

Austin - The Heart Of Texas

People from outside of Texas are pleasantly surprised when they visit Austin for the first time: huge areas of parkland ribboned with hike-and-bike trails, world-famous [Barton Springs](#), and the [Hill Country](#). And to counter those vicious rumors that Texas is a desert, check out the Highland Lakes, and the miles of rolling limestone hills greened with live oaks and junipers, and punctuated with natural landmarks like [Enchanted Rock](#). Because of the Balcones Escarpment, a 150-foot drop in the landscape running right down the middle of Austin, summer is always alleviated by breezes, and cooled by the many springs and pools used as swimming holes.

Austin sports an intriguing combination of bluebonnets, high-tech, live music, hill country, research and recreation. Corporate Austin consists of companies like Motorola, 3M, IBM, Apple, Dell Computer, Texas Instruments, and many more. This diversity drives a cultural scene unlike any other in the United States, running from the [Broken Spoke](#) (barbecue and line dancing), and [Threadgill's](#), where Janis Joplin sang, through one of the world's largest Halloween Parties (on 6th Street), through the new Dell Campus and [Jewish Community Association of Austin](#) (on land that was a gift from Michael Dell, a home-grown computer millionaire). "Silicon Hills" (aka "Silicon Gulch") has come into its own.

Countless activities make Austin a place of infinite recreational diversions. Austin boasts local and touring theater companies, equity theater companies ([Zach Scott](#) and the [State Theater Company](#), [Ballet Austin](#), [Austin Lyric Opera](#), [Austin Symphony](#), and the [Dance Umbrella](#), and the University often sponsors world-class performers from every field of the arts and entertainment in its 3000-seat [Performing Arts Center](#). The live music scene and the city's entertainment area on 6th Street have become legendary, from line-dancing through rap and beyond. The arts community, in all its facets, permeates the community, with many major restaurant and private galleries, aside from Museums like [Austin Museum of Art](#) and UT's own [Blanton Museum](#), which has everything from a Gutenberg Bible (actually, three), world-class collections of European paintings and prints, to contemporary Chicano art. Check out the [Austin Chronicle](#) for the best listings of alternative art and music scenes, an ever-changing palette of innovation. And coverage of art events is offered by quite possibly the best public radio station in the U.S., [KUT](#), also available on RealAudio.

On-campus, check out [events](#) for the [Department of Music](#) at the [College of Fine Arts](#) and the [Department of Theatre and Dance](#), which let you see many future greats as well as guest professional artists.

Annual celebrations and festivals like the Austin Museum's annual [Fine Arts Festival](#) (art and collectibles, with all the music you can listen to), [SxSW](#) Music and Film Festival (with all the music industry's buzz), the classics movies at the [Alamo Draft House](#) or the [Paramount Theater](#),

and other film festivals, jam sessions at Threadgill's, [Austin City Limits](#), and many street fairs only add to Austin's unique flair. And don't forget the legendary [Kerrville Folk Festival](#), the [Round Top Music Festival](#), or [Shakespeare at Winedale](#), each only a short drive away!

Austin's numerous restaurants serve a variety of cuisines comparable to those in cities several times its size. This is one of those rare cities where vegans and meat-eaters alike can share the same restaurants. It is the home of the national natural grocery, [Whole Foods Market](#), which is matched on the local level by [Central Market](#) and [Wheatsville Food Coop](#). Those 60s hippies (Janice Joplin!) all grew up, moved to Austin, and opened bakeries, delis, and brew pubs, and they have NOT stopped professing smart growth and vegetarianism (unlike some of those folks on the left coast), which also explains why Austin is a no-smoke city!

No matter that locals complain that Austin has gotten awfully big since those good old days, navigation in town is easy. The University sponsors a shuttle bus system running from campus to the various clusters of apartments occupied by students, and many an Austinite goes for years commuting on bicycles on ever-improving bike paths.

The state capitol dome and the University of Texas Tower are just a few of the city's sight-seeing stops, while the [Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library](#), the [O. Henry Museum](#), the George Washington Carver Museum, and Mexicarte or other museums present a sense of history in this Colorado River city, with miles of hike and bike trails through preserved greenbelt. Texas's German heritage, maintained through the [German-Texan Heritage Society](#), is evident throughout the region, from the Elisabeth Ney Museum in Austin to the Texas-German towns around [Fredricksburg](#), Gruene (pronounced "green"), and New Braunfels. The great outdoors call Austinites outdoors most of the year, thanks to the mild climate, to enjoy locations from Lake Travis (recreational boating and swimming) and the San Marcos River (float down the river on tubes), through Enchanted Rock and other popular hiking and climbing areas, [Natural Bridge Caverns](#) and [InnerSpace](#), to the green hills of the Texas Hill Country with its many trees and [state parks](#).

Find the most current information on Austin and its many pleasures at [Austin CitySearch](#) or [Austin360.com](#), the city's most complete events and information website, including the daily paper, the [Austin American-Statesman](#) (with the [classified ads](#) for the city). And oh, yes, we're one of the cities with *New York Times* daily home delivery, for those of you who'll think you'll suffer from withdrawal if you decide to move to "The Third Coast," as Central Texas down to Houston has been dubbed. The [Austin Chronicle](#) will refer you to all that is cool (hot?) in town.

The Austin Independent School District ([AISD](#)) has a diverse selection of magnet schools and "academies," making it very usable for children of all ages. There are also private schools from Montessori and Waldorf through religious institutions of many demoninations. The [City of Austin](#)

website can provide more information on city facilities.

In easy range for day trips are New Braunfels, Fredericksburg ([Admiral Nimitz Museum](#), oriental garden, antiques), Gruene (with the Gristmill refurbished as a [music hall](#)), San Antonio (the River Walk, the Alamo, the Institute for Texas Cultures, and its own lively arts scene, different from Austin's), Dallas/Fort Worth (for the Texas State Fair, and the [Kimbell Art Museum](#)), and Houston (especially the [Grand Opera](#), [Alley Theater](#), and several major art galleries and museums).

Other area events and places of note:

- [Painted Churches of Fayette County](#)
- [AGLIFF \(film festival\)](#)
- [Texas Hill Country](#)
- [Fredericksburg](#)
- [Nimitz Museum](#)
- [Eeyore's Birthday Party](#)
- [Wurstfest](#)
- [New Braunfels Museum of Art](#)
- [Spamarama](#)
- [Luling Watermelon Thump](#)
- [Highland Games](#) in the art colony of [Salado, TX](#)

Come enjoy our bluebonnets, blue skies, lakes, and friendly people!

As an additional note: The UT campus is laid out around the Main Building and the original Forty Acres land grant. See the "Virtual Tour of the UT Campus" and various "Campus Maps"; note, too, the "E.P. Schoch Tour" of the building in which the Department of Germanic Studies is to be found. Check us out, too!