

Quality of Life

Arts

McAllen is an area with a burgeoning arts culture. Known state-wide for the quality and quantity of its artists, the city is now emphasizing and enhancing those resources through many special events such as the McAllen Chamber of Commerce's Cultural Arts and Entertainment Series, annual Art and Film Festival, a live outdoor music concert series called Music After Hours which presents local musicians twice per month October through May, and South of the City Limits Entertainment Series at the downtown El Rey Theater; Broadway in McAllen; the McAllen Chamber of Commerce's Creative Incubator, offering support to up and coming artists of all disciplines; Artwalk every first Friday September through May; and the October city-wide arts and entertainment festival Palmfest.

There is public art such as downtown murals, visual art in restaurants and other public buildings, a variety of styles of live music offered at numerous evening restaurants and other establishments, and sculptures along McAllen's hike and bike trails.

Dodge Arena, the area's, 6,000 seat arena, is home not only to professional ice hockey, basketball and arena football teams, but also to top name entertainment musicians and other professional entertainers.

McAllen is also home of the International Museum of Art and Science, an educational community center which preserves the past, records the present, and provides perspective for the future. The museum is home of the nation's largest collection of Mexican folk art, with over 3,000 pieces. Affiliated with the Smithsonian system, the museum has both permanent and visiting exhibitions, and is particularly known for its interactive children's section.

Wildlife

The Rio Grande Valley is the most popular birding and butterflying location in the U.S., and people visit from all over the globe to see some of the bird and butterfly species that can be found nowhere else in the entire country. The area is the most biologically diverse in the nation, so wildlife watchers and photographers have myriad opportunities to view and record local flora and fauna.

The area hosts dozens of wildlife watching sites. Quinta Mazatlan, McAllen's Wing of the World Birding Center, is the city's interpretive nature education center, with not only birding trails but also various programs for families and especially for children. Quinta Mazatlan is also home of Wild Walk, McAllen's outdoor educational festival for schoolchildren, and of McAllen's annual Vida Verde festival, educating residents about sustainability practices, held every spring.

The city's hike and bike trails and other private and public native landscaping bring the colorful neotropical bird species we're so famous for right into the city.

Outdoor sports

For those who enjoy the outdoors, there are also several fine golf courses that are open year round with very reasonable green fees. And because the weather is so temperate, the courses are filled with avid golfers, often in shirt sleeves, even in January and February. Other sports such as walking, rollerblading and jogging are popular along the city's hike and bike trails, and tennis and soccer are other pastimes that locals and visitors can enjoy year-round.

Kayaking and canoeing along the Rio Grande are other activities growing in popularity. Free guided trips are offered each Saturday by the non-profit Los Caminos del Rio.

Winter activities

McAllen is also a major snowbird, or Winter Texan, destination. Many activities are geared to these northern visitors, from entertainment events to volunteer options. McAllen is known as the Square Dance Capital of the World, and many Winter Texans visit to square dance seven days a week to internationally renowned callers.

Worship

The area has hundreds of Catholic and Protestant churches, synagogues and mosques, with many offering services in both English and Spanish.

Accommodations

The City of McAllen has 33 hotels with 3,300 rooms. Over 700 more rooms are scheduled to be built within the next 2 years. Current hotels include many major chains, from full-service convention hotels such as a Renaissance Marriott, Embassy Suites, and Hilton to economy hotels. Several are extended stay facilities. In addition, some long-term visitors choose to stay in one of the hundreds of area RV parks, second homes or apartments.

A limited amount of camping sites is also available nearby.

City Amenities

Retail and restaurants are two of McAllen's great strengths. You can find most of the chains you expect to find in a city, and many local specialty shops as well.

While much of the new growth in town is toward the north, McAllen's Palms Crossing, in the Convention Center District, is the newest large shopping and dining area. New restaurants Macaroni Grill, PF Chang's, BJ's Brewhouse and Cracker Barrel have all opened their doors, along with a vibrant collection of retail stores. The Convention Center District now joins North 10th Street, downtown McAllen, the Las Tiendas shopping area, and La Plaza Mall as a major shopping area in the city.

As our City becomes more culturally diverse, a larger number of specialty stores have also appeared. There are Japanese and Filipino groceries, several health food stores offering organic products, and fresh fruit and vegetable stores open seasonally.

The city offers in-town bus service, hike and bike trails and a new parking garage downtown. American and Continental provide jet flights daily to McAllen International Airport, and Allegiant flies directly to Las Vegas and, in the summers, Orlando.

McAllen's new 175,000 square foot Convention Center hosts state, regional, national and international conventions, bringing in thousands of convention attendees and pouring millions of new dollars into the city economy. It also hosts local events, including professional basketball, adding much to the quality of life for McAllen residents. The Center features a 62,000 square foot Exhibition Hall, a 10,000 square foot Ballroom, 16 breakout rooms, and a spacious foyer/reception area.