



48 HOURS IN

Austin

SLOW DOWN · STAY AWHILE

WELCOME

Welcome to Austin.

Austin grew up as a college town and state capital on the banks of the Colorado River, became the live music capital of the world by accident and then by design, absorbed a tech industry that doubled its population in a decade, and is now a city of 1 million people that still argues about whether it has sold out. The argument is the city's most enduring cultural product.

What remains constant, despite the growth: the music on 6th Street and in the clubs of East Austin that starts at 9pm and doesn't stop; the food trailer parks that serve some of the best tacos, barbecue, and ramen in the country; Barton Springs Pool — a natural spring-fed pool in the middle of the city that Austinites have been swimming in since before the city was incorporated; and the Colorado River lakes (Lady Bird Lake, Lake Austin, Lake Travis) that give the city its outdoor identity.

Austin is a genuinely good city for solo travel. The bar and music culture is built for strangers talking to each other. The food trailer scene is designed for single servings eaten standing up or at picnic tables with whoever sits down. The outdoor culture — swimming, hiking, kayaking — is individual by nature. The city is spread out and car-dependent outside downtown, but the core neighborhoods of South Congress, East 6th, and the Downtown/6th Street corridor are all walkable from each other.

DAY ONE

Day One

Barton Springs · South Congress · East Austin · 6th Street

Day One starts at the water, moves through the city's most distinctive commercial neighborhoods, and ends in East Austin's live music corridor.

MORNING · 7:30 AM - 1:00 PM

7:30 AM

Barton Springs Pool

2101 Barton Springs Road, Zilker Park: a 900-foot natural spring-fed swimming pool maintained at 68°F year-round — cold in summer, mild in winter, and one of the most beloved public spaces in any American city. The springs fill a former limestone quarry; the pool is lined with grass banks and ancient pecan trees. Open daily; admission \$9. Arrive early on weekdays to swim with locals rather than tourists. The springs drain into Barton Creek and ultimately Lady Bird Lake — the entire watershed is a protected natural system.

***Insider Tip** The best time at Barton Springs is 7:30–9am on a weekday: cool air, warm Texas sun just coming over the trees, and the pool occupied only by regulars doing laps and a few dogs on the grass. The springs run at 68°F regardless of season — bracing in summer, comfortable in fall. Bring a towel and nothing else.*

9:30 AM

Breakfast: Juan in a Million

2300 E Cesar Chavez Street, East Austin: the most famous breakfast taco counter in Austin — a neighborhood institution since 1980. The Don Juan taco (eggs, potato, bacon, cheese, and their house salsa in a flour tortilla the size of your forearm) is the one. Cash only; under \$10. The line moves faster than it looks.

11:00 AM

South Congress Avenue (SoCo)

The commercial strip from the Congress Avenue Bridge south to Oltorf: Austin's most walkable and most photographed street — vintage clothing stores, independent bookshops, design boutiques, food trailers, and the classic view north toward the Texas State Capitol dome from the intersection of South Congress and Annie Street. The stores open around 11am; the food trailers by noon. Allow two hours to walk, browse, and eat.

***Insider Tip** The view north on South Congress Avenue toward the Capitol dome — framed by the avenue's trees and storefronts — is the definitive Austin photograph. It's best in late morning before the sun moves overhead. The Allens Boots store (1522 S Congress) has been selling Western boots since 1977 and is worth twenty minutes even if you're not buying.*

12:30 PM

Lunch: South Congress Food Trailers

The trailer parks along South Congress and South First Street serve some of the best lunch in Austin: Veracruz All Natural (best breakfast taco in the city, perpetual debate), Odd Duck

(farm-to-table small plates from a trailer), and the East Side King trailer at Liberty Bar for Japanese-influenced bar snacks. Under \$15 for a full meal at any of them.

AFTERNOON · 2:00 PM - 7:30 PM

2:00 PM

Blanton Museum of Art

200 E Martin Luther King Jr Blvd, UT Austin campus: the best art museum in Austin, with a permanent collection strong in Latin American modernism, European old masters, and contemporary American work. The Ellsworth Kelly building (Austin, 2018) — Kelly's final work, a non-denominational meditation building on the museum grounds — is one of the most beautiful architectural experiences in Texas. Admission \$12; free on Thursdays.

3:30 PM

East 6th Street & East Austin

Drive or ride east across I-35 into East Austin — the neighborhood that absorbed Austin's creative community as downtown gentrified. East 6th Street (Dirty 6th) runs from downtown to the airport, but the relevant section is between I-35 and Chicon: a walkable stretch of bars, restaurants, coffee shops, and live music venues that has evolved from working-class neighborhood to the most interesting commercial district in Austin. The streets south of 6th — East Cesar Chavez, 7th, 11th — have the best restaurants.

5:30 PM

Happy Hour: Whisler's

1816 E 6th Street: one of Austin's best cocktail bars — a mezcal and agave spirits program in a converted bungalow with a back patio. Happy hour until 7pm. The mezcal negroni is the move. The back patio is the social space that defines East Austin bar culture: communal tables, string lights, a mix of regulars and newcomers that makes solo drinking comfortable.

EVENING · 7:30 PM - LATE

7:30 PM

Dinner: Launderette

2115 Holly Street, East Austin: one of Austin's best restaurants — a converted laundromat with an open kitchen, a wood-fired rotisserie, and a menu that moves between Texas ingredients and European technique. The rotisserie chicken, the wood-grilled vegetables, and the pasta are all excellent. Dinner for one with a glass of wine: \$50-65. Reserve at launderetteaustin.com.

9:30 PM

Live Music: 6th Street or Stubb's

Austin Proper 6th Street (between Congress and I-35) has live music at every bar from 9pm to 2am — the cover charges are minimal (\$5-10) and the quality ranges from excellent to memorably bad. Stubb's Amphitheatre (801 Red River St) has the best outdoor stage in Austin for mid-size acts; check the schedule at stubbbsaustin.com. The Continental Club (1315 S Congress) is the most historically important live music room — jazz, blues, and country in a room that hasn't changed since 1957.

DAY TWO

Day Two

Franklin BBQ · Lady Bird Lake · Texas State Capitol · Rainey Street

Day Two is built around the two experiences that define Austin's identity: Franklin Barbecue and Lady Bird Lake. Then the Capitol, the warehouse district, and Rainey Street for the evening.

MORNING · 7:00 AM - 1:00 PM

7:00 AM

Franklin Barbecue (Queue)

900 E 11th Street, East Austin: the most celebrated barbecue restaurant in America — James Beard Award winner, multiple number-one rankings, and a line that forms at 7am for an 11am opening. The brisket is the product of 18-hour oak-smoked technique refined over fifteen years. Arrive by 7:30am at the latest; bring coffee, a book, and patience. The queue is social — you will talk to people. Worth every minute. Sell out typically by 1:30pm; earlier on weekends. Order: brisket (lean and fatty), pork ribs, and jalapeño cheddar sausage. Under \$30 for a full tray.

***Insider Tip** The Franklin queue is one of Austin's genuine social institutions. Bring a camping chair. The regulars arrive with coffee and snacks; by 9am the line is loose and conversational. You will leave having spoken to six strangers about barbecue, Texas, and whatever brought you to Austin. This is the experience — the food is the bonus.*

11:30 AM

Post-BBQ: Wandering East 11th

After Franklin, walk east along 11th Street — one of Austin's historically significant streets, now lined with galleries, studios, and coffee shops that have emerged around the barbecue landmark. White Horse (500 Comal St) is the best honky-tonk in Austin for an afternoon beer and whatever country band shows up.

AFTERNOON · 1:00 PM - 6:00 PM

1:00 PM

Lady Bird Lake: Kayak or SUP

The Colorado River impoundment running through the center of Austin — 6 miles long, bordered by the 10-mile Hike-and-Bike Trail, and studded with kayak and SUP rental operations on both banks. Rowing Dock (2418 Stratford Drive) and Congress Avenue Kayaks (under the Congress Bridge) rent single kayaks for \$20/hour. The Congress Avenue Bridge has the world's largest urban bat colony — 1.5 million Mexican free-tailed bats that emerge at dusk from March through November. Worth timing the afternoon paddle to catch the emergence from the water.

3:00 PM

Texas State Capitol

Congress Avenue and 11th Street: the Texas State Capitol (1888) is the largest state capitol building in the US — taller than the US Capitol in Washington by seven feet, built from Sunset Red granite quarried 75 miles northwest of Austin. Free guided tours run every 45 minutes; the self-guided tour of the rotunda and legislative chambers takes 45 minutes. The south lawn view down Congress Avenue to the Colorado River is one of the best urban vistas in Texas.

4:30 PM

Congress Avenue & Warehouse District

Walk south on Congress Avenue from the Capitol toward Lady Bird Lake — the city's main commercial boulevard, with a mix of Texas institutions (Book People, the best independent bookstore in Texas, at 603 N Lamar), newer restaurants, and the old warehouse district between 2nd and 4th Street that anchors Austin's nightlife.

EVENING · 6:30 PM - LATE

6:30 PM

Dinner: Uchi

801 S Lamar Blvd: the restaurant that defined Austin's contemporary food culture — Tyson Cole's Japanese-influenced omakase-style menu that has been feeding Austin since 2003. Not traditional sushi — a hybrid of Japanese technique, Texas ingredients, and creative combinations that remain genuinely exciting twenty years in. Dinner for one at the bar: \$75–90. Reserve at uchiaustin.com. Book the bar seat if available — better than a table for solo diners.

9:00 PM

Rainey Street

Rainey Street — a single block of converted Craftsman bungalows turned into bars between Cesar Chavez and the lake — is Austin's most pleasant late-night district: open-air bars, string lights, communal outdoor seating, and a crowd that is young but not exclusively so. Banger's Sausage House (79 Rainey St) has 100+ taps and a back patio that runs until 2am. The weather is mild enough in June to be outside until midnight without a jacket.

WHERE TO EAT

Austin's Table

TACOS & BBQ

Juan in a Million · East Austin · €

The Don Juan taco has been an Austin institution since 1980. Cash only, fast line, enormous tortilla. 2300 E Cesar Chavez.

Veracruz All Natural · Multiple trailers · €

The perpetual contender for best breakfast taco in Austin. The migas taco is the call. Cash preferred.

Franklin Barbecue · East Austin · €€

The most celebrated BBQ in America. Queue from 7am. Worth it. Brisket, ribs, jalapeño sausage. 900 E 11th Street.

La Barbecue · East Austin · €€

Franklin's closest rival — shorter queue, equally serious brisket. 2027 E Cesar Chavez. Arrive by 11am.

RESTAURANTS

Launderette · East Austin · €€€

Wood-fired rotisserie, Texas ingredients, European technique. One of Austin's best. 2115 Holly Street.

Uchi · South Lamar · €€€€

The restaurant that shaped Austin's food culture. Japanese-influenced, Texas-sourced. Bar seat for solo diners. 801 S Lamar.

Odd Duck · South Lamar · €€€

Farm-to-table in a proper restaurant setting. Sister restaurant to the trailer; same sourcing philosophy, fuller menu. 1201 S Lamar.

Contigo · East Austin · €€€

Texas ranch cooking in a sprawling outdoor patio restaurant. Whole animal, wood fire, local farms. 2027 Anchor Lane.

BARS & MUSIC

Whisler's · East Austin · €€

Best mezcal bar in Austin. Back patio, communal tables, happy hour until 7pm. 1816 E 6th Street.

Continental Club · South Congress · €€

The most historically important live music room in Austin since 1957. Cover \$5–10. 1315 S Congress.

White Horse · East Austin · €

Best honky-tonk in Austin — live country music, \$3 beer, two-stepping encouraged. 500 Comal Street.

Banger's Sausage House · Rainey Street · €€

100+ taps, back patio, open late. The anchor of Rainey Street. 79 Rainey Street.

GETTING AROUND

Navigating Austin

MODE	COST	NOTES
Rental Car / Uber	Varies	Austin is spread out — a car or Uber is needed for Day Two (Franklin, Capitol, Lake). Uber is reliable; surge pricing during SXSW and ACL.
Walking	Free	Downtown, SoCo, East 6th, and Rainey Street are all walkable from each other. Lady Bird Lake Hike-and-Bike Trail is 10 miles paved.
Lime/Bird Scooter	\$1+/min	Electric scooters everywhere downtown. Useful for SoCo to downtown and along the lake trail. Lock to a rack.
CapMetro Bus	\$1.25/ride	Metro bus covers the main corridors. Route 1 (South Congress to the Capitol) is the most useful for this itinerary.
Kayak/SUP Rental	\$20/hr	Rowing Dock and Congress Ave Kayaks on Lady Bird Lake. Canoe tours also available. Reserve online in peak season.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Before You Go

TOPIC	DETAILS
Getting There	Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (AUS) is 9 miles from downtown — 15 min by car. Uber: \$20-30. No rail to airport.
Getting Around	Car or Uber for Day Two and outer neighborhoods. Downtown and SoCo walkable. Scooters useful for short hops.
Best Time	October-May: ideal weather. June-August: very hot (100°F+). SXSW (March) and ACL Festival (October) bring massive crowds and double hotel rates.
Solo Dining	Austin's bar and counter culture is ideal for solo travelers. The Franklin queue, Uchi's bar seats, and the East Austin patio bars are all solo-friendly.
Live Music	Cover charges at 6th Street bars are \$5-15. Stubb's and ACL Live are ticketed venues. The Continental Club is walk-in. Check do512.com for listings.
Useful Apps	Uber, Lime (scooters), do512.com (music listings), uchiaustin.com (reservations), stubbsaustin.com, Google Maps offline.

Austin awaits.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE: FINAL CHECKLIST

- ☐ Franklin Barbecue: arrive by 7:30am — no reservations taken
- ☐ Reserve Uchi at the bar: uchiaustin.com
- ☐ Reserve Launderette: launderetteaustin.com
- ☐ Check live music listings: do512.com
- ☐ Bat emergence at Congress Bridge: dusk, March–November
- ☐ Download offline map — cell service unreliable at Barton Springs

Your interactive map is one scan away.

All locations from this guide, colour-coded by day, open on your phone.

goingsolo.life/maps/austin

GoingSolo.Life

TRAVEL ALONE. LIVE FULLY.