

The Texas Mystique

People who live in Texas know their state as a diverse place, with prairie, plains, deserts, mountains, canyons, woodlands, caves and seacoast. Yet to outsiders, Texas is a unique, almost mystical concept, something just beyond reach, like the mirage that shimmers on a highway or the rainbow whose end can never be grasped. Anywhere in the world, a person who sees a map of Texas will immediately recognize its shape. Anywhere in the world, the traveler who hails from Texas is greeted with curiosity and respect. People who have never set foot in Texas dream of it as fulfillment of their fantasies.

What, then, is it that makes Texas distinct? Texas is said to be . . .

Big – *I was always proud about being from Texas and, you know, maybe that was part of fearlessness. I love the fact that Texas is so big, but you don't feel small because of that.*¹
– Sissy Spacek, actress

Bad – *If I owned Hell and Texas, I would rent out Texas and live in Hell.*² – Phil Sheridan, Union general
*You may all go to Hell, and I will go to Texas.*³ – Davy Crockett, frontiersman

Bold – *There is a growing feeling that perhaps Texas is really another country, a place where the skies, the disasters, the diamonds, the politicians, the women, the fortunes, the football players and the murders are all bigger than anywhere else.*⁴ – Pete Hamill, author

Beautiful – *There was sufficient water here for a city of one quarter league, and the scenery along the San Antonio River is very beautiful, for there are pecan trees, grape vines, willows, elms and other timbers. . . . Fish were caught in abundance for everybody.*⁵ – Captain Domingo Ramón, exploratory expedition into Texas, 1716

Rugged – *I would give out, just like a horse, and lie down in the road and drop off to sleep. When I would awaken, the wolves would be all around me, snapping and snarling.*⁶ – Charles Goodnight, Panhandle rancher

Windy – *The mystique of West Texas is born of wide-open spaces, vast horizons and windswept vistas—and a lone rider loping over a mesa to round up a herd. Nothing dislodges that beloved image more completely than today's mesa topped with a platoon of sky-high wind turbines.*⁷ – *Houston Chronicle*, February 9, 2007

Lonely – *She used to tell how when they finally came to the homestead and the wagon stopped, she felt so lonely. There was emptiness as far as the eye could see. How could a human endure?*⁸ - Odessa Wilmon, West Texas pioneer

Desolate – *No one can ever know how much pleasure and company they [three gift chickens] were to me. They were someone I could talk to. They would run to me when I called them and follow me everywhere I went.*⁹ - Molly Goodnight, living with her husband on an isolated ranch in the Texas Panhandle

Chaotic – *How can you look at the Texas legislature and still believe in intelligent design?*¹⁰ – Kinky Friedman, musician and satirist

Sprawling – *I feel safer on a racetrack than I do on Houston’s freeways.*¹¹ – A. J. Foyt, racecar driver

Free – *Texas has yet to learn submission to any oppression, come from what source it may.*¹² – Sam Houston, President of the Texas Republic

Vast – *From the back of a horse, the world looked wider and the possibilities greater.*¹³ – Joyce Gibson Roach, author

Mighty – *I get from the soil and spirit of Texas the feeling that I, as an individual, can accomplish whatever I want to, and that there are no limits, that you can just keep going, just keep soaring.*¹⁴ – Barbara Jordan, U.S. Congresswoman

Diverse – *If you’ve ever driven across Texas, you know how different one area of the state can be from another. Take El Paso. It looks as much like Dallas as I look like Jack Nicklaus.*¹⁵ – Lee Trevino, professional golfer

Pre-eminent – *I just want Texas to be first in something other than executions, toll roads and property taxes.*¹⁶ – Kinky Friedman, musician and satirist

Independent – *Texas is a state of mind. Texas is an obsession. Above all, Texas is a nation in ever sense of the word.*¹⁷ – John Steinbeck, author

Majestic – *There is an attitude in Texas that makes you feel you can do anything you want to do. I admire so many women who have come out of Texas and done well. I like the image Texas brings to mind – that of bigness, of goodness, of strength. – Ninfa Lorenzo, restaurateur*¹⁸

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- ¹ Quoted in *Quotable Texas Women*, compiled by Susie Kelly Flatau and Lou Halsell Rodenberger (Abilene, Tex.: State House Press, 2005), p. 145.
- ² Quoted in “Quotes about Texas,” http://www.phswebclass.com/WEB/exam/texas_quotes.htm (accessed June 23, 2009).
- ³ “Davy Crockett Quotes,” *Brainy Quote*, http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/d/davy_crockett.html (accessed June 24, 2009).
- ⁴ Quoted in “Texas Quotes,” *Thinkexist.com*, <http://thinkexist.com/quotes/with/keyword/texas/3.html> (accessed June 23, 2009).
- ⁵ “Diario y Derrotero de Domingo Ramón,” 1716, Archivo General de la Nación de México. Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, translation McKenzie.
- ⁶ “Charles Goodnight Quotes,” *Thinkexist.com*, http://thinkexist.com/quotes/charles_goodnight/ (accessed June 24, 2009).
- ⁷ “Wind industry standards, environmental protection needed in Texas,” *Houston Chronicle*, February 9, 2007, cited in National Wind Watch, Inc., <http://www.wind-watch.org/news/2007/02/12/wind-industry-standards-environmental-protection-needed-in-Texas> (accessed June 26, 2009).
- ⁸ Quoted in *Quotable Texas Women*, p. 107.
- ⁹ Quoted in Ann Fears Crawford and Crystal Sasse Ragsdale, *Women in Texas: Their Lives, Their Experiences, Their Accomplishments* (Burnet, Tex.: Eakin Press, 1982), p. 117.
- ¹⁰ “Kinky Friedman Quotes,” *iCelebZ.com*, http://www.icelebz.com/quotes/kinky_friedman (accessed June 23, 2009).
- ¹¹ Quoted in “Famous Texas Quotes,” Dan Baker, *Texas Web Guide*, <http://web2.iadfw.net/danb1/Quotes.htm> (accessed June 24, 2009).
- ¹² Quoted in “Texas Quotes,” *Thinkexist.com*, <http://thinkexist.com/quotes/with/keyword/texas/2.html> (accessed June 23, 2009).
- ¹³ Quoted in *Quotable Texas Women*, p. 36.
- ¹⁴ Quoted in *Quotable Texas Women*, p. 115.
- ¹⁵ Quoted in “Famous Texas Quotes,” Dan Baker, *Texas Web Guide*, <http://web2.iadfw.net/danb1/Quotes.htm> (accessed June 24, 2009).
- ¹⁶ Quoted in “Texas Quotes,” *Brainy Quote*, http://brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/texas_3.html (accessed June 23, 2009).
- ¹⁷ Quoted in “Famous Texas Quotes,” Dan Baker, *Texas Web Guide*, <http://web2.iadfw.net/danb1/Quotes.htm> (accessed June 24, 2009).
- ¹⁸ Quoted in *Quotable Texas Women*, p. 142.