



[Photo by Robert Mihovil](#)

The Carnival cruise ship Ecstasy appears to loom over downtown Galveston from the port.

Discover isle treasures before your cruise sails

[By Sue Mayfield Geiger](#)

Correspondent

Published October 30, 2011

With five new cruise ships arriving on the island between now and next year, more travelers will be yearning to get their sea legs. But before you say “ahoy,” there are places to stay, people to meet, music to hear, art to view and historical sites to broaden your horizons.

For cruisers who arrive on the island early and spend the night before their voyage, there’s plenty to do, including a stroll along The Strand Historic District downtown or a carriage ride with views of breathtaking architecture.

Want Gulf of Mexico views? Forget to pack something? Visit the hundreds of unique shops downtown and across the island. Here’s a cruiser’s guide to Galveston:

Where to stay

Both The Tremont House and Harbour House at Pier 21 downtown are hotels within walking distance of the Texas Cruise Ship Terminal.

The Hotel Galvez and San Luis Resort — luxury hotels on the seawall — offer free parking for cruise passengers, including a free shuttle to and from the terminal. But many other properties, including Moody Gardens Hotel on the island’s West End, offer parking and shuttle rides. To find the right property for you, visit www.galveston.com/lodging/

Want a look inside some historic island homes?

Try the many Bed & Breakfast accommodations offered on the island. To choose one, visit www.galvestonbedandbreakfast.com.

Art galleries



Galveston is home to a thriving arts scene with numerous galleries to explore. The best way to see them is to meander the streets of the island's downtown. But don't miss out on galleries off the beaten path. Visit www.galveston.com/artgalleries for a helpful list.

If you time your trip just right, you can take advantage of ArtWalk, which lures hundreds of locals and visitors to galleries every six weeks on a Saturday evening. The next ArtWalk is Nov. 26.

Antique shops

From nautical to Victorian, antiquing is a great way to see island treasures of the past.

The Galveston Antique Dealers' Association can help you find the perfect shop. Visit www.piecesofship.com/antiquegalveston.html

Carriage rides

A horse drawn carriage ride is a relaxing and romantic way to enjoy the streets of downtown, the Victorian homes on the island's East End District, a ride through downtown or a grand tour of the island.

For information, call Island Carriages, 409-765-6951 or Seahorse & Classic Carriage Cos., 409-925-3312.

Museums and tours

The Galveston Railroad Museum is located at 123 25th St. and a good place to start your walking tour of historic Galveston.

Pier 21 Theater, 2100 Harborside Drive, features "The Great Storm" documentary daily every hour on the hour except Tuesdays. The film depicts the personal stories of survivors and the recovery of Galveston following the 1900 storm. "The Pirate Island of Jean Lafitte" also is shown every hour on the half-hour.

The Texas Seaport Museum, 1877 Tall Ship Elissa, Ocean Star Offshore Drilling Rig and Museum, and dolphin tours are not to be missed. All are at Pier 21.



One of the newest attractions is Haunted Mayfield Manor in the 1885 Butterowe Building off Saengerfest Park (23rd Street and The Strand). The 12-room haunted mansion is open year-round and themed around the fictional Dr. Horace Mayfield, who supervised the operation of one of the morgues following the 1900 Storm, which still is the deadliest natural disaster in U.S. history. Pirates! Legends on the Gulf Coast, also is expected to open this month in the same building.

Tree art



The Galveston Tree Sculptures are a display of art transformed from tragedy. After thousands of beloved trees were lost to Hurricane Ike in 2008, artists sculpted tree stumps into mermaids, angels and other art forms in East End neighborhoods. To download a map, visit www.galveston.com/treesculptures.

Fun Stuff

Moody Gardens features one of the largest aquariums in the country and a tropical Rainforest Pyramid with free-roaming animals and more than 1,000 different endangered plant species. Schlitterbahn Waterpark is right next door.

If you are yearning to take a ride in a World War II plane, the Lone Star Flight Museum has just what you need. From B-17s to Stearmans, grab your goggles and get ready for takeoff on Nov. 12-16. Or just tour the facility and enjoy the collection of aircraft.

Shopping



KEVIN M. COX/The Daily News

The Strand Historic District offers a variety of specialty stores offering everything from taffy to French lace. Many places will be happy to ship your purchases for you while you're on your cruise.



For an old-fashioned trip to the candy store featuring a working 1920s soda fountain, visit LaKing's Confectionery, 2323 Strand.

For a guide to more shops, visit www.thestrand.com/shoppinwith quaint coffee shops, galleries, and eateries. Visit www.galveston.com/postofficestreettour/

Entertainment

The Grand 1894 Opera House is one of the few remaining theatres of its era in Texas and its opulent décor is a showstopper.

November's lineup includes "The Wizard of Oz," "South Pacific," the Galveston Symphony, and songstress Marilyn Maye. Visit www.thegrand.com. Photo Kevin Fox

Dining

Whether on the harbor, in quaint neighborhoods and along the seawall, dining on the island comes with some beautiful views.

Visit www.galveston.com/cuisine to find what you're hungry for.

Resource guides and maps

www.thestrand.com

www.galvestonhistory.org

www.galveston.com, or call 1-888-425-4753

Galveston Island Visitor Information Center, 409-797-5144