

From Vintage Finds to High Fashion, Austin Offers Eclectic Shopping

Austin satisfies all shoppers, from boutique fans and antique hunters, to outlet lovers and mall-goers. The Capital City's unique boutiques and top-notch vintage shops mix with the finest nationally-known chains that carry tried-and-true brands.

"Keep Austin Weird" has become a slogan, created as a reminder to support the small, local businesses that give Austin its unique cultural identity.

The ultra hip South Congress district, or "SoCo," is a great place to soak up the city's quirky attitude with a large number of vintage and thrift shops, high-end salons and chi-chi clothing and jewelry stores. Favorites include: Parts and Labour, which showcases more than 200 Texas designers of clothing, jewelry, handmade soaps and more; Monkey See, Monkey Do, purveyors of cool retro kitsch; and Maya*, a colorful shop with jewelry and gifts made by local and international artists. While in SoCo, treat your taste buds to sweet treats at Big Top Candy Shop and your body to a full salon package at Ann Kelso Salon and CitySpa.

In addition, Feathers features a unique variety of hand-selected vintage clothing and boasts Austin's largest selection of vintage shoes. Uncommon Objects, also in SoCo, is a treasure trove of unique finds: Mexican religious folk art, vintage belt buckles, 1920s cigarette cases, medical collectibles and much more. These shops offer just a few of the signature finds that rank Austin among America's top five for vintage shopping, according to *Travel + Leisure* magazine.

Besides SoCo, there are numerous other pockets of independently-owned shops across town. The boutique Love on South First is a favorite for its rock star styles, while SoLa on South Lamar offers pretty night-on-the-town fashions.

Naturally, the Live Music Capital of the World® has an art and gift shop that carries nothing but music-themed merchandise. Wild About Music, located downtown, plans to grow into a national chain. Austin's signature shop licenses and markets several lines of art prints and private-labeled apparel and gifts. Also downtown, Anthony Nak sells exquisite jewelry designs that are favorites of international celebrities such as Jessica Alba, Naomi Watts, and Oprah Winfrey.

Other locally-owned favorites include Central Market and Whole Foods Market, which was founded in Austin. The flagship store boasts an 80,000-square-foot culinary “amusement park” that foodies will love. BookPeople is one of the nation’s foremost independent bookstores, and Waterloo Records showcases local, national and international artists in a funky, friendly and independent shop.

Weekend visitors should plan to stop by Austin’s two biggest farmers markets, which carry far more than organic fruits and vegetables. Austin Farmers’ Market and Sunset Valley Market both carry handcrafted jewelry, pottery and homemade candles, are open Saturdays.

While running around town, visitors may notice many locals dressed in a wardrobe that can only be defined as Austin chic: cowboy boots, short dresses and big jewelry. There are plenty of spots around town to find those boots and Western hats.

Cabela’s in nearby Buda is a 230,000-square-foot wonderland of outdoor gear, while the ever-popular Allen’s Boots, an anchor of the SoCo district, stocks cowboy boots by Lucchese, Tony Lama and Old Gringo. Downtown, Heritage Boot makes fancy, vintage-inspired custom boots with colorful cutouts and elaborate designs.

For those wanting a shopping mall boasting all the current fashions, the city has several conveniently located across town. To the south, Barton Creek Square Mall has more than 180 specialty retailers and is anchored by Nordstrom, Dillard’s and Macy’s. In northwest Austin, the Arboretum provides visitors with a luxury outdoor experience with stores such as Saks Fifth Avenue, Pottery Barn, Chico’s, and Jos.A.Bank. The stores are neighbored by a lovely 95 acres of tree-laded parkland, making it a lovely and relaxing place to spend several hours. Austin’s newest high-end shopping area is The Domain, a 700,000-square-foot space of high-end fashion boutiques including Neiman Marcus, Burberry, Tiffany & Co., Louis Vuitton, Michael Kors and more.

Visitors looking for name brands at bargain prices should plan a day at Austin-area outlet centers. In San Marcos, just 30 minutes south of Austin, Tanger Outlets and Prime Outlets conveniently sit side-by-side along the highway. Tanger is home to stores such as Calvin Klein,

Disney Store and Banana Republic, while Prime Outlets contains high-end brands like Cole Haan, Juicy Couture and an enormous Pottery Barn.

On the other side of Austin, Round Rock Premium Outlets has 125 stores, including Adidas, J. Crew, Tommy Hilfiger and Polo Ralph Lauren.

Before visitors leave they should make a final stop to pick up souvenirs for family, friends and dog sitters. Mosey on over to the Austin Visitors Center, conveniently located in the center of the city's best-known entertainment district, Sixth Street. The Center offers Texas souvenirs in every style and price range.

For more lone-star items, visit Congress Avenue Card and Gift Shop around the corner, or the museum store at The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, just one mile north on historic Congress Avenue.

Several Austin museums boast gift shops worthy of a shopping spree. The Austin Museum of Art was recently voted best place to score a last-minute gift; the Austin Children's Museum is a great place to find toys that teach; and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center has pretty garden-inspired items.