
Stop 12. San Antonio

Arrival datetime: Wednesday, April 17, 3:30PM
Sites visited: Galveston Island State Park, The Alamo, The Riverwalk, Mission San Jose
Accommodations: La Mansion Del Rio
States traveled: Texas

On the way out of town, we stopped to get the car washed. We had to pay extra for front-end “debugging.” Nothing to do with the onboard computer, but literally, taking the bugs out of the grill. Cattle ranches were again the primary drive time scenery. We had had a late breakfast in Galveston, so did not stop for lunch, but arrived in San Antonio in time to stroll the Riverwalk before dinner.

The San Antonio River at the Riverwalk was very narrow, perhaps 20 feet across. A promenade sometimes less than 5 feet across on each side seemed individually decorated by the restaurants and other tourist buildings on the waterfront. Most decorations were elaborate gardens, some with waterfalls. Some were statues or mosaics. Each had a corresponding sidewalk. One might be cobblestone, the next a slate tile, the next, a series of stones laid in a path with water where the concrete or grout should be connecting them.

We had dressed for dinner and Jennifer was wearing heels on the uneven rocky surfaces. We abandoned the walk for a riverboat tour. The guide pointed out all the important buildings along the river. He told us how portions of the Riverwalk

were actually along canals built solely for the purpose of extending the touristy atmosphere to buildings intended to be frequented by out-of-towners, for example, the convention center.

Dinner at our hotel demonstrated for us the laid back perfection of our southwestern chef. The plantain and shrimp appetizer was a bouquet of assorted sugars and spices. The grouper was both moist and fluffy, and served with vegetables and sauces that enhanced the delicate flavor. Only the chocolate mouse was disappointing, but we should have known better than to order it so far from France.

The Alamo was set tastefully among spring flowers and native plants ranging from oak to cactus. We saw a short film and museum in the Daughters of the Texas Revolution visitor’s center. Jennifer had just read “Lies My Teacher Told Me,” so we were prepared to be critical of the way the events were embellished or interpreted. Yet even the simple facts that are uncontroversial brought tears to our eyes. We could picture the ailing Bowie, laying prostrate from pneumonia while the younger men fought against impossible odds, knowing their lives would end before the day was

The San Antonio River at the Riverwalk.



out. The two standing buildings into which they had at last retreated and perished were packed with personal details about the individuals who died there.

From the Alamo, we took a bus tour of various other historic and shopping sites. We had lunch at the top of the Tower of the Americas. We had remembered to bring the binoculars and were able to pick out both the Alamo and our hotel. The tour included the Mission San Jose, otherwise we would have missed the National Park Service Visitors center we



Jennifer at the Alamo.

had been looking for at the Alamo. Apparently, there is just one visitor center



Mission San Jose.

for the five missions in San Antonio, and, though the Alamo was one of them, it is located and the San Jose Mission.

A film there told the story of the Franciscan monks bringing modern agricultural techniques to war-weary tribes of hunter-gatherers. The mission was very well preserved, a courtyard of lush grass and oak trees was surrounded by stone walls that formed long narrow rooms offering displays of artifacts and instructional materials. The Catholic church that formed the far end of the wall was functional and appropriately decorated. The chime of the bell in the tower was pleasing.

We shopped at Market Square and again back in the neighborhood of our hotel. Michael packaged up some historical

wooden toys and baby clothes for his grandchildren and shipped them off. Michael has two sons from a previous marriage, and eight grandchildren, five that are genetically his, two through a son's wife's previous marriage, and one through adoption. It is always somebody's birthday, but in addition, Michael wanted to keep in touch with the children throughout our travels. Postcards and the web page did not seem enough. Sending gifts that evoked questions about the places from which they came seemed like a good idea. We envisioned the families opening the gifts and being provoked into a discussion of the history of Texas.

Jennifer bought a pen in the shape of an Alamo-style rifle and sent it to her boss with a note that it should help him "hold the fort until her return." Dinner was another Riverwalk extravaganza, this time at Landry's Seafood house. We sat on the balcony and for a while thought the wind would force us to retreat indoors. This time we skipped desert. We had bought fruit-filled Mexican Pastries at Mi Tierra, but when we got back to the hotel, we were too tired to eat them. We instead had them for breakfast with coffee in our hotel room.

Miles traveled: 287
Departure datetime: Friday, April 19, 9:00AM
Departure weather: 77° Cloudy, Humid°