Generations frequent Garner State Park, sustaining customs unique to this place. The most popular of these traditions, the dance, has its roots in the park’s Great Depression-era construction. An inexpensive form of entertainment, local dances became a popular pastime in the 1930s. When the park opened, local bands performed in the beautiful native limestone and cypress dance pavilion. Later, a jukebox replaced the bands, and the established dance continues on warm summer nights.

Garner State Park is one of the most popular parks in the state. The rich cultural history of the park and its facilities, the clear waters of the Frio River, and steep wooded canyons combine to form a treasured place for all Texans. Help us keep the park a special place for everyone.

- Hike only on designated trails and stay out of closed areas.
- Leave no trace. Keep your park clean by picking up your trash.
- Preserve the park for future generations and leave plants, animals, and fossils where you find them.
- Join the Friends of Garner State Park, a non-profit group that supports the park through donations, service, programs, and running the Visitor Center.

Garner State Park
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The land was a kitchen for some Native Americans! Some groups built large earth ovens to slow cook tough roots and tubers.

Great Western Trail. European immigrants also settled in the area, their livelihood based on ranching and farming. German immigrants like the Magers and Streibs moved here, setting up ranching operations to support their families.

The Frio River, serving the needs of people for thousands of years, isn’t only valuable today for swimming and tubing. It feeds lakes and aquifers, like the Choke Canyon Reservoir and the Edwards Aquifer, that Texans rely on for drinking water.

A healthy riparian area might look overgrown or unkempt—but it’s actually providing a place for animals to live. Wildlife can find cover under branches and search for food in shallow, clean water. You might see the graceful great blue heron stalking fish, frogs, and snakes here. These large birds can be between three feet and four and half feet tall.

Riparian areas also have a diversity of plants, from small sedges to towering trees. Bald cypress trees hang over much of the Frio. These are conifers, like Ashe juniper or pine trees, but they lose their leaves in the fall. Look for their green needles to turn rust red and drift to the ground, leaving the trees “bald” for the winter. You might also see cypress “knees” sticking out of the shallow water. These are extensions of their roots and stabilize the trees during floods. Bald cypress trees help hold the riparian together.

The diversity and structure of riparian areas depends on you! If you’re committed to conservation, avoid accessing the river where the vegetation is tall and thick on the banks. Get to the river from areas which are kept open, like the day use area.