

WINTER 2025

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INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE



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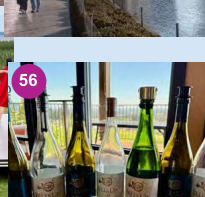
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A Winter Visit to Fredericksburg: *History, Wine, and Texas Cheer*

Story and Photos by Meryl Pearlstein



Kirche Verein & colored Christmas lights

Just over an hour's drive from San Antonio and Austin, Fredericksburg blends small-town Texas hospitality with European flair. A winter visit to this Hill Country town offers the chance to shop, sip and saunter along streets lined with historic limestone buildings dressed in holiday finery. With its deep German roots, Fredericksburg celebrates both European and American traditions, where heritage, resilience and winemaking are woven together.

Determination and a Desire for Harmony

Fredericksburg was founded in 1846 by German immigrants under the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas, the Adelsverein. Looking for a better life and a community of their own, these pioneers struck a harmonious deal with local Comanche people, who welcomed and provided for the settlers in return for farming privileges along the Llano River.



The treaty signing



Das Solheid Sunday House



Kirche Verein

Weihnachtszeit: the Texas-German Christmas Season

Through early January, Fredericksburg becomes a light-filled showplace. Main Street's limestone buildings are decked with wreaths and garlands, and the town's Marktplatz becomes a focal point for Weihnachtszeit celebrations. Each evening, Fredericksburg's Christmas Night of Lights begins with an audio presentation about the town's German heritage, followed by caroling and the illumination of a 26-foot wooden German Christmas pyramid, a towering community Christmas tree and 16 oak trees strung with red, green, blue and white bulbs.

Adding to the festivity, music fills the square, and the adjacent Eisbahn outdoor ice skating rink hums with skaters and spectators sipping mugs of hot chocolate or traditional glühwein.

History Woven Throughout

An illuminated pyramid, surrounded by colorful trees, the Vereins Kirche is an everlasting symbol of freedom, perseverance, and endurance. Now a museum made of stone instead of wood, the original octagonal structure was Fredericksburg's first church, community center, school, and town hall. A timeline and exhibits invite visitors to learn about the building and the town's pioneer beginnings.



Main Street holiday decor



German Christmas Pyramid and marktplatz



Pioneer Museum Barbershop and bath



Pioneer Museum Schoolroom

Also built to welcome those seeking acceptance, the Hill Country Wedding Chapel is a 19th-century white-frame church with handmade pews. Open to the public and still a favorite wedding venue, the chapel was originally used by the local African American community.

The Pioneer Museum preserves Fredericksburg's early days with a collection of restored buildings, including a schoolhouse, Sunday house, barn and barbershop. Docents lead tours, while period-costumed interpreters demonstrate blacksmithing, wool spinning and hearth cooking.

A short drive away, the Sauer-Beckmann Living History Farm at Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park immerses visitors in early 20th-century Hill Country life. Farmhouse rooms, a barn, a garden and a smokehouse showcase daily life and German agricultural know-how.

An Immersion into American History

The year 2025 marks an important milestone for Fredericksburg's National Museum of the Pacific War. Honoring Fredericksburg native Adm. Chester W. Nimitz, commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet during World War II, the Smithsonian-affiliated museum traces events in the Asiatic-Pacific theater. The George H.W. Bush Gallery has been revamped to increase visitor engagement through artifacts, interactive displays and storytelling.

In a new dedicated space, the multisensory exhibit The Rescue simulates a wartime jungle encounter on the Philippine island of Negros and a submarine mission aboard the USS Creville, placing visitors in a high-stakes rescue operation.

Also in the museum complex, the Japanese Garden of Peace — a gift from the people of Japan — stands as a testament to postwar reconciliation and the mutual respect between Japanese Adm. Heihachiro Togo and Nimitz. A walk through the adjacent Memorial Courtyard encourages reflection at the granite walls covered with photos and names of those who served and died in the war.



National Museum of the Pacific War



National Museum of the Pacific War artifacts

Showing true Texas pride, Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park pays tribute to the nation's 36th president and his legacy, including the landmark Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Visitors can explore the president's birthplace, first school, family cemetery and Show Barn on a self-guided driving tour of the LBJ Ranch. The Texas White House is currently closed for renovation.

A Holiday Shopping Haven

Fredericksburg has become a destination for design lovers and antique collectors. Along Main Street and its side streets, boutiques and retrofitted warehouse spaces highlight Hill Country craftsmanship and style.

Many Texans visit the warehouse district, where Blackchalk Home + Laundry — in a former laundry building — is a go-to for whimsical and sophisticated decor. Sofas, pillows, carpets and eclectic home items reflect the curator's passion for design.

If antiquing is your passion, the 30,000-square-foot warehouse at Carol Hicks Bolton Antiquités overflows with French and European furniture, linens, lighting and home goods.

On nearby Main Street, you can while away hours at the holiday-festooned Auer Haus Home, filled with decorations, jewelry, art and furnishings.

Aspiring and accomplished cooks will want to stop by the Fredericksburg Cast Iron Company for heirloom-quality cookware that blends Texas durability with German precision.

For ready-to-enjoy gourmet treats, Fischer & Wieser on Main tempts with award-winning peach preserves, pineapple habanero sauce and roasted raspberry-chipotle sauce. Sample while browsing the specialty foods lining the shelves. At their original Das Peach Haus location, book a dinner featuring seasonal dishes made with house products or try a class at their cooking school.



Historic plaques mark buildings in the historic center



Der Lindenbaum limestone exterior



Blackchalk and Laundry design store



Auer Haus Home exterior



Fischer and Wieser specialty foods



Auslander taps



Mesquite Warehouse BBQ plate



Alla Campagna



Breakfast basket at Hoffman Haus

Lest You Go Hungry

Fredericksburg's German heritage is on delicious display at Otto's German Bistro, where wild boar wurst, duck schnitzel and homemade shokoriegel pair well with German beer or German-Austrian wine. On Main Street, colorful Ausländer serves Bavarian dishes and Texas favorites such as chicken-fried chicken, jägerschnitzel and apple strudel. A few doors down, classic German fare such as schweinekotelett, beef gulasch and potato pancakes highlight Der Lindenbaum, a cozy dining room in a historic limestone building.

Hill Country's farm and dairy heritage takes a modern twist at Hill + Vine. In the contemporary dining room, a menu headed by the words "Willkommen Y'all" introduces dishes like redfish, Hill Country ribeye and fried pie, alongside Texas wines and beverages.

Texan tastes shine at Mesquite at the Warehouse in the historic Woerner Warehouse, a former feed store. The restaurant's updated BBQ platter is a must-order, with slow-cooked brisket, sausage and pork spareribs served in generous, shareable portions. Sides include peanut coleslaw and cornbread, paired with beer from local Altstadt Brewery or a mesquite margarita.

If German food and barbecue feel heavy after glühwein and holiday cookies, retreat to Hill Country Herb Garden for fresh juices, energy shots and veggie-forward dishes. While there, check out the Sunday house-style guest cottages, each with its own porch, swing and rocking chairs. Alla Campagna adds a Tuscan option with pastas, salads, pizzas, seafood and chops. Seasonally appropriate, the Holy Cannoli dessert will have you bowing your head in gratitude.

A Spirited Winter

German beer at Otto's and Ausländer makes a relaxing choice after a day of sightseeing and shopping, but evenings call for something stronger. At Dietz Distillery, the house gin anchors cocktails like the spicy Texas Dove, a mix of gin, prickly pear, habanero and citrus. The Saloon at the Albert Hotel is a popular gathering spot with a nod to the original 1888 White Elephant Saloon. Show your Texas spirit with a "Tour of Texas" flight of locally crafted bourbons. Also rich with history, 78625 The Bar specializes in craft cocktails enjoyed amid antique settees and portraits of notable residents.

Texas Wine Country — the second-largest wine region in the United States by acreage — offers a warm welcome in winter. More than 60 wineries dot Fredericksburg's Gillespie County landscape, many using European winemaking techniques. With limestone-rich soil and warm days turning to cool nights, the region is well suited for varietals such as tempranillo, viognier, syrah and sauvignon blanc, as well as reds like mourvèdre, tannat and grenache and whites such as roussanne and albariño.

Holiday cheer flows at Pedernales Cellars, known for Spanish- and Rhone-style organic wines. A trio of wineries makes for an enjoyable tasting at the Texas Wine Collective, where GSM blends from Brennan Vineyards, Lost Oak Winery and McPherson Cellars showcase balance and complexity.

Accommodations from Luxury to Quirky

Fredericksburg's hospitality scene has reached new heights with the Albert Hotel, which opened in January 2025. The 105-room property connects restored 19th-century limestone buildings with modern construction and abuts the shops of Main Street. Guests enjoy a limestone pool, spa, Texan-gourmet dining and public spaces that blend heritage and comfort. Two casual dining outlets and the Saloon recall the town's early days.

Quirky and quiet, and a short walk from Marktplatz, Hoffman Haus is a sprawling bed-and-breakfast complex with boutique accommodations ranging from rooms and suites to standalone houses. Breakfast arrives each morning in a picnic basket — a gracious, homey touch that defines Texas hospitality.



Auslander



The Saloon



Wine educators represent all 3 vineyards at Texas Wine Collective tastings



Albert Hotel Exterior courtesy of Guerilla Suit

If You Go:

Get your bearings with a Fredericksburg Tours trolley tour. The tour takes you through Fredericksburg's historic district for a look at the city's landmark buildings, churches, and Sunday houses. Specialty tours include the winter night lights Jolly Trolley and the wine trolley for a tour of wine country with guided tastings.

For more information visit:

VisitFredericksburgTX.com