



White Oak Manor Bed & Breakfast

Story | KATHRYN HUNTER

go back in texas-time

In the mid-1800s, the city of Jefferson was a boomtown of steamboats and wealthy merchants—the largest and most significant river port in Texas.

When the railroad was built, bypassing Jefferson, the town's heyday came to an end, but the economic turmoil of long ago left behind a rare treat—a town that never lost its genteel, historical character or relaxed way of life.

Known as the "Bed and Breakfast capital of East Texas," Jefferson makes a perfect winter getaway. Spend a few days at one

of Jefferson's bed and breakfasts or historic hotels forgetting all about yuletide to-do's, whiling away the hours on a porch swing or soaking in a clawfoot bathtub. Or finish up your holiday shopping downtown, where original brick streets and a profusion of antique shops lend a wholesome, old timey air.

Reminders of the town's colorful history are everywhere.

Jefferson is home to more state-registered historic structures than anywhere else in Texas, and many are also listed on The National Registry of Historic Places.

The 31st Annual Candlelight Tour of Homes, held the first two weekends

in December, takes you on a stroll through three private antebellum homes decked out for the season. For further holiday cheer, visit the Trail of Lights or the Enchanted Forest, which features more than 100 decorated trees.

Year-round activities range from tours of historical homes and museums to sightseeing by horse drawn carriage or steamboat. Caddo Lake, only a short drive away, offers paddling or boating adventures in one of the state's most lovely natural settings, an eerie wetland of ancient cypresses draped in Spanish moss.

More than just a quaint small town, Jefferson is a place that draws you into the past, leaving you with a greater appreciation for Texas' earliest days. ✦

SEE & DO

HISTORICAL HOME TOUR

Like many historical homes in Jefferson, the House of the Four Seasons displays elements of the Greek-Revival style of architecture. View fascinating period details and original furnishings. houseoftheseasons.com

STEAMBOAT RIDES

Board The Graceful Ghost to explore Caddo Lake on a replica 1800s-era paddle-wheel steamboat. En route, enjoy an intriguing narration of the history of Caddo Lake and the surrounding area. gracefulghost.com

SOUVENIR SHOPPING

An old-fashioned soda fountain and souvenir store in one, the Jefferson General Store is a refreshing stop during a day spent antique shopping in Jefferson's historic downtown. jeffersongeneralstore.com



Rail of Lights Christmas Train

MARCUS BURG | TAMMY DORIOT | JEFFERSON OFFICE OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT | FRANCENE DEPREZ RAINEY | HISTORIC JEFFERSON RAILWAY