MAEBASHI CITY HALL
CULTURAL AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS DIVISION
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MAEBASHI FOCUS

Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) Newsletter

Howdy, y'all! I hope the first month of the new year has been a fruitful one. I recently had the opportunity to return home for the first time in about half a year, and it reminded me just how different life in Southeast Texas can be. Being back made me notice how many small, everyday moments there feel uniquely Texan, even though they're things I often took for granted growing up. This month, I'd like to share a glimpse of that world by walking you through what a typical weekend might look like back home.

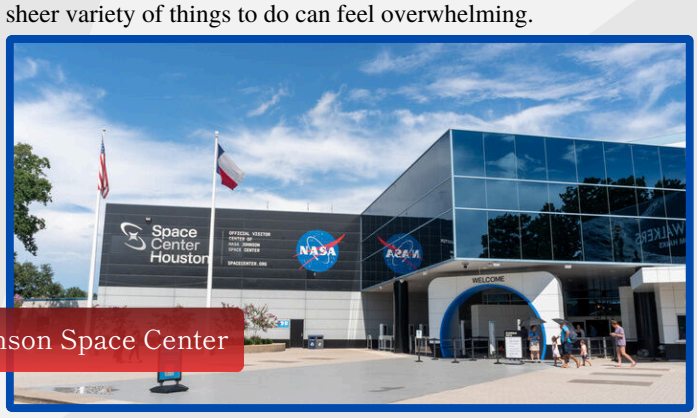
Saturday mornings usually start early, around 7 a.m. The house is quiet, the air is humid even in the winter, and breakfast is something filling enough to last most of the day. A classic plate might include eggs, bacon, and grits with toast, or one of my all-time favorites: biscuits and gravy.

If no one feels like cooking, we'll head out to a local donut shop, which in Texas almost always opens before sunrise. This is where you'll find kolaches, a Texas staple introduced by Czech immigrants. While kolaches were originally sweet pastries, the Texas version has evolved into something heartier and more savory. My personal favorite is the sausage, egg, and jalapeño kolache, but options range from ham and cheese to spicy varieties you won't find elsewhere. Breakfast burritos are another common choice, stuffed with eggs, meat, cheese, potatoes, beans, peppers, and salsa—perfect fuel for a long day ahead.

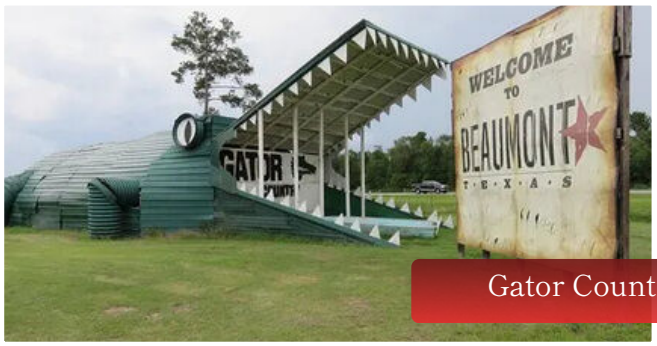
By around 9 a.m., we're usually piling into the car with friends and getting on Interstate 10, heading toward downtown Houston. In Southeast Texas, driving is a fact of life, and road trips—even short ones—are as much about the journey as the destination. Along the way, there are countless places to stop: Gator Country, where you can see massive alligators up close; the Sam Houston Monument, commemorating the man both the city and much of Texas history revolve around; NASA's Johnson Space Center; the historic USS Texas; or the boardwalk at Kemah, with its seafood restaurants and views of the bay.

Of course, no trip along I-10 would be complete without stopping at Buc-ee's. More than just a gas station, it's a Texas institution. People go out of their way to stop there for its famously clean bathrooms, enormous store, and surprisingly good food. It's almost a tradition to walk out with snacks, drinks, and maybe a brisket sandwich—my personal go-to—before continuing on the road.

As we approach downtown Houston, the skyline gradually comes into view, and familiar landmarks begin to appear: Minute Maid Park, home of the Houston Astros; the towering JPMorgan Chase Tower; and the Buffalo Bayou Cistern, a massive underground space that's now used for art installations. Once we arrive, the sheer variety of things to do can feel overwhelming.



Johnson Space Center



Gator Country

We might spend the afternoon at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts or the Museum of Natural Science—both places I've personally visited many times—each visit offering something new. Other options include the aquarium, the Houston Zoo, or POST Houston, a renovated former post office now filled with food stalls, art exhibits, and rooftop views of the city. Shopping enthusiasts might head to the Galleria, one of the largest malls in the region, while others may prefer relaxing at Hermann Park or strolling through Sam Houston Park, where historic buildings sit alongside modern skyscrapers.

Kim Tài/Sheba

After a full day of exploring, food once again becomes the highlight. Houston is famous for many things, but its food scene stands out above all else. Thanks to the city's incredible diversity, you can find cuisine from almost anywhere in the world—and at a level that truly rivals cities like New York. From mouthwatering Vietnamese food at Kim Tài to Yemeni dishes at Sheba, there's something for everyone. Whether we choose an old favorite or try somewhere new, dinner is often loud, lively, and shared over long conversations.

By around 7 p.m., we start the drive back home, tired but content. As the pink sunset fades over the flat Texas landscape, we reminisce about the day, already talking about what we'll do next time.