

Insider's Guide to Austin

Whether you've got a week or a weekend to spare, one travel editor picked her favorite spots to catch the spirit of Texas's coolest city. BY JENNIFER MCKENZIE FRAZIER

I fell in love with Austin the first time I came here. That's why I went to the University of Texas. It's why Willie Nelson sings my ring tone. This music town embraces everyone—from eclectic musicians to buttoned-up legislators to cowboys to hippies. Here are my must-dos in Texas's capital city and their opposites—attractions that really show Austin's diverse appeal.

Uchi Go at 5 p.m. to this sushi bar and you might just catch a coveted table on the fly. Dinner reservations are a good idea later in the evening. Chef Tyson Cole combines flavors in amazing ways—think seared scallops with watermelon radish and shrimp with lime, fennel, and fiddlehead ferns. That kind of artistry is fitting for this creative town. www.uchiaustin.com or (512) 916-4808

The Flip Side: Austin Land & Cattle Company

Sure, you can order the seared ahi tuna here, but for a true taste of Texas, choose an aged steak and one of the six sauces designed to complement your 8-ounce filet mignon or 28-ounce porterhouse. www.austinlandandcattlecompany.com or (512) 472-1813

Kerbey Lane Cafe Start your day at this local diner—the legendary pancakes are hot, fluffy, and unique. (Try the gingerbread.) Not only has Kerbey Lane won awards for their breakfast, they claim that they've made enough pancakes to stretch from Austin to Denver, 830 miles away. Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. www.kerbeylanecafe.com or (512) 451-1436

The Flip Side: Roppolo's Pizzeria End the night here, where you can order a cheesy slice from a street-side window after hanging out in some of Sixth Street's hot spots. www.roppolos.com

Hula Hut This is my family's first stop in town. Order the fajitas—either cooked in local Shiner Bock beer or spicy Thai-style. You'll enjoy the views of Lake Austin while you wrap your mind around the delicious fusion of "Mexonesian" cuisine. www.hulahut.com or (512) 476-4852

The Flip Side: Bess Bistro on Pecan Sandra Bullock's New American restaurant combines the best of the American South and European mainstays. Look for ratatouille, shrimp and grits, and fried green tomatoes. www.bessbistro.com or (512) 477-2377

Toy Joy Adults might have more fun in this toy store than children. Pick up a punching nun, some Chick-O-Sticks in the candy section, a stuffed armadillo purse, or a lava lamp. www.toyjoy.com or (512) 320-0090



▲ **Hotel San Jose** This is the spot for Austinites and those who long to be, but you don't have to stay the night to enjoy this stylish, modern hotel. Go to the courtyard bar for a drink and a quick introduction to eclectic Austin. www.sanjosehotel.com or (512) 444-7322

The Flip Side: Four Seasons Hotel Austin Sitting on the edge of Lady Bird Lake, the Four Seasons is as sophisticated as Austin gets. Luxurious details abound. www.fourseasons.com/austin or (512) 478-4500

The Flip Side: Austin Museum of Art Museum Store After visiting AMOA, pop in to take home stylish jewelry, art books, and more. www.amoa.org or (512) 477-0766

Big Red Sun This garden design company believes in keeping the gate open. Here, design is always evolving, and that's why the bohemian store with a great plant selection continues to offer some of the South's most interesting landscaping and home ideas. www.bigredsun.com or (512) 480-0688

The Flip Side: Allens Boots At Allens, not much has changed over the years. This store on South Congress was cowboy before cowboy was cool. Go for a pair of new boots. www.allensboots.com or (512) 447-1413 ●