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BruceTurner

# The Top 10 Historical Sites in Austin

## **Austin, 1 Day**

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# Guide Description



**AUTHOR NOTE:** Though Austin is known for its live music scene and laid-back urban appeal, many overlook the historical significance of this central Texas city. With the help of this best-of list, visitors can take advantage of an easy opportunity to understand Austin's background, ranging from government bigwigs and ghosts to influential artists and brave lost souls. Turn this Top 10 guide into a day-long event or work a couple points of interest into your busy schedule. Whatever you choose, know that these spots help make Austin remarkable.

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

## Day 1 - Austin



### Texas State Capitol

The colossal house of the Texas state government



### Driskill (The)

Historic downtown beauty



### Governor's Mansion of Texas

Historical Houses in Texas



### Texas State Cemetery

Famous resting place



### St. Mary's Cathedral

Oldest Catholic church



### Treaty Oak

600-year old local landmark



### Elisabet Ney Museum

Home of noted sculptress



### O. Henry House Museum

Visit the 1890s home of O. Henry



### Paramount Theatre

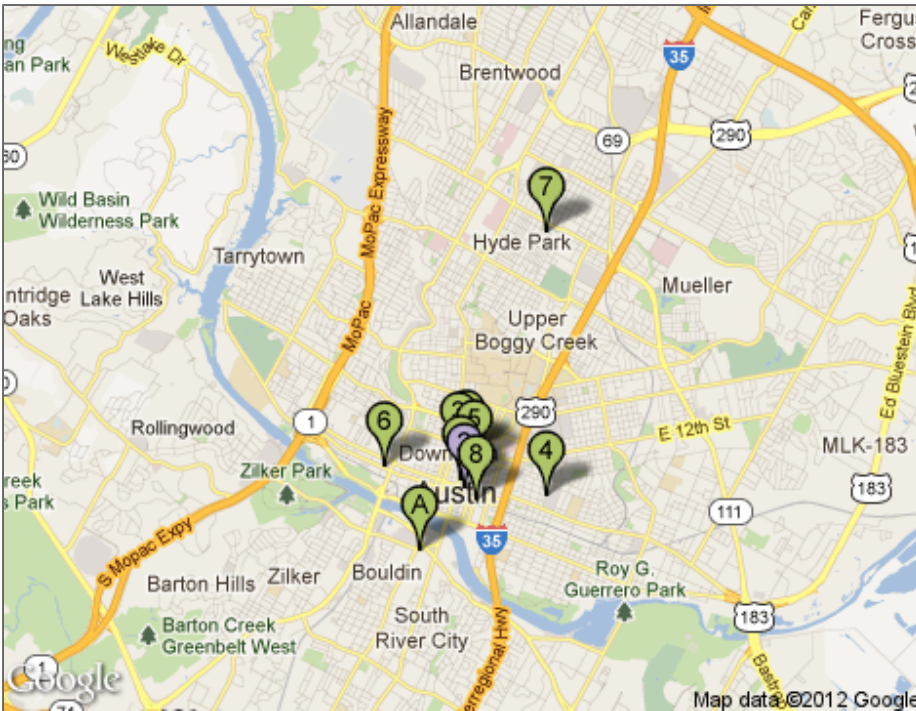
Historic theatre



### Armadillo World Headquarters Plaque

Rock and roll forever

# Day 1 - Austin



## QUICK NOTE

### contact:

tel: 512-463-0063

<http://www.tspb.state.tx.us/spb/plan/tours.htm>

### location:

1100 Congress Ave  
Austin TX 78701

## 1 Texas State Capitol

**DESCRIPTION:** The Texas State Legislature meets only once every two years, so if the cavernous building seems oddly deserted, the legislature is probably not in session. Considered one of the nation's most distinguished state buildings, the Texas State Capitol, with its strong red granite facade and Renaissance Revival architectural style, sits regally on a hill overlooking Congress Avenue. Largest of all state capitols and only second in size to the National Capitol in Washington, D.C., the Texas State Capitol anchors the north end of downtown, just four blocks south of the University of Texas at Austin campus. Free tours of the capitol building cover Texas history, fun facts about the 17 monuments on the 22-acre, park-like grounds, and information about the Texas legislature, or take the self-guided tour to explore at your own pace. You'll need to go through a quick security check at the entrance, including having your bags scanned by a metal detector. © NileGuide



### contact:

tel: +1 512 474 5911 / +1 800 252 9367 (Toll Free)

fax: +1 512 474 2214

<http://www.driskillhotel.com/>

### location:

604 Brazos Street  
Austin TX 78701

## 2 Driskill (The)

**DESCRIPTION: Location.** Located in downtown Austin, Texas, the Driskill Hotel was once the showplace of a cattle baron. Located seven miles from Austin-Bergstrom International Airport, this historic 12-story hotel is adjacent to Sixth Street entertainment district and less than one mile from the Texas State Capitol Complex.



Hotels.com

**Hotel Features.** Gargoyles and busts of The Driskill Hotel's owner and his sons still peer out from high above each entrance, and shorhorn steer heads adorn the outer walls. The lobby's three-story columns reach to a stained-glass dome ceiling canoping marble floors. The hotel features a full-service business center, elegant meeting facilities wired with high-tech capabilities, and a fitness studio complete with stretching room and massage tables. The Driskill Grill offers contemporary American cuisine in elegant surroundings, while old Texas-style décor is found in the 1886 Café & Bakery, serving full breakfasts and light entrees daily. The Driskill Bar is furnished with cowhide couches and features an extensive wine list, native Texas brews, and live piano music.

**Guestrooms.** Palatial guestrooms and suites span from the Driskill's Traditional Wing, built in 1929 featuring the colorful surroundings of the Texas Hill Country, to the Historic Wing's vaulted decorative ceilings, detailed woodwork and balconies. Both wings include original art, lavish draperies, and opulent beds featuring Frette Italian linens. Bathrooms are outfitted with black Brazilian marble tile, brass fixtures and bathrobes. Nightly turndown service, minibars and expanded cable television are room standards. Complimentary guestroom amenities include coffee service, newspapers and high-speed Internet access.

**Expert Tip.** Built in 1886, the Driskill is rich in history and serves as a landmark of Texas hospitality. Its dark mahogany bar with brass railings, scrolled mirrors and crystal globes was imported from Germany and has been featured in many movies throughout the decades, including "Cabaret" in 1972. This hotel is non-smoking. © wcities.com

**contact:**

tel: +1 512 474 9960  
<http://www.governor.state.tx.us/mansion>

**location:**

1010 Colorado St  
Austin TX 78701

**hours:**

10a-noon Mon-Thu

### 3 Governor's Mansion of Texas

**DESCRIPTION:** This is one of the oldest governor's mansions in the country that is still being used on a continuous basis. Builder Abner Cook created a simple square home with four rooms downstairs and four rooms upstairs. A conservatory was added in 1914 along with a new kitchen area. The home showcases original artwork and furniture from yesteryear, as well as modern pieces added during the 1980s restoration. Guests are invited to enjoy viewing the first floor and lush grounds surrounding the home. © wcities.com



**contact:**

tel: +1 512 463 0605  
fax: +1 512 463 8811  
<http://www.cemetery.state.tx.us/>

**location:**

909 Navasota St  
Austin TX 78702

**hours:**

### 4 Texas State Cemetery

**DESCRIPTION:** The city's namesake, Stephen F. Austin, is the best-known resident of this East Side cemetery, established by the state in 1851. Judge Edwin Waller, who laid out the grid plan for Austin's streets and later served as the city's mayor, also rests here, as do eight former Texas governors, various fighters in Texas's battles for independence, and Barbara Jordan, the first black woman from the South elected to the U.S. Congress (in 1996, she became the first African American to gain admittance to these grounds). Perhaps the most striking monument is one sculpted by Elisabet Ney, for



wcities

Grounds: 8a-5p daily; Visitor Center 8a-5p M-F

the tomb of Confederate general Albert Sidney Johnston, who died at the Battle of Shiloh. The narrow drive that runs through the cemetery is actually a state highway. In the 1990s, the cemetery grounds were refurbished and extensively landscaped. This was the pet project of Lt. Gov. Bob Bullock, a politician who was nothing if not resourceful. Thwarted in getting funding passed by the state legislature, Bullock got the driveway designated as a highway so he could allocate funds from the Texas Department of Transportation. When you pay a visit, you can see the highway signs at the entrances. And you can check out a rather fancy tomb with Mr. Bullock's name on it. There are two self-guided-tour pamphlets at the visitor center/museum, which is designed to suggest the long barracks at the Alamo. © Frommer's

**contact:**

tel: +1 512 476 6182  
fax: +1 512 476 8799  
[http://www.austindiocese.org/parishes/austin\\_cathedral1.htm](http://www.austindiocese.org/parishes/austin_cathedral1.htm)

**location:**

203 East 10th St  
Austin TX 78701

**5 St. Mary's Cathedral**

**DESCRIPTION:** St. Mary's Cathedral, designed by noted Texas architect Nicholas J. Clayton, is the oldest Catholic church in Austin. Construction was completed in 1884, but exquisite French and German stained glass windows were added in the 1890s. A beautiful piece of Gothic architecture, this small cathedral now seems almost dwarfed by the high-rise buildings downtown. © wcities.com



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**contact:**

tel: +1 512 476 3809  
<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/treatyOak/>

**location:**

503 Baylor St  
Austin TX 78701

**hours:**

5a-10p Daily

**6 Treaty Oak**

**DESCRIPTION:** Legend has it that Stephen F. Austin signed the first boundary treaty with the Comanche under the spreading branches of this 500-year-old live oak, which once served as the symbolic border between Anglo and Indian territory. Whatever the case, this is the sole remaining tree in what was once a grove of Council Oaks -- which made the well-publicized attempt on its life in the late 1980s especially shocking. But almost as dramatic as the story of the tree's deliberate poisoning by an attention-seeking Austinite is the tale of its rescue by an international team of foresters. The dried wood from major limbs that they removed was allocated to local artists, whose works were auctioned off for the tree's 500th anniversary in 1993. Now such items as pen sets, gavels, and clocks made out of the tree's severed limbs are for sale, with proceeds going to plant additional trees throughout public areas of Austin. © Frommer's



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**contact:**

tel: +1 512 458 2255  
fax: +1 512 453 0638  
<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/elisabetney/html/main.html>

**location:**

304 E 44th St  
Austin TX 78751

**7 Elisabet Ney Museum**

**DESCRIPTION:** The former home and studio of German sculptress Elisabet Ney is open to the public for exploration. This home was one of the first buildings erected in the Hyde Park neighborhood, which was developed as a suburb in 1892 by Monroe Martin Shippe. Ney referred to her space as Formosa (beautiful in Portuguese) and visitors flock to this museum to view nearly 50 busts and statues of Texas heroes,



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**hours:**  
W-Sa 10a-5p; Su noon-5p

as well as Europeans she sculpted as a young artist. Her tools and several personal items are also on display. Admission is free. © wcities.com

**contact:**  
tel: +1 512 472 1903  
fax: +1 512 472 7102  
<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/park/s/ohenry.htm>

**location:**  
409 E Fifth St  
Austin TX 78701

**hours:**  
W-Su noon-5p; closed  
holidays

## 8 O. Henry House Museum

**DESCRIPTION:** Short story writer William Sydney Porter, whose pen name was O. Henry, lived in this home for three years while he spent time in Austin. It was constructed in 1891 and is filled with rare books, O. Henry's writing desk, original furniture, photographs, personal belongings and the chairs that brought *The Gift of the Magi* to life. Enjoy a guided tour and learn about the history of this home and its famous occupant. The home has been moved twice since from its original location at 308 East Fourth Street. It now features a gift shop with books, videotapes and more. The museum offers writing clubs for Austin children and sponsors many local events such as the Victorian Christmas celebration and the "O. Henry Pun-Off." Admission is free, but donations are welcome. © wcities.com



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**contact:**  
tel: +1 512 472 5470  
fax: +1 512 472 5824  
<http://www.austintheatre.org/site/PageServer>

**location:**  
713 Congress Avenue  
Austin TX 78701

## 9 Paramount Theatre

**DESCRIPTION:** The Paramount Theatre has stood on Congress Avenue in the heart of downtown Austin for nearly 100 years. The site of the Paramount Theatre was once home to Sam Houston's office and the War Department of the Republic of Texas and later the Avenue Hotel. As Austin's oldest surviving theatre built in 1915, the Paramount has a long history of entertaining Central Texas audiences.

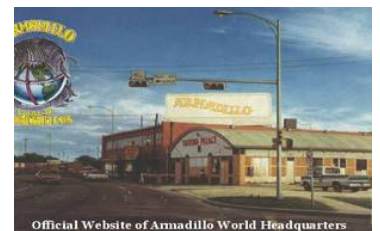
**contact:**  
tel: +1 512 474 5171 (Tourist Information)  
fax: +1 512 583 7280 (Tourist Information)  
<http://www.awhq.com/>

**location:**  
505 Barton Springs Road  
Austin TX 78704

**hours:**  
Daily 24hrs

## A Armadillo World Headquarters Plaque

**DESCRIPTION:** The ground where the One Texas Center stands was the site of the beloved Armadillo World Headquarters. One of Austin's most popular music hall, the Armadillo was a popular hangout for all kinds of people. The list of famous musicians who've played here is illustrious; from AC/DC to Frank Zappa, they've all graced the stage. The Armadillo World Headquarters shut down in 1980 on the grounds of bankruptcy. The commemorative plaque is still a testimony. Music may die, but it'll be remembered forever. © wcities.com



Armadillo World Headquarters Plaque

# Austin Snapshot

## Local Info

With its perfect proportions of adventurous spirit and laid-back atmosphere, Austin wins visitors over time and time again. Nestled in the southern portion of the Lone Star State, the capital city doubles as the hub of serious government affairs and the supreme getaway for outdoor recreation and cultural escape.

### Downtown

The heart of Austin lays downtown, among the busy streets and inner workings of the state government. The Texas State Capitol--built of pink granite and native limestone and standing 14 feet taller than the nation's Capitol in Washington, D.C.--anchors the area's main thoroughfare, Congress Avenue. The street that once paved the way for horses and carriages now houses some of Austin's tallest buildings, including the futuristic-looking Frost Bank Tower--the first high-rise to be constructed in the U.S. following the September 11, 2001 attacks.

The downtown area juggles work and play with a handful of areas organized especially for after-hours fun. Comparable to New Orleans' famous Bourbon Street, Austin's East Sixth Street is often the first place rowdy tourists visit for a memorable night out. Within an eight-block stretch, more than 100 shot bars, live music venues, dance clubs, restaurants and souvenir shops line the street, which is cordoned off from vehicular traffic most nights of the week.

The post-collegiate crowd heads a few blocks west to one of three nearby areas: the Warehouse District, West Sixth Street or the Second Street District. Each neighborhood offers an array of trendy eateries alongside classy pubs, bars and clubs and is only a pedicab ride away from one another.

As the self-described "Live Music Capital of the World," Austin touts a constant schedule of bands and musicians throughout the city, though most

performances are concentrated in the downtown area. The Red River District, located one block west of IH-35 between Sixth and 10th Streets, attracts a mixture of punk, heavy metal and indie rock acts at venues like Emo's, Mohawk and Red-Eyed Fly, while Stubb's regularly schedules big-time touring acts of all genres at the barbecue joint's outdoor amphitheater.

Other popular downtown music venues include Antone's, Austin Music Hall, La Zona Rosa, the Elephant Room and Cedar Street Courtyard, among others. All of these locations and hundreds of other venues host musicians, film premieres and interactive parties during the South by Southwest Music, Film and Interactive Conference held each March.

### University of Texas/ The Drag

Part of Austin's draw is the highly ranked and centrally located University of Texas at Austin. The 40-acre campus sits right in the midst of the city's action, with more than 50,000 students enrolled each semester. The grounds also holds some of Austin's finest museums, including the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum, the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center and the Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art. The campus' western border--Guadalupe Street--is known as the Drag, a mile-long section of coffee shops, cafes and Longhorn-centric stores like the University Co-Op. The open-air Renaissance Market houses local artisans peddling their wares under shady tents, while the nearby Toy Joy stocks the largest array of random baubles fit for all ages.

### South Austin

Lady Bird Lake, formerly known as Town Lake, intersects the city just south of downtown, creating the unofficial divide between Central and South Austin. The Lady Bird Lake Hike and Bike Trail keeps Austinites and travelers alike in shape with nearly 10 miles of landscaped trails amid the hustle and bustle of downtown. Zilker Park, a 400-acre park along the southern shores of the lake, provides wide

open space for kite-flying, Frisbee and other outdoor activities, including dancing at the Austin City Limits Music Festival each October. Kayak and canoe rentals let people enjoy a view of the skyline from the water, while Barton Springs Pool, a natural spring-fed swimming hole, offers up a cool and refreshing respite from the infamous Texas heat. A handful of quirky restaurants--namely Chuy's, Shady Grove, Romeo's, Austin Java Co. and Uncle Billy's Brew & Que--line Barton Springs Road, offering quick and easy meal options for those enjoying the beautiful weather year-round.

Along with university students, musicians and outdoorsy-types, Austin also hosts the largest urban colony of Mexican free-tail bats in North America, which take up residence under the Ann Richards Congress Avenue Bridge from March to November. Their nightly flight for food occurs around dusk and attracts hundreds of visitors eager to see the throngs of insect-eating bats take to the skies.

Just a couple blocks south of the bat haven sits the hip and trendy South Congress Avenue, referred to locally as SoCo. This strip, only a mile or so away from St. Edward's University, houses some of the city's most unique shops (Uncommon Objects, Parts & Labour, Lucy in Disguise) alongside hip hotels (Hotel San Jose, Austin Motel, Hotel Saint Cecilia) and locally owned eateries (Zen Japanese Food Fast, Home Slice Pizza, Guero's Taco Bar). On the first Thursday of each month, area businesses keep late hours while hundreds mingle along the street, shopping and enjoying live music during the free event appropriately dubbed First Thursday. Another SoCo highlight: Airstream trailers-turned-food vendors, and not just of the sno-cone variety. From cupcakes to chicken cones (you have to try one to understand), the block of food trailers draws quite a crowd every night of the week.

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