



Scenic cypress swamp inside the Shangri La grounds is educational as well as scenic.



Shangri La is not only a tourist attraction, it serves as an outdoor education facility with a meeting area, museum and a laboratory.

IF YOU GO

- Admission for members is free
 - Adults (age 18-64): \$6 Gardens, \$6 Outposts; \$10 for entry to both
 - Seniors (age 65 and up): \$5 Gardens, \$5 Outposts; \$8 for entry to both
 - Students (age 13-17, with ID): \$5 Gardens, \$5 Outposts; \$8 for entry to both
 - Children (age 4-12): \$4 Gardens, \$4 Outposts; \$6 for entry to both
 - Toddlers (3 and under): free
- *Children must be over the age of four to tour the outposts

According to the Stark Foundation, a major snowstorm hit the Southeast Texas area in 1958 and destroyed thousands of azaleas, closing the facility for more than 40 years.

In 2002, the Stark Foundation decided to rebuild the Shangri La facility. After months of planning, construction was scheduled to begin in 2005. Hurricane Rita, however, had other plans and construction was delayed for months.

“The ecosystem of this place was virtually destroyed,” Hoke said of the park immediately following Rita. “We worked everyday for five or six months getting Shangri La cleaned, and once we were ready to get back to construction, a lot of the resources were not available because everyone else was busy doing repairs of their own.”

Shangri La sustained heavy damage to various parts of its property during the hurricane, especially to the trees as more than 150,000 were lost. Hoke said it will take about 50 years for Shangri La to become a “pristine paradise” again.

While the ecosystem may not be labeled as “pristine,” the plush park remains a feast for the eyes.

Orange’s newest tourist attraction includes a beautiful water garden, a Beaver Pond and a bat mound referred to as an amphitheater.

Guests will be able to watch from this seating area as thousands of bats leave their lair at dusk and fly off in search of food. This same area will also be utilized as a telescope station for astronomy programs.

Beaver Pond is a 15-acre body of water adjacent to Adams Bayou and is named for the creatures which created it. Shangri La’s botanical gardens feature more than 300 species of plants in nine formal gardens.

Four sculpture gardens, which are part of the overall design of the Historic Garden, show how nature and art can be intertwined.

Not only will Shangri La serve as a tourist attraction, but it will double as an outdoor education facility complete with a meeting area, cafe, theater and museum, offices, bookstore and a laboratory to be used for conducting research and experiments.

The Nature Discovery Center is a hands-on exhibit adjacent to a scenic cypress swamp, and includes a laboratory and three outdoor classrooms.

Many of the materials used at Shangri La include content from recycled items. In fact, nearly 13 percent of all building material content was constructed using recycled materials.

While construction continues on the parking lot across the street from Shangri La on West Park Avenue, guests are encouraged to utilize the free parking and shuttle service at the Lucher Theater in downtown Orange.

Shuttles will leave the parking lot every 15 minutes transporting visitors to and from the wondrous facility for the first several weeks.

Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center is closed on Monday’s but open year round, except on Thanksgiving, Christmas Day and New Year’s Day. From March through October, hours of operation are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., Saturday, and then noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday. From November through February, hours of operation are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday, and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday.

For additional information, call 409-670-9113.

