

Grab drinks and a movie at Alamo Drafthouse



A “Ninja Turtles” mural on the side of the Slaughter Lane Alamo Drafthouse. Photo: Stephen C. Webster.

When in the mood for a movie, Alamo Drafthouse is a no-brainer for many Austinites. The beers are locally brewed, the feature films range from old classics to present-day blockbusters, and the workers have mad spy skills, no lie. You might be able to get away with texting during a movie in any other theater, but at the Drafthouse, you'll be caught and ousted before you can type the “K” that once seemed so important. Plus, check out [the “Ninja Turtles” mural they put up recently](#) at the Slaughter Lane location (pictured). That's totally radical!

5701 W Slaughter Ln. 512-861-7060. Showtimes vary. General admission after 6 p.m. \$10.50 (\$13.50 for 3D), matinees \$7.75 (\$11.25 3D) with discounts for children 11 and under, seniors, college students, military personnel, Austin Film Society and Austin Film Festival members. [Website](#).

Hike, bike, fish!



A cub scout learns to fish at McKinney Falls State Park. Photo: [Flickr user Roy Niswanger](#), creative commons licensed

The natural opportunities are plentiful south of the downtown grind. There's McKinney Falls, a gem of a state park that features nearly 10 miles of wooded hiking trails, [two amazing natural swimming holes](#), and a [500 year-old tree](#) with a title. Onion Creek Metropolitan Park is a 170-acre, off-leash park with a playscape for the kiddies and a system of lovely shaded nature trails with creek access. If those options don't strike your fancy, try exploring the Williamson Creek Greenbelt, a ribbon park that borders winding Williamson Creek, the rugged five-mile Slaughter Creek Preserve hike and bike trail, and Stephenson Nature Preserve.

McKinney Falls State Park: 5808 McKinney Falls Pkwy near Smith Visitor Center. 512-243-1643. Open daily 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Adults \$6, children 12 and under get in free. [Website](#).

Onion Creek Metropolitan Park: 7001 Onion Creek Dr. or 8652 Nuckols Crossing Rd. 512-974-6700. Open daily 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. Free. [Website](#).

Williamson Creek Greenbelt: 5120 S 1st St. 512-477-1566. Open daily 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. Free. [Website](#).

Slaughter Creek Preserve: 9901 FM 1826, trailhead through automatic gate near Trautwein homestead. 512-477-1566. Open daily 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. Free. [Website](#).

Stephenson Nature Preserve: 7501 Longview Rd. 512-974-6700. Open daily 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. Free. [Website](#).

Smell the roses at Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center



Coneflower and cactus at Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. Photo: [Flickr user Earl McGehee](#), creative commons licensed

Speaking of opportunities to explore nature, drop by Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center to encounter and learn about flowers and plants of all types. As it turns out, the former first lady was something of a conservationist and naturalist in her day, so she and her gal pal Helen Hayes, an actress, founded the Wildflower Center as a way to protect and preserve native flora for future generations. You'll find flowers blooming year-round!

4801 La Crosse Ave. 512-232-0100. Grounds and Gallery open Tues-Sun 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Cafe and store hours vary. Adults \$9, Seniors \$7, Students \$7, Children \$3, members and children 4 and under get in free. [Website](#).

Stuff your face at Pieous



A pizza pie! Photo: Flickr user British Mum, creative commons licensed

Fat Queen. House on Fire. Brussels and Jam. These are just three of the quirky pizza flavors that you can order at Pieous, a locally owned and operated pizzeria in south Austin. The joint's wood-fired pizzas are delicious, perhaps because they're made with local ingredients whenever possible. Pieous serves more than pizza, however; the menu is packed full of local brews, sandwiches, desserts, and more.

12005 Hwy 290 W. 512-394-7041. Open Tue-Fri 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. to 9 p.m., Sat 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., and sun 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. [Menu](#). [Website](#).

Shop 'til you drop



Austin shoppers stroll along South Congress. Photo: Flickr user Mads Boedker, creative commons licensed

Whether you're looking for a traditional or thrifty shopping experience, South Austin has you covered. WestGate Shopping Center, Sunset Valley Village, and the Shops at Onion Creek are all places to find department stores, restaurants, and other classic shopping center opportunities. You'll find half a dozen or so thrift stores along S 1st and W Stassney and a few good more just north of 290/71.

WestGate Shopping Center: 4477 South Lamar Blvd. 512-482-5567. [Website](#).

Sunset Valley Village: 5601 Brodie Ln. 512-476-1771. [Website](#).

The Shops at Onion Creek: 11215 S I 35 Frontage Rd. [Website](#). Hit 'next' to see the rest.

Get your music fix at Austin360 Amphitheater



Austin360 Amphitheater is located at Circuit of the Americas. Photo: [Flickr user Idibri](#), creative commons licensed

This open-air concert venue has quickly become one of Austin's favorite venue choices for hosting huge concerts and events. Capable of housing 14,000 concertgoers between the fixed seats and the grassy areas, Austin360 Amphitheater welcomes an average of 15-20 shows, along with an estimated 1.2 million visitors, each year. Currently, the venue is gearing up to host a Brad Paisley concert on September 4 and a Drake vs. Little Wayne rap battle on September 6.

9201 Circuit of the Americas Blvd. 512-301-6600. Event times and ticket prices vary. [Website](#).

Spend a day at the races at Circuit of the Americas



An aerial view of Circuit of the Americas. Photo: [Flickr user Nan Palmero](#), creative commons licensed

While music lovers from all over the nation flock to the Austin360 Amphitheater, worldwide racing fans congregate in South Austin's Grand Prix facility, Circuit of the Americas. Besides auto races, folks can watch many other types of racing sports at COTA, including motocross, skateboarding, and endurance running.

9201 Circuit of the Americas Blvd. 512-301-6600. Event times and ticket prices vary. [Website](#).

Eat an antelope burger at Wild Bubba's Wild Game Grill



Mmmm cheeseburger... Photo: [Flickr user Pink Sherbet Photography](#), creative commons licensed

While you're in the Circuit of the Americas neighborhood, stop by Wild Bubba's Wild Game Grill to try one of the company's famous antelope burgers. You just might rediscover your own wild side as you peruse the [menu](#)—besides antelope, you can order elk, yak, kangaroo, and more!

13912 FM 812, Del Valle, TX 78617, beside Circuit of the Americas. 512-243-1333. Open Mon-Sat 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. [Menu](#). [Website](#).

Visit the Cathedral of Junk



The Cathedral of Junk. Photo: [Flickr user Fuzzy Gerdes](#), creative commons licensed

A garden of TV sets. Hallways lined with circuit boards and bicycle parts, and an inner “throne room” illuminated by recycled beer signs and other interesting doodads. Built and steadily added to over a period of 26 years by long-term Austinite Vince Hanneman, the Cathedral of Junk is made from over 60 tons of abandoned trash that Hanneman finds or is gifted by fans. What started out as a fun personal project in a man's backyard has now come to symbolize Austin's knack for rehabilitating ugly and unwanted objects (and people) and making them beautiful again.

4422 Lareina Dr. Private home, tour by appointment: 512-299-7413. [Website](#).

Play some Blazer Tag!



A family prepares to play laser tag in Austin. Photo: [Flickr user littlemoresunshine](#), creative commons licensed

Step into your Doctor Who shoes for a moment and image yourself wielding a futuristic gun and shooting laser beams at your enemies from behind glowing barriers and from inside lighted tunnels. You can make this dream a reality at Blazer Tag Adventure Center. Not surprisingly, South Austin's very own laser tag arena is the largest in Texas!

1701 Ben White Blvd. 512-462-0202. Open Mon 4 p.m. to 9 p.m., Thurs 4 p.m. to 10 p.m., Fri 4 p.m. to midnight, Sat 10 a.m. to midnight, and Sun 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. \$8.78 plus tax per person per 20-minute game. [Website](#).

Try the old-fashioned Southern food at Hill's Cafe



You can't go on living without trying one of Hill's Cafe's apple pies. Photo: [Flickr user Robert S. Donovan](#), creative commons licensed

For 65 years, Hill's Cafe has comforted Austinites with its award-winning chicken fried steak, its mouthwatering burgers, and its homemade cobblers and pies. Founder Charlie Goodnight started up the restaurant in the back of his chuckwagon, grilling steaks for himself and other cowboys during cattle drives. The first storefront could seat only 20 people, but over the years, the cafe has grown to accommodate hundreds of hungry guests. Now when you need some great Southern food, you'll know where to go!

4700 S Congress Ave. 512-851-9300. Open Sun-Thurs 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Fri-Sat 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. [Menu](#). [Website](#).

Satisfy your coffee cravings at Strange Brew



Best cup of coffee ever? Photo: [Flickr user sean mason](#), creative commons licensed

Open an amazing 24 hours, 7 days a week, Strange Brew is a quirky coffee shop in South Austin with an adjacent [music lounge](#) for live shows and local brews. Strange Brew boasts a wide variety of coffee, teas, sodas, in addition to manning a spectacular bakery and sandwich bar with vegan and gluten free options. Spend an hour or two surfing the web and sipping a latte and you might never leave!

5326 Manchaca Rd. 512-828-7636. Open daily, 24 hours. [Menu](#). [Website](#).

Drive 'em home at the Roy Kizer Golf Course



An Austin golf course. Photo: Flickr user Matthew Rutledge, creative commons licensed

Get excited, golf-lovers, because there's an awesome 18-hole golf course in Southeast Austin! True to Austin's clean-it-up-and-make-it-something-beautiful mindset, 200-acre Roy Kizer Golf Course was converted from an old wastewater plant into one of Austin's best golf greens. Sandwiched between McKinney Falls State Park and the Onion Creek and Williamson Creek greenbelts, the varied course is considered to be suitable for golfers of most skill levels, as well as for waterfowl and other wetland creaturefolk.

5400 Jimmy Clay Dr. 512-444-0999. Call for reservations, 7 days in advance for weekdays, and the Tuesday before the weekend. Fees vary based on tee time, age, and rental needs. [Website](#).

Try not to overdose on queso at Kerbey Lane



Kerbey Lane Southwest: Lord of the Onion Rings. Photo: [Flickr user Steve Santore](#), creative commons licensed

Kerbey Lane knows how it's done. Established in 2010, Kerbey Lane Southwest (aka. Newbie Lane) is the 5th-youngest of six chain locations throughout Austin. Featuring yumtastic espresso, retro decor, and a first-come first-serve breakfast bar, there isn't much lacking at this iconic ATX haunt. Kerbey Lane's hottest two menu items, queso and pancakes, aren't usually consumed together, but they're so fondly beloved by all who try them that we wouldn't be surprised.

4301 W William Cannon. 512-899-1500. Open daily, 24 hours. [Menu](#). [Website](#).

Scarf down some 50-cent wings at Waterloo Ice House



Buffalo wings! Photo: [Flickr user Greg & Stacie Humpherys](#), creative commons licensed

Whether you're in the market for some epic biscuits and sausage gravy, a Guacamole Bacon Swiss burger, or a Waterloo Rita, Waterloo Ice House has it all. This ridiculously popular local chain has four locations spread throughout Austin and two of them are sub-Hwy 290 and 71. Some pluses: Waterloo's coffee, breads, eggs, pies, and sodas are all sourced locally in the greater Austin area and if you visit during Happy Hour (4 p.m. to 7 p.m.), you'll get 50-cent wings in addition to discounted drinks and appetizers!

Slaughter Lane & Escarpment Blvd: 9600 Escarpment Blvd. 512-301-1007. Open Mon-Sat 7 a.m. to midnight and Sun 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. Menus: [Breakfast](#), [Lunch & Dinner](#), [Drinks](#). [Website](#).

Southpark Meadows: 9600 South IH-35 Service Rd, Suite D-100. 512-292-7900. Open Mon-Sat 7 a.m. to 2 a.m. and Sun 8 a.m. to 2 a.m. Menus: [Breakfast](#), [Lunch & Dinner](#), [Drinks](#). [Website](#).

Each of these 15 South Austin locations has something unique to say about Austin's hodgepodge culture. Between all of the local eats and drinks, the myriad of opportunities to get outside for a little fresh air and exercise, and the often-quirky adventures to be had with loved ones, South Austin doesn't disappoint! Let us know which activities you liked best on our [Twitter](#) or [Facebook page](#)!

1. Pack a picnic and head to gorgeous natural swimming



Flickr: 95572727@N00

This magical place on earth was formed when the dome of an underground river collapsed, leaving a ring of waterfalls and a gorgeous natural swimming pool.



Flickr: charliellewellin

This dusty dancehall is a touch of authentic Texas 10 minutes from downtown Austin. If you get to see Dale Watson play, you're doubly lucky.

3. See the city's 1.5 million Mexican Free-Tailed Bats emerge from underneath the Congress Bridge at dusk.



Flickr: 71966930 @N00

That chill you'll feel when you first get in is just your heart filling up with the positive vibes that enchant this entire natural place.

6. Spend some time in the amazing ladies bathroom



yelp.com

The most amazing little bathroom in the world is attached to an almost equally amazing divey piano bar on West 5th St. There's a CARPETED NOOK that you have to climb up a ladder to get to where you can look out over the entire bar / spy on your boyfriend.

7. Sift through the photographs and antique whimsy of



Flickr: salisasaki

The South Congress store is packed from ceiling to floor with baubles, dolls, furniture, jewels, taxidermied animals, and my favorite — mysterious antique photos from strangers whose memories are just waiting for you to come rescue them.

8. Watch the fireworks over Lady Bird Lake or Lake



Flickr: 95572727@N00

Literally the most romantic thing you could ever do, probably in life.



[Bolos Mexican Restaurant.](#)

Flickr: 48680109@N04

You will get drunk on guacamole and the infinite salsa bar as well. Sitting on the patio is the best place to be if you're planning to get loud.



make out.

Flickr: 29697878@N00

11. Do some hipster gazing and coffee drinking at [Spiderhouse.](#)



Flickr: 64143167@N06

Adjacent to the UT campus, Spiderhouse has been the destination for under-21 dates, chain-smokers, and those too cool for the downtown bar scene for close to 20 years. If you need a place to read your worn paperback Kerouac novel and pick up a cutie with glasses, this is your heaven.

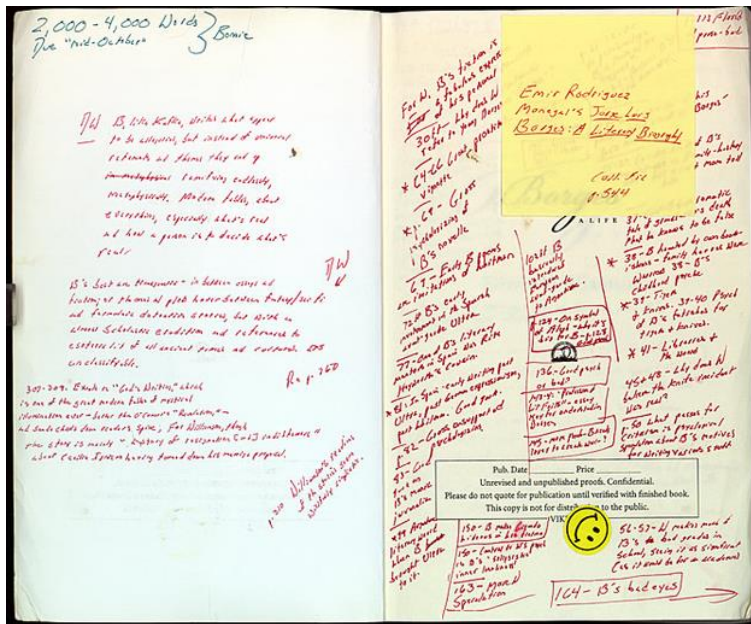
12. Get contemplative among the waterlilies and quiet



Flickr: kthread

A chill retreat when even Austin's laid-back version of hustle is too much for you.

13. Go pore over David Foster Wallace's papers at the [Harry Ransom Center](#) and see if you get more intelligent by osmosis.



hrc.utexas.edu

The HRC has a [huge collection](#) of Wallace's ephemera, books, and correspondence, including over 300 annotated books from Wallace's library.

14. Witness the burnt orange insanity of a University of



Flickr: 14489732 @N00

Texas <3s its football. If UT isn't your jam, the bleachers of any Austin high school game are also the perfect way to spend a Friday evening.

15. Nosh on some delightfully weird and delicious vegetarian dishes at [Veggie Heaven](#).



Flickr: 84184014@N00

I particularly recommend “Protein 2000,” the hilariously named best-selling menu item that’s basically a plate of fried vegetable protein covered in delicious sweet brown sauce. You might also notice that the restaurant’s owners feed everyone who comes to the door to ask for food, regardless of whether they have anything in their pockets.

16. Go to see your favorite movie like you’ve never seen it



zagat.com

The best movie theater in the world according to big fans like Quentin Tarantino, Richard Linklater, and Elijah Wood, plus the entire population of Austin basically. The Alamo serves food and beer during the film and dots their new release schedule with weird and wonderful revivals, quote-alongs of cult classics, and marathons like the Lord of the Rings feast or a screening of all eight Harry Potter movies.

17. Worship at the [Bullock Texas State History Museum](#).



Flickr: 26809429 @N02

People who aren't from Austin sometimes refer to it as an "island" inside Texas or some other similar attempted compliment, but true Austinites love being Texans and are stoked as heck on learning more about Texas history.

18. Finally get a chance to sing your *real* favorite song at karaoke with [Karaoke Underground](#).



[Facebook: 123133827702715](#)

The punk and indie karaoke specialists have a standing first Saturday of the month gig at Nomad bar if you've always dreamt of karaoking your favorite Sleater-Kinney song but never got the chance.

19. Eat at East Side Kings and drink all night on the back



[yelp.com](#)

Paul Qui's been serving up beet fries and deliciousness from a trailer in the back of the Liberty Bar since before he won *Top Chef* and got all fancy on us. It's still my favorite of his now many institutions, and as a bonus you're at the favorite bar of the coolest people in Austin (my friends).

20. Get lost in the rows upon rows of new and vintage at [Pinballz Arcade](#).



Flickr: 71606984@N00

AND IT'S BYOB.

21. Spend a date playing among the uncanny valley



Flickr: 44578381@N05

It's fun AND horrifying! And it's BYOB *and* if you call in advance they'll put your name on the marquee for free!

22. Do the full loop of the Lady Bird Lake Hike & Bike



kut.org

If you're into running, it's a joy. If you're not, bring some stale bread for the ducks, geese, and swans that like to chill nearby.

23. Dig through stacks on stacks on stacks of wonder at



thepinksamurai.blogspot.com

If you love thrifting or antiquing, your eyes will go as wide as saucers as soon as you walk in the door.

24. Stumble upon some “yarn-bombed” trees.



Flickr: 55569773@N00

The yarn-bombing movement originated [in Texas](#) and is easy to spot in Austin if you keep your eyes peeled for the little bursts of magic.

25. Try a selection of beer served lovingly by the experts



whipin.com

And while you're there try some hot curry at the dhabapub and see some tunes on its tiny perfect stage.

26. Stuff yourself on authentic cajun food at [Nubian Queen Lola's Soul Food](#).



upload.wikimedia.org

So good that it will haunt you for the rest of your life if you don't live close enough to pop in anytime.



[Flickr: elchupacabra](https://www.flickr.com/photos/elchupacabra/)

Just don't make a habit of it, OK?

28. Gather up the courage to visit Hippie Hollow, Austin's clothing-optional swimming spot.



upload.wikimedia.org

It's actually quite beautiful so long as you don't mind naked people.



[yelp.com](https://www.yelp.com)

It's actually worth it, and all of the waiting will just make you appreciate it more.

30. Admire the peacocks just wanderin' around at Mayfield Park.



Flickr: 86029670 @N00

They are pretty.

31. Explore the eerily beautiful natural wonder of



Flickr: eschipul

Created over thousands of years by water on limestone bedrock, this is one of those places that feels like a different planet. Perfect for a day trip.

32. Wander through the wonder of the Cathedral of Junk.



Flickr: austins_only_paper

This art attraction is located in one backyard of an otherwise quiet neighborhood in South Austin and it's basically like *Hoarders* if *Hoarders* made you feel inspired and invigorated instead of sad.

33. Look at an amazing collection of natural artifacts you can examine yourself at the [Austin Nature & Science](#)



insidenanabreadhead.com

This cool place feature wild animals that can't be released back into the wild, but the real treasure is in the "naturalist's workshop," a room full of skulls, snakeskins, and fossils you can feel, hold, and stare at for hours.

34. See a show or a summer movie at the historic [Paramount theater](#).



bernardoni.com

The theater was built in 1915 and wow boy is it beautiful.

35. Admire the spring splendor at the [Lady Bird Johnson](#)



[Flickr: 64222254@N00](#)

First Lady Johnson was a fierce conservationist who loved wildflowers and spent much of her life working to preserve wild spaces. Remember her and take in all the beauty one heart can handle in one fell swoop at the Wildflower Center named in her honor.

Favorite South Austin hangouts:

1. **Circle C Metropolitan Park** – Located in Circle C off Slaughter and Mopac is this large shady park. There is always a nice breeze and there are playscapes for both older kids and younger kids. You take a narrow drive to the parking lot so the park is set a good distance off from the busy road. Next to the playscapes are soccer fields.
2. **Dick Nichols Park** – This park is off south Mopac and Davis at 8011 Beckett Rd. While there is not much shade over playscapes here, there are plenty of picnic tables under shade, a button activated seal fountain that squirts water, a pool, basketball courts and about a 1 mile walking trail
3. **Garrison Park** – Right off Manchaca is this expansive park with lots of shade and trees throughout, some walking trails and picnic tables, 2 playscapes and even a pool. It is also set off from the street by a road to a parking lot. My sons preferred running through the trees to spending much time on the playscapes so if you have an “escapee” you’ll want to keep an eye out.
4. **Strange Brew Coffee** – This coffee shop and music venue is across the street from Garrison Park and has a small yard out back with tables and benches and free wi-fi (shade and covering is limited out back). Strange Brew has great coffee drinks (including beer and wine), in addition to sandwiches and baked goods.
5. **Thrift Town** – Located a block south of both Garrison Park and Strange Brew at 5700 Manchaca Rd, Thrift Town is a kid friendly thrift store with lots to browse through. It can be a nice indoor trip for both parents and kids and has a substantial kid clothing section.
6. **The Austin Aqua-Dome** – Just north of 290 off of Manchaca at 1604 Fortview Road is a really cool fish store in the shape of a dome. You can check out the interesting livestock for sale (freshwater fish downstairs and saltwater fish upstairs) or just observe their amazing in-store reef tank set-ups downstairs. Outside are several ponds with koi fish and turtles which you can feed for just \$1 by buying a bag of food inside at the register.
7. **Irie Bean coffee** – Off of South Lamar in the 2310 shopping center is a neat coffee joint that has great coffee (beer and wine as well) and snacks. Out back there is a mostly enclosed patio with tables, a water fountain, a stage for when they have live music and an interesting structure which I think is an old cement truck drum turned into a sort of walk-through. My boys love to go into it and hear their voice echo or bang on the side (unless there is someone studying nearby of course). They also like to climb on a small hill that is great for sitting on near the stage. Sometimes you can even find a few toy trucks up by the register which can be borrowed for play for the duration of your stay.

8. Phil's Ice House/Amy's Ice Creams on South Lamar – This place has an enclosed play structure (and cow statue on which you can sit) that is mostly shaded. The playscape is a bit much for the younger crowd but if it isn't too crowded, even my 18 month old is able to play on it. Grab a yummy milkshake and sit on the patio while you watch your kids play!

9. Ricky Guerrero Park – This is a park with a large splashing fountain area that is mostly enclosed. It was fairly crowded the day I went in the afternoon on a weekday. There is a play structure that is not shaded. I saw babies as young as 6 months all the way up to kids about 11 years old playing in the splash pad.

10. Butler Park and the Liz Carpenter Fountain – THIS is my favorite splash pad in Austin. I have just as much fun as my kids do. The ground is very hot in the summer so wearing sandals or water shoes is recommended. It is not enclosed and there is minimal shade in the outlying areas around the fountain. My boys also enjoy “climbing” the large hill next to the fountain. You can catch a gorgeous view of downtown Austin at the top of the hill.

11. Whole Foods downtown – I know technically this is not “south” it is more central or downtown, however, its just a drive up south lamar from South Austin and many people don't know there is a playscape on the plaza. Grab a coffee and a treat downstairs and take the elevator or walk the stairs up to the rooftop plaza where you'll find a cute little play area and tons of tables and seating. There is some shade, a nice breeze and a great view.

12. Whole Foods Arbor Trails – While there is no playscape here, there is a food court area inside with a perfect kid sized table and chairs for enjoying breakfast, lunch or dinner. There is always a buffet to be had. The early weekend mornings are usually fairly empty and kids can walk around the eating area.

13. The Natural Gardener – This is a gorgeous garden supply store and garden you can walk through and enjoy. It is free to just stroll and hang out! There are chickens, goats and a donkey near the back and several different themed gardens throughout. There are red flyer wagons at the front of the store which you can use to pull a kid or two around or for putting plants in to buy. There is a nice bench swing and some seating areas under shade. Inside you can find bottled tea and popsicles.

14. First Evangelical Church/MOCHA (Monterrey Oaks Coffee House Austin) – As a mom of two young kids, I have to say, I LOVE this place. The cafe is open from 7:00-4:00 on weekdays and 8:30-2:00 on Sundays. The cafe fare includes sandwiches, baked goods and a variety of beverages. They even have a PB&J option for the kids! There is one large playground area covered by a wonderful canopy that provides ample shade. The playground is divided into two parts by a gate which you can secure by yourself as needed (exciting for those of us with “escapees”!) One half of the playground is good for the tots (specified ages 2-5) and the other half is for kids 5-12. There is also a gnarly oak tree and a lovely fountain (for looking, not playing) on the grounds in front of the cafe.

The tables are all under the shade of oak trees outside of the playground gates and within the cafe is plenty of space to cool off or chill out.

15. Southpark Meadows – It has been many months since I last visited “the grove” at Southpark Meadows, however, I know that many people use this play area as a staple in their park routine. There is a fountain that apparently has no operating schedule and several play structures. It is surrounded by restaurants and places to grab a treat while you supervise your kiddos as they play.

16. The Austin Zoo – **DISCLAIMER:** I have not been to this zoo yet, but my sister-in-law, who is involved with Big Brothers Big Sisters, has taken her “little sister” here and recommended it to me. The zoo is located west of Oak Hill at 10807 Rawhide Trail. This zoo is a non-profit organization and provides shelter and care for rescued animals. My sister-in-law recommended the tiger exhibit featuring a tiger who had been rescued from a junk yard as well as a large hog who used to be a young girl’s 4H project and now her family continues to pay for his care in the zoo. She also said you can sometimes find agroupon for the zoo that is two admissions for the price of one (regularly \$8 per adult and \$6 per child 2-12).

17. The Austin Nature and Science Center – Most of us are already familiar with all Zilker Park has to offer the kiddos (namely, the Zilker Zephyr, the Zilker Park playground, Barton Springs, the Lady Bird Lake hike and bike trail) but I wasn’t aware of this treasure until recently. This adventure spot is located under the Mopac bridge off of Stratford Drive (which is where we parked the day we went). A large portion of this center is outdoors so take that into consideration during inclement weather.

This center is free for all who come although there are several areas where you can donate by dropping some cash into a container. I was surprised to discover a mini zoo which included several rehabilitated and rescued birds of prey outdoors and some former pet birds, reptiles and insects indoors. They always welcome donations for care of the animals and you can find a list of things they could use for them inside the reptile and insect area.

In the main building, there are so many things to discover – bones, molted snake skin, skeletons and shells of various small animals, etc. and you are welcome to inspect them with a magnifying glass. My boys enjoyed cooling off after the large sand “dino pit” out back by playing in the simulated cave indoors. In the cave room, we discovered several science themed kid books. When we were there, we found that a summer camp was going on so check out their website for more information on the camp and hours of operation. Get out there and have fun with the kids “keeping it weird” in South Austin!