



# FACTS ABOUT AUSTIN YOU MAY NOT KNOW BUT WILL LOVE!

<https://austin.curbed.com//By Cindy Widner@CurbedAustin>



**Austin is the state capital of Texas and its fourth most populous city. Located in the center of the state, it has scenic natural views and the hustle and bustle of big-city life. There are a few things everyone knows about the city: Austin keeps things weird and it is considered the Live Music Capital of the World, for example. But here are more fun facts you probably didn't know:**

#### **Austin has the only nude beach in all of Texas**

Texas has no laws that stop women from going topless in public. However, no other city in the state has a place designated for nudity. Hippie Hollow is a clothing-optional beach located on Lake Travis. Texas is a conservative state all-in-all, but Austin is pretty liberal.

#### **Austin has the largest urban bat colony in North America**

During spring and summer, about 1.5 million Mexican free-tailed bats migrate to Austin and emerge from under the Congress Avenue Bridge every night. Tourists and residents wait for and watch this unique spectacle.

**No NBA, no NFL, no MLB.** Whether it's due the sheer dominance of Longhorns fans—or just the fact that it's surrounded by three big cities with multiple pro-sports franchises—Austin's first major-league team is the Austin Bold FC, an American professional soccer team. Austin Bold FC competes in the USL Championship, a Division II sanctioned league in the U.S. Soccer Federation hierarchy comprised 36 teams in the United States and Canada.

#### **Tons of movies have been filmed in Austin**

Everyone knows that *Boyhood* was filmed in Austin. But did you know that *What's Eating Gilbert Grape?* was filmed in Texas's capital, too? Other movies that were filmed in Austin include *Dazed and Confused*, *Office Space*, *Ms Congeniality*, *Kill Bill Volume 1*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *True Grit*, *Idiocracy*, *Everybody Wants Some*, *The Faculty*, *Machete*, *The Newton Boys*, *Song to Song*, *The Tree of Life* & *Spy Kids*.

**Electric-green birds on a wire.** Supposedly, the original flock of wild monk parakeets descended from a domesticated group that escaped from a local RV park in the 1970s. Their range seems to expand every year, and now you can spot them all over the city.

**Mother Ginger.** Witnessing different local celebrities play the big-skirted character in Ballet Austin's *Nutcracker* every night of its annual run is a hoot, and being chosen to do so is a high honor that has been bestowed on such luminaries as Ann Richards, Vince Young, and Robert Rodriguez.

**ZIP code pride.** Austin residents don't use area codes to claim their turf. They use ZIP codes as cultural shorthand—"I live in the '23" or "Real estate in the '45 is hot right now"—and ID whole regions of town with the same (78702 is Eastside, 78704 is South Austin, and so on).

**Westlake's native sons.** Longhorns football will probably always have the city's heart, but Westlake High School grads Drew Brees and Nick Foles prove it's no slouch at turning out Super Bowl-winning quarterbacks.

**El Arroyo Sign.** Since 1975, El Arroyo has been serving up Tex-Mex with a side of laughs on their famous marquee sign on the corner of West 5th and Campbell in Austin, Texas. Over the years they've covered every food pun imaginable while never forgetting witty commentary on current events.

**Austin has tons of museums.** The Cathedral of Junk is a favorite of residents and tourists. It's located in the backyard of a small house on the south side of Austin. It's made up of what you might consider junk, from ladders and bicycle parts to clocks. The best thing about this museum is that there's something new to see each time you visit.

#### **Austin celebrates Eeyore's birthday**

Austin has celebrated the birthday of the fictional character from *Winnie the Pooh* since 1963. Eeyore's Birthday Party usually happens on the last Saturday of April. Attendees arrive in colorful costumes and are entertained by live music and very large drum circles.



### The Texas State Capitol building

is the second largest capitol building. The only capitol building that's bigger is the United States Capitol in Washington, DC.

### The Karaoke Underground.

It's karaoke, but it's punk—offering amateurs a shot at non-chart-toppers by bands from Crass to Sleater-Kinney.

### The violet crown.

The pinkish-purple haze that encircles the city just above the horizon some evenings is subtle and enchanting. The phrase refers to a common atmospheric occurrence—and it didn't originate with O. Henry, Austin's patron literary saint and jailbird, as is often asserted. But residents did take enough notice of it to start calling Austin the "City of the Violet Crown," apparently sometime in 1890.

**Low-key celebrity presence.** Okay, Matthew McConaughey couldn't always be described as "low-key." But the citizens of Austin generally enjoy an easygoing relationship with the celebs who live or spend time here (Willie Nelson, Elijah Wood, John Doe, Dan Rather, Sandra Bullock, Andy Roddick, Brooklyn Decker, Carrie Brownstein, Ethan Hawke, Olivia Wilde, a Teen Mom here, a Bachelor there). Maybe it's because we're so much cooler than most of them (not you, Willie and John).

**Barkitecture.** We love our pups so much, we want them to be not just well-fed, but well and stylishly housed, too. That's why, every fall for the past 15 years, local starchitects and designers have deployed their visions to reinvent the doghouse, then displayed and auctioned them at a canine-centric event benefiting local animal shelters and nonprofits.

**(Almost) anything you want to do, you can do outside.** Austinites love to eat, drink, work, hear music, shop, exercise, celebrate, and (sometimes) dance—all outside, even in high summer. In addition to all the natural spaces, there are patios, decks, balconies, and rooftop amenities available to the public everywhere—and most are dog-friendly.

The **tiny highway** that runs through the Texas State Cemetery. When rascally Dem dealmaker Bob Bullock wanted the state to build its cemetery in Austin (so he could be buried in it), he got a small section of an old trail on the Eastside declared a state highway (so it qualified for state funds). It's still a trail, Bullock is buried there, and another Austin legend lives on.

**Waiting for hours for famous barbecue**—or ditching the line for a world-class food truck or a strip-mall surprise. On top of its embarrassment of smoked meat and tortilla-wrapped riches, Austin offers an impressive sampler of foods from all over—from trucks with house-made Italian pasta and deep-fried jambalaya to the sublime sushi, paella, and Nepalese fusion to be found in unassuming, deeply unhip places beyond the central city lights.



**Larry Monroe Forever Bridge.** Covered in a mosaic of mirrors and ceramic work, the short and artful stretch over Blunn Creek on East Side Drive captures both the city's knack for participatory street art and its love of people who make the world better with their big ol' record collections and even bigger hearts.

**Ponies in the bike lane.** It's not unusual to look up from your dashboard, scooter, or sidewalk cafe to see a couple of horses (sometimes mules) being ridden unabashedly on the city streets. (These are miscellaneous riders, not carriages or parade participants.)

**Barton Scream.** So many Austinites swarm at Barton Springs Pool to howl at the full moon that attendance after 8:30 p.m. had to be limited to 750 people. And the popular event—more properly known as the Full Moon Swim—happens every month.

**UT's "secret" libraries.** The Life Science Library reading room in the Main Building is seemingly designed to evoke a huge medieval hall. The Architecture and Planning Library in Battle Hall, designed by Cass Gilbert and built in 1911, looks like its Tuscan cousin. Walking into either one feels like discovering a hidden room in an old castle.

**Zilker Park.** A 351-acre stretch of green that contains Barton Springs, botanical gardens, a hillside theater, a disc-golf course, a leash-free dog area, a sculpture garden, a rowing dock, volleyball courts, and a miniature train, and that hosts a holiday trail of lights, a kite festival, summer musicals, fireworks, and live music—well, that's not a bad place to call "the city's backyard."

Getting the in-jokes on **King of the Hill.** Knowing where the real Landing Strip from Friday Night Lights (and Varsity Blues, and Planet Terror) is. Spotting your neighbor's house (or yours) in Boyhood. Revisiting the place where you got your appendix removed with The Walking Dead.

**Calling it "Town Lake." Town Lake... Lady Bird Lake... the Colorado River.** Whatever you call it, Austin wouldn't be the same without the scenic body of water separating North and South Austin.

**Spotting the Bohn House.** It's fun to catch a glimpse of the gorgeously restored Streamline Art Moderne house as you round a curve on North Lamar Boulevard. The style is a rarity in residential Austin, so the top-notch rendition is startling in a good way.

Austin is the only city in the world that still operates **moonlight towers** Austin has ordinances in place to protect all 17 standing towers from being taken down.

If there is one food that describes Austin, it's **breakfast tacos** If you go to Austin without eating a breakfast taco, did you really even go to Austin?