

In Search of the Best Pralines in New Orleans

Southern Living®

OCTOBER 2004

Seasonal Ideas

- Autumn Arrangements
- Colorful Road Trips
- Bulb Planting

Affordable Decorating

- Before & After Deck Redo
- Simple Sofa Spruce Up
- No-Cost Living Room Makeover

Comfort Food

- Fix & Freeze Favorites
- No-Fuss Baked Breads
- Weeknight Chicken
- Classic Gumbo

\$4.99US \$6.50CAN



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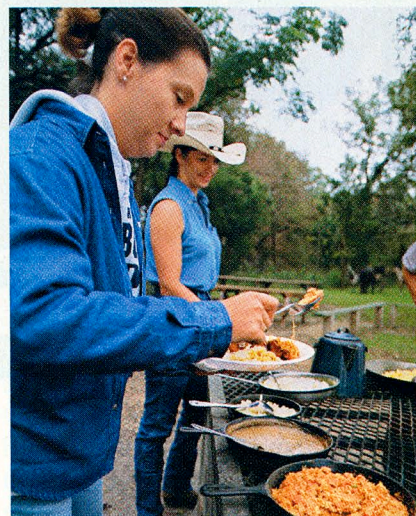
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AOL Keyword: Southern Living



left: Visitors scoot a boot at Arkey Blue's Silver Dollar Saloon on Main Street.

below: A visit to Bandera would be incomplete without a horseback ride through the Hill Country.



PHOTOGRAPHS: MEG MCKINNEY

above: At Mayan Dude Ranch, guests start their day with a cowhand breakfast served on the banks of the Medina River.

Retreat to the Ranch

Beautiful Bandera, Texas, makes the perfect getaway for outdoor fun.

Ranches. Honky-tonks. Real, live cowpokes. Now, this is Texas! Bandera dubs itself the Cowboy Capital of the World, and with good reason. This friendly, laid-back town on the Medina River retains the authentic flavor of the Old West. Located about an hour northwest of San Antonio, it's easy to find. In October, the weather should be just right too.

Friday Fun

Deciding where to stay will be your greatest challenge. We're partial to the family-oriented Mayan Dude Ranch

([830] 796-3312 or www.mayanranch.com). You can choose from lodge-style rooms or one-, two-, and three-bedroom native stone cabins. The all-inclusive rates range \$125-\$135 per person per day, with a two-night minimum stay required. If you'd prefer something more intimate, contact Backroads Reservations (toll-free 1-866-796-0660 or www.backroads.texas.net) for help finding private ranches, guesthouses, and cabins.

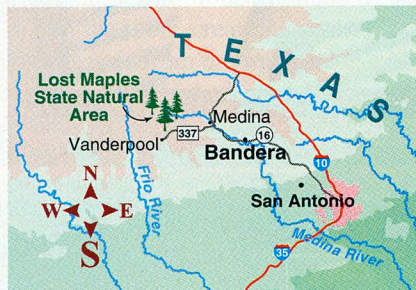
As you mosey into town, make the Bandera General Store your first stop. Texas-style souvenirs and T-shirts now fill most of the shelves, but the old-timey soda fountain makes the visit worthwhile. Then stop by the Frontier Times Museum. The bizarre collection includes a shrunken head, a set of dressed fleas, and a 1950s permanent wave machine in addition to saddles, brands, and Western art.

Check in early so you can relax by the pool, saddle up for your first ride,

or explore the ranch. A typical Friday night dinner features a barbecue on the banks of the Medina River, followed by theatrical entertainment from the Mighty Mayan Players. Then sit awhile and count the night stars before turning in.

A Saturday To Savor

Fuel up for the day with a breakfast fit for a cowhand. Spend a relaxing morning on the ranch, and then return to





above: Guests at the ranch have their choice of one-, two-, or three-bedroom native stone cabins. **above, right:** In nearby Medina, Love Creek Orchards offers mile-high apple pies, made fresh daily. **below:** Bandera's Main Street retains its Old West character and charm.

explore downtown Bandera. On Saturday afternoon, Main Street reverts to its Old West roots. Cowboys ride through the streets, musicians serenade shoppers, and storytellers spin their yarns.

This is the perfect opportunity to explore downtown Bandera. For a new pair of boots and a hat, stop by The Cowboy Store. Ladies love the American Indian Jewelry Store. Even if you don't ride, you'll enjoy watching an expert saddlemaker at work at Kline Leather or Bunk House Leather.

Country Accents Antiques, on State 16 between Bandera and Pipe Creek, specializes in country store cabinets and Blue Willow and Flow Blue china. They also sell ironwork by local artist Warren Lee. It's worth the short drive.

For dinner, you're headed out of town again to Tarpley, about 12 miles to the west of Bandera. Here, Mac & Ernie's Roadside Eatery occupies a tan shed overlooking Williams Creek. Steak and catfish are

staples, but there's always a special or two such as ancho chili honey-basted quail (\$12.95) or grilled grouper with lemon-dill mayonnaise (\$11.95). The restaurant opens for lunch on Wednesday and from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Friday and Saturday.

Scoot a boot over to one of Bandera's honky-tonks after dinner. At Arkey Blue's Silver Dollar Saloon, you can two-step with your honey on a sawdust-covered floor. Bandera Saloon and the 11th Street Cowboy Bar also offer live music and dancing.

Sweet Sunday

There are many churches in Bandera. For a bit of history, try St. Stanislaus, the second-



oldest Polish Catholic parish in the country.

Back at the ranch, you'll have time for a leisurely brunch and one last ride before packing up. If you choose breakfast in town, try Old Spanish Trail Restaurant. Fill up on the Cowboy Breakfast (\$5.95), which includes chicken-fried steak with gravy; two eggs; your choice of hashbrowns, re-fried beans, or grits; and biscuits or toast.

Say a fond farewell to Bandera before heading off to Lost Maples State Natural Area in Vanderpool, about an hour's drive northwest. Here, bigtooth maples grow along creek beds and canyon walls, providing the Hill Country's best fall color.

Don't miss the fresh-baked apple pie at Love Creek Orchards in Medina—either on the way to Lost Maples or on the way home. You can buy a slice for \$2.75 or a whole pie for \$17.50. Kids will love the Great Hill Country Pumpkin Patch held at Love Creek every October.

CASSANDRA M. VANHOOSER

For more information

Contact the Bandera Convention and Visitors Bureau, P.O. Box 171, Bandera, TX 78003; (830) 796-3045, 1-800-364-3833, or www.banderacowboycapital.com.

