curated selection of local beers and wines as well as national and international brews.

Afterward, mosey on down to dance the night away at **Mercer Street Dance Hall**—a fine spot for some good old fashioned Texas two-steppin', courtesy of honky-tonk mainstays like Asleep at the Wheel (on stage Feb. 4).

After a good night's sleep, swing by local coffee roaster **Mazama Coffee Co.**, which offers an idyllic locale to sip your morning brew or munch on a house-made baked good before the journey back home.

**DRINK** Deep Eddy Vodka Distillery, 2250 E. Hwy. 290, deepedyvodka.com; Treaty Oak Distilling, 16604 Fitzhugh Road, treatyoakdistilling.com; Barber Shop Bar, 207 W. Mercer St., barbershopbar.com; Mazama Coffee Co., 301-B Mercer St., mazamacoffee.com

**DO** Mercer Street Dance Hall, 332 Mercer St., mercerstreetdancehall.com

## PHOTO OP

Memorialize your Hill Country travels with must-snap sights



### BLUEBONNET FIELD

It's not spring in the Hill Country without a bluebonnet photo. Visiting a bright blue and purple field of the flowers is a must-see natural Hill Country wonder. Though Burnet is the bluebonnet capital, several fields that bloom big sit along Highway 46 between New Braunfels and Seguin.





Westcave Outdoor  
Discovery Center

**36 HOURS**

With more time on your hands, you can really refine your palate at some of Dripping Springs' finest wineries. And thanks to the tours from **Discover Texas Wine Trail**, you can try them all without getting behind the wheel. With nine wineries, three distilleries and four breweries in the Dripping Springs area, there is a wealth of options to choose from, so pick your favorites and book a tour to get you to and fro.

Since charcuterie and wine go hand-in-hand, stop by the **Texas Hill Country Olive Co.** for a tour of their orchard and some savory bites at their onsite bistro.

After your day of touring and tasting, the folks at **Creek Road Café** will be happy to help your hunger. Serving fresh, high-end fare, their specialty is seafood—think fresh oysters, scallops galore and plenty of Gulf shrimp.

On day two, start things off with some French breakfast at **Crêpe Crazy**, with both sweet and savory options to suit your fancy.

After you've enjoyed your morning meal, grab some gifts at **New Canaan Farms**—specializing in jellies, jams and salsas with a local flair.

Then head out to **Westcave Outdoor Discovery Center**, where weekend visitors can enjoy guided canyon tours that take them through arid savannas to limestone caves. Hikers can get their fix on the **Uplands Trail**—with wildlife and bird watching aplenty. And for the stargazers, the monthly star parties provide an opportunity to gaze at the night sky through a high-quality telescope.

Finally, stop for sustenance at **Rolling in Thyme and Dough**, where Thursday Bistro nights (starting back up in mid-February) offer a delicious meal with a soundtrack of local live music. They also offer sandwiches that make for a perfect lunch.—MFK

**DO** Discover Texas Wine Trail, [discovertexaswine.com](http://discovertexaswine.com); Texas Hill Country Olive Co., 2530 W. Fitzhugh Road, [texashillcountryoliveco.com](http://texashillcountryoliveco.com); Westcave Outdoor Discovery Center, 24814 Hamilton Pool Road, Round Mountain, [westcave.org](http://westcave.org)

**EAT** Creek Road Café, 301 W. Hwy. 290, [creekroadcafe.com](http://creekroadcafe.com); Crêpe Crazy, 660-B W. Hwy. 290, [crepecrazy.com](http://crepecrazy.com); Rolling in Thyme and Dough, 333 W. Hwy. 290, [thymeanddough.com](http://thymeanddough.com)

**SHOP** New Canaan Farms, 5916 W. Hwy. 290, [newcanaanfarms.com](http://newcanaanfarms.com)



(From top)  
Little Gretel  
in Boerne;  
Comfort  
Pizza in  
Comfort;  
814 A Texas  
Bistro in  
Comfort



WESTCAVE: PAUL S. WOLF/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM; LITTLE GRETTEL: VERONICA MAZAL BROWN; COMFORT PIZZA: COURTESY; COMFORT PIZZA: PORK BELLY: COURTESY; 814 A TEXAS BISTRO COURTESY

# Boerne

TASTE THE  
HILL COUNTRY

WHERE TO EAT IN THE H.C.  
BY SAM'S RESIDENT  
FOODIE, JULIA CELESTE

CABERNET GRILL  
FREDERICKSBURG

"Chef-driven, an all-Texas wine list and off the main tourist drag"

OLD 300 BBQ  
BLANCO

"What you want in a town like this and close to the square and courthouse"

LITTLE GRETTEL  
BOERNE

"The kolaches are legendary."

BOBBY J'S BURGERS  
HELOTES

"I love their burgers. Big and messy."

COWBOY STEAK HOUSE  
KERRVILLE

"I remember going there almost 30 years ago, and it's still a classic, family-run Texas steakhouse doing a good job."

814 A TEXAS BISTRO  
COMFORT

"Upscale goodness in a cool setting, and it seems to be overlooked."

COMFORT PIZZA  
COMFORT

"Deliciously gourmet and so artisanal and popular that they frequently run out of dough."

FIND TREASURES ALONG SOUTH  
MAIN STREET'S SHOPS AND BOUTIQUES



31 MILES  
from downtown

**1 CAROUSEL ANTIQUES & FICKLE PICKLES**

Though this shop does sell antiques from a few vendors, the real prize is the pickles. Sample original or extra spicy varieties from a bowl upon entering and peruse the vintage offerings. Love the pickles? Fickle Pickles ships them nationwide in various sizes from their shop or online. 118 S. Main St., [ficklepickles.com](http://ficklepickles.com)

**2 BOUTIQUE CHLOE ROSE**

The popular New Braunfels women's clothing shop now has a Boerne location in a beautiful old building complete with a 1908-original tin-tiled ceiling. The stylish shop carries trendy clothing, shoes, accessories and beauty products with a low price tag. 136 S. Main St., [boutiquechloerose.com](http://boutiquechloerose.com)

**3 CELESTE**

Run by ladies local to Boerne, the friendly staff is happy to help guests find the perfect look or gift from their extensive selection of upscale clothing, shoes, jewelry and more. Shop offerings from well-known brands like Sam Edelman and Silver Jeans or discover a small-scale designer. 140 S. Main St., [shopcelestetx.com](http://shopcelestetx.com)

**4 BOERNE EPICURE GOURMET MARKET**

The kitchen-conscious can find their happy place at this epicurean market, the area's go-to for small-batch fine foods, cookbooks and foodie-friendly gifts. Be on the lookout for San Antonio-based favorites like Humble House and others. The market also serves a delicious lunch menu. 210 S. Main St., [boerneepicure.com](http://boerneepicure.com)



**5 FLASHBACK FUNTIQUES**

Unlike the other antique stores in Boerne, this shop sells a curated selection of fun and eclectic items from the 20th century. Instead of tufted settees, think colorful neon signs, Texas beer memorabilia and pinball machines. And even if you don't plan on purchasing anything, you'll have fun touring the zany offerings. 248 S. Main St.

**6 THE BOERNE WINE CO.**

Whether you're a wine aficionado or a vino novice, head to this shop for some wine-fueled fun. Sip generous samples in their barrel-ceilinged tasting room and then shop for wine and wine accessories. 302 S. Main St., [boernewinecompany.com](http://boernewinecompany.com)

**7 DAISY PEARL  
BOUTIQUE & GIFTS**

Consider yourself a Southwest bohemian? Dress the part with eclectic dresses, funky jewelry and shoes from this boutique's selection of designers that includes Free People, Joie and Laundry. 322 S. Main St., [daisypearlboutique.com](http://daisypearlboutique.com)

**8 BILLY'S WESTERN WEAR**

Opened in 1980, this classic store is the stuff of Texas Hill Country legend. Shoppers searching for the perfect pair of boots can peruse from over 40 manufacturers of unique and classic designs. 1490 S. Main St., [billyswesternwear.com](http://billyswesternwear.com) —MFK

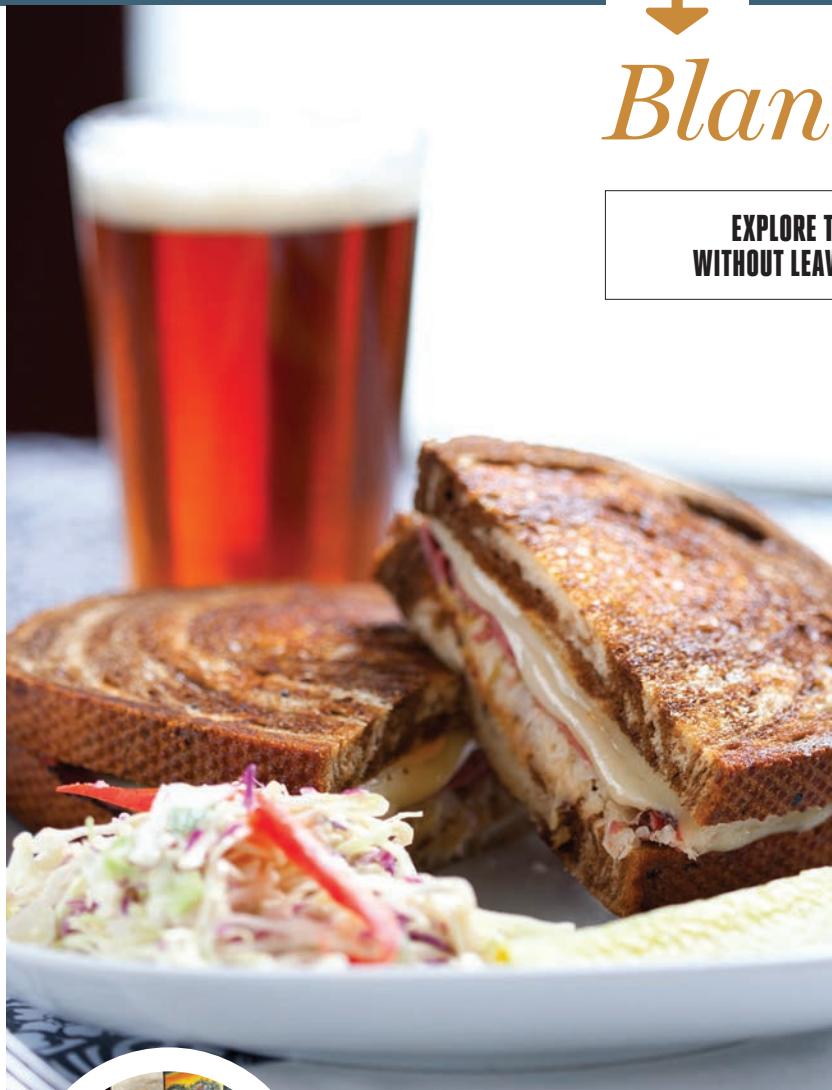


# Blanco

**EXPLORE THIS TINY TREASURE  
WITHOUT LEAVING THE TOWN SQUARE**



**50 MILES**  
from downtown



(From top) Reuben sandwich at Redbud Cafe; products on the shelf at Liz on the Square; the Old Blanco County Courthouse

## BLANCO'S REDBUD CAFE

Serving food made daily with fresh, local ingredients, this spot is an artistic local mainstay. They proudly pour locally made Real Ale, including the seasonal brews, which are often difficult to find. Swing by on Friday or Saturday for dinner served to the tune of live local music. 410 4th St., [redbud-cafe.com](http://redbud-cafe.com)

## LIZ ON THE SQUARE

If you're hunting for gifts with local flavor, this boutique will set you up for success. In addition to Texas-made curios and apparel, the shop also boasts a huge selection of products and foods made with Blanco's Miller Creek lavender. And for the road warriors in your midst, motorcycle leathers are all the rage here. 405-A 3rd St., [lizonthesquare.com](http://lizonthesquare.com)

## THE OLD BLANCO COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Right in the middle of Blanco's town square, you'll find the famous courthouse, a historic landmark that captures the town's quaint charm to a T but actually isn't a courthouse. It housed the county's courts for just four years during the late 1880s before the county seat was moved to Johnson City. It has since served many different uses, including as a bank, a newsroom, a hospital, a museum and now the Blanco Visitor Center, an event venue and sometimes a film set (rewatch 2010's *True Grit* after your visit and see if anything looks familiar). 300 Main St., [historicblanco.org](http://historicblanco.org)

## BLANCO BOWLING CLUB CAFE

Originally built in 1947, the Blanco Bowling Club Cafe preserves a bygone pastime by offering nine-pin bowling, a traditional Texas German game that only exists in a handful of alleys nationwide (mostly in Central Texas). Bowling is offered Monday through Thursday for members (membership dues are just \$12), or by reservation on Saturday. After you work up an appetite on the lanes, enjoy comfort food staples like fried catfish and chicken fried steak. 310 4th St., [blancobowlingclub.com](http://blancobowlingclub.com)

## RAIN BIRD GALLERY

Housed in a former Baptist Church built in 1903, this gallery is the area's go-to for rustic furniture, art and antiques. With a roster including many artists known both locally and internationally, it's the perfect place to find one-of-a-kind collectibles, décor and hand-crafted gifts. 103 Main St., [rainbirdgalleryonline.com](http://rainbirdgalleryonline.com)

## BRIEGER POTTERY

After selling their pottery nationwide, Jan and Jon Brieger decided to keep things close to home and opened shop on Blanco's town square in 1992. The duo employs different methods (a potter's wheel and slab, respectively) to craft their work, which is then coated with hand-mixed glazes and fired in an 80-foot kiln. The shop also sells many beauty products from the Hill Country Lavender line. 408 4th St., [briegerpottery.com](http://briegerpottery.com)—MFK