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[jhamachek@moodygardens.org](mailto:jhamachek@moodygardens.org)**MOODY GARDENS HISTORY****HOW WE BEGAN**

Moody Gardens began in the mid-1980s with only a horse barn and riding arena. The purpose was to begin a hippotherapy riding program for people with head injuries. Today Moody Gardens is one of the premier educational/leisure facilities in the southwest. It also provides horticultural therapy, education and employment for persons with a wide range of physical and emotional disabilities.

**HOW WE GREW**

Since its inception in 1983 and adoption of an eight-phase master plan in 1985, Moody Gardens has illustrated through its various attractions numerous innovative and creative programs resulting in a visitation count of approximately two million visitors annually.

**1986 – Hope Therapy:** A site was secured by The Moody Foundation to establish a hippotherapy program. It was later expanded to include animal and horticultural therapy, education and employment for persons with physical and emotional disabilities.

**1986 – Convention Center:** Originally opened as Hope Arena, this center later expanded from 35,000 to 60,000 square feet to accommodate trade shows, conventions and events. It is now known as the Moody Gardens Convention Center.

**1988 – Palm Beach:** Tons of white Florida sand was barged in across the Gulf of Mexico to create this exotic family beach park.

**1988 – The Learning Place:** Originally opened as Seaside Safari, it is now the home of Moody Gardens educational programs.

**1990 – Production Area:** This area includes two greenhouses used to propagate most of the plants seen on our grounds and for our Medicinal Plant Program. Our water treatment plant takes effluent from Galveston's water treatment facility and treats and polishes it for use on all exterior landscaping.

**1993 – Rainforest Pyramid and Giant Screen 3D Theater Complex:** More than 1,700 exotic plant and animal species from the rainforests of Asia, the tropical Americas and Africa are featured in the Rainforest Pyramid. The Visitor's Center houses The Garden Restaurant and the MG 3D Theater, originally named the Giant Screen 3D Theater.

**1997 – Discovery Pyramid:** Moody Gardens' second grand pyramid features traveling and other science exhibits.

**1999 – Moody Gardens Hotel and Spa:** Nestled among acres of tropical gardens and magnificent pyramids sits the spectacular Moody Gardens Hotel, an architectural masterpiece, with 428 beautifully

decorated rooms, more than 22,000 square feet of flexible meeting space, dining and a full service salon and spa.

**1999 – Aquarium Pyramid:** The 1.5 million-gallon Aquarium Pyramid is a splashy tribute to the North Pacific, Caribbean, Tropical Pacific and South Atlantic Oceans and opened in the summer of 1999. As one of the largest aquariums in the world, the facility features close-up views of penguins, sharks, seals, seahorses, moray eels and much more.

**2004 – Moody Gardens Hotel and Convention Center Expansion:** This expansion project provided an additional 125-room wing to the hotel and expanded the exhibit hall to 60,000 square feet. This flexible meeting space is available for events ranging from trade shows and concerts to large gala dinners.

**2005 – 4D Special FX Theater:** The 4D Theater features 3D images and extra special effects such as leg ticklers, seat buzzers, scent, mist, snow and more to enable you to see, feel, hear and smell the action.

**2008 – Moody Gardens Golf Course:** Galveston's premier public course opened in June after two years and \$16 million in comprehensive renovations to the former Galveston Municipal Golf Course. Lush paspalum fairways are lined with 500 palms and shorebird habitat.

**2011 – Rainforest Pyramid and Palm Beach Enhancements:** The Rainforest Pyramid and Palm Beach both reopened May 28 after extensive enhancement projects. The Rainforest Pyramid sustained substantial damage from Hurricane Ike in 2008 and through the generosity of the Moody Foundation received a \$25 million enhancement project that provided a canopy walkway that gives access to the treetop level for a whole new perspective of the rainforest, as well as new exhibits, plants and animals. Palm Beach added several new features including a wave pool, lazy river and tower slides.

**2014 – Sky Trail® Explorer Ropes Course and Moody Gardens Zip Line:** The two newest permanent attractions to open at Moody Gardens are the Ropes Course and Zip Line. Ranging from Criss-Cross Tight Ropes to Burma Buckets, the 81-foot Ropes Course is filled with 48 fascinating obstacles suitable for the whole family to enjoy. Children can even take on an adventure of a smaller scale on the Sky Tykes™ Ropes Course that is appropriate for those who are 48 inches and under. The Zip Line glides over Palm Beach and the Lazy River 60 feet in the air for a bird's eye view of the Moody Gardens Pyramids and tropical gardens.

**2014 – ICE LAND: Ice Sculptures:** Moody Gardens transformed into the premier holiday destination with the debut of *ICE LAND: Ice Sculptures* during the 2014 holiday season. Being the only holiday ice exhibition on the Gulf Coast, this vast and amazing display of magnificent ice creations adds a frosty new addition to the Festival of Lights and other holiday attractions. A skilled team of award-winning professional ice carvers from Harbin, China dive into 2 million pounds of ice and transform it into majestic and towering marvels that are chilled and held at a temperature of 9 degrees throughout the holiday season. ICE LAND has continued since 2014, taking on a new theme each year. ICE LAND: Pole-to-Pole will open Nov. 17, 2018.

**2014 – SpongeBob SubPants Adventure:** The SpongeBob SubPants Adventure is a one-of-a-kind interactive experience that allows guests to go on a submarine voyage to explore the world of Bikini Bottom with the help of their captain, Patrick Star. Visitors are able to choose their path through the wild and silly deep-sea adventure and have real-time conversations with Patrick. The attraction takes visitors from digital to real time through exciting 4D sensory elements which brings the adventure to life through scents, bubbles and bouncing beach balls. Moody Gardens partnered with Nickelodeon, Super 78 and SimEx-lwerks Entertainment to create this innovative attraction.

**2014 – MG 3D Theater:** In November 2014, the theater unveiled the world’s first state-of-the-art Giant Screen 6-Primary Laser Projector System. Audiences see films nearly three and a half times brighter than standard theaters, with vibrant colors and new 3D glasses technology. Along with the theater’s top-of-the-line surround sound system, this new laser projection further distinguishes the MG 3D Theater as one of the premier cinema venues.

**2017 – Aquarium Pyramid:** A multi-phased renovation at the Aquarium Pyramid was completed in May 2017 ensuring Moody Gardens’ guests have a fun and awe-inspiring experience wonderfully complemented with conservation messages that underscore the vital importance of the oceans. New exhibits not only inspire visitor interest and empathy, but also connect visitors to specific ocean habitats. Visitors travel from the Gulf of Mexico to the South Atlantic, the South Atlantic, the South Pacific, the North Pacific, and the Caribbean. Each ocean exhibit highlights different marine sanctuaries and different aspects of our relationship to the seas. There are also a variety of new exhibits and surprises, including the addition of the tropical Humboldt penguins and touch tanks featuring jellies, stingrays and other crustaceans.

*Moody Gardens® is a public, non-profit, educational destination utilizing nature in the advancement of rehabilitation, conservation, recreation, and research.*

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[jhamachek@moodygardens.org](mailto:jhamachek@moodygardens.org)**MOODY GARDENS EMBRACES ENVIRONMENT, EDUCATES THE YOUNG,  
INSPIRES THE DISABLED AND LOOKS TO THE FUTURE**

**GALVESTON, Texas** – Encompassing 242 acres on Galveston Island, Moody Gardens is the Houston area's No. 1 tourist attraction and family destination, chock full of some of the most exotic subtropical landscaping in the United States.

According to *City Search- the Best of Houston*, 36 percent of the voters selected the non-profit Moody Gardens as the most enjoyable tourist attraction. Featuring a 10-story glass Rainforest Pyramid, breathtaking Aquarium Pyramid, sprawling conference center, white sandy beach, giant 3D Theater, Zip Line and Ropes Course, along with so much more, it's no surprise that Moody Gardens is the Houston area's favorite attraction.

These fantastic attractions, along with two unique therapy programs, are all part of the vision that is Moody Gardens, a highly ambitious project established by the Moody Foundation in 1982. The Foundation is a philanthropic organization launched by W. L. Moody, Jr. and his wife, Libbie Shearn Moody, in 1942.

**Hope Therapy: The Cornerstone**

Hope Therapy at Moody Gardens was inspired by the son of Foundation Trustee Robert L. Moody, who sustained a head injury in an automobile accident and who subsequently discovered the healing benefits of therapy utilizing animals and nature. Opening in January 1986, Hope Therapy became the cornerstone of Moody Gardens, an internationally-recognized program offering rehabilitative horseback riding, hippotherapy, to mentally and physically disabled individuals.

Today's Hope Therapy offers Horticultural Therapy, through which individuals with disabilities can improve sensory awareness and motor abilities, regain confidence and learn new skills to prepare for employment opportunities. These special clients tend the massive greenhouse and Rainforest Pyramid at Moody Gardens in large part.

Vocational Training (or Supported Employment) is also an important part of the program. This provides the opportunity for individuals with disabilities to develop the necessary skills to gain and maintain a job. Moody Gardens employs many of these individuals on a full- and part-time basis. Job coaching is provided as needed.

**Attractions That Embrace the Environment**

The Moody Gardens complex is set in a subtropical environment. An estimated 20,000 plants and trees have been carefully planted to reflect seasonal varieties and a veritable rainbow of hues throughout the year. Pathways invite the walker and biker to fully embrace this environment.

In 1988, Palm Beach was established. This white-sand, blue-lagoon entertainment center is open

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throughout the summer. Waterfalls, jacuzzis, volleyball courts, paddleboats, *Aquatic Adventure* playground, concessions and more make Palm Beach a great place to cool down in the summer. Docked behind Palm Beach is the 800-person-capacity Colonel Paddlewheel Boat, an authentic reproduction of an 1800s paddlewheel that offers daily cruises on Offatts Bayou.

In 1986, the 35,000 square-foot convention center opened. A few years later, the center expanded to 60,000-square foot. The Moody Gardens Convention Center design and furnishings bring the outdoors within. The tropical atmosphere of Galveston Island is further reflected by dramatic fountains and waterfalls accenting the rich gardens.

In March of 1993, Moody Gardens opened its spectacular Rainforest Pyramid, a one-acre rainforest sitting within a 10-story glass pyramid, showcasing the exotic flora and fauna of Asia, Africa and the Americas. Since its opening, the rainforest has developed a 55-foot tall canopy, exotic vines and vibrant, lush greenery throughout. Visitors will find tropical birds, turtles and an exotic insect exhibit as they explore the Rainforest Pyramid, the Mayan Colonnade and freshwater ponds.

Opening simultaneously with the pyramid was the Moody Gardens Giant Screen 3D Theater, a multi-media facility capable of two- and three-dimensional film viewing, conventional cinema and slide shows. A Visitors Center, The Garden Restaurant and Gift Shop, housed within the same complex as the Rainforest Pyramid and 3D Theater, offer detailed information about Moody Gardens, tasty and well-priced meals and a variety of special gifts.

Then in March 1996, Moody Gardens broke ground on a 303-room hotel, a second Discovery Pyramid housing a unique educational museum and a Ridefilm Theater, and a third, spectacular Aquarium Pyramid that would showcase the world's oceans. The Discovery Pyramid, featuring traveling interactive educational exhibits and the Ridefilm Theater both opened in June 1997. The giant, 1.5-million-gallon Aquarium Pyramid, offering a splashy tribute to the North Pacific, Caribbean, Tropical Pacific and Edge of the Antarctic oceans, opened in the summer of 1999.

The 303-room Moody Gardens Hotel opened January 1999 and offers all the conveniences and features of a big-city meeting destination nestled among breathtaking gardens and majestic pyramids. Flexible spaces to accommodate any group size, a 15,000 square foot ballroom, elegant and casual dining, spa, exotic pool and swim-up bar, and a host of luxury services make the Moody Gardens Hotel the ideal meeting and vacation destination. Located next to the existing conference center, the hotel further complements Galveston Island's ability to serve Texas' growing convention market.

In 2004, expansion to the Moody Gardens Hotel, Spa and Convention Center was completed adding a new wing and 125 new guest rooms as well as three new spectacular hospitality suites featuring spacious parlors, perfect for private meetings or small gatherings. Room amenities include refrigerators, color TV, robes, hairdryers, ironing boards and irons, coffee makers, 24-hour room service, in-room safety box, high-speed internet access, additional phone lines and great views of the Moody Gardens attractions and Offatts Bayou. An enclosed five-story, 1,000-car parking garage with connected, covered walkways was also constructed, and the Convention Center Exhibit Hall was expanded to 60,000 square feet.

In 2005, the 4D Special FX Theater opened. All senses like smell, touch, hearing and sight, come alive as hi-definition digital 3D projection, audio and show control systems put audience in the middle of the action. In June 2008 Galveston's premier public golf course opened after two years and \$16 million-comprehensive renovations to the former Galveston Municipal Golf Course. The course is one of the few in the Continental U.S. to use salt-tolerant Paspalum grass exclusively.

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A \$25 million enhancement project was completed in May 2011 at the Rainforest Pyramid. The Rainforests of the World Project enables guests to experience the rainforest in a whole new way. In addition to a new entry, a walkway will lead visitors through the canopy level. Exploring the exhibit from a new vantage point will provide a more interactive experience for guests to see new plants, birds, fish, butterflies as well as closer access to training and husbandry activities between keepers and animals. Visitors will also have access to the lower levels of the exhibit as in the past.

A second project was completed in May 2011 at Palm Beach. Amongst the lush, exotic setting, a new *Kon-Tiki* themed water adventure provided guests with a 650-linear-foot Lazy River with over 60 interactive points at which guests can splash and spray as their friends float by along the Lazy River course. A 6,100-square-foot zero entry Wave Pool graduates to a depth of 5 feet to appeal to a variety of ages. Two 18-foot enclosed Tower Slides offer a thrilling plunge of refreshment. Palm Beach's *Kon-Tiki* theme suggests fun in the sun and a water adventure for all. The area is named after the Incan sun god Viracocha, who was also known as *Kon-Tiki*. Norwegian explorer and writer Thor Heyerdahl also traveled the Pacific Ocean from Peru to Polynesia in 1947 on a raft he named *Kon-Tiki* as he explored the possibility that South Americans could have settled Polynesia in pre-Columbian times.

In 2014, Moody Gardens added a Sky Trail<sup>®</sup> Explorer Ropes Course and Moody Gardens Zip Line. Ranging from Criss-Cross Tight Ropes to Burma Buckets, the 81-foot Ropes Course is filled with 48 fascinating obstacles suitable for the whole family to enjoy. Children can even take on an adventure of a smaller scale on the Sky Tykes™ Ropes Course that is appropriate for those who are 48 inches and under. The Zip Line glides over Palm Beach and the Lazy River 60 feet in the air for a bird's eye view of the Moody Gardens Pyramids and tropical gardens.

Galveston Island dropped down to a frosty 9 degrees in 2014 with the unveiling of ICE LAND: Ice Sculptures, the coolest holiday attraction in the area. Being the only holiday ice exhibition on the Gulf Coast, this vast and amazing display of magnificent ice creations adds a frosty new addition to the Festival of Lights and other holiday attractions. A skilled team of award-winning professional ice carvers from Harbin, China dive into 2 million pounds of ice and transform it into majestic and towering marvels that are chilled and held at a temperature of nine degrees throughout the holiday season. ICE LAND returns to Moody Gardens each November, just in time for the holidays, and is open through January.

Also in 2014, SpongeBob SubPants Adventure opened in the Discovery Pyramid. This one-of-a-kind interactive experience allows guests to go on a submarine voyage to explore the world of Bikini Bottom with the help of their captain, Patrick Star. Visitors are able to choose their path through the wild and silly deep-sea adventure and have real-time conversations with Patrick. The attraction takes visitors from digital to real time through exciting 4D sensory elements which brings the adventure to life through scents, bubbles and bouncing beach balls. Moody Gardens partnered with Nickelodeon, Super 78 and SimEx-Iwerks Entertainment to create this innovative attraction.

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messages that underscore the vital importance of the oceans. New exhibits not only inspire visitor interest and empathy, but also connect visitors to specific ocean habitats. Visitors travel from the Gulf of Mexico to the South Atlantic, South Atlantic, South Pacific, North Pacific and Caribbean. Each ocean exhibit highlights different marine sanctuaries and different aspects of our relationship to the seas. There are also a variety of new exhibits and surprises, including the addition of jellies and tropical penguins.

### **Education and Research**

Through its expansion phases, Moody Gardens has continued to focus on education and research, working to inspire young people to protect their environment, and to assist researchers in the arenas of medicine and entomology.

The Learning Place opened in 1994 as an educational center offering a wide variety of opportunities for children of all ages. Grades K-12 visit The Learning Place in school field trip programs that offer access to educational gardens, animals to see and touch, presentations from the Rainforest Trunk and more. The Learning Place also offers day and overnight camps, Boy Scout merit badge days and an exciting and educational place to have birthday parties.

Equally exciting are two ongoing partnerships designed to aid medical research into curing certain diseases and to replace pesticides with natural insect control. The Medicinal Plant Program is a cooperative initiative led by Dr. E. Arthur Bell, former curator of KEW Gardens in London, Moody Gardens and the University Of Houston School Of Pharmacology. The Horticulture Department at Moody Gardens collects and grows vegetation from rainforests that might prove useful in controlling diseases or viruses, particularly cancer and AIDS, and sends cuttings to University of Houston for research. As plants with healing properties are discovered, Moody Gardens nurtures the species during the research process.

In an intriguing team venture between Moody Gardens and Texas A&M University, the entire Rainforest Pyramid has been protected from harmful insects through a Beneficial Insect Program that has replaced pesticides with natural insect control.

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