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"Mancations - The silliest word we've heard in a while inspired eight Texas trips for guys"

By Judy Wiley, Star-Telegram Travel Editor



Photo courtesy of Carlton Wade

Guy pursuits in Texas can include, counterclockwise from top photo, rock climbing at the Hueco Tanks State Historic Site near El Paso; deep-sea fishing out of Port Aransas; golf at Horseshoe Bay Resort in the Hill Country; and cheering on the UT Longhorns, wherever they may be playing that week.

They've coined a new term for something men have been doing since they started walking on two feet -- getting together with their buddies, drinking and, often, going out and killing something. The word is "mancations."

It apparently started picking up steam after the word was mentioned in the summer movie *The Breakup* and has grown into a trend, partly in defense against its female counterpart, the girlfriend getaway. (Judging by my mail, the girlfriend trip has turned into a whole side industry in the hotel business.)

I'm not saying a word about deer hunting or dove hunting. All Texas hunters, male or female, know what to do on a deer lease. I'm also not venturing into the bass-fishing area. Those trips aside, we found eight "mancations" to consider in Texas, the home state of manly bonding, and ways to plan them (because everyone knows women are the ones who know how to do that).

Deep-sea fishing, Port Aransas

Why: Because Ernest Hemingway did it. Because it can be fun *for some people*. I went once, in Mexico. The manly man I was dating at the time reached around me when I got a bite because he thought he had to show me how to set the hook. As he helped me out, he slammed the giant metal reel into my face, and I spent the rest of the day below decks with a huge wad of tobacco stuck to my bleeding face with electrical tape ("to draw out the poison"). They continued fishing. Although you can deep-sea fish in other areas along the coast, Port Aransas has always had more of the fishing village, less touristy feel.

How to plan it: Linda Mastropole at Fisherman's Wharf in Port Aransas says they offer five-, nine- and 12-hour trips on big, air-conditioned boats with concessions. The 12-hour trip runs \$85 including all tackle and bait. Information: 800-605-5448 or www.wharfcats.com. There are plenty of places to stay in Port Aransas. Look at www.portaransas.org, the chamber of commerce Web site, to get started. It's a seven- to eight-hour drive from Fort Worth, depending on how fast you drive.



Horseshoe Bay offers well-manicured greens. *(Photo courtesy of Carlton Wade)*

Golf, Horseshoe Bay

Why: This is a luxury resort on Lake LBJ, northwest of Austin, with a private jet center and three championship golf courses. Guys in the group who aren't into golf can make use of the full-service marina on Lake LBJ for water sports or just relax at the Yacht Club with cigars, suggests director of golf James Rolls, via e-mail. Beyond that, Horseshoe Bay has a par-72 putting course, three pools, a full-service marina, three restaurants, 12 tennis courts and a 349-room Marriott.

How to plan it: It's about 220 miles south of Fort Worth on Lake LBJ. Published rates on the Web site (marriott.com/property/propertypage/AUSHB) start at \$279 for a double.

College football games

Why: Kind of a no-brainer, huh. Tailgating. Football. Wings. Texas A&M alums never, ever, ever forget they're Aggies, so a long weekend at College Station or wherever the Aggies are playing several times a year is a given. University of Texas fans don't have to look very hard to find an excuse to get back to their alma mater -- Austin is just as much fun as it was when they were in school.

How to plan it: Game schedules are available on the *Star-Telegram's* Web site at www.sportsnetwork.com/merge/tsnform.aspx?c=dfw&page=cfoot/sched/schedule.aspx. In Austin, try the Warehouse District on Fourth and Fifth streets between Congress Avenue and Guadalupe Street for a good variety of pre- and after-game partying. (The bars on Sixth Street, which may you remember from your own college days, are probably best left to your memories and to the current crop of college kids.) If you find yourself at a Texas Tech game in Lubbock and want to eat something besides stadium food or wings, try Cafe J's at 2605 19th St., with its eclectic and sophisticated fare like pistachio pork tenderloin and miso-cured quail, which you might not expect to find in Lubbock.

Tubing, New Braunfels

Why: In the summer, the allure of tubing the cold river while holding a cold beverage is obvious. But the river also can be fun in the fall. Barbra Krueger, property manager at Hideout on the Horseshoe in Canyon Lake, says the 18-cabin resort has been getting lots of bookings for guy trips -- bachelor parties, alumni get-togethers -- since it opened five months ago. In the off-season, which begins at the end of this month, you can chill and watch football on two 60-inch plasma TVs on an outdoor pavilion. "We put out hors d'oeuvres, and we have barbecue and live music," Krueger says.

How to plan it: The resort, one of many in the New Braunfels area, bills itself as being a little more luxurious than some of the other places along the river, with slate tile, copper fixtures and other amenities. This time of year, you can reserve a cabin for eight for \$249 a night, Krueger says. Between May 11 and Sept. 30, the rate goes up to \$400 a night. Smaller, more economical cabins are available, too. Check www.stayandfloat.com or call 830-964-4540; find outfitters and other accommodations at the New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce Web site, www.nbcham.org.

Kayak fishing, Aransas Pass

Why: Because after you learn what a "tailing" redfish looks like and catch one, something resembling buck fever will take over and you won't be able to tear yourself away, says Jennifer Thomas, who with her husband owns Slow Ride Guide Services and Kayak Rental in Aransas Pass. She says it's a little tricky operating a fly rod in a kayak, but the water's usually only about 2 feet deep. You should know how to cast at least 30 feet with a fly rod before you hire a guide. Kayak fishing has been around for 10-15 years, Thomas says, but it has started gaining in popularity in the last five. The kayak gets you into otherwise unfishable waters -- places where you'd sink up to your thighs in waders, for example.

How to plan it: Redfish Bay, where Slow Ride operates its guide service, is between Corpus Christi and Rockport. Several other outfitters work out of this and the Laguna Madre area. The cost runs around \$400 for two for a full day, which includes tackle and kayaks. Information: www.slowrideguide.com, or call 866-856-9477 toll-free. Other general information is widely available on the Web; just Google Texas kayak fishing.

Outdoor activities, Colorado Bend State Park, Bend

Why: Come here for the camping and fishing, says a man-source. The state parks' Web site (www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/colorado_bend) says that, for one thing, white bass run in the spring at this park west of Lampasas. A big advantage to this destination, for North-Central Texans, is that it looks like pretty decent camping only about 164 miles away.

How to plan it: You can choose a developed, drive-up campsite or be real guys and backpack everything in and out. The main camping area has a fish-cleaning table, which always seems like a good sign if you like to catch fish. Fees start at \$12 a night for developed sites. Entrance fees of \$4 a day per person older than 13 also apply. Some of the primitive areas are 35 miles from the nearest gas station, so gas up in San Saba, before you get to Bend. Information: 800-792-1112

Canoeing, bicycling, more in Big Bend

Why: Everyone should go there for the beauty and solitude, but I know for a fact that guys visit all the time on motorcycle trips, fishing trips, camping getaways, canoeing, kayaking, you name it. There's a lot of room to move -- more than 800,000 acres. A variety of campgrounds lets you set up for bicycling, relaxing by the river or in hot springs, or mountain climbing.

How to plan it: Take a look at the November issue of *Ride Texas* for information about street-bike riding and off-roading. Go to www.nps.gov/bibe for details on other activities, plus camping fees, hours and other information. If you're new to motorcycling and need someone to ride with, check out the Harley Owners Group (HOGs) at your local dealership. The park is about 525 miles from the Fort Worth area. If you're not planning something that requires a lot of equipment, you can fly into Midland-Odessa airport, rent a car and drive about three hours to the national park.

Rock climbing, Hueco Tanks and the Franklin Mountains, far West Texas

Why: For the climbing and for hanging out in Juarez, Mexico, when you're done. Both the state parks offer rock climbing, so you can all do the *Mission Impossible: II* thing together. Hueco Tanks is 32 mile northeast of El Paso, and the Franklins are in the city. When you're done, rest up at the Camino Real, a downtown hotel within walking distance of the border. In Juarez, you can relive your college days along Avenida Juarez, which is lined with bars. These used to change fairly frequently, so you'll have to duck in and take a look to find ones that you like. Shops along the street sell onyx chess sets and so-cheesy-they're-funny Mexican curios. Or buy a bottle of mescal and show off how you can eat the worm when you get home.

How to plan it: Fly to El Paso on Southwest Airlines (www.southwest.com) for around \$160 round trip. Book a room at the Camino Real (www.caminoreal.com/elpaso_i/main.php) for the current published fare of \$129 a night.

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