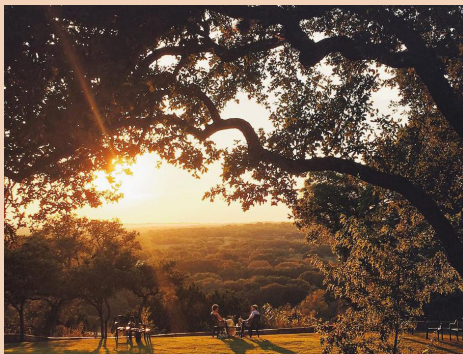


# *A Little Bit of Heaven* by Colleen Brooks



It's a beautiful time to be in hill country! After a long hot summer, there's a lot to get excited about. It's time to pull out the hiking boots, pack a picnic basket, and enjoy the cooler temperatures that autumn has to offer.

"The Devil's Backbone" (FM 32 between Canyon Lake and Wimberley) is popular among bikers and anyone wanting to take a beautiful ride. Be sure to visit the scenic overlooks to fully appreciate the view. Wimberley's Bonsai Exhibit and Blue Hole Park are great destinations this time of year. Blue Hole Park has outdoor activities the whole family can enjoy including hiking trails, a playground, a basketball court, and a volleyball court. It's also the perfect backdrop for a Fall picnic.



Nestled in the scenic back roads of Wimberley is one of its best kept secrets, Bella Vista Ranch. They are best known for their speciality olive oil, and also offer tastings of their imported Italian balsamic vinegar, jam and wine, in addition to tours of their olive orchard and facilities.

Not far from Bella Vista is the Driftwood Estate Winery, where a glass of wine and a beautiful hill country view await. When leaving the winery, take a right and set your GPS to the Salt Lick BBQ. This well known BBQ joint has been featured on the Food Network, and their aroma will tantalize your senses long before you even pull in the drive.

Fall in Gruene is simply magical!

The cooler temperatures allow for a leisurely stroll around this quaint historical district. Gruene is known for its history, music, charming shops, and shady restaurants. They will also be hosting their annual Music and Wine Festival on Thursday, October 8 - Sunday, October 11. This event will include live music, handcrafted items, wine, and food. This year they've also added a "Brew-n-Que" event that includes beer tasting, BBQ, and two big screen TV's showing Sunday's big game. In addition, Gruene Hall will be hosting acts such as Pat Green and the Marshall Tucker Band.

New Braunfels is certainly not to be overlooked for its Fall offerings. Natural Bridge Wildlife Ranch is a fun and scenic family destination. Their Fall view will be second only to the delight in your children's faces as they feed animals that come right up to the car. Landa park offers plenty of family activities to enjoy in the Fall, and is home to one of the biggest events of the year, Wurstfest! Grab your lederhosen and dirndls for this week-long event November 6 - November 15 that offers plenty of beer, authentic german fare, and of course, the chicken dance! Wurstfest is a bucket list item. If you've never been, you must experience it at least once!

Oh Fall, you had me at hello. So many wonderful things to do, so little time. Whatever you choose, enjoy being out in hill country at this beautiful time of year!

