Austin Area Entertainment

Music: No matter how many things you've heard about the music scene in Austin, you can't visualize its full depth and breadth. More than 150 venues offer regular musical sets. At any given time, more than 3,000 musical acts navigate this maze, and public places are a magnet for live music. Almost across the board it's a consistently high level of musicianship that twice a year peaks in mammoth festivals: South by Southwest in the spring and Austin City Limits Music Festival in the fall.

Arts: Second only to music, the arts are ubiquitous in Central Texas. In a select group of cities with professional symphony, opera, ballet and theater companies, Austin also has benefited as those offerings improved exponentially during the past decades. There's only one large art museum, the Blanton Museum of Art, but plenty of high-quality galleries and smaller museums. Comedy is red-hot in Austin, with dozens of transient sketch, improv and hybrid comedy troupes winning international fame.

Movies: Austin has been a movie mecca, for about 20 years. Besides giants like Robert Rodriguez, Mike Judge, Richard Linklater and Elizabeth Avellán, other directors, actors, designers and technicians wander our streets every day. The Alamo Drafthouse phenomenon started here. Depend on the good folks with the Austin Film Society, Austin Film Festival, South by Southwest Film Festival and other hyperactive groups to keep this city cranking out the films.

Nightlife: As money poured into Austin during the past 2 or 3 booms, club scenesters multiplied the "going out" options. Ultra-lounges were all the rage a couple of years ago. Now the night tribes follow celebrity party planners, social media mavens and mixologists sparking the next cocktail revolution. Newer entertainment districts include West Sixth Street, East East Sixth Street and Rainey Street.

Sports: In Austin, sports count as entertainment. Especially the University of Texas Longhorns on any field of action. They've been joined recently by superior minor-league teams, such as the Round Rock Express, Austin Toros, Texas Stars and the amazing freshman Austin Aztex. Add to that fast-expanding local sports bar phenoms, such as Third Base, Bikinis and Cover 3.

Style: Not long ago, the only fashion show in town was staged annually by the UT design program. Now it seems models walk the runway every night of the week. The presence of powerful national stores (Neiman Marcus, Saks, etc.) helps, but more influential are the masses of designers and boutiques that make up the backbone of the Austin fashion scene.

Food: When asked what they do for entertainment, Austinites often say: "Eat out." As you will soon discover, dining in Austin often comes with a dash of design, music, comedy or film. Take it all in.

Central Texas is bustling with attractions tourists and residents alike can enjoy.

Austin BMX & Skate Park. A 30,000 sq. ft. park with a mixture of obstacles, including ramps, stairs, concrete pyramids, a skate bowl and more. 1213 Shoal Creek Blvd. 974-6700, www.ci.austin.tx.us/parks/skateparks.htm.

Austin Duck Adventures. A narrated, 75-minute land/lake tour in an amphibious vehicle through downtown. 209 E. Sixth St. 477-5274, www.austinducks.com.

Austin Ghost Tours. Downtown walking tours of different haunted buildings and stories from Austin's past and present. Tour schedule on website; reservations required. 853-9826, www.austinghosttours.com.

Austin Nature and Science Center. Camps, exhibits and animal showcase. 301 Nature Center Drive. 974-3888, www.ci.austin.tx.us/ansc.

Austin Zoo. Rescued animals from Texas and around the world, petting zoo and train. 10808 Rawhide Trail. 288-1490, www.austinzoo.org.

Austin's Park. Go-karts, miniature golf, bumper boats, rock wall, batting cages, arcade games, laser tag, pizza buffet and more. 16231 Interstate 35 N., Pflugerville. 670-9600, www.austinspark.com.

Bats in flight. The Ann W. Richards Congress Avenue Bridge over Lady Bird Lake is home to the largest urban bat colony in North America. Best mid-March through early November. The American-Statesman has a free bat-viewing area, 305 S. Congress Ave. Inside Line, 416-5700, category 3636, www.batcon.org.

Bear Creek Stables Inc. Lighted arenas, English and Western riding lessons, guided rides and summer camp. 13017 Bob Johnson Lane. 282-0250, www.bearcreekstables.com.

Bremond Block Historic District. A collection of 11 historic homes constructed from the 1850s to 1910 and bound by Seventh, Eighth, San Antonio and Guadalupe streets. The Convention and Visitors Bureau offers tours on weekends March through November. 800-926-2282, www.austintexas.org.

Capital Cruises. Boat tours on Lady Bird Lake. 208 Barton Springs Road. 480-9264, www.capitalcruises.com.

Capital Skate Park. 7500 square foot indoor skate park. 2008 Picadilly Drive, Round Rock. 251-4500, www.austinskatepark.com.

Chaparral Ice. Ice skating, video games and a hockey program. 14200 N. IH 35. 2525 Anderson Lane. 451-5102, www.chaparralice.com

Congress Avenue and Sixth Street. Guided walking tour of downtown includes historic buildings such as the 1915 Paramount Theatre and the 1886 Driskill Hotel. Wheelchair accessible; parking free on weekends. Call 48 hours in advance to register for a guided walking tour with the Convention and Visitors Bureau. 800-926-2282, www.austintexas.org.

J & M Aviaries. Home to more than 60 species of exotic birds and other animals. Animal encounter shows Saturdays and Sundays. 8647 W. U.S. 290. 288-2199, www.austinavianrr.org.

Kiddie Acres. Amusement park for families with children 10 and younger. Rides, miniature golf and concessions. www.kiddieacres.com. 4800 W. Howard Ln. 255-4131.

Lone Star Riverboat. Double-decker, paddle-wheel riverboat cruises on Lady Bird Lake. 327-1388, www.lonestarriverboat.com.

Mabel Davis District Park. Austin's first skate park with a skate bowl and streetscape elements, Olympic-size swimming pool, playscape and picnic area. www.ci.austin.tx.us/parks/mabeldavis.htm, 3427 Parker Ln.974-6700.

Main Event. Bowling alley, laser tag, rock wall, miniature golf, billiards and a restaurant. 13301 N. U.S. 183. 401-0000, www.maineventusa.net.

Millennium Youth Entertainment Complex. Bowling, roller skating, arcade games, movie theater etc. 1156 Hargrave St. 472-6932, www.myec.net.

Mount Bonnell. Visitors can picnic atop this 775-foot limestone hill with panoramic views of Lake Austin, downtown and the University of Texas. 3851 Mount Bonnell Rd. 974-6700, www.ci.austin.tx.us/parks/mountbonnell.htm.

Old Bakery and Emporium. 1876 structure listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Gift shop and confectionery. 1006 Congress Ave. 477-5961, www.ci.austin.tx.us/parks/bakery1.htm.

Peter Pan Mini Golf. Two miniature golf courses plus video games. 1207 Barton Springs Road. 472-1033, www.peterpanminigolf.com.

Playland Skate Center. Roller skating and in-line skating. 8822 McCann Drive. 452-1901, www.playlandskatecenter.com.

Shore Club Volente Beach Water Park. Water rides, beach and lagoon on Lake Travis. April-September. 16107 RM 2769, Leander. 258-5110, www.shoreclubtx.com/water-park.php.

Texas Capitol. Tours of the Capitol and underground extension. 11th Street and Congress Avenue. 463-5495, www.tspb.state.tx.us.

Texas Union Underground. Located on the University of Texas campus, the Union Underground offers bowling, billiards, arcade games and a laptop lounge. Texas Union, 24th and Guadalupe streets. 475-6670, www.utexas.edu/txunion.

Treaty Oak. 500-year-old famed live oak is the last surviving tree of a grove that once sheltered Comanches and Tonkawas. Fifth and Baylor streets. 974-6700, www.ci.austin.tx.us/treatyoak.

Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve. 227-acre sanctuary for native plants, animals and birds, including some endangered species. Some trails are wheelchair accessible. Weekend, stargazer and moonlight tours. 805 N. Capital of Texas Highway (Loop 360). 327-7622, www.wildbasin.org.

Zilker Botanical Garden. 30-acre botanical garden features a butterfly trail and themed gardens, including a pioneer village and prehistoric garden. 2220 Barton Springs Road. 477-8672, www.zilkergarden.org.

Zilker Park. Downtown park includes Barton Springs, a spring-fed swimming pool, picnicking, a hillside theater, playground and a miniature train. 2100 Barton Springs Road. 974-6700, www.ci.austin.tx.us/zilker/.

Most Austin visitors know where the epicenter of Austin entertainment is, Sixth Street has a reputation. Here is how more than 1,700 people responded when asked what events, places or attractions they attended or went to during the previous 12 months.

Sixth Street events 24%
The Riverwalk (San Antonio) 23%
Any IMAX theater 21%
Live theater 20%
Rock concert 19%
Bob Bullock museum 19%
Art museum 16%
The Alamo 14%
Schlitterbahn 13%
Austin Zoo 13%
Sea World (San Antonio) 10%
Country music concert 10%
South by Southwest festival 10%
Six Flags Fiesta Texas 10%
Paramount Theatre 9%
Comedy club 9%
Dance/ballet performance 8%
Symphony/opera performance 8%
Austin City Limits festival 8%
UT Performing Arts Center 8%
Circus 6%
Inner Space Cavern 5%
R&B/rap/hip-hop concert 4%
Six Flags Over Texas 2%

Austin is the biggest city in the US without a franchise in a major professional sports league. This leaves high school, college and minor-league teams plenty of room to stomp around the town.

College Sports
University of Texas. 800-982-2386, www.texassports.com
Texas State University. 512-245-2272, www.txstatebobcats.com
Concordia University. 512-313-4503, athletics.concordia.edu
Huston-Tillotson University. 512-505-3000, athletics.htu.edu
Southwestern University. 512-863-1381, www.southwestern.edu/athletics
St. Edward's University. 512-448-8480, www.stedwards.edu/sports
Austin Toros (NBA development team). 512-236-8333, www.austintoros.com
Texas Stars (minor-league hockey). 512-467-8277, www.texasstarshockey.com
Round Rock Express (baseball) 512-255-2255, www.roundrockexpress.com

Here is how more than 1,700 people responded when asked what sporting events they attended during the previous 12 months. Three sporting events clearly lead the field. The results show a very broad range of interests.

High school football 18%
Round Rock Express baseball 14%
University of Texas football 13%
UT men's basketball 8%
UT baseball 5%
Houston Astros baseball 5%
Texas Stars ice hockey 3%
Pro rodeo 3%
San Antonio Spurs basketball 3%
WWE (pro wrestling) 2%
Dallas Cowboys football 2%
Baylor sports event (any) 2%
UT women's basketball 2%
Texas A&M football 2%
Houston Texans football 1%
Austin Toros basketball 1%
NASCAR 1%
Texas A&M basketball 1%
Texas Motor Speedway 1%
IndyCar Series 1%

Source: Austin 360 and Scarborough Research, 1,773 interviews, Austin-Round Rock MSA.