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BruceTurner

The Top 10 Places to See Live Music in Austin

Austin, 1 Day

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Guide Description

AUTHOR NOTE: There's a reason Austin has been labeled the Live Music Capital of the World and the hundreds of live music venues has a lot to do with it. On any given night, musicians of all kinds take stages across the city--from coffee shops and cafes to nightclubs and concert halls. Steeped in blues, rock and country, Austin also welcomes punk, ska, rockabilly, electronica, hip-hop, acoustic--virtually any genre of music can be found. For a true taste of both local talent and touring acts, check out one of this town's Top 10 music venues.

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Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Austin

Antone's
Classic blues & rock venue

Stubb's Barbecue
Relaxed outdoor barbeque

Parish Room (The)
A variety of popular music

Broken Spoke
Vintage honky-tonk, circa 1964

Emo's
Cutting-edge, alternative, cheap

Elephant Room
Underground bar with smooth jazz

Continental Club
Country, rock, and a distinctively Austin crowd

Cactus Cafe
Songwriter paradise

Zona Rosa (La)
Live music from local and touring acts

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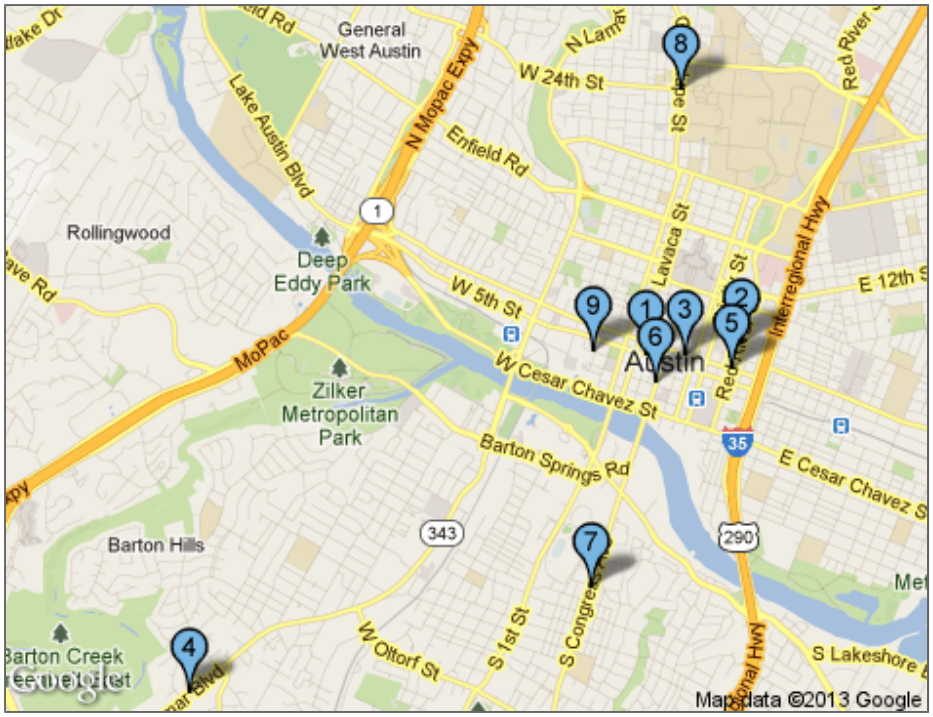
Day 1 - Austin



QUICK NOTE

contact:
tel: +512 320 8424
http://www.antones.net/

location:
213 West Fifth Street
Austin TX 78701

hours:
Daily 8:30p-2a

1 Antone's

DESCRIPTION: Although Willie Nelson and crossover country-and-western bands such as the Austin Lounge Lizards have been known to turn up at Clifford Antone's place, the club owner's name has always been synonymous with the blues. Stevie Ray Vaughan used to be a regular, and when such major blues artists as Buddy Guy, Etta James, or Edgar Winter venture down this way, you can be sure they'll either be playing Antone's or stopping by for a surprise set. Clifford Antone died recently, and the response by the blues community was a large outpouring of performances to honor the man. Look for the club to continue the same trajectory set out by its former owner. © Frommer's

wcities

contact:
tel: 512 480 8341
http://stubbsaustin.com/

location:
801 Red River Street
Austin TX 78701

hours:
Tu-W 11a-10p, Th-Sa 11a-11p, Su 11a-9p

2 Stubb's Barbecue

DESCRIPTION: Within the rough limestone walls of a renovated historic building you'll find great barbecue and country Texas fare and three friendly bars -- plus terrific music, ranging from singer-songwriter solos to hip-hop open mics to all-out country jams. Out back, the Waller Amphitheater hosts some of the bigger acts that come to Austin. © Frommer's

wcities

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contact:
tel: 512 479 0474
fax: 512 479 8646
http://www.theparishroom.com

location:
214 East 6th Street
Austin TX 78701

hours:
Tu-Su 7p-1a

3 Parish Room (The)

DESCRIPTION: This is an intimate venue for those with sophisticated taste. From jazz to house, from acid rock to rap, from shoe-gaze to dub, the place runs the musical gamut. Touring acts such as Smog, Guided By Voices, Autechre and Black Rebel Motorcycle Club have graced the stage. Texas artists Sub Oslo, Lift To Experience, Explosions in the Sky, the Swells and more have also played here. © wcities.com

wcities

contact:
tel: 512-442-6189
http://www.brokenspokeaustintx.com/

location:
3201 South Lamar Boulevard
Austin TX 78704

hours:
Tu-Th 9a-12a, F-Sa 9a-2a

4 Broken Spoke

DESCRIPTION: The most reliable indicator of a high-quality dance hall in Texas is the presence of old people, particularly old people who skillfully dance and spin and seem unaware of anyone other than their partner. On some nights, the Broken Spoke is bursting with lively seniors who dance circles around the novices. Most of the time, there's a mix of young and old, cowboys and hipsters, locals and tourists. The massive wooden dance floor splits the room in two, with seating areas on either side. The bands, whether they're young or old, play mostly traditional country music. Because that's the kind of music owner James White likes, he's been doing things this way since 1964, and he has no intention of changing. Another fan of traditional country music, a certain red-headed stranger, has been known to hang out here when he's not touring. © NileGuide

wcities

contact:
tel: +1 512 477 3667
http://www.emosaustin.com

location:
603 Red River Street
Austin TX 78701

hours:
Call for details

5 Emo's

DESCRIPTION: This live venue provides music on the cutting-edge. Its main entrance is just off of 6th Street, attracting alternative and mainstream patrons looking for local and national acts. You are always greeted with a cold beer at the bar. The front room holds the pool tables, pinball machines and a small indoor stage, while out back the larger bands play on a partially covered outdoor stage. In between the stages lies a courtyard with picnic tables for lounging. © wcities.com

wcities

contact:
tel: 512-473-2279
http://www.elephantroom.com/

location:
315 Congress Avenue
Austin TX 78701

hours:

6 Elephant Room

DESCRIPTION: This basement bar is unpretentious yet unmistakably cool, offering live jazz seven nights a week. And there's usually no cover on weekdays. Michael Mordecai's Monday night Jazz Jam is a must-see; you never know who might show up. The Jazz Pharaohs play every Wednesday night; band member Stanley Smith can make the clarinet sound like a soulful saxophone. Touring acts from all over the

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M-F 4p-2a; Sa-Su 8p-2a

U.S. also play regularly. Jazz superstar Wynton Marsalis has performed at the Elephant Room several times over the years. © NileGuide

contact:
tel: 512-441-2444
fax: 512-443-5478
http://www.continentalclub.com/Austin.html

location:
1315 South Congress Avenue
Austin TX 78704

hours:
Call for details

7 Continental Club

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DESCRIPTION: The Continental Club started out as a swanky dinner club in the 1950s, and it went through a series of ups and downs before emerging as South Congress' premier live music venue. When Steve Wertheimer bought the bar in 1987, the area around the bar was run-down and frequented by prostitutes. As the club developed a loyal following, with acts ranging from roots rock to country, other businesses, including antique shops, restaurants and clothing boutiques, popped up around it. The front area, where the band plays, is long and narrow, with only a smattering of tables and chairs; arrive early if you want a seat. Sitting at the small bar will give you an excellent sampling of Austin culture; bikers, bakers and lawyers drink together and bond over music. In a business where bartenders come and go daily, a few of the Continental Club's friendly, if a little edgy, servers have worked here for 20 years. Some of the popular acts include James McMurtry (son of novelist Larry McMurtry), Jon Dee Graham and Toni Price, whose Tuesday night happy hour show draws legions of slightly obsessive fans. © NileGuide

contact:
tel: 512 475 6515
http://www.utexas.edu/student/txunion/ae/cactus/index.php

location:
24th Street & Guadalupe in Texas Union
Austin TX 78705

hours:
M-Tu 11a-12a, W-Th 11a-1a, F 11a-2a, Sa 8:30a-2a

8 Cactus Cafe

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DESCRIPTION: A small, dark cavern with great acoustics and a fully stocked bar, UT's Cactus Cafe is home-away-from-home for a lot of singer-songwriters. There's a crowd of regulars who come here to see the likes of solo artists such as Alison Krauss and Suzanne Vega, along with well-known acoustic combos. The adjacent **Texas Union Ballroom** (tel. **512/475-6645**) draws larger crowds with such big names as the Dixie Chicks. © Frommer's

contact:
tel: 512 263 4146
fax: 512 263 4194
http://www.lazonarosa.com/

location:
612 West 4th Street
Austin TX 78701

hours:
Tu-Sa 5p-2a

9 Zona Rosa (La)

wcities

DESCRIPTION: This is one of the most popular music venues in the city. With every genre from western to alternative rock played under the arched, open-air roof, you are bound to find a show to suit your particular music taste. Some acts to grace this stage includes Flaming Lips, Primal Scream, Guided By Voices, Mogwai, Bardo Pond and Stereolab. The space is large enough to hold a good-sized crowd and often fills to capacity for touring shows. The venue is located close to downtown, anchoring the new Warehouse entertainment District. © wcities.com

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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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