

Key City Area- Family Itinerary

Right in the heart of the Texas Forts Trail and the home base for the Texas Forts Trail office is the city of Abilene. Abilene and the surrounding area is vibrant and full of life. Your family can enjoy some of the best attractions and sites that the Forts Trail has to offer starting in Abilene with the interactive **Frontier Texas! Museum**.

Abilene

Located in downtown Abilene, **Frontier Texas!** let's visitors see what life on the Texas frontier was like through innovative exhibits and unique encounters. Visitors can experience things like wolf attacks, stampeding bison, shootouts and West Texas thunderstorms with the museum's state of the art technology. Actors portraying frontier personalities guide the audience through interactive exhibits, vignettes of frontier life, and the "Big Picture" where an entire hundred-year history is consolidated into less than five minutes. It's a lot to take in, but don't wear yourself out, the next stop is the **National Center for Children's Illustrated Literature (NCCIL)** and the kids are sure to love it.

The museum was created to celebrate the best of the best when it comes to original art published in children's literature. The **NCCIL** collaborates with award-winning artists to produce exhibitions of their artwork that are distinctive, appealing to museum visitors of all ages, and of the highest quality. Their permanent collection houses over 150 pieces and there are always traveling exhibits to see as well. Make sure you also walk around the grounds to see storybook character bronze statues. It's the perfect photo op for you and your family.



Just one block away is the infamous **Grace Museum**. The **Grace Museum** prides itself on building connections through experiences in art, history and science within the ever evolving Texas Story. On the second floor is the Children's Museum, which houses a more hands-on museum that's learning based. Make sure to see the children's sized replica of Abilene's own Paramount theater. The kids can even dress up and act out a play if they want.

The only way you'll get the kids out of there, is to tell them they're going to the **Abilene Zoo** next. Make sure to take a lunch detour, possibly to the infamous **Beehive Restaurant** downtown. The friendly staff, great service, and tasty food will make for a great lunch stop before the Zoo.

You'll also not be able to contain your excitement as you pull up to the **Abilene Zoo**. Home to over 1,000 animals, the zoo, is fun filled and full of excitement. If you're lucky, a giraffe can even ear right out of your hand!

If you need a sugar boost after the zoo, head to **Candies by Vletas** in downtown Abilene. Nick and George Vegas immigrated from Greece and moved to Abilene to start a candy business in 1912. Since then, the business continued to pass down its candy making secrets from generation to generation and has continued to remain strong. Make sure to check out their caramels and definitely don't miss out on their chocolates, they are to die for.

Take some candies with you and head to **Texas Star Trading Co.** In 2004, Texas Star Trading Co. opened and have been flying their Texas Flags ever since. They have a one of a kind selection of Texas themed

and Texas inspired gifts that are sure to be of interest to all. Stroll around the store and see if anything catches your eye for a friend family member or even yourself.

Grab a flavorful mesquite grilled steak at **Lytle Land and Cattle Company** before catching some Z's at the **Sayles Ranch Guesthouses** just south of downtown. There are a variety of guesthouses to choose from, and the atmosphere really features the West Texas heritage. Enjoy your night at one of Abilene's true treasures. Make sure to rest up, the next day is full of adventure with stops at two frontier forts.

Buffalo Gap

The first stop of the day is **Buffalo Gap Historic Village**, which is south of Abilene off Buffalo Gap Road. Originally, the structure housed the Taylor County courthouse and jail. The village is now comprised of a doctor's office, barbershop, railroad depot, bank, post office, print shop, private homes, and the Nazarene Church and it prides itself on teaching history through their villages living history. Make sure to stop by the admission desk and pick up a sound wand for an interactive audio tour of the grounds. Guests of all ages are sure to enjoy **Buffalo Gap Historic Village** because of their dedication to history and the well-preserved buildings.

Abilene

From Buffalo Gap, head north to **Fort Phantom Hill**. Originally known as the "Post on the Clear Fork of the Brazos," the fort was established in 1851 by the U.S. Army and later abandoned by the army in 1854. The post also served as a stop on the Butterfield Overland Mail Route and was a resting post for the Goodnight-Loving Cattle Trail. On the 38 acre property now sits stacks of chimneys as the only remanence left of former buildings. Let the kids run around and imagine what it was like to live life on the Texas frontier.

Albany

From the fort, head north on West Lake Road and then east on HWY 180 to **Vintage Vanilla** in Albany for a light lunch. Their lunch menu is delicious and includes savory soups and fresh baked casseroles. There is even a vintage soda fountain from 1905 that kids and adults alike will enjoy.

Gear up for you last stop on the trip, **Fort Griffin State Historical Site**. **Fort Griffin** held command over the southern plains. The rugged structures were frowned upon but after a negative evaluation, not much changed seeing as how only six of the 90 structures were changed to stone buildings. Lucky for us, though, the brick parts of multiple buildings are left standing and scatter the grounds of the complex. The complex boasts a visitor's center with interpretive exhibits, campsites, nature trails, the official Texas Longhorn Herd, and access to the Clear Fork of the Brazos River.

Now that you've explored a couple of forts, experienced the wild Abilene Zoo and taken pictures with your favorite storybook characters, it's time to get back to reality. Don't forget; there are still more forts to see and more adventure to be had along the rest of the Texas Forts Trail.

Frontier Texas! 625 N 1st St, Abilene, TX 79601

(325) 437-2800

www.frontiertexas.com

Admission: Adults \$10

Seniors (60+) and Military \$7

Students and Teachers \$6 Children (ages 3-12) \$5

Ages 2 and Under Free

National Center for Children's Illustrated Literate (NCCIL)

102 Cedar St, Abilene, TX 79601

(325) 673-4586

www.nccil.org

The Grace Museum

102 Cypress St, Abilene, TX 79601

(325) 673-4587

www.thegracemuseum.org

Admission: Adults \$6

Seniors/Students/Non-Active Duty Military \$3

Children ages 3 and under Free

Beehive Restaurant

442 Cedar St, Abilene, TX 79601

(325) 675-0600

www.beehivesaloon.com

Abilene Zoo

2070 Zoo Ln, Abilene, TX 79602

(325) 676-6085

www.abilenezoo.org

Adults (ages 13-59) \$7.00

Seniors (ages 60+) \$6.00

Children (ages 3-12) \$4.50

Children under 3 free

Candies by Vletas

1201 N 1st St, Abilene, TX 79601

(325) 673-2005

www.candiesbyvletas.com

Texas Star Trading Co.

174 Cypress St # 101, Abilene, TX 79601

(325) 672-9696

www.texasstartrading.com

Lytle Land and Cattle Company
1150 E South 11th St, Abilene, TX 79602
(325) 677-1925
www.lytlelandandcattle.com

Sayles Ranch Guesthouses
1001 Sayles Blvd, Abilene, TX 79605
(325) 669-6856
www.saylesranch.com

Buffalo Gap Historic Village
133 William St, Buffalo Gap, TX 79508
(325) 572-3365
www.tfhcc.com
Admission: Adult \$7
Seniors and Military \$6
Students \$4
Ages 5 and under free

Fort Phantom Hill
10818 FM 600, Abilene, TX 79601
(325) 677-1309
www.fortphantom.org

Vintage Vanilla
104 S Main St, Albany, TX 76430
(325) 762-3030

Fort Griffin State Historical Site
1701 N. US Hwy 283, Albany, Texas 76430
(325) 762-3592