

By Jessica Chia



A favorite spot each year on the Ennis Bluebonnet Trail is this field along Sugar Ridge Road near Bristol, a small community a few miles north of the city. Photo by Sandy Anderson.

## Ennis bursts with bluebonnets

**T**exas is proud of its bluebonnets, and few cities promote the state flower more during April than Ennis.

The city, about a 90-minute drive northeast of Waco, was designated as the Official Bluebonnet City of Texas by the 1997 Texas Legislature.

Forty miles of roads around Ennis make up the Official Bluebonnet Trail of Texas and draw thousands of visitors who either drive the trail themselves or are part of a group tour.

"We have so many repeat people because they love the countryside. It's very hilly, there are beautiful fields," said Gina Rokas, tourism director for the Ennis Tourism and Visitors Bureau. "We have the flowers, we have the wildlife, and sometimes we have

goats and horses. (Visitors) love the animals, and they love being able to take pictures of their kids or family.

"At the visitors bureau, we let people know where the best places to take pictures are. We know exactly where to send people."

Free maps are available at the Ennis Convention and Visitors bureau. Groups in buses may arrange to have a step-on tour guide ride along for \$50.

The blooming of bluebonnets depends upon rainfall and temperature and can vary not only annually but daily. Visitors are encouraged to check the Ennis Convention and Visitors Bureau website or call ahead for the status of the bluebonnets, which will be assessed each day by members of the Ennis Garden Club.

The trail is open all of April, and the Ennis Bluebonnet Trails Festival will be April 21-22. It's scheduled to coincide with the peak of the bluebonnets' bloom, which occurs typically the third week in April.

"We normally pick the third week of April, but I think (the peak is) going to be earlier this year, based on the rain and the weather we've been getting," Rokas said. "Check the website, because we will definitely let people know there."

The festival, commemorating the Ennis Bluebonnet Trails' 61st anniversary, runs from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. both Saturday and Sunday. The festival is free and hosts more than 50 vendor booths featuring original art, handmade crafts, jewelry and other souvenirs.

Sandy Anderson, co-chair of the

Ennis Bluebonnet Trails Festival, said people from all over come to enjoy the flowers.

"We have people from Colorado, Oklahoma, Louisiana and from all over Texas," she said. "We have a lot of senior citizens that come, and they love it. Children love the wildflowers, and a lot of people bring their dogs."

True to Ennis' Czech heritage, kolaches and klobase sandwiches will be available alongside other fare such as roasted corn, lemonade and hot dogs.

A free John Denver tribute concert is set for early Saturday afternoon featuring vocalist Roy Rivers and Steve Weisberg, former lead guitarist for Denver's band.

The North Texas Studebaker Club's Antique American Independent Automobile Show will feature antique vehicles for viewing from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. Saturday on North Main Street in downtown Ennis.

The family-oriented festival also will feature fee-based activities for children, including a rock-climbing wall, petting zoo and pony rides.



Photo by Barbara Thomas.

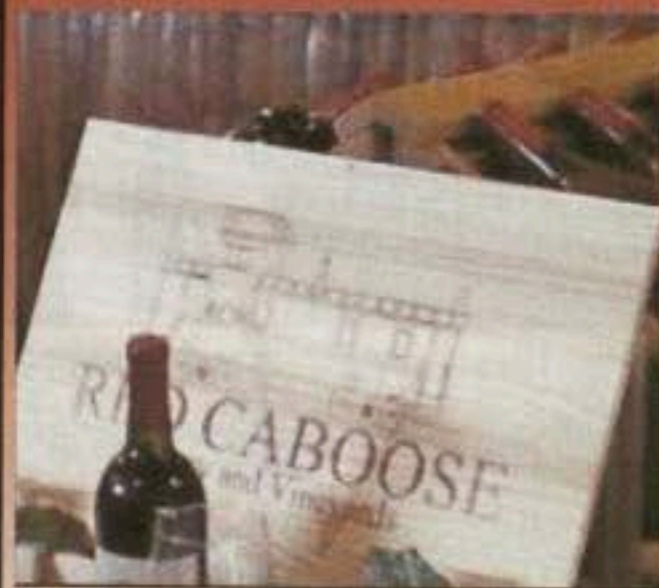
Trail visitors can participate in the Ennis Convention and Visitors Bureau's 14th annual Bloomin' Bluebonnet photo contest by submitting their best bluebonnet trail shots to the visitors bureau by May 31.

Bluebonnet photos are judged in three categories: children and family, animals

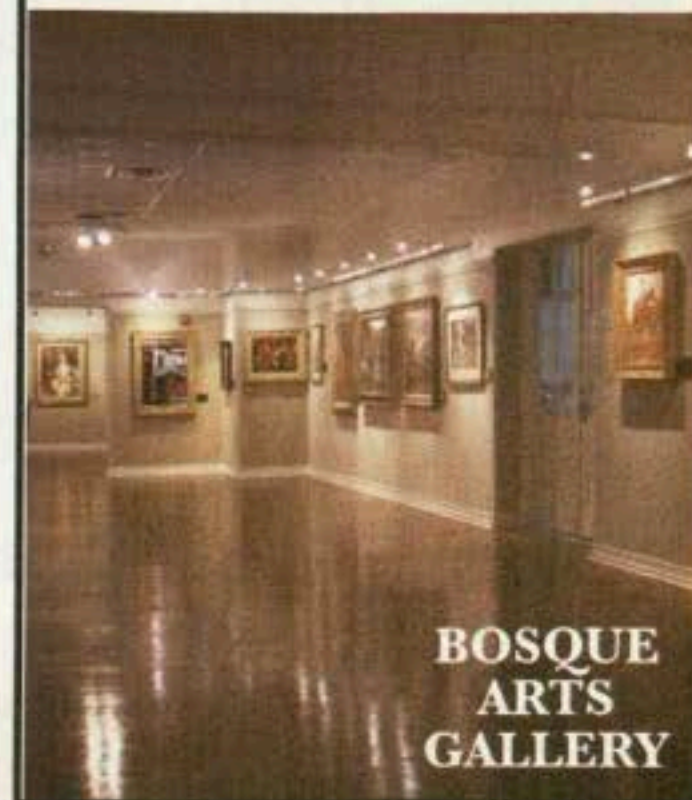
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**CLIFTON CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**Sunday, April 1-16**  
**BAC Bosque County**  
**Photography Show**  
Adult & Student Divisions

**Saturday, April 7**  
**Easter in the Park**  
Starts at 11 am,  
Over 4,000 eggs to be found,  
Serving hot dogs until 1:00

**Friday, April 13-14**  
**4th Annual "Mind's Eye"**  
**Artisan Craft Show/Sale**  
Celebrate the traditions and fine  
craftmanship of Central Texas Artisans

**Saturday, April 14**  
**Bosque Arts Center Big Event**  
Annual fundraiser for the Bosque Arts Center  
featuring catered dinner & live auction.

**Saturday, April 28**  
**Clifton Swirl**  
The Clifton Main Street Program invites you to Sip,  
Swirl, and Shop in Historic Downtown Clifton.

See [clifontexas.org](http://clifontexas.org) calendar for more details

# Who's who

Greater Waco Chamber membership banquet at Waco Convention Center  
Photos by Michael Bancale



Tonette Holle, Wiley Stem



Candace Treadway, Brandon Treadway



Danny Pryor, Pam Pryor

These photos and many more are available to buy at [www.wacotrib.com](http://www.wacotrib.com)



Some people can't resist dressing up their pets for a photo in the bluebonnets. Photo by Harriett Adams.

and scenic views. Winning entries will be presented on the bureau's website.

Like its bluebonnets, Ennis' tourism peaks in April with an estimated 100,000 visitors. Rokas advises to reserve lodging ahead of time.

Both Anderson and Rokas expect the bluebonnets to be particularly plentiful in April.

"We're just real excited," Anderson said. "We're going to have a really good year."

## Bluebonnet trails and festival

**Where:** The festival is at Pierce Park on Northwest Main Street in downtown Ennis. The trails are throughout the area.

**When:** The festival is April 21-22, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Driving directions:** Take Interstate 35 North 32 miles to U.S. Highway 77. Turn onto U.S. Highway 77 North and travel another 15 miles to State Highway 34.

Take State Highway 34 North another 20 miles to Ennis. Estimated travel time from Waco is about 90 minutes.

**Cost:** Free.

**Online:** Go to [visitennis.org](http://visitennis.org) or to the Ennis Convention and Visitors Bureau's Facebook page.

**More information:** Call 972-878-4748 or email [ennis4u@swbell.net](mailto:ennis4u@swbell.net).