

weekend • austin, texas

Living It Up In Austin

A fun, cool **vibe** awaits in one of the South's most entertaining cities.

An **invigorating energy** wrangles each corner here. Austin's **greatest appeal** lies in its ability to balance its trendy scene with an **inclusive attitude**. The cowboy, the politician, the punk rocker, and the soccer mom all groove at the same music clubs and palm tortillas at the same Tex-Mex joints. No matter **who you are**, you'll fit in. Snugly.

Where To Stay

Set yourself on Austin's pace by booking a room at the Austin Motel (rates \$75-\$158) down on South Congress Avenue, aka SoCo. There's not a more unique property in the whole city. Decorated with colorful wallpaper and 1960s and 1970s furniture, it reminds us more of a mom-and-pop lodge we'd find off Route 66. As an alternate choice, you can't beat the location and chain-like consistency of the Embassy Suites (rates start at \$179) just south of the Congress Avenue bridge.

Where To Eat

We like Magnolia Cafe South's giant buttermilk pancakes (\$3.50 for a short stack) almost as much as the pterodactyl-esque dinosaur hanging from the ceiling.

For a quick kick any time of the day, try the Turbo (\$3.25), an iced coffee drink guaranteed to crank your tractor, at Jo's Coffee. The crazy characters—uh, employees—at Amy's Ice Creams serve several fun and funky scoops (\$3-\$5).

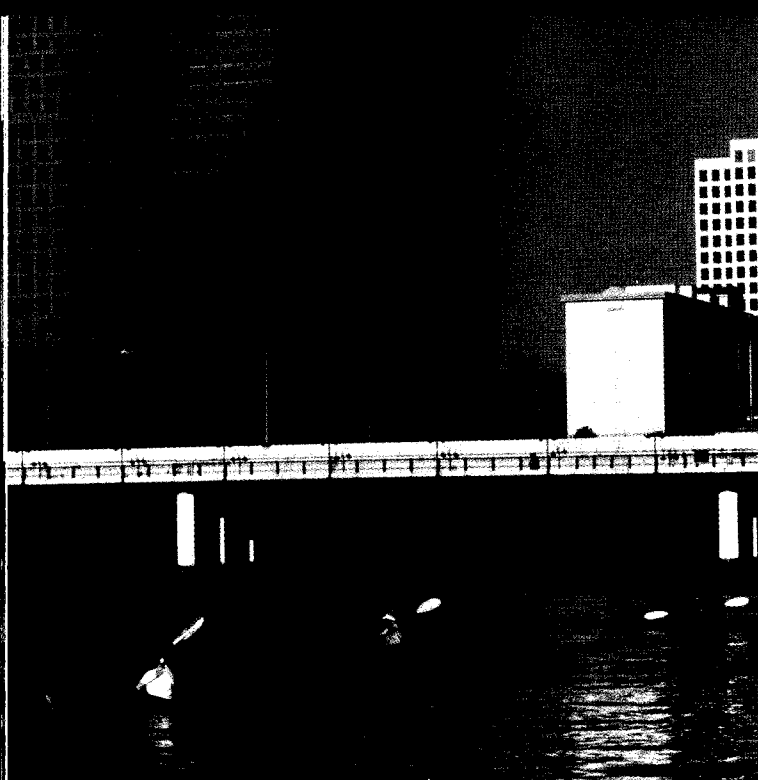
Request an outdoor table at Shady Grove. You can't lose with their spicy green chile cheeseburger (\$6.59). Pizza joints thrive in college towns (duh), and Frank and Angie's Pizzeria consistently ranks as one of the best. We like the 10-inch Pavarotti (\$8.95), a thin-crust pizza made with portobello mushrooms, pesto, spinach, and feta, among other toppings.

Start dipping your chips in the peppery salsa at Vivo, a contemporary take on Tex-Mex. While waiting for your chile enchiladas (\$9.95), walk around and check out the vibrant artwork and atmosphere.

Where To Shop

Head **first to the** recently revitalized 2nd Street District. For high-end, custom-made boots or studded belts, drop into **Cowboy Cool**. Just down the street, Mercury Design Studio offers **chic pillows**, home accessories, and gorgeous coffee-table **books on everything** from travel to design.

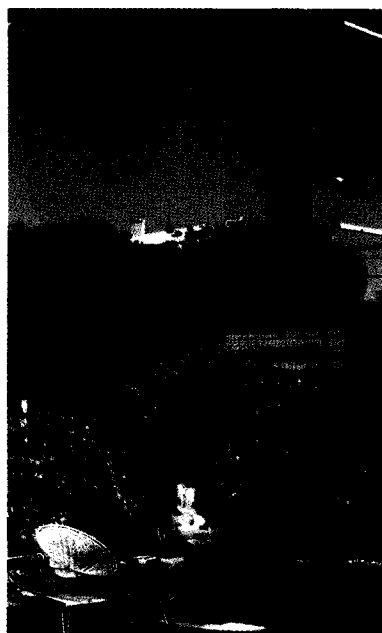
Imagine an antiques store on a caffeine buzz from three



above: Canoes and kayaks slide across Town Lake on warm spring afternoons.

right: Request an outdoor table at Vivo, a Tex-Mex restaurant.

below: Some of the best features of the Austin Motel's pool are the retro chairs from the 1950s.



above: Vivid, a designer clothing store, kicks off a strip of eclectic shops in SoCo.

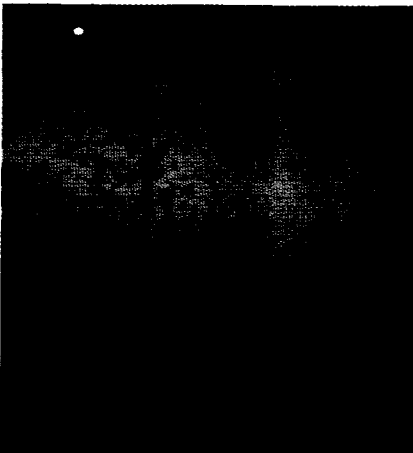
PHOTOGRAPHS: GARY CLARK



This Month

- Texas Hill Country Wine & Food Festival, March 28-April 1, www.texaswineandfood.org

- Austin Fine Arts Festival, April 14-15, www.austinfineartsfestival.org



top: Park yourself at Jo's Coffee down in the 2nd Street District.

above: You can barely turn around without finding a show here.

left: More than 1 million Mexican free-tailed bats take to the sky each evening.

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espressos, and you have Uncommon Objects. The oddities lining the shelves in this SoCo staple will entertain, perplex, and possibly inspire. And a few blocks down, Vivid racks some of the hottest designs in Austin fashion.

What To Do

Warm spring days make walks along the trails lining Town Lake perfectly pleasant. Get on the water in a kayak from Rowing Dock (singles start at \$10 per hour).

As the day wanes, claim your spot along the Congress Avenue bridge for the best free show in town. At sundown from March to November, 1.5 million Mexican free-tailed bats emerge in a cloud, like a giant swarm of bees. **Editor's tip:** You'll have to pay a few bucks, but one of the best vantage points is the sixth floor of the parking deck adjacent to the Radisson Hotel and Suites.

Where To Hear Music

Some say Austin marches to the beat of a different drummer. We're convinced the city broke off long ago to start its own band. **First stop:** Waterloo Records. It's possibly the best independent music store in the South, if not the world. You'll dig the specialty sections, expert staff, and free in-store performances throughout the week. Back on Congress Avenue, descend the stairs to the Elephant Room, a club known for its smooth jazz. **Editor's tip:** Breathe easily. Austin recently passed a no-smoking ordinance in the city's businesses.

An eclectic lineup keeps the Continental Club one of the city's best live music venues. The club's rich history draws the big guns of rock and alternative country in unannounced sets, so you might get lucky and catch the likes of Kris Kristofferson or Sheryl Crow. Because of its popularity, arrive early or prepare to wait. You could be standing in line with a tattooed biker or a fresh-faced kid in tight Wranglers. Either way, don't be too surprised at how much you have in common when you strike up a conversation with them. That's so Austin and so why you'll love it.

—TANNER C. LATHAM

Down to Details Lodging

1. Austin Motel: www.austinmotel.com or (512) 441-1157
2. Embassy Suites: www.embassysuites.com or (512) 469-9000

Dining

3. Magnolia Cafe South: (512) 445-0000
4. Jo's Coffee: (512) 469-9003
5. Amy's Ice Creams: (512) 480-0673
6. Shady Grove: (512) 474-9991
7. Frank and Angie's: (512) 472-3534
8. Vivo: (512) 482-0300

Shopping

9. Cowboy Cool: (512) 708-9000
10. Mercury Design Studio: (512) 236-0100
11. Uncommon Objects: (512) 442-4000
12. Vivid: (512) 326-3095

Activities

13. Rowing Dock: (512) 459-0999

Music

14. Waterloo Records: (512) 474-2500
15. Elephant Room: (512) 473-2279
16. Continental Club: (512) 441-2444

