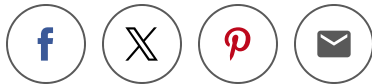


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The Perfect Three-Day Weekend in Austin

Travel + Leisure is exploring America one three-day weekend at a time. Here's what to do during a short trip to Austin, Texas.

By [Mariah Tyler](#) | Published on August 26, 2016



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Whether you're looking for a truly Texas experience with cowboys and longhorns, a nature escape, or a music-filled and art-focused city scene, you'll find something in [Austin](#). [The mid-sized city](#) is slightly too big to be walkable (though biking is an option), and renting a car is the best bet. If you're arriving by car or through [Austin Bergstrom International Airport](#), be wary of the dreadful traffic that happens around the city center. Austin banned Uber and Lyft services earlier this summer, but now all the locals use a similar service called [Fasten](#).

Hotel Saint Cecilia, down the street, a secluded, spacious complex dedicated to 1960s/early 70s rock and roll. Both are centrally located along South Congress Avenue.

If your trip is planned for May through August, you must see the South Congress bats. For most of the year you can see swarms of bats flying out from under the Congress Avenue Bridge; peak season is late July/early August. Thousands of bats fly in large groups for feeding time just before sunset. There are many places to stand and see them for free, but you can also take a boat tour on Lady Bird Lake for a more immersive experience. After watching the magic of bat flight, head to Curra's Grill for a Tex-Mex inspired dinner of enchiladas and to-die-for avocado margaritas.

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Day One

The only way to appropriately start a day in [Austin](#) is to partake in breakfast tacos. The city is saturated in breakfast-taco spots—Tamale House off East Sixth Street has some of the best in Texas.



Grab some lunch at Central Market or Whole Foods (both natively Texan supermarkets) and head out for an afternoon at [Barton Springs](#) or, a little

make cooling down in the Texas heat much easier and more enjoyable.

For a more active outdoor experience, rent a boat or paddleboard at Zilker Park Boat Rentals or Rowing Dock to experience [Lady Bird Lake](#). If you're not a water lover, drive south to the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center to learn about the former First Lady's efforts in preserving natural wildflowers and landscapes.

Head back into the city center for an afternoon pick-me-up at Walton's Fancy & Staple to recharge with a cortado and lemon bar. Down the street is the famed Waterloo Records (one of the best record shops in the world). Across from Waterloo are other great shopping stops, including [By George](#) (a designer boutique) and Wildflower Organics (for linens and home goods).

At night, make your way to one of *Food & Wine* magazine's 2016 Restaurants of the Year, [Launderette](#), for dinner. Be sure to try the fried oysters and PEI mussels at Rene Ortiz's Mediterranean-influenced establishment. Follow dinner with cocktails at Garage (it's in an actual parking garage downtown). Or wander the Sixth Street area of downtown for live music venues like the Belmont (close to the Garage), a spacious club for new rock, electronica, and hip-hop.

Day Two

Stop by Jo's coffee, a short walk from either hotel on South Congress, and fuel up for a creative cathedral experience. [Cathedral of Junk](#) is a true American gem—it's a backyard turned magic wonderland of junk created by Vince Hannemann back in 1988.

Brunch is best at Juniper, a northern Italian-inspired open kitchen that serves up some noteworthy carbonara and frittata plates. Have some Bloody Marys or fresh-squeezed grapefruit juice before embarking on a shopping spree.

Shopping in East Austin may well be the hippest way to spend your time. Down the street from Juniper is Las Cruces, with eclectic designer items and

Afterward, cool off at the newly opened [Kitty Cohens](#). Sip on a gin-prosecco punch by the pool and before you leave, take a bathroom selfie with the pink flamingo wallpaper. Kitty Cohen's also has chef-driven pop-up kitchens in case you get hungry. Or finish the day with some fried chicken from Lucy's Fried Chicken on College Avenue off South Congress and call it a night.

Day Three

On the last day, embrace all things Texas. Grab a quick fix for the morning, but don't fill yourself up, because you'll be spending all day having some of the best barbecue the Lone Star State has to offer. You may have heard of [Franklin's](#), but what they didn't tell you is that the lines are absurd and will waste a whole day.

Skip the crowd and head down the street to Micklethwait Craft Meats (closed Mondays), a charmingly painted trailer serving all homemade, central Texas barbecue (pro tip: get a moon pie for the trip home), Scotty's BBQ, or La Barbecue.

Once you're full, refresh with a bottle of Topo Chico and find yourself in a nice air-conditioned museum. Austin has a couple of great art museums associated with the University of Texas—the [Blanton Museum of Art](#) and the [Harry Ransom Center](#). For more of a cultural space, visit the [Mexic-Arte Museum](#), an institution dedicated to Mexican and Latino art and culture. If you're fascinated by the history of Texas (or on a mission to find out the source of our state pride) walk through [the Bullock Texas State History Museum](#).

Now that you're fully immersed in Texas spirit, make a few more shopping stops near your hotel before the final night's honky-tonk: [Allen's Boots](#) (you can't two-step without a pair of cowboy boots), [Stag](#) (a men's made-in-America shop), and [Feathers](#) (high-waisted Wranglers and vintage 1970s tees).

On your final night, put on your boots, maybe add a bolo tie, and head over to [Continental Club](#), one of Austin's oldest continuously running clubs. If you're

Mariah Tyler is a digital photo editor at Travel + Leisure. You can follow her on Instagram and Twitter at [@mphbox](#).

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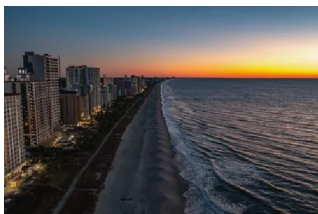
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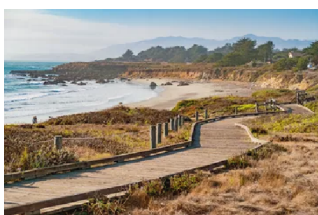
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