

Houston

The nightlife of the big city is just 2 hours away

by Carol Smith
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If you're tired of life in the little city, why don't you go where the action is for spring break. Only two short hours away from College Station you can visit that metropolis of excitement, heartbreak and cheap thrills — Houston. Why, you could spend your whole week there and not even see every play, go to every basketball game, visit every museum or drink at every club.

To start, you'd have to find a place to stay. As one of the fastest growing cities in

the nation, Houston has more than its share of hotels and motels ranging in price for a single room from \$22 at the Alamo Plaza Motel to \$180 at the Remington of Post Oak Park. Take your pick.

If you want to get the big stuff out of the way first, you can head to Astroworld, a huge entertainment center that covers more than 60 acres. One price buys admission to more than 100 rides and other attractions, including the Texas Cyclone, one of the nation's most exciting roller coasters. Spend the

day riding the rides, eating the cotton candy, and drinking lots of lemonade.

You can head further south and visit the Johnson Space Center. The history of America's space exploration is depicted in the collection of spacecraft and flight items displayed at the center, located on N.A.S.A. Rd. 1 off

I-45 South. You can take a self-guided tour which includes the Mission Simulation and Training Facility and the Space Shuttle Orbiter Mockup and Integration Laboratory. For a guided

tour of Mission Control, call ahead.

The Houston Symphony will perform on March 11, 12, 19 and 20 at Rice University's Hamman Hall. If you like country and western, Gilley's Club features two shows a night by John Conlee on March 12 and Hoyt Axton on March 18.

If you haven't gotten enough culture, the Houston Grand Opera will present "The Merry Widow" on March 17 and March 21. The operetta is sung in English and set in turn-of-the-century Paris. Showtime is 8 p.m.

The Museum of Fine Arts has four free exhibits during the month of March. The museum is open from Tuesday to Sunday and is located at 1001 Bissonet.

One of the main attractions in Houston during March is the Houston Festival. The festival focuses on the arts community with indoor and outdoor events in music, art, theatre, dance, crafts and ethnic foods. Over 3,000 artists, dancers, singers and musicians perform outdoors in eight different stages situated in downtown parks and plazas. Treat yourself to the festival's Annual Juried Crafts and Arts Exhibition, which features the work of artists and crafts people from throughout the United States. All outdoor events held in the downtown Houston area are free and open to the public.

If you're a sports buff, the Houston Rockets are playing at the Summit on March 12 and March 15 at 7:30. Or, the NCAA Midwest Basketball Regional playoffs will be played at the Summit on March 17 and 19. For times and information, call 961-9003.

One of the largest of its kind in the country, the Museum of Natural Science offers numerous displays including the Hall of Space Science, the Hall of Petroleum Science and the dinosaur exhibit.

If you like history, the San Jacinto Battleground and the Battleship Texas is not too far. The San Jacinto Monument is the tallest masonry structure in the world. It overlooks the battleground where Sam Houston's army defeated Santa Anna's troops to gain independence for Texas. Then climb aboard the battleship, veteran of two world wars and a monument in its own right.

The Hermann Park Zoo offers 42 acres with thousands of animals in both natural outdoor settings and indoor cages, including a special 3-acre children's zoo.

When you get hungry, Houston has many restaurants offering a variety of international cuisines. Besides numerous steak and seafood restaurants you can find Chinese, Japanese, Indian, French, German, Austrian, Greek and Mexican food to suit your taste.

A visit downtown is never a wasted trip. Houston of the 19th Century and the 21st Century stand side by side today. There are six major historical buildings in Sam Houston Park, skyscrapers that form a tribute to modern architecture and an underground tunnel that's 3.1 miles of restaurants, florists, bookstores and other shops.

If this isn't enough, the Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Council, located at 3300 Main Street, Houston 77002, can provide you with maps and schedules to help you along. The phone number is 1-800-231-7799.

