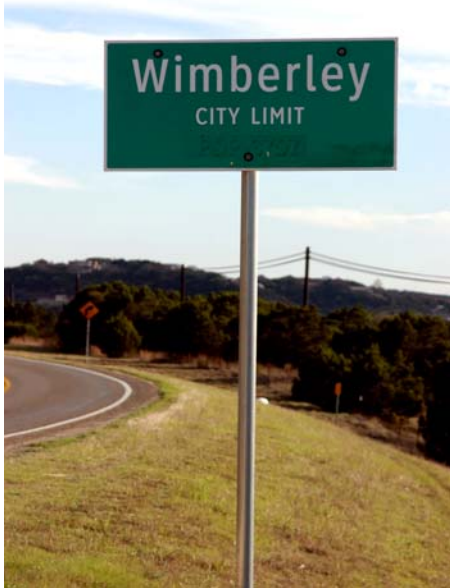


Wimberley

A little piece of heaven at the end of the Devil's Backbone

www.wimberley.org





Janis Turk



and



Rodney Bursiel

Photos by

Getaway to Wimberley by Janis Turk

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It's hard to imagine how a little bit of heaven could sit right at the end of the Devil's Backbone, but that's just where you'll find Wimberley.

Ranch to Market Road 12 is part of what's known as the Devil's Backbone because it is as bent and twisted as both the devil and the gnarled cedar and cypress linking the narrow ridge as it cuts across white limestone hills. Established in 1848, Wimberley is an enchanting stop at the end of that crooked road, and it has retained an old-style Texas atmosphere while seamlessly incorporating everything new and inviting. Residents and visitors to this restful, resort-like community say they've found heaven "on earth as it is in Texas."

A Mecca for local artisans, and a delightful place to peek into galleries and charming shops, with Wimberley's close proximity to Austin, San Antonio, and all the smaller cities in between, it is the ideal weekend getaway destination this spring.

Just a short and wickedly beautiful drive down the Devil's Backbone from San Marcos (about a half hour from Blanco) Wimberley's old town square sits with its squatty buildings made of hand hewn stone, white waterfalls cascading in Cypress Creek, a cold, blue swimming hole, and its funky outdoor movie theatre. But a day in this hill country hamlet reminds guests that Wimberley still has a best kept secret or two to uncover and enjoy.

Pioneer Town

Who knew that a full scale Old West Main Street—the kind where a high noon shoot out might take place—was hiding around the bend on River Road, a mile from the downtown square? Come upon this historic recreation of an 1890's Old West ghost town, built by Raymond L. Czichos in 1956, and you'll find that some of the original buildings date back as far as 1856. They include several log cabins, a blacksmith shop, print shop, general store, emporium, gun shop, saloon, and a chapel. Live music—campfire songs, complete with yodeling, accordions, fiddles, and guitars—was scheduled the evening I visited the Opera House, and that night, Jill Jones and the Hays County Gals and Pals rosined up their fiddle bows, while the Wimberley Association for Preservation members served chocolate chip cookies, hot from a little oven, and popcorn to the large audience that had come through the swinging doors. Across the street the Silver Spoon Café was closed for the night, but on the weekends it is bustling.

According to Association member Christi Bursiel, “The tables are always dressed with white tablecloths, candles and fresh flowers, and the cafe has a romantic fireplace for special, intimate dinners.” But won’t the kids just love the house made entirely of Coke bottles! “The man who built this town saw a house like this made of beer bottles when he visited Knott’s Berry Farm in California in the 1950s, and he was so impressed that he came home and built this one with root beer and soda bottles,” explains Association member Chuck Bursiel. Whether you hope to stroll through an Old West town in your cowboy boots or get married in the log church nestled under Oak branches, Pioneer Town is the most fun place to be in Wimberley.

Wimberley Glass Works

Earth, wind, fire—and talent, too: that’s what you’ll find on your way into town if you stop by Wimberley Glass Works. During a vacation in the Texas Hill Country, highly schooled and trained glass blower/artist Tim de Jong first fell in love with this area in the early 1990s, and he’s been here ever since. Since 1992 he has owned and operated WGW, where visitors may drop in anytime “to observe artists demonstrating the process of crafting molten glass into exceptional art,” explains De Jong. He and the other artists there create extraordinary, original works of art such as vases, bowls, sculptures and lighting sought by private art glass collectors from around the world. “A visit to our studio is unique in that it offers guests and entertaining and educational experience,” he adds. Along with the studio is a gallery and store featuring finished blown glass pieces.

Central Texas Bonsai Exhibit at Jade Gardens

A gallery or living museum of delicate trees, Jade Gardens and Greenhouses along FM 12, offers an intimate look into an intriguing ancient art from Asia. Chuck and Pat Ware have collected more than 125 trees to create one of only a small number of public exhibits of Bonsai in the United States. People of all ages are fascinated with the beauty and simplicity of this ancient art. There are about 160 species of trees at Jade Gardens, and the Wares are pleased to offer everything from traditional Bonsai to those created using plants native to Texas.

The Bella Vista Ranch – First Texas Olive Oil

Jack Dougherty noticed that the soil and weather in Wimberley were akin to that of the Mediterranean, and so he began growing olives on the Bella Vista Ranch in 1998.

Today the ranch, which was designed to reflect a traditional Italian family farm, includes a producing olive orchard, a *frantaio* (olive press), vineyard, winery, "pick your own" berry patch, a Red Brangus herd, and offers many seasonal fruit and vegetable specialties. With 1,000 blackberry bushes bursting with juicy berries from May till June, and ripe red raspberries popping up twice a year, this is certainly a great time to head to Bella Vista, a delightful place for an educational and inspirational adventures.

The Corral Theater

Just as you come into town, look for signs pointing to the Corral Theater on FM 3237, but don’t blink or you might pass right by one of the few remaining outdoor open-air movie theaters in the U.S. Since 1948, the theatre, a cedar stockade fence “First run movies start at dark-thirty p.m.,” they say. You can sit on bleachers in the back, on blankets you bring, or on their old metal lawn chairs. Tickets are \$4 a person, unless you’re four or under or 85 years old and older. No matter what age, you’re going to love rounding up the family and heading to the Corral at sundown.

All the Rest

But where do you hang your hat when you want to stay a while in Wimberley, and where should you dine? Just ask the kind people at Wimberley Lodging, and you’ll find a plethora of choices for a beautiful, relaxing getaway in the Hills. Bed and breakfast cottages, Sunday Haus inns, cabins, and campgrounds are as plentiful as lightning bugs along the Blanco River, and it will be hard to choose a favorite. We

picked one, though, when we visited the cabins of the Exotic Sunset Bed and Breakfast. New, private, opulent, inviting, clean, classy: it is hard to fully describe the loveliness of both the African Nights and Caribbean Dream private guest houses just north of town. With the careful attention to guests' needs, the owner has prepared a 10 acre haven in the hills for those who crave the ultimate in a relaxing getaway. With hot tubs under the stars, full kitchens, dining areas, and dens, plush, lush romantic bedrooms, decks, patios and even a private pool for one of the houses, along with a full, homemade continental breakfast basket, this B&B provides the ideal honeymoon retreat. Fresh flowers, strawberries, chocolates and champagne can be requested ahead of time, and each house boasts a complete sounds system with relaxing music, CDs, a DVD player and DVDs, and television. From the finest bathroom soaps to the thirsty towels and candles near the tub, everything is perfectly in order and designed to set your mind at ease. A little bit of heaven in Wimberley? This is the place to find it.

From the Cypress Creek Café to the coffee and fudge shops and the Wimberley Pie Company, there are almost too many choices to make when it comes to where to dine. But won't it be fun to explore them all to find your favorite? Mexican food at Christo's was a fiesta for the palate on this trip, and a picnic along the banks of the Blanco River is always a delightful outing.

Whenever you go, whatever you do, Wimberley is waiting to delight you. It may be a crooked road that takes us there, but heaven is just around the bend.

BOX:

Check out Wimberley Online at www.wimberley.org and visit the Corral Theater: www.corraltheater.com. Meet our friends at Wimberley Glass Works: www.wgw.com And Jade Gardens and Greenhouses: www.jadegardens.com (512-847-2514), and be sure to visit the Exotic Sunset Bed and Breakfast (with Web links to Pioneer Town) at www.exoticsunset.com (512.847.3909). Find Wimberley Lodging at www.texashillcountrylodging.com. For more information on the 7-Acres Ranch Resort and Pioneer Town call (512)-847-2517.

SIDEBAR: Butterflies are Free

Fling into spring with Wimberley's annual Spring Fling and Butterfly Festival on April 16, 2005 at the EmilyAnn Theatre from 10 to 4 P.M. The 6th annual Butterfly Day promises live butterflies, imaginative butterfly art, exciting activities for youngsters, live and silent auctions, tasty food fare and entertainment featuring some the area's most talented dancers, singers and musicians.

"Preparations began months ago." says Ann Rolling, general manager of the EmilyAnn. "We ordered hundreds of Painted Lady larvae for the live butterfly release." The cages of larvae are placed at locations ranging from nursery schools to nursing homes and many local businesses. Students, residents and visitors watch in awe the growth from caterpillar to chrysalis to butterfly. The cages with the newly hatched butterflies are returned to the Theatre for mass releases on Butterfly Day. Individual butterflies to release are available with the purchase of commemorative pavers.

Butterfly Day also features an Art Contest with thousands of entries, including partner schools in Frisco, Texas. Students from one to 12 years of age create brightly painted paper butterflies and wooden butterfly blanks are decorated by adults. The art is judged, and then displayed in the EmilyAnn Gardens where the hillside blooms with colorful butterflies hanging from trees.

Activities begin at the Memorial flagpole at the top of the hill, where butterflies will be released in memory of loved ones lost during the past year. The ceremony concludes with a fly-over by World War II

planes. Live releases of butterflies will take place every 30 minutes during the day. Educational talks will feature butterfly gardening, rain water retention, lavender growing plant display and sale, and other environment and educational speakers. Live entertainment will include musical acts, choirs and dances. Eppi, the Hill Country Clown will do a special presentation, Metamorphosis, (from man to clown). This one-time performance is scheduled for 2:00 p.m. Other activities at EmilyAnn Theatre include: Star of the Hills - May 27, 28, 29, June 4, 5, 10, 11; Shakespeare Under the Stars - Aug. 1 – 13; Christmas Trail of Lights - Nov. 26 - Jan 1.