

Austin



You'll see it on bumper stickers and T-shirts throughout the city: 'Keep Austin Weird.' And while old-timers grumble that Austin has lost its funky charm, the city has still managed to hang on to its incredibly laid-back vibe. Though this former college town with a hippie soul has seen an influx of tech types and movie stars, it's still a town of artists with day jobs, where people try to focus on their music or write their novel or annoy their neighbors with crazy yard art.

Along the freeway and in the 'burbs, big-box stores and chain restaurants have proliferated at an alarming rate. But the neighborhoods still have an authentically Austin feel, with all sorts of interesting, locally owned businesses, including a flock of food trailers – a symbol of the low-key entrepreneurialism that represents Austin at its best.

The one thing everyone seems to know about Austin whether they've been there or not is that it's a music town, even if they don't actually use the words 'Live Music Capital of the World' (though that's a claim no one's disputing). The city now hosts two major music festivals, South by Southwest and the Austin City Limits festival, but you don't have to endure the crowds and exorbitant hotel prices to experience the scene, because Austin has live music all over town every night of the week.

HIGHLIGHTS

Coollest Place to Chill Out

When the heat is too much, jump into the icy waters of Barton Springs Pool (p123) for instant relief

Oddest Store Selection

Booth after booth of oddities, treasures, memorabilia and tchotchkes invite browsing at Uncommon Objects (p140)

Tastiest Margarita

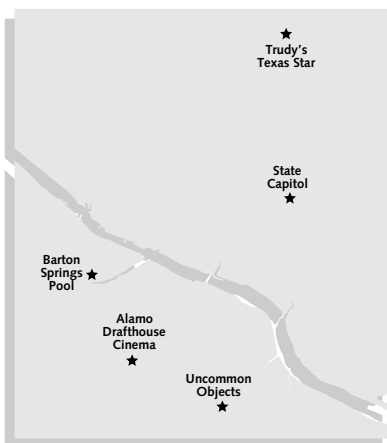
Frozen or on the rocks, plain or with a sangria swirl, the margaritas at Trudy's Texas Star (p132) are practically perfect

Tallest State Capitol

It's not just the tallest one in town; the Texas State Capitol (p117) is the tallest in the USA

Best Place for Dinner and a Movie

Alamo Drafthouse Cinema (p137), because you can get them both in the same place



ORIENTATION

Austin is bordered by highways. The main thoroughfare is I-35, running all the way from Dallas to the north, through the east side of downtown, and south to San Antonio. The other major north-south route is MoPac Expressway (locals just call it 'MoPac') on the west edge of town. Lamar Blvd runs parallel between the two and is a handy way to get around town. What most folks consider 'in town' is bounded by Hwy 183 to the north and Hwy 290 (also known as 'Ben White Blvd') to the south.

The destinations most favored by visitors are downtown, South Congress and the University of Texas area. Sprawling East Austin, on the opposite side of I-35 from downtown, is comprised of historically African American and Spanish-speaking neighborhoods. Other outlying areas of the city also take commonsense geographical designations, such as West Austin (west of MoPac) and Westlake (by Lake Austin). Austin-Bergstrom International Airport is 8 miles southeast of downtown near the junction of Hwys 183 and 71 (E Ben White Blvd).

Downtown

Downtown Austin is an orderly grid. The main north-south artery is Congress Ave, with Cesar Chavez St running east-west. Most downtown streets are one way, including 6th St, a major westbound thoroughfare, and southbound Guadalupe St (pronounced *goad-ah-loop* locally, despite what you might have learned in Spanish class). Downtown is chock-full of entertainment options, including the bars of 6th St, music venues on Red River, and the more upscale Warehouse District.

South Congress

South of downtown and Lady Bird Lake, South Congress is an offbeat and oh-so-Austin neighborhood that was pretty marginal just 25 or so years ago. Tourism types nicknamed it SoCo, which has somewhat stuck, but the locals mostly still call it South Congress. S Congress Ave is the main thoroughfare and the epicenter of the action; most of the rest is residential.

UT & Hyde Park

The University of Texas cuts a huge swath of land through the area north of downtown, beyond Martin Luther King Jr Blvd and west of I-35. Where Guadalupe St borders the campus, it's called the Drag. Hyde Park, a

DRIVING DISTANCES

Austin to Dallas 200 miles, 3½ hours
Austin to Fredericksburg 80 miles, 1 hour and 40 minutes
Austin to Gruene 45 miles, 55 minutes
Austin to Lockhart 30 miles, 40 minutes
Austin to San Antonio 80 miles, 1 hour and 20 minutes

century-old enclave noted for its architecture, lies just northeast in the alphabet avenues found between Guadalupe and Red River Sts, roughly north of 38th St.

Maps

Available at visitors centers (p116), the color tear sheet *Downtown Austin* map will help you get around the city center, especially since it shows CapMetro's free 'Dillo shuttle-bus routes. The glossy foldout *Austin Street Map & Guide* gives much wider coverage of the entire city and outlying districts, with a detailed street index. *Streetwise Austin* is relatively accurate and very easy to carry in its five-fold laminated pocket-size edition.

INFORMATION

The bulletin boards found outside coffeehouses, cafes and grocery stores are a great source of news about local events, special activities and classified ads.

Bookstores

BookPeople (Map p118; ☎ 512-472-5050, 800-853-9757; www.bookpeople.com; 603 N Lamar Blvd; ☎ 9am-11pm daily) Get your maps and 'Keep Austin Weird' T-shirts at Texas' biggest and best independent bookstore.

Half Price Books, Records & Magazines (Map p114; ☎ 512-451-4463; www.halfpricebooks.com; 5555 N Lamar; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-9pm Sun) A broad selection of excellent new and used books, with multiple locations around town.

MonkeyWrench Books (Map p114; ☎ 512-407-6925; 110 E North Loop Blvd; ☎ 11am-8pm Mon-Fri, noon-8pm Sat & Sun) A radical bookstore and community events space. Punk 'zines, feminist treatises and political bumper stickers are sold by the world's friendliest anarchists.

Emergency

Emergency (☎ 911)

Emergency Animal Hospital & Clinic (☎ 512-899-0955, South Austin; ☎ 512-331-6121, Northwest Austin)

Police (☎ 311 or ☎ 512-974-5000)