



Houston - City Business Guide

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Overview

The nation's fourth-largest city with 4.9 million residents is an international business hub as well as a world energy centre. Magnificent glass and metal towers dominate the downtown corridor, but for the most part Houston's cityscape is characterized by random upcroppings of impressive architecture interspersed with groomed greenbelts and lively neighbourhoods. The city is so spread out that visitors have difficulty finding its centre. If the city's prosperity was once heavily dependent on oil, it has diversified today into areas such as aerospace, computers, chemicals and biomedical technology. Houston is headquarters to almost two dozen of the largest corporations in the U.S. and its port is the nation's second largest. Known as Space city, Houston is also home to NASA and the Johnson Space Centre since 1962.

Business Etiquette

As the city can be very humid in the summer months, it is advisable to wear light and breathable materials to avoid perspiring outdoors and shivering indoors

* Houston is still old-fashioned in terms of formality and courtesy is very appreciated

* Texans are warm and friendly people and soon after an initial handshake one is likely to be on first name terms with his contact or host

* As smoking is the subject of much controversy in the United States, a smoker, should exercise discretion and sensitivity and smoke only in like-minded company

* It is quite common for meetings to be held over lunch but these tend to be alcohol free and strictly business

Chamber of Commerce

Asian Chamber of Commerce

7457 Harwin Drive; Tel.: +1 (713) 782 7222

Australian Chamber of Commerce

11935 Cobblestone Drive; Tel.: +1 (713) 467 2146

African-American Chamber of Commerce

2808 Wheeler Street; Tel.: +1 (713) 522 9746

Brazil Texas Chamber of Commerce

1117 Upland Drive; Tel.: +1 (713) 827 7226

Clear Lake Shore Chamber Of Commerce

1201 Nasa Parkway; Tel.: +1 281 488-7676

Chamber of Commerce-Houston

1200 Smith Street Suite 700; Tel.: +1 (713) 844 3600

Czech Chamber of Commerce

7474 South Kirkwood Road; Tel.: +1 (281) 564 9800

French-American Chamber of Commerce

Po Box 31009; Tel.: +1 (713) 960 0575

German-American Chamber of Commerce

2400 Augusta Drive; Tel.: +1 (832) 251 9832

Italian-American Chamber of Commerce

1800 West Loop South; Tel.: +1 (713) 626 9303

Korean Chamber of Commerce

5700 Savoy Drive; Tel.: +1 (713) 926 4398

Pakistan Chamber of Commerce

9700 Club Creek Drive; Tel.: +1 (713) 771 9628

South Asian Chamber of Commerce

9888 Bissonnet Street; Tel.: +1 (713) 988 2445

Embassies and Consulates

Australian Consulate

4623 Feagan Street; Tel.: +1 (713) 782 6009

Brazilian Consulate

1233 West Loop South; Tel.: +1 (713) 961 3063

British Consulate

1000 Louisiana Street Suite 1900; Tel.: +1 (713) 659 6275

Belgian Consulate

2009 Lubbock Street; Tel.: +1 (713) 426 3933

Danish Consulate

4545 Post Oak Place Drive; Tel.: +1 (713) 622 9018

French Consulate

777 Post Oak Boulevard suite 600; Tel.: +1 (713) 985 3260

German Consulate

1330 Post Oak Boulevard Suite 1850; Tel.: +1 (713) 627 7770

Italian Consulate

1300 Post Oak Boulevard; Tel.: +1 (713) 850 7520

Greek Consulate

520 Post Oak Boulevard; Tel.: +1 (713) 840 7522

Japanese Consulate

Allied Bank Plaza; Tel.: +1 (713) 652 2977

Korean Consulate

1990 Post Oak Boulevard; Tel.: +1 (713) 961 0186

Mexican Consulate

4507 San Jacinto Street; Tel.: +1 (713) 271 6800

Norwegian Consulate

2777 Allen Parkway Suite 1185; Tel.: +1 (713) 521 2900

Netherlands Consulate

2200 Post Oak Boulevard; Tel.: +1 (713) 622 8000

Swedish Consulate

2909 Hillcroft Street Suite 515; Tel.: +1 (713) 953 1417

Spanish Consulate

1800 Bering Drive; Tel.: +1 (713) 783 6200

Turkish Consulate

1990 Post Oak Boulevard Suite 1300; Tel.: +1 (713) 622 5849

Business Centers

Business centers generally provide a range of services that include secretarial, translation/interpretation, and office services, including computer rentals, audio/visual equipment rentals, cellular phone rentals, copy and printing services, and temporary office space and staff. Most large hotels (some of which may be listed here) also have business centers that offer many of the same services that independent centers provide.

10777 Business Centers

10777 Westheimer Road; Tel.: +1 (713) 260 9620

3200 Business Centers

3200 Southwest Freeway; Tel.: +1 (713) 402 6142

International Business Center

9610 Long Point Road; Tel.: +1 (713) 932 7495

Regus Business Center

San Felipe Plaza, 5847 San Felipe Street, Suite 1700; Tel: +1 (713) 821 1400

HQ Global Workplaces

20405 State Highway 249; Tel.: +1 (281) 370 6500

HQ Global Workplaces

2500 Citywest Boulevard Suite 300; Tel.: +1 (713) 267 2200

Front Office Business Centers

3200 Southwest Freeway Suite 3300; Tel.: +1 713-552-1900

Conference and Exhibition Centers

Norris Conference Centers

9990 Richmond Avenue Suite 102; Tel.: +1 (713) 780 9300

The Video Conferencing Center of Houston

7011 Harwin Drive; Tel.: +1 (713) 888 0632

Edwin Hornberger Conference Center

2151 W Holcombe Blvd; Tel : +1 713 791-6429

CyExpo.com

11011 Richmond Ave; Tel : +1 (713) 460-8300

International Meeting Managers Inc

4550 Post Oak Place Drive Suite 342; Tel.: +1(713) 965 0566

Global Events Inc

1730 Nasa Parkway Suite 201; Tel.: +1 (281) 333 9988

Translation Offices

Berlitz

520 Post Oak Boulevard Suite 500; Tel.: +1 (713) 626 7844

Courier/Messenger Services

S & D Couriers

Tel.: +1 (713) 528 5525

DHL

Tel.: + 1 800-225-5345

FedEx

Tel.: + 1 (281) 484-8934

A & E Delivery & Messenger Inc

6536 Supply Row; Tel.: +1 (713) 921 4900

Internet Connection Place

Hollywood Book and Cafe

2409 Grant Street; Tel.: +1 (713) 523-8855

Cyber One Systems

4032 Gulf Street; Tel.: +1 (713) 645 8400

Visas & Customs

Passports valid for at least six months after arrival are required for all. In general, travelers visiting the U.S. are required visas. However, under the Visa Waiver Program, citizens of Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom are allowed to stay for 90 days without a visa. Citizens of Canada and Mexico do not need a visa but must carry proof of citizenship and identity. Beginning October 26, 2004, all travelers, including children of any age, who want to travel visa-free to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program must have a Machine-readable passport. Duty-free allowances are 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 2 kilograms of tobacco, 1 liter of alcohol, and gifts worth up to \$100. Meat products, seeds, plants, fruits, and hazardous goods are prohibited. To travel without a visa within the Visa Waiver Program, all passports issued after October 26, 2005 must be biometric. Machine-readable passports issued before this date are also valid for visa-exempt travel.

Phone Information

The country code for U.S.A is 1. The area codes for Houston are 713, 281, and 832. It is necessary to dial the area code and the number in making local calls in Houston. There is no toll charge for any of the three local area codes from within the Houston calling area.

Emergency Phone Numbers

Emergency police, fire, and ambulance :

911

Tips and Rules for Use of Phone in Country

For local calls, dial the seven-digit telephone number. For long-distance calls within the U.S., dial 1, then the three-digit area code then the seven-digit number. For long-distance calls outside the U.S., first dial 011 and the country code. Four special prefixes, "800", "888", "877", and "900", are not area codes but indicators of special services. "800", "888", and "877" are toll-free calls. The "900" numbers charge you for the call and are often expensive. For collect calls or operator-assisted calls, dial "0" instead of "1". For local directory assistance, dial 411. For long-distance information, dial 1, and then the appropriate area code followed by 555-1212. The most common public phone is the coin-operated type. Telephone-card phones are becoming increasingly common.

Tips and Rules for Use and Rental of Mobile Phones

There are several cellular service providers in the U.S., including: Verizon Wireless, Cingular, T-Mobile, AT&T Wireless, Nextel, VoiceStream, and Sprint PCS. Mobile phone numbers follow the regular telephone number convention, with the seven-digit telephone number followed by the area code. If you choose to bring your cellular phone into the U.S., check with your home cellular service provider to establish compatibility of your phone with systems abroad. Rent a locally compatible cellular phone before you arrive to obtain reasonable rates and reliable service.

Money

Foreign currency must be exchanged to U.S. dollars. Money can be exchanged at banks and various foreign-exchange services. Most restaurants, shops, and hotels will take travelers' checks and major credit cards. Travelers can also withdraw cash from ATMs. The basic unit of U.S. currency is the dollar, which equals 100 cents. Coins are the copper penny (1 cent) and four silver coins: the nickel (5 cents), the dime (10 cents), the quarter (25 cents), and the half-dollar (50 cents). Silver \$1 coins and "golden" dollar coins also exist. Paper bills come in denominations of \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, and \$100.

Tipping

- * Restaurants 15 to 20 percent of bill, none at fast-food restaurants.
- * Bars About US\$1 per drink or 10% to 15% of drink prices.
- * Airport Skycap/Porter US\$1 per piece of luggage.
- * Taxis 10 percent of fare.
- * Hotel Bell Desk US\$1 per piece of luggage or per taxi summoned.
- * Hotel Housekeeping US\$1 per person per day.
- * Hotel Room Service 15 percent of bill.
- * Parking Attendant/Valet 15 percent of parking rate.
- * Haircare/Personal Services 20 percent of bill.

Time Difference

Houston is in the Middle time zone (Greenwich Mean Time minus 6 hours). From early April through late October, Georgia switches to daylight-saving time.

Alpha Translation Services
Tel.: +1 (877) 283 4694
World Wide Interpreters
Tel.: +1 713 941-1911
ALTII All Language Translation
Tel.: +1 (877) 881 8317

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VAT & Taxes

Sales tax in Houston is 7%. There is no VAT.

Voltage

110V AC, 60Hz. Plugs are of the flat, two-pin type.

Local Transportation

The arrival of METRORail brings a new era of transportation to Houston. It's a fast, convenient and safe way to travel between Downtown, Midtown, the Museum District, the Texas Medical Center, Reliant Park and the South Fannin Park & Ride lot. With frequent service and the capacity to carry up to 400 passengers per trip, METRORail will help cut through congestion in these heavily traveled areas. Conveniently located at each station along the line and at other locations around town, the Ticket Vending Machine (TVM) is used to purchase your Single-Ride Ticket or Day Pass for anywhere METRO travels. Several TVMs are located at each Rail Station, so they will be an integral part of traveling on METRORail. Service between Hobby Airport and downtown Houston runs seven days a week with a one-way fare of \$1. These buses run approximately every 30 minutes, from 5 a.m.-midnight. Colorful trolleys provide free transportation within the downtown area. With more than 100 stops, METRO's trolley service can whisk you from the George R. Brown Convention Center to Bayou Place, or from Market Square Park to Foley's department store and back to your hotel. Call METRO for more information at +1 (713) 635-4000. Whether transporting space adventurers to Space Center Houston, or culture seekers to the Museum District, taxis are everywhere carrying your message throughout this thriving port city. For more information call at +1 (214) 692 3565.

Health Info

No specific immunizations are needed to enter the United States. For more information, contact the Center for Disease Control at 800-342-2437.

Climate

The temperate climate reflects Houston's location near the Gulf of Mexico. In winter (December-early February), temperatures rarely dip below freezing and highs often to 15-18°C. Spring, which starts in late February, is warm and slightly humid. Summer (late May-September) is hot and uncomfortably humid, with high temperatures above 32°C for extended periods. The heaviest rainfall occurs in late summer and in December. Heavy showers move in and out at any time of year.

Public Holidays

Where to Eat

Mark's (Montrose) is Zagat's best restaurant in Houston's. Housed in church, it features a creative seasonal menu with Mississippi accents. French gourmet Chez Nous (in Humble) also stands in an old church. Fine dining is served by tuxedoed staff in the nave and choir chapel. La Réserve (Post Oak/Galleria) features excellent French Provençal contemporary food and an extended wine list in a classic elegant atmosphere. La Tour d'Argent is worth the visit for its artfully rustic log cabin overlooking Oak Bayou and its old-school French menu Café Annie (Uptown) is a favorite among locals with its New Southwestern cuisine founded by Robert Del Grande. Other good restaurants include Aldo's and Damian's (Downtown) considered the best Italians, Hugo's (Montrose) for its inventive Mexican food, and Thai Spice (Kirby district), which offers decent Thai food. Meat lovers will enjoy the upscale Rôtisserie for Beef & Bird which specializes in creative Texas wild game such as deer or wild boar, pheasant.

Local Gift Ideas

For those lacking an idea, **Y'all's Texas** holds more than 7,000 gift items focusing on the state of Texas and **Dave's Pepper Palace** sells specialty hot sauces and Texan seasonings. **Traders Village's** enormous flea market hosts 800 merchants. **Katy Mills**, just outside the city, regroups 200 factory outlet discount stores.

Leisure Time

The Space Center is the local attraction. The Museum of Fine Arts has an interesting collection of both modern and ancient art. One should see the Rothko Chapel covered by paintings of the American abstract expressionist. The Byzantine Fresco Chapel Museum boasts of the only intact Byzantine frescoes in the entire western hemisphere, i.e. a dome and an apse ripped and stolen out of a 13th century chapel in Cyprus. Bayou Bend, a private mansion built in the 1920s by Houston's most prominent architect is worth the visit. Do not miss the folk-art monumental Orange Show, an outdoor structure built single handedly by a Houston postal worker from 1956 to 1979 and another oddity, the Beer Can House. February is Houston's Livestock Show and Rodeo. Golf lovers should test one of Houston's 100 golf courses especially Tour 18, and Memorial Park open to the public.

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