



Art in Texas

Outstanding collections in city and desert

25 February – 7 March 2026 (MM 888)

11 days • £7,360

International flights are not included

Lecturer: Gijs van Hensbergen

World class collections of art and sculpture, housed in exceptional buildings.

Big names include the Kimbell in Fort Worth, Menil in Houston, Blanton in Austin, McNay in San Antonio, Fine Arts in Dallas and Houston, and Donald Judd's Chinati Foundation.

The range is considerable from Renaissance to contemporary, European and American, with emphasis on the modern.

The variety continues in city and landscape: big brother Houston, leafy and lush; to tiny Marfa, way out west in the desert; alongside the Rio Grande to historic San Antonio; to end in Dallas, the home of hospitality and a terrific arts scene.

Led by art historian Gijs van Hensbergen, an expert on American collections and collectors.

The cultural resonance of 'Texas' may not be overwhelming, yet the oil and livestock barons of this southern state were philanthropists to rival any on the eastern or western seaboard. The result: art collections of staggering richness in buildings developed by the leading architects of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Among the highlights are some of the very personal collections these patrons of the arts acquired. The Meadows Museum in Dallas, for example, the gift of oilman Algor Meadows, houses the finest display of Spanish art outside the Prado. While John and Dominique de Menil's dazzling Menil Collection in Houston – built up with money from the Schlumberger oil-drilling fortune – contains over 15,000 works by the greatest names of twentieth-century European and American art. Painter and heiress Marion Koogler McNay, too, used an oil fortune to establish The McNay – the first modern art museum in the Lone Star State – in her colonial revival mansion in San Antonio.

But private wealth in Texas has always been matched by public investment and the entire history of art is abundantly represented in the major city galleries. The Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, one of the largest in the US, has an extraordinary 62,000 works spanning six thousand years, while the Dallas Museum of Art is as renowned for its Impressionists and



Houston, from Esquire Magazine, mid-20th-century.

Post Impressionists as Austin's The Blanton is for its Renaissance masterpieces.

The searing Texan landscape, with its expanses of sand and scrub and distant sierras, is a work of art in its own right, and a visit to Marfa provides the moment where art, architecture and nature meet. The Chinati Foundation was established by minimalist sculptor Donald Judd to display large installations of his own work and other leading contemporary sculptors and, in its wake, this tiny desert town has become one of the liveliest contemporary art scenes in the US.

As rich as the art is the architecture. The Dallas Arts District includes buildings by four Pritzker Prize winners (Norman Foster, Rem Koolhaas, I.M. Pei and Renzo Piano); while in Houston, admirers of Mies van der Rohe can view one of his very rare museum buildings at the Fine Arts Museum, followed by Piano's simple and striking cypress-clad Menil. However, it is without doubt Louis Kahn's Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth that shows off these big hitters at their memorable best.

Itinerary

Flights from London are not included. The tour begins at the Zaza Hotel – located in Houston's 'Museum District' – and your room is available

from 4.00pm on 25th February. The tour leaders fly from London on a British Airways flight departing Heathrow at 9.30am on this day should you wish to join them. There is an airport transfer to meet this flight. See 'Practicalities'.

Day 1: London to Houston. The tour begins with a dinner in the hotel restaurant at 6.30pm. First of three nights in Houston.

Day 2: Houston. The morning is spent in the Museum of Fine Arts, an outstanding collection built up over the last century. Highlights include the Impressionists and American art of the 19th and 20th centuries, but there is much variety from the Renaissance to contemporary works by minimalist Dan Flavin. It is architecturally varied too with extensions by Mies van der Rohe and Rafael Moneo. Bayou Bend houses a good collection of American decorative and fine art, with beautiful gardens around. Overnight Houston.

Day 3: Houston. The Menil is one of the world's greatest private collections of modern art. Across the road is another Piano museum dedicated to Cy Twombly's abstract works. Also visited are the Rothko Chapel, built as a sanctuary for fourteen of the artist's canvases, and Richmond Hall, a grocery store converted into a Dan Flavin light installation. Some free time to return to the Fine Arts Museum or walk

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in the neighbouring Rice University campus. Overnight Houston.

Day 4: Houston to Marfa. Early flight to Midland, in westernmost Texas (United Airlines), and drive south across the Chihuahuan Desert (c. 190 miles) through a landscape of scrub and shrub, fringed by distant sierras. Marfa is little more than a handful of dusty intersections and yet is laden with western charm. Thanks to Donald Judd, it also has a thriving contemporary arts scene and a sophistication out of all proportion to its size. First of two nights in Marfa.

Day 5: Marfa, the Chinati Foundation. Special visits both to Judd's home and to the Chinati Foundation (most of the day is spent here). Judd's decision to convert 340 acres of former US military land into an art installation stemmed from a need to escape the East Coast and a desire to display large-scale installations in a setting which linked art with landscape. Works by Judd, John Chamberlain and Dan Flavin have been joined over the years by Carl Andre, Ingólfur Arnarson, Roni Horn, Ilya Kabakov, Richard Long, Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen. Some free time to visit Marfa's excellent bookstore and main street. Overnight Marfa.

Day 6: Marfa to San Antonio. Drive through deepest desert and countryside to bordertown Del Rio and then to San Antonio (journey time: c. 10 hours with several refreshment breaks, including the Judge Roy Bean Visitor Center in Langtry). Arrive San Antonio c. 6.00pm. First of two nights in San Antonio.

Day 7: San Antonio. The McNay was the first modern art museum in Texas and alongside the excellent 19th- and 20th-century works is a substantial sculpture collection in the landscaped park plus a new wing for temporary exhibitions. Afternoon boat trip from the hotel to the San Antonio Museum of Art with excellent American and Latin American collections. Free time to visit The Alamo, of Davy Crockett fame. Overnight San Antonio.

Day 8: Austin, Dallas. Drive north via Austin, a major university city and the state capital. Visit the Blanton Museum of Art, with fine collections of Renaissance as well as 20th-century American art. Brief stop at the Harry Ransom Center, an incredible resource of rare books and manuscripts. Continue to Dallas (c. 195 miles), arriving early evening. First of three nights in Dallas.

Day 9: Dallas. Begin with Philip Johnson's Thanksgiving Chapel and JFK Memorial before continuing to the Arts District. The Dallas Museum of Art is one of the finest in the US. Next door is the Nasher Sculpture Center, a superb collection including works by Calder, Chillida, Serra and Hepworth. Some free time – the Asian Art Museum is a possibility. Overnight Dallas.

Day 10: Fort Worth, Dallas. The day is spent in Fort Worth and its astonishingly rich 'Cultural District'. The Kimbell Art Museum is a magnificent collection, particularly the European paintings with Titian and Tiepolo to Matisse and Mondrian. Kahn's building is sublime: a series of barrel vaults providing lighting and acoustic perfection for the masterworks. Piano's sympathetic extension (2013) granted much needed exhibiting space. Across the road is The Modern (designed by Tadao Ando), another collection of 20th-century greats: Pollock, Hockney, Picasso, Bacon and a room of Sean Scully canvasses. See also the Amon Carter Museum of American art including works by Frederic Remington and Charles M. Russell, the two greatest artists of the American West. Overnight Dallas.

Day 11: Dallas. Morning at the Meadows Museum, a world-renowned collection of Spanish art, particularly strong on the Golden Age. Return to the hotel where the tour ends by c. 1.00pm. The tour manager accompanies a transfer to the airport, timed for the BA flight to London, currently departing 6.30pm.

Lecturer

Gijs van Hensbergen. Art historian and author specialising in Spain and the USA. His books include *The Sagrada Familia* (2017), *Gaudí, In the Kitchens of Castile* and *Guernica* and he has published in the Burlington Magazine and Wall Street Journal. He read languages at Utrecht University and Art History at the Courtauld, and undertook postgraduate studies in American art of the 1960s. He has worked in England, the USA and Spain as exhibitions organiser, TV researcher and critic and is a Fellow of the Cañada Blanch Centre for Contemporary Spanish Studies at the LSE.

Practicalities

Price – per person. Two sharing: £ 7,360.
Single occupancy: £8,950.

Included: domestic flight (Economy Class) with United Airlines from Houston to Midland on day 4; private coach for all transfers and excursions; boat trip; accommodation as described below; all breakfasts, 2 lunches and 7 dinners with wine; all admission charges and donations; all tips for restaurant staff, drivers, guides and porters; all taxes (federal, state, and city); the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Flights: international flights between London and Houston, Dallas and London are not included in the price of the tour. This is both because they can only be booked 355 days before travelling and, more significantly, upgrades from World Traveller (economy) are now rarely granted on a group booking. We therefore recommend you book your own flight at ba.com. We can help you with this. Our tour manager is on the flight to Houston detailed in the itinerary.

Visa: British, Australian or New Zealand citizens can apply for a visa waiver. We will advise on this.

Additional arrangements. We can request extra nights in the hotel at the beginning or end of the tour. Please contact us for a quote. An amendment fee will apply.

Accommodation. Hotel Zaza, Houston (hotelzaza.com/#houston): a contemporary hotel next door to the Fine Arts Museum.

Hotel Saint George, Marfa (marfasaintgeorge.com): a modern hotel, opened in 2016, in the centre of town. **Omni Mokara Hotel & Spa, San Antonio** (omnihotels.com): comfortable hotel well located on the River Walk. **Hotel Zaza Uptown, Dallas** (hotelzaza.com/dallas): a blend of Mediterranean elegance and modern comfort.

How strenuous? This is a long tour with a lot of travelling and a significant time difference to contend with. There is a fair amount of walking and standing around in museums. Fitness and stamina are essential. Average distance by coach per day: 62 miles.

Music. There may be an opportunity to attend an opera in Dallas. Programmes will be sent nearer the time.

Group size: between 12 and 22 participants.