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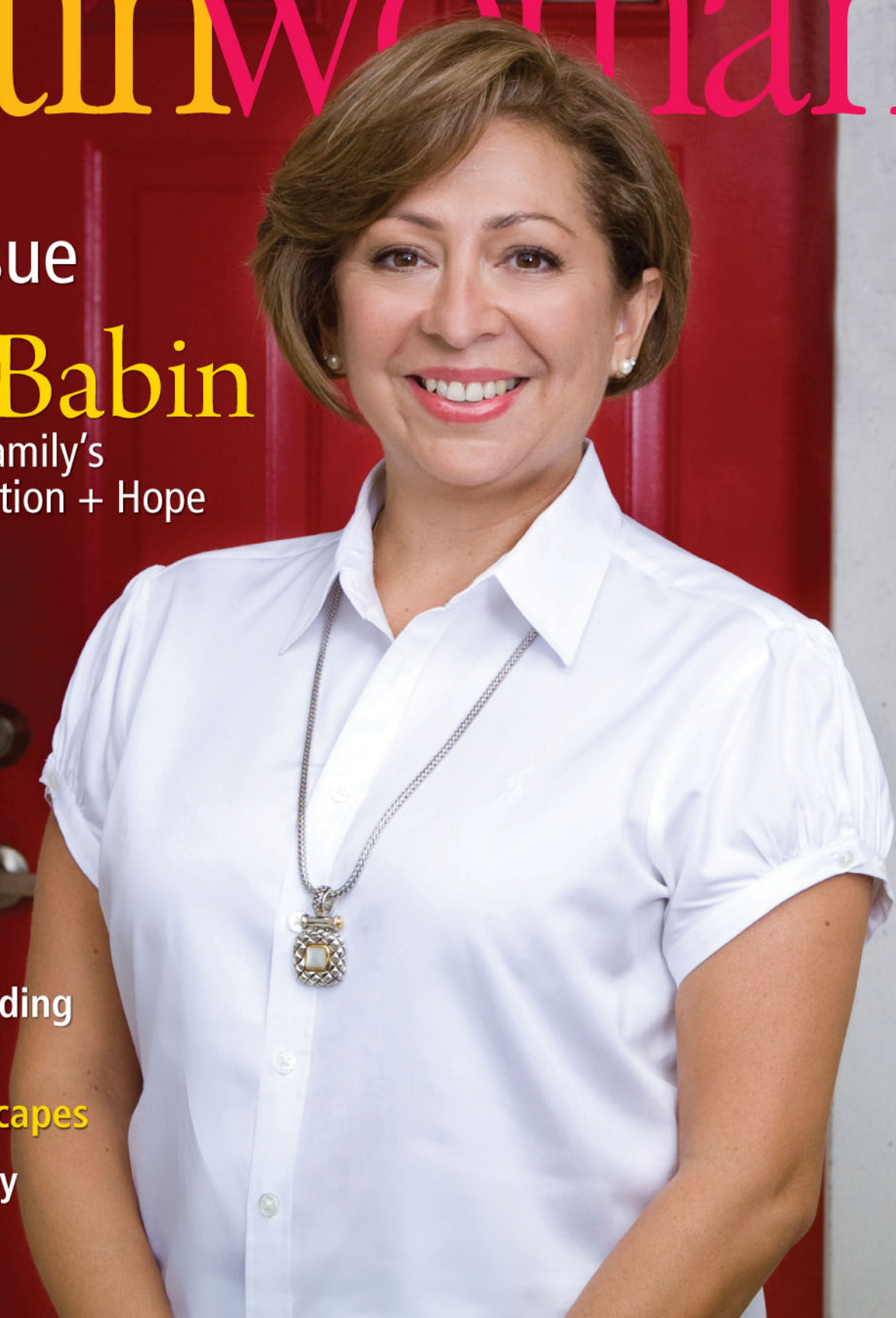
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# austin woman

The  
Family Issue

## Rosie Babin

A Story of One Family's  
Dedication, Devotion + Hope



**shop  
fashion**  
Special Section

**10 Cool Ways  
to Beat the Heat**

**Babies, Breastfeeding  
+ Beijing**

**Waterwise Landscapes**

**Childhood Obesity**

# Touring Texas with your Troops

Three Different Family Locations  
for your Picking Pleasure

Story by Marika Flatt

If gas prices have you seeing red, white and blue this summer and you just “wanna get away” with your kiddoes, there are plenty of locales within reasonable driving distance. Just decide what type of property you’re most interested in visiting since you have many options. Here’s a quick tour through some Texas family-friendly hot spots.

## Water Park Wonderland

The very first Texas resort with an outdoor *and* indoor water park – Great Wolf Lodge in Grapevine (between Dallas and Fort Worth) is a child’s wonderland. Recently opened in January 2008, Great Wolf is a first-class family destination resort modeled to resemble the feel of the northwoods. This 402-suite property boasts 10 different suite configurations. If you’re traveling with children, you’ll want to try the KidCabin Suite. This design has a log cabin fort within the main room, with bunk beds, a daybed and a flat-screen TV with cable.

Great Wolf boasts the largest indoor water park in Texas, Bear Track Landing – 80,000 square feet of fun and the water is 84 degrees year-round. Their signature “Howlin’ Tornado,” a six-story extreme funnel ride, is sure to make you weak in the knees. Fort Mackenzie has 12 levels of water adventure with swinging bridges, cargo nets and plenty of water dumping from above. The outdoor water park, Raccoon Lagoon, has a large pool and two waterslides.

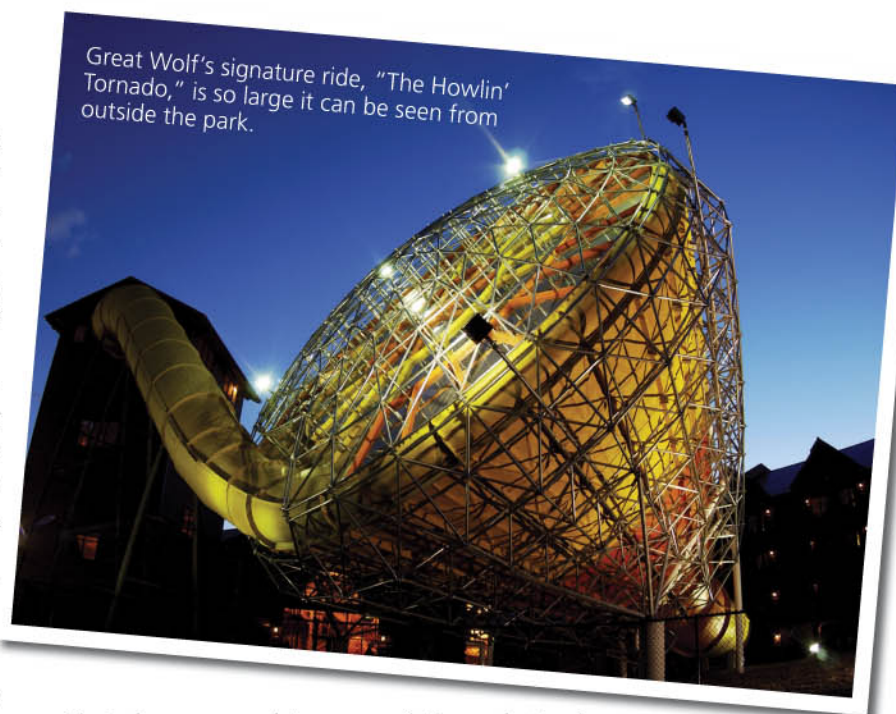
With décor and offerings likened after an ice cream parlor, Scoops Kids’ Spa offers manicures and pedicures in various “flavors.” With a manicure, everything from the salt scrub to the polish follows the flavor theme. And, to top it off, each service comes with a coupon for an ice cream cone from the resort’s sweet shop.

Kids won’t want to miss the nightly Great Clock Tower animated “Rhythm of Nature” show followed by storytime with mascots Wiley the Wolf and Biko the Bear. Children are invited to come in their pajamas if they choose, and the characters stick around for pictures and hugs after the show.

Great Wolf also includes: a fitness center, an arcade, tech center for teens, a mystical scavenger hunt game, the Cub Club, two restaurants and several snack bars. And, if you are a parent and need a vacation from your vacation, visit their Elements spa.

### Traveler’s Treasure:

- Armbands are given to hotel guests (infants don’t have to wear them) and the adult bands are programmed with the room key and charge on your account.



Great Wolf’s signature ride, “The Howlin’ Tornado,” is so large it can be seen from outside the park.

- The indoor water park is open until 10 p.m. during the summer and on weekends.
- The pool water recirculates every hour and whirlpool water recirculates every 15 minutes to maintain a strict level of sanitation.

### Buyer Beware:

- With construction still underway, there is currently only one set of elevators for the entire resort, which equates to a long wait.
- The outdoor water park closes at 5 p.m. on weekdays and 7 p.m. on weekends. Enjoy the outdoor park while you can.
- Come prepared with a cooler of drinks and plenty of snacks. As with most resorts, food and drink costs can break the vacation bank. There’s no room service and the two main restaurants can get very crowded.



Barton Creek Resort is Austin's answer for a "staycation" close to home. Kids of all ages enjoy Barton Creek's pool and the waitstaff makes sure you are well taken care of.

## Urban Upscale

If you're more interested in a "staycation," you can pop over to Barton Creek Resort without having to gas up. Located just off Bee Caves Road west of Loop 360, Barton Creek has recently upgraded their offerings for children, which turns this country club-style property into an enticing one-stop-fun-shop.

The amenities you can enjoy include a large resort pool with baby pool and hot tub, miniature golf and a nature trail. Storytelling and nature talks are hosted in the recently-constructed Fort Barton, located right off the nature trail.

By reservation, kids can enjoy Camp Barton, a day camp with various theme weeks throughout the summer. With a low counselor-to-camper ratio, campers enjoy arts and crafts, sports instruction, swimming and ice cream socials. Each camp is a week long, but guests are welcome on a daily basis.

As an added bonus, Barton Creek offers Kids' Club, a fun room with games, movies and other activities to enjoy while parents are off doing something on the property, such as a relaxing meal sans kids.

Golf is one of the pillars of Barton Creek Resort. A golfer's paradise, Fazio Foothills, Fazio Canyons, Crenshaw Cliffside and Palmer Lakeside all offer different scenery and scorecards. The first

three are on property and the Lakeside course overlooks Lake Travis 25 miles from the resort.

While dad is playing golf, mom can enjoy a day at Barton Creek Spa, which boasts a menu for the mind, body and spirit. A therapeutic massage is one of nine massages offered at the spa. Also available are a host of body and skin care therapies and hair and nail services.

The main dining option is the Hill Country Dining Room, an AAA-rated Four Diamond restaurant with a live pianist. You won't find a lot of kids at this restaurant but there's value in exposing your children to dining etiquette.

### Traveler's Treasure:

- The resort is first-rate and offers the comforts of a classy retreat.
- The Kids' Club is a lifesaver when you long for a relaxing meal.
- The staff is eager to please and is happy to grant requests such as a room with a microwave, refrigerator or crib.

### Buyer Beware:

- The pricey room rate does not cover additional meals or activities so fees can add up quickly.
- At times, having infants or toddlers at the resort feels like an imposition on other guests. The resort is geared more towards families with children ages 4+.





Enjoy a trail ride (left) or a lazy tube float in the lagoon (below) at the Flying L Dude Ranch Resort in Bandera.



## Roaming Ranch

If it's the cowboy life you're yearning for, take a trip to Flying L Dude Ranch Resort in Bandera, known as the Cowboy Capital of the World. You can kick it country-style for a few days while relaxing in its comfortable accommodations and playing in the water park.

The newly built Water Park Suites are clean, spacious and comfortable for a family of five. The suite features a small room with bunk beds, full kitchen, a living room with foldout couch connected to a small dining area, and separate bedroom with king-size bed and full bath. The suites are outfitted with everything you need to hunker down and stay a while, including: washer/dryer, cable TVs and a stocked kitchen.

The Lone Star Lagoon water park is the newest amenity to this ranch that's been around for several decades. The Lagoon was added in early 2008 and includes a waterslide, pool for the little ones, wave pool and lazy river. The quality of the water park is as nice as you'd find at a five-star resort.

Offered several times a day, guests are invited to pay an extra fee to saddle up for a one-hour trail ride. The horses are "line horses" so they are trained to follow each other and even first-timers can handle these horses with no problem. The

wranglers are entertainment aplenty.

Other kid activities are offered throughout the day, such as pony rides, arts and crafts, and cowboy-themed contests. Nightly entertainment is followed by s'mores at the campfire. The entertainment could be a buffalo demonstration, dress-up cowboy photos or music, among others.

### Traveler's Treasure

- Bandera is a great town to visit, a tourist destination for travelers from around the world.
- It's easy to strike up a conversation and get to know other guests.
- On certain days, you might have the entire water park to yourself!

### Buyer Beware:

- Breakfast and dinner are included in the per-person price, but the food lacks flavor.

- Horseback riding is an additional \$35 per trail ride.
- A few days are enough to get a taste of all the ranch has to offer. ★

### MORE INFO

Great Wolf Lodge  
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512.329.4000  
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Flying L Guest Ranch  
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