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THE HEART *of* TEXAS

Written by Sarah Crosland

There's something special about Austin, Texas. Once known as a college town—it's home to the University of Texas—the city has established itself as a cultural center. Annual festivals like South by Southwest and Austin City Limits draw crowds from around the world, while perfectly quirky bars offer live music every night of the week. The dining scene may have first garnered attention for its tender Texas brisket and trendy breakfast tacos, but it's long since expanded into world-class restaurants and award-winning chefs.

Tech giants like Apple and Google are now among the high-rises in the city's crane-filled skyline, but locals still stand behind the city's unofficial motto: Keep Austin Weird. And from honky-tonk dance halls to warm spring-fed pools, Austin definitely isn't like other places you'll visit—which is exactly why it should be on your list.



COURTESY OF THE LINE.



STAY

Unsurprisingly, there's no shortage of well-designed hotels in Austin these days. One of the city's most stylish—and best located—is **The LINE**, a midcentury modern hotel with a distinctly West Coast vibe that sits on the banks of Town Lake in the heart of downtown.

Originally opened in 1965, the 428-room hotel was most recently a Radisson, but a multimillion-dollar renovation has erased any hints of a bland chain. Its open lobby features vignettes with warm, earthy tones, lush plants in gold pots,

a patchwork-textured ceiling, and big, original Texas art. It's all very Instagrammable, which may be why it's often filled with a fashionable see-and-be-seen crowd.

Rooms here are chic with minimal Southwestern decor and panoramic views of the water. Cozy touches include vintage books about Texas (all from local shop **South Congress Books**) and a bedside bowl of dried florals with instructions to pour in hot

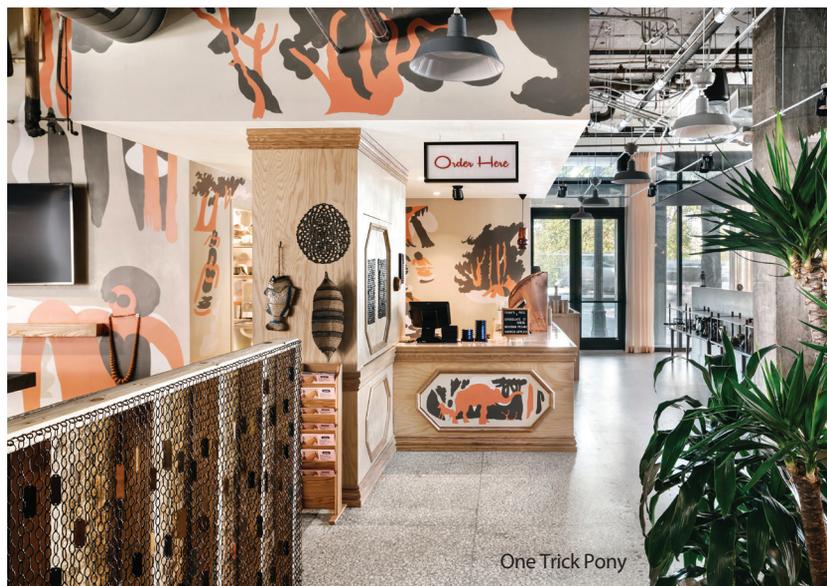
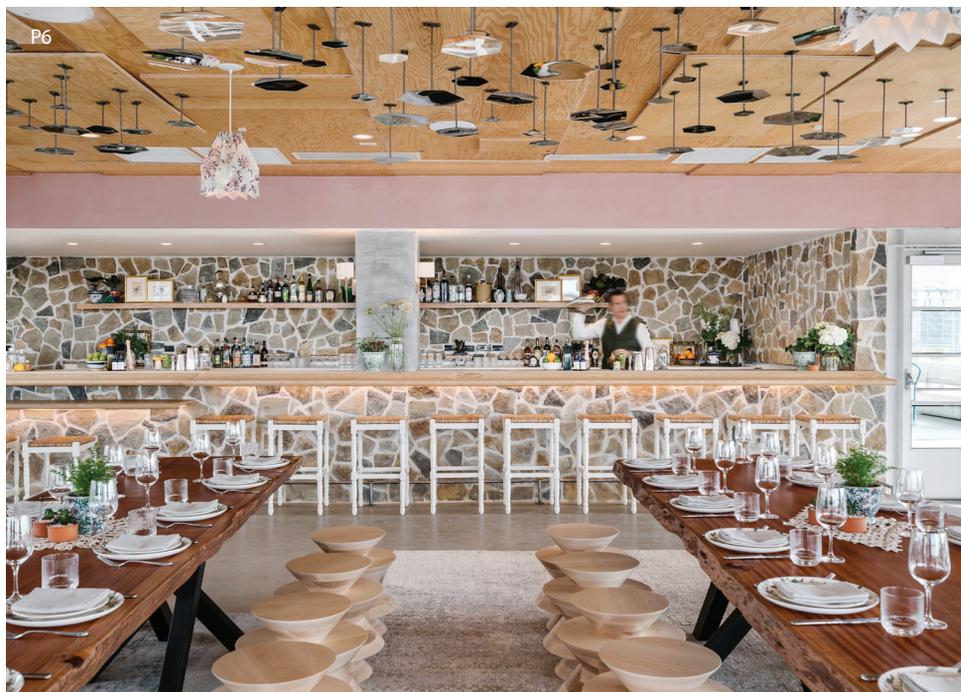


travel

water to create a fragrant post-travel steam facial.

It would be easy to spend a day here without ever leaving the property. Start your morning with a Stumptown flat white or a matcha latte at the hotel's **Alfred Coffee**, a Los Angeles-based coffee shop known for its well-designed interiors and trendy drinks. For lunch, grab a Texas beer and one of the decadent burgers at **Dean's One Trick Pony**. And after an afternoon in the sun by the lakeside saltwater infinity pool, make reservations for dinner at adjacent restaurant **Arlo Grey**. Here, *Top Chef* winner Kristen Kish is serving up globally inspired dishes using Central Texas ingredients.

End your evening at **P6**, a bright and airy sixth-floor cocktail bar whose name comes from its past life as a rooftop parking garage. During the warmer months, arrive just before sundown and ask for a patio table for a front-row seat to Congress Avenue Bridge's famed nightly bat flight.



Launderette



EAT

At least one Austin morning should include a stop by **Jo's Coffee** on South Congress for iced coffee and breakfast tacos (and a photo with the famed "I love you so much" mural). And even with its notoriously long line, you'll want to plan on an order

of ribs at **Franklin Barbecue**. But these days, many of Austin's top dining destinations have a more sophisticated side.

Emmer & Rye, a restaurant where the chef mills fifteen different grains in house, has drawn national



Emmer & Rye

acclaim for its flavorful dishes, including a perfectly swirled *cacio e pepe* that's worth the trip alone. For a creative take on Mediterranean fare, make reservations at **Launderette**, where dishes like burrata with black mission figs or citrusy tuna crudo are served in a retro-laundromat-turned-stylish-café. The best seafood in Austin, though, may be at **Perla's** on South Congress. For the ultimate weekend brunch, snag a seat on the shaded patio on a warm afternoon and indulge in a tower of the fresh oysters, crab legs, and shrimp alongside a chilled Mimosa flight.

LAUNDERETTE AND CIDER: PHOTOS COURTESY OF VISIT AUSTIN; EMMER & RYE PHOTO COURTESY OF EMMER & RYE; PERLA'S PHOTO BY SARAH CROSLAND.



Emmer & Rye



Perla's



Barton Creek Greenbelt



Lucy in Disguise with Diamonds Signage



South Congress



Austin Skyline

DO

It doesn't take long to see that this is a city that loves to be outside. At sunrise, its riverside trails are already filled with runners, while crew teams and kayakers glide over the water. The best spot for hiking and biking is the **Barton Creek Greenbelt**, which winds through wooded areas and alongside swimming holes for twelve miles. On warm days, end your hike with a swim at the spring-fed three-acre **Barton Springs Pool**.

For those who prefer shopping while walking, take a stroll down **South Congress (SoCo)**. The iconic street is packed with shops that are distinctly Austin—think colorful cowboy boots, Western hats, retro records, and vintage wares.

While it may sound strange, during the warmer months, your Austin nights should start with a **sunset bat show**.

Each evening, from early spring until late fall, thousands of Mexican free-tailed bats pour out from their homes beneath Congress Avenue Bridge over Lady Bird Lake, attracting hundreds of viewers by land and water.

And no trip to Austin is complete without at least one night of live music. Be sure to hit an old-fashioned honky-tonk such as **Broken Spoke** or **The Little Longhorn Saloon**, as well as a blues bar like **Antone's Nightclub**. You'll find you



Sunroom at South Congress Hotel

won't have to look hard for music, though. From the Sunday Gospel Brunch at **Stubb's Bar-B-Q** to buskers on seemingly every corner, the city is living up to its official motto: Live Music Capital of the World.

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