

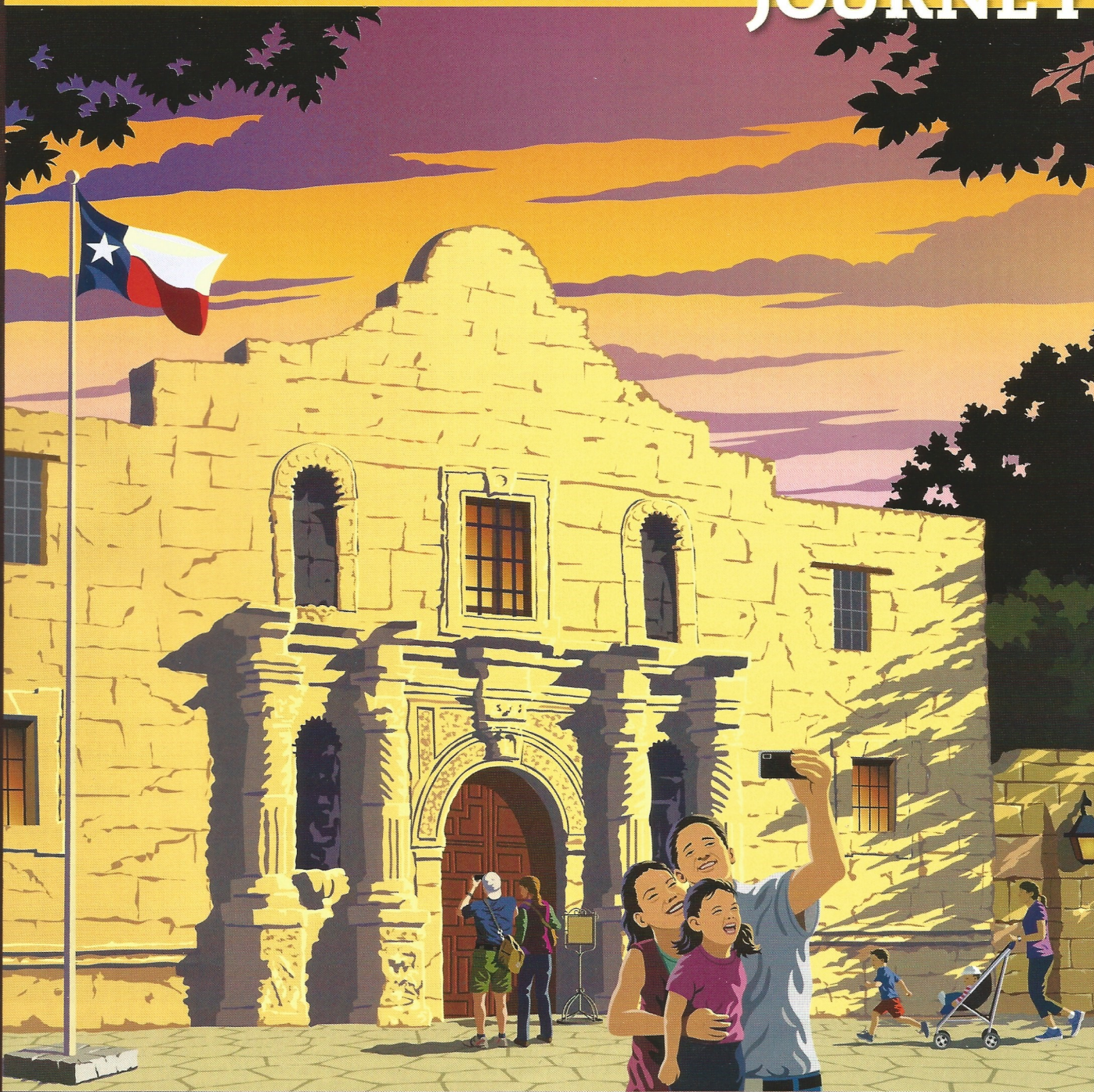
JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2018



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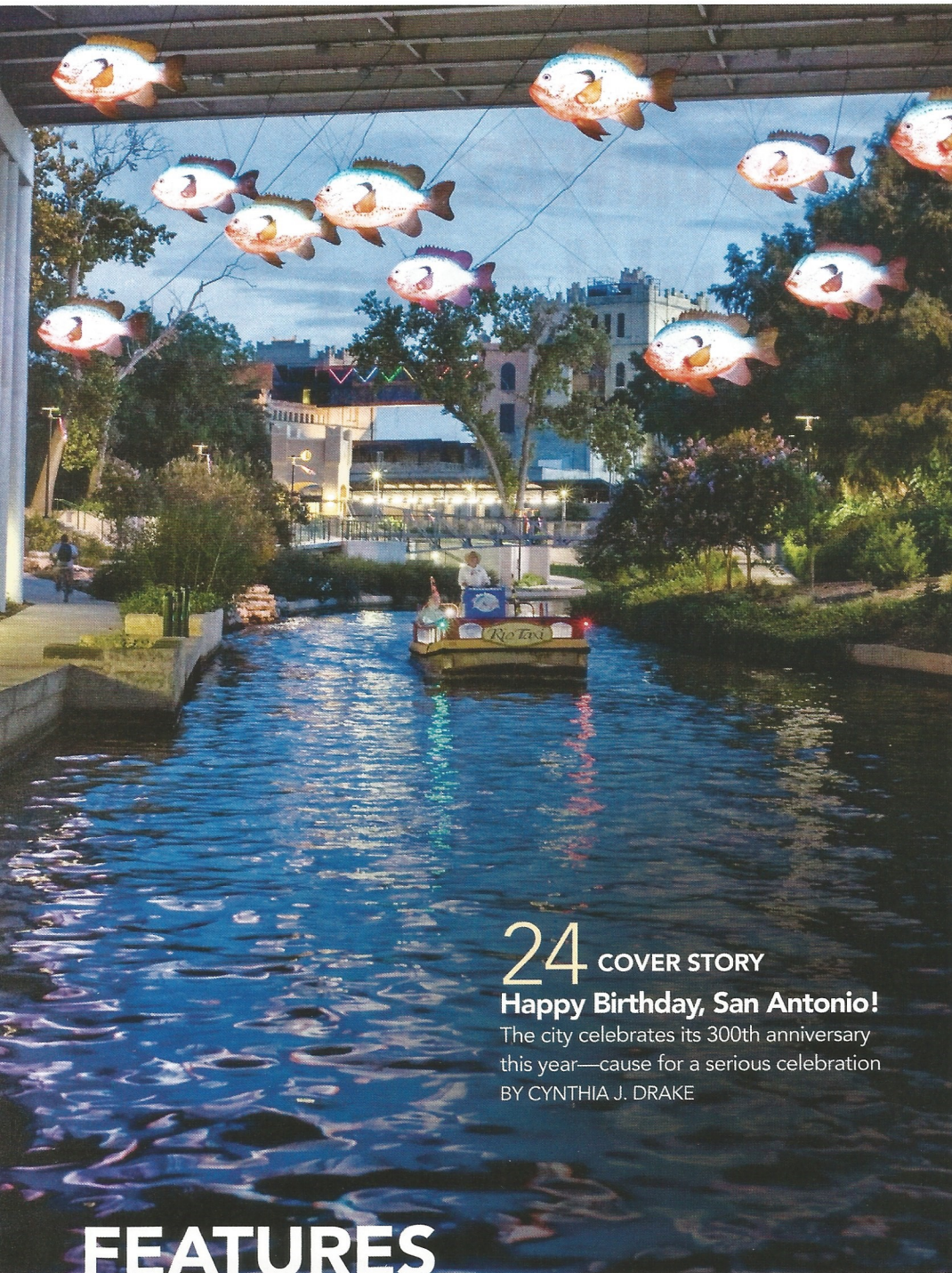
THE MAGAZINE FOR AAA MEMBERS

JOURNEY



CELEBRATING 300 YEARS

SAN ANTONIO



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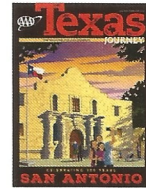
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GLENN GUSTAFSON

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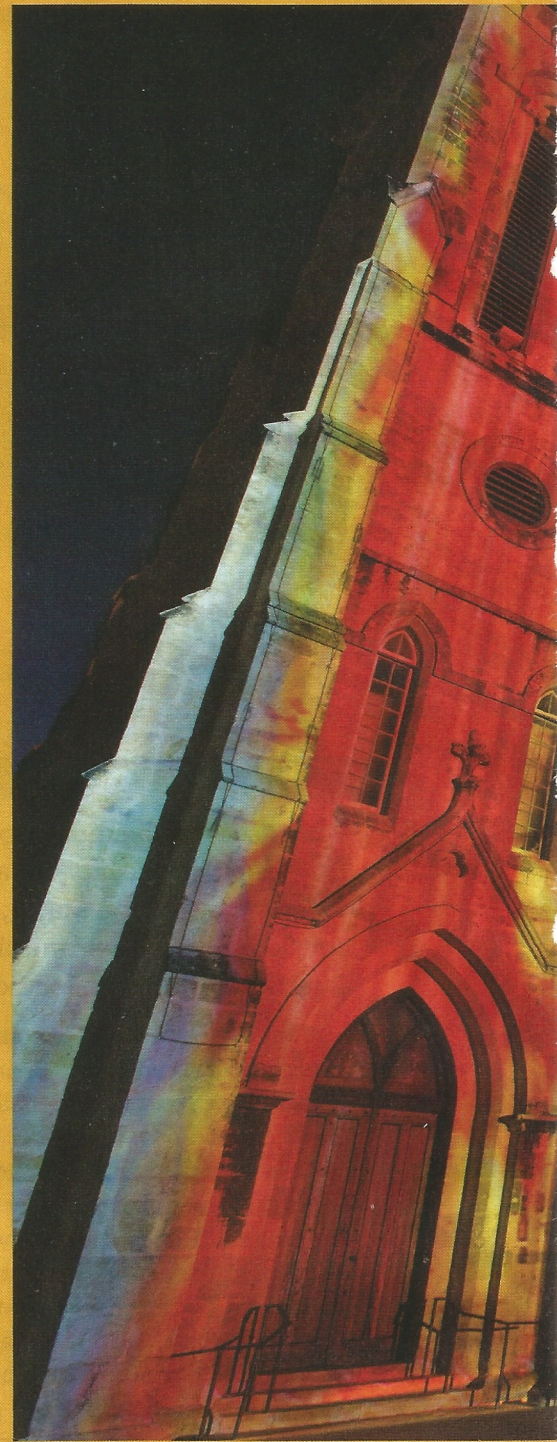
GO BIG IN ALAMO CITY

How to celebrate San Antonio's milestone birthday? Visiting the Alamo itself is a no-brainer. Here are 10 *other* ideas.

By Cynthia J. Drake

1 CELEBRATE IN MAY

Plan a visit for early May to catch some of the tricentennial fun. The weeklong **birthday festivities** kick off May 1 with a community candlelight vigil and pilgrimage from Mission Concepción to Main Plaza. On May 3, a Founders Day celebration takes place at six spots across the city, and the following evening, May 4, fireworks light up the sky at three locations along 5 miles of the Mission Reach. On May 5, a new public art piece, *Plethora*, is unveiled at San Pedro Creek, the original site of the first mission, which we now call the Alamo. Stick around for an after-dark projection of stars arranged the same way they appeared that night three centuries ago. sanantonio300.org.



KEVIN VANDIVIER

2 JOIN THE FIESTA



3 SEE 'THE SAGA'

This kaleidoscopic, 24-minute light show four nights a week on the front of **San Fernando Cathedral** is not to be missed. Created by French artist Xavier de Richemont, the 7,000-square-foot projection on the 18th-century cathedral—one of the oldest in the United States—tells the story of San Antonio and is accompanied by hypnotic drumbeats, flutes, and polkas that pay homage to indigenous tribes, missionaries, and other settlers. See it for free at 9, 9:30 and 10 p.m. on Tuesdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. mainplaza.org/san-antoniiothe-saga.

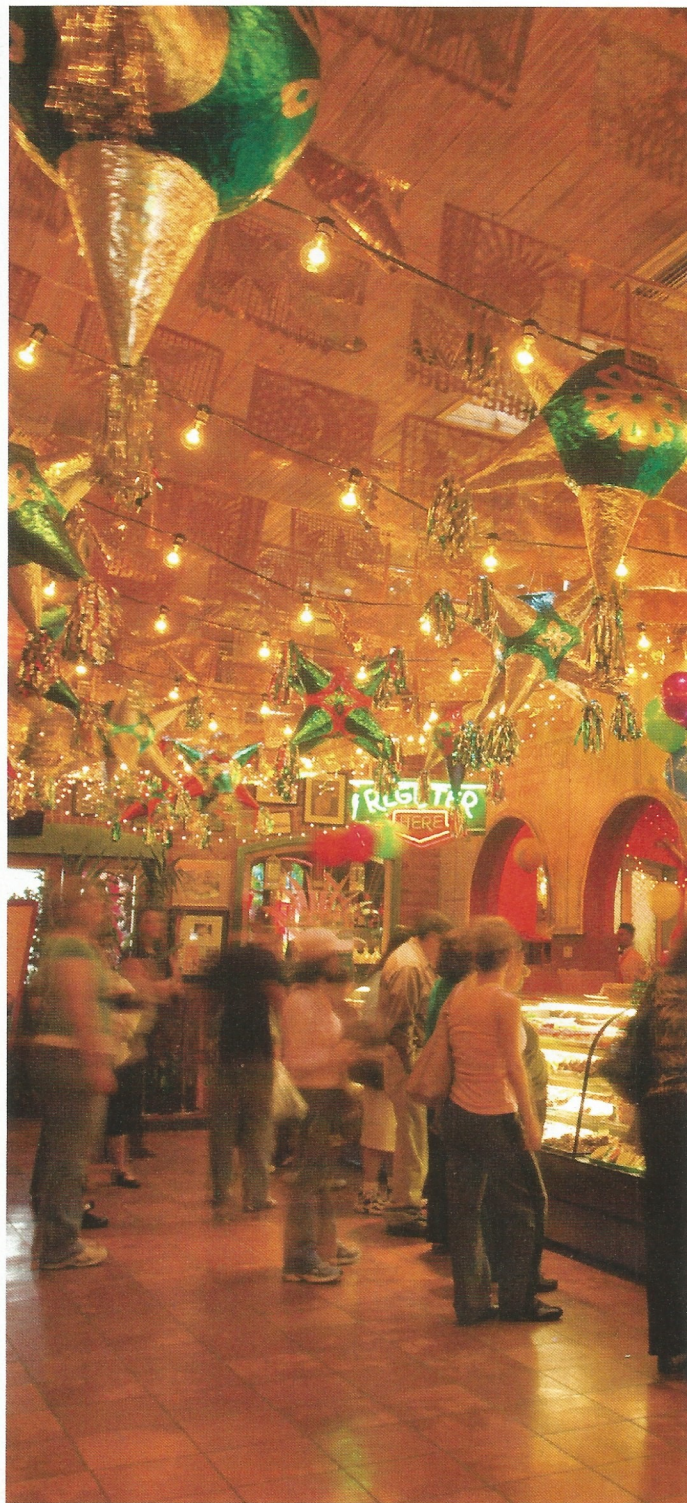
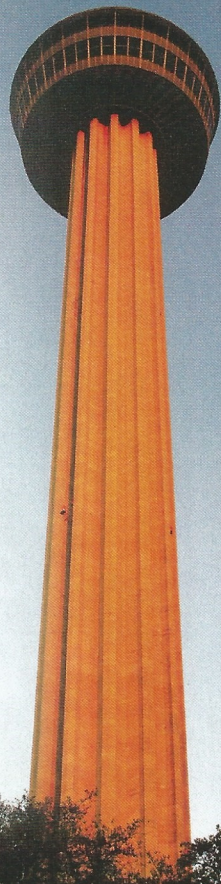
San Antonio's annual "party with a purpose" began in 1891 to honor those who fought at the Alamo and the Battle of San Jacinto. The **11-day festival** features elaborate parades, including a dazzling boat procession on the San Antonio River. It's always fun, but given the city's tricentennial, this year's April 19–29 Fiesta

promises to be particularly celebratory. The festivities kick off with Fiesta Fiesta in Hemisfair Park, featuring cuisines from several Texas regions. Other Fiesta highlights include Charreada, an authentic Mexican rodeo, and the San Antonio Symphony's Fiesta Pops show at the Tobin Center for the Performing Arts,

featuring mariachis and ballet folklórico performers. Night in Old San Antonio, a local favorite that takes place in the city's oldest neighborhood, La Villita, entices revelers with delicious food, from pan dulce to bratwurst. Don a flower crown, crack a *cascarón*, dance the polka, and enjoy the multicultural merriment.

4 TAKE IN EPIC VIEWS

San Antonio's last big birthday party—its 250th—came with a 750-foot-tall candle: the **Tower of the Americas**. It was the theme building for HemisFair, the 1968 World's Fair that drew 6 million people to the city and ushered in an explosion of new businesses and tourism. At that time, Tower of the Americas was the tallest observation tower in the U.S., and remained so until Las Vegas' Stratosphere snatched the title in 1996. The tower remains a great place to take in spectacular views of the city. Buy a ticket that includes all-day elevator rides to the Observation Deck, or enjoy a meal or a cocktail at Chart House, the revolving restaurant on top. (210) 223-3101; toweroftheamericas.com.



FROM LEFT: KEVIN VANDIVIER; LAURENCE PARENT (3)

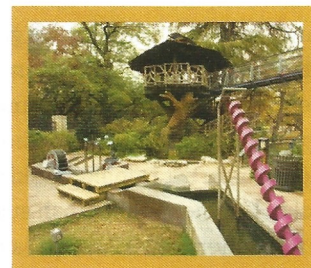
5 SPEND A DAY AT THE MERCADO



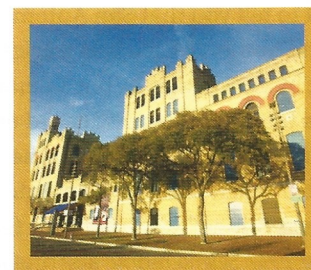
From the colorful *papel picado* dancing in the breeze to the countless vendors hawking street corn, T-shirts, and luchador masks, **El Mercado**, or Market Square, is the largest Mexican-style market in the U.S. Among the culinary highlights is **Mi Tierra Cafe**, a family-run business that dates to 1941. It's worth a look inside just for the explosion of holiday lights and outrageously kitschy Mexican decor. Better yet, linger for a breakfast taco or a slice of tres leches cake. (210) 225-1262; mitierracafe.com.

6 SOAK IN HISTORY AND CULTURE

The **San Antonio Symphony** will welcome soloist Ana María Martínez in a special opera to celebrate the tricentennial January 5 and 6 at the Tobin Center. (210) 223-8624; tobincenter.org.



The newly expanded **Witte Museum** is welcoming visitors this year with two tricentennial exhibits that explore the area's natural and cultural history. "Gathering at the Waters: 12,000 Years of People" runs January 13 to December 2; "300 Years of San Antonio History: Confluence and Culture," runs March 3 to January 2, 2019. Visitors to "300 Years" can hear storytellers, see rare artifacts such as Davy Crockett's fiddle, build a model mission wall, and witness some of the key moments that gave rise to this culturally rich city. (210) 357-1900; witemuseum.org.



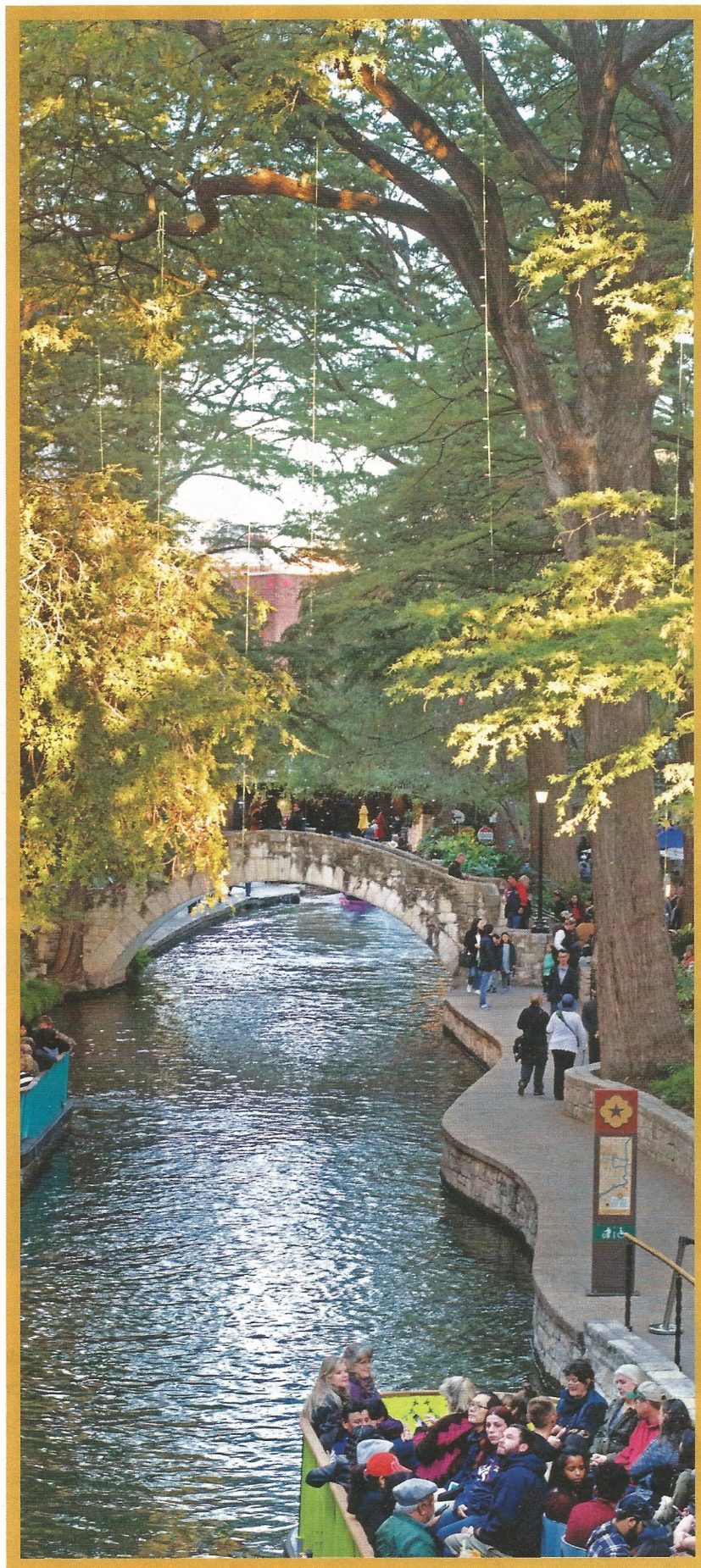
The **San Antonio Museum of Art's** February 16–May 13 exhibition, "San Antonio 1718: Art from Viceregal Mexico," portrays the seldom-seen visual story of the city's first century with more than 100 landscape paintings, portraits, and sculptures. (210) 978-8100; samuseum.org.

7 STROLL THE RIVER'S TREASURES

The San Antonio **River Walk** began as architect Robert H.H. Hugman's dream and came to life as a 1938 Works Project Administration endeavor. Now extending 15 miles along the San Antonio River, the River Walk breathes romance into San Antonio and gives the city its identity as the "American Venice." These days, the walk is also home to compelling art installations. Among them: Philadelphia artist Donald Lipski's *F.I.S.H.*, a school of luminescent sunfish suspended under the Interstate 35 overpass near Camden Street; Belgian artist Arne Quinze's *Whispers*, which features large, colorful metal shapes that grow out of the landscape near Mission San Juan; and the poetic inscriptions etched in the walls near Main Plaza—a collaboration between landscape architect Rosa Finsley and artist Celia Muñoz. sariverfoundation.org.

8 PAY HOMAGE TO SELENA

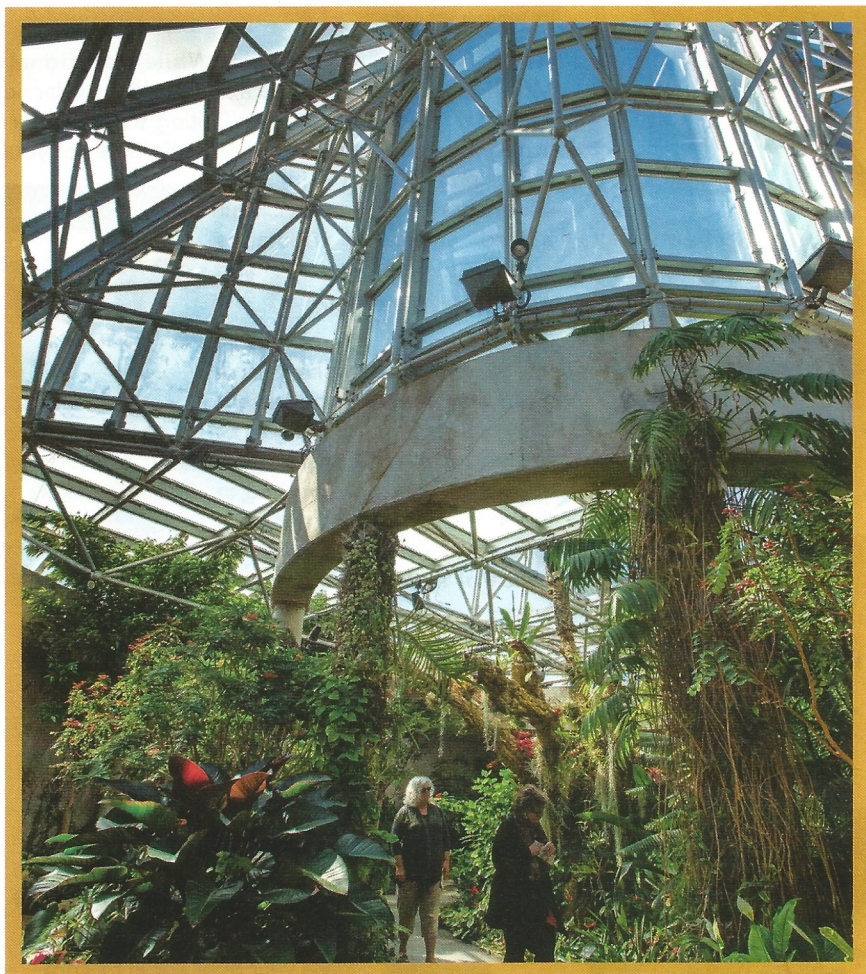
Legendary singer Selena lived in Corpus Christi, but locals are quick to tell you that San Antonio was her second home. Her life was tragically cut short in 1995 at age 23, but Selena's star burns bright here, as evidenced at spots throughout the city. Probably the most photographed bridge in San Antonio, the "**Selena Bridge**" (pictured) was featured in the 1997 *Selena* biopic starring Jennifer Lopez; it arches over the River Walk by the Omni La Mansión del Rio at St. Mary's Street. Other Selena stops include Hard Rock Café (111 W. Crockett Street), with memorabilia inside and her star outside; an altar dedicated to her at Mi Tierra Cafe; and Sunset Station (1174 E. Commerce Street), where Selena recorded the video for "No Me Queda Más."



KEVIN VANDIVIER

9 EXPLORE THE MISSIONS BY BIKE OR KAYAK

Not many 20-mile bike routes give you the opportunity to stop and explore 18th-century Franciscan missions along the way, but you can do just that in San Antonio thanks to a 2013 River Walk expansion. Rent a bike from the San Antonio BCycle bike-sharing program—the first of its kind in Texas—and pedal your way down the paved paths on either side of the San Antonio River. The four missions designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site—**Concepción, San José, San Juan, and Espada**—are all located within 7 miles of one another on relatively flat terrain. Since the 2013 expansion, which included kayak-friendly paddling chutes along the river, you can kayak the 8-mile stretch of the Mission Reach. Kayak rentals and organized trips are available through Mission Adventure Tours. This park area of San Antonio is peaceful and lush, with herons that fish from the river and flowers growing wild along the path. San Antonio BCycle: (210) 281-0101; sanantonio.bcycle.com; Mission Adventure Tours: missionadventuretours.com.



10 SEE WHAT'S GROWING IN THE GARDEN

Fresh off a fall 2017 makeover, the **San Antonio Botanical Garden** will expand by 8 acres this year. New spaces will include a welcome building, expanded garden areas, and high-tech learning spaces. Visitors can check out the Goldsbury Foundation Pavilion and CHEF (Culinary Health Education for Families) Teaching Kitchen. The kitchen features cooking demonstrations and chef-led culinary classes such as “Sprouts and Spritzers,” which uses ingredients harvested from the 1-acre Culinary Garden. In March, the new Family Adventure Garden will spring to life with 2 1/2 acres of creeks, fairy huts, and a Prickly Pear Peak for children to explore. (210) 536-1400; sabot.org.

FROM TOP: LAURENCE PARENT; KEVIN VANDIVIER