

Story Ideas: The Inside Scoop

FROM ART TO ARCHIVES

Unveiling a World-Class Collection — The Blanton Museum of Art houses the largest university-owned art collection in the country. The permanent collection includes more than 17,000 works spanning from Renaissance masters to contemporary. A new wing is scheduled to open in summer 2008, and will include lecture halls, seminar rooms and interactive spaces. *MLK Blvd. and Congress Avenue, Austin; 512-471-7324; www.blantonmuseum.org*

The Lone Star Spirit — The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum celebrates the history of the Lone Star State with exhibits on the history of Texas' lands and peoples. Guests can experience the essence of Texas first-hand with a "4-D" production at The Texas Spirit Theatre, or enjoy larger than life films at the IMAX theatre. *MLK, Jr. Blvd. & Congress, Austin; 866-369-7108; www.thestoryoftexas.com*

A Presidential Library — A scale replica of the Oval Office and presidential limousine used during Lyndon Baines Johnson's tenure as commander-in-chief are among the exhibits at the LBJ Presidential Library and Museum. The free library houses 40 million pages of historical documents relating to the 36th president of the United States. *2313 Red River Street, Austin; 512-721-0200; www.lbjlib.utexas.edu*

Harry Ransom Center — One of the world's finest cultural archives can be found at the Harry Ransom Center on the University of Texas campus. Containing some of the most valuable treasures on earth, this center stores a rare Gutenberg Bible, the world's first photograph, thousands of literary manuscripts and Scarlett O'Hara's original costumes from "Gone With the Wind." *21st & Guadalupe, Austin; 512-471-8944; www.hrc.utexas.edu*

FOOD FAVORITES

Food & Wine— Austin's culinary scene has mushroomed beyond its distinctive barbecue and Tex-Mex, yet Southwestern cuisine continues to be the leading food genre. The *Wall Street Journal* taps Austin as a "new dining destination," citing Ranch 616 (haute cowboy cuisine) and Whole Foods Market as reasons *foodies* need to get here — and fast. Each April, Austin celebrates its culinary tributes with the Texas Hill Country Wine & Food Festival, where more than 30 events are held throughout the city and at surrounding Hill Country wineries. These aided in Austin and the Texas Hill Country be launched to #2 on Orbitz.com's list of the Top Ten Fastest Growing Wine Regions. *512-249-6300; www.texaswineandfood.org*

Main Attraction: Barbecue— Nothing sparks a more heated battle in Texas than who has the best barbecue. Champion barbecue is primarily discovered off the beaten path. Mouth-watering brisket, ribs and sausage are always top contenders. Stubbs, Ironworks and County Line in Austin and The Salt Lick in nearby Driftwood make a good run for "the best."

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Featuring Tex-Mex — It's hot; it's spicy; and it's on almost every Austin menu. From small, family-run *taquerias* to larger Austin-based chain restaurants, you'll find some of the best enchiladas, migas, chile rellenos, burritos and salsas north of the border in Austin. The Cedar Door's Mexican martinis, which have been ranked among the best beverages in the country, and Chuy's margaritas come highly recommended.

Market of Distinction — Austin is home to the headquarters of Whole Foods, the world's largest retailer of natural and organic foods. The flagship store features produce, seafood, free-range meats, foods-to-go and health products. The set list includes: Whole Body department; Whole Home, featuring organic cottons and linens; sit-down dining and take-out selections; food sampling; an outdoor rooftop plaza complete with playscape and live music.
601 North Lamar, Ste 100, Austin; 512-476-1206; www.wholefoodsmarket.com

And Another Market — Another foodie paradise is Central Market, a European-style market with an outstanding reputation for fresh meats, produce and assortment of chef-prepared meals. The central store on North Lamar features outstanding cooking classes, and both stores offer restaurants and free live music.
4001 North Lamar and 4477 South Lamar, Austin; 800-360-2552; www.centralmarket.com

Scream for Ice cream — The Annual Ice Cream Festival at Waterloo Park is a free event bringing back the joy of chasing after the neighborhood ice cream truck. There is an ice cream eating contest, a homemade ice cream making contest and popsicle stick sculpture contest as well as games, activities and live entertainment. This past year, over \$9,000 was raised for Lifeworks, Habibi's Hutch, La Leche and The Austin Children's Shelter.
www.austinicecreamfestival.com

Chocoholics Unite — The Austin Chocolate Festival happens once a year at the beginning of March and benefits the Susan G. Komen for the Cure Foundation. The Festival combines live music, appetizers, wine, and of course chocolate sampling by participating vendors. Chocolate vendors may compete in several categories including best chocolate cake or pie, best fudge, best truffle and best cookie. *www.austinchocolatefestival.com*

GREENER PASTURES

Healthy Living - Austin already benefited from a reputation as an active, healthy hub with over 10 farmers' markets and over 10 vegetarian-friendly restaurants. Vegetarian restaurants such as Mother's Café and Garden, Veggie Heaven, Mr. Natural and Leaf, a "green" salad restaurant, make it easy to eat your greens. *www.vegnetaustin.org*

The Great Outdoors — *National Geographic Adventure* names Austin as the #1 adventure town in America because of its ability to combine the great outdoors with its unique culture. With over 220 parks and a combined shoreline of 405 miles, it is no wonder that Austin was listed as the #2 "city for taking a stroll," by *Prevention Magazine*. There are tons of options for those who stay active with such exciting activities as Cypress Valley Canopy Tours and 8 miles of hiking trail along the Barton Creek Greenbelt. In addition, the downtown Hike and Bike Trail lines Lady Bird Lake and offers over 10 miles of off-road paths for runners, bikers and walkers.

A Family Park, Naturally: Zilker Park, 68-acres on the west side of the city, hosts the annual *Austin City Limits* Music Festival and offers a great spot for enjoying Austin's 300 days of sunshine each year. Or take a dip at Barton Springs Pool, which has a constant 68-degree water temperature. Park-goers can also rent canoes or kayaks, play soccer or volleyball, or wander among the park's Japanese-style Botanical Gardens. *www.ci.austin.tx.us/parks/zilker.htm*

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Saving the Environment – Always striving to improve the city's quality of life, Austin was listed as the "Greenest City" in America by MSN.com. The city currently leads the country in wind power and biodiesel production. The recently announced Austin Climate Protection Plan intends to make all facilities, fleets and operations carbon-neutral by 2020, which eliminates carbon dioxide emissions from virtually all municipal activities. Visitors can stay at the city's premier "green" hotel; Habitat Suites was designed to support ecological consciousness and uses only nontoxic fertilizers and pesticides on the ground as well as nontoxic and natural cleaners in cleaning. Part of the next wave of green hotels, about 20% of their energy is powered by a solar panel photo-voltaic system. *500 East Highland Mall Blvd., Austin; 512-467-6000; www.habitatsuites.com*

Biking for Cleaner Air - The Yellow Bike Project was started in 1997 as a community-sponsored organization dedicated to reducing pollution and traffic by providing human-powered vehicles. There are currently 2 shops in Austin which educate the public on the effects of pollution as well as show people how to fix their own bikes. The project also takes bikes that were destined for landfills, reconditions them and donates them back to the community.

Parks for the People — In 2007, Austin was named #1 of the top 27 environmentally friendly cities to live in by U.S. Private Communities: 16,700 acres of parkland, 206 parks, 12 nature preserves, 74 miles of hike and bike trails, 117 mi of lakeshore (within city limits only), 72 athletic fields, 6 public city-owned golf courses, 108 city-owned tennis courts and 47 city-owned public pools. Visitors and Austinites alike enjoy "disc-golf" at 5 Austin parks. Austin offers a new state-of-the-art skate park at Mabel Davis park with a concrete skate bowl, pedestrian obstacles and grass-covered amphitheatre-type seating for spectators. *City of Austin Parks & Recreation Dept., 512-974-6700; www.ci.austin.tx.us/parks*

LIVE MUSIC CAPITAL OF THE WORLD®

The Music Plays On — From intimate settings to cavernous concert halls, the Live Music Capital of the World® is home to nearly 200 live music clubs. The mix includes the blues at Antone's, traditional country at Broken Spoke, rock on Sixth Street and cool jazz in the Warehouse District. Among the musicians who call Austin "home" are Willie Nelson, Jerry Jeff Walker, the Dixie Chicks, Spoon, Ray Benson and Asleep at the Wheel. *Austin Visitor Center; 512-478-0098; www.austintexas.org*

Capital Of Texas — Austin is not only the live music capital; it is also the capital of Texas. Completed in 1888, this National Historic Landmark is built of Texas "Sunset Red" granite. At the time of construction, it was considered to be the seventh largest building in the world. The Texas Capitol is 14 feet taller than the U.S. Capitol. A "Goddess of Liberty" statue tops the domed building to overlook the meticulous surrounding grounds. *1100 Congress Ave, Austin; 512-463-5495; www.tspb.state.tx.us*

SXSW — One of the most vital music events in America is South by Southwest Music, Film and Interactive Conference and Festival, known locally as "South by." The 10-day event takes center stage throughout Austin each March (Mar. 7-16, 2008). Big-name acts and unknown bands travel across the globe to take part in the action. More than 27,000 registrants take part in seminars, screenings, workshops and all-day entertainment. *Various locations; 512-467-7979; www.sxsw.com*

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No Limits on Opening Act — The most sought after ticket in town is *Austin City Limits*. PBS's longest running program first broadcast from the KLRU studios on the University of Texas campus in 1976. It continues to showcase great American musical talents. Free tickets to the tapings are hard to come by; however, free studio tours are conducted on Fridays at 10:30 a.m. *Jesse H. Jones Communications Building B, Dean Keeton Blvd. & Guadalupe Street, Austin; 512-471-4811; www.pbs.org/klru/austin*

Austin City Limits Music Festival — *Austin City Limits* was the inspiration behind the *Austin City Limits Music Festival*, a three-day outdoor gig (Sept. 26 - 28, 2008) spread over 16 acres in Zilker Park. More than 140 musical acts from every genre take center stage. *512-478-7211; www.aclfestival.com*

SOUTH AUSTIN KEEPS IT WEIRD

SoCo, SoFi, SoLa — Austin's renowned mellow eccentricity is abundant along South Congress Avenue, *aka* SoCo. This colorful portion of the city's main street south of Lady Bird Lake is lined with funky shops, trendy dining spots, unique accommodations, art galleries and live music venues. A monthly celebration erupts along the street with First Thursdays. On the first Thursday of each month, merchants of the historic, pedestrian-friendly avenue keep their doors open until 10 p.m. and play host to an array of events and activities. New shops and boutiques have opened along South First (SoFi) and South Lamar (SoLa), following suit and making South Austin a boutique shopper's heaven. *www.firstthursday.info*

FIRST CLASS RESORTS

Hyatt Regency Lost Pines Resort & Spa — Central Texas' newest resort and spa reflects the natural beauty of the Hill Country. Meeting attendees and leisure travelers alike can enjoy a full-service spa and fitness facility, four dining establishments, local tours of the Bastrop area, a fly-fishing camp and river rafting on the Colorado River. *575 Hyatt Lost Pines Road, Lost Pines; 512-308-1234; www.lostpines.hyatt.com*

Barton Creek Resort & Spa — World-class golf and four-diamond dining are among the fine amenities at one of America's most acclaimed resorts. Barton Creek offers four specialized golf courses for all levels of play and is home to the Chuck Cook Golf Academy. Guests also enjoy tennis and indoor and outdoor swimming. Four restaurants offer fine or casual dining. Barton Creek is also perfect for meetings and events. In addition to the great weather and great courses, Austin was named the #1 Golf City in America on CNN's *golf.com*. *8212 Barton Club Drive, Austin; 800-336-6158; www.bartoncreek.com*

Horseshoe Bay Marriott Resort Hotel — Originally a private resort, the new luxury property offers 349 guestrooms, three golf courses and two restaurants, as well as world-class activities. The unique putting course is billed as one of the most elaborate putting courses in the country, featuring lush tropical landscaping, exotic parrots and flamingos, elaborate lighting and waterfalls. The spa gives guests a chance to relax; and the marina allows a getaway on Lake LBJ. The property is also available for meetings and events. *200 Hi Circle North, Horseshoe Bay; 866-799-5384; www.horseshoebaymarriott.com*

Lakeway Inn & Resort - Situated on the shores of Lake Travis near Austin, Lakeway Inn is undergoing a total transformation. The newly renovated resort includes a full-service spa, marina with boat rentals, guest cruises and nearby golf and tennis. The main lodge houses guest accommodations, a fitness center, ballroom, wine and coffee bar and main dining. *101 Lakeway Drive, Austin; 512-261-6600; www.lakeway.dolce.com*

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SPAS FOR MIND, BODY AND SOUL

Lake Austin Spa Resort — Lake Austin Spa Resort is recognized among the world's top spas. *Conde Nast Traveler* and *Travel + Leisure* rank it among the Top 5 Spas in North America. The spa's recent 25,000-square-foot multimillion-dollar addition, Lake House Spa, skyrocketed the resort's golden reputation.

1705 South Quinlan Park, Austin; 800-847-5637; www.lakeaustin.com

The Crossings — "Growth, balance and sanctuary" governs the philosophy of The Crossings. This unique learning center, meeting place and spa set list includes everything from song-writing classes to Watsu massages to trapeze lessons. This premier retreat center is located on 210 acres in Balcones Canyonland Preserve, just outside Austin.

13500 FM 2769; 512-258-7243; www.thecrossingsaustin.com

BAT-TASTIC ATTRACTION

Austin is home to 1.5 million Mexican Free-tailed bats, the largest urban colony of bats in North America. Spectators gather at sunset to watch the bats emerge from beneath the Ann Richards Congress Avenue Bridge, from late April through October.

First Street & Congress Avenue; Bat Conservation International, 512-327-9721; www.batcon.org

THAT'S A WRAP

Front Row For Filmmaking — *MovieMaker* magazine taps Austin as the #1 in the country for making movies. Nearly 300 major features and made-for-television movies have been filmed in Austin over the past two decades, not including hundreds of commercials and independent projects. Currently, the show *Friday Night Lights* about the drama surrounding football in small Texas towns is filmed in the city.

Austin Film Office, 512-583-7229; www.austintexas.org

100 Movies In 8 Days— Recognized as one of the top film festivals in the country, for eight days each October, Austin Film Festival turns the spotlight on top-billed films and indies. The conference features renowned screenwriters and other panelists, as well as a competition for screenwriters.

Various locations, 800-310-FEST; www.austinfilmfestival.com

CATTLE BARONS & PRESIDENTS

The Driskill Hotel — Built in 1886, the nationally recognized, award-winning hotel began as the "frontier palace" of cattle baron Jesse Driskill. A fixture in downtown Austin, the grand hotel features stunning marble floors, a stained glass-domed ceiling and exquisite woodwork. The guest registry includes presidents, entertainers, debutantes and even a ghost or two. The nationally recognized Driskill Grill features award-winning contemporary cuisine.

604 Brazos Street, Austin; 512-474-5911; www.driskillhotel.com

EXPERIENCE THE JOHNSON'S AUSTIN

Celebrate your "can do" spirit with the Johnson's legacy at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, the LBJ Library and Museum and the Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park.

Wildflower Sightings — Wildflowers are the main attraction at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. The center promotes the preservation of native plants and the benefits of xeriscaping. The center celebrates spring wildflower season with a number of special events. Highways, fields and backroads throughout Central Texas bloom with bluebonnets, the state flower, and dozens of other native flowers in March and April.
4801 LaCrosse Ave., Austin; 512-292-4100; www.wildflower.org

Presidents Club - The LBJ Library and Museum, located on the UT campus, is the nation's most-visited presidential library. Johnson's goal of opening the museum was to show visitors "what this nation tried to do in an eventful period of its history." The museum is hosting its centennial celebration to celebrate Johnson's "can do" spirit throughout the entire year.
2313 Red River Street, Austin; 512-721-0158; www.lbjlib.utexas.edu

The Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park, located in Johnson City, Texas was established to take visitors on a tour of Johnson's full life from his childhood home to his final resting place.
www.nps.gov/lyjo

SPECTATOR SPORTS

Austin Ice Bats — Hockey skated into Austin in 1996 with the immediately popular Austin Ice Bats. The Central Hockey League team plays October through March at Chaparral Ice, beginning with the 2007-08 season.
512.927.PUCK; www.icebats.com

Round Rock Express — The Round Rock Express continues its homerun streak at the Dell Diamond in nearby Round Rock, from April to September. The Triple A affiliate of the Houston Astros provides great family entertainment throughout the summer.
512-255-BALL; www.roundrockexpress.com

Austin Wranglers — Just after the frenzy of college football subsides in this football-crazy city, the Austin Wranglers kick off arena football from January through May at the Frank Erwin Center.
512-491-6600; www.austinwranglers.com

Austin Toros — The newest team on the Austin sports scene is the Austin Toros, a member of the National Basketball Association Development League. The Toros take midcourt at the Austin Convention Center, November through April.
512-236-8333; www.nba.com/dleague/austin

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

University of the First Class – The University of Texas occupies center stage in downtown Austin. Founded in 1883 on 40 acres, the campus now encompasses more than 350 acres in downtown. With nearly 50,000 students, UT boasts one of the country's largest student populations. Recognized nationally among the country's best academic and athletic programs, the school was recently tapped by *Newsweek* as "Hottest for Saving America's Schools," for excellence in education reform in the 2007 "Top 25 Universities" poll.
www.utexas.edu

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