

# SOUTH PADRE ISLAND Fact Sheet



## South Padre Island's Accolades

- Ranked No. 3 destination for 2006 Texas non-residents travel and No. 5 for destination traveled to by overall Texas visitors.
- Designated in 2007 as holding one of the Top 10 Sand-Castle Contests in the United States by Coastal Living magazine.
- Designated in 2007 as one of the World's Top 30 Island Beaches by Condé Nast Traveler magazine.
- Designated in 2007 as a top destination in the 100 Hot-City Guide on Cosmopolitan.com.
- The boardwalk of the South Padre Island's Laguna Madre Nature Trail was listed in the state's top 10 list by Texas Parks & Wildlife and The Outdoor Magazine of Texas.
- South Padre Island was recently named a Top 20 fishing destination by Field and Stream magazine!
- Designated in 2006 by National Geographic Adventure magazine as one of the top 10 destinations for Trips with a Splash. Kiteboarding was recognized.
- Designated in 2006 by AOL's SmartMoney.com as one of the top five destinations for purchasing a vacation home.
- Designated in 2006 by MSN.com's CitySearch editors as one of the nation's top 10 beaches.
- Designated in 2006 by the Travel Channel as one of America's Best Beaches for Families.
- South Padre Island's Bikefest named in the Top 10 Best in Texas Events for 2006 list by Ride Texas Travel Magazine.
- Designated in 2005 by EscapeHomes.com as the No. 2 location to purchase an affordable vacation home.
- Designated in 2005 by MSN.com's CitySearch editors as one of the nation's top 10 beaches.
- Designated in 2005 as No. 1 on the Top 10 Beaches for Vacationers by a travel industry authority, TravelExperts.
- Received in 2005 a Top Restored Beach Award by the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association.
- CBS News: The Early Show deems South Padre Island a "Texas-Style Paradise"
- NBC's Today show also provided a segment on the nation's popular beaches. "Although a premiere Spring Break hot spot", the Today show crew stated that South Padre Island has "lots of great family resorts for the rest of the year."

## Population

The resident population of South Padre Island in the 2000 Census was 2,422. Estimated population in 2006 is 3,583. Due to the large number of visitors, the resident population is only a small percentage of the total number of people who are in the Town of South Padre Island at any given time. South Padre Island's population has a high median age of 51.77 as compared to 27 for Cameron County. The Rio Grande Valley area has been one of the fastest growing areas in the nation, with a 54 percent increase in population since 1980.

## Climate

South Padre Island is a year-round vacation destination located at practically the same latitude as Miami, Florida, latitude 26. The Island enjoys a sub-tropical environment with mild, dry winters and warm, breezy summers.



## Transportation

South Padre Island boasts access to four airports, three waterways and is 45 minutes from the population center of the Rio Grande Valley. U.S. Highways 77, 281 and 83 provide passage to South Padre Island. Locally free transportation is provided by the Town's own motorized trolley (the Wave).

## Border Crossings

- Matamoros, Mexico: Bargain shopping for silver, leather goods, and handicrafts at vibrant Mexican markets. Traditional dining, museums. Thirty minutes southwest of the Island. Escorted tours available.
- Nuevo Progreso: This quaint little town caters to tourists. Shopping and dining is made easy. You can walk across the short international ridge or drive your car across. The main street is lined with shops of all kinds, pharmacies, dentists' and doctors' offices. Restaurants abound with a variety of food choices.

## Airports

- Valley International Airport, Harlingen, Texas (HRL) 1.5 hours from the Island
- Brownsville/South Padre Island International Airport (BRO) 30 min. from the Island

## Nightlife

Dining and entertainment options abound on the Island. Many restaurants feature outdoor seating and live music, and some go so far as to offer volleyball courts, swimming pools, and bungee jumping!

## New Highways

In 2002, Gov. Rick Perry unveiled his Trans Texas Corridor plan that would incorporate the already imagined I-69. Passenger lanes would be supplemented with truck-only lanes, rail lines and utilities in a corridor that could be a quarter-mile wide in places as it stretched 650 miles north to south across the state.

## Climatic Profile

Winter Average Temp.	65 degrees
Summer Average Temp.	82 degrees
Average Daily Temp.	74 degrees
Average Sunshine Days	253 days
Average Growing Season	336 days
Average Annual Rainfall	27.6 inches



## Future Causeway

Bidding and debates are underway for a second causeway from the mainland to the North end of the Island as well as an offshore wind farm.

## Rio Grande Valley Premium Outlets Mall

Shop the day away in Mercedes, Texas. Located 20 miles east of McAllen and 10 miles from the Mexican border on 54 acres, Rio Grande Valley Premium Outlets features 100 designer and name-brand outlet stores.

## Chamber of Commerce

The South Padre Island Chamber of Commerce is organized to advance the quality of life and economy of the Island so that all areas of the business community and its residents shall prosper. Emphasis will be given to participation in the formation of Town strategies, education & development of the workforce, coordination and support of Town and tourism efforts and the establishment of partnerships with the communities of the Laguna Madre Area and the Rio Grande Valley.

## City Growth

South Padre Island is experiencing major development growth and interest. The City is also implementing substantial infrastructure improvements such as City-wide median and street rebuilding/ beautification and a new City Hall which has just been completed. Possible Wi-Fi Mesh Network, artificial beach protection reefs, utility line burial, etc.

## Population

In 1978, South Padre Island had a population estimated at 314. Ten years later it had an estimated 1,012 residents and 111 businesses. Its main industry is tourism; peak seasons are summer, late winter and spring. Hundreds of thousands of college students make the trek down to South Padre Island during their annual Spring Breaks to party and party and party. During the winter season, the area is much calmer and the population drops almost 50% and is often visited by Winter Texans (senior citizens from the North who escape the cold). Still, the area is often warm enough to enjoy the outdoors. Today the full-time resident population is 2,600.

## History



According to some documents from the Spanish Archives, Westerners first walked the shores of Padre Island around 1519

when Spanish Explorer Alonso Alvarez de Pineda surveyed the area as he charted the Gulf of Mexico for Spain. Padre Island first appears as a dot labeled 'Isla Blanca' (White Island) on a map drawn by Pineda. In one of his letters, Pineda claimed that "giants inhabited the coast" and may have been referring to the mysterious Karankawa Indians, a supposedly cannibalistic Indian tribe that was known to mark its territory...and keep it. Whatever the case, the native people of the island have been extinct since 1850 and the only remnants of their past are the few discarded arrowheads and pottery that occasionally spring up on the shoreline.

## Casino Potential

A development group led by Community Planning Associates hopes to establish a casino destination resort & marina and a world-class aquarium at South Padre Island's Isla Blanca Park, the most Southern point of the Island. Developers will present the issue to a special session of the legislature, addressing school funding. The economic benefits of legalizing casinos will be presented. 80% of Louisiana's casino revenue comes from Texas, dollars that could stay in Texas. Developers say the project would help the local economy by producing \$20 million-plus per year in new tax revenues for schools, and 2200 direct jobs paying \$9 to \$90 per hour with full employee benefits.

## Distance to Main Cities

From Austin	340 miles
From Dallas	531 miles
From Houston	367 miles
From San Antonio	285 miles
From El Paso	815 miles
From Mexico City	666 miles
From Monterrey	225 miles
From Tampico	336 miles

## Fishing Paradise

South Padre Island is Texas' hottest fishing spot. Drop your line from a boat, a pier or cast out into the surf. Tackle an 800-pound Marlin or maybe a state-record Wahoo in the Gulf of Mexico. The Laguna Madre Bay swells with trophy speckled trout, redfish and flounder.

## Crime Rates

The number of violent crimes recorded by the FBI in 2003 was 38. The number of murders and homicides was 1. The violent crime rate was 15.3 per 1,000 people.