

w e e k e n d g e t a w a y

Horseshoe Bay Resort, Texas



Fly-in Luxury Golf Getaway

by Stephanie L. Smith



aerial photos by George A. Kounis
photos courtesy Horseshoe Bay Resort



Consistent elegance is what Horseshoe Bay Resort is about. Its hotel, condos, golf courses, spa, tennis courts, and private airport sprawl across 7,000-acres of bluebonnets, prickly pears, and oak trees to the well-manicured shores of Lake Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ). While other lakes in the Texas Hill Country may swell and dry with rainfall, the lowest points of Lake LBJ are always 90-ft. deep. The 6,449-acre lake is kept full to drive the turbines of the nearby power plant, and that means plenty of blue water for swimming, fishing, and watercraft, plus keeping three championship golf courses green.

You can be golfing within 10 minutes of landing at the resort's private 6,000-ft. runway. Call ahead, and a Cadillac Escalade will whisk you from the field to the first tee—there's time to check in later. Your hotel or condo reservation includes a temporary membership to this exclusive resort, and all the privileges that come with it, such as spa access, tennis courts, and dinner reservations at the Yacht Club. If you enjoy full service, fine dining, and the lush life, then plot a course for Horseshoe Bay.

Flying There

Horseshoe Bay Resort Airport sits on a bluff overlooking the southeast side of Lake LBJ, 41 nm northwest of Austin (AUS), 60 nm north of San Antonio (SAT), and 157 nm south of Dallas (DFW) in the Texas Golden Triangle, where it's said two-thirds

of the Lone Star State's population (and money) reside.

When arriving from the north or east, avoid the P-49 prohibited area around President Bush's ranch approximately 46 nm northeast. The TFR expands from a 3-nm to a 30-nm radius when the president is at the ranch. From the east, you can fly direct to Lago Vista Airport (RYW), which is a possible fuel stop. From there, follow the Colorado River approximately 20 nm to Lake LBJ.

There is substantial military activity in this part of Texas. The Brady and Brownsville MOAs are about 32 nm northwest of the field. The perimeter of Randolph MOA is about 60 nm southwest, and the Kingsville 4, Laughlin, and Crystal MOAs are farther south. Also, watch for tall towers in every direction. The tallest in the area is a nearly 2,000-ft. tower that reaches 3,097 ft. MSL about 23 nm northeast.

Runway 17/35 is 6,000 x 100 ft. The approach to Runway 17 takes you over Lake LBJ; look out for a tower at 1,071 ft. MSL from the north shore of the lake, about 3 nm from the field.

Horseshoe Bay Resort Airport & Jet Center, which caters to corporate jets, is pumping \$7 million into a new terminal, two new taxiways, perimeter deer fencing, and more hangars. They estimate 40 percent of resort guests fly themselves in; hired pilots chauffeur the rest. At press time, construction is slated to finish in late 2009, with the new terminal scheduled to wrap last. A

full-service (albeit dusty) FBO, passenger and crew lounges, hangars, and fuel are available throughout construction. Landings and services are by reservation only; call the airport manager, Stan Barnes at least four hours before your ETA. Hours vary seasonally, Nov–Feb hours are Sat–Thu 8 a.m.–6 p.m., Fri 8 a.m.–9 p.m., (830) 598-6386, www.hsbresort.com/jetcenter.

History

On what was once a ranch owned by Coca-Cola bottlers from Fort Worth, Norman Hurd and his cousin, Wayne Hurd, realized their vision of a luxury fly-in resort. The initial build-out called for a golf course, yacht club, and private airstrip on 2,700 acres.

During the early to mid-1970s, the Hurds reshaped the water's edge on the south shores of Lake LBJ. While the lake was temporarily drained, they brought in earth-movers to create new lakefront property. They built homes, established country club facilities, and wooed West Texas oilmen to purchase memberships.

Between 1977 and 1995, two more golf courses, a marina, tennis courts, and more housing developments were added, drawing a total of 5,000 members. Relations grew strained between the two cousins, as Norman seemed more concerned with bigger, flashier, more innovative additions, with less regard to the bottom line that Wayne was trying to keep.

By 1987, Wayne called it quits, selling his interest to the father and son development

Clockwise from left: Stu McCurdy and Seth Hancock soar in tandem over Lake LBJ in their Van's RVs; Apple Rock's happily challenging course boasts great views; Docksiding at the Yacht Club; Land with the Air Horseshoe jets on their private strip.





Above: Don't forget, you'll need permission to land.

Bottom (L-R): The lake is great for watercraft fun and fishing charters; Swim and eat at the Cap Rock Grill; A Texas-sized standard room at the Marriott; Brush up your short game at the Whitewater Putting Course.

team of Morris Douglas Jaffe Sr. and Jr. Nearly a decade later, Norman did the same.

Today, the Jaffes strive to keep the resort fresh, and at the top of "best golf destination" lists. They've enlisted the services of Jack Nicklaus in the construction of yet another golf course, and keep 800 staff members to tend to 385 lodgings, including a newly franchised Marriott, and waterfront condo development. The next development to watch is Skywater, a new planned community that will add another 1,600 acres to the 7,000 already part of the property.

What to Do

Touch base with the **concierge**, (830) 598-7846, about a month before you arrive to secure tee times, dinner reservations, spa treatments, and the like. Pack all necessary apparel for your chosen activities—golf, tennis, fishing, swimming, jet skiing, or dining at the club. Dress codes are enforced. While the days are likely to be balmy year round, a sport coat, windbreaker, or wrap will be handy when evening turns chilly.

The one thing guests flock here to do is play **golf**. The resort boasts three champi-

onship courses designed by Robert Trent Jones, Sr. Slick Rock is the easiest; Ram Rock is a killer; and Apple Rock falls in between. Tee times may be made a month in advance through the concierge, or by contacting each course directly. Per-person charges include greens fees, range balls, and shared cart, \$45–\$150, replay same day \$50, 25% off after 2 p.m. Club rentals, \$50, include Callaway, Titlelist, and Taylor Made; collared shirts are required, no T-shirts or jeans, soft spikes only, www.hsbresort.com/leisureactivities/golf.

If you're looking for "hard par, easy bogey," try **Slick Rock**, the closest course to the airport. Its 14th hole is dubbed the "\$1 million hole" because that's how much Norman Hurd spent transforming a tiny creek next to the green into a gushing two-tiered waterfall. The shot is only par two, so a bigger thrill comes from driving your cart on a 35-yard track across the waterfall, (830) 598-2561, closed Mondays, www.hsbresort.com/leisureactivities/golf/slickrock.

The fifth hole at par-71 **Ram Rock** is one that even resort executives love to hate. It

doglegs to the left to an hourglass-shaped green with sand traps all the way around it. Nicknamed "The Challenger", the course is armed with 62 bunkers, ten water hazards, and dry creeks on six holes, closed Mondays Nov–Feb & Tuesdays Mar–Oct, (830) 598-6561, www.hsbresort.com/leisureactivities/golf/ramrock.

Apple Rock is the middle child, not too precocious, not too demanding. The par-72 course is worth playing for the view from the 10th tee alone: a sweeping vista of Lake LBJ from a hilltop crested with palo verde trees and cooing doves, open from 7 a.m., (830) 598-6561, www.hsbresort.com/leisureactivities/golf/applerock.

Between the starts of the Ram Rock and Apple Rock courses is the Cap Rock **driving range** and practice green. At approximately 1,000-ft. MSL, it's one of the highest points in the resort, where you can enjoy cool breezes when the rest of the grounds swelter. Adirondack chairs are provided, so your companion can relax while critiquing your backswing. Use is complimentary with Slick Rock, Ram Rock, or Apple Rock fees, open Tue 7 a.m.–noon, Wed–Mon 7 a.m.–dark.

For your short game, hit the little links at the Whitewater **par-72 putting course**. Is it mini golf? Not quite. They took a full-sized course and shrank it, Dwarf Bermuda Grass and all—plus, 4,000 palm trees crammed around 18 holes! Fees include a putter and ball, \$10–\$16, open from Wed–Mon at 8 a.m., Tue at 3 p.m., (830) 598-2591, www.hsbresort.com/leisureactivities/golf/whitewater.

In the marina, you'll find **watercraft** for rent from one to four hours for exploring the smooth, blue waters of Lake LBJ. There are 16 110-hp WaveRunners, \$95–\$365, and three ski and wakeboard boats, \$189–\$755. (Boat rentals include a resort driver.) The 20-ft. Harris Kayot pontoon boats hold 10 people, and you can drive them yourself, \$117–\$460. The two 26-ft. pontoon boats hold 20 guests each, \$149–\$545, and require that you hire a driver at \$45 per hour, www.hsbresort.com/leisureactivities/marina.

The lake is stocked with bass, catfish, and crappie. Half-day **fishing charters** can take up to three guests, one or two people \$280, third person \$100. Fees include poles, bait, and fish filleting. Drivers must be 18 or older, reserve through the concierge, (830) 598-7840. Non-anglers can rustle up five friends to charter a **sunset cruise**. They



run weeknights for about an hour. No refreshments are provided, though you are welcome to bring your own. Reservations are required, \$31, ages 2–12 \$16, (830) 598-9401 or (800) 531-5105, www.hsbresort.com/leisureactivities/marina/options.

There's a small **swimming** beach between the Yacht Club and Lake LBJ, one side for adults, the other for little kids. (In 2007, there were two isolated instances of fatal amoebic meningitis traced to playing in the lake. If this concerns you, stick with one of the resort's four pools.) The dark marble-lined Yacht Club Pool is steps from the lake, and rising above its center is a large bronze sculpture of birds in flight, open 11 a.m.–dark (Mar–Nov). It also has a 27-person whirlpool tub decorated with pier pilings. Slip between the pilings and enjoy its roiling waters, but not romance, unless you're the kind of couple who likes to canoodle in front of a crowd. The Marriott Pool is lit with fiber optics, is kid-friendly, and has a hot tub, open year-round 6 a.m.–11 p.m. The Paseo Pool, at the villas section of the Marriott, looks like it was airlifted from a suburban housing development and is extremely popular with families, open 6 a.m.–11 p.m. (Mar–Oct). The Cap Rock Pool by the Apple Rock and Ram Rock golf courses has a waterfall and adjoins the restaurant, open 10 a.m.–dark, (Mar–Nov), www.hsbresort.com/leisureactivities/pools.

Bayside **Spa** is small, warmly lit, and wood paneled. Its resistance swimming pool is decorated with mosaic tile flowers. The 11 treatment rooms here fill up fast, so the resort is in the process of constructing a new 20,000-sq.-ft. spa with an adjoining 10,000-sq.-ft. fitness studio, both due in 2009. All services include an automatic 20% service charge, additional tips are up to you, manicure \$40, massages \$105–\$210, facials \$85–\$160, ages 16 and up, open 9 a.m.–6 p.m. (Mar–Oct) & Mon–Sat 9 a.m.–6 p.m., Sun 9 a.m.–4 p.m. (Nov–Feb), (830) 598-9210, www.hsbresort.com/leisureactivities/spa.

Of the 12 **tennis** courts, 10 are lighted for night play. Next door are three Andy Roddick-branded kids' courts, which, like their players, are smaller than the others. Instruction is available, clinics \$27–\$37, lessons \$80–\$115 per hour, racquets \$9, open daily from 8 a.m., (830) 598-7840, www.hsbresort.com/leisureactivities/tennis.



The small and warmly lit Bayside Spa has 11 treatment rooms and a swimming pool decorated with mosaic tile flowers—perfect for relaxation and reflection.

Where to Stay

Horseshoe Bay Resort can accommodate you in lodgings ranging from swank hotel rooms and waterfront high-rise condos to relaxed family townhouses.

Each room at The **Marriott Hotel** is outfitted in a muted palette of reds, greens, and tans, framed in honeyed wood. Even the standard rooms are spacious, but for more elbow room, book a corner king, which comes with a suite-style sitting area, a deck, and views in two directions (north and western exposures have lake views). All rooms have big TVs, picture windows, and marble countertops in the bathroom, \$165–\$300, (830) 598-8600 or (866) 799-5384, www.horseshoebaymarriott.com.

What appears to be a suburban townhouse development next to the Marriott is actually the **Paseo Villas**. Don't let the somewhat faded gray-and-white clapboard exterior fool you. Inside, they've just gone through a \$1.2 million renovation that brought granite counters, new fixtures, and fresh paint to these two- and three-bedroom units. Each has a living room, wet bar, and full kitchen, balcony or patio, and spa tub, \$210–\$1,200 per night, pets \$75, book through the Marriott (see above).

For extended stays, groups, or lavish privacy, book a deluxe lakefront condo at **The Waters**. The three towers are adjacent to the marina and Yacht Club. Each of the 50 units is privately owned, and adheres to strict decorating guidelines that give them the look and feel of model homes. They come in one-, two- and three-bedroom configurations, with one to three baths. All units have balconies, full kitchens with granite countertops and stainless steel appliances, flat-screen TVs, iPod docks, and washers and dryers. Rates range \$250–\$1,250 per night, weekly & monthly rates available, (830) 598-0372 or (877) 611-0112, www.hsbresort.com/accommodations/luxuryrentals.

Where to Eat

If you like bar & grills, you've come to the right place. They're sprinkled all over the resort, from the marina's edge to the golf courses. Plan ahead if you'd like a fine dining meal at the Yacht Club, as reservations go fast. If you can't get in, relax with the knowledge that the Lantana has more inventive cuisine, livelier atmosphere, and longer hours.

The deck of **The Yacht Club** overlooks the marina, the marble pool, and a grassy expanse lined with brass Tiki torches. Its ceiling fans, clean lines, and lanterns look like they leapt off the pages of a Pottery Barn catalog. Like much of the resort, you can see which parts have been renovated, and which ones still party like it's 1975. Example: The interior dining rooms are quieter, and sport linen tablecloths and vintage wrought iron light fixtures. Express your dining area preference when making reservations.

The menu focuses on contemporary American fine dining, and changes seasonally. The 14-oz. Angus Bone-in Filet, is a showcase dish that comes with roasted potatoes, a bone marrow reduction, and Humboldt fog cheese—a creamy chèvre with a ribbon of smoky volcanic ash at its core. Other options include Chamomile-brined Organic Chicken with fiddlehead ferns and potatoes, and Almond-crusted Halibut with Jerusalem artichoke risotto and spring veggies. This is the one spot on the resort that serves Sunday brunch, complete with waffle bar and live jazz, entrées \$28–\$56, upscale sportswear mandatory, open Tue–Sat for lunch at 11 a.m. & dinner at



5:30 p.m., Sun 10 a.m.–2 p.m. (year-round) & 5:30–9 p.m. (May–Oct), reservations required, (830) 596-0881, www.horseshoebaymarriott.com/Yacht-Club-Y-Bar-14.html.

Outside, the **Yacht Club Grill** caters to all guests, including damp ones who just pulled up on a jet ski or climbed out of the pool (beach cover-ups are preferred for diners). On the redwood deck and flagstone patio, indulge in Texas diner classics with a twist, like Hill Country Taco Salad with chopped brisket, salsa, guacamole, jalapeños, and mild white queso fresco, or the Prime Rib Sandwich with Boursin horseradish cream and crispy onions. On the side, the homemade barbecue potato chips with chipotle aioli dip are very good, with more sweet than heat, entrées \$8–\$13, open Tue–Thu 11 a.m.–9 p.m., Fri–Sat 10 a.m.–10 p.m., Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m. (May–Oct).

Just off the Marriott lobby is the sleek, chic **Lantana Grill & Bar**. Dressed in sienna red, ochre yellow, and mahogany brown, it specializes in steaks, Texas barbecue, and other “Hill Country cuisine,” dinner entrées \$22–\$36. Attention oenophiles: There are more than 200 wines on the list. If the silky La Crema chardonnay sounds good, consider pairing it with the house specialty: Chicken-fried Lobster. What risks being a Texas-fusion train wreck is surprisingly delicious. An 8-oz. flash-fried lobster tail escorted by potato-leek hash has crisp batter just peppery enough to offset the sweetness of the meat, open 6:30 a.m.–midnight, (830) 598-8600, www.horseshoebaymarriott.com/Lantana-Grill-Bar-12.html.

Outdoor dining is outstanding at the newly-renovated **Cap Rock Grill & Bar**. On the side facing the driving range is a flagstone patio punctuated by a waterfall pool and the Cap Rock outcropping. A two-tiered



Catch all the fiery action of Hill Country cuisine at Lantana's open kitchen.

deck flanks the other side of the building, where you can enjoy club sandwiches, burgers, and BLTs in the shade of old oaks while you gaze at the lake. Salads and burgers are \$9–\$15, entrées \$16–\$32, open daily at 11 a.m. (May–Oct) & 7 a.m. (Nov–Apr), (830) 598-4813, www.horseshoebaymarriott.com/Cap-Rock-49.html.

On chilly days, they fire up the 1970s-style triangular fireplace in the center of the **Slick Rock Grill & Bar**. Queso cheese dip and chips are out for snacking while you wait for your big, juicy burger. They're four inches thick, bursting with flavorful beef, butter lettuce, sweet pickles, and a melting slab of Tillamook cheddar. (Tip: Call in your order from the phone at the 9th tee of the Slick Rock course, and your food

will be ready when you arrive.) Sausage-filled breakfasts run \$4–\$9, Frito pies, salads, and sandwiches, \$6–\$11, open Tue–Sun from 7 a.m., (830) 598-1303, www.horseshoebaymarriott.com/Pollside-Bar-Grills-16.html.

A little secret if you don't feel like cooking in your condo or heading to the club for dinner is nearby **Pizza Mia**. While they don't deliver, it's a resort staff favorite, so you might be able to join one of their pizza runs. Given the cost of meals at the resort, you could save enough for another round of golf simply by opting for a large pepperoni, \$15, open Mon–Thu 11 a.m.–2 p.m. & 4–8 p.m., Fri–Sat until 9 p.m., 9000 W. Fm 2147, (830) 596-2575.

Transportation

From the moment you touch down on the private airstrip, a **complimentary luxury shuttle** will take you where you want to go. These burgundy Cadillac Escalades run to and from any part of the resort Sun–Thu 6 a.m.–10 p.m., and a little later on weekends.

You can also explore the resort on a **Segway** scooter. Rentals from the White water Pro Shop include a lesson and a tour of the grounds, \$75–\$85, ages 12 and up, reservations required, (512) 699-6051, www.hsbresort.com/leisureactivities/more.

So pack your bags and ditch your car keys; the only things here you'll need to worry about driving are a golf cart and clubs. Leave the planner at home, too, since the concierge will look after your appointments, be they for tennis, a deep-tissue massage, or a dinner date with a chicken-fried lobster. For the ultimate in fly-in luxury, including golf, fine dining, and Hill Country hospitality, head to Horseshoe Bay. ■

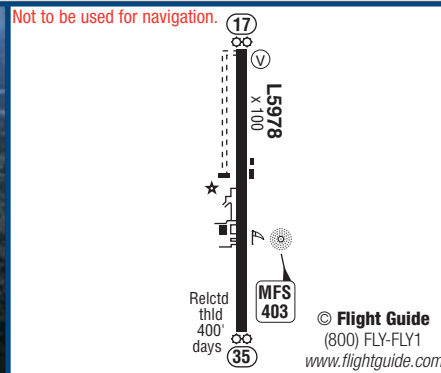
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Horseshoe Bay Airpark

Austin, TX • N 30° 31.6' W 98° 21.5' • Elevation: 1,092 ft.

Sectional Chart: San Antonio

Pattern Altitude: 1,892 ft.



FREQUENCIES

CTAF: 122.8

Houston Ctr. ARTCC: 132.35

San Angelo FSS: 122.1R/
113.8T

ASOS at BMQ: 119.925
(14 nm NE)

NOTES: Privately owned. Permission required prior to landing.

RUNWAYS: 17/35 6,000 x 100 ft. Asphalt. Lighted. REIL, PAPI Rwy 17/35. HIRL preset to low intensity, change intensity PCL 122.8 MHz

SERVICES: *Horseshoe Bay Resort Jet Center.* Landing fee (waived for resort guests/members and with fuel purchase): Singles \$25, Twins \$60. Tiedowns: \$13. Pilot lounge. Fuel: 100LL \$4.50 (full serve), Jet A \$4.40 (full serve). Open daily 8 a.m.–7 p.m., (830) 598-6386.

PHONES: Airport Owner (830) 598-2511, Airport Manager (830) 598-6386, AWOS (830) 598-2059, ASOS at BMQ, 14 nm NE, (512) 756-7277.

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