

GEO QUIZ

Q: To what U.S. city would you travel to visit the National Constitution Center? (Answer on PAGE J2.)

ADVENTURES | BARGAINS | DESTINATIONS | ROAD TRIPS | CRUISES | CONSUMER TIPS | COMMENTARY | FUN AND SUN

Sunday, July 6, 2008

TRAVEL

HOUSTON CHRONICLE

TEXAS

Hill Country deals

■ Save money with summer rates, special credits at three resorts catering to families

By JEFF SAMFIELD
HOUSTON CHRONICLE

SAN ANTONIO — The Hyatt Regency Hill Country Resort and Spa has built its reputation as a family destination over the past 15 years.

"We're all about family," says Rebecca Martinez, the resort's director of public relations. "We take pride that we are family-oriented and that we uphold the traditions of the family."

My family spent Father's Day weekend at the 300-acre resort west of downtown San Antonio and adjacent to SeaWorld San Antonio.

There's no question that kids — of all ages — have plenty of fun activities to choose from during the hot Texas summer, from a water park and golf to spa treatments and kids camps.

And with many Americans reconsidering vacation plans as the price of gas hovers at \$4 a gallon, the Hyatt Regency and two other Texas Hill Country resorts are offering special summer packages to lure families.

1 Hyatt Regency Hill Country Resort and Spa

■ **The resort and its amenities:** At the resort's 4-acre water park, guests can frolic in three pools divided by a waterfall or float in inner tubes on the 950-foot man-made Ramblin' River's steady current. Kids can make sand castles on a small "beach" on the bank of the "river."

A kids playground and tetherball and sand volleyball courts are nearby. Bikes are available for guests to ride at no charge.

Nature is everywhere. On the golf course, I spotted wild rabbits. On a nature trail, I learned about the Hill Country environment.

At 7 p.m. each day, families gather to roast marshmallows in a fire pit and make s'mores. Just before sunset, wagon rides tour the resort. And after dark, families sprawl on blankets to watch movies shown on an outdoor screen. The Saturday-night film I watched was



COOLING OFF: On a hot summer afternoon, it feels great to float on the 950-foot-long man-made Ramblin' River. Kids also enjoy building sand castles on the "beach" at the Hyatt Regency Hill Country Resort and Spa.



MAKING S'MORES: With parental help, kids roast marshmallows on sticks in a fire pit at the Hyatt resort.



SUNSET RIDES: Families staying at the Hyatt resort take rides on horse-drawn wagons that wind around the golf course.

credits up to \$500 via the Hyatt Hill Country resort's "Family Stay More, Play More" package.

Stay three nights and get a \$200 credit good at the resort's dining options and activities, including golf, spa treatments and Camp Hyatt. Stay four nights and the credit is increased to \$300. A five-night stay reaps a \$500 credit. These deals are valid through Nov. 30. Guests also get complimentary valet parking for the length of their stay.

■ **Information:** Call 210-647-1234; access www.hillcountry.hyatt.com.

2 Horseshoe Bay Resort

■ **The resort and its amenities:** This 7,000-acre Marriott resort is on the shore of Lake LBJ, about six miles from Marble Falls.

The resort features three challenging golf courses, a separate putting course, a full-service spa, tennis facilities, a private beach, swimming pools and a fitness center.

Overlooking the limestone cliffs of Lake LBJ, Horseshoe



BOATING: Besides golf, tennis and swimming, visitors at Horseshoe Bay Resort use the marina.

Bay takes advantage of the water. There's a yacht club at the lake, and watercraft rentals are available at a marina. There are even banana-boat rides for the kids.

Youngsters ages 4-12 can join the Kids' Club for a half day (\$40) or full day (\$70). And while Mom and Dad are playing golf or relaxing at the spa, their kids (ages 4-6 and 7-18) can take part in extensive training camps. Daily and weekly camps are available, and fees vary.

At the tennis camps,

beginners are taught the rules and fundamentals of the game as well as basic strokes. Campers up to age 10 use three smaller Andy Roddick USTA Kids' Courts. Older, more advanced players focus on match play and mental toughness.

At the sports camps, kids get lessons in both tennis and golf. The tennis camps are continuing each week through Aug. 8; two more sports camps will be held July 14-18 and Aug. 11-15.

1 A DEAL EVEN CLOSER TO HOME

The Woodlands Resort & Conference Center, north of Houston, is trying to take the sting out of summer travel by offering guests a \$25 gas card with a minimum two-night stay (excluding a Friday or Saturday arrival).

Room rates for the "Destination Fun" package start at \$149 per night and include breakfast for two.

Guests have access to two championship 18-hole golf courses, a full-service spa, a fitness center and tennis courts. The resort also features the Forest Oasis Waterscape with waterfalls and water slides. Summer activities for kids include dive-in movies and a s'mores pit.

For more information, call 866-361-5674 or access www.woodlandsresort.com.

chron.com

PLANNING A TEXAS VACATION? Explore city guides, Top 5 lists, state-park report cards and a Texas events calendar at chron.com/traveltexas.

lakefront condos. Prices start \$329 per night at the hotel, \$353 per night at the Paseo villas and \$353 per night at the condos at the Waters. A \$200 credit that comes with a minimum two-night stay can be used for golf, spa services, dining, watercraft rentals or the Kids' Club. Additional savings of 10 percent to 20 percent apply to fees for golf and spa treatment. Children ages 3-12 receive a "fun pack" valued at more than \$50. The family package also includes a daily breakfast buffet at the Lantana Grill.

■ **Information:** Call 877-611-0112; access www.hsbresort.com.

3 Barton Creek Resort & Spa

■ **The resort and its amenities:** This family-friendly top-rated resort in Austin is home to many recreational opportunities. Surrounded by hilly terrain and managed by KSL Resorts, Barton Creek has four championship golf courses, a golf school, a miniature golf course, a full-service spa, tennis courts and pools.

A new children's activity area called Fort Barton was scheduled to open this week according to Melody Campbell Goeken, Barton Creek's marketing director. Fort Barton will have teepees, a log deck for kids programs and an area for storytelling and making s'mores.

Through Aug. 15, Camp Barton will provide supervised activities Mondays-Fridays. The camp will focus on theme activities plus swimming, golf tennis instruction. For kids ages 4-6, camp fees are \$55 a day or \$250 per week. For kids ages 7-12, fees are \$85 a day or \$375 per week.

Besides the camp, Barton Creek's Kids' Club is open for children 6 months to age 8. Reservations are required as well as a small fee.

Other family-related activities include putting contests, bingo, nature walks, water volleyball and computer games.

■ **The summer deals:** Rates for the "Summer Fun" package start at \$150 a night Sundays-Tuesdays and \$225 a night for the rest of the week. The prices are good through Sept. 7. You can add golf starting at \$50, with complimentary Saturday replays; enroll your child in Camp Barton and receive two days for the price of one; or reserve a spa treatment and receive a second treatment at half price.

■ **Information:** Call 512-329-4000 or 800-336-6158; access www.bartoncreek.com.

jeff.samfield@chron.com



INVITING: Barton Creek guests can savor the peaceful surroundings at the resort's outdoor pool.