



# Moving to Austin

## NEWCOMER'S GUIDE

by Glenda Beasley for Habitat Hunters

Whether you're moving to Austin for a job, because your friends or family are here, or just for a change of pace, there are a few things to know about the [City of the Violet Crown](#).

- 1. It's a little weird.** Get prepared to see a musician to break into song, a horse on the street or a smiling man in nothing but a thong happily riding his bike. The Tonight Show's Jimmy Kimmel captured the flavor of the city well in his [farewell to Austin song](#) with Willie Nelson.
- 2. The locals go local.** There is big support for local farmers, craftsmen and businesses. You can support these fine locals and get discounts when you purchase a [Go Local card](#).
- 3. It's the live music capital of the world.** If you can't find a live music venue on any given night, at the airport, or during happy hour, you're not trying hard enough. Some of our favorite long-standing venues include: [The Continental Club](#), [The Carousel Lounge](#), [Little Longhorn Saloon](#), [Ego's](#), [Guero's](#), [Saxon Pub](#) and the [Broken Spoke](#), to name a few.
- 4. It's an urban oasis.** There are miles and miles of trails and greenbelts in Austin and the surrounding environs. Sources to find nature near you include the [City of Austin](#), [Travis County](#), [Texas State Parks](#) and the [Habitat Hunter's website](#). Another great resource is [www.naturerocksAustin.org](#). Wildlife such as the [bats on Congress Ave](#), raccoons, deer, armadillos, golden cheek warblers, and grackles are found in the city. City gem, [Barton Springs](#), home to the endangered Austin Blind Salamander and a cool 67-70 degrees year round, along with [Deep Eddy's spring-fed pool](#) will refresh your soul and take your breath away. Popular hikes include the [Greenbelt](#) southwest of town, [Bull Creek](#) northwest of town, and [Lady Bird \(formerly called Town\) Lake](#), downtown. If you are looking for a different kind of wildlife, visit clothing-optional Travis County's [Hippie Hollow Park](#) out on Lake Travis.
- 5. The capitol is here.** That means that every other year, legislators from all over the state take up residence, try to do the right thing for their constituents, blow hot air at each other, schmooze, negotiate and change a lot of laws until the year after next, when they start all over again. Texas politics are so lively that writer [Molly Ivins](#) wrote several books about it. You can [watch the session in action](#) starting every other January when it kicks in, or enjoy the protests from a picnic on the lovely grounds during the warmer 140 days of session March-May. When the legislature is not in session, you can still see the pink dome up close and personal through [tours](#) or by simply walking in the building or on the grounds.
- 6. The University of Texas is here.** Get a degree, or just learn a thing or two at one of the many seminars, events and learning experiences that regularly occur on campus. Have a tailgate party or lunch with a professor at [Posse East](#). Enjoy the art at [Blanton Museum](#), the historical museum and exhibits at the [LBJ Presidential Library](#) or one of many garden-inspired exhibits at the [Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#) southwest of town. Do not miss watching a [Longhorn game](#) live, (as long as you say "Hook 'Em Horns!" and sit on the correct side of the venue).
- 7. Don't mess with Texas.** That means do not litter. Ever. You will be [fined](#) and ostracized.
- 8. Water is precious.** Deemed the new "oil" in Texas, there's a lot to learn about [water rights](#) when it comes to property ownership, particularly in the outskirts of town. If you want to fit in, do not leave your water running while you are cooking or take long showers at someone's house. They will give you the stink eye and/or a lecture. Droughts are common, and you need to keep up with [city restriction](#) phases to accommodate water levels or risk being fined.
- 9. It is de rigueur to recycle.** Plus you can save the other kind of green by ordering a [smaller trashcan](#) than your recycling bin. If you need yard work done or want to garden, it doesn't get anymore recyclable than to use good ol' [Dillo Dirt](#) for your project.
- 10. The neighborhoods and the surrounding schools are decidedly different.** This handy [overview of neighborhoods](#) can help you to find the right one for you and/or your family and the [school section](#) of the website lists the schools in each of those neighborhoods. To see how those schools rate, visit [www.greatschools.org](#).

- 11. The food is top notch.** [Yelp](#) it, [get trip advice](#) from visitors, refer to one of the [great magazines of Austin](#), or just ask around for restaurant suggestions. You will find everything from hole-in-the-wall goodness to upscale eateries to [trailer parks](#) to satisfy your hunger cravings.
- 12. BBQ and Mexican Food are serious business.** Zagat's has a special listing for the mostly verb and somewhat noun word that spells delicious: [BBQ](#). Mexican food can range from down and dirty Tex-Mex greasy awesomeness to interior Mexican. Here are the main stays of [Mexican cuisine in Austin](#).
- 13. It's Dog Heaven.** And some cats are allowed. [Dog Friendly Places and Events](#) are easy to find.
- 14. Traffic sucks but it's not LA or NYC bad.** Nothing says "LA" like cutting someone off and/or not letting someone in. To add to the underlying expectations of your behavior when driving, FM means Farm to Market road. Close by to Austin traffic jams, you will see Texans pull over on the shoulder and let people pass (or wave at you if you let them) in in the nearby countryside. Should you forget those manners in the "big city"? No you should not. It's all about being Texas friendly; please try to drive that way. Want to cut down on traffic? Try taking the [metro bus](#), [riding your bike on the bike trails to work](#), or take advantage of the [new train](#).
- 15. If you can't take the heat,** don't open the door, and/or get a pool. Or wait a minute...the weather often changes on a dime.
- 16. Go digital or die.** Austin's other nickname is "Silicon Hills". The Capital Factory, Dell, gamers, and many more call this home. Apple, Google, Rackspace and Facebook have offices here to show face. [SXSWi](#) is a transformative event where you can witness the digital wonderment happening in our city and worldwide. Get thee the highest speed of Internet package available and several electronic devices if you want to keep up.
- 17. Lingo and Pronunciations.** There may be several things that you don't quite understand when entering the Austin area, but let's stick with the [road pronunciation challenge](#), for starters.
- 18. People and Places you should know about.** The cast of characters include everyone from Governor Abbott to the LBJ family, the [Long's](#), GSD&M advertising agency, [Robert Rodriguez](#), Sandra Bullock, Matthew McConahey, Stevie Ray Vaughn, Greg Fenves, Charlie Strong, Michael Dell, and SXSW founder [Louis Black](#). The places include the (former) [Armadillo](#), [the Broken Spoke](#), [Mt. Bonnell](#), [Wild Basin](#), [Scholz Garten](#), [Hoffbrau Steaks](#), [Dirty's](#), [SoCo](#), [Whole Earth](#) and [Whole Foods Headquarters](#).
- 19. It's Artsy Fartsy:** From [East and West Austin Art tours](#) to the [Zach Scott Theater](#) to the [Paramount](#), [Long Center](#), [Esther's Follies](#) and [more](#), you can find art and theatre to keep you entertained every week of the year.
- 20. Austin is big on charitable giving.** 6000+ charities serve the Austin area. There are more than a few organizations in need if you want to get involved. Look to [Amplify Austin](#) or [Mission Capital](#) (formerly called Greenlights) to get the lay of the land.
- 21. When your out-of-state friends, family and other tourists take over the city and want to sleep in your guest bedroom:** [Austin City Limits Festival](#), [SXSW](#), [F1 Races](#) and [more](#), depending on their hobbies and interests. If they aren't in town for an event, they will probably want you to take them to [6th street](#), [2nd street district](#), [Rainey Street](#), [Soco](#), the [Eastside](#) or the [Domain](#) for nightlife, food, music and shopping. You might as well go and live in your own city, after all.

**We could go on, but why spoil all of the surprises? Hope you enjoy our formerly small eco-friendly, hippie-dippy university town that grew up into a big thriving city...somewhere along the way.**

**Call/Email/Stop by and we will find you everything from funky to luxury to modern homes and lifestyles, in what many now call, ATX.**