

Houston

Home to a respected and energetic cultural arts scene, celebrated restaurants featuring flavors from 35 countries, the oldest African-American theater in the Southwest and the brains behind United States space exploration, Houston is as diverse a city as they come. With nearly 21,000 concerts, plays, exhibitions and other arts programs presented in Houston annually, residents and visitors have access to a wide variety of cultural programs. Houston rates first among the nation's 10 most populous cities in total acreage of park land, with 56,405 acres of total park space. The fourth largest city in the United States is also one of the most culturally-rich cities in the nation. Home to 90 consulates, the third largest consular corps in the nation, Houston radiates with diversity, giving the city one of the most vivid cultural scenes in the country.



Houston's Size

The Houston City Statistical Area (CSA) covers 12,476 square miles, an area larger than Maryland (12,297 square miles).

The Houston Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) covers 10,062 square miles, an area slightly smaller than Maryland but larger than Massachusetts (9,241 square miles).

Harris County covers 1,778 square miles, an area nearly half again as large as Rhode Island (1,231 square miles).

At 634 square miles, the City of Houston could contain the cities of New York, Washington, Boston, San Francisco, Seattle, Minneapolis and Miami.

The Houston MSA contains more people than Minnesota, which ranks 21st among the states in population.

Harris County contains more people than Oregon, which ranks 27th.

Houston Business and Economy

Although Houston remains the energy capital of the world, the industry has streamlined and redefined itself. The city's history has been intertwined with that of the energy industry since the discovery of oil at Spindletop in East Texas in 1901. Within 10 years, that discovery led to the founding of The Texas Company (now Chevron) and Humble Oil and Refining Company (now ExxonMobil), both with operations based in Houston.

Today, Houston's economy is still based on energy, but to a lesser extent than in the boom days. The city is an industrial, commercial, educational and financial center. Its diverse economy comprises space and science research firms, universities, leading medical facilities, technology companies, telecommunications, shipyards, grain elevators and a wide range of other businesses. The emphasis on international trade is expanding every year, and will be a prominent theme in the city's continued economic development.

Houston Fast Facts

Houston is one of only five cities in the U.S. with resident companies in the four disciplines of the performing arts—Alley Theatre, Houston Ballet, Houston Symphony and Houston Grand Opera. Houston is also home to Theatre Under The Stars and the Society for the Performing Arts.

Explore a world of art, history and nature in the fourth largest museum district in the United States, home to 17 museums, including the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the sixth largest museum in the country, and the Houston Museum of Natural Science, the third most visited museum in the U.S.



The Toyota Center, a downtown arena, is home to the Houston Rockets and Aeros. The facility boasts the city's largest escalator.

One of the finest baseball parks in America, Minute Maid Park features a retractable roof and is home to the Houston Astros.



Houston is a coastal city with some of the country's most diverse saltwater fishing opportunities available in the nearby waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Houston is also surrounded by 1.5 million acres of lakes and 80,000 miles of rivers and streams, and has more than 43,700 acres of green and growing city parks.

Enjoy Gulf Coast seafood, the great outdoors and the relaxing waters of Clear Lake on the Kemah Boardwalk—just 30 minutes from downtown Houston.

Head to miles of Galveston's sun-drenched beaches—just one hour from downtown Houston.

Miracles happen daily at the Texas Medical Center, the world's largest healthcare complex. The 46 institutions include M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, Memorial Hermann Hospital and Texas Children's Hospital.

Houston is among the nation's fastest growing and most diverse metropolitan areas. The racial composition of the city today looks like what the U.S. Census Bureau predicts for the nation by 2060.

Attractions

Houston is the first city in Texas and the Southwest to offer CityPass. It's affordable and convenient, and offers access to Houston's top eight attractions: Space Center Houston; Downtown Aquarium; Houston Museum of Natural Science; Houston Zoo; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; George Ranch Historical Park; The Health Museum; and the Children's Museum of Houston.



The Downtown Aquarium, an underwater dining and entertainment adventure, features 500,000 gallons of marine life, a live white tiger exhibit, several themed restaurants, a Ferris wheel, boardwalk and dancing fountains.

Feel like an astronaut as you explore the hands-on exhibits and behind-the-scenes tours at the Official Visitors Center for NASA's Johnson Space Center. Theaters, dining areas and exhibit halls can accommodate groups from 50 to 5,000.