

Heritage Tours of Harris County and Houston

Compiled by Will Howard, Member, Harris County Historical Commission, October 2011

These 100 tour providers offer over 200 tours. The tours range from free to ticketed events, from walking to driving to online tours, from general tours of Houston to specific neighborhoods, religious centers, buildings, and themes. Some require reservations. Some providers are historical organizations, institutions, individuals, and commercial companies.

The providers are categorized and simply annotated. A bibliography is attached. Please let us know of other tours that you know are available.

Inventory Topic Categories

Open the “Bookmarks” on the left, or click the boxes below.

Architectural Interests	Historical Organizations
Art Interests	Natural Interests
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Downtown Telephone – Audio Tours	Stadiums
Energy Interests	Special Interests
Food and Drink Interests	Bibliography
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Architectural Interests

Top

Architecture Center of Houston / Houston AIA

713-520-0155 COST

Walking tours of Montrose neighborhood, Buffalo Bayou, and Museum District

<http://www.aiahouston.org/events.cfm>

Heritage Society at Sam Houston Park

1100 Bagby Street Houston, Texas 77002 713.655.1912

Various tours for adults and children (several grade levels and scouting programs) COST

<http://www.heritagesociety.org/schoolscouttours.html>

Candlelight Tour in December COST

Telephone tour of Sam Houston Park Architecture @ 713 568 9190 – Subsequently press numbers 1 – 9 for individual audio commentary regarding (1) Kellum-Noble Home, (2) 4th Ward Cottage, (3) Nichols-Rice-Cherry Home, (4) Old Place, (5) St. John Church, (6) Jack Yates

Home, (7) Staiti Home (8) San Felipe Cottage, (9) Pillot House. This telephone tour can be used in conjunction with photos at <http://www.heritagesociety.org/historicstructures.html>

Houston Mod

Annual Moderne buildings tour in April, occasional special tours of neighborhoods and threatened buildings - Website allows searching by neighborhood which is quite adaptable to designing tours. COST

<http://houstonmod.org/>

Rice Design Alliance

Annual architectural tour on a particular topic, also provides a variety of occasional tours of buildings, sites, and neighborhoods, about a dozen of which are summarized online COST

<http://ricedesigalliance.org/category/architecture-tour>

Greater Houston Preservation Alliance

712 Main Street #110 Houston, TX 77002 (713) 216-5000

Monthly walking tours and provides, as arranged, 3 dozen tours of buildings, sites, and neighborhoods COST

<http://www.ghpa.org/tours>

Arts Interests and Institutions

Top

Art Crawl

Annual opening of art studios and galleries in the Downtown warehouse district on the Saturday before Thanksgiving – brochure available FREE

<http://www.artcrawlhouston.com/>

Art Houston / Art Scene

Annual July opening of about 30 major art galleries - Participating galleries in the Colquitt, Museum, Heights districts, and other areas. Brochure available. FREE

http://www.arthouston.com/ArtHouston_2010/Home.html

Art On The Avenue

Winter Street Studios 2101 Winter Street Houston, TX 77007 - FREE

A fall evening, usually November, with more than 200 Texas artists

<http://avenuecdc.org/art-on-the-avenue/>

GPS My City Houston Online Virtual Walking Tour

An online service where writers create virtual, printed tours, downloadable at a modest cost. The Houston connection has about a dozen brief topical tours.

<http://www.gpsmycity.com/iphone/houston-walking-tours-23.html>

John Biggers Murals Virtual Tour

Murals at several locations

<http://atlantis.coe.uh.edu/biggers/virttour1.htm>

Houston Museum District

Museum Day - Annually in September, openings of Museum District museums - free buses circulate. FREE

<http://www.houstonmuseumdistrict.org/>

Museum of Fine Arts, Central Campus

1001 Bissonnet Houston, TX 77005 713-639-7300 COST

Gallery Talks are offered daily. Self-Guided Group Visits and Custom Group Tours can be arranged.

<http://www.mfah.org/customtours> <http://www.mfah.org/groups>

Museum of Fine Arts, Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens

1 Westcott St @ Memorial Drive Houston, TX 77007 (713) 639-7300

Home and Gardens are separate tours. Group tours can be arranged. COST

<http://mfah.org/visit/bayou-bend-visitor-info>

Museum of Fine Arts, Rienzi Center for European Decorative Arts

Home tours by regular schedule and garden tour by self-guiding.

1406 Kirby Drive Houston, Texas 77019 713.639.7800 COST

<http://mfah.org/visit/visiting-rienzi>

UH Campus Art Collection – Online Virtual Tour

Eight media are separately collected and location on campus is given. Numerous examples in each category

<http://www.advancement.uh.edu/arttour/>

Arts - Performing Arts Institutions
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Top

Alley Theatre

615 Texas Avenue Houston 77002 713.220.5700

Arrange a group tour COST

<http://www.alleytheatre.org>

Ensemble

3535 Main Street Houston, TX 77002 (713) 520-0055

Arrange group tours

<http://www.ensemblehouston.com/>

Hobby Center for the Performing Arts

800 Bagby Street, Ste. 300 Houston, TX 77002 713.315.2400

Three virtual tours, one general, one of the Sarofim Hall, and one of the Zilkha Hall – each with several photos and each of those with 360 degree views, all with narrative commentary

Arrange a group tour

<http://www.thehobbycenter.org/>

Jones Hall for the Performing Arts

615 Louisiana St # 101, Houston -

Short photo tour of work and public spaces

<http://www.houstontx.gov/joneshall/gallery.html>

Group tours arranged via 713-250-3654

<http://www.houstontx.gov/joneshall/index.htm>

Main Street Theater

2540 Times Blvd. Houston, TX 77005 713-524-3622

Arrange a group tour

<http://www.mainstreettheater.com/youththeater/touring.html>

Stages Repertory Theatre

3201 Allen Parkway Suite #101 Houston, TX 77019 (713) 527-0220

Group tours can be arranged

<http://www.stagestheatre.com/>

Wortham Theater Center

501 Texas / Houston, TX 77002 713.237.1439

Short photo tour of work and public spaces

<http://www.houstontx.gov/worthamcenter/gallery.html>

Group tours to be arranged

Colleges and Universities**Top****Houston Baptist University**

7502 Fondren Rd • Houston, TX 77074 • (281) 649-3000

Arrange a personal tour

http://www.hbu.edu/hbu/Arrange_a_Personal_Campus_Tour.asp?SnID=2

Bible Museum Online Tour

http://www.hbu.edu/hbu/Tour_of_Museum.asp?SnID=1423554721

Lone Star College

Each of the several campuses has a video tour.

<http://www.lonestar.edu/virtualtours.htm>

University of Houston

To schedule a guided tour visit this link.

<http://www.uh.edu/admissions/undergraduate/schedule-visit/>

To experience a virtual tour visit this link

<http://www.ecampustours.com/VirtualTours/default.aspx?FafsaCode=003652>

Self-guided Tour Packet (pdf)

<http://uh.edu/admissions/undergraduate/schedule-visit/SELF%20GUIDED%20TOUR%20PACKET%20ORIGINAL.pdf>

Rice University

Nine Virtual Tours, with map

<http://www.rice.edu/virtualtours/>

Rice's Fondren Library Video Tour

http://library.rice.edu/services/reference_assistance/workshops-classes

South Texas College of Law, Fred Parks Library Online Photo Tour

1303 San Jacinto Street, Houston, Texas 77002 · 713-659-8040

http://www.stcl.edu/library/photo_tour/index.htm

Texas Southern University

3100 Cleburne Street, Houston, TX 77004 713-313-7011

Virtual photographic tour online

<http://www.tsu.edu/pages/105.asp>

Commercial Touring Companies & Guides**Top****Emerson Arnold, Tour Guide**

Conducts tours via motor coaches and motorcycles. COST

936.894.3426 hm 713.417.2371 cell

Bayou City Tours

Specializes in guided walking tours of Downtown Houston COST

<http://www.bayoucitytours.com/>

Betty Bruno, Tour Guide

A specialist in African American aspects of Houston area COST

713.631.4454

Destination Houston Tours

912 Prairie Houston, TX 77002 713-227-8300

General Houston city tours, neighborhood tours, tunnels walks, rail tours COST

<http://www.destinationhou.com>

Discover Houston

Downtown walking tours is the specialty - Tunnel Walks, Rail Tours, Broomstick Adventures, Ghost Walks, and Downtown Holiday Walk COST

<http://www.discoverhoustontours.com/>

Lynn Gaines, Tour Guide

Specialist in Downtown, the Museum District, the Montrose area, Reliant Stadium, and walking tours COST

713.524.2381 hm 832.721.0597 cell

Andrew Groocock, Tour Guide

Specialist in art, architecture, and history COST
713.864.3875

Dot Honeycutt, Tour Guide

Specialist in historical tours of Downtown and neighborhoods - COST
281.398.0659 hm 713.582.2502 cell

Houston Global Solutions (formerly Roberto's Tours of Houston)

14207 Burgoyne St. Houston, Houston, TX 77077 (281) 558 – 5882
General Houston, shopping, and surrounding attractions – convention service
<http://www.houstongs.com/en/tours.html>

Houston Historical Tours

Houston 713 392 0867
About 50 diverse tours, general city tours (2-10 hours), theme tours, NASA, neighborhood tours, commercial and shopping tours, and about 50 out of town tours by locale and theme COST
<http://www.houstonhistoricaltours.com/>

Houston Tours

8915 Bellaire Blvd. Houston TX 77036 (713) 988-5900 (832) 630-9188
General Houston tour, Space Center, San Jacinto, Battleship, etc. COST
<http://www.houstontours.com/>

Michael R. Kees, Tour Guide

Specialist in the tunnels, downtown, Minute Maid, and general tours COST
Seabrook 281.474.1225

Moderne Metropolis Tours

Driving, walking, and rail tours – architecture, history, Downtown; Midtown; Medical Center; Hermann Park; Rice University; Reliant Stadium
713-680-1955 or 1-800-895-4667 Ask for a City Tour by town car with Michael Zargarov as your driver. COST
<http://www.zargarov.com/>

Lucette Rieger, Tour Guide

713.960.1239
Provides a variety of tours, with the strength of conversing in several languages COST

Texas Tour Connection

2303 Shane Road Richmond TX, 77469 713-826-6963
Tour emphasis - Texas History, Houston City, NASA, etc
<http://www.texastourconnection.com>

Texana Tours

Spring TX, 77393 - 281-772-9526

A general Houston tour & tours of NASA, San Jacinto Battleground, and Minute Maid Park

<http://www.texanatours.com>

Tour Serve

Houston 713.562.3892

General Houston tour, Space City, stadiums, art, architecture, shopping, Medical Center, nature, history, theaters, nightlife

http://www.tour-serve.com/tours_of_houston.asp

Tours with Kathleen

Seabrook, Texas 77586 713-542-5100

Ecological, historical, and cultural surveys, NASA, & Galveston Bay

<http://www.tourswithkathleen.com>

Randall L. Woods. Tour Guide

Spring, Texas (281) 367-6156

Walking Ghost Tours of Old Town Spring - for groups COST

Good narrative on webpage.

<http://oldtownspringonline.com/tour.htm>

Bob Zurik, Tour Guide

14603 Carolcrest Houston, TX 77079 281-497-3417

General tours with special knowledge of the Brown Convention Center and Minute Maid. COST

Downtown: Telephone / Audio Tours
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Top

Downtown Houston

1500 McKinney Houston, TX 77010 713-650-3022

Maps and audio walking tours of Discovery Green Park, Downtown, and Museum District

<http://www.downtownhouston.org/guidedetail/audio-walking-tours/>

Downtown Management District

909 Fannin, Suite 1650 Houston, TX 77010 713-650-3022

The Art Deco Walking Tour - The tour pamphlet can be downloaded from the district's website which also offers audio downloads for three additional tours – Downtown buildings, Downtown public art, and the Museum District.

<http://www.houstondowntown.com>

Downtown Mobile Info

Downtown telephone tour near Wortham Center by dialing 713-300-0892 – map on website

<http://www.houstondmi.org>

Energy Interests

Top

Houston Solar Tour

<http://www.houstonsolartour.com/the-tour/tour-project-sites/>

Food and Drink Interests

Top

Anheuser-Busch Brewery

775 Gellhorn Drive, Houston, TX 77028 713-670-1695

Regularly scheduled tours COST

<http://www.anheuser-busch.com/breweryHouston.html>

Houston Culinary Tours

The city's top chefs take groups to eat in Houston's mom and pop restaurants to showing them where they eat on their days off. COST

<http://www.HoustonCulinaryTours.com>

Saint Arnold Brewery Tours

2000 Lyons Avenue Houston, TX 77020 713-686-9494

Regularly scheduled tours COST

<http://www.saintarnold.com/>

Gardening Interests

Top

River Oaks Garden Club

2503 Westheimer Houston, TX 77098 713.523.2483

Annual Azalea Trail in March

<http://www.riveroaksgardenclub.org/AzaleaTrail.cfm>

Audio tours of Miss Ima Hogg's Bayou Bend

<http://www.riveroaksgardenclub.org/BayouBend.cfm>

Lone Star Koi Club & Houston Pond Society

Houston - Annual Water Garden and Pond Tour in June

<http://www.lonestarkoi.com/PondTour.htm>

Woodlands Spring Home & Garden Show

Annually in March

<http://www.woodlandsshows.com/>

African American Library at the Gregory School

1300 Victor Street, Houston, Texas, 77019 (832) 393-1440 (enter on Cleveland St.)

Arrange a group tour of the exhibits and collections

<http://www.thegregoryschool.org/>

Battleship Texas Foundation & Battleship Texas State Historic Site

3523 Highway 134 LaPorte TX 77571 281/479-2431

Individual tours always available, COST. Special "Hard Hat" group tours with special docents (First Texas Volunteers) arranged via 281-479-2431 COST

<http://www.usstexasbb35.com/hard-hat-tours.htm>

Harris County Historical Society

713-721-7931

Occasional tours for members. COST

Houston Archeological Society

Occasional tours for members

<http://www.houstonarcheology.org/>

Museum of Printing History

1324 W. Clay Street, Houston, Texas 77019 713-522-4652

Visit to browse or schedule a guided group tour

<http://www.printingmuseum.org/tours.php>

San Jacinto Battleground, Friends of, Flickr Account

Tour of the Lorenzo de Zavala Family Cemetery via photos

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/friendsofsanjacinto/sets/72157623747484744/>

San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Park

3523 Battleground Road LaPorte TX 77571 281/479-2431

Self-guided Walking Tour of Battleground narrative

http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/san_jacinto_battleground/walktour.phtml

Self-guided Walking Tour Marsh Restoration and Boardwalk Interpretive Trail Guide narrative

http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/san_jacinto_battleground/walktour.phtml

Tomball Heritage Museum

510 N Pine Street, Tomball, Texas (281) 255-2148

Call to arrange group tours. COST

<http://tomballmuseumcenter.org/>

Tour de Hood

713-525-9400.

A historic bicycle ride goes to landmarks of Houston's civil rights movement on March 26, Saturday. The Tour will leave from the Menil Collection at 1515 Sul Ross, at 9:00 am and will last about 2 1/2 hours.

Natural Interests**Top****Armand Bayou**

8500 Bay Area Blvd. Pasadena, TX 77507 281-474-2551

Canoe Tours

<http://www.abnc.org/things-to-do/guided-canoe-tour.html>

Buffalo Bayou Preservation / Partnership

1113 Vine Street Suite 200 Houston TX, 77002 713-752-0314

Canoe, kayak, and pontoon boat tours along Buffalo Bayou, near downtown Houston, as well as a tour of the Waugh Bridge Bat Colony..

<http://www.buffalobayou.org/boattours.html>

Buffalo Bayou Shuttle Service

100 Sabine Street, Houston - (713) 538-7433

Canoe and kayak tours of Buffalo Bayou

<http://www.bayoushuttle.com>

Edith Moore Nature Sanctuary

440 Wilcester Blvd. 440 Wilchester Blvd, Houston, 77079 713-932-1639

Personal browsing tour, always - Guided tours by arrangement.

<http://www.houstonaudubon.org/default.aspx/MenuItemID/161/MenuGroup/Docents.htm>

Harris County Precinct 4

Precinct 4 offers launches at Collins Park, Jesse H. Jones Park & Nature Center, Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, and Pundt Park for those interested in canoeing/kayaking Spring Creek or Cypress Creek and associated waterways.

<http://www.hcp4.net/parks/canoekayak.htm>

Houston Arboretum and Nature Center

4501 Woodway Drive Houston, TX 77024-7708 713.681.8433

Many of the programs and classes include tours of the remarkable grounds, some seasonal, some thematic.

Regular scheduled Saturday tours at 2:00 and 3:00. COST Call ahead for large group.

Pre-arrange Friday's "Wine and Cheese Night Hike." COST

A driving tour of "Wildflowers & Texas History" by arrangement in the spring, usually May.

COST

<http://www.houstonarboretum.org>

Jesse H. Jones Park and Nature Center

20634 Kenswick Drive Humble, Texas 77338 (281) 446-8588

Various tours available for various ages.

<http://www.hcp4.net/jones/index.htm>

Mercer Arboretum & Nature Center

22306 Aldine Westfield Rd Humble, TX 77338 - (281) 443-8731

Pre-arrange a regularly scheduled tour on Tuesday and Thursday. Third Saturday morning has open invitation to tour the grounds. "Scavenger Hunt" tour brochure available for children.

<http://www.hcp4.net/mercerc/>

Sims Bayou Urban Nature Center

3997 River Drive Houston, TX 77017-3016 (713) 640-2407

Center is open by appointment. Groups schedule a tour in advance

[http://www.houstonaudubon.org/\(S\(ezjmwc55jh0ddfvyhdomu0ba\)\)/default.aspx/MenuItemID/484/MenuGroup/Home.htm](http://www.houstonaudubon.org/(S(ezjmwc55jh0ddfvyhdomu0ba))/default.aspx/MenuItemID/484/MenuGroup/Home.htm)

Neighborhood & Community Tours

Top

About.com - Lower Westheimer

Virtual tour with 10 photos and narrative

<http://houston.about.com/od/neighborhoods/ss/WestheimerWT.htm>

About.com - West University's Rice Village Virtual Walking Tour

Virtual tour of 10 photos with narrative

<http://houston.about.com/od/neighborhoods/ss/WalkingTour.htm>

Art & Environmental Architecture, Inc. (AEA)

Arrange a group tour of old Frost Town area and James Bute Park near McKee Street Bridge.

<http://www.frosttownhistoricsite.org/>

Asian Heritage Tours

Specializes in Southwest Houston including tea tasting, herbology, Chinese calligraphy, Dim Sum, shopping, and Buddhist temples. COST

<http://asianheritagediscovery.com/>

Asian Pacific American Heritage Association

6220 Westpark Dr. #245 B, Houston, 77057 713 784 1112

Annual Cultural/Interfaith Bus Tour: APAHA/Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston for a guided bus tour to Asian places of worship and a lunch stop in Chinatown. COST

<http://www.apaha.org/>

Bellaire Arts Commission & Bellaire Parks Patrons & Bellaire Historical Society

Bellaire's Centennial History Walk, a self-guided tour of landmarks that illustrate the city's past, in Paseo Park where several informative metal plates are added to the Texas historical markers there. Near the Trolley @ Bellaire Boulevard & South Rice

Brochure at <http://www.bellairehistoricalsociety.org/HistoryWalkPamphlet.pdf>

Carrington's Tours

6502 N Shepherd Dr Houston, TX 77091 (713) 695-3444 COST
Arrange a group tour of Independence Heights.

East Montrose Association

(713) 528-5614

See previous Home Tour online with photos, map, and commentary, during May

<http://hometour.eastmontrose.org/home-tour>

See previous Art Walk sites online with photos, map, and commentary, during May

<http://hometour.eastmontrose.org/art-walk>

Eastwood Neighborhood Civic Association

Annual fall Home Tour, see printed narrative and map on website in October

<http://www.eastwoodcivicassociation.org/hometour.html>

Friendswood Heritage Gardeners Club

112 W. Spreading Oaks, Friendswood 77546 281 992 4438

Annual tour of decorated homes in November

<http://www.heritagegardeners.org>

Garden Oaks Neighborhood

Tour on even numbered years

<http://gardenoaks.org/involvement/hometour/index.html>

Houston Heights Association

831 Harvard Street Houston, Texas 77007 713-880-2832

Annual Winter Holiday Home Tour, usually in December, with docents and brochure

Annual Spring Home & Garden Tour, often in April, with docents and brochure

<http://www.houstonheights.org/>

Tour of the Heights via the National Geographic Magazine

<http://traveler.nationalgeographic.com/2010/03/on-foot/houston-interactive>

Old Sixth Ward

Houston - Annual Home Tour is in October.

<http://www.old6ward.org/hometour.html>

Walking Tour narrative with photos is available online.

<http://www.old6ward.org/walk.html>

Olivewood Cemetery

Arrange a walking tour via the Descendants of Olivewood.

<http://www.descendantsofolivewood.org/education.html>

Rutherford B. H. Yates Home

1314 Andrews Street, Houston, Texas 713-739-0163

Regular tours of home on 3rd Saturday or arrange a tour of the Rutherford Yates home and its surrounding lots or a separate tour of the 4th Ward Residential District

<http://www.yatesmuseum.org/>

Woodland Heights Civic Association

Houston 713-200-3610

Annual Home & Garden tour, often in March COST

<http://www.woodland-heights.org/hometour.htm>

Winter "Lights in the Heights" tour and map - in December

<http://www.woodland-heights.org/lightsintheheights.htm>

Westmoreland Preservation Alliance

Houston - Westmoreland Historic District Walking Tour with pamphlet

<http://www.westmorelandpreservationalliance.org/westmorelandtoday/walkingtour.html>

Religious Interests

Top

Annunciation Catholic Church

1618 Texas Street Houston, TX 77003 (713) 222-2289

Group tours available

<http://www.eldersforlife.org/annunciationcc/>

Antioch Missionary Baptist Church

500 Clay Street, Houston - (713) 652-0738

Arrange a group tour.

<http://www.antiochdowntown.org>

Catholic Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart

1111 St. Joseph Parkway Houston 713-659-1561

Pre-arranged group tours or regularly scheduled tours on 2nd Sunday, and printed booklet for self-guided tours

<http://www.sacredheartheouston.org/tour/index.htm>

Congregation Beth Israel

5600 North Braeswood Blvd., Houston, TX 713.771.6221

Photographic tour of campus

<http://www.beth-israel.org/about-us/campus-tour>

First United Methodist Church

1320 Main Street @ Clay Houston, TX 77002 1-800-652-2999

Arrange a group tour or visit the brief online virtual 360 degree visual tour of the sanctuary.

<http://www.fmhouston.com/AboutUs/VirtualTours.aspx>

Islamic Da'wah Center

201 Travis @ Franklin Houston, Texas 77002 713.223.3311
Virtual photographic tour, click each to enlarge and see commentary
<http://www.islamicdawahcenter.org/html/tour.html>

St. Paul's United Methodist Church

5501 Main Street ∞ Houston, Texas 77004 ∞ Phone - 713-528-0527
Call to arrange a group tour or visit the link for a brief virtual tour.
<http://www.stpaulshouston.org/about/tour.aspx>

St. Martin's Episcopal Church

717 Sage Road, Houston (713) 830-4117
Regularly scheduled tours are given on Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday. Other times can be arranged
<http://www.stmartinsepiscopal.org/>

Second Baptist Church, Woodway Campus

Virtual tour, using an online photographic map, click on the sites for information
http://www.second.org/flash/_flash/WoodwayVirtualTour.html

Stadiums**Top****Minute Maid Ball Park**

501 Crawford Street Houston, Texas, 77002 713-259-8000
Regularly scheduled tours Monday-Friday. Larger group tours by arrangement. COST
<http://mlb.mlb.com/hou/ballpark/tours/index.jsp>

Toyota Center

1510 Polk Street Houston, TX 77002 713.758.7715
Regular, scheduled tours and special group tours COST
<http://www.houstontoyotacenter.com/tickets/public tours.php>

Reliant Stadium

One Reliant Park, Houston, TX 77054 832.667.1842
Regular scheduled tours and special group tours COST
<http://www.reliantpark.com/public-tours>
Several virtual tours via "360" camera shots
<http://www.reliantpark.com/view-360-tour>

Port & Outer Space Interests

Top

Houston Space Center - NASA

1601 NASA Parkway Houston, TX 77058 281-244-2100

Tram Tour of Grounds 2 – 3 different tours of the actual grounds and buildings

<http://www.spacecenter.org/NasaTour.html>

Level 9 Tour – A day long special tour

<http://www.spacecenter.org/Level9Tour.html>

Port of Houston Sam Houston Boat Tour of the Ship Channel

Tours are arranged via the website. No tours in September.

<http://www.portofhouston.com/samhou/samhou.html>

Special Interests

Top

Houston Arts Alliance

3201 Allen Parkway Suite 250 Houston, TX 77019- 713.527.9330

“The Houston Arts Alliance (HAA) is a 501C3 non-profit arts organization. The mission is to support and promote artistic life in the Houston region through programs, initiatives and alliances. Advancing the nonprofit arts industry in Greater Houston improves the region's quality of life, ensures a competitive economy, and creates an appealing tourist destination.”

<http://www.houstonartsalliance.com/>

Houston Greeters

901 Bagby, Ste. 100 Houston, TX 77002 713-473-3837

“Houston Greeters is a free visitor service that offers a unique look at Houston through the eyes and hearts of its residents. Local volunteers serving as Houston Greeters host individuals for two to four hour visits to one of the city’s local attractions or cultural destinations.”

<http://www.houstongreeters.org>

Professional Tour Guides Association of Houston

The PTGAH provides an initial contact to some tour guides in the Houston area.

<http://ptgah.com/about.htm>

Bibliography of Some Tour Books

Top

City houses: The urban landscape By the Rice Design Alliance. Houston: Rice Design Alliance, [1980]

Discover Houston Downtown: Tunnelwalk & rail tour, 3rd edition. By Sandra S Lord, photographs by Sandra S. Lord, Aryelle Amador & Larry Morris. Houston: Discover Houston Tours, 2007.

Golden triangle tour for new residents, volume IV. Houston: [The Woman's Club of Houston], [ca. 1968]

Guide to the Texas Medical Center. By Clyde W. Burluson and Suzy Williams. Austin: University of Texas, Press, 1987.

Heights historical home tour. Houston : Houston Heights Association, [1983].

Homes of the stars: A who's who tour of Houston. By: Barbara Jo Morgan Publisher: Houston: Houston Metropolitan, 1993.

Houston architectural guide. By Stephen Fox; photographs and editing by Gerald Moorhead and Yolita Schmidt; foreword by Joel Wayne Barna, 2nd edition. Houston : American Institute of Architects, Houston Chapter; Herring Press, 1999.

Houston's cradle of culture & environs: Three architectural walking tours of the museums area. Prepared by the Anchorage Foundation. Houston: Rice Design Alliance, 1985.

Houston's gallery of Architecture: Walking tour of downtown Houston, 2nd edition. By Phyllis Harris. Houston: Houston Chapter of the American Institute of Architects , 1989.

Houston tours for children and other people. Houston: Ebenezer Press, 1976

Houston, bold and beautiful; your complete tour guide. Publisher: [Chicago, 1964]

Intrepid walker's guide to Houston: Exploring the city on foot & bike. By Eli Zal & Doug Milburn and with photos by Tom Richmond. Houston: Texas Chapbook Press, 1975.

Last American city: An intrepid walker's guide to Houston. By Douglas Milburn. Houston: Texas Chapbook Press, c1979.

Official tour book. By the Space Center Houston. Houston: Aerographics, Inc., 2005.

Pictorial trip through the Niels Esperson Building. [Houston : s.n., ca. 1926]

Rice University: An architectural tour. By Stephen Fox and photos by Paul Hester and foreword by Lars Larup. NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001.

River Oaks: Three self-guided tours of its architecture. Prepared by the Anchorage Foundation of Texas for the Houston Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Houston: Houston Chapter, AIA, 1984.

Scenic tours through Houston and vicinity. Houston: Motor League of South Texas, [ca. 1930]. Vol. 5, no. 11 of Plymouth Traveler.

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What is a tour? Five hundred years ago, the only excursions over the Houston area would have been by the local original Texans, ancestors of the local Karankawas, Bidais and other tribes, probably in search of food and shelter provisions and other resources, although keeping an occasional eye for the novel or amusing circumstance. Their later recounting through oral tradition of their travels could constitute the first “virtual” or “audio” tours.

Shortly thereafter in the 1500’s a Spanish shipwreck cast Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca and fellow castaways upon the nearby Texas coast, and he later wrote two accounts, including light references to his travels and times in this area, establishing a “tour” commentary in printed form. Subsequent other Spanish conquistadors, missionaries, military officers, and bureaucrats provided accounts (some extensive and detailed) of their Texas travels, but there was little reason to dwell on the Houston area although the naming of the San Jacinto River and occasional such mementos occurred. The Spanish lack of records on our area is primarily due to their own prohibition of settling near the Gulf coast and the consequent attention paid elsewhere. Later, scattered missions, forts, settlements, and ranches in parts distant from later Houston tended to focus on those individual’s practical concerns rather than unauthorized exotic excursions and explorations.

The 1568 shipwrecked three Englishmen’s northward travels apply far beyond the bayou. The 1600’s English settlement on the Buffalo Bayou has not been found described in British records as yet.

LaSalle’s 1680’s French settlement near Matagorda Bay and its subsequent survivors’ narratives do not touch us here. Much later the French did provide the first novel about Texas in L’heroine du Texas (Paris, 1819).

In American English most early accounts were in newspapers, e.g., Nile’s Register, or in military sources such as Zebulon Pike, of Pike’s Peak fame, who also did not see the double yellow line in the highway and wandered into Spanish Texas in 1806 and published his Expeditions account in 1810. Moses and Stephen Austin’s colonizing efforts were remarkably successful in the 1820’s. Spots in Harris County were occupied. Harrisburg’s John Harris came in 1824. Cousin Mary Austin Holley’s 1833 volume simply titled Texas is the first extensive

English language description and describes colonial life, typical of times nearby. The Gustav Dresel and Fairfax Gray diaries are commonly used. Adele Looscan's work is often cited.

Common and uncommon folks came and went after the 1836 revolution and establishment of Houston. John James Audubon documented local birdlife.

A hundred years ago, 1900, tours were still primarily for the wealthy. General mobility was restricted, and tours were thought of as exotic. Newspapers were the main source of exotic "virtual" tours; the Chronicle being established in 1901 after a \$30 investment in a wild oil speculation yielded \$5,000 – it was a Spindletop investment. What out-of-town newspapers said about Houston and Harris County has yet to be investigated. Stage productions were augmented with movie houses. For a nickel you could see far away lands. Travel magazines emerged. Occasional train rides to Galveston for weekend holidays came within reach of more families. Hunting and fishing along the Bay were popular. Boat rides on the Bayou were common, and Pasadena's petroleum refineries could have been a herd of elephants for the notice they drew and still do. Annual trips on San Jacinto Day to the Battleground were common for the rich and the un-rich.

Automobiles and their subsequent travel clubs were augmented by radio and then television as means of projecting a public profile of Harris County and Houston attributes – other than the cotton, rail, port, and the oil businesses. Fishing and swimming at Sylvan Beach became the rage. The Houston Fat Stock Show and Exhibition came to town in the 1930's, and so have countless visitors looking at the sights every year.

With the arrival of the Democratic National Convention in 1928, Jesse Jones made Houston a destination spot for the nation. The training facilities of World War I, the military industry of World War II, and the related port business of those and other wars all sensitized outsiders' awareness of Houston. Houstonians kept a continuous presence in Washington, D.C., exemplified by the House family, the Jones family, and on through the Bush and Baker families. Even Lyndon Johnson taught school here before moving to the Capital as a young man. Houston earned a place in folk's imagination as worthy of notice and tours.

Printed booklets are preserved from the 1920's and 1930's to show the formal development of "tour" publications, including those from the Esperson Building, the Motor Club of South Texas, and even the Woman Club of Houston.

Fifty years ago, 1960, a tour was a tour. A tour was still a real-time, real-world event. Tourists were carted around by friends. Professionals were shown the highlights by office staff. Visits of the Texas State Historical Association, and later the Texas Library Association and the Texas Historical Commission, led to lists of sights to see, in addition to San Jacinto. The Chamber of Commerce was not a laggard touting points here and there and was willing to arrange a guide to provide informed comments while escorting folks through a sequence of places tied together with some theme. Sometimes a printed itinerary for a self-guided tour gave addresses and instructions to travel from place to place. A “tour” conducted by oneself in a serendipitous browsing manner was a tour in the most casual definition. Printed brochures, booklets, and formal volumes were available, and magazines also printed itineraries and abbreviated commentary.

The 21st electronics environment and the Internet offer a carnival of other options. But what is a tour? Short videos on Youtube are available but the fuzziness of what is a tour or just a few minutes caught on tape can be difficult to discern. Checking “Will’s Texana Youtube Collection” shows a superficial but remarkable diversity of opportunities. Web photo databases offer other options. Flickr accounts offer the option of loading and sequencing photos and providing written commentary for each photo, as from the Friends of San Jacinto. Audio commentary is available to listen to at points along a tour as with the Heritage Society’s Sam Houston Park collection of saved homes. Some historical and religious institutions and organizations have websites with formally organized visual tours of their architectural and social history. Others offer written narrative with illustrative photos in sequence to a walking tour, e.g., the Old Sixth Ward Neighborhood Association. E-mail attachments now permit the distribution of slide show presentations quite usable for virtual tours. Indeed, a driving tour of the East End, using Navigation, Canal, Harrisburg, Polk, and Lawndale as the backbone, would be a prime candidate for such a photo narrative.

The modern world’s aggressive print publication option is still healthy and offers many new channels for authors and organizations to publish or manufacture short run books and booklets. Guidebooks, surveys, essays abound which while not actually tourist itineraries, they do offer the raw material from which many different tours can be developed. Indeed, even the national tourist industry which often relies on the ever growing number of city sightseeing books, including Fodor, Frommer, and Marmac offering volumes on Houston. - WH