

Fodor's

GAY
GUIDE TO THE
USA

THE MOST
COMPREHENSIVE
GUIDE FOR
GAY AND LESBIAN
TRAVELERS

ANDREW COLLINS

Body and Fitness

Boot Camp (Ansley Mall, 1544 Piedmont Ave., ☎ 404/876-8686) is big with muscle boys and can be quite a scene. **Mid City Fitness** (2201 Faulkner Rd., ☎ 404/321-6507) has a more mainstream following and has become the most popular gym with gays and lesbians in the city. The **Fitness Factory** (Midtown Outlets, 500 N. Amsterdam Ave., off Monroe Dr., ☎ 404/815-7900) has quickly developed a gay following.

2 Out in Austin

AMERICA'S CITIES ARE STRIKING PORTRAITS of highs and lows, gains and losses, compromises and accommodations. We cope with New York City's crime and grime to be able to enjoy its restaurants, culture, and sophistication. L.A.'s smog and plasticity may be hard to take, but the film industry's glamour and Santa Monica's beaches keep us happy. New Orleans is an all-night party—but how much of that is too much? For almost every city a simple rule seems to hold: Opposing each of its strengths is an equally significant weakness.

The capital of Texas, however, is the exception to this rule, particularly if you're gay. Look all you like: There is simply nothing wrong with Austin, and it seems to have an unmistakably rosy future. As one gay resident commented with a hint of frustration in her voice, "Everybody is just so damned comfortable here." Even the disconcerting election in 1994 of former first son George W. Bush as governor of Texas has done little to upset people. "It's certainly not a good thing," commented another local, "but with regard to gay issues, he's really an unknown. Ann Richards appointed several lesbians and gays to high level positions—she gave us extremely high visibility in state politics. Bush claims he simply won't ask." (Former governor Ann Richards is in fact cited as often as the University of Texas as a major reason Austin is such a lovely city. And it's hard to believe Bush will be as good to this free-thinking, arts-minded, eco-concerned community as she was for so many years.)

Even if this largely conservative state now has a staunchly conservative governor, few in the gay community are overly concerned about the state of politics in Austin itself. For one thing, Austin's representative on the state legislature is none other than openly gay Glen Maxie. And Austin's mayor, Bruce Todd, is exceedingly gay-friendly and progressive.

Spend a few days in Austin and you'll even begin to wonder if it's truly in Texas. This is actually one of the most diverse cities in America, and it's thriving. While Houston slumped in the '80s, Austin had the nation's fastest growing economy. *Fortune* rated Austin's work force as the fifth most knowledgeable in America. It has the highest number of restaurants per capita in the United States, the most movie screens per capita, more than 100 live-music clubs, the sixth-highest number of artists per capita, and the highest bookstore sales per capita. It's also been cited as the nation's most computer-literate city, the fifth-best city in which to start a business (*Entrepreneur*), the most "fit city" (*Walking*), and the third-best place to live (*Money*).

The University of Texas could probably take credit for some of these startling statistics. UT attracts people to Austin, and many decide to stay. For this reason, Austin has a high number of parking attendants and burger flippers with PhDs. Only so many high-level jobs exist, and highly educated residents are often forced to take what's left. It's not surprising that the pop term "slacker" was coined here a few years back, when an amusing, low-budget documentary on the city's brightest and youngest do-nothings achieved cult status.

Yes, here in Austin, where high-tech industry thrives, slackerdom is a major force, or antiface, to be perfectly accurate. As you stroll by the coffeehouses and restaurants along Guadalupe Street, note the remarkable number of disillusioned Gen-Xers hitting passersby up for change. In many ways a nuisance, their presence nevertheless adds a certain grungy charm to the streetscape.

Some peculiar battles relevant to the gay community have been fought here in recent years. Apple Computers nearly decided not to move to nearby Georgetown because the company's gay-friendly benefits rules clashed with the county's gay-unfriendly attitudes. Though Austin's Travis County is the most liberal in Texas, neighboring Williamson County, of which Georgetown is the county seat, is quite conservative. The county eventually relented, and Apple moved in, joining the likes of Dell Computers, IBM, and Motorola as key engineers of Austin's information highway.

Although antidiscrimination laws protecting gays have been on the books in Austin since the last decade, passing a same-sex benefits package for city employees has proven trickier. Austin actually did pass a resolution in favor of domestic-partner benefits in September 1993, but enraged Bible thumpers rose up against it, raising enough of a stink to cause a revote in May 1994. Few took the revolt seriously, but much to the amazement of many complacent Austinites, the package was repealed.

Nevertheless, residents—straight and gay—still praise Austin as one of America's best cities, and visitors keep coming back to savor a few cheap meals, catch a few bands, sun themselves along the banks of Barton Creek or Travis Lake, drive around the hill country, browse a few funky shops, and wonder why it is they live somewhere else.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

People disagree about the designations and borders of neighborhoods in Austin. Such fabled enclaves as Travis Heights, Clarksville, Red River, and Barton Springs are bandied about from time to time. The local paper, the *American-Statesman*, groups the city's restaurants in its weekly roundup into regions based on points of the compass: Northwest, Northeast, Central, Southwest, and Southeast. And real estate ads often default to listing properties in terms of their proximity to well-known landmarks (e.g., Zilker Park, the University of Texas, the MoPac Expressway). If you ask where Austin's gay neighborhoods are, most locals shrug, noting that gays and lesbians live, eat, and conduct their business all around town.

Downtown

Austin's grid-shaped downtown is defined to the west by Lamar Boulevard, to the north by Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, to the east by I-35, and to the south by the Colorado River (or Town Lake, as the segment that fringes downtown is called). There isn't that much in terms of sightseeing, but there's plenty to do. The area is small and walkable, and for the most part very picturesque. And what it lacks in attractions, it makes up for with shops, restaurants, and music clubs.

Sixth Street (a.k.a. Old Pecan Street) is Austin's equivalent of New Orleans's Bourbon Street. It has the liveliest array of diversions—all quite gay-friendly. Red River Street, which intersects 6th, has more of the same from about 4th through 8th streets. Most of the neighborhood below the State Capitol (11th and Congress Sts.) makes for good exploring and shopping. The outskirts of downtown are largely made up of quiet, tree-lined residential streets. If you feel you have to have a guided tour of something—anything—stop by the Renaissance Revival **State Capitol Complex** (☎ 512/463-0063), the largest in the country, a good nine feet taller than the one in Washington, D.C.

Connecting downtown to the area just south, across Town Lake, is the **Congress Avenue Bridge**, famous as the home of more than 1.5 million Mexican free-tailed bats, who hang out beneath it from March to November. Curious onlookers gather at dusk on the walkway along the river to watch the nation's largest urban bat colony emerge from its daytime slumber and take to the night skies.

South of Downtown

Here you'll discover the less prettified but still engaging **Barton Springs**. If you follow Barton Springs Road (site of many of the city's slacker-infested shops and eateries) you'll reach **Zilker Park**; an offshoot of the Colorado River, Barton Creek, snakes southwest out of the city through the park. Zilker is a popular place to tan your hide on sunny days, and a good place to meet some of the city's outgoing locals. There's also a popular swimming hole here, **Barton Springs**, whose spring-fed pool remains an invigorating 68°F year-round. Following Barton Springs Road east will bring you to South Congress Avenue and to **Travis Heights**. If Austin has an unofficial gay settlement, Travis Heights is it. It's bordered by Riverside Drive to the north, I-35 to the east, Oltorf Street to the south, and Congress Avenue to the west.

University of Texas and Environs

North of downtown is the sprawling campus of the **University of Texas**, which is bordered to the north and south by a commercially and residentially mixed neighborhood. The campus itself is bound to the west by Guadalupe Street, to the north by East 26th Street, to the east by I-35, and to the south by Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. The 357-acre campus (tours are available, ☎ 512/475-7348) is dotted with dozens of notable buildings, including the **Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library and Museum** (2313 Red River Rd., ☎ 512/482-5279) and the **Texas Memorial Museum** (2400 Trinity, ☎ 512/471-1604), which has exhibits on state history and local flora and fauna. **Guadalupe Street** (known along its border with UT as "The Drag") is another haven of Austin's slackerdom as well as *the* place to shop for locally made arts and crafts, Longhorn memorabilia, and other offbeat goods.

Lake Travis and Points West

A great way to spend a sunny afternoon is to drive out to Lake Travis. Begin by driving west on RR 2222 for several miles, then turn left onto Route 640W and take a right a short while later on Comanche Road. This leads to the famed **Oasis** restaurant (*see* Eats, *below*), which overlooks the shores of **Lake Travis**, and, farther on, to **Hippie Hollow State Park** (populated with gay sunbathers).

To get back to Austin, return to and turn right onto Route 640W; in a few miles you'll pass a recently opened outpost of the regionally famous Mexican bar and restaurant, **Carlos'n'Charlies**, a popular party ground on weekends. Continue on Route 640W another 10 miles to the tiny city of Beehive, and turn left at the light onto Route 71. A mile farther, make

another left onto RR 2244 (Bee Cave Road), and follow that 15 miles back to town. The last section of this scenic loop (particularly around Barton Creek Boulevard) will take you past some of the city's wealthiest developments.

GETTING AROUND

Austin's lively downtown is navigable on foot, and you can definitely enjoy three or four days in Austin without wheels. If you want to take advantage of greater Austin, however—the beautiful countryside west and north, many of the better restaurants, and the University of Texas—you'll need a car. Public transportation isn't really adequate, and taxis are inconvenient (and generally too expensive) for greater distances.

EATS

Even though Austin has some terrific restaurants, it's impossible to spend a lot of money on food here. Just try to find an entrée above \$15—most are in the single digits! Almost every neighborhood has a few good restaurants to choose from. There are several downtown, close to major hotels and most nightclubs. Many others are farther afield, however—north and west of the city. There's a particularly funky stretch of dilapidated, queer-friendly eateries south of Town Lake on Barton Springs Road. Austinites like to dine out and often late—most places are still hopping past 10 PM, especially on weekends.

For price ranges, see Chart B at the front of this guide.

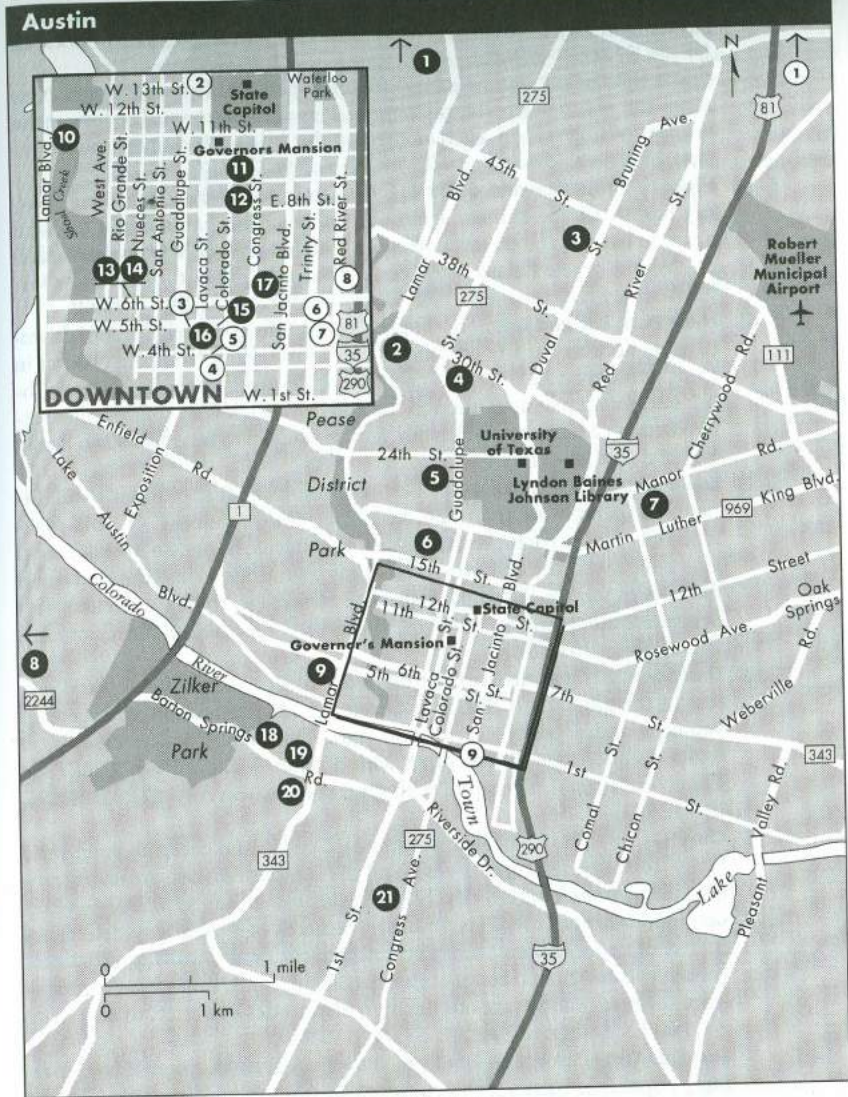
\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ Coyote Cafe. Mark Miller, a renowned Southwestern cook, first opened a Coyote Cafe in Santa Fe, then one in Las Vegas, and recently this one in Austin. The nouvelle Southwestern menu leans toward the grill. Popular dishes are blue-corn New Mexican enchiladas, pan-roasted salmon, Mexican green-chili sirloin filets, and the Cowboy Steak, a 20-pound slab of black Angus rib steak. Faux adobe walls, Santa Fe shuttered windows, leather booths, handmade cowhide chairs, and earthy hues make you feel as if you're dining in a Spaghetti Western. 612 W. 6th St., ☎ 512/476-0612.

\$\$-\$\$\$ Granite Cafe. West of the University, the Granite Cafe with its light, airy dining room and inviting terrace is as upscale as Austin gets. The eclectic, contemporary menu changes daily (for both lunch and dinner). Recent offerings included sesame mahimahi on Asian noodles, lamb with rice pilaf and cassis-peppercorn sauce, and several varieties of wood-oven pizza. 2905 San Gabriel, ☎ 512/472-6483.

\$\$ El Rinconcito. The blackboard menu of this elegant little Mexican restaurant is always crammed with inventive specials like jalapeño and cheese-stuffed shrimp wrapped in bacon and simmered in a smoky chipotle sauce. The intimate dining room is suffused with warm lighting and decorated with authentic Mexican crafts. In the same shopping center as Liberty Books (see *The Little Black Book*, below). 1014-E N. Lamar Blvd., ☎ 512/476-5277.

\$\$ Mars. An unprepossessing pale gray clapboard structure on residential San Antonio Street houses one of Austin's hottest restaurants and bars. The interior walls are fiery red and lined with glittering copper sconces, and the food is fiery hot—bistro versions of Thai and Indian standards, including wonderful naan bread pizzas with a variety of toppings. 1610 San Antonio, ☎ 512/472-3901.

\$\$ Cafe Spiazzo. Much of the interior of this chic but casual, noisy but refined restaurant is speckled with multicolor sprays of paint that would



Eats ●

Cafe Spiazzo, **1**
Castle Hill Cafe, **9**
Chuy's, **18**
Common Market Cafe, **21**
Coyote Cafe, **14**
East Side Cafe, **7**

El Rinconcito, **10**
Flipnotiks, **20**
Granite Cafe, **2**
Hickory Street Bar and Grill, **12**
Hyde Park Bar and Grill, **3**
Insomnia, **5**
Katz Deli, **13**

Little City, **11**
Louie's 106, **17**
Mars, **6**
Oasis, **8**
Ruby's BBQ, **4**
Ruta Maya Coffee, **16**
Shady Grove, **19**
Thai Soon, **15**

Scenes ○

Area 52, **5**
'Bout Time, **1**
Casino El Camino, **6**
Chain Drive, **9**
Charlie's, **2**
DJ's, **8**
5th Street Station Dance Hall Saloon, **7**
Oilcan Harry's, **4**
Nexus, **3**

make Jackson Pollack proud. The designer pizzas and gourmet salads and pastas rival any in town. Very gay staff and patronage. 5416 Parkcrest Dr., ☎ 512/459-9960.

- ⌘-⌘ **Castle Hill Cafe.** It can be a bit difficult to get a table in this bright New American bistro in a pretty pink house west of downtown. The long menu has lots of finger food, such as the popular brie with chutney, plus a variety of grills and salads. 1101 W. 5th St., ☎ 512/476-0728.
- ⌘-⌘ **Hickory Street Bar and Grill.** Welcome to food-bar headquarters: Hickory has an all-you-can-eat salad bar, an ice cream bar, a bread bar, and a potato bar. This large, social hangout with red-and-white checkered tablecloths and beveled glass is the perfect place to pig out. Great New Orleans-style breakfasts, too. 800 Congress Ave., ☎ 512/477-8969.
- ⌘-⌘ **Hyde Park Bar and Grill.** This hoppin' college hangout well north of downtown is notable for the enormous silver fork rising from the ground in front (it must be 12 feet tall). The Grill prides itself on its diverse, healthful, and cheap menu—although the addictive Park fries (buttermilk-battered) aren't exactly good for you. Very casual. Good wine list. 4206 Duval St., ☎ 512/458-3168.
- ⌘-⌘ **Louie's 106.** This is one of the best restaurants in Texas (and it's still difficult to spend more than \$20 on a three-course dinner). The old-fashioned city dining room, with high ceilings, marble floors, an open kitchen, and a hip, well-dressed crowd has only two drawbacks: the noise and the uneven service. A sample dish: red snapper *en croûte* (in a crust) with dry vermouth, mussels, mustard, and grilled vegetables. 106 E. 6th St., ☎ 512/476-2010.
- ⌘-⌘ **Thai Soon.** Around the corner from Area 52 (see Scenes, below) and several of the gay bars is this cute storefront Thai restaurant with curtain valances and a perky green neon sign. The menu focuses chiefly on seafood and veggie dishes, often with a slight Texan influence (like the Thai corn fritters). The squid with vegetables is heavenly. 121 W. 5th St., ☎ 512/476-2356.
- ⌘ **Chuy's.** Chuy's is one of Austin's standard cheap and cheerful, young and funky Tex-Mex restaurants—with all the standard dishes, great margaritas, and huge weekend crowds. 1728 Barton Springs Rd., ☎ 512/474-4452.
- ⌘ **Common Market Café.** Has all the ingredients of a great gay deli: tasteful use of neon, contemporary art and photos on the walls, pretty floral curtain valances, and throngs of gay staff and patrons. Everything is great—from the thick sandwiches to the myriad varieties of coffee, to stay or to go. 1600 S. Congress Ave., ☎ 512/416-1940.
- ⌘ **East Side Cafe.** Patronized largely by crunchy peaceniks, this café has amazingly popular brunches, sunny outdoor seating, and dishes made with the fresh produce grown in the Café's garden. Big lesbian and gay following. 2113 Manor Rd., ☎ 512/476-5858.
- ⌘ **Katz Deli.** This upbeat, contemporary deli is busy all day and has some of the cutest staff in town. The half-pound sandwiches are more than most can eat in one sitting—especially good is the grilled three-cheese with tomatoes. Many come for cocktails after work—the martinis are killers. Has been very good to AIDS causes. 618 W. 6th St., ☎ 512/472-2037.
- ⌘ **Oasis.** This huge, multidecked, hilltop compound is about 20 minutes west of the city center in the hill country and commands glorious views of Lake Travis. It's a little tacky, the food is mediocre Mexican, but the drinks (especially the margaritas) are great. Everyone—gay, straight, and in between—heads here on weekend afternoons and lingers to admire the best sunset in Texas. 6550 Comanche Trail, near Lake Travis, ☎ 512/266-2441.
- ⌘ **Ruby's BBQ.** This funky spot with off-white siding and teal trim serves up real Texas barbecue. Mutton, brisket, and smoked chicken are a few of the items sold by the pound. Delicious sides of tacos, red beans and

rice, and other goodies are plentiful, too. 29th and Guadalupe Sts., ☎ 512/477-1651.

- ⌘ **Shady Grove.** Set in an actual shady grove south of the Town Lake and close to Zilker Park, this twentysomething slacker hangout has been around forever and is something of a landmark. The patio, gussied up with Christmas lights, odd topiaries, and plenty of kitsch, must be seen to be understood. Good, down-home Southern and Mexican standbys. 1624 Barton Springs Rd., ☎ 512/474-9991.

Coffeeshouse Culture

The closest thing you'll find to a coffeeshouse nightclub, **Ruta Maya Coffee** (218 W. 4th St., ☎ 512/472-9637) is in an ancient brick building near several of the gay and straight clubs. The front door was once an old loading dock. It has live music and a queer, trendy, alternative following. The crowd at **Little City** (916 Congress Ave., ☎ 512/476-2489) is a little too hot for its own good, but this is a great perch from which to observe the rituals of Austin society. It's near the capitol. As the name suggests, **Insomnia** (2222 Guadalupe St., ☎ 512/474-5730) is open all night; the uncomfortable, postmodern metal furniture even seems designed to keep you alert. In the heart of Guadalupe Street's stretch of used-clothing and music stores, it attracts a collegiate, artsy bunch. It also has a big post-club following, and serves a basic munchy menu and great pies. **Flipnotiks** (1601 Barton Springs Rd., ☎ 512/322-9750) is above a terrific clothing boutique across the street from the Shady Grove restaurant. Enter through a rickety porch in back. They have great desserts, but the best feature may be the television whose tube has been replaced with a tropical fish tank.

SLEEPS

Because it's a relatively new city on the upswing, Austin has an inviting selection of sleek, relatively new hotels. Most bars, shops, and restaurants are close to downtown hotels, which range from no-frills to upscale—rates rarely go over \$130, even at the Four Seasons or the Stouffer. That said, there is nothing especially showy or interesting about Austin accommodations—the lodging scene is typical of other mid-size American metropolises. There are also no gay-specific accommodations here, but a couple of the guest houses have gay followings.

For price ranges, see Chart B at the front of this guide.

Hotels

Downtown

- ☑ In addition to being the city's most luxurious hostelry, the **Four Seasons Hotel Austin** has great views of the Congress Avenue Bridge, where Austin's legendary fleet of bats reside in the summer months. 98 San Jacinto Blvd., ☎ 512/478-4500 or 800/332-3442. 292 rooms. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$
- ☑ Austin's grande dame is the splendid, extremely gay-popular **Driskill Hotel**, an 1886 period piece that continues to witness the patronage of famed politicians and celebrities. Beyond the spectacular lobby, guest rooms, though not especially memorable, are some of the largest in town. 604 Brazos St., ☎ 512/474-5911 or 800/527-2008. 177 rooms. \$\$-\$\$\$
- ☑ A block above 6th Avenue's bustle is the shiny glass-and-steel **Omni**, whose upper floors have great views. 700 San Jacinto Blvd., ☎ 512/476-3700 or 800/843-6664. 314 rooms. \$\$-\$\$\$
- ☑ The most affordable centrally located options are the **Radisson Hotel** (111 E. 1st St., ☎ 512/478-9611 or 800/333-3333; 280 rooms; \$-\$\$),

which overlooks Town Lake and is just off Congress Avenue, and the surprisingly pretty **La Quinta Capital Inn** (300 E. 11th St., ☎ 512/476-1166 or 800/531-5900; 148 rooms; \$), which is just a stroll from the capitol and midway between the bar district and UT.

Elsewhere

☑ Though a 15-minute drive from downtown, the giant **Stouffer Renaissance Austin** is one of the chain's premier properties, a contemporary convention hotel attached to the ritzy Arboretum shopping center. 9721 Arboretum Rd., ☎ 512/343-2626 or 800/468-3571. 478 rooms. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

☑ A more peaceful alternative to being downtown is staying at the intimate **Melbourne Hotel and Conference Center** over in the clean and green Barton Creek area. 4611 Bee Cave Rd., ☎ 512/328-4000. 60 rooms. \$-\$\$

Guest Houses and Small Hotels

☑ The **City View Bed & Breakfast** is on a 2-acre, tree-covered hilltop overlooking downtown Austin and Town Lake. The house has characteristics reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture. It's furnished with '30s European Art Deco and modern classics. 1405 E. Riverside St., ☎ 512/441-2606. 8 rooms. Mixed gay/straight. \$\$\$

☑ Also popular in the community is the grand **Fairview**. This Colonial Revival house was built in 1910 and is now an Austin landmark. It's surrounded by an acre of rose gardens, lawns, and trees: you feel as if you're out in the country. The rooms are decorated with period antiques and have private baths, TVs, and phones. 1304 Newning Ave., ☎ 512/444-4746 or 800/310-4746. 6 rooms. Mixed gay/straight. \$\$-\$\$\$

SCENES

Austin's gay nightlife is unusual for Texas—for all of America, in fact. Whereas many gay bars in many cities are small, off the beaten path, and hidden behind dark windows, only one of Austin's several hangouts fits this image. The bulk of them are downtown in well-decorated and often historic buildings; they have big dance floors and often live music, and they pull in equally mixed gay and straight or, at the very least, partially straight crowds.

There's only one difficulty, and that's meeting people over 30. The bar scene is young and collegiate. The most concentrated areas, Red River Street, 4th Street around Lavaca and Colorado, and 6th Street, appeal primarily to students, and typically to a somewhat alternative, nonconformist bunch. If you're looking to meet working adults, your best bets are the bars of many of the restaurants listed above, and also at **Charlie's** (for men) and **Nexus** (for women); both places get a good mix of the young and not-so-young.

Area 52. In an old downtown brick warehouse, this new establishment opened in October 1995 and replaced Club 404; it has a fantastic sound system and lighting, scaffolds, walkways, two levels, a dance floor, and a steamy, high-energy atmosphere. Nice outdoor balcony, too. Though liquor is not served after 2 AM, the club often stays open for dancing long after. 404 Colorado St., ☎ 512/474-4849. *Crowd: young, mostly gay, trendy, 70/30 m/f, mix of club kids and college students.*

'Bout Time. This is Austin's only true neighborhood bar, a tavern well north of downtown just off I-35 at Rundberg Street. It has a nice big central bar, good lighting, lots of seating, and pool tables. If you're looking to

strike up a conversation, come here. 9601 N. I-35, ☎ 512/832-5339. *Crowd: laid-back, local, chatty; mixed genders, ages, and races.*

Casino El Camino. Punkish, grungish, stylish, freakish. Leave the loafers and khaki pants at home. This place has all the buzz of Greenwich Village—black-and-white walls, clever music ranging from punk to acid jazz to Cole Porter, and some pretty good bar food. There are three pool tables upstairs. These kids think they're pretty cool, but they are friendly. 517 E. 6th St., ☎ 512/469-9330. *Crowd: mostly straight, young, goths and alternates; gay-friendly.*

Chain Drive. This is your only choice if you're into leather. Few students come here, and it's very popular, dark, and seedy. The leather dress code is enforced weekends. Has a nice leather shop on the premises. 504 Willow St., ☎ 512/480-9017. *Crowd: leather and Levi's, male, macho, bears, ages 30s and 40s.*

Charlie's. Austin's original gay bar is attractive and popular. Nowadays it looks a bit like a country-western bar, but the music is definitely of the mainstream dance variety. Since it's within the shadow of the capitol building you may be able to spot a few polymorphously perverse politicians. Several rooms, lots of video screens, pool tables. 1301 Lavaca St., ☎ 512/474-6481. *Crowd: mostly male, some suits after work, mixed ages, very cruisy.*

DJ's. A disco opened by a British investor in 1995, DJ's is meant to compete with Area 52. A purple sidewalk leads you to the front door of this million-dollar-renovation dance complex, which is divided into three sections: the main bar with the dance floor and a game room, the quiet back bar, and the outside patio bar. Go-go dancers prance around seven days a week; on Sunday there's a tea dance with a cookout, and on Wednesday there's a drag show. 611 Red River Rd., ☎ 512/476-3611. *Crowd: very mixed.*

5th Street Station Dance Hall Saloon. This is Austin's best gay country-western bar, and it plays *nothing* but country music. It attracts a terrific mix of people. The cow skulls and other Western trinkets hanging from the walls lend it a kitschy air. There's also a big game room with pool, air hockey, darts, and other diversions. Has great drag shows on Sundays. 505 E. 5th St., ☎ 512/478-6065. *Crowd: 80/20 m/f; mixed ages but mostly young, country-western, cruisy, Nirvana-meets-Travis Tritt.*

Nexus. This is the largest women's bar in Texas, and actually one of the largest in the country. The elevated dance floor holds a sizable jumble of two-steppers and line-dancers, and there's also lots of room for comfortable mingling and chatting. Has an upscale feel, thanks to the great decorating, but all are quite comfortable here. Heavy use of neon gives the room a pink and lavender glow. Great sound system. 305 W. 5th St., ☎ 512/472-5288. *Crowd: mostly women, mixed ages, butch to lipstick, country-western.*

Oilcan Harry's. Austin's only true stand-and-model bar attracts a truly hot collegiate crowd. There are a couple of bars, a nice patio in back, amber lighting, a good sound system, a tiny dance floor, and bar stools everywhere. For a guppie cruise bar, they serve some surprisingly stiff drinks. Another surprise is how relatively approachable and attitude-free the guys are. Oilcan Harry's is starched shirt, but not stuffed shirt. 211 W. 4th St., ☎ 512/320-8823. *Crowd: mostly male, cruisy, young, professional, buttoned-down.*

Since Austin is one of the nation's best music cities, there are dozens of other clubs and nightspots that offer excellent entertainment ranging from country, blues, and folk to hard-driving rock, grunge, and punk (check the *Austin Chronicle* for listings). A few mostly straight clubs with gay followings include the divy **Blue Flamingo** (617 Red River St., ☎ 512/469-

0014), a little trendoid bar with pressed-tin ceilings and tortured souls—and a pool table; **Esther's Follies** (525 E. 6th St., ☎ 512/320-0553), a renowned comedy club with skits and a penchant for drag and queer-theme humor; **Ohms** (611 E. 7th St., ☎ 512/472-7136), the hub of the city's industrial, underground music scene, packed with a grim bunch of Day-Glo-haired ne'er-do-wells; **Paradox** (5th and Trinity Sts., ☎ 512/469-7615), a sprawling, warehouse-style dance club that's neither gay nor straight and plays great house music; and **Proteus** (501 E. 6th St., ☎ 512/472-8922), another warehouse-style dance club with hip decor and an extremely diverse crowd.

THE LITTLE BLACK BOOK

At Your Fingertips

AIDS Services of Austin Hotline: ☎ 512/458-2437. **Austin Convention and Visitors Bureau:** 201 E. 2nd St., 78701, ☎ 512/474-5171.

Gay Media

The biweekly **FagRag** (☎ 512/416-0100), which offers the most comprehensive coverage of gay entertainment in Austin (as well as San Antonio, Corpus Christi, and Waco) is one of the more professional and entertaining publications of its kind. Other gay periodicals include **This Week in Texas** (☎ 713/527-9111), an entertainment-oriented magazine that covers the entire state, and the **Texas Triangle** (☎ 713/871-1272), a news-oriented weekly newspaper. The gay monthly from San Antonio, the **Marquise** (☎ 210/545-3511), is also available throughout Austin. The best mainstream resource is the **Austin Chronicle** (☎ 512/454-5766), an alternative-scene arts-and-entertainment weekly.

BOOKSTORES

Liberty Books (1014-B N. Lamar Blvd., ☎ 512/495-9737), Austin's principal gay/lesbian bookstore, is small, neat, well-stocked, and evenly male- and female-oriented; it has some porn mags and some gay newspapers from other states. **Bookwoman** (918 W. 12th St., ☎ 512/472-2785) is a good feminist bookstore with plenty of lesbian titles. **LOBO** (3204-A Guadalupe St., ☎ 512/454-5406), like its Houston and Dallas branches, specializes in gay-male porn but has some other gay and lesbian titles, too.

Body and Fitness

A fairly laid-back bunch, Austinites seem to have a mild aversion to those who put brawn above brains. Nevertheless, the **Clean & Lean Fitness Center** (4225 Guadalupe St., ☎ 512/458-5326) has a strong gay and lesbian following.

Body and Fitness

Around the Loop, the seven-floor **Athletic Club Illinois Center** (211 N. Stetson, ☎ 312/616-9000) is terrific, well-equipped, and popular with the gay community. Lakeview's **Body Shop** (3246 N. Halsted St., ☎ 312/248-7717), next to the Unicorn bathhouse, is a cruisy fitness center. The **Chicago Sweat Shop** (3215 N. Broadway, ☎ 312/871-2789) draws a better mix of men and women for aerobics and Nautilus. Plenty of space for working those buns. **Quad's Gym** (3727 N. Broadway, ☎ 312/404-7867) and the **Chicago Health Club** (2828 N. Clark St., ☎ 312/929-6900) are also good.

6 Out in Dallas

IN JANUARY 1995, THE DALLAS CITY COUNCIL voted to add sexual orientation and marital status to the city's already fairly comprehensive employment nondiscrimination policy. Of course, votes like this occur regularly across the country, and as many pass as fail. In Dallas, however, the 9 to 5 outcome came as a surprise. This is a conservative—some might say uptight—city, and had the option to vote on this issue been extended to the city's general population, it might never have made it. It certainly wouldn't have passed by a margin of nearly 2 to 1.

It's easy to make fun of gay Dallas. The phrases "buttoned-down" and "starched-collar" are part of the regional gay vernacular; they're used self-referentially to describe this most image-conscious and fashion-enslaved breed of Texans. Gay Dallasites have difficulty wearing their sexual orientation on their sleeves; they tend not to cut loose outside gay-friendly arenas. With this recent vote, however, Dallas's gay community may have taught the rest of us a few things about politics and about how to work in subtle ways for slow, steady change. The original antidiscrimination policy had been presented before the council without any mention of sexual orientation. Because the City Manager would not add orientation to the policy, two council members (one of them openly gay) drafted the amendment. Shortly thereafter, several gay and lesbian activists contacted individual council members and persuaded them to vote for the amendment. It's interesting that the council members least predisposed to vote in favor were never contacted—in fact, they weren't apprised of the amendment until shortly before it was brought to a vote. By then, it was too late for these few vehemently antigay members to rally public support against the amendment. The rest, as they say, is history.

So in a city where the nationally celebrated gay men's chorus goes by the nonconfrontational (and more fashionable) name of Turtle Creek Men's Chorale, successful passage of a gay-positive policy was accomplished without widespread parading and picketing. As the then president of the Dallas Gay and Lesbian Alliance, Cece Cox, commented to the gay *Dallas Voice*, "We wanted to show them that we are reasonable people asking for reasonable things."

Reasonable discourse has long had its proponents—from Plato to Booker T. Washington. There are disadvantages to keeping such a quiet profile, however. Many in the gay community are kept closeted by Dallas society's unspoken long-standing rules. Coming out is tricky and frightening; fear of reprisal can be strong. Being gay in Dallas means walking a delicate balance and can often mean trying to be the darling of straight

society and the darling of gay society simultaneously, which is an exhausting act to sustain over time. It's perhaps a manifestation of the schizophrenic nature of Dallas's closet that the heart of the gay community, Oak Lawn, rubs shoulders with the city's most fashionable neighborhoods, Turtle Creek and Highland Park. It's not as though the community steals away to a ramshackle "gay ghetto" far from the hubbub of city politics, commerce, and society. On the contrary, closeted gays dance, mingle, and eat right under the noses of their most conservative neighbors, within a stone's throw of the elaborate estates that dot Preston Road.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

Many who visit Dallas, besides the hordes of conventioners who descend on the city weekly, come to visit the site where President John F. Kennedy was assassinated or to visit Jock and Miss Ellie's ranch. When it comes to big Texas cities, Houston is actually better for sightseeing and culture, and Austin is more scenic. For better or worse, Dallas is just a hodgepodge of neighborhoods, many of them worth driving through simply to admire homes and to do some shopping.

Oak Lawn/Turtle Creek/Highland Park

Dallas's so-called Uptown, which comprises the neighborhoods of Oak Lawn, Highland Park, Turtle Creek, and McKinney Avenue, is where many Dallasites eat, shop, and live, and where a good many of them work, too. This segment of the city is a rectangle north of downtown, roughly bounded to the south by the Woodall Rogers Freeway, to the east by the Central Expressway (I-75), to the north by Mockingbird Lane, and to the west by the Dallas North Tollway.

Oak Lawn is for the most part a young, middle-class gay enclave. The hub is Cedar Springs Road, which, from the intersection with Oak Lawn Avenue up to about Knight Road, is lined with either gay-owned or gay-supported restaurants, bars, and shops (the **Tom Thumb** grocery store just north of the bars on Cedar Springs is one of the nation's cruisiest). The intersection of Cedar Springs Road and Throckmorton Road, has come to be known as "the Crossroads" of Oak Lawn; the immediate surrounding area has a fairly strong mix of genders, races, looks, and ages, though on a Saturday night it's pretty well overrun with pretty young things on the prowl. The blocks immediately east, north, and west of the Crossroads are generally residential but no less gay.

The moneyed gay community extends south of Oak Lawn Avenue into posh **Turtle Creek**, but the bulk of condos and housing developments throughout Uptown have a good share of gays and lesbians living in them. Abutting all of this gayness to the north is swank **Highland Park**, Dallas's premier residential neighborhood—a land of perfectly manicured lawns and grand mansions. **Highland Park Village** (Mockingbird La. and Preston Rd.) has upscale clothiers and boutiques, plus several good restaurants. (Good luck finding a parking space.) **McKinney Avenue**, which is in eastern Uptown and runs more or less parallel to the Central Expressway, has been revitalized in recent years. Dozens of the city's trendiest restaurants are here, and a restored trolley provides access.

Knox-Henderson

In the northeast quadrant of Uptown, another resurgence of tony shops and restaurants has sprouted along Knox Street, which becomes Henderson Street once it crosses the Central Expressway. **Knox-Henderson** takes in **Travis Walk**, a small complex containing several gay-owned or gay-frequented restaurants and boutiques. Once you hit Henderson, you'll notice several antiques shops and galleries, and a few more places to eat. This

whole section borders the southern edge of **Southern Methodist University**, and a good number of college types filter through this neighborhood.

Downtown and the West End District

Like so many cities, Dallas's downtown is almost derelict most evenings. Its dramatic, space-age skyline, however (nothing to sneeze at by day, either), is positively spectacular at night—many of its building framed with streaks of neon. There's a modest **Arts District** at the northern tip of downtown, near the base of McKinney Avenue, whose sights include the **Dallas Museum of Art** (1717 N. Harwood St., ☎ 214/922-1200), which has an esteemed collection of pre-Columbian art, and the stunning, I. M. Pei-designed **Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center** (2301 Flora St., ☎ 214/670-3600), where the Turtle Creek Chorale performs regularly.

The **West End Historic District**, anchored by the **West End Market Place** (603 Munger Ave.), is a series of early 20th-century brick warehouses and factories that have been restored in recent years to accommodate more shops, bars, and restaurants. Though you hardly need to worry about crime, this is definitely the city's least gay-friendly entertainment district.

Just south of here is **Dealey Plaza**, the triangular patch of grass where thousands congregate every year to ponder the loss of President Kennedy on November 22, 1963. Across Elm Street, along which Kennedy's motorcade was moving, is the so-called **grassy knoll**, the site that has led so many to speculate about a second gunman. And at the northeast corner of the plaza and Houston Street is the legendary **Texas School Book Depository** (☎ 214/653-6666); on the sixth floor is a museum documenting all that is known about the assassination.

Deep Ellum

Follow either Elm or Main streets east from downtown, under the I-75 overpass, to about the 3000 block, and you'll come to **Deep Ellum** (that's "Deep Elm" with a slow Texas drawl), a haven for nonconformists and alternates. Most of conservative Dallas warns to watch your wallet and your back while walking these streets. It can in fact be a tad spooky, but no more so than similar districts in other American cities. Once Dallas's first black neighborhood, Deep Ellum is now just a blizzard of low warehouses converted into clubs and eateries, plus a few tattoo shops and art galleries. Many exterior walls are painted with elaborate murals. This is not so much a gay community as an everything-goes community, but gays (especially young ones) frequent many of Deep Ellum's establishments—or should we say *antiestablishments*.

GETTING AROUND

Outside of its compact downtown, most of Dallas is what a New Yorker or Chicagoan would call the suburbs. Every house has a yard; every commercial establishment is in a shopping center; and, not surprisingly, everybody gets around by car—people in Dallas don't use mass transit and they certainly don't walk. If you're spotted on foot along any street Uptown, drivers passing by will assume you're in trouble. Little of Dallas except the downtown is laid out in a grid, and roads often change names between neighborhoods. It's best to get a detailed map. Parking near the bars in Oak Lawn can be frustrating.

EATS

Dallas has an extremely sophisticated palate, with lots of trendy bistros dreaming up inventive contemporary creations. Yet you can also find

more familiar comfort food—such pseudo-exotic delicacies as fajitas and frozen margaritas were invented here. Burgers and barbecues are also plentiful.

Most of the city's best restaurants just happen to be in the gayest neighborhoods—northwest of downtown and in the somewhat alternative Deep Ellum. You'll also find a slew of good eateries along the northern end of Belt Line Road. Oak Lawn—especially near the Galleria—is a trendy shopping and dining area that draws a rather well-to-do suburban crowd. Hotel restaurants are also quite good here: The dining room at the **Mansion at Turtle Creek** is one of the top two or three in the country, and the restaurants at the **Adolphus** and the **Hotel Crescent Court** are also outstanding.

The very gay-friendly chain of frou-frou Italian bistros, **Sfuzzi**, began in Dallas. Of its several locations in the city, the one at 2504 McKinney is most popular. Another Dallas-based chain, the Southern-style cafeteria **Black-Eyed Pea**, is also hot, the one at 3857 Cedar Springs Road being particularly gay. There are a number of so-so restaurants around the Crossroads, notably **Panda's** and the **Good Wok** (both Chinese, the former being the best better of the two), the **Thai Lotus Kitchen**, and **Jolly's Shrimp and Oyster Bar**.

For price ranges, see Chart A at the front of this guide.

Uptown and Oak Lawn

\$\$\$\$ Mansion on Turtle Creek. There's electricity in the air of this luxurious restaurant in the old Sheppard King mansion, a splendid structure whose circular lobby has a black-and-white marble floor. Renowned nationally is the food of chef Dean Fearing, whose inventions include tortilla soup and warm lobster salad with yellow tomato salsa and jicama salad. His style is complex, the food always astonishing; if your beloved is a foodie, don't miss this place. 2821 Turtle Creek Blvd., ☎ 214/559-2100.

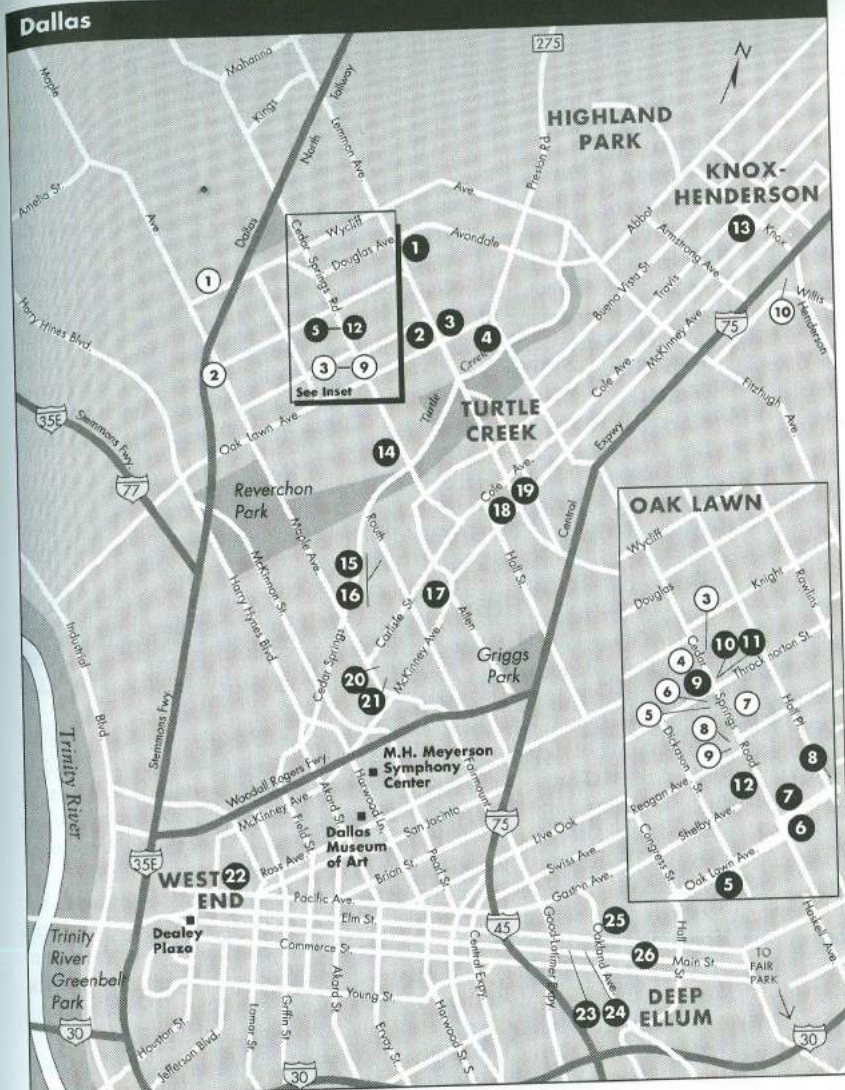
\$\$\$\$ Old Warsaw. Incongruously housed inside a rather hideous building with a siding of plaster and pebbles, this windowless spot has been one of the city's swankest and most formal French restaurants for years. Expect fine china and crystal, a piano-and-violin duo, and waiters in tuxedos—it's almost a bit retro. Save room (and money) for any of the lavish dessert soufflés. 2610 Maple Ave., ☎ 214/528-0032.

\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ Star Canyon. This very popular dining room is in the upscale, gay-frequented Centrum Sports Complex. It's tough to get a table here, the service can be uppity, and some complain it's overrated. It's hard to argue, though, when the kitchen turns out phenomenal dishes such as red snapper on Texas jambalaya with *chilipiquin* aioli. 3102 Oak Lawn Ave., Suite 144, ☎ 214/520-7827.

\$\$-\$\$\$ Bombay Cricket Club. In a small white mansion near the Hotel St. Germain and the Crescent Court, this elegant Indian restaurant differs from many in America: The decor is bright, crisp, and sophisticated, and the menu is impeccably authentic, with every kind of curry, tandoori, and *biryani* imaginable. Lots of veggie dishes, too. 2508 Maple Ave., ☎ 214/871-1333.

\$\$\$-\$\$\$ Lombardi's. This well-liked regional chain is a bit more upscale than Sfuzzi and its recipes are more authentic. The tables are decked with the requisite red-and-white checked tablecloths, the menu is in Italian, and veal is well represented. Very romantic. 311 Market St., ☎ 214/747-0322.

\$\$\$-\$\$\$ Parigi. Parigi is one of the most talked about Oak Lawn eateries. The marble tables, dainty wooden chairs, and lemon-yellow and pale-blue color scheme make for a chic atmosphere. The healthful bistro menu offers many



Eats ●

Bombay Cricket Club, 21
Bronx, 12
Café Society, 13
Cosmic Cup, 5
Deep Ellem Cafe, 24
Dream Cafe, 16
Feed Bag, 18
Gloria's, 1
Hunky's, 10
Java Jones, 7
J. Pepe's, 15
Lombardi's, 22
Lucky's Cafe, 3
Mansion on Turtle Creek, 14
Monica
Aca y Alla, 26
Natura, 17

Old Warsaw, 20

Parigi, 8
Sambuca, 23
Spasso, 11, 19
Star Canyon, 6
Sweet Endings, 25
That Special Blend, 9
Yoli's, 2
Zuzu, 4

Scenes ○

Anchor Inn/Big Daddy/Numbers, 3
Brick Bar, 2
Desert Moon, 10
JR's, 6
John L's, 1
Moby Dick's, 4
Round-Up Saloon, 7
Sue Ellen's, 9
Throckmorton Mining Co., 5
Village Station, 8

- whole-wheat pastas and delicious accents like shallot smashed potatoes and ginger-lime cream sauce. 3311 Oak Lawn Ave., ☎ 214/521-0295.
- \$\$\$ **Natura.** You can't not like the entrance to this place—a pair of shockingly enormous artichoke sculptures guard the front door. With the menu comes a full nutritional analysis (calories, protein, fat, etc.) of each dish, which ranges from roast chicken and herb potatoes with field greens to grilled tuna wasabi. Gimmicky but good. 2909 McKinney Ave., ☎ 214/855-5483.
- \$\$ **Bronx.** For more than two decades the best of the gay restaurants at the Crossroads, the Bronx is still refreshingly inexpensive and untrendy. You come for the mom-style pot roast, London broil, omelets, and chicken cacciatore, and to chat with old friends. Should be called the Bronx Zoo on weekend evenings, though. 3835 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/521-5821.
- \$\$ **Gloria's.** Next to a dull T.G.I.F. on Lemmon Avenue, Gloria's is a noisy, cavernous, unromantic place with unfinished concrete floors and green plastic chairs. Nonetheless, the no-frills Mexican and South American menu is fiery and fresh, and the staff is outgoing. Yummy black bean dip. 4140 Lemmon Ave., Suite 102, ☎ 214/521-7576.
- \$\$ **J. Pepe's.** Because it's in the trendy Quadrangle, the kitschy trappings of this crowded Mexican restaurant pass as stylish. The Tex-Mex is good (try the smoked brisket tacos), the margaritas better. Popular with power-lunchers. *Quadrangle*, 2800 Routh St., ☎ 214/871-0366.
- \$\$ **Lucky's Café.** Lucky's is at its best late on weekend nights, especially as the bars are letting out. Of course, this is Dallas, so this diner is especially well-dressed, with art deco tables and chairs, a black-and-white tile floor, and judicious use of neon. The food is good but typical. 3531 Oak Lawn Ave., ☎ 214/522-3500.
- \$\$ **Yoli's.** The familiar A-frame exterior gives away that this was once an IHOP. Look closely though, and you'll notice that the pink trim on the roof is neon. This isn't a greasy pancake house anymore. Inside, the large fish tank anchoring the dining room tells you more about what Yoli's is famous for: Dozens of varieties of fish are served, all of the entrées under \$10. 3827 Lemmon Ave., ☎ 214/521-9654.
- \$ **Dream Café.** Dream Café is the place to go for breakfast anytime or for leisurely patio dining on a Saturday afternoon. There's always a great mix of people here, all of them longing for another crack at the Café's veggie-oriented menu. The buttermilk pancakes topped with ricotta are famous. Between bites, you can toss a frisbee to your dog or your date on the long green lawn out front. *Quadrangle*, 2800 Routh St., ☎ 214/954-0486.
- \$ **Feed Bag.** This ineloquently named restaurant with its red-and-white barn facade is a standout in its dull shopping center setting. Wagon wheels and farming equipment continue the theme inside. Feed Bag offerings are just a cut above fast food, but possibly even greasier—note that the BLT comes with six thick slabs of bacon. The cholesterol-laden burgers and fries are great. *Corner of Lemmon and McKinney Aves.*, ☎ 214/522-2630.
- \$ **Hunky's.** A gay study in fast food on Cedar Springs Road's bar strip: Hunky waitrons skirt around tables of hunky patrons. They have the juiciest old-fashioned hamburgers here, but, in contrast to the Feed Bag (see above), none of the food is overly greasy. 4000 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/522-1212.
- \$ **Spasso.** The branch of this local chain at Throckmorton and Cedar Springs is the gayest (and it's quite gay), but all of them serve the best pizza in Dallas—from traditional to white, with both mundane and exotic toppings. The dining room is warm and colorful, unusually nice for a pizza parlor. 3227 McKinney Ave., ☎ 214/520-6000; 4000 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/521-1141.
- \$ **ZuZu.** In a swank shopping center is this ultrabright, cheerful place (part of a regional chain) where you order at the counter before plopping

down into one of the festive little red chairs. The Mexican food is standard by Texas standards (which means stellar to everybody else); Mexican pizzas and margaritas are a highlight. 3848 Oak Lawn Ave., ☎ 214/521-1290.

Deep Ellum

- \$\$-\$\$\$ **Monica Aca y Alla.** This is the best, and most festive, of Deep Ellum restaurants. Even yupsters in suits brave the neighborhood's eccentricities for the live music—mostly Latin-flavored jazz, salsa, and mambo—and feisty, somewhat Southwestern-inspired fare, from Mexican lasagna to pumpkin ravioli. 2914 Main St., ☎ 214/748-7140.
- \$\$-\$\$\$ **Sambuca.** As bohemian—in a well-to-do sort of way—as it gets. The sign outside says MEDITERRANEAN CUISINE—JAZZ BAH, and that basically sums it up. The seats upholstered in faux-leopard skin are the highlight of the post-industrial interior. Dishes include couscous, pasta, salmon over spinach, and the like. The nightly jazz shows are renowned. 2618 Elm St., ☎ 214/744-0820.
- \$\$ **Deep Ellum Café.** Vietnamese chicken salad and crawfish enchiladas are a couple of the delicious, diverse dishes you can sample off this quirky menu. It's in a purposefully shabby redbrick building with teal and raspberry trim—not too cute, but artsy and innovative. 2706 Elm St., ☎ 214/741-9012.

Coffeeshouse Culture

Despite its somewhat pretentious name, **Café Society** (4514 Travis St., Suite 133, ☎ 214/528-6543) is inviting if not particularly offbeat. Its fine coffees, eclectic menu (Tex-Mex meets Provence), marble-and-tile floors, and antique furniture bring in a fairly well-heeled bunch. The dining room at the **Cosmic Cup** (2912 Oak Lawn Ave., ☎ 214/521-6157) is filled with crunchy, unconventional types perusing the small library of good-for-your-soul, New Age titles. A favorite dish is the “I hate eggplant” sandwich, which, inexplicably, requires that you eat a good bit of eggplant, along with basil, tomatoes, and mozzarella. Good juice bar. Cool and jazzy, with live music some nights, **Java Jones** (3211 Oak Lawn Ave., ☎ 214/528-2099) definitely collars Oak Lawn's collared-shirt crowd. It's the best spot for desserts in the neighborhood—scrumptious freshly made pastries and rich gelato. The sandwiches and pasta dishes are good, too. You wouldn't think the purple-haired and navel-pierced would bother with **Sweet Endings** (2901 Elm St., ☎ 214/747-8001), a cute little hangout in otherwise seedy Deep Ellum, but they seem to love it. Apparently the legendary cheesecake pulls them in. Despite its plum location midway between JR's and Moby Dick's (see *Scenes, below*), **That Special Blend** (4001A Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/522-3726) leaves a bit to be desired in the way of atmosphere. And the cheap, white plastic lawn furniture outside doesn't help. Still, the boys and girls do linger here for hours, hoping to discover other new boys and girls.

SLEEPS

Dallas has plenty of outstanding options close to things queer. For this reason, even the stodgiest hotels are used to gay travelers, though discretion is always wise (this is Dallas, after all). Thanks to its popularity as a trade-show site, Dallas has from two to five outposts of just about every major hotel chain and a total of more than 40,000 hotel rooms. The most interesting and historic hotels (*not* the chains) offer travelers personal attention, individually designed rooms, and great restaurants—

though often at a price. The two small inns in the Oak Lawn area are very popular with the gay community.

For price ranges, see Chart A at the front of this guide.

Hotels

☑ The finest downtown hotel is the grand, vintage 1912 **Adolphus**. A Beaux Arts beauty built by beer baron Adolphus Busch, the structure is widely admired by students of architecture. The only problem is that it's a good distance from the grooviest restaurants and nightlife. 1321 Commerce St., ☎ 214/742-8200 or 800/221-9083. 432 rooms. \$\$\$\$

☑ Arguably the top hotel in the country, the **Mansion on Turtle Creek** is a mere 15-minute walk to the Crossroads, has an absolutely amazing restaurant (reserve well ahead), a new state-of-the-art health club, and plush rooms in which no expense has been spared. 2821 Turtle Creek Blvd., ☎ 214/559-2100 or 800/527-5432. 141 rooms. \$\$\$\$

☑ A touch less exclusive, the **Hotel Crescent Court** is close to both downtown and Oak Lawn. It feels and looks like a European hotel, and rooms are spectacular (some are duplexes with lofts and glass dormers), all with Chanel bath amenities. If you stay here, be sure to have breakfast in the glitzy coffee shop. 400 Crescent Ct., ☎ 214/871-3200 or 800/654-6541. 216 rooms. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

☑ It's only about 200 yards from the lobby of the stately, 1924 **Melrose** to most of the action on Cedar Springs Road and in Oak Lawn, and practically just across the street is the Centrum Sports Club (see The Little Black Book, below), at which guests have privileges. Rooms are nicely appointed, with ceiling fans and reproductions of antiques. 3015 Oak Lawn Ave., ☎ 214/521-5151 or 800/637-7200. 183 rooms. \$\$\$

☑ Another more moderately priced historic property, the 70-year-old brick **Stoneleigh** is where Oliver Stone stayed while filming *JFK*. It's also close to Oak Lawn. It's convenient to many restaurants and home to the Dallas Press Club. 2927 Maple Ave., ☎ 214/871-7111 or 800/255-9299. 132 rooms. \$\$-\$\$\$

☑ A bit farther afield but close to the Galleria shopping mall and Belt Line Road restaurants, the **Holiday Inn—Northpark Plaza** is just off I-75 and has an indoor pool and a decent fitness center. 10650 N. Central Expressway, ☎ 214/373-6000 or 800/465-4329. 248 rooms. \$\$

☑ The best budget accommodation is the **La Quinta** across I-75 from Travis Walk, in the Knox-Henderson area. It's practically behind the Desert Moon bar (see Scenes, below). 4440 N. Central Expressway, ☎ 214/821-4220 or 800/531-5900. 101 rooms. \$

Guest Houses and Small Hotels

☑ The most luxurious of the city's small inns, the **Hotel St. Germain** is a turn-of-the-century house in southern Oak Lawn whose suites are all fitted with French and New Orleans antiques. Some of the elaborate touches include canopied featherbeds, rich tapestries, marble bedstands, balconies, fireplaces, and, in two suites, Jacuzzis. 2516 Maple Ave., ☎ 214/871-2516 or 800/683-2516. 7 suites. \$\$\$\$

☑ More affordable and attracting a mostly gay crowd, the **Inn on Fairmount** is still on a par with some of Dallas's top hotels in terms of both service and amenities. 3701 Fairmount, ☎ 214/522-2800. 7 rooms. \$\$-\$\$\$

SCENES

Dallas's gay nightlife bubbles in small, dense pockets scattered throughout Uptown (mostly near Oak Lawn). The bars along the Crossroads are the most heavily frequented by visitors. Four of them, J.R.'s, Sue Ellen's, the Throckmorton Mining Co., and the Village Station, share the same owner, who throws a "Cruising the Crossroads" party on weekend nights: From 9 until 11, the four bars rotate for a half hour each, offering 50¢ well-drinks.

Dallas may be the only city in America where people actually dress up to go out for a beer. At Moby Dick's or Sue Ellen's, a collared shirt is almost a requirement. Outside of the Crossroads, places are more casual, particularly those clustered around Maple Avenue where it crosses below the Dallas North Tollway (most of these are leather), Fitzhugh Street where it's bisected by Travis and Cole avenues (neighborhood hangouts), and Lemmon Avenue just northwest of the Tollway (mostly local Latino bars).

In Deep Ellum, the major dance club, **Club One** (3025 Main St., ☎ 214/741-1111) is fairly straight, though gay-friendly, throughout the week; the queerest night is Friday. Likewise, most of Deep Ellum music clubs and restaurants have small to significant gay followings.

Anchor Inn/Big Daddy's/Numbers. These three bars make up what is essentially a long shopping center of gay drag and strip shows. The Anchor Inn has the strippers, and a loud, fun-loving crowd watching them; Big Daddy's has two drag shows nightly; and Numbers is just a watering hole. Because the compound is technically part of the Crossroads, you see a surprising number of suits and guppies strolling through here. 4024 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/526-4098. Crowd: male, generally older, raunchy, raucous.

Brick Bar. Everything about the Brick Bar does seem to be brick. It's a brick-shape, painted-red brick building with glass brick windows. Most of the men have brick upper bodies—and, some would say, brick brains. The only collars you're gonna see around here are leather with silver spikes—although a certain number of preppy curiosity-seekers amble through most nights, usually in giggling gaggles. There's a good leather shop inside this labyrinthine complex, which is a short walk from a few other, slimmer, leather bars. 4117 Maple Ave., ☎ 214/521-2024. Crowd: more leather than Levi's, all ages, mostly male, gruff but lovable.

Desert Moon. The only gay bar in the up-and-coming Knox-Henderson neighborhood, this lesbian watering hole is a great alternative to the Crossroads. It's far less frenzied, and less of a scene, than Sue Ellen's, but still extremely popular. It's decorated with an array of festive colors—a bit like a Mexican restaurant—and has pool tables and a small stage for live music. There is country-western dancing here, but there's not a whole lot of space to kick up those heels. 5039 Willis Ave., ☎ 214/828-4471. Crowd: mostly female, mixed ages, friendly, laid-back, country-western.

J.R.'s. Similar to Houston's J.R.'s, only this one is no longer the main stand-and-model venue—Moby Dick's has stolen that honor. Still, it's a splendid place aesthetically—a true "city" bar with high pressed-tin ceilings, brass bar fixtures, and high windows overlooking the Crossroads. Though not as happening as it once was, almost everybody pops in here before heading to one of its neighbors. Has a decent pub-food menu. 3923 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/380-3808. Crowd: 70/30 m/f, mixed ages, some suits, starched-shirt.

John L's. What was once the place to find a date is now the place to take one. It's the city's prettiest and most popular gay cabaret and piano bar

(it even has a strong straight following). The dim lighting and cozy seating give a soft, romantic feel. The entertainment, from your usual lounge singers to female impersonators, is top-notch (try to catch Coco, Miss Gay USA). 2525 Wycliff Ave., ☎ 214/520-2525. *Crowd: diverse in age and gender, fat wallets and nice duds.*

Moby Dick's. Formerly a run-of-the-mill piano bar, Moby Dick's seems to have stolen the pretty-boy populace away from J.R.'s. Two floors are decked out with video screens; balconies allow bird's-eye cruising of those down below. And guys do cruise here, so relentlessly that it's rare that anyone lets his guard down long enough to meet somebody. The upstairs patio bar gives a little relief from the always-packed interior; from here you can admire the palm trees bedecked with Christmas lights out front. Great sound system; weak, pricey drinks. 4011 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/520-6629. *Crowd: mostly male, buff and beautiful, starched-shirt, younger, a bit narcissistic.*

Round-Up Saloon. Though it may be the friendliest bar in the Crossroads, the Round-Up can still feel a bit intimidating, at least relative to other country-western bars. And perhaps because Dallas has a very good lesbian country-western club, the Desert Moon (*see above*), few women come here. It may not be the best place to *learn* how to two-step, but if you know what you're doing, join right in—these guys are good. The decor is typically Western (lots of wagon wheels). There's also a nice little room with pool tables off the main dance floor. Very welcoming staff. 3912 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/522-9611. *Crowd: mostly male, starched-shirt, country-western, mostly in 20s and 30s, trying hard to be butch.*

Sue Ellen's. A terrific lesbian disco. In the heart of the Crossroads, this roomy club has a big dance floor, lots of booth seating, clear windows showing onto the street, and a patio out back that is packed on weekends (when it also gets its largest share of guys). The bar is well decorated and thoughtfully laid out—very conducive to chatting—and off the main room is a second section with pool tables and more seating. 3903 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/380-3808. *Crowd: 80/20 f/m, guppies, younger, lots of lipstick and mousse.*

Throckmorton Mining Co. (TMC). Like other "Mining Companies," this one aims for a dark and forbidding leather look, but TMC is smack in the heart of the Crossroads, and it gets a lot of the same guys from J.R.'s, the Round-Up, and the Village Station. It is, nevertheless, dark, smoky, and devoid of ambience. One nice touch: peanuts served out of huge beer vats. 3014 Throckmorton St., ☎ 214/380-3808. *Crowd: mostly guys, more Levi's than leather but some of both, a few guppies, lots of bears, wide mix of ages.*

Village Station. It's had other names, it's been burned to the ground, and at times it's been a fairly shaggy dive. Now rebuilt in concrete, it's more crowded. It's also much roomier inside than you might think (larger, some joke, than Dallas-Ft. Worth Airport): There's a room with go-go dancers, the neighborhood's nicest patio bar, and a stage for drag shows (some of the best in the country). Saturday nights are the most popular. Cover most nights. 3911 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/380-3808. *Crowd: just about anybody who parties around the Crossroads; generally younger, male, and well dressed, but the many exceptions define the rules; significant racial mix.*

Two more bars close to the Crossroads are **Jugs** (3810 Congress St., ☎ 214/521-3474), a mid-size women's pool hall and dance club that's racially diverse, and the tiny **Side 2 Bar** (4006 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/528-2026), which is, oddly, in the middle of things, right next to Hunky's, and draws a cross-section of dykes and fags.

The Little Black Book

93

East of Oak Lawn, across Turtle Creek, Fitzhugh Avenue leads to a few spots popular primarily with older guys who find the Crossroads attitude a bit of a turnoff. Despite the fact that it's an unattractive bar in the Mr. M Foods shopping center, the male **Crews Inn** (3215 N. Fitzhugh Ave., ☎ 214/526-9510) is probably the most popular of the bunch. The slightly dreary **Hideaway Club** (4144 Buena Vista St., ☎ 214/559-2966), whose patio is lit with trillions of lights and colors, is the city's non-up-pity piano bar (some women). **Pub Pegasus** (3326 N. Fitzhugh Ave., ☎ 214/559-4663), your quintessential neighborhood dive, has occasional piano entertainment, a lovely neon Pegasus sign inside, and friendly bartenders. **Zipper's** (3333 N. Fitzhugh St., ☎ 214/526-9519) features male strippers nightly.

Near the Brick Bar (*see above*) are several rough-and-raw bars: **Backstreet** (4020 Maple Ave., ☎ 214/522-4814) is right across the street from the Brick.

The only bar near downtown, the **Trestle** (412 S. Haskell St., ☎ 214/826-9988) is a gnarly hustler bar, which gets raided often, in a dicey neighborhood.

THE LITTLE BLACK BOOK

At Your Fingertips

AIDS Hotline: ☎ 214/263-2437. **AIDS Resource Center Hotline:** ☎ 214/559-2437. **AIDS Services of Dallas:** ☎ 214/941-0523. **Dallas Convention and Visitors Bureau:** 1201 Elm St., Suite 2000, 75270, ☎ 214/746-6677 or 800/232-5527. **Gay and Lesbian Community Center:** 2701 Reagan St., ☎ 214/528-9254. **Lesbian Visionaries:** ☎ 214/521-5342, ext. 844. **Oak Lawn Community Services** (referrals, counseling, and medical services): ☎ 214/520-8108.

Gay Media

Dallas has no shortage of gay papers, all of them quite useful and well-written. The **Dallas Voice** (☎ 214/754-8711) is a weekly news and entertainment magazine. **Maleman** (☎ 713/527-9111) is a gay-male, Houston- and Dallas-oriented bar rag. **This Week in Texas** (☎ 713/527-9111), an entertainment-oriented magazine covering the whole state, has plenty of stuff on Dallas. The **Texas Triangle** (☎ 713/871-1272) is a mostly news-oriented weekly newspaper. There's also a gay arts and news monthly for neighboring Tarrant County (Ft. Worth), the **Alliance News**.

Good mainstream resources include the **Dallas Observer** (☎ 214/757-9000), an alternative-scene arts-and-entertainment monthly; and the youthful **Met** (☎ 214/696-2900).

BOOKSTORES

The major lesbigay bookstore, **Crossroads Market** (3930 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/521-8919) is a busy place that has an extensive selection of lesbian and gay titles, plus gifts, cards, and porn mags. Just up the street, the **Lobo/After Dark Bookstore** (4008 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/522-1132) is basically an adult, gay-male bookstore with a few mainstream titles.

Body and Fitness

The **Crossroads Gym** (4001 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/522-9376) is an incredibly gay scene—some might argue that it's a better place to pick people up than to work out. Bigger and better is the renowned **Centrum Sports Club** (3102 Oak Lawn Ave., ☎ 214/522-4100).

9 Out in Houston

AS THE 1970s DREW TO A CLOSE, an oil boom vastly increased Houston's open coffers, and it seemed poised to become the most vibrant, prosperous city in the southern United States. Shimmering new skyscrapers rose one after another, and the ritzy western neighborhood of River Oaks witnessed the construction of one mammoth mansion after another. But the oil bust of the 1980s brought Houston quickly to its knees: The decade saw infrastructure crumble, businesses fold, and Houstonians flee for greener pastures. Only recently, since the early '90s, has the Bayou City begun to awaken from its economic doldrums.

Now, even though Houston is right back in the swing of things, residents seem somewhat humbled by the experience of the '80s. Neither cocky nor contrite, they act like people who have survived an economic tornado. Having lived through the '80s they can beat just about anything, but they also know how quickly the sky can come tumbling down again. They're very happy to have visitors, and they welcome you warmly, talk your ear off, show off the city's strengths, sheepishly acknowledge its weaknesses, and treat you to a very good time.

The plucky, gracious character you encounter in many native Houstonians has a lot to do with the hybridization of Western and Southern cultures. Situated at the confluence of the Oak and Buffalo bayous (what better marries the Wild West with the Deep South than the words "buffalo" and "bayou"?), at a point where the Gulf of Mexico is deep enough to serve as a turning basin for cargo ships, Houston developed during the middle part of this century into the most significant port city in the gulf. As such, it always had more commerce with the other Southern cities along the gulf than with the land mass of Texas to the west. Perhaps partly for this reason, many Houstonians think of themselves as southerners, not southwesterners.

As in most port cities, the population is quite diverse. There are many Cajuns and Creoles here, as well as significant numbers of Latin-Americans, Asians, African-Americans, and Greeks. The resulting mix of residents—outsiders once themselves—is very open to newcomers and visitors.

In the '70s, this spirit of tolerance helped to foster the growth of a new, nationally recognized gay ghetto—the downtown neighborhood of Montrose (the community at that time was notoriously large, loud, and lusty). It's still big and still the center of gay life in Houston. There is also a very conservative, macho element—reinforced in pockets by an indigenous brand of Texan-Latino machismo—and you may encounter disapproval or, at best, a cool, as-long-as-you-keep-it-to-yourself sort of attitude.

This same mix of cultural influences—Southern, Texan, Latin American—that shapes the character of the city also allows for some curious and colorful blends within the gay community itself. Houston has some of the liveliest drag scenes in America; weekly shows are staged at almost every bar in town. Many of these clubs also host weekly steak cookouts. In Houston, the two elements—the first very Southern and Latin American, the second very Western—mingle surprisingly well.

Regardless of what they wear to work each day, gay and lesbian Houstonians like to dress in denim or leather when they head out for a good time; you'll also see lots of cowboy hats and boots. If one gender is better represented among the city's well-dressed, well-heeled yuppies, it's women. Many of the city's gay male professionals left during the '80s. Emerging in their absence is an extremely effective lesbian community of entrepreneurs and professionals, who played as large a role as anyone in turning the city around.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

Houston, the fourth-largest city in the United States, is marked by striking contrasts. In many spots it looks as if time stood still in the late '70s. In other sections, rows of storefront windows are boarded over—victims of the economic downturn in the '80s. Then there are the pockets of Houston that have been developed in the '90s: the office buildings and swank shopping plazas. What's so odd is that these three urban visions appear in combination virtually anywhere you look. There is no zoning: Gleaming skyscrapers rub shoulders with vacant lots; the patio of the trendiest eatery sits across from a 20-year-old Jiffy Lube; and an avenue of stately Colonial Revival homes suddenly gives way to a tired lane of tenements and unkempt lawns. The trade-off from whatever aesthetic embarrassments arise from this highly unplanned urban landscape is Houston's air of accessibility. All cities regard themselves as melting pots; Houston can truly make this claim.

Montrose

Plenty of gays have settled into less-expensive areas such as the Heights, White Oak Bayou, and Old Sixth Ward, but **Montrose** is still the community's headquarters and commercial hub. The neighborhood is about midway between downtown and the Galleria, bounded to the west by Shepard, to the north by Allen Parkway, to the east by Bagby, and to the south by the Southwest Freeway (U.S. 59). Westheimer Road cuts east-west through its center; Montrose Boulevard divides the neighborhood north-south.

This is not a particularly swank area: Its streets are a hodgepodge of restored early 20th-century architecture along with more recent experiments in urban design—some tasteful, some not—particularly around Fairview and Pacific streets. You'd never know you're within a couple miles of downtown: The blocks resemble a dowdy, middle-class, Southern suburb. And, although some nice homes are close by, much of Montrose has an almost rural feel to it. Its cuteness quotient is on the low side, but it also lacks the attitude. Montrose is low-key and modest in every respect: an eclectic mix of guppies, leather aficionados, artists, professionals, and college students. Houston's outgoing and welcoming nature is more than evident here.

On the western outskirts of Montrose along Westheimer Road, from roughly the 1500 block to the 2300 block, is a popular **antiques row**. On the eastern side of the area (the blocks just south of Westheimer Road and east of Montrose Boulevard) is the **Westmoreland Addition**. In the absence of zoning, Houston does have a number of "deed-restricted" neigh-

borhoods; these are essentially planned—and sometimes gated—communities. The Westmoreland Addition, plotted in 1902 on a 12-block grid and consisting of hundreds of midsize to enormous late-Victorian and Colonial Revival homes, is one of the prettiest.

The district's top cultural sights include the **Menil Collection** (1515 Sul Ross St., ☎ 713/525-9400), with works by Warhol, Léger, Picasso, Braque, Matisse, and a building designed in 1987 by Renzo Piano. Near this eclectic and esteemed art museum is the nearby **Rothko Chapel** (1409 Sul Ross St., ☎ 713/524-9839). The 14 large-scale Rothko paintings here were commissioned specifically for the chapel. They are among the last important pieces he struggled to complete before his untimely suicide in the early '70s. There is a peaceful reflecting pool and plaza, punctuated by Barnett Newman's sculpture, *Broken Obelisk*.

Downtown

Walk through downtown on a sultry summer day, and you won't see a soul—it's as though a neutron bomb silently wiped out the population. Houston has managed its oppressively crummy climate by linking every major hotel and office building with a 6-mile network of underground tunnels.

Houston's downtown is unusually dense. The entire contemporary skyline fits into a relatively compact pocket of office towers—it looks as though you could toss a lasso over the whole lot of them. The most striking of them all is I. M. Pei's 75-story **Texas Commerce Tower** (600 Travis St.), whose observation deck is definitely worth a visit. Dallas is always cited as the state's major design center, but Houston is no slouch: The visual arts and architecture receive tremendous attention here. Despite all its shimmer and shine, however, there's little to do downtown, and activity dwindles at night and on weekends, when all the suits have scooted. The only exception is the impressive **theater district**, concentrated up near the Buffalo Bayou around the intersection of Texas and Smith streets. Both **Market Square** and **Allen's Landing**, site of the city's first settlement, are near here. In addition to some touristy restaurants and bars, there are a number of historic buildings in the vicinity. One, the old **Rice Hotel** (Main St. and Texas Ave.), is infamous: President Kennedy spent the final night of his life here; vacant since 1977, it's in sore need of restoration.

Sam Houston Park, near where Lamar runs into Bagby, is literally in the shadows of downtown. With a fascinating collection of historic buildings moved here from other sites in Houston, the park offers an impression of the city's mid-19th-century beginnings; one-hour tours are available (☎ 713/655-1912).

Just northwest of the park, across I-45, is the **Old Sixth Ward Historic District**, Houston's oldest residential neighborhood. Many gays and lesbians have migrated here in recent years, attracted by the challenge of restoring small, relatively affordable, Greek Revival and Victorian cottages. Kane Street and Washington Avenue are two of the most picturesque streets.

Museum District/Texas Medical Center

To the surprise of many visitors, Houston is the most culturally endowed city in the Southwest and the Deep South, with a fine symphony orchestra, opera, and ballet, as well as outstanding museums. The **Museum District**, a loosely defined rectangle south of downtown, is bisected diagonally by Main Street and borders the northern tip of neatly landscaped **Hermann Park**. Among the must-sees here are the highly regarded **Museum of Fine Arts** (☎ 713/639-7300; highlights: 18th-century, Italian and Spanish Renaissance, impressionism); the **Contemporary Arts Museum** (☎ 713/526-3129; highlights: changing exhibits, which have featured Miro, Calder,

Sophie Calle); the **Houston Museum of Natural Science** (☎ 713/639-4600; highlights: 25,000-square-foot butterfly and tropical rain forest, 2,500 sea shells, space station exhibits, the Burke Baker Planetarium); and the **Holocaust Museum** (☎ 713/789-9898), which opened in March 1996 with a sculpture garden, a memorial area, changing exhibits, and a theater in which oral histories are movingly rendered. The south end of Hermann Park leads to the **Texas Medical Center**, an area comprising several hospitals, hotels, and the beautiful campus of **Rice University**.

River Oaks and the Galleria

This section west of downtown and Montrose (follow Westheimer Rd.) is often referred to simply as **Uptown**. It takes in the **Galleria** shopping district and the **Post Oak** neighborhood of newer homes, hotels, and office buildings. The Galleria is made up of three mammoth shopping malls packed with every upscale boutique known to humankind. It's fun to simply sit in the parking lot and listen to the fever-pitched chirping of car alarms being activated and deactivated by their owners. Between Uptown and Montrose is **River Oaks**, Houston's snazziest residential neighborhood, and **Memorial Park**, which is the closest thing the city has to a gay cruising ground. If you hang around in the latter you run the risk of being mugged or bumping into former president George Bush in jogging shorts (it's up to you to decide which is the more terrifying prospect).

Longtime resident Miss Ima Hogg—heir to a vast fortune and bearer of quite possibly the most embarrassing name in human history—left the public her magnificent River Oaks home, **Bayou Bend** (1 Westcott St., ☎ 713/639-7750; reservations required), which sits on a scenic curve in the Buffalo Bayou. Inside is one of the world's most priceless collections of decorative arts and Early American painting.

The Heights

At the turn of the century, Northern Houston, a.k.a. **the Heights** (from Montrose, follow Waugh Dr. several miles until it crosses the White Oak Bayou and becomes Heights Blvd.), was the city's first streetcar suburb. It gradually lost status, and many of the area's grand Victorians were torn down to provide space for low-income housing. Now it's largely a working-class Latin American neighborhood, broken up here and there by a few pockets of artsy bohemianism. Dribs and drabs of hip young fags are settling in this relatively inexpensive, if not especially cheerful, neighborhood.

The best area for exploring is along **West 19th Street** (from Heights Blvd., head west on 11th St. for several blocks; turn right onto Rutland and continue north for a few more blocks), where there's a concentration of antiques and consignment shops, galleries, furniture restorers, and restaurants.

Galveston

Galveston Island became a resort destination around the turn of the century. It has all the gaudy seaside attractions and amusements of the Jersey Shore or Mississippi Gulf. For general tourism information, contact the **Galveston Island Convention and Visitors Bureau** (2106 Seawall Blvd., 77550, ☎ 409/763-4311 or 800/351-4237). There are two gay clubs here: **Evolution** (2214 Mechanic St., ☎ 409/763-4212) and **Kon-Tiki** (315 23rd St., ☎ 409/763-6264).

GETTING AROUND

With its maze of freeways and clotted two- and four-lane roads, Houston can be a frustrating place to drive during the workday. Westheimer Road is both narrow and overused, particularly in the Montrose district.

Nevertheless, an automobile is your best weapon here. You'll need one to get from your hotel to any of the good bars and restaurants, and though downtown is walkable, you'll do best to spend as little time there as possible. The city has the third-largest cab fleet in America, and drivers are consistently helpful and reliable.

EATS

Virtually all the restaurants in Montrose have a gay following, and a few qualify as established hangouts. The swank River Oaks neighborhood and the Galleria shopping district farther west are both also quite gay-friendly.

Thanks to its Southern, Cajun, Southwestern, Mexican, and Latin-American accents, Houston is a food lover's city. And although all of those regional cuisines are known for heavy and/or spicy fare, you'll also find plenty of light contemporary cuisine as well, especially in River Oaks and around the Galleria.

Many of the bars serve good, basic pub grub, and most have a weekly "steak out," to which you can bring your own meat—generous sides of slaw and baked beans are usually provided. These are a great deal of fun, and outsiders are always welcome. Although a few of the city's many Mexican restaurants are reviewed below, a couple have a major gay following on certain days. **Cafe Adobe** (2111 Westheimer Rd., ☎ 713/528-1468), for instance, is big with lesbians and gays on Sunday afternoons and with gay men on Mondays; **Ninfa's** (2704 Navigation St., ☎ 713/228-1175) in East Houston cranks queer on Sunday afternoons.

For price ranges, see Chart B at the front of this guide.

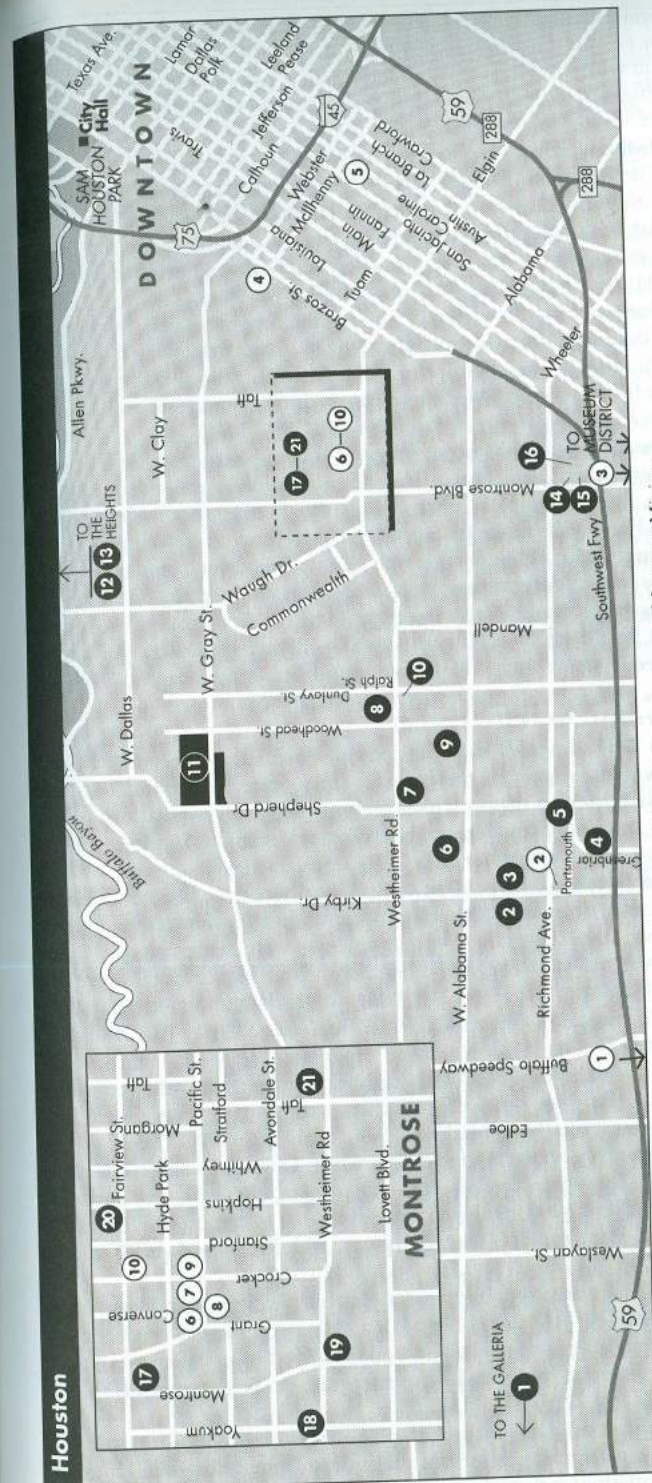
\$\$\$\$ Cafe Annie. This fancy Galleria restaurant is to Houston what Spago is to L.A., so consider it only for special occasions and reserve well ahead for weekends—it's where the stars dine when in town. Innovative Southwestern-inspired dishes include grilled quail with red-chile vinaigrette and snapper with crab, avocado, and tomatillo salsa. 1728 Post Oak Blvd., ☎ 713/840-1111.

\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ Churrascos. Though mired in a poorly designed shopping plaza that never has enough parking, Churrascos is one of the hottest spots in the city. Hanging plants, bamboo, dark-wood beams, and clean white walls lend an elegant air and set diners up for fine Latin American cuisine. 2055 Westheimer Rd., ☎ 713/527-8300.

\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ La Griglia. In the chichi, art deco River Oaks Center shopping district, La Griglia is part of a local syndicate of exceptional, though pricey, Italian bistros. The design is as impressive as the food: a cavernous dining room painted with a dazzling array of colors; huge, copper air ducts rising from behind the bar to the ceiling; and columns spackled with colorful chunks of mosaic. 2002 W. Gray St., ☎ 713/526-4700.

\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ Carrabba's. A major bastion of yuppie-dom, this dining room is large, loud, crowded, and festive—there's lots of standing and modeling. The Italian menu shows off such specials as pancetta-wrapped quail and a delightful minestrone. 3115 Kirby Dr., ☎ 713/522-3131.

\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ La Strada. La Strada's "Great Bilini Bash" puts this place in serious competition with Ruggles (see below) for the best Sunday brunch award. With a more sophisticated mood and a more serious menu, La Strada serves fine—if slightly trendy—Italian dishes at dinner, including several good steak, chicken, and fish grills. The staff is plenty fey and friendly. The kind of place that'll get you in the mood for bar-hopping later on. 322 Westheimer Rd., ☎ 713/523-1014.



- Eats**
- Barnaby's, 20
 - Boulevard Bistrot, 15
 - Brasil Cafe, 10
 - Cafe Annie, 1
 - Cafe Anthony's, 14
 - Cafe Noche, 17
 - Carraba's, 3
 - Cent'Anni, 5
 - Chapultepec, 16
 - Charlie's, 18
 - Churrascos, 7
 - 8.0, 4
 - Empire Cafe, 8
 - House of Pies, 2
- Scenes**
- Brazos River Bottom, 4
 - Briar Patch, 3
 - Gentry, 2
 - Heaven, 6
 - J.R.'s, 7
 - Java Java Cafe, 13
 - Kaldi's Cafe and Coffeeshop, 12
 - La Griglia, 11
 - La Strada, 21
 - A Moveable Feast, 6
 - Ruggles Grill, 19
 - Toopees, 9
- Montrose Mining Co., 8**
- Pacific Street, 9
 - Plaza 9200, 1
 - Rich's, 5
 - Ripcord, 10

- \$\$-\$\$\$ Boulevard Bistrot.** Almost too neat and dapper for shaggy Montrose; the Bistrot sits on a promenade of boutiques and has a bright, airy dining room in which steak, pastas, grilled chicken, salmon, flounder, and other tempting possibilities are jazzed up with the latest New American preparations. 4319 Montrose Blvd., ☎ 713/524-6922.
- \$\$-\$\$\$ Cafe Anthony's.** Yet another spot on Montrose Boulevard with designer pizzas on its menu (though they *are* excellent), Cafe Anthony's is actually distinguished by its fine contemporary seafood dishes. The setting is cheerful, with walls of floor-to-ceiling windows and a wooden deck outside overlooking the homo-happy sidewalk. Draws a fairly young crowd. 4315 Montrose Blvd., ☎ 713/529-8000.
- \$\$-\$\$\$ Cafe Noche.** Not your ordinary Tex-Mex eatery but a very festive Mexican restaurant with a somewhat daring chef (note the portobello mushroom fajitas). It's best to dine in the mercifully adorable courtyard out front; a foliage-choked, black-iron gate hides the mundanity of Montrose Boulevard. 2409 Montrose Blvd., ☎ 713/529-2409.
- \$\$-\$\$\$ Cent'Anni.** Houston has no shortage of Italian bistro-style dining, much of it overpriced; Cent'Anni delivers the goods without bankrupting you. Despite its dull shopping center venue, the dining room is elegant, with trompe l'oeil walls made to capture the setting of an Italian piazza. The traditional menu delivers with rich shrimp primavera, designer pizzas, and fine wines. Very romantic. 2128 Portsmouth, ☎ 713/529-4199.
- \$\$-\$\$\$ 8.0.** The perfect spot if you have a case of the funky munchies: Everything at "eight-oh" is a bit off the wall—including the abstract murals. The eclectic menu pitches black beans and rice, olive burgers, chilis, jerk chicken, and other Southwestern- and Caribbean-inspired fare. 3745 Greenbriar St., ☎ 713/523-0880.
- \$\$-\$\$\$ Ruggles Grill.** Ruggles is highly popular with the queer community. People come because of the colorful (and pretty) staff and the Italy-meets-New Mexico menu, which presents such clever creations as red-snapper-and-crab chowder, and black-bean pasta. The Sunday brunch is legendary. 903 Westheimer Rd., ☎ 713/524-3839.
- \$ A Moveable Feast.** Maybe a bit too politically correct (the good-for-you sandwiches are blessed with such perky sobriquets as the "happy burger," owing, one suspects, to the fact that no cows were made unhappy in creating them), this sunny veggie restaurant and market serves far more than piles of alfalfa sprouts. They have a long list of salads and sandwiches, plus some delicious cakes and pies. 2202 W. Alabama St., ☎ 713/528-3585.
- \$ Barnaby's.** This tatty, down-home diner notable for its rainbow-flag chimney and facade painted with legions of yellow, blue, and red stars is as close to Montrose's main bar district as you can get. Has a loyal local following—especially at breakfast. 604 Fairview St., ☎ 713/522-0106.
- \$ Chapultepec.** A popular Montrose hangout, Chapultepec is a cut above most Tex-Mex places in the area—great salsa, chili rellenos, and margaritas that'll purse your lips. The best seating is out on the festive but noisy tiled front porch. Open 24 hours. 813 Richmond Ave., ☎ 713/522-2365.
- \$ Charlie's.** There are no pretensions at this big ole diner, just droves of big ole fags—and rather butch ones at that. A bit perfunctory on decor (the Tiffany-style lamps are a standout), and the food is just so-so—but there isn't a better place to dish with your friends on Westheimer. 1100 Westheimer Rd., ☎ 713/522-3332.
- \$ Empire Cafe.** An old gas station along Westheimer Road's antiques row has been transformed into one of the slickest, hippest cafés in Houston. Heavenly offerings include the boutique pizzas, hearty frittatas, and a breakfast of hot polenta with honey-cream and toasted almonds. Cute, curved dining room with high ceilings and funky hanging lamps. 1732 Westheimer Rd., ☎ 713/528-5282.

\$ House of Pies. This circa-mid-'60s pie diner has, for much of its tenure, been referred to affectionately as "House of Guys." It's open 24 hours and is especially busy after the bars close. Everything is no-frills (meat loaf is a typical special); whatever you do, *do* choose something from their long, long list of freshly baked pies. Tacky and proud of it. 3112 Kirby Dr., ☎ 713/528-3816.

Coffeeshouse Culture

The crunchiest of local coffeeshouses, the **Brasil Cafe** (2604 Dunlavy St., ☎ 713/528-1993) is also an art gallery. You can dine in the tree-shaded courtyard, enjoying such healthful dishes as mesquite-smoked turkey sandwich, hummus, or *baba ganoush*. There are also dozens of vegetable and juice blends on tap. **Kaldi's Cafe and Coffeshop** (250 W. 19th St., ☎ 713/802-2246), a large antiques emporia-cum-restaurant, prints its daily menu on brown paper bags plastered to the walls. The food itself is somewhat more sophisticated—sandwiches and salads with plenty of gourmet ingredients. Very boho, with poetry readings and open-mike nights. Though it's not really near anything, **Java Java Cafe** (911 W. 11th St., ☎ 713/880-5282) is probably the gayest coffeeshouse in the Heights. It's inside a shop that sells flowers, antiques, balloons, plants, and gifts. The horrid Liquid Drano-blue roof, vinyl booths, and Formica tables at **Toopees** (1830 W. Alabama St., ☎ 713/522-7662) put it on the aesthetic plane of your average Denny's, but there is a pleasant, arbored courtyard off the side of the building. They serve good, simple diner food, and have a major gay following.

SLEEPS

Houston's hotel scene is characterized by typical chain properties. Most are downtown or out by the Galleria (Montrose is directly between these two neighborhoods); a smaller, third cluster is in and around the Texas Medical Center. The advantages of the Galleria neighborhood are its luxe shopping and dining and its location away from the daytime bustle and nighttime desolation of downtown.

For price ranges, see Chart B at the front of this guide.

Hotels

Near Downtown

- ☑ The intimate **Lancaster** is one of only two hotels in Houston that could be said to possess historic character and European charm. A restored 1926 gem, it's equidistant from the theater and financial districts. 701 Texas Ave., ☎ 713/228-9500 or 800/231-0336. 93 rooms. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$
- ☑ The Lancaster's only competitor for charm and style, the **Wyndham Warwick** is a newer, slightly less extravagant property just south of downtown in the Museum District. The Warwick has exquisite public areas and a strong homo following. 5701 Main St., ☎ 713/526-1991 or 800/822-4200. 308 rooms. \$\$-\$\$\$\$
- ☑ The top business choice downtown is the towering **Hyatt Regency**, whose rooms have balconies looking out over a 30-story atrium. 1200 Louisiana St., ☎ 713/654-1234 or 800/233-1234. 959 rooms. \$\$-\$\$\$
- ☑ The best economy choice within a short drive of Montrose is the **Allen Park Inn**, a fairly typical motor lodge that's cleaner than most and has a nice pool and exercise room. 2121 Allen Pkwy., ☎ 713/521-9321. 249 rooms. \$-\$\$

Near the Galleria

☑ The former Remington Hotel is now the exclusive and expertly managed **Ritz-Carlton Houston**, the hostelry of choice for world leaders and celebrities. It's very close to Montrose and has a fabulous rooftop swimming pool and sundeck. 1919 *Briar Oaks La.*, ☎ 713/840-7600 or 800/241-3333. 232 rooms. \$\$\$\$

☑ Long-term guests and couples traveling together should consider the **Guest Quarter Suites-Galleria West**, whose two-bedroom suites with kitchens are a particularly good value. 5353 *Westheimer Rd.*, ☎ 713/961-9000 or 800/222-8733. 335 suites. \$\$-\$\$\$

☑ A frequent host of gay and lesbian events, the **Westin Oaks** rises 21 stories directly above the Galleria Mall. Rooms are large and contemporary. 5011 *Westheimer Rd.*, ☎ 713/960-8100 or 800/228-3000. 406 rooms. \$\$-\$\$\$

Guest Houses and Small Hotels

☑ Madonna stays at **La Colombe d'Or**, a 1920s 21-room mansion that has been meticulously restored with every detail considered. Each suite has a private dining room and is decked with a collection of regionally and internationally acclaimed art. 3410 *Montrose Blvd.*, ☎ 713/524-7999. 5 suites, 1 penthouse. Mixed gay/straight. \$\$\$\$

☑ On a homier—and much more affordable—scale is the **Lovett Inn**, the former home of a Houston mayor and the most popular choice of gays and lesbians for several years now. Rooms are done with a tasteful mix of antiques and reproductions, and in back, a pool and hot tub are given privacy by rows of box hedges. All of Montrose's bars and restaurants are within walking distance. 501 *Lovett Blvd.*, ☎ 713/522-5224 or 800/779-5224. 6 rooms. Mostly mixed gay male/lesbian. \$-\$\$

☑ The **Montrose Inn** is the area's most affordable choice, a clean but characterless spot in the heart of Montrose. It's a fairly social place. 408 *Avondale St.*, ☎ 713/520-0206 or 800/357-1228. 7 rooms. Gay male. \$

SCENES

Houston has no shortage of bars—about 30 of them—most small and catering to a local crowd. Montrose is the major hub for nightlife and partying, though there are a few bars downtown and scattered around in other parts of the city.

The main cluster of Montrose bars is in a somewhat ordinary-looking residential area just east of Montrose Boulevard and north of Westheimer Road. Most of the major venues here—Heaven, the Ripcord, J. R.'s, and Pacific Street—are patronized predominantly by men. There really is no single dyke district. The Plaza 9200 complex in southwest Houston, however, just inside the Loop (I-610), has a largely female following.

Houston bar culture has a raw, gritty character that somehow draws together the city's two strongest (though not mutually exclusive) factions of bar goers: fans of leather and fans of drag. Many Montrose bars still look a lot as they did 15 years ago—they're dimly lit, the walls are coated with chipped paint, the windows are shuttered, the floors are covered with grubby linoleum.

All bars stop serving liquor at 2 AM. The Montrose Mining Co. and the Ripcord, however, serve coffee and soft drinks until 4 on Fridays and Saturdays. After-hours clubs pop up frequently; they open, close, and move so rapidly it's impossible to review them, so ask around.

Brazos River Bottom (BRB). BRB has been hopping for many years and is a great place to go if you're new in town. It has a good-size bar and offers two-stepping and line-dancing most nights, lessons on Tuesdays and Thursdays. On Sundays hundreds cram in here for what's arguably the best steak night in town. 2400 *Brazos St.*, ☎ 713/528-9192. *Crowd: more men but very woman-friendly, good mix of ages and types.*

Briar Patch. The city's main piano bar, this is a nice place to take a date, get to know locals, and get away from the intensity of Montrose—it's a 10-minute drive to the south. It gets a bit campier here during the drag shows. The only problem is the soft pink lighting: It gives everybody a Pepto-Bismol complexion. Often thought of as a "wrinkle bar," but lots of young guys like it here, too. 2294 *Holcombe St.*, ☎ 713/665-9678. *Crowd: mostly male, generally older, chatty.*

Gentry. This is a terribly popular spot when work lets out and closet cases need a fix of gaiety before heading home to the family. Despite that reputation, it's a convivial, elegant bar—feels like a very proper social club. 2303 *Richmond Ave.*, ☎ 713/520-1861. *Crowd: mostly ages 30s to 50s, many older guys preying upon the younger ones, lots of suits and ties.*

Heaven. This is the city's best small disco. The lighting and sound system are outstanding, and huge video screens abound. A second cruise bar off to the side is quieter—a good place to dish. Used to be a more uptight, clonish crowd, but lesbians and Latinos have thankfully livened up the mix and loosened things up. Watch for the 50-cent drink specials on Sundays. Cover many nights. 810 *Pacific St.*, ☎ 713/521-9123. *Crowd: mostly under 30; diverse in race and gender; some stand-and-model, more urban than preppy, plenty of disco bunnies.*

J. R.'s. Like its namesakes in Dallas and Washington, J. R.'s is the quintessential fern bar of the '90s, with hanging plants, Tiffany-style lamps, wood paneling, brick archways, brass bar fixtures, and lots of nooks and corners for standing around and ogling. A flagstone floor leads through an archway to the Santa Fe bar and patio, which is decorated with Navajo tapestries and fake cacti; the patio has a great dyke following on Sunday afternoons. 808 *Pacific St.*, ☎ 713/521-2519. *Crowd: like a J. Crew fashion show with a few cowhands thrown in; young, professional, on the prowl; mostly guys but lesbian-friendly.*

Montrose Mining Co. Typical of other "Mining Companies" around Texas, this one tries to be the major leather bar, but actually gets more of a mix of guys; for instance, it's host to Houston's "bear of the month" contests. It's extremely dark (they should hand out flashlights at the door) and kind of dingy inside, but there's a nice patio off the back. Gets a little more mainstream late on weekends, when it's open after hours. 805 *Pacific St.*, ☎ 713/529-7488. *Crowd: men only, very butch (hairy chests and faces, some leather but more denim), ages 30 and up, strong racial mix.*

Pacific Street. Some say it's just a quieter, less interesting version of its neighbors on the same street (J. R.'s and Montrose Mining Co.); others say it's more fun than either of them. It does have a nice little dance floor and a great balcony overlooking all the action on Pacific Street. There's also a good game room with pool, pinball, and video games. 710 *Pacific St.*, ☎ 713/523-0213. *Crowd: mostly male, a lot like Heaven's with some of the Mining Co.'s guys thrown in.*

Plaza 9200. The ownership of this giant '70s complex in southwest Houston, which used to be a tacky shopping center, is emphatic about not wanting Plaza 9200 to be called a lesbian bar. Nevertheless, the majority of its patrons are women. It's a big place with plenty to do and very little attitude, but it's also a bit of a haul from Montrose and lacks some of that neighborhood's cheerful hustle and bustle. Within its dowdy walls are several bars: Ms. B's, which looks like a Howard Johnson's cocktail lounge

circa 1976, is a conversation/cruise bar (open every night but Mon.). **The Ranch** is a popular country-western dance bar (open Tues. and Thurs.–Sat.; lessons on Tues.). **XTC**, a disco, draws a great mix of ages and genders; TVs and TSs tend to find it very comfortable here as well (open Fri. and Sat.). There's also a patio open anytime any of the bars are. **9200 Buffalo Speedway**, ☎ 713/666-3356. *Crowd: mostly women though men are welcome; very diverse in age and race, dressed-down.*

Rich's. A short drive from Montrose, Rich's is *the* downtown warehouse disco; it's only open Thursday to Saturday. It has a big dance floor and an outstanding sound system. Friday's retro disco theme is the best of the three nights; Saturday is a bit too crowded—though it's still the place to be seen, so most everyone makes an appearance. **2401 San Jacinto**, ☎ 713/759-9606. *Crowd: 80/20 mlf, younger disco bunnies and club kids.*

Ripcord. A true leather bar, with the traditional, mind-numbing black decor and dim lighting (a few preppy boys sneak in here for a look every once in a while). It's set in a tan, windowless compound in the heart of Montrose's bar territory. **715 Fairview St.**, ☎ 713/521-2792. *Crowd: mostly men; somewhat older; leather, Levi's, and uniforms.*

DIVES IN MONTROSE

Bacchus II (2715 Waughcrest St., ☎ 713/523-3396) is a dark and smoky dyke bar; Wednesdays are the most crowded. **Club 403** (403 Westheimer Rd., ☎ 713/523-0030) is a male bar set in a dilapidated, wood-frame house that looks a bit like a bait-and-tackle shop. **Cousins** (817 Fairview St., ☎ 713/528-9204) is the home of Houston's drag organization. **E/J's** (2517 Ralph St., ☎ 713/527-9071), a big bar just off Westheimer's antiques row, is best known for its lively patio grill, nasty but beloved Saturday night drag shows, and the E/J's Mug Club (you buy a mug and they keep it there for you). **Mary's** (1022 Westheimer Rd., ☎ 713/527-9669) is one of the oldest bars in town and can get lively from time to time. If Flannery O'Connor were to design a gay bar, it would look like **Past Times** (617 Fairview St., ☎ 713/529-4669), a low gray house that's spare, trashy, dark, smoky, dirty, and looks almost abandoned; it also has a terrible sound system. The **Venture-N** (2923 S. Main St., ☎ 713/522-0000), actually just east of Montrose, is home to four leather-and-Levi's clubs, and gets more of the motorcycle crowd than the Ripcord or Mining Co. (see above); can get very frisky in here late at night.

Club Houston (2205 Fannin St., ☎ 713/659-4998) is the city's male bathhouse, with lockers, video rooms, tanning beds, an outdoor pool, and workout equipment.

THE LITTLE BLACK BOOK

At Your Fingertips

AIDS Foundation Houston Hotline: ☎ 713/524-2437. **Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau:** 801 Congress Ave., 77002, ☎ 713/227-3100 or 800/446-8786. **Gay and Lesbian Switchboard:** ☎ 713/529-3211. **Hate Crimes Hotline:** ☎ 713/529-9615. **Montrose Clinic:** ☎ 713/520-2000.

Gay Media

Houston has no shortage of gay papers, all of them quite useful and well-written. **Out Smart** (☎ 713/520-7237) is a monthly news and entertainment magazine, **Houston Voice** (☎ 713/529-8490) is a weekly, and **This Week in Texas** (☎ 713/527-9111) includes plenty of stuff on Houston. The **Texas Triangle** (☎ 713/871-1272) is the news-oriented weekly newspaper. **Maleman** (☎ 713/528-6253) is the gay-male bar rag (also covers Dallas).

Good mainstream resources include the **Houston Tribune** (☎ 713/862-9603), an upbeat arts monthly that covers mostly events and happenings in western Houston, including Montrose; **Public News** (☎ 713/520-1520), a vaguely counterculturalist newsweekly; and the ubiquitous **Houston Press** (☎ 713/624-1400), the major arts and entertainment weekly.

BOOKSTORES

Crossroads Market (111 Westheimer Rd., ☎ 713/942-0147) has both mainstream and lesbigay titles; it's rather upscale and literary. **LOBO Books** (1424-C Westheimer Rd., ☎ 713/522-5156) has some gay and lesbian titles (and an especially good selection of used titles), though it's decidedly more male-oriented and carries adult videos. **Inklings** (1846 Richmond Ave., ☎ 713/521-3369) has the best selection of feminist and lesbian titles. Of the three stores, this one comes closest to serving as the hub and resource center of the gay and lesbian community.

Body and Fitness

The big cruising and buffing grounds, for both men and women, is the **Fitness Exchange** (3930 Kirby Dr., ☎ 713/524-9932), a huge, well-equipped health club. Smaller, far less of a scene, and more personal and user-friendly, is **Body Balance** (2425 Sunset Blvd., ☎ 713/520-9916).

A **READER WRITES** “My life does not begin and end with gay culture. But there is something about being in a new town—I want to know where the boys are even if I never go near the place. I can’t tell you how frustrating it is to try to guess which part of town is the most like-minded. And trying to decide where to get a room (‘No, we don’t want to be switched to two twin beds, I want the king-size as specified on my reservation’) can be rough. Luckily, I have a savvy gay travel agent. Can someone in a smaller town say the same?”

You’ve been there, too: Asking a B&B owner for something a little less frilly

(preferably plaid). That awkward moment when room service arrives, in the room with the king-size bed, both of you in morning *déshabille*.

To help you avoid such awkward moments, this guide directs you to the hotels and restaurants where you’ll be comfortable, the parts of town that are most like-minded. We hope you’ll find it a wonderful traveling companion: charming, brimming with sound recommendations and solid ideas, absolutely honest, and consistently full of fascinating facts that will help you see America’s cities under the brightest possible rainbow.



Karen Cure
Editorial Director

AUTHOR’S NOTE

B **BEING GAY OR LESBIAN** influences our choice of accommodations, nightlife, dining, shopping, and perhaps even sightseeing. Exactly how “gay” you want your vacation to be is entirely up to you.

Whatever you decide, this book will enable you to plan your trip confidently and with authority. On the following pages, I list and describe dozens of options, from the main gay bars and clubs to the great gay beaches; from the best shopping in New York City to the top restaurants in Chicago. You’ll also find a wide range of accommodations in every destination, from exclusively gay resorts to lesbian guest houses to mainstream hotels. And you’ll be shown which properties are closest to downtown businesses and which are near the gay discos. In every category, I’ve tried to provide ideas for every segment of our community.

Early plans for this book called for coverage of more than 50 destinations, including both the country’s largest cities and some that are smaller. But the list shrank as my editors and I realized how much there was to say about each place. The options available to gay and lesbian travelers have never been richer, and if we included it all, you’d have an encyclopedia.

About Me

This is an opinionated book, and I don’t hesitate to say what I think, so it might help you to know a bit about me. I’m a white gay male in my midtwenties. I grew up in Connecticut. My favorite restaurants are in New Orleans and San Francisco; my favorite bars are in Austin, Texas, and New York City’s East Village; and my favorite resort communities are Provincetown and Taos. I’m prone to describe certain neighborhoods as characterless, resorts as touristy or uppity, restaurants as dumpy or over-the-top. My intention is always to relate what I’ve observed and what I’ve heard locals say. I expect that anybody reading this book will find plenty to disagree with, which is understandable.

How I Researched This Book

I spent between 5 and 15 days in most cities, and a couple of days in smaller resort towns. At every destination, I interviewed gays and lesbians—from newspaper editors to city council members to barflies to people on the street. For the most part, I traveled without announcing myself—most of the businesses in this book had no idea I was writing about them when I visited.

On the road, I often I slept in the living rooms of friends . . . or friends of friends . . . or acquaintances, who soon became new friends. Sometimes I paid for hotel rooms and in some cases hoteliers extended their hospitality on the house. At least twice I slept in my car. Without the generosity of friends and many hotels, I couldn’t have written the book. But I never included a property or wrote favorably about one in exchange for a room. And I personally paid for every other expense, from airfare and car rentals to meals and club covers. I made all my own travel arrangements. In short, I attempted to experience these destinations in the same manner you will.

I’ve described everything as I’ve seen it—or as it has been reported to me. In the end, *Fodor’s Gay Guide to the USA* is a service not to hotels and guest houses, or to gay bars and restaurants, or to anybody in the travel industry. It is a resource for you, the traveler.

Language and Voice

Rather than sticking to the safe PC “gay” and “lesbian”, I opted for the more colorful language of my own generation; I used terms such as “faggy,” “dyke,” and “queer” throughout the book (even while I recognize that, for some people, these words are painful reminders of more repressive times). Much of gay and lesbian America uses these terms. And often I do personally. Please be assured that no offense or assumptions are intended.

Also, unless the context suggests otherwise, when I use the terms "gay" or "homosexual," I'm referring to gay men *and* lesbians. Where clarity was needed, I tried to specify which gender was intended.

Content

Each chapter has several distinct sections. Here's a quick rundown of what's inside each one.

The Lay of the Land

If you're looking for a quick summation of each destination's geography, its neighborhoods and major attractions, and its shopping, you'll want to read this carefully. At the end of each section are tips on getting around.

Eats

The list of restaurants in each chapter can be a bit arbitrary, but I've tried to give a range, balancing cuisine, price, and location. I've considered places named to me by gay and lesbian locals, places that advertise in gay publications, and places that were reviewed positively in local newspapers and magazines. Omission of your personal favorite does not mean that I don't recommend it, only that it's probably similar to other restaurants I did include. I ate at about 20% of the places in the guide and visited almost all the rest to study the menu, check out the decor and atmosphere, and observe the crowd.

I've tried to include choices for every budget. In most destinations, many recommendations are in or near gay-oriented neighborhoods. A handful of places are included less for the food than for the overtly festive (gay) atmosphere. A few places in each chapter are there simply because they represent some of the destination's finest or most unusual dining. Unless otherwise noted, you can assume that any restaurant in this book is at least somewhat popular with the community.

If you're looking for a great social alternative to the bar scene, you'll be happy to know that each dining section ends with a section about coffeehouses. Unless I describe the food, you can assume that each place offers only coffee and light snacks.

The following charts explain the price categories used for restaurants throughout this guide:

CHART A

Category	Cost of Dinner Entrées
\$\$\$\$	over \$20
\$\$\$	\$15-\$20
\$\$	\$9-\$14
\$	under \$9

CHART B

Category	Cost of Dinner Entrées
\$\$\$\$	over \$16
\$\$\$	\$12-\$16
\$\$	\$7-\$11
\$	under \$7

Sleeps

In large cities, I've included any gay-specific establishments that I felt confident recommending. In resort areas, I've listed a broad range of gay-specific accommodations, but in the most popular areas—including Key West and Provincetown—there wasn't space to include every possibility. I visited most of the B&Bs and small inns (usually anonymously), although I stayed in only a handful. If the establishment was straight-owned and I had no knowledge of its gay-friendliness, I checked with the owners to verify their interest in being covered in a gay publication. My descriptions of the clientele, compiled without the owners' input, are there only to give you a general sense of the place.

When I discuss larger hotels, particularly those in cities, don't assume that they are gay-friendly (or otherwise) unless the reviews specifically state so. Obviously, the degree of tolerance you encounter at a large property with many employees will depend largely on who happens to assist you. I included both mainstream properties that are in and near gay neighborhoods and those that have a strong reputation with the community.

The following charts explain the price categories used for lodging establishments throughout this guide:

CHART A

Category	Cost*
\$\$\$\$	over \$180
\$\$\$	\$130-\$180
\$\$	\$90-\$130
\$	under \$90

*Cost of double-occupancy room in high season

CHART B

Category	Cost*
\$\$\$\$	over \$150
\$\$\$	\$115-\$150
\$\$	\$75-\$115
\$	under \$75

*Cost of double-occupancy room in high season

Scenes

I checked out nearly every bar reviewed in this book. If a place opened after my visit to the city, I telephoned an employee and also got a report from a knowledgeable local resource to ensure an accurate review.

Although the smallest, sleepest, and most out-of-the-way bars aren't reviewed, I have mentioned a few of the more memorable, friendly, "neighborhood" bars—they're terrific places to meet locals, and they're usually low on attitude.

In this guide, male-oriented places outnumber those that cater mostly to women by about 10 to 1. This is not a reflection of my preferences but of America's gay bar culture—it's overwhelmingly young, white, and male. Still, don't assume that a bar described as 80% male or mostly young doesn't welcome lesbians or older guys. Descriptions of each bar's crowd and its "cruise factor" are based on my own observations and interviews and are there simply to give you a profile of what's typical.

I've tried to provide complete information on every city's entertainment scene. So, in addition to bars and discos, I've listed a few bathhouses, adult theaters, and the like. Our sexuality defines us and a sexually charged atmosphere defines many of the destinations we visit. I would be remiss if I didn't tell you what's where. What you do with the information is up to you. (I would also be remiss if I didn't encourage you to do it safely.)

The Little Black Book

This is your quick resource guide for every destination. If some establishments have closed by the time you read about them—bars and restaurants are unpredictable—

try the contacts here to get the latest scoop. Local tourist boards, as well as lesbian bookstores, help lines, community centers, and newspapers can be helpful. Additionally, I've included a few gay-popular gyms, and the phone numbers of resources for persons who are HIV-positive or who have AIDS.

Disclaimer

This is where I'm to remind you that time brings changes, and that neither I nor the publisher can accept responsibility for errors. An incredible amount of time and effort has been spent ensuring the accuracy of this book's information, but businesses move and/or close and restaurants and bars change. Always call an establishment before you go to make sure that it will be open when you get there.

Few of the establishments in this book knew in advance that they would be appearing in *Fodor's Gay Guide to the USA*. The mention of any business, attraction, or person in this book is in no way an indication of sexual orientation or attitudes about sexual orientation. Unless specifically stated, no business in this book is implied or assumed to be gay-owned or operated.

Send Letters

Whatever your reaction to this book—delight, excitement, unbridled rage—your feedback is greatly appreciated. I'd love to hear about your experiences, both good and bad, and about establishments you'd like me to include or exclude in future editions. Send your letters to me c/o Fodor's Travel Publications, 201 East 50th Street, New York, New York 10022.

In the mean time, I hope you'll have as much fun using this guide as I had writing it.



Andrew Collins
December 6, 1995

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Since I started this project, more than 300 of you have assisted me with this book by offering insights, opinions, suggestions, and advice. Some of you gave me your names, and I have thanked you personally below. Just as many of you either had no idea I was interviewing you for a book (surprise!) or drifted off before introducing yourselves—please accept my warmest gratitude.

More than a dozen members of Fodor's staff worked tirelessly on this book. Particular thanks go to Bob Blake, who coordinated all of the book's maps and continues to act as my unofficial spiritual advisor; Craig Seligman, who helped me immeasurably to get the project off the ground; Chris Billy, who spent hours editing, reworking, and coming up with new ways to improve the book; Ken Paprocki, who fact-checked the entire manuscript and wrote dozens of new reviews; and Laura Kidder, who saw the book through every single stage of production, kept me on track, edited, wrote, transferred corrections, and helped me maintain my sanity.

I'd also like to thank my agent, Daniel Bial, for not only invaluable professional advice but for constant moral support. I wish to thank dozens of great friends, on whose sofas and spare futons I've slept over the past three years. Lastly, I wish to thank my parents, Edward and Gretchen Collins, for encouraging me to pursue freelance writing, this particular project, and every other unlikely endeavor I've ever attempted.

This project is dedicated to D. Keller Beasley and Forrest H. "Woody" Bennett... two diamonds in the rough who, against considerable odds, taught me everything about love, a few things about patience, and never to take anything for granted.

Special thanks also go to the following:

General: Valerie Aaronoff, Stephanie Blackwood, Andrew Caldwell, Sara Cartwright, Teagan Chandler, John Frazier, Norman Hackl at the International Gay Travel Association, Thomas R. Harris, Laura McWade, Stan Metzger.

Atlanta: D. Keller Beasley; Cliff, Eddie, Kendra, Patrick, Rodney, et al; Judy C.; Cliff Edge; Debbie Fraker at Outwrite Bookstore; Dave Hayward; Les Howell; Badili Jones, Gary Kaupman, K.C. Wildmoon, and Joan Sherwood at *Southern Voice*; F. J. and R. C. McLaughlin; Jack Pelham at *Etc. Magazine*; David Verzello at Black Sheep Lager. **Austin:** Craig Edwards at the *Fag Rag*, Kay Longcope at the *Texas Triangle*, John Metz.

Baltimore: Patricia Beachley, Jennie Boyd Bull and the staff at the 31st Street Bookstore Cooperative, Sally Franklin at Cafe Diana, Jack Garman at Lambda Rising, Rawley Grau at the *Baltimore Alternative*, Gwen at P. T. Max, Larry Holmes, Ed Lawrence, Tom Mayak, Stephen Ziobro.

Boston: Matthew Basile, John Caveretta, Richard DiCusati at Citywide Reservation Service, Sam Donato, Joe Haley, Eric Hess, Johanna Nackley and John Affuso, Deborah Knapp, Jon Revere, Paul A. Thurman, Jesse Wennik, Kevin Zimmerman.

Chicago: Susan Cross, Mark Kollar, Todd Savage.

Dallas: Scott Bishop, Trey Brown, Pam D., Randall Hooper, Skip Landers, Steven Lawson, John Shore, Jeff Updike.

Denver: Michelle Baker, Richard Evans, Simon Foster, Roger Hunt and Jim Tomberlin in Aspen.

Fire Island: "Casey."

Houston: Tom Fricke, Carolyn A. Larson and Tad Nelson at the *Houston Voice*, Danni Saboda at the Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau, Sandra Wilkins.

Key West: Fran, Jerry Frantz, Michael Ingram, Melissa Kendrick, Damon Leard, Michael MacIntyre, Foster Meagher, Mark Porter, Martha Robinson, Stephen Smith and the staff at the Key West Business Guild, Bob Tracy.

Las Vegas: Brad Anderson, Leigh Bucknam, Bill Haller, Wes Miller and the staff of Get Booked, Christopher Strauss, Susan L. Thompson.

Los Angeles: Patricia Archuleta, Carter Bravmann, Steven Crawford at California Riviera 800 in Laguna Beach, Robin Eckland, Jim Kepner, Rosalie Kerkochian and Dan Marroni at Atlas Travel Service,

Acknowledgements

Dona Klein, Grinnell Morris, Fred Mutter, Alex Perez, Lucky Scoles, Marsha Meyer Sculatti at the West Hollywood CVB, Mark Simon at A Different Light Bookstore, Kristoffer Tangen, Stuart Timmons, David Urquhart, Ted Zepeda.

Nashville: Paul Clere, Collette, Cindy Sanders at the Nashville Convention and Visitors Bureau, Tracey at Ralph's.

New Orleans: Will Avera; Forrest H. "Woody" Bennett III; Bill, Charles, Gloria, Jeff, Lea-Ann, Lisa, and Stacey; Russell S. Colvin; Karl D. Matherne; Kyle Scafidy at *Impact*.

New York City: Noel Ambery; Andrew Boorstyn; Michelle Bouchard; Frank Browning; Nancy Duran; Elvis, Sil, and Craig; Caroline Hickson; Jason Jercinovic; Jeffrey Kazin; Christina Knight; Matthew Lloyd; Matthew Lore; Christopher Pennington; Laura Prichard; Marcy Pritchard; Sam and Tigger; Ruth Scovill; Todd Whitley.

Philadelphia: Rita Adessa at the Lesbian and Gay Task Force; Thom Cardwell, Al Patrick, and Mark Segal at the *Philadelphia Gay News*; Jim Carpenter at the New Hope Information Center; David Covert; Ed Hernance at Giovanni's Room; Alan Krause and Shilpa Mehta at *Au Courant*; Michelle at Hepburn's; Alan Molchan at Cafe Nola; L. A. Mundy; Charles O'Donald at the Rittenhouse Hotel; Robert at the Westbury; Michael Smith; Richard Smith; R. C. Staab at the Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Phoenix: Daphne Budge at Out'n Arizona Tours, Bruce Carl, Maureen P. Faul, Steve Francoeur, the staff at the Heartline Cafe in Sedona, Marian at Kachina Stables in Sedona, Jeff Ofstedahl at *Echo*, JoAnn Palazzo, Graydon Williams.

Portland: Alan Jones, Robert Liberty, Dan Rooney, Susan Solari of the Portland Oregon Visitors Association.

Provincetown: Ken Esry, Esther Lastique, Arise LaVina, Alex McCune, Philip Norkeloni, Peter at the Boatslip.

Rehoboth Beach: Bob the Cabana Boy, Fred, Patty, Swan, et al.

St. Louis: Adam, Barb, and Kent; Jeff Archuleta; Tim Cusick; Michael Lance; Nancy McAdams at *LesTalk*; Nancy Milton at the St. Louis Convention and Visitors Bureau; Amy Adams Squires Strongheart; Becky Turner; Rodney Wilson.

San Diego: Albert Columbo, the staff at Jerry and David's Travel, the staff at Men on Vacation.

San Francisco: Ty Accornero, Chris Arrott at Council Travel, Jon Bain, Daniel Carrillo, Mark Chekal, Chip Conley of Joie De Vivre Hotels, the late Mark Finch, Joseph Fortier, Gary King, Jeffrey Longhenry, Don Mack, Daniel Mangin, Vicki McGrath, Jenni Olson, Paige Schaffer.

Santa Fe and Taos: Andrew Beckerman, Cathy Bugliari, John Daw, Diane Fichtelberg, Karen Ford, Beth Goldman, Carol Jensen, Steve Lewis at the Santa Fe Convention and Visitors Bureau, David McCarty, Noel Stone, Patty Taylor at the Taos Chamber of Commerce, Carole Wildman, Jess Williams.

Seattle: Steve Bennett, Rob Cunningham, Mark Hanley, Cathy Hastings, John Hickey, Peter Johnson, Nathan Kibler at Beyond the Closet, Jim Locke, Eric Rockey.

South Beach: Michael Aller, Gerry and Jeffrey at Jefferson House, Bob Guilmartin at the South Florida Hotel Network, Craig Pritchard.

Tucson: the staff at Antigone Bookstore, Carl Eynatian, Bob Griffin at the *Observer*, the owners of the Catalina Park Inn, Edie Jarolim, Bob McMahan.

Washington, DC: Garbo Afarian, Joe Rio, Erik Wolf.



0 400 miles
0 400 km

Honolulu
Oahu
Maui
Hawaii

0 500 miles
0 800 km

Fodor's Gay Guide to the USA

Editor: Christopher Billy

Contributing Editors: Steven Amsterdam, Karen Cure, David Low, Conrad Little Paulus, Craig Seligman

Editorial Contributors: Susan Bain, Deb Carroll, Steve Crohn, Fionn Davenport, Mitchell Davis, Audra Epstein, Ellen Mayer, Rebecca Miller, Ken Paprocki, Julius Roberge, Vicki Robinson, James Sinclair, Nevenah Smith, Russell Stockman

Map Editor: Robert P. Blake

Production Editor: Laura M. Kidder

Creative Director: Fabrizio La Rocca

Cartographer: David Lindroth; Eureka Cartography

Cover Design: Archie Ferguson

Text Design: Between the Covers

Copyright © 1996 by Andrew Collins

Maps Copyright © 1996 by Fodor's Travel Publications, Inc.

Fodor's is a registered trademark of Fodor's Travel Publications, Inc.

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. Published in the United States by Fodor's Travel Publications, Inc., a subsidiary of Random House, Inc., New York, and simultaneously in Canada by Random House of Canada Limited, Toronto. Distributed by Random House, Inc., New York.

No maps, illustrations, or other portions of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the publisher.

First Edition

ISBN 0-679-02909-5

Special Sales

Fodor's Travel Publications are available at special discounts for bulk purchases for sales promotions or premiums. Special editions, including personalized covers, excerpts of existing guides, and corporate imprints, can be created in large quantities for special needs. For more information, contact your local bookseller or write to Special Markets, Fodor's Travel Publications, 201 East 50th Street, New York, NY 10022. Inquiries from Canada should be directed to your local Canadian bookseller or sent to Random House of Canada, Ltd., Marketing Department, 1265 Aerowood Drive, Mississauga, Ontario L4W 1B9. Inquiries from the United Kingdom should be sent to Fodor's Travel Publications, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 2SA, England.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

CONTENTS

	Foreword	vi
	Author's Note	vii
1	Atlanta	1
2	Austin	17
3	Baltimore	27
4	Boston	39
	<i>With Ogunquit, Maine</i>	
5	Chicago	57
	<i>With Saugatuck and Douglas, Michigan</i>	
6	Dallas	83
7	Denver	94
	<i>With Aspen</i>	
8	Fire Island	107
9	Houston	118
10	Key West	130
11	Las Vegas	142
12	Los Angeles	154
	<i>With Laguna Beach</i>	
13	Nashville	181
14	New Orleans	192
15	New York City	209
16	Palm Springs	245
17	Philadelphia	256
	<i>With New Hope</i>	
18	Phoenix	276
	<i>With Sedona and Jerome</i>	
19	Portland	295
20	Provincetown	309

21	Rehoboth Beach	322
22	St. Louis	330
23	San Diego	342
24	San Francisco	357
	<i>With Russian River</i>	
25	Santa Fe and Taos	396
26	Seattle	414
27	South Beach	432
	<i>With Miami and Fort Lauderdale</i>	
28	Tucson	448
29	Washington, DC	461
	Index	479

FODOR'S GAY GUIDE TO THE USA

"Fodor's, America's travel experts, have published the most comprehensive guide for gay and lesbian travelers—written for us, about us, and by one of us. Quite simply, 'if it's out there, it's in here.' Thanks, Fodor's."

—Harry Taylor, publisher, *Out* magazine

"Yet another step in the acceptance of American gays and lesbians by the establishment is marked by this guide from Fodor's." —Edmund White

It's engaging and insightful. It's personable and chatty. It's informative and candid. This guide-with-attitude reviews and rates hotels, B&Bs, restaurants, coffeehouses, nightspots, and other attractions where gay men and lesbians will feel comfortable and right at home.

Do you want the ultimate gay vacation, or the hottest gay spots to visit on your next trip? The best bars? The most romantic restaurants? The dives we all hate to love? You'll find it all inside. Along with 44 detailed maps pinpointing key locations, plus publications, switchboards, and other local resources for each city.

THE AUTHOR As a former Fodor's editor, inveterate traveler Andrew Collins knows what's worth recommending—and what's not—and for his research visited more sites popular with gay men and lesbians than most people

see in a lifetime.



JOANN DHARRAJ

DESTINATIONS COVERED

Aspen, CO
Atlanta, GA
Austin, TX
Baltimore, MD
Boston, MA
Chicago, IL
Dallas, TX
Denver, CO
Douglas, MI
Fire Island, NY
Fort Lauderdale, FL
Houston, TX
Jerome, AZ
Key West, FL
Laguna Beach, CA
Las Vegas, NV
Los Angeles, CA
Miami, FL
Nashville, TN
New Hope, PA
New Orleans, LA
New York, NY
Ogunquit, ME
Palm Springs, CA
Philadelphia, PA
Phoenix, AZ
Portland, OR
Provincetown, MA
Rehoboth Beach, DE
Russian River, CA
St. Louis, MO
San Diego, CA
San Francisco, CA
Santa Fe, NM
Saugatuck, MI
Seattle, WA
Sedona, AZ
South Beach, FL
Taos, NM
Tucson, AZ
Washington, DC

ISBN 0-679-02909-5



EAN

51950 >

9 780679 029090

US \$19.50 UK £14.99 CAN \$27.00

Visit us on the Web at <http://www.fodors.com/>