

## Northern Hill Country- Retiree Itinerary

Brady, Mason, and Menard are in the south part of the Texas Forts Trail Region and boast a fascinating glimpse into local and statewide history. Explore frontier history at the region's only Presidio in Menard.

### Menard

Start your day at **Presidio de San Saba** in Menard. The fortress was built in 1757 to protect Spanish interests in the region but was burnt down only a year after it was established. In 1936, the Texas Centennial Commission reconstructed the northwest side of the Presidio to help preserve the history and tell the story of the region. Take a tour around the Presidio and see what the Spanish Colonial period was like in Texas. Soak up the sun while strolling along the San Saba River and take in the beautiful landscapes.

### Brady

Next, travel east on US-190 E to the **Heart of Texas Country Music Museum** in Brady. The museum represents more than 100 country artists through memorabilia including stage costumes, autographs, instruments, and other collector's items that embrace the soul of country music.

Next, go five minutes north to the **Heart of Texas Historical Museum** in the refurbished McCulloch County Jail. The museum, once called "the best small town museum" by the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, is 3-stories tall and is filled with history from around the county. There is also a control tower used in WWII that was recently dedicated to the 10,000 men and women who served in the military from McCulloch County during the war.

After stepping back in time at the museum, recharge your batteries at **The Spread** in Brady. You can smell this barbeque from over a mile away, and your taste buds will surely thank you after. Take a moment to enjoy the traditional good ol' fashioned Texas barbecue and don't forget about the homemade pies to complete your meal.

### Mason

Head south on US-87 to Fort Mason to see Robert E. Lee's last command post in the Army before the Civil War. During the ten years leading up to the War, **Fort Mason** played a crucial role in the settlement of the region. The Fort was abandoned in 1869 and later the rock buildings were taken apart by the locals to construct other early homes in Mason. Now, you can still see the bases of many buildings as well as reconstructed officers' quarters.

After working up a thirst exploring the fort, your next stop will be **Sandstone Cellars Winery** in Mason, right off San Antonio Street. The boutique winery was opened in the early 2000s and has since been a popular spot for tourists and locals alike. Winemaker Don Pullum is thought to be one of the finest winemakers in Texas and his passion for wine is one of a kind.

Sandstone makes only one kind of wine a year, which consists of a unique blend of red grapes found only in Mason County. They've won many awards and have even been featured in Texas Monthly. Take this chance to relax and pull up a seat at the bar and savor in the wonderful tastes of Mason County. After that, grab a bottle of wine and go next door to the renowned **Santos Taqueria**. This homemade Mexican food will fill you up and put a smile on your face. The food is made from scratch and is sure not

to disappoint... and the gorditas are a must have!

Next, travel southwest of town to the **Eckert James River Bat Cave Preserve** which one of the largest bat nurseries in the country. Millions female bats inhabit the site from May to September and a couple of hours before sunset; the cave comes alive with the sights and sounds of the bats. This is definitely something you should make time to see before leaving Mason County.

Now that you've savored in some Texas Hill Country wine, seen memorabilia from the legends of country music and experienced the wonderful world of bats it's time to get back to reality. But don't forget, there are still more seven more forts and other attractions to explore on the Texas Forts Trail.

Presidio de San Saba  
191 Presidio Rd, Menard, TX 76859

Heart of Texas Country Music Museum  
1701 S Bridge St, Brady, TX 76825  
(325) 597-1895  
[www.hillbillyhits.com/museum.htm](http://www.hillbillyhits.com/museum.htm)

Heart of Texas Historical Museum  
17 N High St, Brady, TX 76825  
(325) 597-0526  
[www.heartoftexasmuseum.com](http://www.heartoftexasmuseum.com)

The Spread  
2010 S Bridge St, Brady, TX 76825  
(325) 597-1111  
[www.thespreadpitbbq.com](http://www.thespreadpitbbq.com)

Fort Mason  
302, 314 Spruce St, Mason, TX 76856  
(325) 347-5758

Sandstone Cellars Winery  
211 San Antonio St, Mason, TX 76856  
(325) 347-9463  
[www.sandstonecellarswinery.com](http://www.sandstonecellarswinery.com)

Santos Taqueria  
205 San Antonio St, Mason, TX 76856  
(325) 347-6140  
[www.santostaqueria.com](http://www.santostaqueria.com)

Eckert James River Bat Cave Preserve  
James River Rd, Mason, TX 76856  
(325) 347-5970  
[www.texasfortstrail.com/plan-your-adventure/historic-sites-and-cities/sites/eckert-james-river-bat-cave-preserve](http://www.texasfortstrail.com/plan-your-adventure/historic-sites-and-cities/sites/eckert-james-river-bat-cave-preserve)