

golf getaway

# Celebrate Your Texas Spirit

Stay and play at the Gaylord Texan and nearby Cowboys Golf Club.



The Gaylord Texan houses its own version of the famed San Antonio River Walk.

Now that football season is upon us, it's time to revel in the spirit that is so unique to our great state. Whether you're a Longhorn or an Aggie, a newly minted Houston Texan or a longtime Cowboys fan, you can't help but get caught up in the excitement of the season. For a pure Texas-style weekend, you can't do any better than a stay at the Gaylord Texan in Grapevine, with an accompanying round next door at Cowboys Golf

Club. From the giant timbers and limestone of the Gaylord hotel to the blue and silver golf carts named after former Cowboys players, everything about the experience lets you embrace your inner Texan.

The Gaylord Texan is more than a hotel, it's a destination. Surrounded by rolling pastureland and overlooking the beautiful Lake Grapevine, the entire resort is built on a grand scale. When you turn into the entrance, you'll pass under a ranch-style archway and travel along a long, winding drive before you reach the imposing stone entrance. Inside, the hotel features four and a half acres of gardens under a soaring glass atrium. The centerpiece of the atrium is a recreation of the San Antonio River Walk, featuring 8,000 square feet of shopping, six restaurants and lush indoor gardens. The effect makes you feel as if you're strolling outdoors – in perfect, air-conditioned weather.

The Gaylord's many restaurants include the high-end Old Hickory Steakhouse, decorated to look like a Texas wine cellar. In addition to the excellent steaks, the restaurant features an artisan cheese selection delivered on a cart to your table. Choose three for \$15 or six for \$24 of the many international selections. The restaurant also hosts the Gaylord Texan Wine and Food Society, which holds regular wine tastings and dinners. For a more regional flair, Ama Lur features contemporary Southwestern cuisine and a margarita bar with a selection of sipping tequilas, while the Riverwalk Café provides casual dining options in a market-style atmosphere. When it's game time, head to Texas Station, where a giant 52-foot screen hovers on the wall over rows of comfy armchairs. The sports complex includes two bars, a restaurant, a cigar bar and a golf simulator for those half-time bets.

If all you're after is rest and relaxation, enjoy the luxurious 25,000-square-foot spa and fitness center. There is also an indoor pool, a grotto-style outdoor pool and nightly live music. When you've exhausted the possibilities of the endless walkways, shops and res-



Local golfers frequently cite it as one of the best courses in the Metroplex.

taurants, retire to your room overlooking the atrium. The hotel houses over 1,500 guestrooms, including 127 suites. Balconies face inward over the courtyard below, while many of the windows provide a view of Lake Grapevine. If you must sneak a peak at your e-mail, the in-room computing systems include high-speed Internet access. There is even an in-room safe fitted with an AC outlet, designed to accommodate and recharge a laptop. And if you just want to ask a simple question, hit the "Consider It Done" button on the guest phone, and you'll be connected to one of the hotel's 1,700 employees.

### **At Cowboys Golf Club, the real star is the course**

Of course, you didn't come all this way just to dine and shop. With the world's only NFL-themed golf course right next door, you won't want to miss playing a round. Make no mistake, Cowboys Golf Club is no theme park. The Cowboys connection is a big draw for first-time visitors, but local area golfers frequently cite it as one of the best courses in the Metroplex.

Laid out over a heavily wooded site, the course features dramatic elevation changes up to 100 feet, offering magnificent views of the unusually

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lush, hilly landscape. You won't believe you're still in the heart of the Metroplex – until you hear one of the 747s from nearby DFW Airport roar by overhead. Fairways are well-manicured, the sand in the bunkers is fluffy and deep, and the greens are a match for any putter. The club also features a large practice range and a star-shaped putting green.

Award-winning golf course architect Jeff Brauer and the construction team worked with the City of Grape-

tees that played 5,257 yards, but they have mysteriously disappeared from the layout. That makes the jump from the forward tees at 4,702 yards to the blue tees at 6,182 yards a bit much. Note to the course management: bring the white tees back!

Other than that, golfers will find a fascinating layout that challenges you to think your way through each hole. It starts with the first hole, a dogleg left with a set of bunkers looming at

shallow green is backed by bunkers set into a hillside. Hit it long and you must hit out of those bunkers back toward the water.

Number four is the course's signature hole, featuring tee boxes set 100 feet above the fairway (from the back tees). Aim for the large blue and silver star logo painted on the middle of the fairway, and don't forget to snap a photo. It's a short hole at 211 yards from the forward tees – you'll be tempted to drive the green, but watch out for the bunkers on the right. It's easy to land your drive there if you don't account for the 100-foot drop.

**At the turn, make a quick stop at the outdoor grill for made-to-order chicken fajitas or an enormous grilled bratwurst.**

The double dogleg on the par-5 eighth demands smart, conservative play. A straight shot off the tee will put you in good position to aim your second down the left side – the right is guarded by a large lake and an enormous bunker. Take three shots to reach the green, which is tucked back to the right at the far end of the water, and you'll be in good shape to attack the pin. Conservative is the name of the game here, and par is a great score.

When you make the turn, be sure to stop at the outdoor grill for made-to-order chicken fajitas or an enormous grilled bratwurst, sliced in half and topped with grilled onions and spicy mustard. The service is quick, so you won't endure an undue delay. It's one of the many thoughtful details that sets this course apart.

If you love par-3 holes, the 17<sup>th</sup> on the back side is one of the more memo-



Texas Station is the perfect place to relax and watch the game in front of a 52-foot television.

vine and the Army Corps of Engineers to preserve the natural environment of the 159-acre site. Plaques at each tee box recall a memorable moment from the Cowboys' storied history, and the clubhouse features a "Hall of Honor" display of the team's Super Bowl trophies and memorabilia.

Four sets of tees offer golfers a variety of ways to play the course, each with its own set of challenges and rewards. There used to be a fifth (white) set of

the corner. Should you hit a 3-wood straight out to the turn or risk aiming your tee shot over those bunkers? The answer depends on your confidence as well as your skill level. Did you warm up your driver on the practice range or head straight from the parking lot to the first tee?

The par-3 third hole looks simple enough at 95 yards, but look again. To go at the usually tucked pin, you must carry a water hazard, and the long, very

rable ones you'll play. Deep bunkers and large trees frame the uphill shot to the green. A ravine runs in front of the green, which slopes from back to front, so take an extra club here.


To get the full club experience, splurge for the VIP package. At \$130, it's not the least expensive golf you'll play, but it's a nice splurge. When you check in, you're given a magnetized ball marker with the Cowboys' logo that you wear on your shirt or hat. In addition to your green fee and cart fee, it entitles you to range balls, as well as complimentary non-alcoholic beverages and food service throughout the day, in the clubhouse and on the golf course. For more budget-minded golfers, Cowboys offers a Player Development Program for \$79 a month that includes weekly clinics, unlimited use of the practice facility and twilight golf for only \$18.



At the Southwestern restaurant Ama Lur, ask for a table with a view in the courtyard.

The Gaylord Texan also offers weekend packages that include a round of golf.

Whether you're a Lone Star native or a transplant, it's hard not to get caught up in Texas mythology. The good

news is that whether your taste tends toward fine wine and cheese, or beer and brats, at the Gaylord Texan and Cowboys Golf Club, you'll find something that's sure to please. 

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