

Key City Area- Retiree 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. You can enjoy some of the best attractions and sites that the Forts Trail has to offer starting in Buffalo Gap at **Buffalo Gap Historic Village**.

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.

While you're in Buffalo Gap, stop in for an early lunch at **Perini Ranch Steakhouse**. Just 5 minutes southwest of Buffalo Gap, is the acclaimed Perini Ranch Steakhouse, which is a true hidden treasure of the Abilene area. You might want to make a reservation, even if you're just going for lunch because it's the home of the best steak in the area. If you're not a big fan of red meat, they also have some tasty catfish. Take some time to sit back and relax and enjoy the simple beauty of West Texas.

Abilene



Next head north to downtown Abilene and visit the infamous **Grace Museum**. The museum prides itself on building connections through experiences in art, history and science within the ever evolving Texas story. The museum houses three different but interrelated museums. The Grace Hotel was built in 1909 and was known as the finest and best-equipped hotel between Fort Worth and El Paso. With passenger train traffic eventually coming to an end, the hotel closed its doors in

1973. In 1986, it was saved from being torn down and made into the **Grace Museum**. Stroll the exhibits and see the historic and contemporary art.

If you feel like getting a little exercise, walk less than 10 minutes to **Frontier Texas!** This interactive museum lets 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 museums 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, so don't wear yourself out.

While you're downtown, grab a snack at **Candies by Vletas** in downtown Abilene. Nick and George Vegas emigrated 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.

Make one more stop at the **12th Armor Division Memorial Museum** before you head to dinner at The Beehive. The 12th Armor Division (nicknamed the Hellcat Division) was one of the most feared fighting machines in World War II. Most famous for capturing 72,000 German soldiers and freeing Nazi death camps, the 12th Armor division is now honored in the museum filled with artifacts, pictures and lots of history from World War II. Exploring the museum gives visitors a better understanding of World War II.

While you're downtown, grab dinner at one of Abilene's favorite restaurants **The Beehive**. The friendly staff, great service, and tasty food will make for a great dinner stop before you head to the theater. From the moment you walk through the door, you walk into a warm and welcoming atmosphere and the smell will take your taste buds happy. Their superbly tasty food will fill you up and then you can head to the **Paramount Theatre** for a show.



Built in 1930 by H. O. Wooten, the Paramount is the only theater of this size and grandness between El Paso and Fort Worth. Fully restored in 1986, the Paramount is now an icon for the revitalization of downtown Abilene. Check their calendar when you're planning your trip to see what is going on at the theater. The 1,200-seat theater is home to a wide variety of events including films, concerts, musical productions, opera, and dance. When you walk into the theater, you're blown away by the breathtaking architecture, beautiful painted ceiling and hand-blown glass chandeliers. Enjoy a show then head to the **Sayles Ranch Guesthouses**.

Catch 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.

Originally known as the "Post on the Clear Fork of the Brazos," the **Fort Phantom Hill** 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 remnant 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, get on HWY 180 and head east to the **Aztec Theatre** in Albany. Built in 1927, The Aztec Theatre was the cultural gem of Albany. The theater was originally built to show western movies, but since then has become a community hub and an important part of Albany's heritage. If you have time,

stop and take in the beautiful building before heading just down the street to the **Shackelford County Courthouse**.

Built and designed by James Edward Flanders in 1883, **Shackelford County Courthouse** is quite the work of art. Its empire style required the use of native limestone and was constructed by Scottish stone masons, and the plasterwork is one of the buildings artistic highlights. The courthouse was restored in 2001 and is really a sight to see if you're into architecture. After checking out the courthouse, head to the **Old Jail Art Center**.

With free admission, this is a place you just can't pass up. Take some time walk amongst their wonderfully laid out internationally acclaimed permanent collection and outdoor sculpture garden as well as their captivating rotating exhibits. Housed in an old stone jailhouse, the artistic atmosphere is sure to inspire you.

Take a short break and make your way to **The Icehouse Restaurant**, which is right next door. Located in a historic building off of the square, the restaurant is known for its wide variety menu with Tex-Mex specialties, a whopping chicken fried steak, and some pretty good catfish. Don't be ashamed to lick your plate clean; it's just that good. Plus you'll need a full stomach for your last stop at **Fort Griffin**.

The next stop is about 20 minutes north on US-283 at **Fort Griffin**. The fort 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.

After exploring two forts, strolling around in downtown Abilene and savored a juicy steak from Perini's your trip has come to an end and 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.

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

Perini Ranch Steakhouse
3002 FM 89, Buffalo Gap, TX 79508
(325) 572-3339
www.store.periniranch.com/steakhouse

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

Frontier Texas!
625 N 1st St, Abilene, TX 79601
(325) 437-2800
frontiertexas.com
Admission: Adults \$10
Seniors (60+) and Military \$7
Students and Teachers \$6
Children (ages 3-12) \$5
Ages 2 and Under 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

12th Armor Division Memorial Museum
1289 N 2nd St, Abilene, TX 79601
(325) 677-6515
www.12tharmoredmuseum.com

Beehive Restaurant
442 Cedar St, Abilene, TX 79601
(325) 675-0600
www.beehivesaloon.com

Paramount Theatre
352 Cypress St, Abilene, TX 79601
(325) 676-9620
www.paramount-abilene.org

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

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

Aztec Theatre
141 South Main, Albany, Texas 76430
(325) 762-3133
www.aztectheater.org

Shackelford County Courthouse
225 S Main St, Albany, TX 76430
(325) 762-3228

Old Jail Art Center
201 S 2nd St, Albany, TX 76430
(325) 762-2269
www.theojac.org/#about

The Icehouse Restaurant
200 S 2nd St, Albany, TX 76430
(325) 762-3287

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