

Sunset over
downtown
Austin



wellbeing
TRAVEL
GUIDE
Texas

As America's second-largest state, a trip around the vast plains of the Lone Star may seem daunting. But, as our Food and Travel Editor discovered, equipped with a car and well-crafted itinerary, this culturally diverse destination has much to offer. From cycling around its cities and horse-trekking through its wilds, to lakeside spas and farm-to-table dining, there's more to Texas than cowboys, steaks and line-dancing – although they're fun, too.



Hotel Ella

TO STAY
Hotel Ella

This gorgeous Greek revival-style mansion, dating from 1900, is home to one of Austin's smartest boutique hotels. Just a few

minutes from downtown, it's the perfect base from which to explore the city. You may find you don't want to leave the outdoor pool, gym or luxuriously-decorated bedrooms, though. Its casual American bistro Goodall's Kitchen & Bar is a wonderful option for an evening meal, while The Parlor Bar serves a wide range of beautifully crafted cocktails and bar snacks. hotelella.com

AUSTIN

A hive of creativity and culture, this colourful, laid-back city's 'Keep Austin Weird' slogan reflects its commitment to promoting and supporting small businesses. The result is a strong independent feel, with locally owned cafés, bars and restaurants. It's also the Live Music Capital of the world, with more live music venues per capita than anywhere else.



Lady Bird Lake

Photograph: Jake Holt

Words: Emma Winterschladen



Emma's boyfriend Tom enjoys a Jo's

TO DRINK *Jo's Coffee*

Locals will attest to the fact that this is *the* place to go for a proper cup of coffee (and a freshly baked cinnamon swirl). On a hot day, expect queues down the street for the dangerously good Iced Turbo – coffee mixed with chocolate, hazelnut and cream, served over crushed ice (or if you prefer something less sweet, try the Belgian Bomber). The South Congress venue frequently hosts live music, too, making it a prime spot. joscoffee.com

TO GO *Rainey Street Historic District*

Sitting in the middle of Austin's downtown is a row of perfectly preserved houses, many in a 1930s bungalow style that contrasts with the high-rises surrounding them. Once a residential area, today this now-famous street is home to Austin's quirkiest, liveliest bar scene.

On a balmy evening the place comes alive with string lights, live music and the buzz of conversation. Try El Naranjo for its signature mole negro de Oaxaca (a rich sauce made with over 30 ingredients, served with meat or veg), and for craft cocktails head to Half Step. elnanjorestaurant.com; halfstepbar.com



TO EAT *Odd Duck*

Having started out as a trailer serving locally sourced food almost ten years ago, this bricks-and-mortar reincarnation of Bryce and Dylan Gilmore's passion project is still going strong. Their sophisticated yet informal restaurant celebrates the very best of Austin's farmers' market produce. The menu is an ode to seasonality, freshness and taste, with a selection of small plates, including the likes of redfish ceviche, tiger's milk, beets, olive, corn curry and chips, and customer favourite, stuffed pretzel, grilled greens, cheese and pepperoni-spiced mayo (of which \$1 per pretzel is donated to the Central Texas Food Bank). oddduckaustin.com



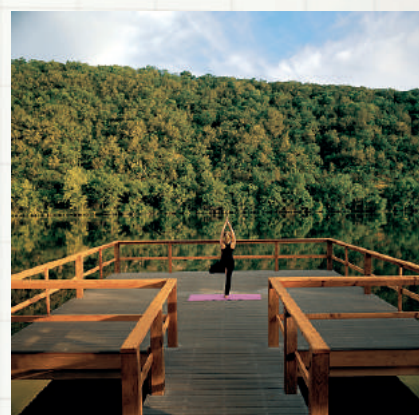
ON THE ROAD *Magnolia Market at the Silos, Waco*

No Texas road trip would be complete without a stop at this beautiful homeware store halfway between Austin and Dallas. It has a bakery, a Pinterest-worthy garden shop and an outdoor lawn area to relax and enjoy a bite to eat. magnolia.com



UNWIND AT... *Lake Austin Spa Resort*

This all-inclusive, award-winning wellness retreat is an ideal place to get back to nature. Nestled in Texas Hill Country, on the shores of Lake Austin, it's just a 30-minute drive from the city centre. Its 360-degree approach to health and wellbeing means there's more on offer than just a fabulous spa – although it's a good place to start. What makes it feel like a true retreat is the schedule of activities, including Pilates, cooking and meditation – many of which are done outside, overlooking the lake. lakeaustin.com



DON'T MISS...

1 Catching a breathtaking sunset overlooking Lake Travis at The Oasis. Best enjoyed with a cocktail in hand (although having supper elsewhere is recommended).

2 Watching the Austin bats emerge from the underside of Ann W. Richards Congress Avenue Bridge. Between March and November of each year, 1.5 million bats take flight just before sundown. A majestic sight that must be seen to be believed.



Truck Yard, Lower Greenville

Dallas is full of Instagrammable wall art



DALLAS

A sprawling metropolis with a big heart, the 'Big D' is a city rich in history and fizzing with energy. From museums and eclectic shopping to cool neighbourhoods and watering holes, there's lots to explore in this friendly giant.

TO STAY *The Joule*

Located in the heart of downtown Dallas and surrounded by high-rises, this boutique hotel – housed in a 1920s neo-Gothic landmark building – couldn't be less 'business'. Its beautiful interiors are enhanced with an impressive art collection, and its rooftop boasts a glass-fronted pool with views over Main Street. The hotel's adjoining brasserie, CBD Provisions, has an impressive menu of modern Texan cuisine, as well as all the brunch classics. And if you're in need of a little pampering, The Spa at The Joule is a world away from the city bustle. thejouledallas.com



Bolsa

TO EAT *Bolsa*

A go-to among foodie Dallasites, this converted garage serves up top-quality grub in a relaxed, communal environment. With a seasonal menu that uses the best of Texan produce, including beef from Waco and local veggies and honey, it's a true farm-to-table experience in the heart of the city's Bishop Arts District. bolsadallas.com

TO DRINK *Lower Greenville*

This buzzy corner to the east of the city is a great spot for an evening of people-watching and cocktail-sipping. Head to Truck Yard for a cold beverage in a quirky outdoor space. For more wholesome fare, try HG Sply Co, a paleo-inspired restaurant serving healthy food in a lively setting. The drinks menu includes strawberry peppercorn gin and cucumber smash. hgsplyco.com; truckyarddallas.com



Enjoy a cocktail at HG Sply Co



TO DO

Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden

Nowhere does ‘fall’ better than this 66-acre botanical garden in east Dallas. Aside from a spectacular display of autumn colours, it’s also home to an impressive 90,000-strong pumpkin village from the end of September to the end of November. Add to that its sea of chrysanthemums and edible garden, A Tasteful Place (which holds regular cookery classes and garden-to-table dining experiences), and you’ve got yourself a lovely afternoon enjoying nature in all her glory. dallasarboretum.org

TO GO

Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza

There’s something incredibly stirring about standing in the spot on Dealey Plaza, where 55 years ago, on 22 November 1963, JFK was assassinated. The museum itself – housed on the same floor of the building where the fateful shot was fired – is a fascinating look at the life and death of the people’s president. Making your way around the evocative exhibition, which chronicles the events that led up to and followed that fateful day, is an afternoon well spent. jfk.org



FORT WORTH

Rooted in a colourful cowboy history, this is a place where old and new happily coexist. Still known as ‘Cow Town’ for its long cattle-rearing history, today’s Fort Worth mixes its Wild West past with a thoroughly modern buzz.



TO STAY

The Omni

With a sleek glass facade and lots of floors, this smart hotel sits above the heart of Fort Worth’s downtown. Just a short walk from Sundance Square Plaza and its abundance of shops, bars and restaurants, the hotel itself is also home to a vibrant bar downstairs called Whiskey & Rye. Be sure to book into a west-facing room high up so you can enjoy a fiery Texas sunset over the city’s skyline. It also sits opposite the Fort Worth Water Gardens, a dramatic and unexpected oasis of geometric waterfalls and pools situated within the city’s urban landscape. omnihotels.com

Cowboy country

ESCAPE THE CITY

Wildcatter Ranch, Graham

If you're after a real Texan cowboy experience, then this luxury ranch – just an hour and a half from Fort Worth – is a great option. During the day there are ample activities to enjoy, including clay pigeon shooting, archery and horse trekking through its 1,484 acres of land, led by the resident cowboy. A peaceful sunset dip in the infinity pool is a wonderful way to wind down your day before popping over to the restaurant, which specialises in Texan steak. Opt if you can for one of the ranch's luxury suites for more space and a terrace that overlooks the rugged landscape. wildcatterranch.com

TO EAT

The Lonesome Dove

For a real treat night, book a table at this kooky restaurant in the heart of the Stockyards. Best described as fine dining with an eccentric twist, its menu brings together modern Texan cuisine with innovative flavour combinations. More exotic offerings include rabbit-rattlesnake sausage with spicy Manchego rosti, while safer options include Berkshire pork chops with purple potato gratin and crispy onions. The service is second to none and the waiters know the menu and wine list inside out. lonesomedovefortworth.com



TO DRINK

Press Cafe

What strikes you first about this delightful brunch and coffee spot is how leisurely it feels. Surrounded by greenery and overlooking Trinity River, there's a slower pace that lends itself to enjoying a long coffee or two. It's a great stop off if you're cycling around the city and are in need of a drink or something to eat, as well as being a lovely evening option for good wine and food. presscafeftworth.com



TO GO

Historic Stockyards

If you want to dip into the real 'Great American West' of bygone years, then head to the Stockyards – a historically preserved district of the city. Here you'll find a uniquely Western shopping experience, with institutions such as M.L. Leddy's, where you can buy luxury leather goods, traditional cowboy hats and a vast range of cowboy boots. Luckily, you don't need a pair to line-dance at Billy Bob's – the world's largest honky tonk. It's also worth catching the twice-daily longhorn cattle drive, which happens at 11.30am and 4pm, if only to see these majestic creatures up close. fortworthstockyards.org

Hit the Texas highway



ONE LAST THING...

A minimum ten-day trip is recommended for this itinerary, to break up the drive between cities. (Austin to Dallas is three hours; Dallas to Fort Worth is 40 minutes; and Fort Worth to Austin is three hours).



GETTING THERE

Flights to Austin-Bergstrom International from London Heathrow start at just £195 one way with Norwegian Airlines. norwegian.com

GETTING AROUND

A car is highly recommended. Ten-day car hire with Hertz starts from around £38 per day for a midsize SUV, picking up and dropping off at Austin-Bergstrom International. For discounts, queue-hopping and free additional drivers, join Hertz Gold Plus Rewards for free. hertz.co.uk