



## Travel

### The perfect Hill Country escape

By KRISTIN FINAN Copyright 2009 Houston Chronicle

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#### Horseshoe Bay Resort

Horseshoe Bay Resort, located near Marble Falls, offers a variety of attractions.

After a hectic summer of trips, visitors and playdates for our 10-month-old daughter, my husband and I decided we needed some time away together as a family.

But as we brainstormed locations, we hit a roadblock: A big vacation seemed too exhausting, and a staycation seemed too dull.

What we wanted was somewhere close that offered an activity-filled weekend — a playcation, if you will — but gave us the freedom to just sit by the pool and order room service if we wanted.

After researching places within a reasonable drive, we decided on Horseshoe Bay Resort, a 7,000-acre playground with three golf courses, four swimming pools, a putting course, a fitness center, tennis courts, spa and multiple restaurants located on Lake LBJ in the Hill Country.

From the melt-in-your-mouth sticky buns served piping hot in individual cast-iron skillets during breakfast at Lantana Grill (they're not on the menu, but the chef will make them by request) to the endearing 87-year-old resident parrot named Grandma who lives at the Whitewater Putting Course, Horseshoe Bay offered us a relaxing, entertaining escape.

One of the first things on my agenda was making an appointment for my first spa treatment since our daughter was born. At Bayside Spa and Fitness Center, which overlooks Lake LBJ, I opted for the Hill Country Envelopment, during which the masseuse exfoliated my skin with locally grown ground pecans, rosemary and essential oils, had me rinse off and then gave me a

massage. The treatment, which costs \$165 for 80 minutes, isn't cheap, but for a temporary escape, it's well worth it.

For those who prefer playing on the lake to looking at it from a spa window, the marina rents ski boats, pontoon boats, WaveRunners, fishing boats and kayaks.

Once we swaddled our daughter in a life jacket almost taller than she was, we set out in a pontoon boat for a guided tour of the bay, where we cruised past sprawling, perfectly kept homes belonging to San Antonio Spurs players, Fortune 500 CEOs and state politicians.

The next morning, I took time out from our vacation to tour the grounds with chief marketing officer Martha Heagany. She pointed out even more highlights.

Like the Yacht Club lawn, where, with the glittering lake as a backdrop, couple after couple has chosen to say "I do."

And the private airport, where, if you prefer flying to driving, you can land your plane on the 6,000-foot runway at any time of day.

And Slick Rock Golf Course's "Million Dollar Hole," which winds golfers down a path and through a waterfall that spans more than 35 yards. The hole is rumored to have cost — you guessed it — a million bucks to create.

Despite all the amenities, our favorite parts of the weekend were the simplest: splashing in the pool, where fountains shot arches of water across the shallow kids' area during the day and enjoying Lantana Grill takeout of chicken fried rib-eye steak, macaroni and cheese with green chilies and six-layer chocolate cake at night.

Sitting on the balcony after the daily activities had come to a close, the stars twinkling overhead, we couldn't help but feel far away from our city lives.

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## IF YOU GO

Horseshoe Bay Resort is located in the Hill Country about 45 minutes from Austin.

- **Stay:** Horseshoe Bay Resort Marriott Hotel. It has 385 rooms, including 117 suites at the adjacent Paseo villas, some with views of Lake LBJ. Rates start around \$179. Through Sept. 30, guests may take advantage of a VIP Summer Special, which offers a \$100 credit with a two-night stay for use on resort amenities such as food, beverage, golf, spa and marina rentals. Condominium rentals are also available at the Waters at Horseshoe Bay.
- **Eat:** There are seven on-site dining facilities, six of which are open year-round, varying from casual to upscale.
- **Play:** Three golf courses, an 18-hole putting course, four swimming pools, a marina, a spa, a fitness center and clay, grass and kids' tennis courts are available.
- **For more information:** call 830-598-2511 or visit [www.hsbresort.com](http://www.hsbresort.com).