

Flatonia

This 144-year-old railroad town still has plenty of steam—take a detour off I-10 for a nostalgic downtown experience.



Some people think Flatonia is too far off the map, says James Longmire, owner of the old Lyric Theater on South Main Street. But Longmire points out that the town is halfway between Houston and San Antonio and halfway between Austin and Corpus Christi. “We’re right in the middle of nowhere but also the middle of everywhere,” he says.

Flatonia’s historic downtown, less than a mile from the interstate and just off the tracks of the Southern Pacific Railroad, offers a glimpse of its late-19th-century roots and present-day charm. Once a railroad boarding house, the 11-room Olle Hotel dates back to 1899, with leather and craft shop Hairgrove Saddlery and Gifts located in an 1870s warehouse just around the corner. Other century-old downtown structures play host to businesses or to tantalizing modern cuisine and libations, such as the renowned Red Vault Bistro and the Wine Haus. Rail fans and history lovers can schedule a stop at the Central Texas Rail History Center and the E.A. Arnim Archives and Museum.

Some citizens of Flatonia are lifelong natives; others are transplants from the big city seeking a slower pace or a bigger piece of land and sky. But if you’re wondering about that *je ne sais quoi* that draws people here, you might consider Longmire’s story of renovating the Lyric, where he found a 14-cent ticket lost between the floorboards: The town is changing, but evidence of the past is always just beneath the surface. ♣

SEE & DO

CZHILISPIEL OCT. 27-29, 2017

Honoring the town’s Czech and German heritage and attracting more than 15,000 visitors, this annual event includes music, a tented biergarten, a cook-off, arts and crafts, food booths, a carnival, a 5k run, a golf tournament, a parade, dancing, and of course the infamous “Czhili” itself.

CRAWFEST APRIL 2018

All-you-can-eat crawfish and sides are the main events but stick around for the auctions, raffles, live music and more.

Story | KATHRYN HUNTER

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