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Texas dance halls are still kickin'

You can check out the boot-tappin' heritage (and down plenty of BBQ) on these new Hill Country tours

IN THEIR HEYDAY, THERE WERE maybe a thousand dance halls in Texas. Built in the 18th and 19th centuries, these halls were epicenters of social life, a place for locals to boot-scoot to live music. Sadly, postwar urbanization led to their decline—only 400 or so stand today.

This month (March 20-26), the Grammy-winning band Asleep at the Wheel presents the Texas Dance Hall Tour, a weeklong event in and around Hill Country. "Dance halls are a part of who we are as Texans," says the band's manager, Sam Seifert. "They're places where we've attended weddings, birthdays and graduations, and where famous Texas musicians have cut their teeth. It's

important that future generations are aware of their culture."

By day, participants sightsee and learn the two-step, while each sundown offers a different dance hall, where a Lone Star dinner (chicken-fried steak, barbeque, Tex-Mex) is followed by heel-kicking to live concerts. Among the venues is Sengelmann Hall in the town of Schulenburg, whose 19th-century features include the original plank floors, tin ceilings and pillars marked with bullet holes from evenings when the festivities got a little too lively.

Current owner Dana Harper, who rescued the space from being an auto supply store, says, "I had a vision of this lonely old hall full of people having a good time, dancing, the way it was intended."

—KIMBERLEY LOVATO
texasdancehalltour.com

The Texas Dance Hall Tour raises funds for the preservation of halls like The Pavilion



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Phoenix is hipper than you think

The Roosevelt Row district offers art, and a new hotel

Just north of downtown, Phoenix's Roosevelt Row district bustles during bi-monthly gallery walks, and is home to a profusion of street art, funky galleries (see the two spaces run by MonOrchid), quirky boutiques like MADE, and homey-hip food from Songbird Coffee & Tea House and Desoto Central Market.

A new hotel, the wonderfully exuberant FOUND:RE, functions as a gallery for local artists. "Art isn't just something to match the sofa," says Michael Oleskow, the property's cultural curator. "It's a way of living, and we wanted to bring that to Arizona and the world."

foundrehotels.com

