

Self-Guided Tour of Houston Hobby Shops (and other neat stuff)

Courtesy of **AUSTNTRAK MODULAR N SCALE CLUB**

The following is our suggestion for a self-guided tour of Southwest Houston to allow you to visit four hobby shops, a famous barbecue restaurant, and two park trains. The attractions are listed in a logical sequence and any can be omitted without too much negative effect on the route. In order, the attractions are:

RC Hobby Shop - 13835 Southwest Freeway, Sugar Land, 77478, (281)265-4844: This hobby shop is very close to the hotel, and its focus is mainly on remote control airplanes and similar interests. But they have a great assortment of modelers' tools and supplies like paints, tools, superglue, and canopy glue.

Downtown Aquarium - 410 Bagby Street, Houston, 77002, (713)223-3474: Besides the aquarium, there is a park train ride, and part of its journey is through a clear glass tunnel under the shark tank. Hard Rock Cafe is across the street.

Goode Company (Barbecue or Tex-Mex food and hamburgers) - 5109 Kirby, Houston, 77005, (713)522-2530: We'll be eating barbecue catered by Goode Company on Friday night. If you can't get enough, this a chance to pack it in.

G&G Model Shop - 2522 Times Blvd., Houston, 77005, (713)529-7752: The proprietor, Gus Freitag, has a large selection of vintage and new N Scale, and is planning a special display for viewing during the Convention. The shop caters to architecture students at nearby Rice University, so be sure you visit the rear part of the store to see the amazing assortment of parts for architectural models.

Hermann Park Train - Hermann Park, Golf Course Dr. at Zoo Circle Dr., Houston, (713)526-2183: You've seen a few photos of this train in Convention brochures. The route ambles through the picnic areas and Japanese Garden in the park, and the main station is across from the zoo entrance. There are stops at the Natural History Museum and the Metrorail Station.

Papa Ben's Train Place - 4007 Bellaire Blvd., Suite E, Houston 77025 (behind the large Chinese restaurant), (713)523-5600: You'll find a very large selection of new and vintage N Scale equipment, supplies, and the club layout of the Houston N' Crowd at the back of the store.

M&M Hobbies - 6703 Chimney Rock, Bellaire, 77401, (713)661-7137: In addition to model railroad equipment, this shop has a wide selection of tools and supplies, every RC hobby item you can imagine, and a large outdoor dirt racing track for RC cars.

Larry's Hobbies - 156 FM 1960 (I-45 at FM 1960), Houston, 77073, (281)443-7373: This shop is located fairly close to Houston Intercontinental Airport on the north side of Houston. It is included in this list because it is a fine shop emphasizing model railroads and everything from RC equipment to plastic models, even though it is quite far from the other locations.

DRIVING DIRECTIONS

To get to ***RC Hobby Shop*** from the Hotel: Get on the Southwest Freeway headed for downtown Houston, exit at Sugar Creek Blvd. (second exit), keep going across Sugar Creek Blvd. on the service road, turn right into the shopping center, and go toward the back row of stores on the left. To get back to the Southwest Freeway, exit the parking lot to the west via Sugar Creek Blvd.

To get to the ***Downtown Aquarium*** from the Southwest Freeway: Go all the way in toward downtown, follow the Louisiana Street exit, continue on Louisiana almost all the way through the downtown area, turn left on Prairie Street, go two blocks, and there it is.

To get back on the Southwest Freeway, just follow Smith Street (outbound street between Louisiana and Travis) westward until it puts you on the freeway.

To get to ***Goode Company*** from the Southwest Freeway: Exit at Kirby Street and go south. The Goode Company Tex-Mex and hamburger place is on the right at the first traffic light (Westpark). The Goode Company barbecue place is on the left, just before the Burger King.

To get to ***G&G Model Shop***: Drive south on Kirby. The first street after Rice Blvd. is Times Blvd. Turn left at Times Blvd. and the shop is about 1/2 block down on the left.

To get to the ***Hermann Park Train***: Go east on Rice Blvd. until it becomes Sunset Blvd. and then dead ends into Main Street. Turn left at Main, get over to the right, and turn right at the first opportunity a few blocks down at the large fountain. Go around Sam Houston's statue and follow Golf Course Dr. heading south. When you come to the large parking lot at the zoo entrance, park and walk to the train station.

To skip Hermann Park, go south on Kirby and turn right on Holcomb/Bellaire. Go to Stella Link Rd.

To get to ***Papa Ben's***: From Hermann Park, go back to Main Street (not easy - hope you left a trail of bread crumbs), go outbound toward the southwest, and through the Texas Medical Center (expect congestion). When on the southwest edge of the Medical Center, take the gradual right exit for Holcomb Blvd. heading westward. Holcomb becomes Bellaire Blvd. At Stella Link Road, turn left, then turn right into the parking lot and look for Papa Ben's at the back of the shopping center.

To get to ***M&M Hobbies***: Get back on Bellaire Blvd. heading west. Go a few miles, crossing over the UP tracks and under Loop 610. At the light at Stella Link, turn right and look for the hobby shop on the right. Watch out for those nasty curbs when you exit the parking area.

To get back to the ***Marriott***: Get back on the Southwest Freeway by heading north on Stella Link or Kirby, and get on the freeway by turning left, heading outbound. In Sugar Land, take the Highway 6 exit, turn left under the freeway, carefully move to the right, and make the first right turn on City Walk. The hotel is a block ahead, and the parking garage entrance is a block beyond that, in the Minute Maid building.

To get to ***Larry's Hobbies***: Take the Southwest Freeway into Houston (outskirts of downtown), get on I-45 Northbound, and go out to FM 1960. (In Texas, "FM" means "Farm-to-Market Road", one step below a state highway.) Larry's is in the shopping center at the Southeast corner of that intersection. To get to the big airport, keep going north and follow the signs.