

We Will Not Be Tamed

TEXAS IS DEFINED BY ICONIC LANDSCAPES, FROM BIG BEND TO THE PINEY WOODS. IT IS THE LAND THAT DEFINES US AS TEXANS, TEN DISTINCT ECOREGIONS AS DIVERSE AS ITS PEOPLE. ONE OF THOSE REGIONS IS THE EDWARDS PLATEAU, HOME TO THE TEXAS HILL COUNTRY AND COUNTLESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUTDOOR ADVENTURERS, LIKE JORGE AVALOS.

“Once I got on a bicycle, I felt that freedom again.”

Jorge Avalos is a retired U.S. Army veteran who served 23 years as an airborne ranger. A cyclist from a young age, Avalos has always sought adventure. In 2011, he was skydiving when his canopy collapsed. The accident paralyzed him from the waist down and compounded previous injuries he suffered from an IED explosion while serving in Iraq. After a year of physical therapy, he eventually began to walk—and ride—again. Avalos currently lives with his family in San Antonio.

“I was a city boy until I joined the military. My connection with the outdoors has been a love/hate relationship. During my time in the military, I was forced to be outside all the time—I didn’t get to enjoy it the

way I wanted to. But because I’ve been pushed to my limits, I knew I could go beyond what I was told I was going to be confined to [after my injury]. I didn’t believe I was going to stay paralyzed. The body is a remarkable thing, and it can go a lot further than people believe.

“Two months after my accident, I walked out of the rehab hospital with crutches. I still needed a wheelchair for about six months, but I didn’t give up. I was lifting weights as much as I could—to the point of discomfort. Just over a year after my accident, I finally got the courage to get back on a bicycle again.

“A month later, I did a 500-mile ride over a period of six days. It was painful, but it made me realize that I’m down, but not out. It felt like I was finally released from the entrapment

of my own body.

“Being out in the Hill Country, riding on the roads and trails, is how I’m able to feel more in tune with myself. I get to feel the difference in the landscapes, crossing a river or climbing a painful hill. It changes constantly.

“One thing I’ve learned to love is the state itself—the natural beauty of Texas. Having grown up in a city, I never thought I’d get used to not being in the city. But once I moved out here, I’m just flabbergasted with how beautiful it is.

“Riding always ends up clearing my head. It’s a medication for me. It gets me out of my own body and I just enjoy what’s out there. Being able to experience going outdoors, on the road, I don’t think there would be anything better to motivate me to continue moving on.”



Jorge Avalos is a retired U.S. Army veteran who has overcome a paralyzing injury for the love of adventure.



WATCH MORE OF JORGE'S STORY

Avalos was selected to participate in the W100K, a bike ride led by President George W. Bush that is an initiative of the Bush Institute, to showcase the resiliency of wounded veterans. He and Avalos have formed a bond riding together in Crawford. See the video of their latest outing at TexasMonthly.com and learn more about the Military Service Initiative at BushCenter.org.



“The body is a remarkable thing and it can go a lot further than people believe.”

Texans are some of the wildest, most rugged, independent, and freedom-loving people on Earth. So is our land and the life on it. Find out how you can join Jorge and others who are standing together for the land that has given us so much.

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