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January/February 2011

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Austin

Music, Museums and More!



Live Music Capital of the World

By Susan B. Barnes

Home to the increasingly popular South by Southwest (March) and Austin City Limits (September) music festivals, it's no wonder that Austin, Texas, is known as the Live Music Capital of the World. But the city has so much more to offer, throughout the year!

Don't get me wrong—music is a passion that lives within most everyone in Austin, and there are some fantastic venues in which to see a show. On a recent visit, we were fortunate to catch one at the Paramount Theatre. Reminiscent of the Tampa Theatre—in fact, they were both designed by John Eberson—the Paramount features a balcony and has been in the heart of Austin's arts scene since 1915.

Music isn't the only art form alive and well in the city, though. Austin boasts a number of fine museums, including the Blanton Museum of Art on the University of Texas—Austin campus. The museum houses the largest university-owned art collection in the country! Also at the UT-Austin campus is the Harry Ransom Center. Fans of "Gone With the Wind" will delight in seeing the original cos-

tumes from the movie, in addition to some 41 million literary, film, photographic, cultural and historic artifacts.



The Lyndon B. Johnson Library & Museum—also found on the UT Austin campus—is a fantastic, up-close look at the 36th U.S. president's era. The replica of Johnson's oval office is quite impressive, and there's a lovely exhibit dedicated to Lady Bird Johnson.

On the other side of town, the Umlauf Sculpture Garden is a hidden gem of more than 130 sculptures by Charles Umlauf, who is known for his artwork depicting animals, families, religious figures and mythological creatures.

The architecture in Austin is incredibly impressive as well. Walking through the downtown streets, you can just imagine stagecoaches waiting outside the stone buildings built in the late 1800s. It's as if the Old West still thrives amongst the modern buildings that have sprung up.

One incredible edifice is the Texas State Capitol itself. Completed in 1888, the capitol building was the tallest in the country—surpassing even the U.S. capitol in Washington, D.C.—until an addition was recently built onto the Louisiana State Capitol.

Take a guided tour of the capitol for a deeper look at the majestic building. During the tour, our guide talked about the founding and the history of the city and the building, as well as how the State House and Senate operate. Walking into the chambers, it's amazing to see the more than 180 antique desks dating from 1889 that the congressmen and congresswomen still use today, if modernized.

Another impressive building in downtown Austin is the historic Driskill Hotel (ca. 1886), built by cattle baron Jesse

Lincoln Driskill. Even if you don't stay at the Driskill, take a walk through its impressive lobby and maybe even sip a drink in the bar—it's a real architectural gem!

But it's not only its arts scene that Austin is known for. Ask anyone their favorite restaurant in Austin, and you're sure to get a diverse list. For Tex-Mex, the locals suggested Chuy's, and they weren't wrong! The Gospel Brunch at Threadgill's was a hit, too, and the 30-minute drive and subsequent 30-minute wait at The Salt Lick BBQ was definitely worth it. Take note—the Salt Lick is cash only and BYOB, so stock your cooler before you get there!

Austinites head outdoors every chance they get, and it's no wonder! Ten miles of hiking and bike trails circumnavigate Lady Bird Lake in downtown Austin, and the area is a favorite among locals. Take a walk around the lake, and pay tribute to Stevie Ray Vaughan at his lakeside memorial.

Just down the road is Zilker Park (home of the aforementioned Austin City Limits music festival), 361 acres of playgrounds, picnic grounds, the Zilker Zephyr train (great for kids!) and a disc golf course, not to mention Barton Springs Pool. In the summertime, cool off at the spring-fed pool—temperature averages 68 degrees year round!

About 20 minutes outside of town is the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. Here, native plants and flowers bloom throughout the year, and it's a chance to witness the beauty deep in the heart of Texas.

After all the exploring you're bound to do in Austin, take some time to relax and pamper yourself. One of the best places in the city to do just that is The Spa at Four Seasons. Book a massage and prepare to melt away.

These are just a few of the reasons that Austin is a great vacation destination throughout the year! DR

opposite left: Stevie Ray Vaughan's statue watches the Austin skyline
opposite middle: Austin City Limits Music Festival
top to bottom:
top: LBJ Library and Museum
middle: Texas State History Museum
bottom: Paramount and State Theatres





The Salt Lick B.B.Q. restaurant is one of the most popular barbecue restaurants in Central Texas.

TIPS FOR VISITING AUSTIN

Direct flights to New Orleans are available on Southwest Airlines; other major carriers also fly into the city, with a layover. Even if staying in the very pedestrian-friendly downtown area, rent a car to get to the outlying areas.

Make the most of your visit to Austin and stay downtown. The city is quite walkable, and if you book a room at a downtown hotel such as the Omni Austin Hotel, you'll be in the heart of it all.

Visit www.austintexas.org for more information.

AUSTIN ATTRACTIONS

Paramount Theatre

713 Congress Avenue
(512) 472-5470 | www.austintheatre.org

Blanton Museum of Art

200 E. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. (at Congress)
(512) 471-7324 | www.blantonmuseum.org

Harry Ransom Center

21st and Guadalupe Streets
(512) 471-8944 | www.hrc.utexas.edu

Lyndon B. Johnson Library & Museum

2313 Red River Street
(512) 721-0200 | www.lbjlib.utexas.edu

Umlauf Sculpture Garden

605 Robert E. Lee Road
(512) 445-5282 | www.umlaufsculpture.org

The Texas Capitol

201 E. 14th Street
(512) 463-5495 | www.tspb.state.tx.us

Driskill Hotel

604 Brazos Street
(800) 252-9367 | www.driskillhotel.com

Chuy's

1728 Barton Springs Road
(512) 474-4452 | www.chuys.com

Threadgill's World Headquarters Restaurant

301 W. Riverside Drive
(512) 472-9304 | www.threadgills.com

The Salt Lick BBQ

18300 FM 1826, Driftwood
(512) 858-4959 | www.saltlickbbq.com

Zilker Park

2100 Barton Springs Road
(512) 974-6700 | www.ci.austin.tx.us/zilker

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

4801 La Crosse Avenue
(512) 232-0100 | www.wildflower.org

The Spa at Four Seasons

98 San Jacinto Boulevard
(512) 685-8160 | www.fourseasons.com/austin/spa

Omni Austin Hotel

700 San Jacinto at 8th Street
(512) 476-3700 | www.omnihotels.com