



CITY OF  
Port Isabel, Texas  
*Beacon by the Bay!*





**JOE E. VEGA**  
*Mayor of Port Isabel*  
305 E. Maxan St.  
Port Isabel, Texas 78578  
956/943-2682



**Greetings:**

Welcome to beautiful Port Isabel! If you are just here for a short visit or are interested in a permanent relocation, the City of Port Isabel wants to make sure your experience is everything you want it to be and more.

Just visiting? You can experience the rich history of the Laguna Madre in the Port Isabel Historical Museum, the Treasures of the Gulf Museum and the Port Isabel Lighthouse. Or dine in a variety of fine restaurants, shop for souvenirs, or just relax and soak up our coastal ambiance. For the sportsman, the hyper saline Laguna Madre Bay where you can fish for a wide variety of species including trout, redfish, drum or the prized and elusive snook borders Port Isabel. Well over a dozen different species can be catchable in a single day. Soak up the sun on South Padre Island, one of the top three beaches in the world, just 2.6 miles across the Queen Isabella Memorial Bridge. Take a dolphin watch, eco tour, pirate cruise, a walk on the longest pier in Texas, walk or bike the trails or enjoy a movie projected on the side of the Port Isabel Lighthouse. Annual events include the Lighted Boat Parade, Queen Isabella Market Day, Lighthouse Market Day, the Longest Causeway Run & Fitness Walk, Los Colores Del Muerte ( Day of the Dead Festival),

Pachanga in the Park in Washington Park, Lighting of the Christmas Tree and Holiday Lights, Santa Mobile, and the World Championship Shrimp Cook-Off.

If you are interested in relocating your family, Port Isabel can offer good schools, a well equipped public library system, sport and community parks, community gathering facilities, active sports programs, a Boys and Girls Club and a great quality of life. With a population of 5,078, Port Isabel is big on everything you would expect to find in a small town. And with a climate that is mild all year around, residents can enjoy all the amenities that the visitor can.

Relocating or starting a business? Port Isabel also boasts a healthy business community with everything from light industry to retail to commercial and fosters a strong entrepreneurial climate that produces charter captains, artists, restaurateurs, retail specialty shops and support industries.

The City of Port Isabel, the Commissioners and the Mayor's Office welcome and invite you to immerse yourself in the Port Isabel experience. Please let us know if we can be of any assistance to your travel or relocation plans.

Sincerely Yours,  
*Joe E. Vega,*  
Mayor



# THE CITY OF PORT ISABEL

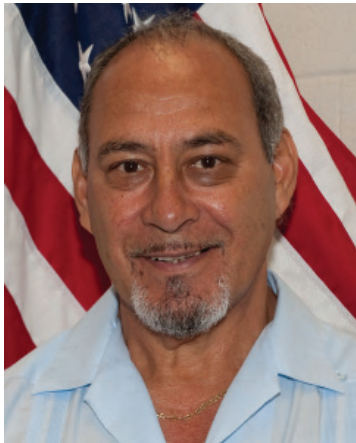
The City of Port Isabel is a Home Rule Municipal Government established on March 23, 1928. City offices are located at 305 E. Maxan Street which also includes the office of the Port Isabel Economic Development Corporation. Hours: Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Phone: 956/943-2682.

Elected officials pictured to the right are: Mayor Joe E. Vega, City Commissioner Place 1 Juan Jose “JJ” Zamora, City Commissioner Place 2 Maria de Jesus “MJ” Garza, City Commissioner Place 3 Martin C. Cantu, City Commissioner Place 4 Guillermo “Memo” Torres. The City is managed by Edward Meza.

City of Port Isabel Code of Ordinances: [http://www.amlegal.com/portisabel\\_tx](http://www.amlegal.com/portisabel_tx)



MAYOR  
Joe E. Vega



CITY COMMISSIONER  
Place 1  
Juan Jose “JJ” Zamora



CITY COMMISSIONER  
Place 2  
Maria de Jesus “MJ” Garza



CITY COMMISSIONER  
Place 3  
Martin C. Cantu



CITY COMMISSIONER  
Place 4  
Guillermo “Memo” Torres



City Staff in front of City Hall represent the departments of Finance, Library, Museum, Public works, Social Services, City Secretary, Municipal Courts, Animal Control, Animal Shelter, Health, Building, Fire Department, Police Department, Parks & Recreation, Code Enforcement, EMS and the Housing Department.



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**PORT ISABEL** is situated in the eastern portion of Cameron County, just 2.6 miles from South Padre Island. Population: 5, 033 (2011). Elevation: 27 ft. Land area: 2.20 miles

COUNTY	POPULATION	LARGEST CITIES
Cameron County	415,557	Brownsville, Harlingen, South Padre Island, Port Isabel, San Benito, Los Fresnos, Laguna Vista
Hidalgo County	806,552	McAllen, Mission, Edinburg, Pharr, Weslaco, Mercedes, Hidalgo, Alamo, Donna, Ed Couch, Progresso, Elsa
Starr County	61,614	Rio Grande City, Roma
Webb County	259,172	Laredo, Rio Bravo
Willacy County	22,058	Raymondville, Lyford, Port Mansfield
Kenedy County	431	
Kleberg County	32,025	Kingsville
Brooks County	7,161	Falfurrias
Jim Hogg County	5,249	
Zapata County	14,290	
Duval County	11,717	
Jim Wells County	41,754	Alice

**Total Area Population** 1,677,580

(2012 Population Estimate, [www.quickfacts.census.gov](http://www.quickfacts.census.gov))

Nearest city with population over 50,000+:

19.6 miles- **Brownsville** (139,722)

Nearest city with population over 200,000+:

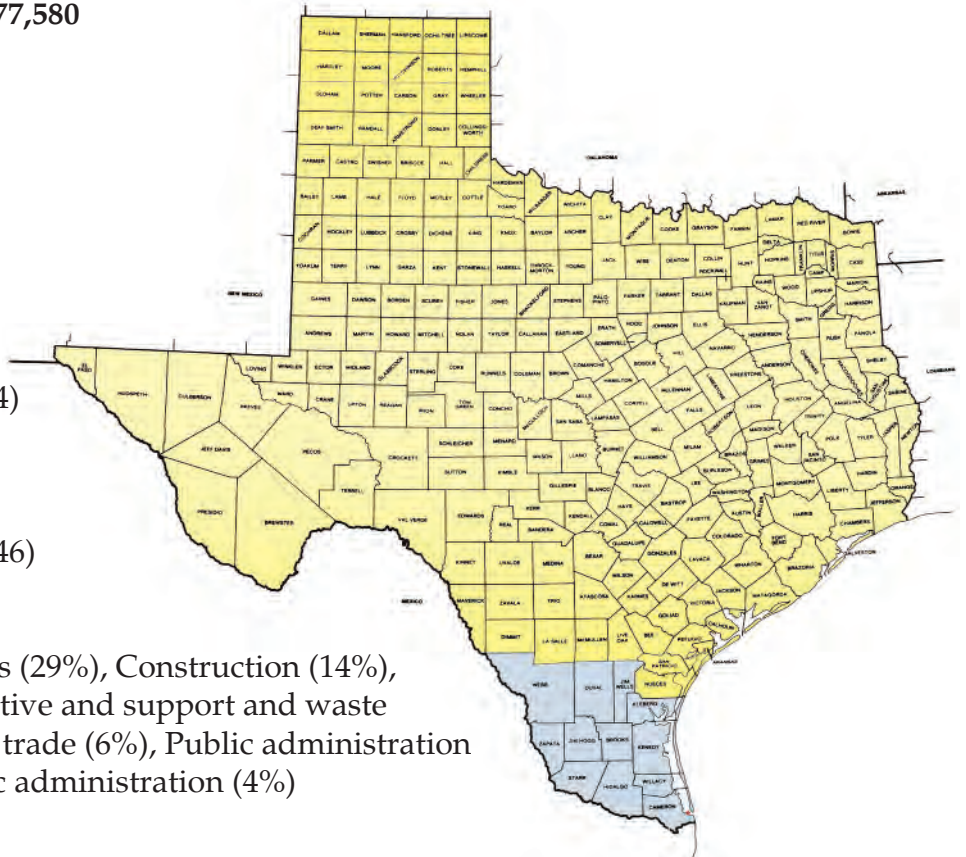
116 miles- **Corpus Christi** (277,454)

Nearest city with population over 1,000,000+:

246.8 miles- **San Antonio** (1,144,646)

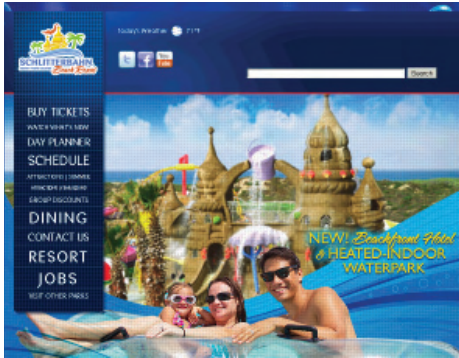
**Most common occupations:**

Accommodation and food services (29%), Construction (14%), Manufacturing (14%), Administrative and support and waste management services (8%), Retail trade (6%), Public administration (5%), Other services, except public administration (4%)





## AREA ATTRACTIONS



**Schlitterbahn Beach Waterpark** is located 3 miles from Port Isabel.

33261 State Park Road 100,  
South Padre Island, Texas  
[www.schlitterbahn.com/spi/](http://www.schlitterbahn.com/spi/)

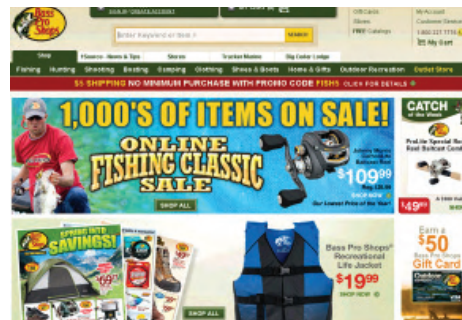


**Pirates Landing** in Port Isabel, the **Black Dragon Pirate Ship**, the **Buccaneer** and the **Thriller**  
888-867-7739 (888-8-OSPREY)  
501 East Maxan Street  
Port Isabel, Texas 78578



**Rio Grande Valley Premium Outlets**, located 53 miles west of Port Isabel.

5001 East Expressway 83  
Mercedes, TX 78570  
(956) 565-3900  
[www.premiumoutlets.com/riograndevalley/](http://www.premiumoutlets.com/riograndevalley/)



**Bass Pro Shops** is located 43 miles west of Port Isabel.

101 Bass Pro Drive  
Harlingen, Texas 78552  
(956) 291-5200  
[www.basspro.com](http://www.basspro.com)



**Gladys Porter Zoo**, located 23 miles from Port Isabel

500 Ringgold Street  
Brownsville, Texas 78520  
(956) 546-7187  
[www.gpz.org](http://www.gpz.org)

## ACTIVITIES & ATTRACTIONS

Camille Playhouse  
Island Equestrian  
Port Isabel Lighthouse  
Sea Turtle Inc.  
UT-Pan American University  
Coastal Studies Lab  
Iwo Jima Memorial  
Jackson Street District  
Our Lady of San Juan del Valle  
National Shrine  
Travel Information Center  
Scenic Drive - TX 4 Brownsville to Boca Chica Beach

## BEACHES

Beach at South Padre Island  
Isla Blanca Park  
Andy Bowie Park  
Boca Chica Beach

## BIRDING

South Padre Island Convention & Visitors Center  
South Padre Island Birding & Nature Center  
Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge  
National Audubon Society Bird Sanctuary Green Island  
National Audubon Society Bird Sanctuary Medio Island  
Arroyo Park / C.B. Wood Park  
Brownsville Sanitary Landfill  
Frontera Audubon Thicket  
Harlingen City Lake Park  
Hugh Ramsey Nature Park  
NOAA Brownsville Weather Forecast Office  
Port of Harlingen  
Sabal Palm Audubon Center & Sanctuary  
The Valley Nature Center  
The Weslaco Wetlands

(continued...)



TPWD Coastal Fisheries Field Station  
 TX 48 Scenic Drive  
 World Birding Center  
 Harlingen Arroyo Colorado  
 World Birding Center Resaca  
 De La Palma State Park



**GOLF**

Long Island Village  
 South Padre Island Golf Club  
 Brownsville Municipal Golf Course  
 Cottonwood Creek Country Club  
 Fort Brown Memorial Golf Course  
 Harlingen Country Club  
 Rancho Viejo Country Club  
 Raymondville Golf Course  
 River Bend Country Club  
 Stuart Place Country Club  
 Tony Butler Municipal Golf Course  
 Treasure Hills Country Club  
 Valley International Country Club  
 Village Executive Golf Course



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**HISTORIC SITES**

1554 Wrecks on Padre Island  
 Point Isabel Lighthouse  
 Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Park  
 1912 Cameron County Jail  
 Home of Chas. Stillman  
 Sacred Heart Catholic Church  
 Yturria Bank  
 Cameron County Courthouse  
 Clarksville (Ghost Town)  
 Fort Brown  
 Harlingen Historical Downtown  
 Resaca De La Palma Battlefield  
 Willacy County Courthouse



**MUSEUMS**

Museums of Port Isabel  
 Treasures of the Gulf Museum  
 Raymondville Historical Center  
 Brownsville Art League & Museum  
 Brownsville Heritage Museum  
 Childrens Museum of Brownsville  
 Harlingen Arts & Heritage Museum  
 Historic Brownsville Museum  
 International Museum of Art & Science  
 Iwo Jima Memorial Museum  
 Mission Historical Museum  
 Museum of South Texas History  
 Narciso Martinez Cultural Arts Center



Smitty's Juke Box Museum  
 Stillman House Museum  
 Weslaco Bicultural Museum

**PARKS**

Andy Bowie County Park (SPI)  
 Isla Blanca Park (SPI)  
 Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge  
 Port Mansfield Nature Park  
 Boca Chica State Park/WMA  
 Brazos Island State Park  
 Estero Llano Grande State Park  
 Hugh Ramsey Nature Park  
 La Feria Nature Center  
 Lon C Hill Park  
 Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Park  
 Resaca De La Palma State Park





## FISHING

Port Isabel and the Laguna Madre area are home to dozens of fishing guides specializing in bay, offshore and fly fishing charters. From the party boat to the customized trip, full day or half day, these captains represent decades and generations of experience angling the Laguna Madre Bay and the Gulf of Mexico.

This area of the Texas Gulf Coast offers the only fishable snook population

outside of Florida. Speckled trout, flounder, black drum, sheepshead, Spanish mackerel, kingfish, mangrove snapper, barracudas, jack crevalle, shark, grouper and more are within a sinker's throw of Port Isabel. Offshore, ling, bonito, blackfin and yellow tuna, sailfish, wahoo, marlin and more are just a short boat ride from Port Isabel.

Port Isabel is home to the longest lighted pier in Texas. Boat ramps offer quick access to the Laguna Madre Bay and offshore waters and bait stands

supply both tackle and advice.

A number of fishing tournaments are hosted in Port Isabel and on South Padre Island attracting anglers and boats from all over the United States and Mexico. Many encourage conservation by tag and release programs.

The Port Isabel & South Padre Island Fishing Guides Association (see below), <http://www.fishspi.com/>, contains some helpful information about the fishing charter industry in the lower Laguna Madre Area.

**THE PORT ISABEL & SOUTH PADRE ISLAND FISHING GUIDES ASSOCIATION**

HOME GUIDES LIST SPONSORS WEATHER & TIDES LINKS LOGIN

**PORT ISABEL & SOUTH PADRE ISLAND FISHING GUIDES ASSOCIATION**

maintains a listing of members that offer bay and offshore fishing charters.

**South Padre Island has a mild sub-tropical climate so you can enjoy fishing throughout the year.**

**FISHING THE SOUTH TEXAS COAST**



## TACKLE SHOPS & MARINAS

Port Isabel has several tackle shops and marinas that offer bait, tackle, supplies, licenses and guided fishing trips. Looking for advice on where to drop a line? Drop in to any of the the bait and tackle shops and gather information on where to fish, who to fish with and what to fish with. For more information visit [www.portisabel.org/fishing](http://www.portisabel.org/fishing). For State of Texas Fishing Regulations, log on to the Texas Parks and Wildlife website: [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/).

## BOAT RAMPS

Four boat ramps are available in the Port Isabel area. The White Sands ramp is available for their customers and guests. Park Center charges a small fee. The San Martin Launch on State Highway 48 and Port Isabel City Boat Ramp on Pompano Street are both free and open to the public.

## FISHING PIERS

Texas' longest fishing pier, the Pirate's Landing Fishing Pier, is located at the base of the Queen Isabella Memorial Bridge in Port Isabel. The pier provides fishermen an excellent angling platform for both day and night fishing.

## FISHING GUIDES

Port Isabel is home to numerous quality fishing guides. From bait fishing to fly fishing to party boats, there is a guide for every type of angling pursuit on the Lower Laguna Madre. For a complete listing of area fishing guides visit [www.portisabel.org](http://www.portisabel.org).

## TOURNAMENTS

The Lower Laguna Madre plays host to a variety of tournaments throughout the year, including the state's largest saltwater fishing tournament, the Texas International Fishing Tournament which is held the first weekend in August annually.

[WWW.PORTISABEL.ORG/FISHING](http://WWW.PORTISABEL.ORG/FISHING)

## BEYOND BAY FISHING

Although fishing the Lower Laguna Madre is foremost on mind of most fishermen visiting Port Isabel, there are other angling options. Just a short drive across the Queen Isabella Memorial Bridge, South Padre Island offers excellent surf and jetty fishing. And, no other stretch of Texas coast offers such a variety of offshore species so close to shore - kingfish, ling, bonito, blackfin and yellowfin tuna, sailfish, wahoo, marlin and more swim within striking distance of the south Texas coastline.



- 1 Gulf of Mexico
  - 2 North Jetty
  - 3 South Jetty
  - 4 Boca Chica Beach
  - 5 Gulf Intracoastal Water Way on the Lower Laguna Madre Bay
  - 6 Pirates Landing Fishing Pier
  - 7 South Bay
  - 8 Brazos Santiago Pass
  - 9 Brownsville Ship Channel
  - 10 Bahia Grande Wetlands
- PORT ISABEL**  
**Chamber of Commerce**  
**1-800-527-6102**  
 421 E. Queen Isabella Blvd. [www.portisabel.org](http://www.portisabel.org)

# FISHING!

## PORT ISABEL, TEXAS



Flounder



Spot Tail Red

Where to get more info!  
What you can catch!  
Where to fish!

# GATEWAY TO THE WATERS OF THE TEXAS TROPICS!

of available species and the clearest water on the Texas Gulf Coast make Port Isabel the perfect destination for an angling vacation.

**THE LOWER LAGUNA MADRE** has long been famous for producing high quantities of quality speckled trout. In fact, the current Texas state record and numerous IGFA line class world records have come from these waters.

**AS IS THE CASE ALONG THE ENTIRE** Gulf Coast, redfish are a top draw for anglers in the Lower Laguna Madre. With miles of shallow, clear grass flats, the Lower Laguna is an ideal playground for anyone hoping to tangle with big redfish.

**PERHAPS THE MOST OVERLOOKED TARPON** fishery in the entire country lies just a few miles from Port Isabel Small Boat Channel. The Brazos Santiago Pass, which connects the Lower Laguna Madre to the Gulf of Mexico is the seasonal home to Silver Kings from April through November. Fish ranging from 20 to 200 pounds can be encountered during the prime tarpon months, which run July through October.

**BOASTING THE ONLY** fishable snook population in the continental United States outside south Florida, the Lower Laguna Madre is home to lunker line-siders throughout the year. During the summer and fall, snook can consistently be found over the shallow flats of the Lower Laguna. During the winter and spring, they are typically found in the port areas.

**MORE THAN ANYTHING,** anglers can expect a diverse catch when they visit the Lower Laguna Madre. In addition to species such as redfish, speckled trout, snook and tarpon, fishermen routinely encounter flounder, Spanish mackerel, kingfish, mangrove snapper, barracudas, jack crevalle, black drum, sheepshead, shark, ladyfish, lookdowns, grouper and many other types of saltwater fish - many of which aren't found elsewhere on the Texas coast.

**LOCATED** at the southern end of Texas' famed Lower Laguna Madre Bay, scant miles above the U.S./Mexico border, Port Isabel has beckoned to generations of saltwater fishermen. Anglers fishing these clear, shallow waters today can easily see why fishermen have flocked here for nearly a century. The diversity of game fish species swimming in the waters surrounding Port Isabel is unlike that found anywhere else along the Texas Gulf Coast. And, with miles of shallow grass flats teeming with fish, anglers have plenty of room to roam and can easily find a secluded spot to fish - a luxury not often afforded on other crowded coastal waters. The combination of moderate year-around weather, dozens





## RETAIL SALES

Port Isabel is home to a wide variety of retail sales outlets. From Sutherlands Lumber and Home Improvement to Wal-Mart to H.E.B. groceries, an art gallery, drug store and dozens of specialty shops including stores offering merchandise to support all the outdoor experiences that the lower Laguna Madre area features.

## CAMERON COUNTY RETAIL SALES:

	2012 3rd Qtr.	2012 3rd Qtr.
Outlets	7,534	7,996
Gross Sales	\$1,623,278,517	\$1,575,624,095
Percent Change:	+3.0%	
Taxable:	\$683,733,924	

Year	Qtr.	Gross Sales	Taxable	Outlets
2010	1	36,273,822	18,661,887	192
2010	2	41,274,700	21,924,897	193
2010	3	43,969,033	23,430,401	196
2010	4	34,564,659	16,540,701	256
Total		156,082,214	80,557,886	
2011	1	38,079,224	18,612,316	211
2011	2	42,219,250	21,812,761	207
2011	3	45,560,145	23,186,592	216
2011	4	38,171,579	16,210,248	270
Total		164,030,198	79,821,917	
2012	1	38,755,563	19,572,095	209
2012	2	44,917,712	24,362,962	217
2012	3	48,128,767	24,828,808	213
Total		131,802,042	68,763,865	



© Valerie D. Bates



**The downtown and Historic District have been carefully cultured to encourage business and projects that reflects Port Isabel's unique coastal experience. The resulting balance of locally owned shops catering to the tourist or gift shopper and franchise stores offering complete staples serve to keep the Laguna Madre area economy circulating locally.**



## INCENTIVES

### **Texas Enterprise Fund:**

The Texas Enterprise Fund (TEF) is the largest “deal-closing” fund of its kind in the nation. The fund is used as a final incentive tool for projects that offer significant projected job creation and capital investment and where a single Texas site is competing with another viable out-of-state option.

### **Texas Emerging Technology Fund:**

The Texas Emerging Technology Fund (TETF) provides Texas with an unparalleled advantage in the research, development, and commercialization of emerging technologies by offering grants to recruit the best research talent in the world and to help companies take ideas from concept to development to the marketplace.

### **Grants:**

From public infrastructure projects in non-entitlement communities to cancer research and laboratory facility construction, several types of grants are available to Texas communities and businesses.

### **Revolving Loan Program:**

The Port Isabel RLP is funded by the Port Isabel EDC and a grant from the USDA Rural Enterprise Business Grant program. The revolving loan program works by lending money out to businesses and as the loan is paid back, the collected money is then used to lend out to other businesses. Qualified applicants for this loan program are businesses which have 50 employees or less, and earn less than \$1 million dollars in gross revenues annually. Loans are available for working capital, construction, renovations, land and property acquisition. The RLP is managed by Reyna & Associates (956) 583-7431.



*Port Isabel is located in eastern Cameron County, just 2.6 miles from South Padre Island!*



*The Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, the Port Isabel Side Channel and the Laguna Madre Bay surround Port Isabel offering lots of water related and relaxing recreational activities!*





## Port Isabel Event Center

The Port Event Center is coming FALL 2013! With over 7,500 square feet of event space and conveniently located just one block from Highway 100, the Port Isabel Event Center will offer a flexible and affordable event experience.

Conveniently located just one block off Highway 100 in the center of Garcia Street, Railroad Avenue, Hickman Street and Manatou Street, the Port Isabel Event Center offers a charming coastal location as the perfect backdrop for your event or celebration!

With construction on schedule for a Fall 2013 completion date it's not too early to make plans for your event! It is our mission to offer both an affordable and a high quality meeting location for Port Isabel's citizens and visitors, with amenities, ambience and hospitality to make your occasion a lifetime memory!

### Groundbreaking for PI Visitor & Events Center held 7/21/2012

After a decade of planning the City of Port Isabel kicked off the Port Isabel Visitor and Events Center

and Emergency Operation Center construction phase on Saturday, July 21, 2012.

Over 100 gathered including community members, elected officials and dignitaries as the first shovels ceremoniously turned site soil over.

From left to right in photo below: Ron Lindsay, Colair Inc.; George Lazado, Project Engineer, Fulcrum Consulting Services; Edward Meza, City Manager; Guillermo "Memo" Torres, City Commissioner and EDC Board Member; Maria de Jesus "MJ" Garza, City Commissioner and EDC Board Member; Mayor Joe E. Vega and son; Inocente Zurita, EDC Board Member; Robin Ochoa, EDC Board Member; Mario Gonzalez- Davis, Special Projects Coordinator; Roel Gomez, USDA Rural Development Area Director; Glenda Stafford, Community Center Board Member; Manuel Hinojosa, Architect, Ero Architects.

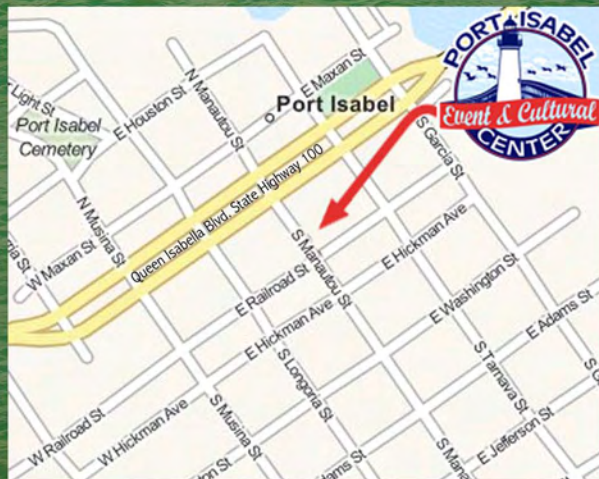




*Where we are...*

Port Isabel is located in deep south Texas, in eastern Cameron County on the shores of the Laguna Madre and just 2.6 miles from South Padre Island!

The Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, the Port Isabel Side Channel and the Laguna Madre Bay surround Port Isabel offering lots of water related and relaxing recreational activities! Museums, shopping, dining, entertainment and activities are all located within walking distance of the Port Isabel Event & Cultural Center.



The Port Isabel Event & Cultural Center offers over 9,000 square feet of divisible, flexible and elegant ballrooms ideal for receptions, corporate meetings and social events. The two beautifully appointed ballrooms are well suited for meetings or conferences and perfect for social events. The Port Isabel Event & Cultural Center is more than a place you'll simply settle for, it's the one you will prefer!

- Prep kitchen to accommodate your favorite caterer
- Convenient location
- Free on-site parking, with handicap accessibility
- Boardroom / Media room
- A list of suppliers, including caterers, florists, linens and audio / visual equipment
- Tables and chairs
- Nonsmoking facility
- Event professionals to help you with every step of planning your special event

*The Clear Choice!  
A Coastal, Convenient,  
Quality Venue~*

**Port Isabel Event & Cultural Center**  
**309 E. Railroad Ave. • 956/943-0720**  
**[eventcenter@portisabel-texas.com](mailto:eventcenter@portisabel-texas.com)**  
**[www.portisabel-texas.com/eventcenter](http://www.portisabel-texas.com/eventcenter)**  
**[facebook.com/portisabeleventcenter](https://www.facebook.com/portisabeleventcenter)**



## Space

Capacity from small groups up to 1,200!

### Queen Isabella Ballroom

8,000 sq. ft.

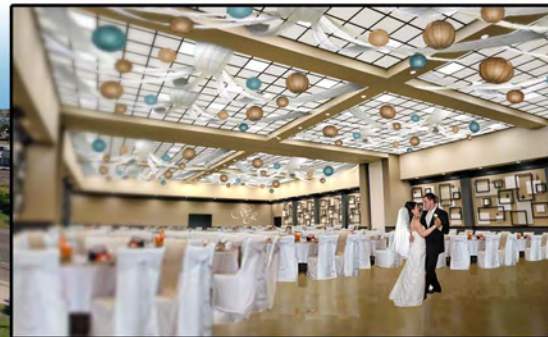
### Reyna Isabella or El Fronton

3,968 sq. ft. each

### Board Room 1,080 sq. ft.

## Whether it's an annual

conference or corporate retreat or a social gathering the Port Isabel Event & Cultural Center will surpass your expectations. We offer a wide array of rental items including staging, portable bars, additional tables/chairs and a Media Boardroom. And



our staff is prepared to set up and tear down ensuring a convenient and worry-free event. All of these amenities and services paired with our caring and professional staff are sure to provide a truly memorable experience at the Port Isabel Event & Cultural Center.

## We look forward to

booking your special event at the Port Isabel Event & Cultural Center. If you have questions, would like to schedule a private showing, or to inquire about availability, please contact the professionals at the Port Isabel Event & Cultural Center.





## NATURE TOURISM

### **South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center**

7.5 miles from Port Isabel  
6801 Padre Blvd.  
South Padre Island, TX 78597  
(956) 243-8179  
<http://www.spibirding.com>

### **Sea Turtle, Inc.**

7.5 miles from Port Isabel  
6617 Padre Blvd.  
South Padre Island, TX 78597  
(956) 761-4511  
<http://www.seaturtleinc.org/>

### **University of Texas - Pan American Coastal Studies Laboratories**

3.5 miles from Port Isabel  
100 Marine Lab Drive, South Padre Island, Texas 78597  
(956) 761-2644  
<http://www.utpa.edu/csl>

### **Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge**

22.5 miles from Port Isabel  
22817 Ocelot Road  
Los Fresnos, Texas 78566  
(956) 748-3607  
[http://www.stateparks.com/laguna\\_atascosa\\_national\\_wildlife\\_refuge\\_in\\_texas.html](http://www.stateparks.com/laguna_atascosa_national_wildlife_refuge_in_texas.html)

### **South Padre Island Dolphin Research & Sealife Nature Center**

406 E Queen Isabella Blvd.  
Port Isabel, Texas 78578-2411  
(956) 943-1989  
<http://www.spinaturecenter.com/>





# 101 THINGS TO DO IN PORT ISABEL! Texas



1- CLIMB THE PORT ISABEL LIGHTHOUSE. The Port Isabel Lighthouse is the only lighthouse open to the public on the Texas Gulf Coast.

2- LIGHTHOUSE KEEPER'S COTTAGE. Visit the Lighthouse Keeper's Cottage for a free lighthouse memorabilia and artifact display.

3- TREASURES OF THE GULF MUSEUM. In 1554, a fleet of ships wrecked 30 miles north of Port Isabel. The Treasures Museum tells the tale of the survivors with a variety of displays. Gift shop.

4- PORT ISABEL HISTORIC MUSEUM. The Champion building, built in 1899, sports a fish mural painted by a one-armed man.

5- ILLUMINATING THE LIGHTHOUSE. The lighthouse is decorated and illuminated for celebrations or awareness during select times of the year.

6- BEULAH LEE PARK. In the center of Park District. Two gazebos, lots of outdoors.

7- PORT ISABEL EVENT & CULTURAL. Port Isabel's newest venue! Over 9,000 square feet of meeting and event space. 309 E. Railroad Ave.

8- TEXAS' LONGEST LIGHTED FISHING PIER. Don't have a rod and reel? Rent one. Don't want to fish... spectators are welcomed.

9- PORT ISABEL YACHT CLUB. Constructed in 1927, when Port Isabel was just incorporated and just a few years before the area got a deep water port.

10- BAY FISHING TRIP. Need a story to bring back home with you? Capable and local expert captain captains can find the fish. Skinny water, great big fish.

11- OFFSHORE FISHING TRIP. Skinny water not enough? Try an offshore fishing experience for a bigger fishing tale.

12- BUTTERFLY & BIRDWATCHING AT THE MUSEUMS. Specially selected foliage attracts birds and butterflies in public green areas all over town.

13- WATCHING PELICANS AT PELICAN STATION. Pelicans perch on the railroad pier pilings and boulders.

14- BUY FRESH SEAFOOD. If you don't want to catch your own, or just want to take home some succulent Gulf shrimp, shop Quik Stop, Joe's Seafood Market, Reyes Seafood or Gulf Seafood for your own fresh Gulf catch.

15- EAT FRESH SEAFOOD. Many restaurants offer to cook your catch and add their side dishes. Or choose from menus full of expertly prepared seafood.

16- SHOP TILL YOU DROP. Whatever you want? Browse and leave with just a postcard or a new address!

17- VIEW THE SHRIMP BOAT FLEETS. Visible from both South Shore & Port District, or from the end of Champion St.

18- CROSS THE ONLY SWING BRIDGE IN TEXAS. At the intersection of South Shore Drive and Garcia St., you can cross the only swing bridge in Texas.

19- GO ON A DOLPHIN CRUISE. Take a few friends or your family with you on a dolphin cruise and experience marine life close up and personal.

20- CITY OF PORT ISABEL CEMETERY. The City Cemetery is home to some of the earliest settlers to the area. Grave markers with countries of origins connect us to lands across the waters.

21- OLDEST CEMETERY IN PORT ISABEL. Located on Island Ave., right hand side, 1/2 block north of Queen Isabella Blvd.

22- VISIT THE QUEEN ISABEL INN. Constructed sometime in 1908-1909, the Queen Isabel Inn has been witness and triumphant to many of the area's hurricanes.

23- DRIVE MODERN VENICE. Carved from earth and water during the 1930s, Modern Venice offers a waterfront view for every resident.

24- DRIVE THE PORT ISABEL/SAN BENITO NAVIGATION DISTRICT. The southernmost deepwater port in Texas is home to shrimping fleets, related industry and can facilitate large sea going vessels at its docks. Shrimp boats use the turning basin before heading back to dock. Barges, ships, fishing and pleasure craft pass through these waters.

25- PICNIC UNDER THE TREES AT THE PORT ISABEL LIGHTHOUSE STATE



HISTORIC SITE. Enjoy an afternoon in the sea breezes, under the trees, steps from the historic Port Isabel Lighthouse.

26- READ AN ADVENTURE AT THE PORT ISABEL PUBLIC LIBRARY. Take a break from all the action and settle in with a good book. Or check up on news from home on one of the library's computers. 213 Yturria St.

27- TAKE THE WALK OF GENERALS. Strategically placed in the Lighthouse District, the walk of Generals pays homage to the military giants that spent time in Port Isabel or on Brazos Santiago (Boca Chica beach).

28- HIKE OR BIKE THE EL PASEO TRAIL. 11 miles of marked trails will take you from the east end of Port Isabel to the County Park in Laguna Heights.

29- VISIT ALL 8 DISTRICTS IN PORT ISABEL. 8 districts offer a glimpse of the diverse character of Port Isabel.

30- SEE THE WETLANDS BEHIND H.E.B. The intersection of Highways 48 & 100 is a perfect example of the terrain of the Laguna Madre area before its settlement settlement in the early years.

31- WINDSURF THE LAGUNA MADRE. No shortage of fuel here! Navigate the bay from the flats on South Padre Island to the Port Isabel Side Channel in Port Isabel.

32- VISIT THE HISTORIC FORT POLK ON THE LIGHTHOUSE GROUNDS. Ft. Polk was the first occupant at the site of the Lighthouse. Zachary Taylor built the fort in 1846 which served the troops until 1850. In 1852, the Port Isabel Lighthouse was constructed at the cost of \$15,000.

33- TRY TO FINISH TEXAS' LARGEST FLOUR TORTILLAS. So big, they dwarf a dinner plate. Filled with anything you want. Not a challenge for the faint hearted. Isabel's Cafe and Manuels Restaurant both boast of Texas Monthly's best tortilla ratings!

34- VISIT ALL 11 KIOSKS ON THE EL PASEO WALK. When walking or biking the El Paseo trail, take advantage of the 11 rest areas. Shade, benches, bike racks, trash receptacles.

35- WATCH A MOVIE AT THE LIGHTHOUSE ESTABLISHMENT CINEMA. Free to the public.

Summers & Halloween weekend.

36- SEND A POSTCARD HOME FROM THE PORT ISABEL POST OFFICE. Share a memory. Don't just email home, buy and send an authentic postcard from Port Isabel.

37- SEND AN EMAIL FROM THE PORT ISABEL PUBLIC LIBRARY. Ok, sometimes the mail just isn't fast enough. Use the library's computers to let folks back home know what a great time you are having.

38- FLYFISH THE LAGUNA MADRE. Some of the best flyfishing on the Gulf coast will test your technique.

39- WADE FISH THE LAGUNA MADRE. Strap on the bait bucket and hit the Laguna Madre 'mano a mano'.

40- VISIT THE OLD PORT ISABEL FIRE HALL. Located southeast of the Port Isabel City Cemetery, the old Port Isabel Fire Hall is still used for community activities.

41- VISIT LAFITTE'S WELL. He had to get fresh water somewhere, why not dig a hole in Laguna Vista.

42- PLAY GOLF. On the shores of the Intracoastal Waterway at Long Island Village or on the banks of the Laguna Madre at SPI Golf Club.

43- LAUNCH YOUR BOAT AT THE POMPANO CITY DOCKS. You're not going to catch any fish if it stays on the trailer!



44- STORE YOUR BOAT AT SEARANCH II. Don't want to trailer your boat all the way from home? Might not be here for for awhile? Dry dock your boat in Port Isabel.

45- DOCK YOUR BOAT AT THE POMPANO CITY DOCKS. Check at City Hall for information on the City Docks' accommodations. Call 956/943-2682.



**46- WATERFRONT DINING.** Pelican Station, Pirate's Landing or White Sands, pick one, or try them all.  
**47- SAIL THE BAY.** Challenge your skills, or drop anchor and enjoy the breeze and the peace and quiet.  
**48- STAY IN PORT ISABEL.** Nostalgic to waterfront to modern to a waterfront rv experience.

Moderately priced Port Isabel accommodations offer what you need.

**49- BUY FINE ART.** Take an original created by a local artist home with you. Many specialty shops feature local artist's wares.

**50- BUY SOMETHING OLD.** Like antiquing? Area shops offer collectibles to fill every nook and cranny of your luggage.

**51- BUY SOMETHING NAUTICAL.** Need a seashell? A port hole? A whole boat? Bay Quest Outfitters, Harris Sea Castle, Anglers Marine Center, Quik Stop or Twenty Four Ten Net Works Hardware will fill the bill.

**52- KAYAK THE CHANNELS.** For an off road view of Port Isabel, take a kayak ride through all the channels.

**53- JET SKI THE LAGUNA MADRE.** Kayaking too slow? Jet ski the Laguna Madre Bay!

**54- FISH IN TEXAS' OLDEST FISHING TOURNAMENT.** Port Isabel is home to the Texas International Fishing Tournament. Held annually the first weekend in August.

**55- RUN ACROSS TEXAS' LONGEST CAUSEWAY.** Held annually in January, Longest Causeway Run & Fitness walk is a 10k run that starts in Port Isabel and ends across the Queen Isabella Memorial Bridge on South Padre Island.

**56- EAT THE WORLD'S BEST SHRIMP.** Many local restaurants serve fresh caught Gulf shrimp, expertly prepared. You can ample the finest at the Chamber's World's Championship Shrimp Cook-Off, annually, the first Sunday in November.

**57- VISIT THE VALLEY'S SPORTS HALL OF FAME & ONE OF THE LARGEST SPORTS MEMORIALIA COLLECTIONS IN THE RVG.** Drop in at Doubleday's Sports Bar.

**58- VISIT THE PIRATES AT PIRATES LANDING.** And enjoy a meal overlooking the Laguna Madre.

**59- SHOP MARKET DAYS.** Held twice a year in April and October, at the Port Isabel Lighthouse.

**60- VALLEY'S OLDEST DAY OF THE DEAD CELEBRATION.**

Held the Saturday before Halloween, Port Isabel's Day of the Dead Celebration is a day long event with lots of family friendly entertainment and displays at the Treasures of the Gulf Museum and the Historic Museum.

**61- SEE THE BROWNSVILLE SHIP CHANNEL.** From the intersection of Garcia Street and South Shore Drive or in the Port District, you can see large ocean going vessels, oil rigs heading out to the Gulf and barges turn in from the Intracoastal Waterway or the Gulf of Mexico enroute to the Brownsville Ship Channel.

**62- SEE THE INTRACOASTAL WATERWAY FROM THE TOP OF THE CAUSEWAY.** The darker deeper water seen from the top of the Causeway is the Intracoastal Waterway.

**63- SEE THE ORIGINAL QUEEN ISABELLA CAUSEWAY.** Cross the swing bridge on the end of Garcia Street and continue following the road to the left.

**64- WATCH THE FIREWORKS OVER THE BAY.** Fridays from Memorial Day to Labor Day, the City of South Padre Island creates a breathtaking fireworks display on the north side of the causeway over the Laguna Madre Bay.

**65- BIKE, SWIM, RIDE.** Port Isabel Chamber of Commerce hosts a Triathlon, first Saturday in June.

**66- TRICK OR TREAT THE LIGHTHOUSE SQUARE.** Every Halloween, local businesses pass out treats.

**67- CROSS THE LONGEST BRIDGE IN TEXAS.** Going to South Padre Island? You've got to cross the longest bridge in Texas at 2.6 miles over the Laguna Madre Bay.

**68- CAMP IN PORT ISABEL.** Enjoy the sounds of seagulls and the fresh sea breezes.

**69- SPRING BREAK IN PORT ISABEL.** From February to April, south Texas sees the migration of college students taking a little 'R & R'.

**70- WATCH THE LIGHTED BOAT PARADE.** The Port Isabel Chamber of Commerce hosts their Annual Lighted Boat Parade the first Saturday in December.



**71-VISIT ONE OF THE TOP THREE BEACHES IN AMERICA.** Cross the Queen Isabella Memorial Bridge to South Padre Island.

**72- WI-FI.** Need to make it a working vacation? Catch the free Wi-Fi at various locations around town.

**73- CANNON FIRE OVER THE BAY.** 6 p.m. daily, at the Cannon Bar, watch the crew of the Black Dragon fire a 6 pounder!

**74-TOUR PORT ISABEL'S 8 REGISTERED HISTORIC MARKERS.** The Port of Matamoros, located at Pirate's Landing; the Charles Champion Building; the Queen Isabella Causeway; Fort Polk located at the Point Isabel Lighthouse; Queen Isabel Inn; Alta Vista Apartments on Yturria St.; and the newest site, the Palangana Cemetery.

**75- FLOWERING PLANTS & TREES.** Varying with the seasons, look for Cactus, Yuccas (Spanish Dagger), Royal Poincians, Century Plant, Aloe Vera, Anacua (sandpaper plant), Sea Grape, palm trees, Mesquite, Ebony and much more.

**76- PLAY IN ALL THE PARKS.** Berrell Mock, Washington Park, Veterans Park, Episcopal Church Park, the Laguna Madre Park, Veteran's Park, Triangle Park and the Port Isabel Lighthouse State Historic Site.

**77- HISTORY BY THE MURALS.** From contemporary to historic, see the murals at the Port Isabel Museums, the fish mural on the Champion building, the mural on Port City Mercantile, inside Our Lady of the Sea Catholic Church, Pirate's Landing Restaurant interior and Doubleday Sports Bar.

**78- CHECK OUT THE UT/ROBERT RUNYON PHOTO DISPLAY.** The 50 photos that decorate the walls of Pelican Station Restaurant illustrate Port Isabel's ties to the railroad.

**79- COMMUNITY GALLERY.** On the Highway 100 side of the Treasures of the Gulf Museum, displays illustrate our past, present and future.

**80- SEE A REAL SHRIMP BOAT.** The Lady Bea II is on display at the north end of Garcia St.

**81- TROPICAL LANDSCAPING.** Everywhere... medians, corners, Triangle Park, Beulah Lee Park, First National Bank of Edinburg, Treasures of the Gulf Museum and Port Isabel Historic Museum.

**82- ANCHORS & NAUTICAL ARTIFACTS.** Drive, hike or bike and keep an eye out for all the anchors and floats that adorn both private and public properties.

**83- ARCHITECTURE.** The Port Isabel Lighthouse, the Keeper's Cottage, the Yacht Club, Alta Vista Apartments, Isla Vista Apartments, Wireless Station buildings, Champion building, Queen Isabel Inn, the Thompkins building, Old Port Isabel Fire Hall, shops on Maxan Street... discover our uniqueness.

**84- TAKE A RIDE ON THE THRILLER.** For an exciting and exhilarating trip on the Laguna Madre Bay.

**85- ZACHARY TAYLOR'S WELL.** Located between the Port Isabel Historic Museum and the Treasures of the Gulf Museum or Jean Lafitte's well in Laguna Vista.

**86- SITE OF THE MILITARY HOSPITAL.** Used from 1846 - 1865, this military hospital saw more discomfort caused by disease than injuries caused by both the US/Mexican and the US Civil Wars it was in use for. It's located at the Pirate's Landing Pier parking lot.

**87- CATCH UP ON THE LOCAL NEWS.** Pick up a Port Isabel/South Padre Press, Coastal Current, or the Parade for all the local information.

**88- STAY IN SHAPE.** Local gyms and fitness centers offer a full range of services.

**89- TAKE A BOATER'S SAFETY COURSE.** Check with the Laguna Madre Yacht Club for their next scheduled classes.

**90- ATTEND THE CHURCH OF YOUR CHOICE.** Churches are located from Laguna Vista to South Padre Island.

**91- WANT TO MAKE IT PERMANENT?** If you are considering a move to the area, check out the real estate agents that could make your dream come true.

**92- GET A NEW DO.** Treat yourself to a new look or get help finding a creative way to live with the humidity.

**93- GET ALL THE AREA INFORMATION YOU WILL NEED.** Stop in at the Port Isabel Chamber of Commerce and Information Center at the Lighthouse Keeper's Cottage.

**94- LEARN A LITTLE ABOUT OUR LOCAL HISTORY.** Like our page at [facebook.com/portisabeltx](https://www.facebook.com/portisabeltx).

**95- WATCH A SUNSET.** Sunsets over the Laguna Madre are spectacular and free!

**96- WATCH A SUNRISE.** If you didn't stay out too late, take in a sunrise before heading to breakfast. They cost the same as a sunset.

**97- TRY ALL THE 'ALL YOU CAN EAT FISH' SPECIALS.** Pirate's Landing, White Sands, Mexiquito Restaurant, Marcello's Italian Restaurant. How hard could that be?

**98- TAKE A NIGHT TIME FISHING TRIP.** The Isabella leaves the Pirate's Landing Fishing Pier for a night fishing trip on the Laguna Madre Bay!

**99- VISIT THE BAHIA GRANDE ON HWY 48.** The world's largest wetlands restoration project is home to a variety of wildlife species.

**100- PORT ISABEL'S ANTIQUE & FLEA MARKET.** First Sunday, 1st & 3rd Sunday during winter months.

**101-PLAN. To come back again!**



Beautiful Bahia Grande.

Fan us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/portisabeltx](https://www.facebook.com/portisabeltx)

Port Isabel, Texas~ Beacon by the Bay!~ 17



## Point Isabel Lighthouse

The Point Isabel Lighthouse is the heart of the Port Isabel experience! Open to the public, daily, weather permitting, a stroll to the top of the 70 ft. tower offers a 16 mile view. The lighthouse was constructed in 1852 as a working beacon for vessels entering the Brazos Santiago Pass. Decommissioned in 1905, the lighthouse is now a primary tourist attraction.

Tickets may be purchased in the Lighthouse, the Keepers Cottage (Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center), the Treasures of the Gulf Museum and the Port Isabel Historical Museum.

**Hours of Operation:** Daily 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (weather permitting).  
**Summer Hours:** Monday - Thursday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Friday - Sunday 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.

**Ticket Information:** Individual Site Tickets to the Port Isabel Lighthouse OR the Treasures of the Gulf Museum OR the Port Isabel Historical Museum.

Adults: \$3.00; Senior Citizens\*: \$2.00; Students\*\*: \$1.00

Children 4 & Under: Free; Museum Member\*\*\*: Free.

**Combination Site Ticket:** to the Port Isabel Lighthouse & Keepers Cottage AND the Treasures of the Gulf Museum AND the Port Isabel Historical Museum.

Adults: \$7.00; Senior Citizens\*: \$5.00; Students\*\*: \$2.00

Children 4 & Under: Free; Museum Member\*\*\*: Free

\*Senior Citizens (55 & over); \*\*Students (K - College with ID);

\*\*\*Museum Member (with Membership Card). Military ID: Free.

**For more information:** [www.portisabellighthouse.com](http://www.portisabellighthouse.com).



## PORT ISABEL LIGHTHOUSE HISTORY

After Fort Polk, Texas, was abandoned following the Mexican War, on Feb. 27, 1850, the Quartermaster General of the U.S. Army recommended that the site and buildings be transferred as a lighthouse site to the Treasury Department, a recommendation which was approved on April 22, 1850. Because of an increase in maritime shipping through Brazos Santiago Pass to Port Isabel, Texas, and because of frequent foggy conditions in the area, Treasury Department officials agreed with the Army Quartermaster General and determined that the Department should construct a lighthouse in the vicinity as a navigational aid. On Sept. 28, 1850, the U.S. Congress authorized an appropriation of \$15,000 for "a lighthouse and beacon light" at Brazos Santiago and President Zachary Taylor, former General of the Rio Grande and one-time commander of the region, signed the bill.

The original construction contract between the Treasury Department and John Garey of Brownsville was signed December 6, 1851, and work began in February 1852. It was listed as completed in the 1853 report of the Lighthouse Board and was included in the October 1853 "List of Lighthouses" with Stephen Powers as its keeper. As initially constructed the lighthouse was an 82-foot-high brick tower topped with four lights. By 1854 it had 15 lamps and 21 reflectors. A third order lens was installed in 1857 and the fixed light was varied by flashes.

Probably the most colorful period of history of the Point Isabel Lighthouse occurred during the American Civil War. During the conflict, as federal ships blockaded the Texas coast, the Point Isabel Lighthouse was occupied by soldiers from both sides as a look-out post. Cannon and musket balls found in the walls of the structure a century later attest to the fighting in its vicinity.



After the close of the Civil War, the Treasury Department refitted the Point Isabel Lighthouse. It's said that during the conflict Col. John S. (Rip) Ford of Texas forces removed the lens to prevent its falling into the hands of Union troops. In the months after the war, Treasury Department employees refurbished the tower, refitted the lamps, and then the lighthouse on February 22, 1866. In 1879 the Lighthouse Board reported that the tower had deteriorated to a dilapidated condition, but by 1881 a new iron lantern had been installed and the following year mineral oil lamps had been fitted. In 1888 the light was temporarily discontinued because of a question about the title to the land upon which it stood. Claimants proved that the United States government had not title to the land, forcing the government to condemn the land in 1894 to acquire title. The government paid \$5,000 to secure unquestioned title and on July 15, 1895, the light returned to use. It operated for ten years, after which time it was extinguished in 1905. On Sept. 20, 1927, the Secretary of Commerce ordered the unused lighthouse and land sold. A local citizen purchased it for the sum of \$2,760 on December 14, 1927, but in the late 1940's a movement began to save the old lighthouse as a historic site. On October 5, 1950, the Texas State Park Board, as authorized by the Texas Legislature, formally accepted the lighthouse and surrounding land as a gift from Mr. and Mrs. Lon C. Hill, Jr., owners at the time. Later additions were made from two lots adjoining on the west side of the plot.

The Texas State Park Board began restoring the lighthouse in 1951 and completed the following year. Using original descriptions, the restoration was conducted as precisely as possible. The outside of the brick tower was recovered with plaster, but the original iron platform on the top of the tower was replaced with concrete and the glass dome was raised to provide easier access to visitors. The spiral iron stairway within the tower was reinforced during the restoration with a welded hand rail. A mercury vapor lamp was installed on the tower and the lighthouse returned to service as a navigational aid to seamen. Today the lighthouse is operated as a Texas State Historic Park.

Because of increasing maritime traffic through Brazos Santiago Pass, near the mouth of the Rio Grande on the Gulf of Mexico, the U. S. Department of Treasury constructed there in 1852 an eighty-two-foot-high brick lighthouse tower topped with a stationary white light which could be seen for fifteen miles. The lighthouse operated with changing equipment and with intermittent interruptions until 1905, after which time it was abandoned for several years. During the American Civil War the lighthouse served as an observation post for both Union and Confederate forces operating in the vicinity. After lying unused for most of the first half of the twentieth century, the Point Isabel Lighthouse was acquired in 1950 by the Texas State Park Board, subsequently was restored by that agency, and today stands both as a state historical park and as a functioning navigational aid.

The Point Isabel Lighthouse is one of the oldest functioning lighthouses on the Texas Gulf Coast. It played a significant part in military operations around the mouth of the Rio Grande during the Civil War and for over a century, with some interruptions, has served the region as an aid to seamen. BIBLIOGRAPHY ON FILE IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER



## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LAGUNA MADRE AREA

**1519** – 1st Spanish explorers, Capt. Pineda.

**1523** – Spaniard Francisco Garay Sails into Brazos Santiago Pass on July 25, Saint James Day and names the pass “El Paso de los Brazos de Santiago” (The Arms of Saint James Pass) in his honor. Brazos Island was named after the pass.

**1554** – A Spanish treasure fleet left Mexico en route to Spain and was demolished by a violent hurricane. Several boats were wrecked on Padre Island and a few survivors began to walk the beach towards Vera Cruz Mexico. Some of the survivors walked through our area, only one reached Vera Cruz. The rest fell victim to the harsh elements and ferocious Indians.

**1560-1700** – This area known as the Wild Horse Desert was unexplored and only inhabited by local Indians and wildlife. This was the last area of the gulf coast to be settled as it was considered the harshest environment of all areas the Spaniards desired to settle.

**1749** – Colonel Jose de Escondon leads a colonization party into the Rio Grande Valley area and founds the towns of Camargo, Mier, Reynosa, and Matamoros.

**Ca. 1770** – A small fishing village is located at the Point Isabel area known as “El Fronton de Santa Isabel” or El Fronton for short. The name fronton means ‘bluff’ or ‘wall’ and came from the steep face of the hill that faced the bay in the area of the fishing pier. This bluff could easily be seen from the Brazos Santiago Pass.

**1770s – 1840s** – El Fronton was a popular summer “resort” area for ranching families of this area, enjoying the cool gulf breeze during the hot summer.

**1803** – Padre Nicolas Balli granted the barrier island which bears his name – Padre Island.

**1829** – A Mexican fort is constructed on Brazos Island to protect the Brazos de Santiago Pass.

**1836** – The Texas navy “Invincible” sinks the Mexican navy gunboat “Nicolas Bravo” in the Brazos Santiago area.

**1842** – Mexican customs house for the “Port of Matamoros” at El Fronton was located near the present site of the lighthouse.

**1846** – General Zachary Taylor and the U.S. Army set up Fort Polk at the present site of Lighthouse Square. General Taylor renames the town “Point Isabel.”

**1846-48** – The “Mexican War” dramatically changes Point Isabel which becomes a boomtown. Many famous Americans served at Fort Polk/Point Isabel.

**1849-50** – California gold rush causes a mini-boom era at Point Isabel. Fortune seekers search for a safe route to the gold fields through Mexico. Among them, James Audubon comes through and records plants and wildlife.

**1852** – Lighthouse built at Point Isabel.

**1861-65** – The American Civil War impacts the Point Isabel area.

**1863** – General N.P. Banks lands Union troops on Brazos Island. Confederates use the lighthouse to spy on the Union soldiers.

**1864** – A small battle is fought between U.S. and Confederate soldiers at

the docks by the lighthouse. Confederate Colonel John “Rip” Ford removes the light from the lighthouse so the “Yankees” can’t use it. Confederate forces attempt to blow up the lighthouse as they evacuate Point Isabel. They only damage the upper structure.

**1865** – The hospital at Brazos Santiago serves over 100,000 patients during the four years of the Civil War, almost all from sickness such as cholera, dysentery, and yellow fever. The last land battle of the American Civil War is fought 9 miles south of Point Isabel on May 15, 1865 between Union soldiers en route to Point Isabel and Confederates camped at Whites Ranch. Known as the Battle of Palmito Hill, the Confederates won the battle, and later had to surrender to their defeated foe.

**1867** – One of the most powerful hurricanes to ever hit our area completely destroyed Clarksville, Texas, and Bagdad, Mexico. Brazos Santiago was underwater and Point Isabel was leveled.

**1872** – The Rio Grande Railroad, from Point Isabel to Brownsville, begins service. Point Isabel begins to enjoy another prosperous era as a seaport and summer resort.

**1884** – Coast Guard/Life Saving Service is established on the south end of Padre Island. U.S. Quarantine station is built on Brazos Island.

**1880s-90s** – Commercial fishing begins to be big business in Point Isabel. The shallow sloop improves the catch and vast quantities of fish are shipped by train to Brownsville and Mexico. The boat is so effective at its job that it is outlawed by the Texas Legislature in the 1930s.

**1898** – Troops from south Texas forts are deployed for the Spanish American War, and leave via steamers from Point Isabel.

**1909** – A 12’ deep channel is cut from Brazos to the Point Isabel docks.

**1916** – U.S. soldiers are deployed to the border as a result of the increased ‘bandit’ activities. Troops from Iowa and Illinois are stationed at Point Isabel.

**1920s** – Point Isabel gains fame as a sport fishing paradise, increasing tourism.

**1928** – Point Isabel Land Company modernizes and develops the townsite and renames the town Port Isabel in hopes of a deep water port. They market the project as “Building a city where a city belongs”

**1933** – A devastating hurricane hits Port Isabel and disrupts life throughout south Texas. Much of Port Isabel goes underwater.

**1934** – The first Texas International Fishing Tournament is a smashing success.

**1936** – The Brownsville ship channel is completed. Port Brownsville opens.

**1943-45** – WW2 causes alerts at Port Isabel, U-Boats are sunk in the gulf.

**1954** – 1st Queen Isabella Causeway opens. The area begins a vigorous period of growth and development.

**1974** – New Queen Isabella Causeway opens.

**2001** – Barge hits the Queen Isabella Causeway and a section collapses, 8 lives were lost. Renamed Queen Isabella Memorial Bridge.

# EVENTS

PORT ISABEL  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



**JANUARY**~ Longest Causeway Run and Fitness Walk. The Port Isabel Chamber of Commerce hosts this annual event which features a 10k walk/run over the Queen Isabella Memorial Bridge from Port Isabel to South Padre Island.



**APRIL**~ Queen Isabella Market Day. Held the second Saturday in April, the Queen Isabella Market is hosted by the Museums of Port Isabel on the grounds of the Lighthouse. Vendors, food, live music and more.



**JUNE**~ Port Isabel Triathlon. Held the first Saturday in June. Bike, swim, run. Hosted by the Port Isabel Chamber of Commerce.



**SUMMER & SPECIAL DATES**~ The Lighthouse Establishment Cinema is hosted by the Museums of Port Isabel. Movies are projected onto the Port Isabel Lighthouse. Free admission. Concessions.



**SEPTEMBER**~ Pachanga in the Park hosted by the City of Port Isabel. Food, vendors, games, live music.



**OCTOBER**~ Lighthouse Market Day is hosted by the Museums of Port Isabel on the grounds of the Lighthouse. Food, vendors, live music, entertainment and more. \$1.00 admission to the Lighthouse.



**OCTOBER**~ Los Colores del Muerto, Day of the Dead Celebration. Hosted by the Museums of Port Isabel. Tours, open house, exhibits, etc.



**NOVEMBER**~ World's Championship Shrimp Cook-Off. Hosted by the Port Isabel Chamber of Commerce, the Cook-Off attracts dozens of competitors for the World's Best Title.



**DECEMBER**~ Lighted Boat Parade. Hosted by the Port Isabel Chamber of Commerce. Decorated boats sail the Laguna Madre Bay. Decorating contests sponsored by the City of Port Isabel.



# MUSEUMS OF PORT ISABEL

**1-** Constructed in 1852, the Point Isabel Lighthouse was built to guide ships through Brazos Santiago and the barrier islands. In 1952, the Lighthouse was opened as a State park and remains the only lighthouse on the Texas coast open to the public. The Lighthouse Keeper's Cottage, situated on the grounds houses the Chamber of Commerce and historic exhibits. Admission to the Keeper's Cottage is free.

## POINT ISABEL LIGHTHOUSE HOURS:

Daily, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Last ticket sold at 4:30 p.m.

1



**2-** The Port Isabel Historical Museum is a state-of-the-art facility located in the Champion Building.

Built in 1899 as a dry goods store and residence, it now houses two exhibit

levels, a theatre, a gift shop and one of the largest collections of Mexican artifacts from the U.S. Mexican War. The facade of the building features the famous 'fish



mural' painted in 1906 by a local one armed fisherman.

## PORT ISABEL HISTORICAL MUSEUM HOURS:

Tuesday - Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Last ticket sold at 3:30 p.m.

**3-** Treasures of the Gulf Museum focuses on three Spanish shipwrecks which met their fate in 1554 just 30 miles north of Port Isabel. Exhibits and artifacts tell the stories of the victims and the survivors. The Treasures Museum also features a Children's Discovery Lab, Ship theatre and Nautical Gift Shop.

TREASURES OF THE GULF MUSEUM Hours: Tuesday - Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Last ticket sold at 3:30 p.m.

3



317 E. RAILROAD AVE. ~PORT ISABEL, TX 78578  
956/943-7602

[WWW.PORTISABELMUSEUMS.COM](http://WWW.PORTISABELMUSEUMS.COM)

# THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY'S HISTORIC ROOTS BEGIN IN PORT ISABEL, TEXAS!

## VISIT THE PORT ISABEL MUSEUMS



### ADMISSION:

#### ~THREE SITE COMBINATION TICKET:

ADULTS .....	\$7.00
SENIOR CITIZENS (55 & OVER) .....	\$5.00
STUDENTS (K - COLLEGE W/ID) .....	\$2.00
CHILDREN (4 & UNDER) .....	FREE ADMISSION
MUSEUM MEMBERS* .....	FREE ADMISSION

#### ~INDIVIDUAL SITE TICKET:

ADULTS .....	\$3.00
SENIOR CITIZENS (55 & OVER) .....	\$2.00
STUDENTS (K - COLLEGE W/ID) .....	\$1.00
CHILDREN (4 & UNDER) .....	FREE ADMISSION
MUSEUM MEMBERS* .....	FREE ADMISSION

ALL TICKET PURCHASES ARE FINAL

(\*WITH MEMBERSHIP CARD)

317 E. RAILROAD AVE. PORT ISABEL, TEXAS 78578  
956/943-7602

GROUP TOURS AVAILABLE

[WWW.PORTISABELMUSEUMS.COM](http://WWW.PORTISABELMUSEUMS.COM)

## Brownsville-Harlingen, TX MSA Executive Summary

### Highlights of Visitors to the Brownsville-Harlingen MSA

- Texans generated 75% of Person-Days to the Brownsville-Harlingen MSA; Non-Texans 25%
- Top 3 Texan origin DMAs (San Antonio, Harlingen-Weslaco-Brownsville-Mc Allen, Dallas-Fort Worth); Non-Texan DMAs (Chicago, Los Angeles, Little Rock-Pine Bluff)
- Leisure travel represented 81.8% of Person-Days to the Brownsville-Harlingen MSA; Vacation 50.8% and Non-Vacation 31%
- Business travel represented 18.2% of Person-Days; Meetings 2.7% and Transient 15.5%
- Activity categories participated: Touring 14.7%, Nature 41%, Culture 13.3%, Attractions 12%, Outdoor Sports 15.9%
- Average Party Size (Adults and Children) 2.86 persons
- Average length of Stay was 2.41 days (overnight and days); 3.55 nights (overnight only).
- 73.4% traveled by Auto; 13% by Air
- Average distance traveled 534 miles
- Accommodation Type: Paid 71.5%; Non-Paid 26.7%; Other Overnight 1.8%
- Average Per Person Per Day Spending \$93.50
- Average Age 41.7 years
- Average Household Income \$68,664
- Employment: Employed 55.9%, Retired 9.4%, Not Employed 34.7%
- Marital Status: Married 74.7%, Never Married 16.1%, Divorced/Widowed 9.2%
- Children in Household: Yes 56.6%, No 43.4%



## Brownsville-Harlingen, TX MSA Executive Summary

### Volume/Share

The number of Person-Stays to the Brownsville-Harlingen MSA is estimated at 2.44 million in 2011, and the volume of Person-Days was estimated at 8.22 million.

The Brownsville-Harlingen MSA's share of total Person-Days to Texas ranked 8 out of 26 Texas MSAs.

### Brownsville-Harlingen, TX MSA Volume (millions)

Person-Days	Total	Leisure	Business
2011	8.22	6.59	1.62
2010	7.41	5.92	1.50
2009	6.80	5.48	1.32
Person-Stays	Total	Leisure	Business
2011	2.44	1.83	0.61
2010	2.08	1.53	0.55
2009	1.85	1.36	0.50

### Brownsville-Harlingen, TX MSA Share of Texas Travel

Person-Days	Total	Leisure	Business
2011	2.0%	2.4%	0.8%
2010	2.3%	2.4%	2.0%
2009	1.4%	1.4%	1.3%

# Brownsville-Harlingen, TX MSA

	MSA	TEXAS	MSA	TEXAS
<b>Top Origin DMAs (Person-Days)</b>				
<b>In State DMAs</b>				
<b>Total Texans (Intrastate)</b>	<b>75.0%</b>	<b>61.5%</b>	<b>81.8%</b>	<b>72.9%</b>
San Antonio	23.2%	8.1%		
Harlingen-Weslaco-Brownsville-McAllen	17.3%	2.9%		
Dallas-Fort Worth	12.8%	15.7%		
Houston	10.0%	11.0%		
Austin	3.5%	6.3%		
Victoria	2.2%	0.4%		
Laredo	2.1%	0.6%		
San Angelo	1.3%	0.5%		
<b>Total Business Meetings</b>	<b>18.2%</b>	<b>27.1%</b>	<b>2.7%</b>	<b>11.8%</b>
<b>Out-of-State DMAs</b>				
<b>Total Non-Texans (Interstate)</b>	<b>25.0%</b>	<b>38.5%</b>	<b>15.5%</b>	<b>15.4%</b>
Chicago, IL	5.7%	1.3%		
Los Angeles, CA	2.3%	2.6%		
Little Rock-Pine Bluff, AR	2.2%	0.8%		
Albuquerque-Santa Fe, NM	1.4%	1.3%		
Idaho Falls-Pocatello, ID	1.4%	0.0%		
Colorado Springs-Pueblo, CO	1.3%	0.3%		
Louisville, KY	1.1%	0.2%		
Grand Rapids-Kalamazoo-Battle Creek, MI	1.0%	0.1%		

## Purpose of Stay (Person-Days)

	MSA	TEXAS	MSA	TEXAS
<b>Total Leisure</b>				
<b>Total Texans (Intrastate)</b>	<b>75.0%</b>	<b>61.5%</b>	<b>81.8%</b>	<b>72.9%</b>
San Antonio	23.2%	8.1%		
Harlingen-Weslaco-Brownsville-McAllen	17.3%	2.9%		
Dallas-Fort Worth	12.8%	15.7%		
Houston	10.0%	11.0%		
Austin	3.5%	6.3%		
Victoria	2.2%	0.4%		
Laredo	2.1%	0.6%		
San Angelo	1.3%	0.5%		
<b>Total Business Meetings</b>	<b>18.2%</b>	<b>27.1%</b>	<b>2.7%</b>	<b>11.8%</b>
Chicago, IL	5.7%	1.3%		
Los Angeles, CA	2.3%	2.6%		
Little Rock-Pine Bluff, AR	2.2%	0.8%		
Albuquerque-Santa Fe, NM	1.4%	1.3%		
Idaho Falls-Pocatello, ID	1.4%	0.0%		
Colorado Springs-Pueblo, CO	1.3%	0.3%		
Louisville, KY	1.1%	0.2%		
Grand Rapids-Kalamazoo-Battle Creek, MI	1.0%	0.1%		

# Brownsville-Harlingen, TX MSA

	MSA	TEXAS	MSA	TEXAS
<b>Activities Summary (Stays)</b>				
<b>Touring (Net)</b>	<b>14.7%</b>	<b>10.0%</b>	<b>Outdoor Sports (Net)</b>	<b>15.9%</b>
Touring/Sightseeing	14.4%	8.3%	Hunt, Fish	9.1%
Group Tour	0.3%	0.4%	Boat/Sail	5.3%
Look at Real Estate	0.0%	1.6%	Golf	1.8%
<b>Nature (Net)</b>	<b>41.0%</b>	<b>13.2%</b>	Other Adventure Sports	1.5%
Beach/Waterfront	33.7%	5.5%	<b>Trip Party Composition (Trip-Days)</b>	
Park: National, State	7.3%	4.8%	<b>Avg. Party Size(Adults and Children)</b>	<b>2.86 persons</b>
Camping	4.2%	1.6%	One Male Only	15.7%
Nature/Culture: Eco-Travel	4.0%	2.1%	One Female Only	3.1%
Hike, Bike	3.7%	2.7%	One Male and One Female	38.7%
<b>Culture (Net)</b>	<b>13.3%</b>	<b>15.4%</b>	Two Male and Two Females	3.9%
Concert, Play, Dance	8.4%	6.2%	Three or More Adults	12.1%
Museum, Art Exhibit	2.9%	4.6%	Adults with Children	26.5%
Festival, Craft Fair	1.9%	3.8%	<b>Length of Stay (Stays)</b>	
Visit Historic Site	1.9%	5.5%	<b>Average Length (Incl. Days)</b>	<b>2.41 days</b>
<b>Attractions (Net)</b>	<b>12.0%</b>	<b>11.6%</b>	<b>Average Length (Overnight Only)</b>	<b>3.55 nights</b>
Night Life	9.0%	6.3%	Day –Trips	40.7%
Theme/Amusement Park	2.7%	2.9%	1-3 Nights	47.0%
Show: Boat, Car, Home	2.1%	0.8%	4-7 Nights	10.0%
Attend Sports/Olympic Event	0.6%	2.0%	8+ Nights	2.3%
Gamble	0.0%	1.0%		

Texas Destinations 2011 prepared for The Office of the Governor, Economic Development & Tourism Division.  
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# Brownsville-Harlingen, TX MSA

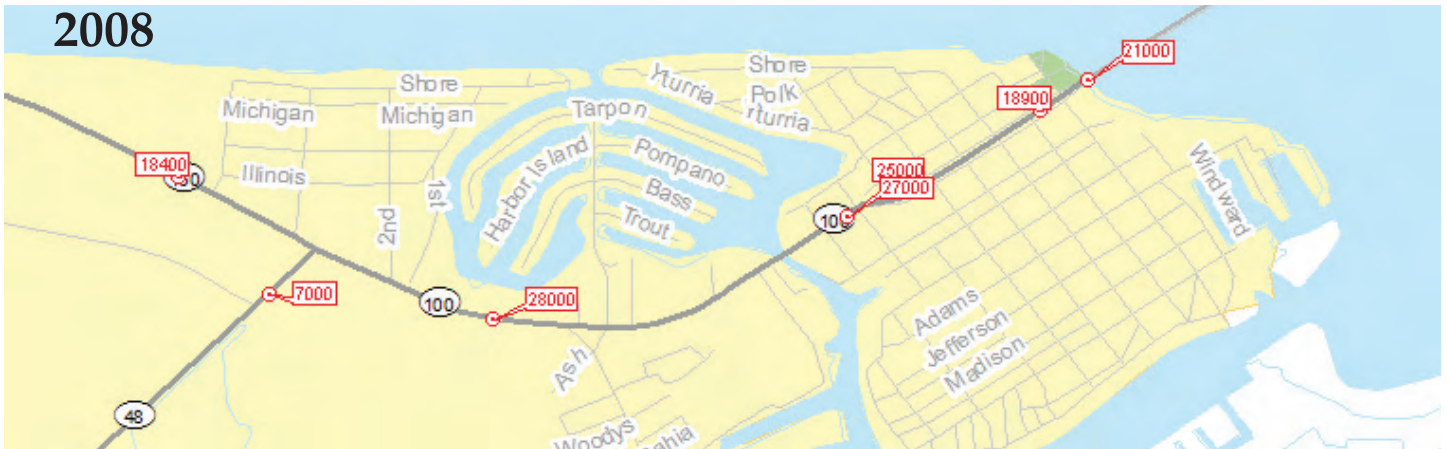
	MSA		TEXAS		MSA		TEXAS	
	Expenditure Summary (Person-Days)		Expenditure Summary (Person-Days)		Expenditure Summary (Person-Days)		Expenditure Summary (Person-Days)	
	Air	13.0%	17.9%	Avg. Per Person Per Day Spending	\$93.5	\$115.1		
<b>Primary Mode of Transportation (Person-Days)</b>				<b>Average</b>	<b>\$28.9</b>	<b>\$41.3</b>		
<b>Auto Travel (Net)</b>		<b>73.4%</b>	<b>75.7%</b>	<b>Transportation</b>				
<b>Other Transportation (Net)</b>		<b>13.6%</b>	<b>6.4%</b>	<b>Food</b>	<b>\$22.2</b>	<b>\$23.7</b>		
Bus	1.1%		1.4%	<b>Room</b>	<b>\$20.3</b>	<b>\$19.4</b>		
Train	0.5%		0.3%	<b>Shopping</b>	<b>\$8.6</b>	<b>\$14.9</b>		
Other	12.0%		4.7%	<b>Entertainment</b>	<b>\$9.7</b>	<b>\$9.7</b>		
<b>Distance Traveled One-Way from Home (Person-Days)</b>				<b>Miscellaneous</b>	<b>\$3.9</b>	<b>\$6.1</b>		
<b>Average Distance Traveled</b>	<b>534 miles</b>		<b>478 miles</b>					
250 Miles or Less	24.4%		47.5%	<b>Share</b>				
251-500 Miles	38.8%		20.1%	<b>Transportation</b>	<b>30.9%</b>	<b>35.9%</b>		
500-1000 Miles	15.8%		15.1%	<b>Food</b>	<b>23.7%</b>	<b>20.6%</b>		
1001 Miles or More	21.0%		17.3%	<b>Room</b>	<b>21.7%</b>	<b>16.9%</b>		
<b>Accommodation Type (Person-Days)</b>				<b>Shopping</b>	<b>9.2%</b>	<b>12.9%</b>		
<b>Paid Accommodations</b>	<b>71.5%</b>		<b>59.0%</b>	<b>Entertainment</b>	<b>10.4%</b>	<b>8.5%</b>		
Hotel/Motel	41.8%		49.8%	<b>Miscellaneous</b>	<b>4.2%</b>	<b>5.3%</b>		
High-End	12.8%		16.5%					
Mid-Level	17.4%		22.5%					
Economy	8.1%		9.2%					
Non-Hotel/Motel	29.7%		9.2%					
<b>Non-Paid Accommodations</b>	<b>26.7%</b>		<b>39.6%</b>					
<b>Other Overnight</b>	<b>1.8%</b>		<b>1.4%</b>					

## Brownsville-Harlingen, TX MSA

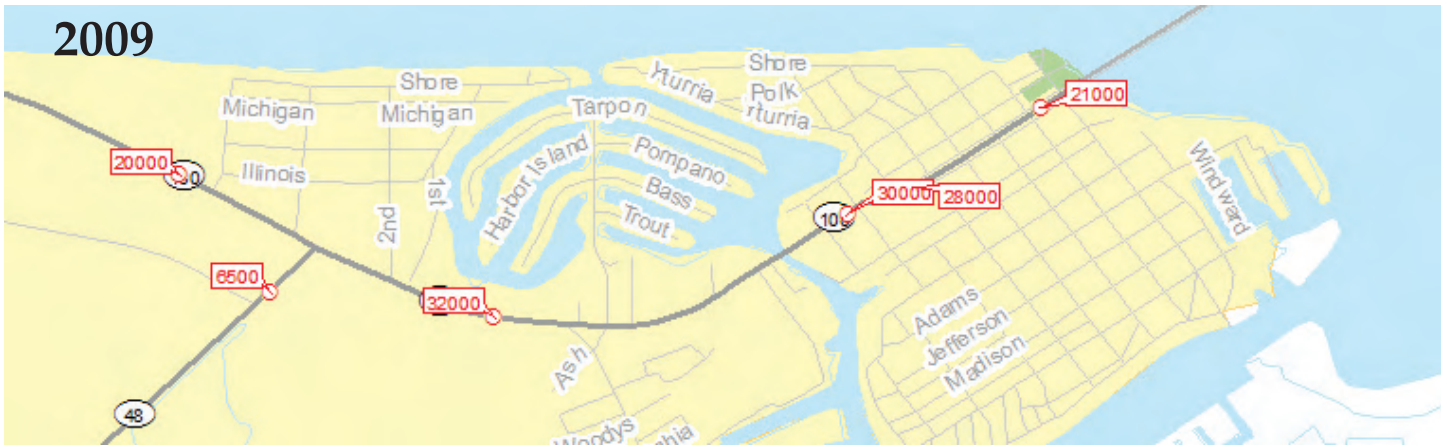
	MSA	TEXAS	MSA	TEXAS
<b>Demographic Profile (Person-Days)</b>				
<b>Average Age</b>	<b>41.7 years</b>	<b>45.0 years</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>TEXAS</b>
18-34 Years	34.5%	32.4%	Employed	68.9%
35-49 Years	35.0%	28.1%	Retired	11.3%
50-64 Years	24.4%	25.9%	Not Employed	19.8%
65+ Years	6.2%	13.6%		
<b>Marital Status</b>				
<b>Average HH Income (in \$1,000)</b>	<b>\$68,664</b>	<b>\$84,466</b>	<b>Married</b>	<b>74.7%</b>
Under \$25,000	7.7%	12.3%	Never Married	16.1%
\$25,000-\$49,999	35.4%	21.1%	Divorced/Widowed	9.2%
\$50,000-\$74,999	22.2%	20.8%		
\$75,000-\$99,999	19.3%	15.7%	<b>Children in Household</b>	
\$100,0000+	15.5%	30.0%	Yes	56.6%
			No	43.4%
				60.9%

# TRAFFIC COUNT MAPS 2008 - 2011

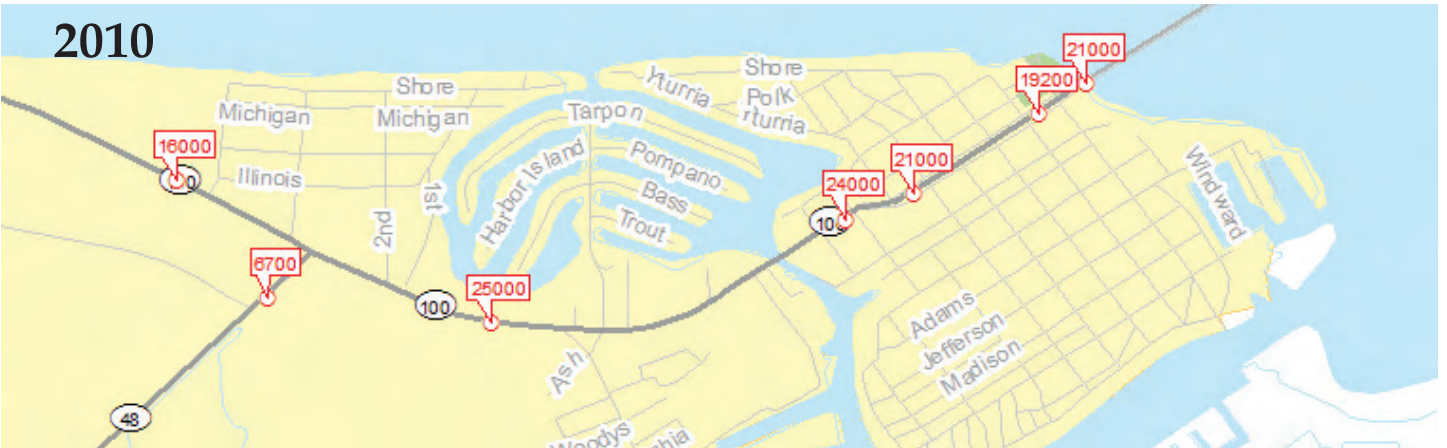
2008



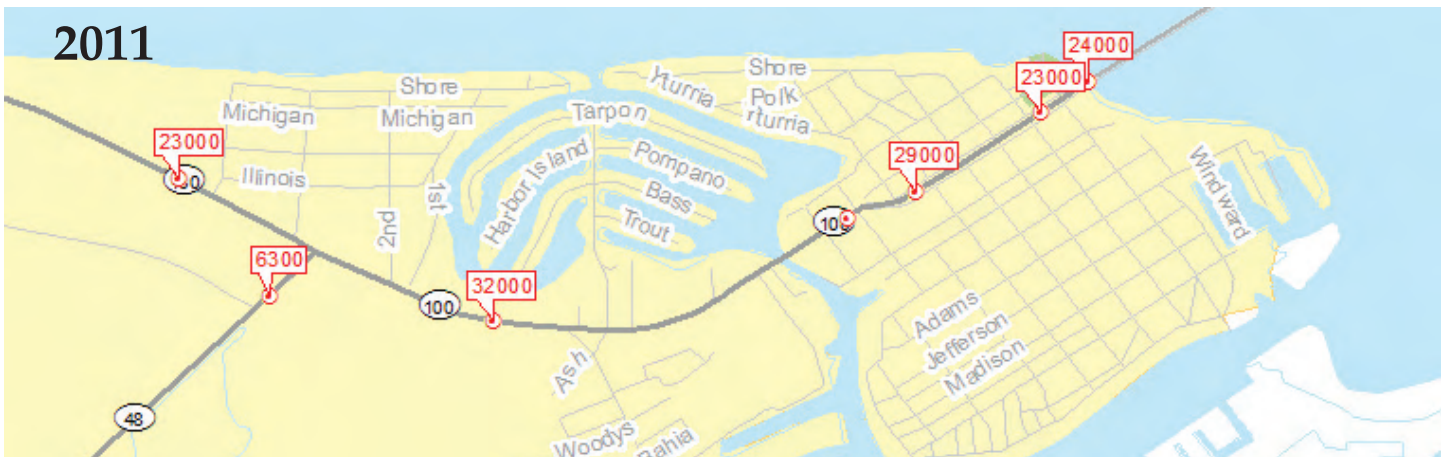
2009



2010



2011



[http://www.txdot.gov/apps/statewide\\_mapping/StatewidePlanningMap.html](http://www.txdot.gov/apps/statewide_mapping/StatewidePlanningMap.html)



# EVENTS

## El Paseo de Santa Isabel

El Paseo de Santa Isabel project features nearly 10 miles of hike and bike trails. Four different trails start at the Historic Museum and are highlighted by landscaping, rest areas, informative kiosks, lighting and historical interpretation. The trails provide bicycle and pedestrian access to the districts in Port Isabel and into Laguna Heights. The El Paseo de Santa Isabel routes have been marked in orange, purple, yellow and green on the map inside. Explore, discover and experience Port Isabel and its rich history and diverse landscaping. . . on foot or on bike!

### PORT ISABEL MERCHANT DISTRICTS SEE MAP FOR COLOR CODED DISTRICTS



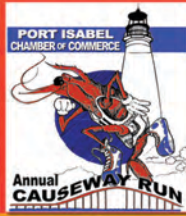
**PORT ISABEL INFORMATION:**  
[www.portisabel-texas.com](http://www.portisabel-texas.com)

**PORT ISABEL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**  
[www.portisabel-texas.com/piedc](http://www.portisabel-texas.com/piedc) ~ 956/943-0705  
305 E. Maxan St. ~ Port Isabel, Tx 78578

**MUSEUMS OF PORT ISABEL**  
[www.portisabelmuseums.com](http://www.portisabelmuseums.com) ~ 956/943-7602  
317 E. Railroad Ave. ~ Port Isabel, Tx 78578

**CITY OF PORT ISABEL**  
[www.portisabel-texas.com/cityhall](http://www.portisabel-texas.com/cityhall) ~ 956/943-2682  
305 E. Maxan St. ~ Port Isabel, Tx 78578

**CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & VISITORS CENTER**  
[www.portisabel.org](http://www.portisabel.org) ~ 800-527/6102 ~ 956/943-2262  
412 Queen Isabella Blvd. ~ Port Isabel, Tx 78578



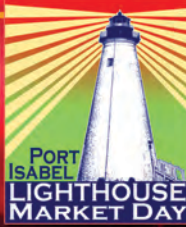
**JANUARY~** Longest Causeway Run and Wellness Walk. The Port Isabel Chamber of Commerce hosts this annual event which features a 10k walk/run over the Queen Isabella Memorial Bridge from Port Isabel to South Padre Island.



**APRIL~** Queen Isabella Market Day. Held the second Saturday in April, the Queen Isabella Market is hosted by the City of Port Isabel on the grounds of the Lighthouse. Vendors, food, live music and more.



**SUMMER & SPECIAL DATES~** The Lighthouse Establishment Cinema is hosted by the City of Port Isabel. Movies are projected onto the Port Isabel Lighthouse. No admission. Concessions.



**OCTOBER~** Port Isabel Lighthouse Arts & Heritage Festival is hosted by the City of Port Isabel on the grounds of the Lighthouse. Art, poetry, food, vendors, live music, entertainment and more. \$1.00 admission to the Lighthouse.



**SEPTEMBER~** Pachanga in the Park hosted by the City of Port Isabel. Food, vendors, games, live music.



**OCTOBER~** Los Colores del Muerto, Day of the Dead Celebration. Hosted by the Museums of Port Isabel. Tours, open house, exhibits, etc.



**NOVEMBER~** World's Championship Shrimp Cook-Off. Hosted by the Port Isabel Chamber of Commerce, the Cook-Off attracts dozens of competitors for the World's Best Title.



**DECEMBER~** Lighted Boat Parade. Hosted by the Port Isabel Chamber of Commerce. Decorated boats sail the Laguna Madre Bay. Decorating contests sponsored by the City of Port Isabel.

# MAP

## Port Isabel Texas 78578

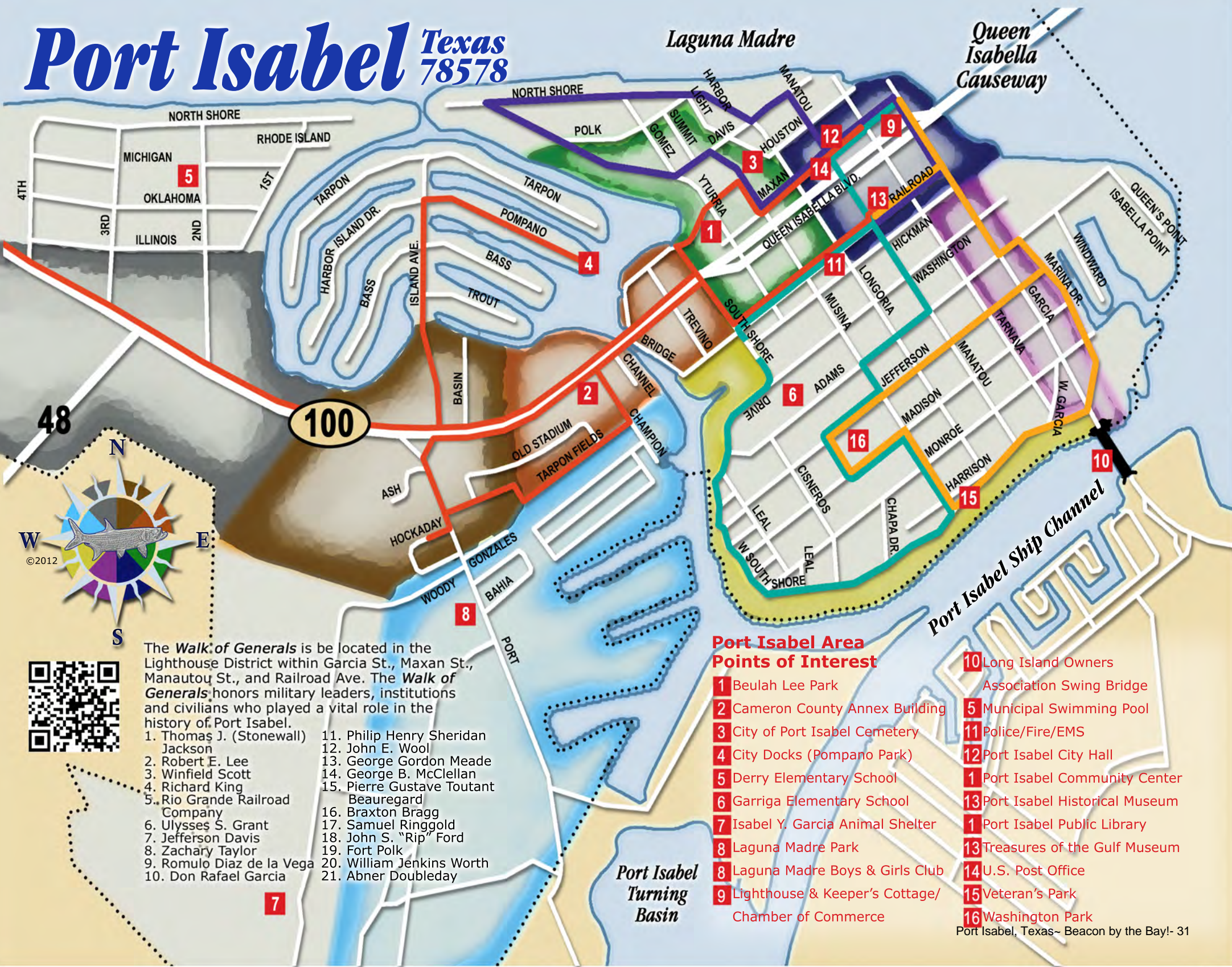


## Hike/Bike Trail Event Info Walk of Generals Points of Interest

# FREE

Port Isabel, Texas~ Beacon by the Bay!- 30

# Port Isabel Texas 78578



The *Walk of Generals* is located in the Lighthouse District within Garcia St., Maxan St., Manatou St., and Railroad Ave. The *Walk of Generals* honors military leaders, institutions and civilians who played a vital role in the history of Port Isabel.

- |                                  |                                       |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson | 11. Philip Henry Sheridan             |
| 2. Robert E. Lee                 | 12. John E. Wool                      |
| 3. Winfield Scott                | 13. George Gordon Meade               |
| 4. Richard King                  | 14. George B. McClellan               |
| 5. Rio Grande Railroad Company   | 15. Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard |
| 6. Ulysses S. Grant              | 16. Braxton Bragg                     |
| 7. Jefferson Davis               | 17. Samuel Ringgold                   |
| 8. Zachary Taylor                | 18. John S. "Rip" Ford                |
| 9. Romulo Diaz de la Vega        | 19. Fort Polk                         |
| 10. Don Rafael Garcia            | 20. William Jenkins Worth             |
|                                  | 21. Abner Doubleday                   |

## Port Isabel Area Points of Interest

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 Beulah Lee Park                                    | 10 Long Island Owners Association Swing Bridge |
| 2 Cameron County Annex Building                      | 5 Municipal Swimming Pool                      |
| 3 City of Port Isabel Cemetery                       | 11 Police/Fire/EMS                             |
| 4 City Docks (Pompano Park)                          | 12 Port Isabel City Hall                       |
| 5 Derry Elementary School                            | 1 Port Isabel Community Center                 |
| 6 Garriga Elementary School                          | 13 Port Isabel Historical Museum               |
| 7 Isabel Y. Garcia Animal Shelter                    | 1 Port Isabel Public Library                   |
| 8 Laguna Madre Park                                  | 13 Treasures of the Gulf Museum                |
| 8 Laguna Madre Boys & Girls Club                     | 14 U.S. Post Office                            |
| 9 Lighthouse & Keeper's Cottage/ Chamber of Commerce | 15 Veteran's Park                              |
|  | 16 Washington Park                             |





# The Rio Grande Valley Fishing Rodeo

## Extends an Invitation to the World

*(Editor's Note: Had it not been for World War II and the rationing of fuel supplies, the Texas International Fishing Tournament would be celebrating its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Originally dubbed The Rio Grande Valley Fishing Rodeo, the name was later changed to its present day designation. And while some things have inevitably changed, it is interesting to note that the fundamentals of the tournament remain true to the philosophy of its founder, Dr. J. A. Hockaday. So join us as we take a look at some of the tournament father's thoughts as published in the June 1934 issue of "Monty's Monthly". The following are excerpts from that original article by the doc himself.)*

### **By Dr. J.A. Hockaday**

Of all of the outdoor sports, most of us are agreed that none holds the interest of more people than that fathered by that genial soul, Isaac Walton, long gone to his reward. . .

When it comes to fishing, we all stand on common ground. I am reminded of one of the verses from the little poem, by an unknown author, "OutFishing":

*"The rich are comrades to the poor,  
Out fishin'.*

*All brothers of a common lure,  
Out fishin'.*

*The urchin with his pin and string,  
Can chum with millionaire and king,  
Out fishin'.*

At our front door flows some of the world's best fishing waters. How little we of the Valley appreciate it! It is one of our greatest assets and what little effort is expended to capitalize it!

How many times has some northern visitor who just happened to be in the Valley and to whom someone has casually mentioned "going fishing" has been surprisingly rewarded with one of those often-dreamed of but seldom realized, catches of the finny tribe so frequently made in our waters. Then I frequently hear the remark, "Why don't you people in the Valley tell the rest of the country about this fishing? If the whole world knew about this grand fishing, your

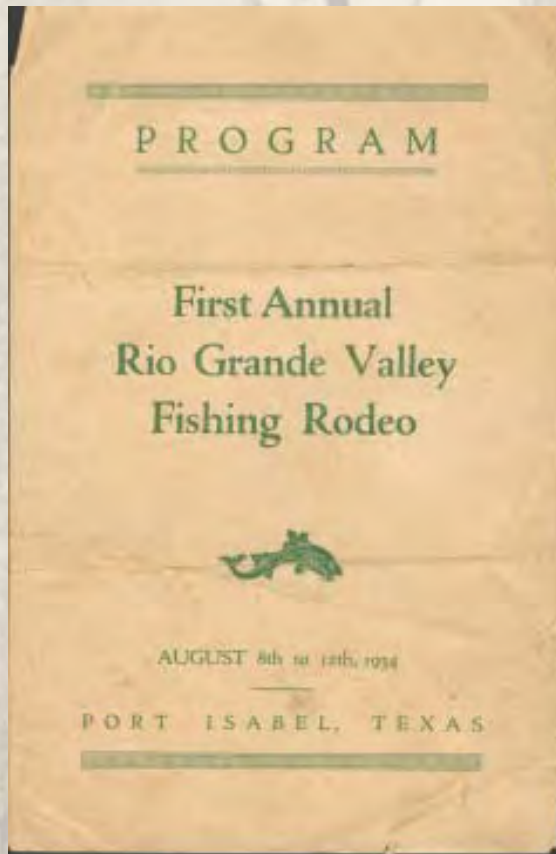
Valley wouldn't hold the disciples of Walton during fishing season." *This season lasts for nine months of every year.* Simply to tell the world has its limitations. Being from Missouri, I am convinced that it is better to show them. . . This thought of telling and at the same time showing the world what we have to offer in the way of fishing is what prompted the idea of the Rio Grande Valley Fishing Rodeo, next August 8<sup>th</sup> through the 12<sup>th</sup>. A plan to get the country's fishermen here in numbers, develop a spirit of competition so that they will keep at it for five days, and then when the motors become silent on the afternoon of August 12<sup>th</sup>, read the results. Not until then can we tell the world about our fishing, and prove our statements. The news of the results of this contest will be broadcast to every community in the United States. Wide, long and wild fish stories of this event will be told over and over wherever good fellows get together. A few exaggerations? Inevitable, but why worry about this?

The rodeo is planned as an annual affair. We must bend every effort to make the 1934 event a success. Future rodeos at Port Isabel will be governed by the results of the initial contest. The whole Gulf Coast has eyes on our Port Isabel Rodeo. It is the only one of the kind ever planned on such a large scale, *the first National fishing event ever held.*

During the five days of contests the Valley will be host to several hundred of the grandest good fellows living. Fishermen are invariably good fellows, and we expect to have the cream of the crop on hand during the rodeo. They must not only be provided with opportunity to demonstrate their angling ability but they must be instructed in our local fishing problems, so that each will catch his full bag. They must be made to feel that they are most

welcome guests, and made recipients of the much-famed Southern and Valley hospitality. . . With proper cooperation, it will become the Valley's outstanding entertainment feature for years to come.

*Dr. Hockaday's article goes on to outline the rodeo's division and rules, which are too long and numerous to include in this publication. But his prophetic description of an event that would outlive him should serve as a reminder to us all as each year, we extend an invitation to the world.*





# PI Museum Features TIFT Display

The Texas International Fishing Tournament will be one of four featured displays at the Port Isabel Treasures of the Gulf Museum's new Highway 100 façade.

Part of the museum's renovation includes a Community Gallery, which consists of four displays interpreting TIFT, Local Events, Merchant Districts, and Museum information. Each display is 8' x 8' and includes historical photos, text, artifacts and more. Each of the four segments will also include an 8' built in bench where visitors can sit and enjoy the displays.

The display area, which faces Highway 100, will be available to the public 24 hours a day. The area will be lit from the exterior as well as the interior. The TIFT display will include historical information, imagery, event schedule and registration information, and a monitor with DVD player with slide show and video of past TIFTs. The bench will also include a plaque crediting the tournament. Each display will be featured for a minimum of 18 months.

"I think this is a wonderful opportunity to continue telling the story of the Texas International Fishing Tournament," says President Robin Farris. "it provides us with year round access to the general public and allows us to update our message as often as necessary."

In addition to the highway frontage display, the Museums of Port Isabel also house the tournament's archives and serve as the permanent home of its perpetual trophy collection. "Past and present winners can 'visit' their perpetual trophies at anytime," Farris says. The trophies are removed only once each year, when they travel to the South Padre Island Convention Centre during tournament activities and are later engraved with current winners' name before returning to their permanent home.

"The Texas International Fishing Tournament and the Museums of Port Isabel have formed a natural partnership," says Farris. "They have the resources to preserve and care for the history of our event, including documents and photographs that date back to 1934. We are pleased to be a part of the new innovative display."

*Pictured to the right is the TIFT display scheduled to be installed in time for the start of 66th TIFT August 4 - 8, 2004.*

**Ride 'im, Fisherman!**

Some of the activities scheduled in the early tournaments were:

- Beauty Contests • Porpoise Riding
- Water Polo • Firemen's Fish Fry
- Boat Show • Human Fishing Contest
- Street Dances • Parachute Jumping!

**TIFT... the tradition continues!**

**2005 TIFT AUGUST 3-7, 2005**

**TIFT**

**TEXAS INTERNATIONAL FISHING TOURNAMENT**

**TIFT**

**PORT ISABEL - SOUTH PADRE ISLAND**

The little fishing tournament that built a city...

Now in its 66th year, the Texas International Fishing Tournament was first held as the RGV Fishing Rodeo. Founded by Port Isabel resident Dr. J.A. Hockaday as a way to generate publicity for south Texas and Port Isabel, TIFT has grown into the Texas' largest saltwater fishing tournament and number seven tournament in the world.

The 5 day event, scheduled for the first weekend in August, has become a family tradition. Dock-side activities attract thousands of spectators as anglers weigh-in their catches. Local media on hand to capture the scores broadcast them live. In the most recent tournament, nearly 500 boats and over 1200 anglers brought in a spectacular showing in the billfish category. Both offshore and bay categories are represented including an ever growing flyfishing category. ([www.tift.org](http://www.tift.org))

# Pictorial History of the Texas International Fishing Tournament

The winner of the 1st Annual Rio Grande Valley Fishing Rodeo, pictured right, was Dr. I. Henry Smith of Shreveport, La. Here he poses with the “Perpetual Tarpon Trophy” donated by the Missouri Pacific Railroad Company and designed by Lynn Bogue Hunt, New York wildlife artist. Below and right is a photo of 15 year old Pete LaTurno of Harlingen with the Valley’s first sailfish and the first sail entry in the tournament. The photo at the bottom represents a long time tradition of displaying the tournament’s winning catches on the Port Isabel Lighthouse grounds. The tournament still draws crowds of spectators as the anglers bring in their catches to be weighed in. And in just the last 15 years TIFT has attracted over 15,000 anglers of all ages fishing in both offshore and bay divisions. With a tradition now celebrating its 70th year and the eternal lure of sport fishing, the Texas International Fishing Tournament will continue to be a family tradition.



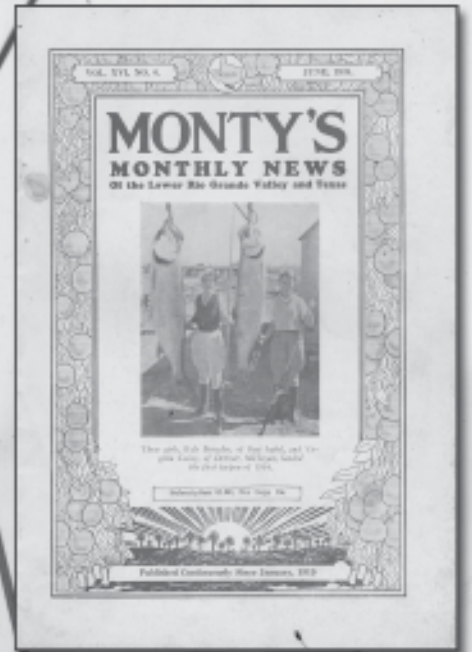
All the images featured in this pictorial history were taken in 1934 during the 1st Annual Rio Grande Valley Fishing Rodeo in Port Isabel, Texas.



## Some of the high-lights of the Rio Grande Valley Fishing Rodeo

Catches of fish will be graded according to the following schedule of points:

Any tarpon seven feet in length or over.....	1500	points
Any tarpon six feet in length to seven feet in length.....	1000	points
Any tarpon five feet in length to six feet in length.....	500	points
Any tarpon less than five feet in length.....	250	points
Any Jew-fish or deep sea bass over 100 pounds.....	500	points
Any Jew-fish or deep-sea bass less than 100 pounds.....	250	points
Any Black snapper or red grouper.....	250	points
Any Ling.....	250	points
Tuna fish; any size.....	200	points
Jack fish; either yellow jack or amber jock.....	50	points
Baby jack fish less than five pounds.....	20	points
King Mackerel.....	20	points
Salt water pike or (robalo).....	20	points
Blue fish any size.....	20	points
Black fish or sun fish.....	20	points
Red-fish or channel bass over ten pounds.....	20	points
Red-fish or channel bass less than ten pounds.....	10	points
Pompano, any size.....	10	points
Spanish mackerel.....	10	points
Spotted sea trout.....	10	points
Sheeps-head.....	10	points
Flounder.....	10	points
Red-snapper, any size.....	10	points
Drum fish any size.....	10	points
Sand trout.....	5	points
Croaker.....	5	points
Kingfish or black mullet.....	5	points
Gaff top-sail cat fish.....	5	points



- Anglers vied for 26 trophies (pictured below in a publicity shot). Six of the prizes went to the Lide family of Shreveport, La. Bobby Lide won the juvenile division, while Mrs. Lide won the women's division. Mr. Lide almost won the grand prize but was nosed out during the last hour of fishing by Dr. I. Smith also of Shreveport.
- Pictured above is the scoring system used in the tournament's early years.

- To the right is the cover of Monty's Monthly News featuring a photo of the tournament.



PARIS IN AUSTIN ~ PIE-TOPIA! ~ WOODLANDS WONDERLAND

# TEXAS<sup>TM</sup>

## HIGHWAYS



*The* TRAVEL MAGAZINE *of* TEXAS

DECEMBER 2013

# HOLIDAY ESCAPES

**RIO GRANDE VALLEY,  
MARATHON, SAN ANTONIO,  
GUADALUPE MOUNTAINS,  
GRAPEVINE, AND MORE ...**





DEEP IN THE HEART

# Seaside Cinema

## Enjoy summer film screenings at Port Isabel's icon

The Port Isabel Lighthouse was built in 1852 to guide ships through Brazos Santiago Pass on the low-lying Texas coast. Nowadays, it sheds another kind of light: On select summer Fridays, movies are shown on the 72-foot-tall lighthouse's facade for free. Since its beginning in 2005, the city-sponsored Lighthouse Establishment Cinema has drawn up to 500 people per show; families bring blankets, lawn chairs, and picnic baskets to enjoy favorite films like *Grease* amid revivifying coastal breezes. Movies begin at 9:30 p.m., right after the conclusion of South Padre Island's fireworks shows across Laguna Madre. "Tourists come to the movies, too, but the series is a way for Port Isabel citizens to enjoy their lighthouse," says Betty Wells, Chamber of Commerce president. "It's a different and fun way to use the attraction." Port Isabel is the only one of 16 original Texas lighthouses open to the public. Moviegoers can arrive early and tour the structure's interior (admission, \$1-\$3). The remaining film schedule is June 29, July 6 and 20, and August 3 and 17. (800) 527-6102; [portisabellighthouse.com](http://portisabellighthouse.com). —John Morthland

CARRIE ROBERTSON/THIRD COAST PHOTO

TRUE LANDMARK

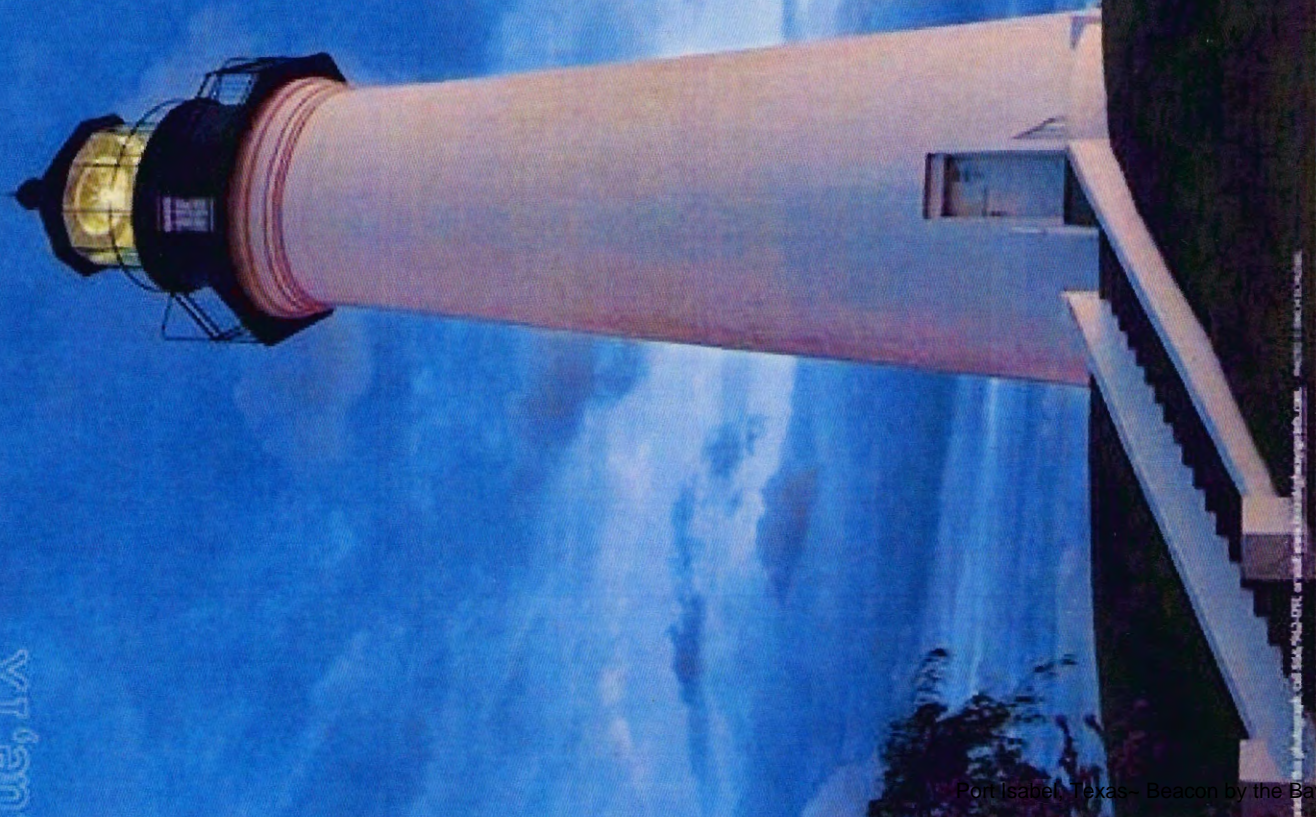
# PORT ISABEL LIGHTHOUSE PORT ISABEL

**THE 72-FOOT,** gleaming white Port Isabel Lighthouse on the shore of the Laguna Madre has overlooked a lot of Texas history. Built in 1852 to guide ships plying the narrow opening between Padre and Brazos islands, the original lighthouse had 15 lamps and 21 reflectors. During the Civil War, it fell briefly into the hands of Confederates, who set off a charge in it when a Union ship entered the harbor in May, 1863. Repaired and reactivated in 1866, the lighthouse was built up about three feet in the 1880s to accommodate a state-of-the-art Fresnel lens illuminated by a single lamp.

Its light was extinguished for good in 1905 after the railroad connected Corpus Christi and Taylor Meadows, and the tower sat neglected until the Texas State Parks Board restored and dedicated it as a state park in 1952. Renovations in 2000 returned the venerable structure to its original glory with a replica lighthouse keeper's home housing a visitor's center and inspiring historic displays. It's the only one of 14 lighthouses once built along the Texas coast that is open to the public. —Melissa Gosdall



**PORT ISABEL LIGHTHOUSE STATE HISTORIC SITE** (managed by the City of Port Isabel) 1311 Ocean Boulevard, Port Isabel, TX 78472 • 361.743.4402 • [www.portisabel.com](http://www.portisabel.com)



# Port Isabel show and tell

By Jonette W. Childs

The weather report was not encouraging. Red Tide was affecting area beaches and work was waiting to be finished while my deadline kept creeping up. But, the invitation from Danno Wise and the Port Isabel Chamber of Commerce to come on down and fish at Port Isabel was too tempting to resist.

Located just a few miles from Brownsville at the Brazos Santiago Pass to the Gulf of Mexico, Port Isabel is an old city with a very colorful history. The community has roots dating back to inhabitation by the Coahilitecan Indians. It's strategic location played an important role in the U.S. Mexican War, the U.S. Civil War and the California Gold Rush.

Unlike visits in the past, this trip



included time to explore all the historic aspects such as the Port Isabel Lighthouse State Historic Site. This lighthouse was built in 1852 and is one of the oldest functioning lighthouses on the Texas Gulf Coast. Its appearance was altered in 1880 to widen the catwalk and raise the lantern room, which holds a rotated, third-order Fresnel lens. In 1951, the Texas State Park Board began restoring the lighthouse. The restoration took a year and was conducted as precisely as possible. Climb the 75 steps to the top and you can take in the breathtaking view for 16 miles in all directions.

The Keepers Cottage was built next to the Lighthouse in 1855 and provides office space for the Chamber of Commerce. The Cottage is filled with photos of the city's interesting past. In addition there are at least 18 Historic Markers throughout the city

and surrounding area.

The city is home to three museums including the one located at the Lighthouse. The Treasures of the Gulf Museum focuses on three Spanish shipwrecks, which met their fate in 1554 just 30 miles north of Port Isabel. The U.S./Mexican War is the focus of The Port Isabel Historical Museum. It houses one of the largest collections of Mexican artifacts you will find anywhere.

The Port of Brownsville and a large shrimping industry help drive the economy of Port Isabel, but recreational fishing is the city's main draw. It's fantastic fishery draws thousands of anglers to the area for

the yearly Texas International Fishing Tournament (TIFT), which is held every year on the first weekend of August. TIFT events include activities for the entire family and the youngsters are certainly not forgotten.

We saw firsthand why so many anglers are attracted to these waters. I was part of a group of outdoor media invited to take part in a Port Isabel "Show and Tell." We fished for two days with area guides and were not disappointed even though some of the bays were experiencing the effects of a major Red Tide breakout. Many different species were caught each day including snook, tarpon and mangrove snapper. Of course, we bagged

our share of trout and redfish, which were excellently prepared by the White Sands Restaurant for our lunch on the day of our

**See "Isabel," page 25**



PHOTO BY JONETTE W. CHILDS

Capt. Gary Farmer and outdoor writer and cookbook author, Ralph Winingham stopped fishing long enough to allow me to snap this photo of one of Winingham's nice catches.



PHOTO BY JONETTE W. CHILDS

Jana Copeland and her mother-in-law, Annie Joe Copeland, share a moment with Cutthroat, one of the pirate crewmen aboard The Black Dragon.



## Isabel

departure.

All types of lodging are available in Port Isabel from bed and break-



PHOTO BY ALVIN CHILDS

*Capt. Carlos Garcia guided us to one honey hole after another on a day that forced him to look for cover once the norther hit. This red hit the box to become part of the day's lunch.*

fasts to your everyday chain motels. We stayed at a full-service accommodation, The White Sands. It offers a marina, a bait and tackle shop, a restaurant and clean, comfortable kitchenettes. We ate in some great restaurants and our visit to Doubleday's Sports Bar proved that Doubleday's did, indeed, house South Texas' finest sports memorabilia collection.

You won't want for entertainment. To be honest, I wasn't too excited about our scheduled two-hour tour on the Laguna Madre aboard *The Black Dragon*, a large replica of a pirate ship. We were barely underway when my opinion changed and the fun began. Our group blended with the other soon-to-be pirates aboard and we were quickly engaged in water gun fights, sword battles, cannon firings, deck swabbing and face painting. Our pirate queen and her crew showed us a great time. I would certainly recommend the experience for kids



PHOTO BY JONETTE W. CHILDS

From page nineteen

of all ages.

While you're visiting Port Isabel, don't forget the great shopping to be found in the city's Merchant Districts. You will find shops selling souvenirs, gifts, tackle, antiques, clothing and coastal curiosities—something for everyone. Most of the shops are located near the Lighthouse while others are within an easy stroll.

Don't forget to schedule some time to just relax and take in the local ambiance. You'll be glad you put Port Isabel on your list of great places to visit on the Texas Coast.

*Patsy Garcia, of Port Isabel, hooked up over and over throughout our day on the water. Even though she fishes often, she reacted with gleeful enthusiasm each time she reeled in another one.*

Port Isabel, Texas—Beacon by the Bay!—40



## WEBSITES

**Port Isabel Economic Development Corporation**  
Partnering for Port Isabel's Future

HOME | CALENDAR | COMMERCIAL PROPERTY | COMMUNITY PROFILE | FISHING | ZONING & CODES | CONTACT US | EDC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**OUR MISSION**  
The Port Isabel Economic Development Corporation Mission is to meet the unique and changing needs of our community by creating and maintaining partnerships that provide quality workforce development and career resources that enhance economic growth.

**About the PIEDC**  
The Port Isabel Economic Development Corporation is a non-profit corporation governed by a Board of Directors and operated under the direction of the Port Isabel Economic Development Corporation Director and Administrator.  
PIEDC utilizes 5% of one percent from the local sales tax which is then committed to funding projects and initiatives for the City of Port Isabel's Economic Development benefit. Because of the tourism nature of our community and region, in addition to workforce training and business incentives, the PIEDC has flexibility to contribute to projects that enhance the aesthetic and cultural value of our City such as street and sidewalk beautification,...

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**City of PORT ISABEL, Texas**

RECENT POSTS

- » Planning & Zoning Regular Meeting 3/13 6p
- » Regular City Commission Meeting 3/12 7p
- » Regular City Commission Meeting 2/20 7p
- » Regular City Commission Meeting 2/12 7p
- » Planning & Zoning Regular Meeting 2/13 6p
- » Board of Adjustments Regular Meeting 2/7 6p
- » Special EDC Meeting 2/7 6p

**City Hall**

The Port Isabel City Hall is located on 305 E. Maxon St. in Port Isabel. It is the location of the offices of the City Manager, City Secretary, Health Department, Finance Department and Building Department.

Services available at the Port Isabel City Hall include: Garbage collection payment and various permits. See info below for contact information for these departments.

Hours: Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**PAGES**  

- Administration
- Boards
- Calendar
- City Hall
- City Meetings Schedule
- City of Port Isabel Code of Ordinances

[www.portisabel-texas.com/cityhall](http://www.portisabel-texas.com/cityhall)

**PORT ISABEL LIGHTHOUSE**  
Open Daily - Year Around on Highway 100

**Lighthouse Info**  
Book a School or Group Tour at the Lighthouse

- Tours: group, group rates, lighthouse tour, museum tour, organization, tour

Port Isabel webpages  
Spring - Happy St., Patrick's Day - Spring Break & ALL things March!!  
Port Isabel Lighthouse decorated with shamrocks and strings of green lights through the month of March!  
Like this on Facebook!

**Notification of Balcony Maintenance**  
The balcony of the Port Isabel Lighthouse is CLOSED and OFF LIMITS due to broken rails. Maintenance will be conducted by the City of Port Isabel & Texas Parks & Wildlife Department.

**Pages**  

- Address and Info
- For Sale & Enjoyable Visit
- Group Tour Fees & Info
- Lighthouse Safety Info
- TPWD Lighthouse Flyer
- History
- Historic Markers
- Southernmost
- US Lighthouse Society
- Home & Near Home - Lighthouse Establishment Classes
- Lighthouse Release Tour

[www.portisabellighthouse.com](http://www.portisabellighthouse.com)

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Valerie Bates · Find Friends · Home

Port Isabel, Texas, just 2.6 miles from South Padre Island! Home to the only lighthouse open to the public on the Texas Gulf Coast! Great fishing, great shopping, great dining.

**Port Isabel Texas**  
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**Port Isabel, Texas**

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Recent Posts

- 58th Annual Christmas Lighted Boat Parade Winners Announced
- 58th Annual Community Christmas Tree Lighting Kicks Off Holiday Season
- Halloween & Day of the Dead Week Packed with Fun!
- Lighthouse Features National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

**HOME**

TEXAS is a big state... so we thank you for your interest in the Port Isabel area as your vacation destination, relaxation or retirement home. Port Isabel has everything you need to create vacation memories or a new home for your family or business!

Some of the oldest cities in extreme South Texas, Port Isabel has a long and interesting history dating back to 1916 when it was drafted by Spanish explorer Alonso de Pineda. There are tales of pirate's treasures still buried on South Padre Island. Port Isabel is home to three world class museums which bring our history to life. The Port Isabel Historic Museum, the Treasures of the Gulf Museum, and the 1853 Port Isabel Lighthouse are monuments to our rich past. The Lighthouse Keeper's Cottage, on the grounds of the Port Isabel lighthouse also highlights the maritime history of the Laguna Madre area.

Port Isabel enjoys mild weather year around, world class fishing, events and festivals, lots of great food and friendly faces. Visit our blog, then visit us!

[www.portisabel-texas.com/blog](http://www.portisabel-texas.com/blog)

**MUSEUMS OF PORT ISABEL**  
317 E. RAILROAD AVE.

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**QUEEN ISABELLA MARKET DAY 4/13**

**Green Isabella MARKET DAY**  
Sat - April 13th 9a-4p  
Live Entertainment  
Art Exhibits & Sale  
Food Booths  
Live Music  
Lighthouse Square in PORT ISABEL  
www.portisabellighthouse.com

The Treasures of the Gulf Museum is open! Due to construction, please use the entrance on Highway 100.

The Museums of Port Isabel is a complex consisting of three diverse facilities, the Port Isabel Historic Museum, the Treasures of the Gulf Museum, and the Point Isabel Lighthouse. All three are within walking distance of each other and are open year around to the public.

**PORT ISABEL LIGHTHOUSE**  
Constructed in 1852, the Point Isabel Lighthouse was built to protect and guide ships through Brazos Santiago Pass and the barrier islands. In 1952, the Lighthouse was opened as a State Park and remains the only lighthouse on the Texas Gulf coast open to the public. The Lighthouse Keeper's Cottage which is on the grounds of the Lighthouse, is open to the public and houses the Chamber of Commerce and the Port Isabel Visitors Center. There is no admission charge to the Keepers Cottage. Lighthouse tickets can be purchased at the Keepers Cottage or at the Lighthouse. A combination ticket is available. Last ticket sold at 4:30 p.m. or 1/2 hour before closing.

Summer Hours: Daily 9a - 7p

[www.portisabellighthouse.com](http://www.portisabellighthouse.com)



## SOURCES

**Visitors & Event Center & Feasibility Study:** <http://portisabel-texas.com/cityhall/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/BBPHotel-EventVisitorCenterFeasibilityStudy-Port-Isabel-TX.pdf>

**Office of the Governor, Economic Development and Tourism:** <http://www.travel.state.tx.us/TravelResearch/Economic-Impact.aspx>

**2011 Economic Impact on Travel in Texas Report:** <http://www.travel.state.tx.us/getattachment/7941c6e2-2d92-4c42-84af-a7156318ad0d/TXImp-11pRev.aspx>

**Texas Air Travel, 2011:** [http://www.travel.state.tx.us/getattachment/49bb5668-1bd7-4c2a-8df9-4c494929b4ca/TXAirports\\_11.aspx](http://www.travel.state.tx.us/getattachment/49bb5668-1bd7-4c2a-8df9-4c494929b4ca/TXAirports_11.aspx)

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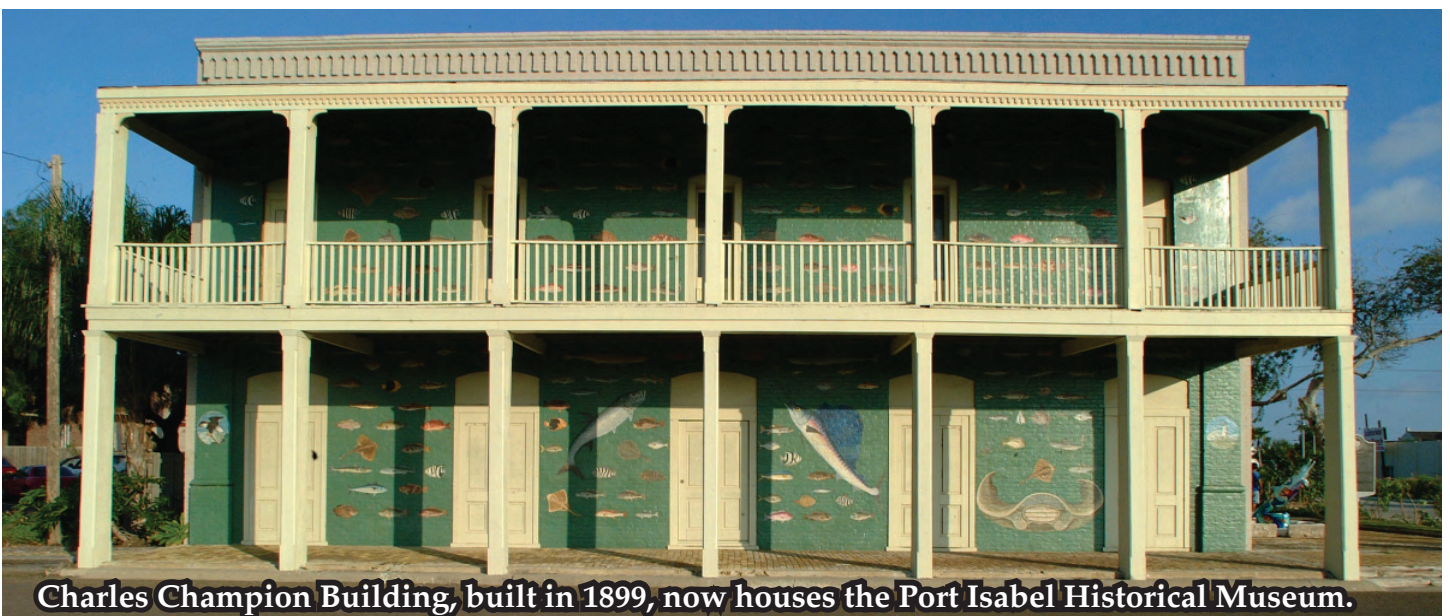
**2011 Texas Tourism Region and MSA Visitor Profile:** <http://www.travel.state.tx.us/getattachment/c796786e-642d-40da-aeda-b5d3d1090105/2011-Gulf-Coast-Final.aspx>

**Window on State Government:** <http://www.window.state.tx.us/>

**City-Data.com:** <http://www.city-data.com/city/Port-Isabel-Texas.html>

**Port Isabel Historic Design Guidelines:** [http://portisabelmuseums.com/mopi/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/pi\\_design\\_guidelines.pdf](http://portisabelmuseums.com/mopi/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/pi_design_guidelines.pdf)

**Port Isabel's Comprehensive Plan:** <http://portisabel-texas.com/city-hall/comprehensive-plan-2/>



**Charles Champion Building, built in 1899, now houses the Port Isabel Historical Museum.**



# 101 QUESTIONS ABOUT PORT ISABEL

1. Has the lighthouse ever been moved? No, but the hill was formed around it when dirt was moved away from the site in the early 50s.

2. How many steps to the top of the lighthouse? 75 winding stairs including 3 short ladders.



3. When was the name changed from Point Isabel to Port Isabel? In 1927, when the Town of Port Isabel was incorporated.

4. Why is it called "Port" Isabel? The 30 ft. bluffs on the bank of the Laguna Madre Bay made it a natural port.

5. Why was it called "Point" Isabel? The shape of the land formed a point into the Laguna Madre Bay.

6. What about the "Isabel" part of the name? From Queen Isabella of Spain.

7. Does the light in the lighthouse still work? The original lens is no longer in the lighthouse, but there is an ornamental light installed for non navigational purposes.

8. What was the shipwrecked fleet of 1554 carrying? They were on their way back to Spain with their treasure of silver and gold.

9. Where was Flota de Plata (the Silver Fleet) discovered? It was discovered off the shores of Port Mansfield, 30 miles north of Port Isabel.

10. How many survived the wreck? Three hundred made it to the beach, but only two lived to tell the tale.

11. What happened to the other 298? The two survivors say the 298 were victims of local Indians and the harsh elements.

12. Where is the Lighthouse's original lens? No one knows. It was removed in 1863 by the Confederate Army and hidden.

13. What are the porpoises all over town? The Porpoise Pachanga. Nearly two dozen of them were painted by local artists and can be found displayed all around Port Isabel.

14. Are there any ghost stories about the old museum building and the Lighthouse? Yes, inquire within!

15. Who painted the fish mural on the front of the Champion Building? A local one armed artist painted a representation of species found near Port Isabel in the Laguna Madre Bay and the Gulf of Mexico

16. Do sharks swim in the bay? Yes, they do. Bull, black tip, lemon, hammerheads, spinners and many other varieties live in the waters of the Laguna Madre.

17. Where is a good place to eat? They are all good! From seafood, Mexican food, Italian food, buffets, Chinese and American, Port Isabel has great food and great service.

18. Can people walk over the causeway? No, pedestrian traffic is prohibited.

19. What is the oldest building in Port Isabel besides the lighthouse? The Champion building, built in 1899.

20. When was the Lighthouse Keepers cottage built? The original was built in 1850.

21. When was the causeway built? 1974.

22. How tall is the lighthouse? 72 feet from the top of the hill to the top of the cupola.

23. When was the first causeway built? 1952.

24. What's the biggest fish caught in the Laguna Madre Bay? Depends on the fisherman you ask. Sharks up to 400 lbs. have been caught in the bay.

25. Do dolphins swim in the Laguna Madre Bay? Yes, it is the exclusive playground of the bottlenose dolphin.

26. Can I swim with the dolphins? While you may swim in the Laguna Madre and the dolphins are swimming there also, interaction in the water with them is not advisable.

27. Can people get married at the top of the lighthouse? Couples get engaged, renew vows and get married at the top of the lighthouse! Contact the Port Isabel Museums for details.

28. Were there really cannibals here? The local Karankawas practiced a form of cannibalism. Ashes of their elders were consumed in a beverages.

29. Is there an elevator to the top of the lighthouse? No elevator to the top. While the first elevator was invented the same year the lighthouse was built, no consideration was made for the tourist 100 years later.

30. How long is the causeway? 2.6 miles, the longest bridge in the state of Texas.

31. How tall is the causeway? 88 ft. at the highest point.

32. How far is Mexico? The Tamaulipas bordertown of Matamoros is just 25 miles from Port Isabel.

33. Why does the water go up and down? Tides.

34. What are the best months to visit Port Isabel? Locals think they are all good months! But you may want to try April, May, October and September.

35. Did pirates ever come to Port Isabel? Famed pirate, Jean LaFitte was rumored to have visited. Many other lesser known pirates have also rowed ashore.

36. When was Port Isabel founded? The earliest records reflect a date of 1770.

37. When was the last time it snowed in Port Isabel? Christmas 2004.

38. Are there whales in the Gulf of Mexico near Port Isabel? Several varieties call this part of the Gulf their home. There is a record of a whale that washed up on the SPI beach in the 1800s.

39. How deep is the Laguna Madre? The average depth is 2.5 feet.

40. What is the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway? The GIWW was dredged in the 1930s to offer sea going ships shelter between the barrier islands and the mainland. It starts here and ends on the east coast.

41. How old is the swing bridge? It was installed in 1952.

42. What kind of pelicans are in Port Isabel? Brown Pelicans and in the winter months, White and Brown.

43. What is the average mean temperature in Port Isabel? 74 degrees.

44. Does the wind ever quit blowing? Yes it does, briefly before changing directions. Average speed is 13 mph.

45. What is a shrimp? Well, it's not very big, it's a shrimp. They are crustacean shellfish similar to prawn and quite tasty when properly prepared.

46. What are some of the other names Port Isabel was known as? El Fronton (1770 - 1846), Point Isabel and sometimes just Isabel (1846 - 1927).

47. Where is the "port"? It's on Port Road. The Port Isabel-San Benito Navigation District is one

of 12 deep water ports in Texas.

48. Who built the lighthouse? John Garey of Brownsville was awarded the contract. Started in December 1851, completed in March 1853.

49. Where are the 30 ft. bluffs Port Isabel was known for? They were removed and used for fill in the mid 1920s.

50. Where was Ft. Polk? Where the Port Isabel Lighthouse is located.

51. When was the Lighthouse decommissioned? In 1905.

52. How much did it cost to build the Lighthouse? \$15,000 to build the Point Isabel lighthouse and the Brazos Santiago Lighthouse.

53. What is a skow sloop? A specially designed sail powered fishing vessel. Its





# 101 QUESTIONS ABOUT PORT ISABEL

shallow keel allowed access to the fish laden waters of the Laguna Madre.  
54. Where were the wireless towers? In the southern portion of Port Isabel near South Shore Drive.

55. How did people get to South Padre Island before the bridge was built? In very low tides it was possible to walk across before the GIWW was dredged. The most common method was by ferry boat.

56. Where were the railroad docks? On the south side of Railroad Ave. in front of the Champion building.

57. How much did it cost to take a ferry boat to South Padre Island? It cost about \$2.00 to take your car the Laguna Madre Bay.

58. Who was Don Chencho? Owned the title of the most photographed person in Port Isabel. He died in the 1950s at 117 years old. He had helped to construct the lighthouse as a youth and later served the community as an aquadore.

59. Where was the railroad depot? In front of the railroad tracks on Railroad Ave. near the present day Port Isabel Press offices.

60. What do you do with the rain water you catch in the barrels at the Lighthouse Keepers Cottage? They are ornamental, but the original played an important role as fresh water was very important to daily life at the coast.  
61. Were there manatees here? One was captured here in 1911.



62. What's the name of the trees on the grounds of the Lighthouse? Mesquite and palm.

63. How were the steps inside the Lighthouse built? They were cast and installed in pieces.

64. How many lighthouses were originally built in the state of Texas? Sixteen.

65. Who owns the lighthouse? The State of Texas. The City of Port Isabel operates and staffs the lighthouse.

66. Does Brazos Santiago lighthouse still exist? It was destroyed by fire in 1944.

67. Why was the lighthouse decommissioned? Lessening navigational needs.

68. What year did the town become incorporated? 1927.

69. Who named the city streets? The daughters of Manatou and Garcia, two important founding families. Street names in the original city plan were selected in the 1880s.

70. What happened to the shrimping industry? Regulation, fuel cost, importation, shrimp farms and other factors have slowed the industry.

71. When was the replica of the keeper's cottage built? 1996, at a cost of \$320,000.

72. What happened to "Lady Bea"? It was scrapped, but the namesake lives on as a bay shrimper on the grounds of the Treasures of the Gulf Museum.

73. How far could ships see the Lighthouse light from sea? Approximately 16 nautical miles.

74. Why are the stairs in the lighthouse curved? Because the inside of the lighthouse is curved.

75. Why is the town called Port Isabel and the school district called Point Isabel Independent School District? Because the school district was formed before the town was incorporated in 1927.

76. Why were the railroad tracks built 1/2 mile into the bay? So goods could be loaded and unloaded from ships and railroad cars.

77. Has the lighthouse appearance ever been altered? Changes were made to the top of it in 1880. The lantern room was raised and the catwalk was increased from 16" to its present day width.

78. What is the most interesting bird sighted in the Port Isabel area? The Mangrove Warbler, found on Long Island and in South Bay.

79. Where are the best places to bird in Port Isabel? One of the best spots accessible to the public is between the Port Isabel Historic Museum and the Treasures of the Gulf Museum on Railroad Ave.

80. How big is the Lighthouse State Historic Site Park? 0.9 acres.

81. What kind of fish are in the Laguna Madre Bay? A wide variety including trout, redfish, snook, flounder, croaker, drum, mangrove snapper and many more.

82. What is the rarest kind of fish in the bay? Sawfish were caught in the bay and the last one sighted was in 1974.

83. What is the biggest fish in the bay? The one got away.

84. How big is the Laguna Madre Bay? A hyper saline estuary bay system, the Laguna Madre Bay is the only lagoon in the world saltier than the ocean, accounts for 3/4 of Texas seagrass habitat and is about 130 miles long.

85. What is the rarest bird sighting in Port Isabel? Mangrove Cuckoo.

86. Do butterflies migrate through Port Isabel? Yes. The best place to view them at is between the Port Isabel Historic Museum and Treasures of the Gulf Museum.

87. What is that laughing sound I sometimes hear up in the sky? That is our resident Laughing Gull.

88. Did the original lens in the lighthouse move? Yes, it rotated. The keeper put blackout shades in the part that faced Port Isabel.

89. What is the elevation at the lighthouse? 15 ft. above sea level.

90. Is Port Isabel an island? A portion of Port Isabel is an island that is separated from the mainland by the Port Isabel Side Channel.

91. How did the locals used to get their fresh water? Aguadores would bring a full barrel of water pulled by a donkey to exchange for your empty one for 10¢.

92. What was the worst hurricane to hit Port Isabel? The unnamed storm of September 1933 left only the top of the lighthouse visible.

93. Historically, what other industries besides fishing was Port Isabel known for? Ranching and salt gathering.

94. Who had the first ranch at Port Isabel? Don Rafael Garcia in 1827 as part of a Spanish land grant.

95. Are there shipwrecks in the bay? Several have met their fate in the shallow waters of the Laguna Madre Bay. When the waters are clear, one can be spotted just off the QIC near the high point of the bridge, just look to the south for the darker waters.

96. Have any presidents visited Port Isabel? Zachary Taylor, Ulysses S. Grant, Jefferson Davis, Warren G. Hardin.

97. Was the Port Isabel Lighthouse ever damaged by cannon fire during the Civil War? No, but the Confederated attempted to blow it up with TNT and gunpowder. They only succeeded in cracking it and damaging the top slightly.

98. Are those pink flamingos we see near Port Isabel? They are Roseate Spoonbills.

99. What is the oldest grave stone in the Port Isabel Cemetery? Hard to tell exactly, but some date back before the 1900s by settlers from Ireland, Italy, England, Germany, Spain and France.

100. What kind of porpoises are the Porpoise Pachanga? They are actually Spinner Dolphins.

101. Need to know more? Visit the Port Isabel Chamber of Commerce, the Port Isabel Museums, housed in the Keeper's Cottage, the Treasures of the Gulf Museum and the Port Isabel Historic Museum.





# HISTORICAL MARKERS

## ALTA VISTA APARTMENTS

Constructed in 1931 for the Gaskill-Hodgson Company, this Mediterranean Style structure is the oldest apartment building in Port Isabel. A survivor of numerous coastal storms and hurricanes, the complex originally consisted of three each one-bedroom, two-bedroom, and efficiency apartments. Prominent features of the two-story stucco building include its asymmetrical massing, arched-entry porches, covered balconies, and red tile roof. Recorded Texas Historic Landmark - 1988.

Year Marker Erected: 1988

Marker Location: 700 Polk Street, Port Isabel



## CHARLES CHAMPION

The son of Joseph Champion, an Italian immigrant who settled in Texas in 1855, Charles Champion was born on February 2, 1870, in Old Point Isabel. He served as district clerk in Hidalgo County before purchasing the Hess General Store in Old Point Isabel in 1894. He renamed it "The Champion Store," and continued to operate the business in the small frame structure. In 1899, Champion erected this two-story brick building and named it "The Key of the Gulf."



The first floor housed the general merchandise store, the U.S. Customs House, and the post office. Champion served as the second postmaster of

Point Isabel. In the early 1900s, Champion provided the impetus for the fishing industry that employed many local citizens and became an integral part of the local economy.

By 1908 Champion and Judge J.B. Wells owned the Santa Isabella land grant, which included Point Isabel. Long a proponent of a deep water port in Point Isabel, Champion died in 1926 before its completion in 1933. Champion was buried next to his wife Margaret Orive and other family members in the Point Isabel Cemetery.

Year Marker Erected: 1996

Marker Location: 317 E. Railroad Ave.



## PALANGANA CEMETERY / SANTA ISABEL CEMETERY

Directions: Approx 179 feet north of Hwy 100. Faces Island Ave. Approximately 126 feet west of

Basin St.

Size: .07 acre

Number of Graves: 10



Dates of Burials: 1916 to mid 20th century  
Date designated: 17 April 2006 Marker not yet installed.

## OLD POINT ISABEL LIGHTHOUSE

The beacon for the commerce of the Rio Grande; Erected by the United States Government in 1852; Extinguished during the Civil War; Discontinued, 1888-1895; Permanently discontinued, 1905

Year Marker Erected: 1936

Marker Location: 421 E. Queen Isabella Blvd.

## OLD POINT ISABEL (PORT ISABEL)

Site of a ranch settlement, owned by Don Rafael Garcia, called "El Frontera de Santa Ysabel" (Bluff of Saint Isabel) about the year 1828. The Mexican custom station was located here in 1844, after the villages of Brazos Santiago and Boca Del Rio were swept away by storms. Goods landed here were at once freighted inland to Matamoros. After the Mexican War (1846-1848), the United States Post Office of "Point Isabel" was created on April 9, 1849. Efforts to build a railroad line to Brownsville in the 1850s did not succeed, but after the Civil War, in 1866, public demands for a rail line to Brownsville were met by Rio Grande steamboat interests, who chartered but refrained from building the road. In 1871, competitors formed the Rio Grande Railroad Company, obtained a charter, and put the line into service in 1873 from Brownsville to a terminus here (450 feet south of this marker). The line served until 1933 when a deep water channel was built to Brownsville.

Year Marker Erected: 1972

Marker Location: SE corner of P100 and S. Garcia Street.

## POINT ISABEL, C.S.A.

After Texas seceded and joined the Confederacy, the Federal Navy in late 1861 blockaded this port with the U.S. "Santiago de Cuba". Commerce stoppage caused removal of customs offices to Brownsville and some civilians to neutral Bagdad, Mexico. The Confederates ceased to use the lighthouse, and it became a watch tower for blockade runners, and thus Laguna Madre their haven. Boats from the U.S.S. "Brooklyn", in May 1863, attacked vessels in port and a Confederate unit near the lighthouse. The Confederates tried to blow up the tower--a defense measure--but only succeeded in damaging fixtures. The French, supporting Maximilian in Mexico, prohibited the landing of war material at Bagdad. Defying both the French and U.S. Naval patrols, Mexican lighters from the Rio Grande landed here in Sept. 1863 with a large cargo of C.S.A. arms. In Nov. 1863, U.S. forces from the expedition of Gen. N.P. Banks occupied Point Isabel. The blockade was lifted and the port reactivated. In Aug. 1864, the Confederates drove the Federals across the bay to Brazos Island. The next march, Federal Gen. Lew Wallace (later author of "Ben Hur") met Confederate officers here to talk peace.





# HISTORICAL MARKERS

Year Marker Erected: 1964. Marker Location: At library, corner of Maxan Street and Yurria Street.



**POINT ISABEL LIGHTHOUSE**  
 Built 1852 – Retired 1905  
 Built of brick brought from New Orleans by schooner. The beacon's 16 mile range guided ships into the harbor and to the Rio Grande, bringing commerce to sw Texas. Darkened during the Civil War, it was used as a lookout by both Union and Confederate forces, and again during World War I.  
 Placed in Honor of the American Merchant Marine United States Daughters of 1812, Texas Society Coryne Aston Boggs Choate, State President.  
 Year Marker Erected: 9 February 1992  
 Marker Location: Corner of Tarnava Street and State Highway 100.

## PORT ISABEL CEMETERY

Encompassing almost one acre of land, the Port Isabel Cemetery is located on property granted to Don Rafael Garcia by the government of Mexico in 1829. The land was known as the Santa Ysabel Grant, and Garcia soon established a ranch he named El Fronton de Santa Isabel (Saint Elizabeth's Bluff). Garcia continued to reside at his home in Matamoros, Mexico, and the ranch was operated by hired workers.



According to local tradition, the workers on El Fronton de Santa Isabel Ranch began to use this site as a burial ground as early as the 1840s. No grave markers from that time period survive, however, and the oldest marked graves in the cemetery date to the 1880s. The ground was consecrated for use as a Catholic cemetery by French Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in December 1849, although it has served as a community burial ground for people of all faiths throughout its history.

Later owners of the land included members of the Champion (Campeoni) Family, who immigrated to America from Italy in the early 19th Century. The Champion Family donated the cemetery property to the Catholic Church in 1926. It remains an important element of Port Isabel's cultural history.

Year Marker Erected: 1990  
 Marker Location: Corner of Houston Street and Musina Street



## PORT OF MATAMOROS

The Port of Matamoros was established in 1824. Commercial cargo, shipped mainly from New Orleans and other U.S. ports, was unloaded at the port and transported overland to Matamoros, Reynosa, Camargo, Monterrey, and Mier. Mexico maintained a garrison and at least one Navy vessel at the port. This area was the site of numerous naval encounters between the U.S. and Mexico in 1836-37, during and after the Texas Revolution. Jurisdiction over the port was finally settled in

1846 when forces of U.S. General Zachary Taylor occupied the area at the outset of the Mexican War.

Year Marker Erected: 1994. Marker Location: On shore north of causeway, at end of east Maxan Street.



## QUEEN ISABEL INN

Built by 1906 to lodge Rio Grande Railroad Company passengers and tourists, especially fishermen and hunters, the Queen Isabella Inn was first known as "Point Isabel Tarpon & Fishing Club". The hotel hosted family train excursions from Brownsville as early as 1907. Prominent visitors to the inn included president-elect Warren G. Harding in November of 1920. By 1930, indoor plumbing, electrical service, and a popular dining room made the hotel an attractive destination for vacationers.

The Rio Grande Valley Fishing Rodeo was organized here in the summer of 1934 to promote tourism. The hotel was the headquarters for the contest, later renamed the Texas International Fishing Tournament.

Hurricanes in 1933 and 1967 removed the hotel's original porches and pitched roof. The hotel has served as the site for many important civic and social events and has been associated with the lives of persons significant to Port Isabel's history. The Queen Isabella Inn sparked the beginning of the hotel and tourism industry in the area and endures as an important landmark business in Port Isabel history.

Year Marker Erected: 1991  
 Marker Location: 300 S. Garcia Street.

**QUEEN ISABELLA CAUSEWAY**  
 Designated and named in honor of Queen Isabella of Castile who financed Christopher Columbus' Expedition into this part of the New World in the year 1492.



## SITE OF FORT POLK

A Mexican village developed on this point, settled by Mexican ranchers in the 1700's. The village was abandoned prior to the U.S. Declaration of war with Mexico in 1846. U.S. Forces led by general Zachary Taylor occupied the point on March 24, 1846. Taylor erected a depot here to receive supplies from New Orleans. The six-sided Fort, named for President Polk, consisted of 4 sides of Earthen Embankments and 2 sides open to the shoreline. The Fort was abandoned in 1850 but the settlement it attracted eventually developed into Port Isabel. Remnants of the Fort were visible until the 1920's.

Year Marker Erected: 1994  
 Location: Corner of North Tarnava and P100, Port Isabel Lighthouse State Park.

**OTHER SITES OF HISTORIC INTEREST:** Yacht Club (700 N. Yurria St.), Swing Bridge (Garcia St.), Shrimp Basin (Port Road), Lighthouse Keeper's Cottage (421 E. Queen Isabella Blvd.), Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Church (705 S. Longoria St.), Zachary Taylor's Well (located between the Port Isabel Historic Museum & the Treasures of the Gulf Museum), Isla Vista Apartments (542 Polk St.).



# RELOCATION INFORMATION

Port Isabel, population 5006, is located 35 miles southeast of Harlingen and 22 miles northeast of Brownsville, Texas and 25 miles from the U.S./Mexico border. It lies on the eastern end of the Rio Grande Valley at the Brazos-Santiago Pass to the Gulf of Mexico. The latitude of Port Isabel is 26.073N. The longitude is 97.208W. It is in the Central Standard time zone. Elevation is 7 feet.

Port Isabel is 180 miles from Monterrey, Mexico; 286 miles from San Antonio; 366 miles from Houston; 531 miles from Dallas; 688 miles from Mexico City; and 815 miles from El Paso, Texas.



Incorporated in 1927, the City of Port Isabel has a Home Rule type of government with five council members including the mayor, a city planning commission and a city master plan. The city has a full-time manager and staff. Emergency personnel include 18 police officers, 6 police vehicles, a volunteer fire department and fully staffed emergency medical services. The fire department has one fire marshal, 5 vehicles and a fire insurance rating of 0.42 full key rate and a fire protection class of 6. Service is provided to industry beyond the corporate limits.

Port Isabel and the Laguna Madre area is home to about 2,500 school age children attending one of four public schools; Garriga Elementary School (Grades K-2), Derry Elementary School, (3-5), Port Isabel Junior High School (6-8), and Port Isabel High School (9-12). Port Isabel is within 25 miles of the University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College, and 40 miles from Texas State Technical College, the University Preparatory School and the Marine Academy in Harlingen.

As historic and cultural preservation is a priority for the community, Port Isabel has three museums, the Point Isabel Lighthouse, the Treasures



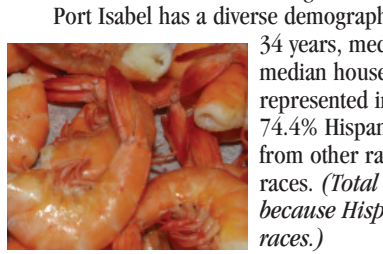
of the Gulf Museum and the Port Isabel Historic Museum. Port Isabel also has an accredited public library. Recreational, social and cultural facilities include: public swimming pool, golf courses, tennis courts, Laguna Madre Boys & Girls Club, high school auditorium and a community center. Clubs and organizations include: Port Isabel Chamber of Commerce, American Legion Post #498, Friends of the Library, Laguna Madre Art League, Laguna Madre Humane Society, Laguna Madre

Museum Foundation, Laguna Madre Yacht Club, Habitat for Humanity (Laguna Madre Chapter), Laguna Madre Golf Association and numerous committees and subcommittees.

The Port Isabel/Cameron County Airport is located ten miles from Port Isabel. Municipally owned, it has a lighted primary runway of 10,000 feet. The Brownsville South Padre Island International Airport is located in Brownsville, just 22 miles south with commercial and passenger service. The Valley International Airport, located in Harlingen, 35 miles northeast, is a hub serving the lower Rio Grande Valley and South Padre Island.

The Laguna Madre community is served locally by several publications including Port Isabel/South Padre Press (semi-weekly), Coastal Current (weekly), Island Breeze (two times weekly), and South Padre Parade (weekly). Rio Grande Valley newspapers serving the area include: Brownsville Herald and Valley Morning Star, El Nuevo Herald, La Frontera, Mid Valley Town Crier and the Bargain Book.

The climate is mild, semi-tropical. January mean minimum temperature is 51.4 F, July mean maximum is 92.5 F. Annual average temperature is 73.6 F. September is the month with the highest precipitation with an average rainfall of 5.13", March is the lowest precipitation month with 1.11". Annual average is 27.62".



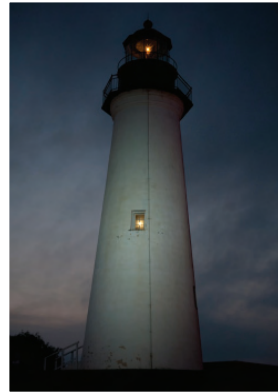
Port Isabel has a diverse demographic picture. Median resident age is 34 years, median household income is \$28,413, median house value is \$82,349. Ethnic groups represented in Port Isabel breakdown following: 74.4% Hispanic, 24.5% Non-Hispanic, 15.5% from other races, and 3.01% from two or more races. *(Total can be greater than 100% because Hispanics could be counted in other races.)*

Industries providing employment include: arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services (25.1%); educational, health and social services (12.2%); retail trade (10.9%). Daytime population change due to commuting: +21.1%. Workers who live and work in Port Isabel: 38.5%

Taxation: Ad valorem rate per \$100 evaluation:

City of Port Isabel . . . . .	0.626327
Cameron County . . . . .	0.384291
State of Texas . . . . .	none
Point Isabel ISD . . . . .	1.081634
Laguna Madre Water District . . . . .	0.080820
Texas Southmost College . . . . .	0.164026
South Texas ISD . . . . .	0.049200

Port Isabel is a historic community with roots dating back to inhabitation by the Coahilitecan Indians prior to European settlements. It's strategic location played an important role in the U.S. Mexican War, the U.S. Civil War and the California Gold Rush. Natural clay bluffs and a proximity to the Gulf of Mexico made it a safe harbor for passage to points west and north. The Laguna Madre area has been settled, ranched, fished, shrimped and still plays a vital role in Cameron County and south Texas. Whether considering a visit, a new home or a business home, our quality of life and diversity make Port Isabel a great place to stop for day or stay a for a lifetime.





# PORT ISABEL WORD SEARCH

LAGUNA MADRE BAY  
 LIGHTHOUSE  
 GOLFING  
 TELLING OUR STORIES  
 BIRDING  
 DOLPHIN  
 TIFT  
 EL FRONTON  
 MUSEUMS  
 VACATION  
 OSPREY  
 LIGHTED BOAT  
 PARADE  
 SEAFOOD  
 DAY OF THE DEAD  
 DINING  
 PIRATES  
 HERITAGE  
 SEAGULL  
 PARKS  
 DON RAFAEL GARCIA  
 HISTORICAL MARKERS  
 FLOUNDER  
 CAUSEWAY  
 COMMUNITY  
 CHRISTMAS TREE  
 TROUT  
 EVENT CENTER  
 PELICAN  
 BRAZOS SANTIAGO  
 BEACON  
 PARASAILING  
 FISHING  
 CULTURE  
 QUEEN ISABELLA  
 SUNSHINE  
 SHOPPING  
 WINDSURF  
 POSTCARD  
 CIVIL WAR  
 MARKET DAY  
 SEA BREEZE  
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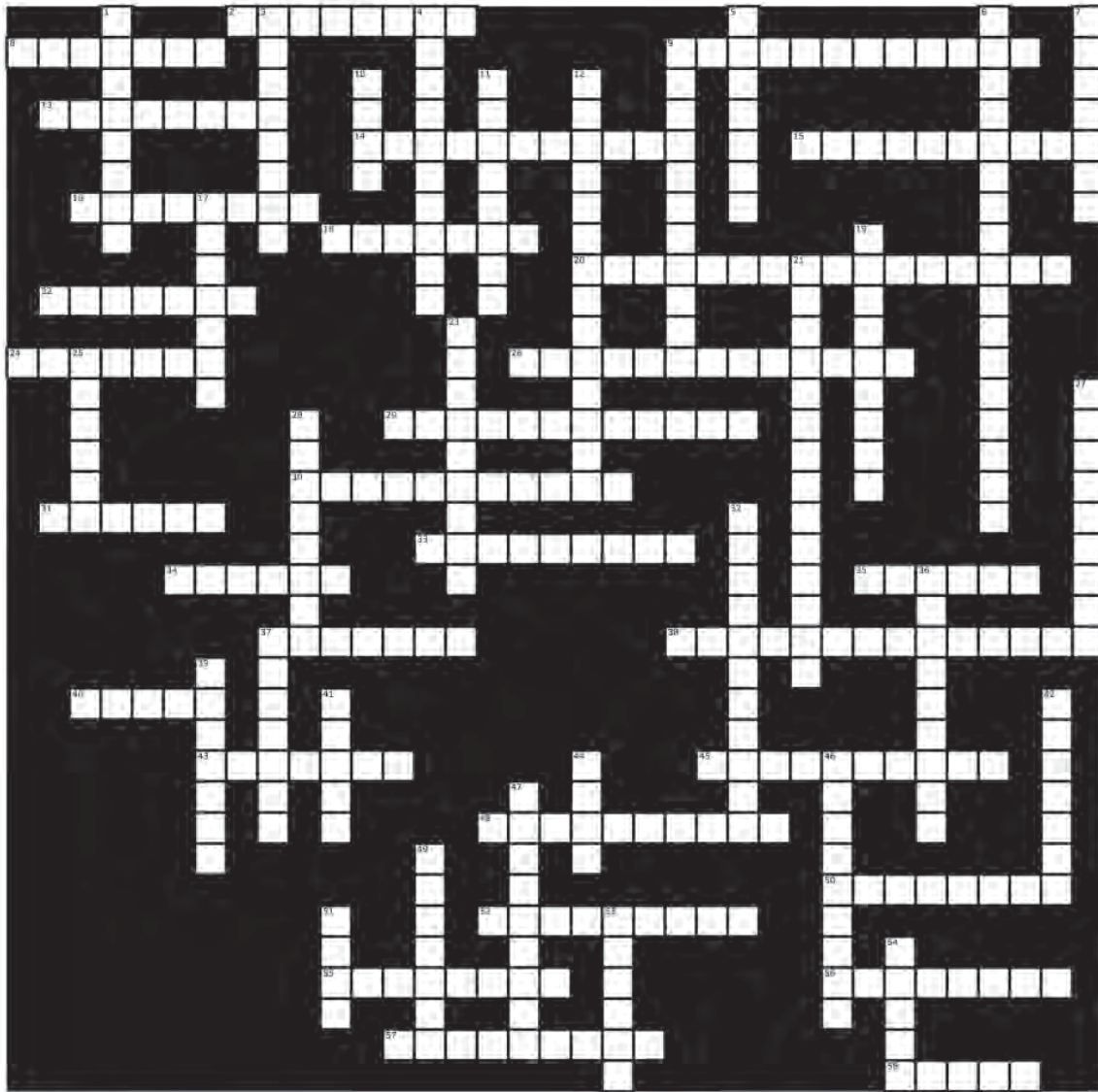
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CAUSEWAY  
 PIER  
 MANGROVES  
 BLUFF  
 SOUVENIR  
 SWING BRIDGE  
 WINTER TEXANS  
 RIP FORD  
 RELAX  
 FORT POLK  
 SHRIMP COOKOFF  
 BEACH  
 INTRACOASTAL  
 OSPREY  
 TSHIRT

SNOOK  
 PACHANGA IN THE  
 PARK  
 RESTAURANTS  
 SANDALS  
 ROSEATE SPOONBILL  
 CHAMPION  
 ZACHARY TAYLOR  
 TREASURES  
 PORT ISABEL  
 MEXICAN FOOD  
 FOLKLORICO  
 SHRIMP  
 TIDES  
 LAFITTE

SWIMMING  
 GIFT SHOPS  
 SOUTH PADRE ISLAND  
 NAVIGATION  
 SHIP CHANNEL  
 ECO TOUR  
 BOAT  
 HURRICANE  
 TARPON  
 SEASIDE  
 KARANKAWAS  
 HYPERSALINE

# PORT ISABEL PUZZLE!



Clues can be found in the Port Isabel Visitors Guide! You can pick your copy up at the Port Isabel Chamber of Commerce.

- Across
- 2 These swim and play in the bay
  - 8 Cruise with the \_\_\_ on the Black Dragon
  - 9 World's \_\_\_ Shrimp Cook-Off, first Sunday in November, celebrates the mighty shrimp
  - 13 These laugh while flying overhead
  - 14 \_\_\_ Bay is hypersaline bay
  - 15 Port Isabel's beacon
  - 16 What you might send back home while visiting
  - 18 Catch fish with their long beaks & big throats
  - 20 Neighbor to the east
  - 22 Annual \_\_\_ Boat Parade features vessels decorated for Christmas
  - 24 Launch or dock your boat at the City's \_\_\_ Docks
  - 26 Texas \_\_\_ Fishing Tournament, one of the biggest & oldest on the Texas Gulf Coast
  - 29 Find us on Facebook, [www.facebook.com/](http://www.facebook.com/) \_\_\_
  - 30 A \_\_\_ site ticket can be purchased for the Lighthouse, Treasures of the Gulf Museum & Port Isabel Historical Museum
  - 31 Lighthouse Establishment Cinema features \_\_\_ shown on the side of the lighthouse
  - 33 Buy these to take back home
  - 34 Activity at our local restaurants
  - 35 Known as the "Silver King", this fish is also the Port Isabel mascot
  - 37 This famed pirate is rumored to have spent time in Port Isabel
  - 38 Home to lighthouse keeper
  - 40 This vessel collided with the Queen Isabella Causeway in 2001
  - 43 Fresh \_\_\_ expertly prepared by Port Isabel's restaurants
  - 45 The 1849-1850 \_\_\_ Gold Rush brought adventurers through Port Isabel
  - 48 Port Isabel has two of these historical burying grounds
  - 50 Annual Longest \_\_\_ Run & Fitness Walk, held annually, first Saturday in January
  - 52 Port Isabel was known as the \_\_\_ Capitol of the World in the 1950s
  - 55 Queen the bridge was named for
  - 56 Charles \_\_\_ built this building in 1899, now the Port Isabel Historical Museum
  - 57 Museum housing 1554 shipwreck history, \_\_\_ of the Gulf
  - 58 A \_\_\_ bridge connects Port Isabel with Long Island Village

- Down
- 1 What one might do in Port Isabel
  - 3 Bay or \_\_\_ fishing trips can be book with local expert captains
  - 4 Port Isabel's deep water port, Port Isabel-San Benito \_\_\_ District
  - 5 Oversaw Fort Polk, future president \_\_\_ Taylor
  - 6 You can read these signs to gather facts
  - 7 The top of the lighthouse offers a \_\_\_ mile view
  - 9 October's Day of the Dead \_\_\_ features exhibits & activities
  - 10 This fort was established in Port Isabel in 1846
  - 11 This Walk of \_\_\_ is marked by medallions embedded in the sidewalk around lighthouse square
  - 12 Name of pass between jetties
  - 17 Port Isabel is located in this county
  - 19 Flea market held in this park
  - 21 Lighthouse was \_\_\_ in 1905
  - 23 In 1770 Port Isabel was known as \_\_\_
  - 25 Gulf of \_\_\_, off the beaches of South Padre Island
  - 27 This 1933 \_\_\_ devastated Port Isabel
  - 28 \_\_\_ in the Park, held each September features local culinary specialties
  - 32 1864, US & \_\_\_ soldiers clash in Port Isabel
  - 36 In 1872 this railroad was built between Port Isabel & Brownsville
  - 37 You can check out a book at the Port Isabel Public \_\_\_
  - 39 [www.portisabel-texas.com](http://www.portisabel-texas.com)
  - 41 In the 1920s Port Isabel became known for \_\_\_ fishing
  - 42 State \_\_\_ 100 runs through Port Isabel
  - 44 You can fish from this longest lighted in Texas
  - 46 1523, Spaniard \_\_\_ Garay sails into Brazos Santiago Pass
  - 47 Port Isabel's gift shops sell \_\_\_ by the seashore
  - 49 Visit the Port Isabel \_\_\_ of Commerce for visitor's information
  - 51 What you need to catch a fish with, \_\_\_ & tackle
  - 53 Queen Isabella \_\_\_ Day, each April at the lighthouse
  - 54 1863, Nathaniel \_\_\_ lands Union troops on Brazos Island



## CONTACT INFORMATION

<p>City Manager Edward P. Meza..... 943-2682</p> <p>City Secretary Susie Alcocer..... 943-0700</p> <p>Assistant City Secretary ..... 943-0702  <i>Beverage Permits, Wrecker Permits, Swimming Pool Rentals, Human Resources. Need to speak with Mayor or Commissioners</i></p> <p>Animal Control / Shelter &amp; Officer..... 943-2727</p> <p>Building Department          Larry Ellis, Building Inspector ..... 943-0715  <i>Building Licenses &amp; Permits, Contractor's Registration, Certificates of Occupancy, Electrical or Plumbing Permits, Health Certifications, Inspections, Maps, Planning or Zoning, Signs</i></p> <p>Code Enforcement..... 943-2682</p> <p>Economic Development          Robert Salinas, Administrator..... 943-0705</p> <p>Emergency Medical Services          Charlie Wood, EMS Director..... 943-7829</p> <p>Finance Department          Rene Nava, Finance Director..... 943-0701</p> <p>Fire Department          Rodrigo Garcia, Fire Marshal..... 943-3523</p> <p>Garbage / Debris /          Community Center ..... 943-0703  <i>Garbage Pick-ups, Debris Pick-ups, Billing Questions, Broken/Replace 96 gallon Can,</i></p>	<p><i>Complaints or comments for Allied Waste, Hurricane Stickers . (*Community Center Pricing &amp; available dates)</i></p> <p>Health Department ..... 943-2682</p> <p>Housing Department..... 943-3523</p> <p>Human Resources          Nadini P. Jee, Asst. City Secretary..... 943-0702</p> <p>Municipal Court          Helen Delgadillo, Municipal Judge..... 943-1281</p> <p>Museums of Port Isabel          Jeannie Marie Flores, Director..... 943-7602</p> <p>Parks &amp; Recreation..... 943-2682</p> <p>Police Department          Gually Gonzalez, Chief of Police ..... 943-2727</p> <p>Public Library .....          Janie Villarreal, Librarian..... 943-1822</p> <p>Public Works.....          Baldemar Alaniz, Crew Chief ..... 943-0798</p> <p>Social Services.....          Lulu Nunez, Director..... 943-0798</p> <p>Abuse &amp; Fraud Line..... 943-0723</p>
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**PORT ISABEL CITY HALL**  
 Hours: Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
 Phone: 956/943-2682  
 Fax: 956/943-2029  
 Location: 305 E. Maxan St., Port Isabel, Tx. 78578

**Facts about the Port Isabel Lighthouse State Historic Site**

<p>Lighthouse was constructed in 1852                  Original construction cost: \$15,000                  Location: built on the grounds of Ft. Polk                  Contractor: John E. Garey, Brownsville                  View from top: 16 miles                  Keepers Cottage: constructed in 1855                  Site: donated to state in 1950 by Lon C. Hill                  Family &amp; Port Isabel Realty Company</p>	<p>Steps to the top: 75, including three short ladders                  Texas State Park status: in 1952 became Texas' smallest state park                  Original construction cost of keepers cottage: \$1,400                  Original lens: removed in 1863, location unknown                  Height: 72 ft. from the top of the hill to the top of the lighthouse</p>	<p>Lighthouse decommissioned: in 1905                  Lighthouses in Texas: originally only 16 were built                  Open to the public: only lighthouse on Texas Gulf coast                  Appearance altered: in 1880, to widen the catwalk and raise the lantern room                  Lens type: rotated, third-order Fresnel</p>
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**Panoramic View from the top of the Port Isabel Lighthouse.**

*Photography & Presentation prepared by Valerie D. Bates, City of Port Isabel Marketing Director.*

# PORT ISABEL

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