

# Things In Central Texas You *Must* See or Do

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*We have enjoyed living in Central Texas for over 40 years, finding many fun and unique places this great area has to offer. Our experience, plus the input of our wonderful clients, has created a short list of things to consider. Let us know if you have some to add.*

The Echols Team

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Some general internet resources you can use to find out what's going on around here:

[www.austin.citysearch.com](http://www.austin.citysearch.com)

[www.austinlinks.com/rec.html](http://www.austinlinks.com/rec.html)

[www.austin360.com](http://www.austin360.com) – movies, food, music . . .

[www.texasoutside.com/austinframes](http://www.texasoutside.com/austinframes) - Outdoor stuff to do.

## BAT WATCHING [Mexican Free-Tailed]

One of the most amazing sights in Austin takes place every evening from March to early November, when 1.5 million Mexican free-tailed bats emerge from their roosts under the Congress Avenue Bridge. For more information, go to:

[www.batcon.org/index.php/get-involved/visit-a-bat-location/congress-avenue-bridge.html](http://www.batcon.org/index.php/get-involved/visit-a-bat-location/congress-avenue-bridge.html)

## CAVES

- One idea for cooling off in Summer is *Inner Space Cavern*, Exit 259 off I-35 in Georgetown. It's nice and cool inside the caverns. Inner Space is highly decorated with all types of formations both large and small. There are complete rooms of soda straws (hollow crystalline formations) that hang from the ceiling and resemble regular drinking straws. Other sections have a profusion of delicate helictites that grow in every direction. The entire cave is rich in snow-white crystal flowstone that covers the floors and walls. Call 512-931-CAVE for ticket prices and times or go to:

[www.myinnerspacecavern.com](http://www.myinnerspacecavern.com)

- *Longhorn Cavern State Park*, south of Burnet, is 645.62 acres classified as a scenic park in the rugged Hill Country. The cave was first formed when the ground levels of water began to drop. As this downward movement occurred, the water began to dissolve the limestone. This downward drainage continued until great underground stream beds were cut out of solid rock. It is this unusual combination of dissolving and cutting by water that makes Longhorn Cavern one of the most unique caves of the world. While in the area, stop in Marble Falls for some home cookin' at the Blue Bonnet Café at 211 Hwy 281. [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/longhorn-cavern](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/longhorn-cavern)

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## DAY TRIPS

There are so many; here are a couple to consider:

- ***Texas Hill Country*** – we love to take a day and drive west to the Hill Country, savoring down-home food, beautiful scenery, and enjoying friendly people. Burnet, Marble Falls, Johnson City, Comfort, Kerrville ... any will do great. But the prime favorite is Fredericksburg, a German town with lots of good eats and crafts, and even a mid-1800's cemetery. Take an extra day and relax at one of the many B&B's in the area. During late March and April, experience the beauty of vast fields of bluebonnets. In June and July, enjoy the taste of fresh peaches. [www.fredericksburg-texas.com](http://www.fredericksburg-texas.com)
- Travel east a bit [mainly between Austin and Schulenburg] and experience the ***Painted Churches of Texas***. Built by 19th century immigrants to this rough but promising territory, these churches transport the visitor back to a different era, a different way of life. Inscriptions on the walls read not in English, but in the mother tongue of those who built them: German and Czech. Cross the threshold of these particular Texas churches and you'll encounter not a simple wooden interior but an unexpected profusion of color. Nearly every surface is covered with bright painting: exuberant murals radiate from the apse, elaborate foliage trails the walls, wooden columns and baseboards shine like polished marble in shades of green and gray. In 1984, 15 of these churches, with their unique style of art, were listed on the National Register of Historic Places.  
[www.klru.org/paintedchurches](http://www.klru.org/paintedchurches)
- ***Spanish Missions Trail*** and ***San Antonio River Walk***– for a great look back to early 1700's Texas, take a day trip to San Antonio. Start at the Alamo mission in central San Antonio and proceed south along the National Parks' Mission Trail to Mission Concepcion, Mission San Jose [the largest], and Mission Espada. The National Park Service has a web site with more information and a detailed map:  
[www.nps.gov/saan/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/saan/index.htm) . While in San Antonio, also explore the famous River Walk: [www.thesanantonioriverwalk.com/about/the-san-antonio-river-walk](http://www.thesanantonioriverwalk.com/about/the-san-antonio-river-walk)

## FARMS TO VISIT

***Boggy Creek*** [Organic] ***Farm*** - 926-4650 - 3414 Lyons Road

-Located in the old part of Austin, just west of Airport Blvd., this farm is 'kid friendly', with lots of animals and fresh organic produce to check out. Weds and Sats, 9am - 2pm

[www.boggycreekfarm.com](http://www.boggycreekfarm.com)

## FOOD MARKETS [SPECIALTY]

- **Central Market & Café** - [www.centralmarket.com](http://www.centralmarket.com)  
206-1000 - 4001 N. Lamar Blvd.  
899-4300 - 4477 S. Lamar Blvd. [Westgate Mall] -

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~ *Organic and Gourmet food products from around the world* ~

- **Whole Foods Market** - [www.wholefoods.com](http://www.wholefoods.com)  
See the website for all store locations in the Austin area.  
~ *The world's largest retailer of natural and organic foods* ~

## GOLF

Check out the top golf courses in the area at:

[www.golfguideweb.com/texas/austin/austin.html](http://www.golfguideweb.com/texas/austin/austin.html)

For a map, go to:

[www.texasoutside.com/golf/austin.htm](http://www.texasoutside.com/golf/austin.htm)

## HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

- **Christmas Lights:** Drive [very slowly] or walk down **37<sup>th</sup> Street** at Guadalupe St at Christmas time and see the eclectic lighting displays these homeowners have put out. Take a taste of some mystery foods or listen to music played on the sidewalk.
- **Christmas Lights:** City of Austin's '**Trail of Lights**' and lighted Christmas tree in Zilker Park. Stand under the giant tree and spin around – and get dizzy.
- **State Capitol Building** – Decorated Christmas tree at the Capitol. Stand on the front steps and enjoy the view down a decorated Congress Ave.

## LAKE ACTIVITIES

- **Lake Austin** – hang out by the lake and have burgers at 'Ski Shores' on City Park Road. Or sip your favorite coffee at Mozart's dock on Lake Austin Blvd, near the end of Enfield Rd. [www.mozartcoffee.com](http://www.mozartcoffee.com)
- **Lady Bird Lake [Town Lake]** – ride the Lone Star Riverboat [just west of Hyatt Hotel – 512-327-1388] for a great tour of the lake, or rent a canoe near the dam on the Barton Springs inlet to the lake and set your own laid-back agenda.
- **Lake Travis** – too many things to mention here, but try catching a sunset over the lake from the deck of The Oasis Restaurant. Located 450 feet above Lake Travis, The Oasis offers breathtaking views of the Texas Hill Country and spectacular sunsets! Enjoy the scenery from one of the 40 plus outdoor decks, or inside from one of the enchanting dining rooms. [www.oasis-austin.com](http://www.oasis-austin.com) [Live Oasis webcam: [www.kvue.com/weather/cameras](http://www.kvue.com/weather/cameras) ]

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## MOVIE THEATER [Historic]

The *Paramount Theatre* - For over 88 years, the Paramount Theatre has been home to vaudeville, silent movies and "talkies," music, dance, and Broadway shows. One of our favorites is the Paramount's showing of classic movies all summer long. For a schedule, or more information on this historic theater, go to: [www.theparamount.org](http://www.theparamount.org)

## MUSEUMS

- Check out the Bob Bullock *Texas State History Museum*, 1800 N. Congress Avenue – 936-8746. The Museum in downtown Austin, Texas, tells the "Story of Texas" with three floors of exhibits and fun things to do. Enjoy the 400-seat IMAX Theatre with a 6-story tall screen. The Star of Destiny in the Texas Spirit Theatre features 10 special effects, like rattlesnakes in your seat or grasshoppers in your hair!!! For more information on the museum, go to: [www.thestoryoftexas.com](http://www.thestoryoftexas.com)
- The *Texas Memorial Museum* and natural science center, located on Trinity St. on the University of Texas Campus, contains four floors of exhibits featuring dinosaurs, fossils, gems, minerals and wildlife, as well as a virtual reality facility showing 3-D images of fossils, a fossil preparation area, staffed by a working paleontologist, and live-animal wildlife exhibits. For directions, maps, and exhibit information, go to: [www.utexas.edu/tmm/](http://www.utexas.edu/tmm/)

PARKS [for a City of Austin **park/pool directory**, with map links and facilities list, go to: [www.austintexas.gov/page/park-directory](http://www.austintexas.gov/page/park-directory)]

- *Zilker Park* [just south of Town Lake] – swim in the cool Barton Springs *Pool*, canoe from the creek out to Town Lake, picnic under spreading oak trees, or *ride the Zilker Park Train*, a thrill for riders of all ages. And it's free!! Take a picnic lunch. If you're a little warm, you can cool off in the spring fed waters of Barton Springs at Zilker Park. While you're in the Zilker Park area [on the south side of Barton Springs Rd, just east of Mopac] take a tour of the Umlauf Sculpture Gardens, just east of the park across Barton Springs at 605 Robert E. Lee Rd.
- *Bull Creek Park* has Bull Creek meandering through it, with limestone cliffs on one side and the creek on the other, with picnic tables [12] in the middle. It's 48 acres provide a great place to let the dogs [or kids] go for a run while enjoying the abundance of nature. It's accessed Lakewood Drive from either FM 2222 [just west of the County Line BBQ] or just off Loop 360. There is a low water crossing for the creek that is fun to drive through.

## SITE SEEING

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***Austin 'Duck' Tours*** – Tour around Austin sites and then take a drive in Lake Austin; it's fun for all ages. The "Austin Duck" was originally a British Alvis Stalwart. The vehicle has six wheel drive capabilities and can drive in the water. Maximum speed on land is 40 miles an hour and its speed in water is about 6 knots. [www.austinducks.com](http://www.austinducks.com)

## STAR GAZING

***Star Gazing*** - The Department of Astronomy at the University of Texas (512-471-5007; 512-471-1307) provides the opportunity to gaze through a 16-inch telescope on the roof of Robert Lee Moore Hall (26<sup>th</sup> St. & Speedway) on Wednesdays during select seasons. Call before you go to ensure good star-gazing conditions. Admission is free, and staff members are on site to assist.

## TEXAS STATE CAPITOL COMPLEX

Tour the ***Texas State Capital***. The Capital was remodeled several years ago and is beautifully restored to its 1800's design. Tours leave from the south foyer every 15 to 30 minutes, depending on demand, and last about 45 minutes. Call 512-463-0063 for more info. You can also take a tour of the ***Governor's Mansion*** [~20 minutes – call 512-463-5518]. Before either tour, stop at the nearby Old Land Office building for a brief film on Texas history.

## TRAILS

There are so many, it's hard to list. But, the City of Austin has a web site listing them [see below]. Be sure to check out the longest one, Town Lake Hike and Bike Trail [10+ miles]:

[www.austintexas.gov/page/trail-directory](http://www.austintexas.gov/page/trail-directory)

## TRAIN TRIPS

The ***Hill Country Flyer*** - Tour the scenic Texas Hill Country by train! The ***Hill Country Flyer*** descends rugged Short Creek Canyon and crosses the tall trestle over the South San Gabriel River on its way from Cedar Park to Burnet on a 33-mile journey through Texas' Hill Country. During a leisurely layover in Burnet, enjoy lunch and shopping on the town square. The ***River City Flyer*** and ***Twilight Flyer*** provide tours at other times and routes. For more information, go to: [www.AustinSteamTrain.org](http://www.AustinSteamTrain.org)

## UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

The University of Texas opens its doors each March to visitors to show off all the great things that are happening there. The events and exhibits [science, engineering, medicine,

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art, music, museums, etc.] are interesting and great fun. Check the following web sites for the next open house [Choose events by scheduled time or by name]:

Do an internet search with at least the following search terms: U.T., Texas, explore, engineering, the current year.

## VIEWS

- Climbing the 106 steps to the top of *Mount Bonnell* can tire most anyone, but it's well worth the climb. The vista over Lake Austin and views of the city are grand. For an extra special treat, go at sunset and bring a picnic dinner; or how about early in the morning? To get there, take Mt Bonnell Dr south from FM 2222, or take it off Old Bull Creek Rd at the end of W. 35<sup>th</sup> St.
- *See Austin from new heights.* Tours of the *UT Tower* on campus are offered on selected days [call 512-475-6633 for reservation dates and information or go to [www.utexas.edu/universityunions/texas-union/scene/tower-tours](http://www.utexas.edu/universityunions/texas-union/scene/tower-tours) ]. Tickets are currently \$6 each. Being on campus always brings back lots of memories for us. Sharon's favorite time to take classes was summer – fewer students and only 2 classes at a time!!

## WILDFLOWER CENTER

The *Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center* has year-round exhibits of central Texas native plants. Get ideas for your landscaping. The center is located southwest Austin of south Mopac. For more information, go to: [www.wildflower.org](http://www.wildflower.org)

## ZOO

At the *Austin Zoo*, adults and kids alike can enjoy the great outdoors and experience a close-up look at animals from around the world...all in family friendly environment.

[www.austinzoo.org](http://www.austinzoo.org)

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