

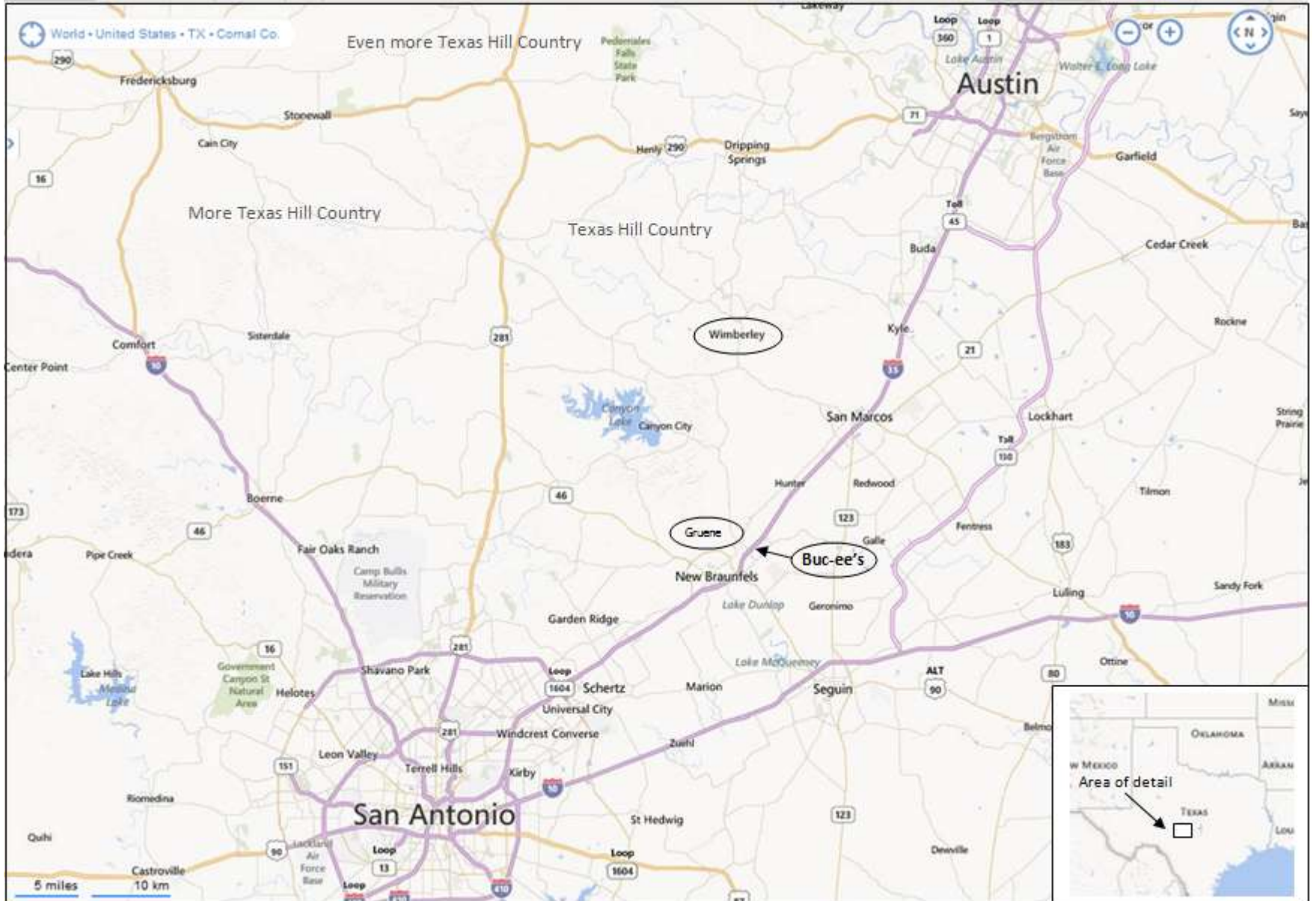
# BUC-EES – WORLD’S LARGEST CONVENIENCE STORE :: SEPT 1 ‘13

**Dateline: United Airlines Flight 1556, LAX-EWR, October 4, 2013**

Readers choice votes came in and it was a landslide, albeit with low participation. The winner with 50% of the votes: Buc-ee's. - DC  
One of these things is not like the other: Big Bend; Joshua Tree; Zion; Bryce; Buc-ee's. The first four are national parks and are closed due to the partial shutdown of the United States government. The fifth is a convenience store; it's open. In fact, it's open 24-7-365. It is Buc-ee's, in New Braunfels, Texas. Unlike the US government, no amount of tea-bagging will shut it down. Simply put: it never closes! Read my lips: n-e-v-e-r!  
\* Exclusions include, but are not limited to, acts of nature, armed rebellion, war, drought, sunspots, moon doggies, planetary misalignment, whim of management, and employees' refusal to work for minimum wage.

## GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN SPECIAL REPORT "B" :: BUC-EE'S – WORLD’S LARGEST CONVENIENCE STORE :: September 1, 2013

As my big summer sojourn through the Southwest wound out, I took a late afternoon drive through the Texas Hill Country down to Wimberley and then on to Gruene to check out a Texas music show at iconic Gruene Hall. Little did I know that this balmy eve would lead me...



...first to Ino'z, in this cute little town, which I only knew about from chatting with a Wimberleyite couple in Taos earlier this week. Caught This two-gal-and-a-guy trio during dinner, which was pretty good experience except for the smell wafting from nearby leaky septic tank.



Then it was a quick hop on down to historic Gruene, known for its historic Gruene Hall, said to be the oldest-standing dance hall in all of Texas...



...where Charlie Robison – seated due to recent ankle strain – and band got down into his aging but reliable collection of Texas country anthems.



By the end of the set Charlie rallied and leapt to his feet, leading his enthusiastic fans through “Barlight,” “Cerritos,” and “My Home Town.”



Though it was great to take back roads through the Hill Country on the way down, I-35 is the optimal for the 50-minute drive back up to Austin. I had a Texas-sized hankering for a Diet Coke, and right there in New Braunfels by the interstate appeared this amazing Texas oasis: Buc-ee's!



It's no secret that size matters in this state. Back in the 80's I went to see the English ska band Madness in Dallas. The venue was a bowling alley, but not like any I grew up with in the stoic Midwest. The facility had maybe 36 lanes... on one side. And another 36 on the other. In the vast median space were batting cages and a driving range. And then, down a long corridor, was 600-seat theatre. That's what I call Texas-sized.



What that place is to entertainment Buc-ee's is to convenience retailing. You know you're in for something special when you see 20 ice freezers.



And inside? You guessed it... delicious! And filled with everything the Texas traveler may desire, any time of day, any day of the year. Buc-ee's!









Truth be told, this is the newest and – at 68,000 square feet – the largest location in the expanding Buc-ee’s universe. It’s the flagship of the Buc-ee’s chain, launched 31 years ago in Lake Jackson, TX. I left with a 99¢ can of pop and hightailed it back to the Hojo Inn in South Austin.



**Next up:** *Second choice in the reader’s poll, with two votes as of this writing: Bryce Canyon National Park. Additional voting could change that...*