



Harlingen, Texas
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Harlingen

Bright green-feathered parrots flit around jade-leafed palm trees. Colorful and elaborate murals adorn the side walls of historic buildings that house one-of-a-kind jewelry, antique, and art shops. Hundreds of acres of lush landscape provide the ideal platform for an outdoor escape. This is Harlingen, a veritable tropical playground where the sun shines throughout the year and the weather is always pleasant. Harlingen sits in the heart of the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas, a region that boasts a fascinating confluence of Mexican and American culture, an inexhaustible wealth of things to see and do, and some of the best birding in North America.





Harlingen was established in the beginning of the 20th century as a key station on a railroad line that ran from Brownsville to Corpus Christi. In its early days, it was the headquarters of the Texas Rangers and was once known as “Six-Shooter Junction” because of the pistol ranges that were next to the train station. Its people survived the struggles faced by many frontier towns in the Valley, including bandit attacks. Within the next 20 years, farmers and ranchers would begin growing cotton, citrus, and vegetables on the fertile land around town, starting a thriving agriculture industry that remains strong to this day. All of the town’s history is retold in the Harlingen Arts & History Museum, one of the top attractions in Harlingen.

Nowadays, Harlingen is a vibrant and bustling city that has plenty to offer. Birding and wildlife enthusiasts will find plenty of places where they can observe animals not seen anywhere else in the country, such as the Altamira oriole and the green jay. Although you can see these birds anywhere in town, your best bet may be to start at the Harlingen Arroyo Colorado, one of nine World Birding Center locations in the Valley. The Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge, located just east of Harlingen, is another option for nature lovers.

There are more than 500 acres of parks full of hiking and biking trails in Harlingen, as well as several public golf courses. All of this space to play in, combined with Harlingen’s nearly ideal year-round weather, makes the town a great four-season destination for anyone who enjoys being active. Downtown Harlingen, with its 20 spectacular murals and unique shops, restaurants, and cafes, is more than worth exploring as well. And if all of that isn’t enough for you, Harlingen is within 40 miles of the sandy beaches of South Padre Island, as well as the many things to experience in the other cities in the Valley.

Limitless natural beauty, some of the best birding in Texas, and plenty of fascinating experiences makes Harlingen a fantastic destination for just about any traveler.