

THE LITTLE BLACK BOOK

At Your Fingertips

Broward County Gay Hotline (☎ 954/537-0823). **Broward County Mass Transit** (☎ 954/357-8400). **Center One** (☒ 3015 N. Ocean Blvd., Suite 111, ☎ 954/537-4111 or 800/339-2815) provides resources for persons with AIDS/HIV. **Entertainment and Attractions Hotline** (☎ 954/527-5600). **Gay/Lesbian Community Center** (☒ 1164 E. Oakland Park Blvd., ☎ 954/563-9500). **Gay & Lesbian Switchboard** (☎ 954/563-9500). **Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau** (☒ 200 E. Las Olas Blvd., Suite 1500, Fort Lauderdale, 33301, ☎ 954/765-4466 or 800/227-8669). **Health Link** (☎ 954/565-8284) is a resource line for information on AIDS, cancer, and other health issues. **PWA Coalition of Broward County** (☒ 2302 N.E. 7th Ave., ☎ 954/565-9119). **Women in Network** (☎ 954/564-4946). **XS Magazine** (alternative newspaper with good arts and dining coverage, ☎ 954/523-9797, e-mail xsmag@xso.com). **Yellow Cab** (☎ 954/565-5400).

Gay Media

For the best nightlife coverage, stick with the Fort Lauderdale-based weekly, **Hot Spots** (☎ 954/928-1862), a colorful magazine with listings on South and Central Florida, plus a few gossip columns and news clips. **Scoop** (☎ 954/561-9707, e-mail scoop@scoopmag.com) is Fort Lauderdale's main gay news weekly; it also has extensive bar and cultural coverage. **TWN** (*The Weekly News*, ☎ 305/757-6333, e-mail info@twnmag.com) is a similar option, with weekly gay arts, entertainment, and news; it gives equal coverage to Dade and Broward counties. The monthly magazine **Unique** (☎ 954/463-8640), a high-quality production with color photos, is based in Broward County but also has regional coverage and good articles for and by lesbians and gay men. For news of weekly events and support groups, pick up **The Center Voice** (☎ 954/563-9500), published by the lesbian and gay community center.

BOOKSTORES

Once more of a gay gift and greeting card store, the **Pride Factory** (☒ 710 W. Broward Blvd., ☎ 954/463-6600) has increased its selection of lesbigay books and periodicals and is now one of the best sources for such titles in the region; it's also an excellent source for movies (porn and otherwise). Also with a significant gay and lesbian section is **Borders** (☒ 2240 E. Sunrise Blvd., ☎ 954/566-6335), a branch of the national megachain; it has plenty of friendly employees and a queer-popular café.

WORKING OUT

Even if you don't consider bathhouses to be legitimate workout facilities, you'll like **Club Fort Lauderdale** (☒ 400 W. Broward Blvd., ☎ 954/525-3344). While it has its cruisy sections, it's also a new, clean facility with good fitness equipment. The **Zoo** (☒ 3001 S.E. 5th St., ☎ 954/525-7010), by the beach, gets a mix of straights and gays.

14 Out in Houston

AS THE 1970S drew to a close, an oil boom vastly increased Houston's coffers, and it seemed poised to become the most vibrant city in the South. 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 to its knees: The infrastructure crumbled, businesses folded, and Houstonians fled for greener pastures. Only in the early '90s did the Bayou City begin to awaken from its economic doldrums.

Now, with Houston back in full swing, residents seem neither cocky nor contrite. Having lived through the '80s they can beat just about anything, but they also know how quickly the tables can turn.

A hybrid of Southern and Western cultures, Houston is 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"?) near the Gulf of Mexico. A thriving port city, Houston has a diverse population. Many Cajuns and Creoles live here, as well as significant numbers of Latin Americans, Asians, African-Americans, and Greeks. Outsiders themselves at one time, most residents warm quickly to newcomers and visitors.

In the '70s this spirit of tolerance helped to foster the growth of a gay ghetto—Montrose. During the past 20 years Montrose has grown from a loud, lusty, and in many ways downcast district into a haven of restored homes and trendy restaurants and coffeehouses. Plenty of straights have settled here, too, and gays have begun moving elsewhere. As downtown's old warehouses and defunct office buildings reopen as residential lofts, a good many upwardly mobile gays and lesbians are moving there. And despite a lack of national recognition, Houston's queer community continues to play a vital role in the city's commercial, social, and arts scenes.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

Houston, the fourth-largest city in the United States, is marked by striking contrasts. In many sections it looks as if time stood still in the late '70s. Elsewhere, rows of storefront windows are boarded over, victims of the economic downturn in the '80s. Then there are the pockets that have been developed in the '90s—office buildings and swank shopping plazas. What's odd is that these three urban visions appear in combination anywhere you look. There is no zoning: Skyscrapers rub shoulders with vacant lots; the patio of the trendiest eatery sits across from a Jiffy Lube; and an avenue of stately Colonial Revival homes gives way to tenements. Despite these aesthetic blemishes, Houston has acquired an 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, the Old Sixth Ward, and downtown, but **Montrose** remains ground zero. Montrose is about midway between downtown and the Galleria, with intersecting Westheimer Road and Montrose Boulevard its main commercial spines.

This is a pleasant but hardly swank area—a hodgepodge of restored early 20th-century architecture along with more recent experiments in urban design—some tasteful, some not. Walking along these tree-shaded, quiet streets, you'd never know you're a short drive from downtown. Montrose is low-key and modest in most respects—guppies, artists, professionals, and students live here, and Houston's outgoing and welcoming nature is more than evident.

Along Westheimer Road, from roughly the 1500 block to the 2300 block, is a memorable **antiques row**. The blocks just south of Westheimer Road and east of Montrose make up the **Westmoreland Addition**, plotted in 1902 on a 12-block grid and consisting of hundreds of late-Victorian and Colonial Revival homes.

Nearby cultural sights include the **Menil Collection** (☒ 1515 Sul Ross St., ☎ 713/525-9400), with works by Warhol, Léger, Picasso, Braque, Matisse, and Twombly in a space designed in 1987 by Renzo Piano. The **Rothko Chapel** (☒ 3900 Yupon St., ☎ 713/524-9839) contains 14 large-scale Rothko paintings commissioned for the chapel. A peaceful reflecting pool and plaza are punctuated by Barnett Newman's sculpture *Broken Obelisk*. The **Byzantine Fresco Chapel** (☒ Branard and Yupon Sts., ☎ 713/525-9400) opened in 1997 and showcases two 13th-century frescoes rescued from war-torn Cyprus.

Downtown

The most striking of Houston's downtown office towers is I. M. Pei's 75-story **Texas Commerce Tower** (☒ 600 Travis St.). The blocks immediately north and west are at the center of the neighborhood's comeback, which was first felt on a dramatic scale in 1997. Although it was hard hit by the '80s economy, the area continued to draw people in to Houston's first-rate symphony, opera, ballet, and theaters. Recently, many of the stately warehouses and buildings near this arts district have been converted into residential space. The 1997 condo-refitting of the historic **Rice Hotel** (☒ Main St. at Texas Ave.) has perhaps attracted the most attention; it is where President Kennedy spent the final night of his life, and it stood vacant from 1977 until its makeover.

Bayou Place (☒ 520 Texas Ave., ☎ 713/229-8990) opened in late 1997. This restored building has restaurants, bars, and a theater. This space complements nearby existing entertainment districts like **Market Square** and **Allen's Landing**, site of the city's first settlement and now a complex of restaurants, shops, and bars. Future projects include the proposed construction of a vintage-style stadium for Major League Baseball's Houston Astros and the continued beautification of the **Buffalo Bayou Waterfront**, which will soon be laced with landscaped trails and bike paths.

Sam Houston Park and the Old Sixth Ward

Sam Houston Park (☒ Bagby at Lamar Sts., ☎ 713/655-1912) sits 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 of the seven homes and one church are available.

Northwest of the park, across I-45, the **Old Sixth Ward** is one of Houston's eight National Historic Districts. Many gays and lesbians have mi-

grated here, 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 and Texas Medical Center

Houston is the most culturally endowed city in the Southwest and the Deep South. The **Museum District**, which is south of downtown, begins at the northern tip of **Hermann Park**. Don't miss the recently expanded **Museum of Fine Arts** (☒ 1000 Bissonnet St., ☎ 713/639-7300), whose 27,000 works include a concentration of Impressionist, as well as Italian and Spanish Renaissance, pieces. Although it contains no permanent collection, the **Contemporary Arts Museum** (☒ 5126 Montrose Blvd., ☎ 713/526-3129) hosts important temporary exhibitions.

A few blocks east, the **Holocaust Museum** (☒ 5401 Caroline St., ☎ 713/789-9898) has a sculpture garden, a memorial area, changing exhibits (which sometimes touch on the persecution of gays and lesbians during World War II), and a theater in which oral histories are powerfully rendered. Just south, at the northern tip of the park, the **Houston Museum of Natural Science** (☒ 1 Hermann Circle Dr., ☎ 713/639-4600) is the nation's fourth-most-visited museum. Check out the Burke Baker Planetarium, which has a 25,000-square-foot tropical rain forest complete with butterflies. (No joke: Spray Calvin Klein's *Obsession* on your shoulder and the butterflies won't leave you alone!)

The south end of the park is dominated by the **Houston Zoological Gardens** (☒ 1513 N. MacGregor St., ☎ 713/525-3300), the campus of **Rice University**, and the 650-acre **Texas Medical Center**, the world's largest concentration of hospitals and medical research facilities. A major focus at the center is biotechnology, including cutting-edge AIDS and cancer research. Although you can't tour the Medical Center, consider visiting the **Museum of Health and Medical Science** (☒ 1515 Hermann Dr., ☎ 713/790-1838), which is near the Museum of Natural Science. The museum recently introduced a permanent exhibit that helps explain the workings of the human immune system and how it's affected by HIV/AIDS and other viruses. Clever exhibits actually allow you to "tour" the human body and learn up close how it works.

River Oaks and the Galleria

Head west of downtown and Montrose via Westheimer Road to reach **Uptown**, which encompasses the **Galleria** and snazzy **Post Oak**. The Galleria is made up of three mammoth shopping malls packed with every type of upscale boutique known to humankind.

Between Uptown and Montrose are **River Oaks** and the mildly cruisy but sometimes dangerous **Memorial Park**. Hang around in the park and you run the risk of being mugged or bumping into former President George Bush in jogging shorts (it's hard to say which is the more terrifying prospect). Longtime resident Miss Ima Hogg—heir to a vast fortune and bearer of a highly embarrassing name—left the public her magnificent River Oaks home, **Bayou Bend** (☒ 1 Westcott St., ☎ 713/520-2600; reservations required), which sits on a scenic curve along the Buffalo Bayou.

GETTING AROUND

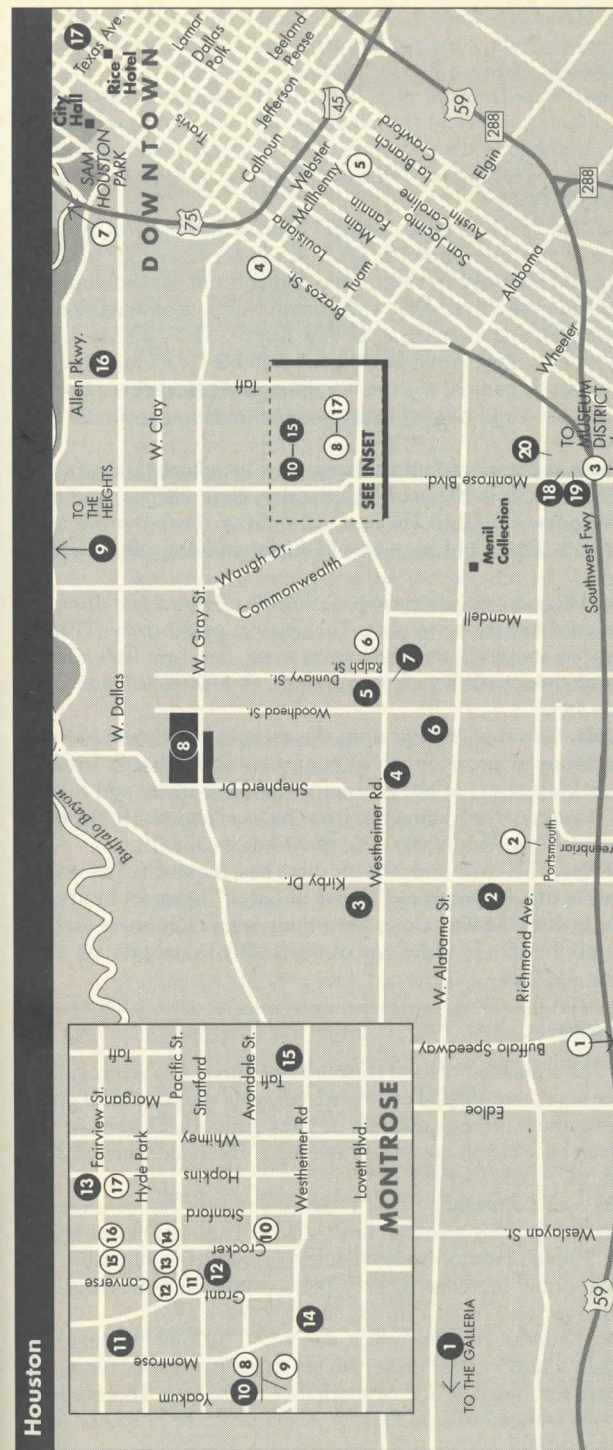
With its maze of freeways and clotted two- and four-lane roads, Houston can be a frustrating place to drive during the workday. Westheimer Road is narrow and overused, particularly in the Montrose district. Nevertheless, an automobile is your best bet. You'll need one to get from your hotel to any of the good bars and restaurants. The city has the third-largest cab fleet in America, and drivers are consistently helpful and reliable.

EATS

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, light contemporary cuisine is also plentiful. Restaurants in Montrose have a gay following, and those in the downtown theater district, River Oaks, and the Galleria tend to be gay-friendly. Many gay bars serve good, basic pub grub, and most have a weekly "steak out," to which you can bring your own meat (so to speak)—generous sides are usually provided. These are fun, and outsiders are welcome. In addition to the two excellent Mexican eateries reviewed below, **Ninfa's** (☎ 2704 Navigation St., ☎ 713/228-1175) in East Houston cranks queer on Sunday afternoons.

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

- \$\$\$\$ X **River Oaks Grill.** Probably the gay-friendliest of the city's top-tier restaurants, this debonair establishment with the feel of a hunt club and the tinkle of piano keys in the air specializes in nouvelle but untrendy American and Continental fare such as red snapper with crab-laced pico de gallo. ☎ 2630 Westheimer Rd., ☎ 713/520-1738.
- \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ X **Churrascos.** Though mired in a poorly designed shopping plaza with never enough parking, Churrascos is one of the city's hot spots. Hanging plants, bamboo, dark-wood beams, and clean white walls provide an elegant setting for fine Latin American cuisine, like charcoal-grilled tenderloins with garlic sauce. ☎ 2055 Westheimer Rd., ☎ 713/527-8300.
- \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ X **La Griglia.** In chichi River Oaks, La Griglia is part of a local syndicate of exceptional, though pricey, Italian trattorias. The design is as impressive as the food: a cavernous dining room painted with dazzling colors. For dinner, any of the rotisserie chicken dishes or wood-grilled steaks will do the trick. ☎ 2002 W. Gray St., ☎ 713/526-4700.
- \$\$-\$\$\$ X **Boulevard Bistrot.** One of the slickest restaurants in Montrose, the Bistrot sits on a promenade of boutiques and has a bright dining room in which steak, pastas, grilled chicken, salmon, flounder, and other tempting possibilities are jazzed up with chef Monica Pope's nationally acclaimed New American preparations. ☎ 4319 Montrose Blvd., ☎ 713/524-6922.
- \$\$-\$\$\$ X **Café Anthony's.** Yet another spot on Montrose Boulevard serving designer pizzas (though they *are* excellent), Café Anthony's is also distinguished by its fine contemporary seafood dishes. The setting is cheerful, with walls of floor-to-ceiling windows and an outside deck overlooking the homo-happy sidewalk. ☎ 4315 Montrose Blvd., ☎ 713/529-8000.
- \$\$-\$\$\$ X **Café Noche.** Not your ordinary Tex-Mex eatery, Café Noche is a 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.
- \$\$-\$\$\$ X **La Strada.** With an ebullient atmosphere but a serious menu, La Strada serves fine, slightly trendy Italian dishes at dinner, including good steak, chicken, and fish grills. The staff is fey and friendly. This place will get you in the mood for bar-hopping later on. ☎ 322 Westheimer Rd., ☎ 713/523-1014; also ☎ 5161 San Felipe Rd., ☎ 713/850-9999.
- \$\$-\$\$\$ X **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 includes clever creations like red-snapper and crab chowder, and black-bean pasta. The Sunday brunch is legendary. ☎ 903 Westheimer Rd., ☎ 713/524-3839.
- \$\$ X **Solero.** The culinary cornerstone of downtown's comeback, this elaborately restored high-ceiling space—with 1880s architectural details intact—serves the best (well, actually the only) tapas in Houston. Come either to eat or watch the beautiful people devour white-bean and ham



- Eats**
- Baba Yegas, **12**
 - Barnaby's, **13**
 - Boulevard Bistrot, **19**
 - Brasil Café, **7**
 - Café Anthony's, **18**
 - Café Noche, **11**
 - Chapultepec, **20**
 - Charlie's, **10**
 - Churrascos, **4**
 - Empire Café, **5**
 - Fox Diner, **16**
 - House of Pies, **2**
 - Kaldi's Café and Coffeshop, **9**
 - La Griglia, **8**
 - La Strada, **1, 15**
 - River Oaks Grill, **3**
 - Ruggles Grill, **14**
 - Solero, **17**
 - Toopees, **6**
 - Scenes O
 - Brazos River Bottom, **4**
 - Briar Patch, **3**
 - Bricks II, **17**
 - Cousins, **15**
 - E/J's, **6**
 - Gentry, **2**
 - Heaven, **12**
 - J.R.'s, **13**
 - Liquid Lounge, **10**
 - Mary's, **9**
 - Montrose Mining Co., **11**
 - New Barn, **8**
 - Pacific Street, **14**
 - Plaza 9200, **1**
 - Rich's, **5**
 - Ripcord, **16**
 - Venture-N, **7**

soup, sliced *Manchego* (Spanish sheep's) cheese with apples, or pan-fried snapper cakes with spicy roasted-pepper sauce. ☒ 910 Prairie Ave., ☎ 713/227-2665.

- \$-\$\$ ✕ **Baba Yegas.** Steps from the queer bar strip, this très gay eatery sprawls with sunny dining rooms and shaded decks, which are constantly abuzz with chatter and gossip. Decent burgers, many veggie items, and other light dishes are served, but the ambience is the big draw. ☒ 2607 Grant St., ☎ 713/522-0042.
- \$-\$\$ ✕ **Fox Diner.** The "New American diner" concept seldom lives up to the tasty success of this queer-popular spot on the northern edge of Montrose. Warm and attentive service, a chic dining room, and sublime creations like warm-grilled tuna steak with tomato-calamata olive relish make for a wonderful dining experience. ☒ 905 Taft St., ☎ 713/523-5369.
- \$ ✕ **Barnaby's.** This tatty, down-home diner notable for its rainbow-flag chimney and facade painted with yellow, blue, and red stars is a favorite for casual pub food and filling breakfasts. ☒ 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 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 ol' diner, just droves of big ol' fags—and butch ones at that. The decor is perfunctory (Tiffany-style lamps are a standout) and the food is so-so, but there isn't a better place on Westheimer to dish with your friends. ☒ 1100 Westheimer Rd., ☎ 713/522-3332.
- \$ ✕ **Empire Café.** An old gas station along Westheimer Road's antiques row has been transformed into a hip café offering great pizzas, hearty frittatas, and such breakfast treats as hot polenta with honey-cream and toasted almonds. The cute, curved dining room has high ceilings and funky overhead 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." Open 24 hours, it's especially busy after the bars close. Everything is no-frills (meat loaf is a typical special); be sure to order one of the freshly baked pies. ☒ 3112 Kirby Dr., ☎ 713/528-3816.

Coffeehouse Culture

Brasil Café. The crunchiest of local coffeehouses, this is also an art gallery. You can dine in the tree-shaded courtyard, enjoying such healthful dishes as mesquite-smoked turkey sandwich or baba ganoush. Dozens of vegetable and fruit juice blends are on tap, and there's beer and wine. ☒ 2604 Dunlavy St., ☎ 713/528-1993.

Kaldi's Café and Coffeeshop. This Heights antiques emporium-cum-restaurant prints its daily menu on brown paper bags and plasters them to the walls. The food itself is somewhat less primitive—sandwiches and salads with gourmet ingredients. Very boho, with poetry readings and open-mike nights. ☒ 250 W. 19th St., ☎ 713/802-2246.

Toopees. Vinyl booths, Formica tables, and a '60s-looking building belie what is actually a funky coffeehouse with good café fare, exotic beers, and plenty of space for lounging. A nice alternative to the bars, Toopees is especially popular with lesbians. ☒ 1830 W. Alabama St., ☎ 713/522-7662.

SCENES

Houston has no shortage of bars—nearly 30—most of them small, divey, and catering to a local crowd. The main cluster is in an ordinary-looking

residential area east of Montrose Boulevard and north of Westheimer Road; with a few exceptions the bars have predominantly male followings, but the Plaza 9200 complex in southwest Houston is huge and caters largely to women.

Houston bar culture has a raw, gritty character that draws together the city's two strongest (though not mutually exclusive) factions of bar-goers: fans of leather and fans of drag. Many Montrose hangouts still look a lot like they did 15 years ago—dimly lit, the walls coated with chipped paint, the windows shuttered, the floors covered with grubby linoleum. Although bars stop serving liquor at 2 AM, the Montrose Mining Co. and the Ripcord serve coffee and soft drinks until 4 on Friday and Saturday. After-hours clubs pop up frequently; they open, close, but move so rapidly it's impossible to review them. Ask around.

Prime Suspects

Brazos River Bottom (BRB). Hopping for many years and a great place to go if you're new in town, BRB has a good-size bar and two-stepping and line-dancing some nights. On Sunday hundreds cram in for what's arguably the best steakout in town. ☒ 2400 Brazos St., ☎ 713/528-9192. *Crowd: mostly male but very female-friendly, all 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 flee the intensity of Montrose—it's a 10-minute drive south. It gets campier during the drag shows. The only problem is the soft pink lighting, which gives patrons a sickly salmon complexion. Often thought of as a "wrinkle bar," but young guys like it, too. ☒ 2294 Holcombe St., ☎ 713/665-9678. *Crowd: mostly male, generally older, chatty.*

Gentry. This oft-crowded "gentleman's bar" (strip joint) gets busy after work, when suits drop by for a fix of gaiety before heading home to the family. Despite a somewhat sleazy reputation, the bar retains an upscale ambience and the staff is friendly. ☒ 2303 Richmond Ave., ☎ 713/520-1861. *Crowd: male, 30s to 50s, dads and sons, suits and ties, boots and g-strings.*

Heaven. Houston's best small disco has an outstanding lighting and sound system, and huge video screens abound. A second cruise bar off to the side is quieter—a good place to dish. Heaven used to have a more uptight, clonish crowd, but lesbians, alternaqueers, and a more racially diverse set have loosened things up. Watch for the 50-cent drink specials on Sunday. ☒ 810 Pacific St., ☎ 713/521-9123. *Crowd: 60/40 m/f, mostly under 30, some stand-and-model, a few goths and grungers, more urban than preppy, plenty of disco bunnies.*

J. R.'s. Like its Dallas namesake, J. R.'s is the quintessential fern bar of the '90s, with hanging plants, Tiffany-style lamps, wood paneling, brass bar fixtures, and nooks and corners for standing around and looking pretty. A flagstone floor leads through an archway to the Santa Fe bar and patio, which is decorated with Navajo tapestries and faux cacti; the patio has a dyke following on Sunday afternoon. ☒ 808 Pacific St., ☎ 713/521-2519. *Crowd: 75/25 m/f, like a J. Crew fashion show with a few cowhands thrown in, young, professional, on the prowl.*

Montrose Mining Co. Once a hard-core leather bar, the Mining Co. now draws bears, Levi's, and even some of the dressy guys from nearby J. R.'s and Heaven. It's dark (they should hand out flashlights at the door) and kind of dingy inside, but there's a nice patio off the back. The club is more mainstream late on weekends, when it's open after hours. ☒ 805 Pacific St., ☎ 713/529-7488. *Crowd: male, mostly 30s and 40s, horny and butch, chest and facial hair.*

Pacific Street. Some say this two-story space is merely a quieter, less interesting version of its neighbors on the main bar strip; others say it's more fun than either of them. It has a nice little dance floor, a great balcony

overlooking all the action on Pacific Street, and 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 owners emphatically deny that this huge entertainment complex, fashioned ineptly out of a tacky '70s shopping center, is a lesbian bar, but most of its patrons are women. It's a big place with plenty to do and very little attitude, but it's also a haul from Montrose. **Ms. B's**, which looks like a Howard Johnson's cocktail lounge circa 1976, is a conversation/cruise bar; the **Ranch** draws fans of country-western music for dancing and lessons; **XTC** is a weekends-only high-energy disco with the all genders and races (plus quite a few TVs and TSs), and the **Patio** is a fine spot to catch a breath of fresh air and chat up new friends. ☎ 9200 Buffalo Speedway, ☎ 713/666-3464. *Crowd: 20/80 m/f, all ages and races, dressed-down, butch.*

Rich's. A short drive from Montrose, Rich's is Houston's prime warehouse disco, with a big dance floor and a super sound system. It's only open from Thursday to Saturday. Friday's retro-disco theme is the best of the three nights; Saturday is 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 m/f, younger disco bunnies and club kids.*

Ripcord. This is a serious leather bar, with the traditional, mind-numbing black decor and dim lighting (a few preppy boys sneak in for a look every once in a while). It's set in a tan, windowless compound in the heart of Montrose. ☎ 715 Fairview St., ☎ 713/521-2792. *Crowd: male, mostly over 35, leather, Levis, uniforms.*

Neighborhood Haunts

Cousins (☎ 817 Fairview St., ☎ 713/528-9204) is the home of Houston's drag organization. **E/J's** (☎ 2517 Ralph St., ☎ 713/527-9071) is 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), one of the oldest bars in town, can get lively from time to time. A seeming exercise in Southern Gothic, **Brick's II** (☎ 617 Fairview St., ☎ 713/529-4669) is a low, gray house that's spare, trashy, dark, smoky, dirty, and looks almost abandoned. The ultratrendy **Liquid Lounge** (☎ 220 Avondale St., ☎ 713/526-9878) draws a see-and-be-seen hetero/homo crowd for chichi cocktails and posing. The **Venture-N** (☎ 2923 Main St., ☎ 713/522-0000), just north of Montrose and home to leather-and-Levi's clubs, gets more of the motorcycle crowd than the Ripcord or Mining Co.; it can be very fun late at night. **The New Barn** (☎ 1100 Westheimer Rd., ☎ 713/521-9533) is a low-key country-western bar that draws men and women and sometimes has live music.

Action

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.

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 are its luxe shopping and dining and its location away from the daytime bustle downtown.

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

Hotels

Near Downtown

\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ ☎ **Lancaster.** This 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. Rooms have VCRs, CD players, and private fax lines. ☎ 701 Texas Ave., 77002, ☎ 713/228-9500 or 800/231-0336, FAX 713/223-4528. 93 rooms. *Restaurant, exercise room.*

\$\$-\$\$\$\$ ☎ **Wyndham Warwick.** The Lancaster's only competitor for charm and style, this newer, slightly less extravagant property is south of downtown in the museum district. Guests appreciate the exquisite public areas and park views. Strong homo following. ☎ 5701 Main St., 77005, ☎ 713/526-1991 or 800/822-4200, FAX 713/639-4545. 308 rooms. *Restaurant, pool, exercise room.*

\$-\$\$ ☎ **Allen Park Inn.** The best economy choice within a short drive of Montrose is a typical motor lodge that's cleaner than most and has a nice pool and exercise room. ☎ 2121 Allen Pkwy., 77019, ☎ FAX 713/521-9321 or 800/231-6310. 249 rooms. *Restaurant, pool, exercise room.*

Near the Galleria

\$\$\$\$ ☎ **Sheraton Luxury Collection.** This exclusive and expertly managed property is the hostelry of choice for world leaders and celebrities. Close to Montrose, it has a fabulous rooftop swimming pool and sundeck. ☎ 1919 Briar Oaks La., 77027, ☎ 713/840-7600 or 800/325-3535, FAX 713/840-8036. 232 rooms. *Restaurant, pool, health club.*

\$\$-\$\$\$ ☎ **Westin Oaks.** A frequent host to gay and lesbian events, this 21-story hotel directly above the Galleria Mall has large, contemporary rooms. ☎ 5011 Westheimer Rd., 77056, ☎ 713/960-8100 or 800/228-3000, FAX 713/960-6554. 406 rooms. *Restaurant, health club.*

Guest Houses and Small Hotels

\$-\$\$ ☎ **Lovett Inn.** Homey and affordable, this former residence of a one-time Houston mayor has long been the most popular choice of gays and lesbians. Rooms are done with tasteful antiques and reproductions, and in back, a pool and hot tub are given privacy by rows of box hedges. Bars and restaurants are within walking distance. ☎ 501 Lovett Blvd., 77006, ☎ 713/522-5224 or 800/779-5224, FAX 713/528-6708, e-mail lovetinn@aol.com. 8 rooms with phone, TV, and private bath. *Pool, hot tub. Continental breakfast. Mostly mixed gay male/lesbian.*

\$ ☎ **Montrose Inn.** This is the area's most affordable choice, a clean but basic B&B in the heart of Montrose, with friendly hosts and a social, if cruisy, ambience. Rooms have VCRs with adult movies. ☎ 408 Avondale St., 77006, ☎ 713/520-0206 or 800/357-1228. 5 rooms with phone, TV, some with private bath. *Full breakfast. Gay male.*

THE LITTLE BLACK BOOK

At Your Fingertips

AIDS Foundation Houston Hotline (☎ 713/524-2437, Web site www.aids-help.org). **Gay and Lesbian Switchboard** (☎ 713/529-3211). **Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau** (☎ 801 Congress Ave., 77002, ☎ 713/227-3100 or 800/365-7575, Web site www.houston-guide.com). **Greater Houston Lesbian and Gay Chamber of Commerce** (☎ 713/523-7576). **Hate Crimes Hotline** (☎ 713/529-9615). **Houston Gay and Lesbian Community Center** (to open some time in 1998, ☎ 713/867-7904). **Houston Press** (☎ 713/624-1400, Web site www.houston-press.com). **Montrose Clinic** (☎ 713/520-2000). **Public News** (☎ 713/520-1520, Web

site www.publicnews.com). **Women's Information and Referral Hotline** (☎ 713/528-2121).

Gay Media

Houston has no shortage of gay papers, all of them quite useful and well-written. **Out Smart** (☎ 713/520-7237, Web site www.outsmart-magazine.com) is a monthly news and entertainment magazine, **Houston Voice** (☎ 713/529-8490, Web site www.houstonvoice.com) is a weekly, and **This Week in Texas** (☎ 713/527-9111, e-mail twmag@aol.com) includes plenty of stuff on Houston. **The Texas Triangle** (☎ 713/521-5822, e-mail txtrihoust@aol.com) is the news-oriented weekly newspaper. Also look out for the helpful weekly newspaper-format **Guide to Gay Houston** (☎ 713/660-6808), which has a handy map, news about upcoming events, and bar and restaurant listings.

BOOKSTORES

Crossroads Market (☎ 1111 Westheimer Rd., ☎ 713/942-0147) is a true community bookstore with mainstream and lesbigay titles; it's upscale and literary. **LOBO Books** (☎ 3939-S Montrose Blvd., ☎ 713/522-5156) has porn and gay books (but not much for dykes), plus framed autographs of gay icons and celebs (from Cher to Walt Whitman) and some first editions and used titles. **Inklings** (☎ 1846 Richmond Ave., ☎ 713/521-3369) has the best selection of feminist and lesbian titles.

Working Out

The big cruising and buffing grounds, for men and women, is the **Fitness Exchange** (☎ 4040 Milam St., No. 100, ☎ 713/524-9932), a huge, well-equipped health club.

15 Out in Kansas City

With Lawrence, Kansas, and Eureka Springs, Arkansas

ALTHOUGH IT'S THE CLOSEST MAJOR CITY to the geographic center of America, Kansas City is off the beaten tourist path. Ironically, its centrality obscures Kansas City from the rest of the country. Vacation plans typically begin on either coast and creep inland as far as the Rockies in the West and the Mississippi River in the East. If the United States were a feature film, America's Heartland would be the part where everybody gets up and goes to the bathroom.

This lack of attention seems not to ruffle locals, who are far too busy enjoying themselves to care what coastal snobs think of their fine city. Certain midwestern cities suffer from the so-called "Second City" complex, but Kansas City is far enough out of the loop not to care.

In fact, this is one of the most delightful cities in America. Hilly, green, laced with parks, and with more fountains than any city but Rome, it is blessed with vibrant neighborhoods. The cost of living is not only reasonable, it's shockingly low. Gays and lesbians maintain clear, if not high, visibility in several neighborhoods and are rarely the target of grandstanding right-wing politicians.

Local queers, especially those who have settled here from other parts of the country, complain only that the gay community is too insular. Folks live throughout the city, but there is no gay ghetto or community center. Activists find the community's political edge in need of a good sharpening. This has a lot to do with how mellow everybody is. As one local put it, "If Kansas Citians were any steadier, they'd be dead."

THE LAY OF THE LAND

The metro region is the size of Connecticut, but the chunk of Kansas City you'll want to focus on comprises historic neighborhoods extending south from the Missouri River. Downtown is near the river, and as you head farther south you'll encounter the charming neighborhoods of Westport and the Country Club Plaza. Although part of the metro area falls in Kansas, most of the attractions and amusements are in Missouri.

Downtown and City Market

The southern half of Kansas City, including Westport, has remained fashionable and populated throughout most of this century, but **downtown** has had a rough time since World War II. Only in the past 10 years have there been signs of improvement, but this grid of office buildings encircled by interstate highways is not terribly dynamic.

Take an afternoon, however, to explore the northern tip of downtown, near the Missouri River. A well-preserved warehouse district is anchored

9 Out in Dallas

A FEW YEARS BACK THE DALLAS CITY COUNCIL voted to add sexual orientation and marital status to the city's employment nondiscrimination policy. Of course, votes like this occur regularly across the country, and as many pass as fail. In Dallas, however, the solid 9 to 5 outcome came as a surprise. This is a conservative city, and had this issue been extended to voters, it might never have passed.

With this vote, Dallas's gay community taught the world a few things about how to work in subtle ways for slow but effective change. The two council members who drafted the policy used persuasion and cunning to secure its passage—they concentrated their efforts on the council members they knew were undecided. Suspected opponents weren't apprised of the amendment until shortly before it was brought to a vote. By then, it was too late to rally public support against the amendment.

The gay community's most recent accomplishments have been in the arenas of religion and education. In September 1997 the nation's third high school for gay and lesbian students, the Walt Whitman Community School, opened here. A second headline-grabbing development has been the construction of the nation's largest gay and lesbian church, the 2,000-seat Cathedral of Hope, which will be the new home of the Dallas congregation of the Metropolitan Community Church. It's the creation of gay über-architect Philip Johnson, who, ironically, also designed Dr. Robert Schuller's Crystal Cathedral in Orange County, California.

Dallas maintains a high profile among business travelers, but the city may never be a major vacation destination; attractions are scarce. Gay and lesbian tourists will, however, discover a vibrant bar scene, an internationally acclaimed gay men's chorus, hot restaurants, and enough high-end shopping to wither away the magnetic strips on your credit cards.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

Downtown Dallas sits at the center of a network of highways. Due north, Uptown, which comprises the neighborhoods of Oak Lawn, Highland Park, Turtle Creek, and McKinney Avenue, is where many Dallasites eat, shop, and live, and work.

Oak Lawn, Turtle Creek, and Highland Park

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 gay-supported restaurants, bars, and shops (including a cruisy **Tom Thumb** grocery store). The intersection of Cedar Springs and Throckmorton roads has come to be known

as "the Crossroads"; the surrounding area has a strong mix of genders, races, looks, and ages, though on a Saturday night it's overrun with pretty young things on the prowl.

The moneyed gay community extends south into posh **Turtle Creek**, but the condos and housing throughout Uptown have a good share of gay and lesbian residents living in them. To the north of all this gayness is swank **Highland Park**, Dallas's wealthiest residential neighborhood, a land of perfectly manicured lawns and grand mansions. **Highland Park Village** (☒ Mockingbird La. and Preston Rd.) has upscale clothing stores and boutiques, plus several good restaurants. **McKinney Avenue**, which is in eastern Uptown, 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, many tony shops and restaurants have sprouted along Knox Street, which becomes Henderson Street once it crosses the Central Expressway. **Knox-Henderson** takes in **Travis Walk**, a small complex containing some nifty restaurants and boutiques. The area borders the southern edge of **Southern Methodist University**, and many college types filter through the neighborhood.

Downtown and the West End District

Dallas's downtown feels almost abandoned in the evening, but its space-age skyline is spectacular, with streaks of neon framing many buildings. A growing **arts district** at the northern tip of downtown, near the base of McKinney Avenue, includes the **Dallas Museum of Art** (☒ 1717 N. Harwood St., ☎ 214/922-1200), which has a collection of pre-Columbian art, as well as a newer wing of North and South American works spanning the past several centuries; and the **Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center** (☒ 2301 Flora St., ☎ 214/670-3600), frequent host to the gay Turtle Creek Chorale.

The nearby **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 to accommodate mostly touristy and straight-oriented shops, bars, and restaurants.

Just south is **Dealey Plaza**, where President Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, and where thousands congregate every year on the anniversary of his death. Across Elm Street, along which Kennedy's motorcade traveled, is the so-called **grassy knoll**, from which conspiracy theorists believe a second gunman fired at Kennedy. At the northeast corner of the plaza and Houston Street is the legendary **Texas School Book Depository** (☎ 214/653-6666).

Deep Ellum

Follow either Elm or Main streets east from downtown 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. Dallas's first black neighborhood, Deep Ellum is now a blizzard of low warehouses converted into clubs and eateries, plus a few tattoo shops and art galleries. Gays frequent many of the establishments—or *antiestablishments*—in this anything-goes neighborhood.

White Rock Lake

Gays and lesbians tan their hides at **White Rock Lake**, which is a short drive east of Uptown. Bordering the lake is the **Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Gardens** (☒ 8525 Garland Rd., ☎ 214/327-8263), 65 acres of floral and vegetable gardens and an art- and antiques-filled Spanish Colonial-style mansion. Take I-30 east from downtown, exit north at Grand Avenue, and follow this until it becomes Garland Road.

GETTING AROUND

Outside of 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 everybody gets around by car. People in Dallas rarely use mass transit, but the new commuter-oriented light rail system is slowly catching on. Only downtown is laid out in a grid, and roads often change names between neighborhoods—get a detailed map. Parking near the bars in Oak Lawn can be frustrating.

EATS

Dallas has a sophisticated palate, with trendy bistros dreaming up inventive contemporary creations. You'll also find more familiar comfort food and some pseudo-exotic delicacies—fajitas and frozen margaritas were invented here. Burger joints and barbecues are abundant. Most of the best restaurants are in gay Uptown, in funky Deep Ellum, and in the rapidly gay-fying South Dallas neighborhood, Oak Cliff.

If you're planning a picnic at White Rock Lake or looking to stock up on delicious gourmet goods and groceries, check out **Café TuGogh** (☒ inside Marty's, 3316 Oak Lawn Ave., ☎ 214/526-4070) or, across the street, **Eatzie's** (☒ 3403 Oak Lawn Ave., ☎ 214/526-1515).

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

Uptown

\$\$\$\$ X **Mansion on Turtle Creek.** There's electricity in the air of this restaurant in a splendid old mansion presided over by New American cooking guru Dean Fearing. His style is complex, and inventions like tortilla soup, warm lobster salad with yellow-tomato salsa, and jicama salad always astonish. ☒ 2821 Turtle Creek Blvd., ☎ 214/559-2100.

\$\$\$\$ X **NorthSouth.** The menu at this ultrachic eatery is divided into two varieties of cooking: South-style (i.e., traditional, high-caloric, and rich) and North-style (i.e., nouvelle, low-fat, and still seemingly rich). The latter is a reflection of chef Larry North's predilection for tasty but healthful fare like tortilla-crust roasted-corn hash and tomato salsa-verde snapper. ☒ Quadrangle, 2800 Routh St., ☎ 214/849-0000.

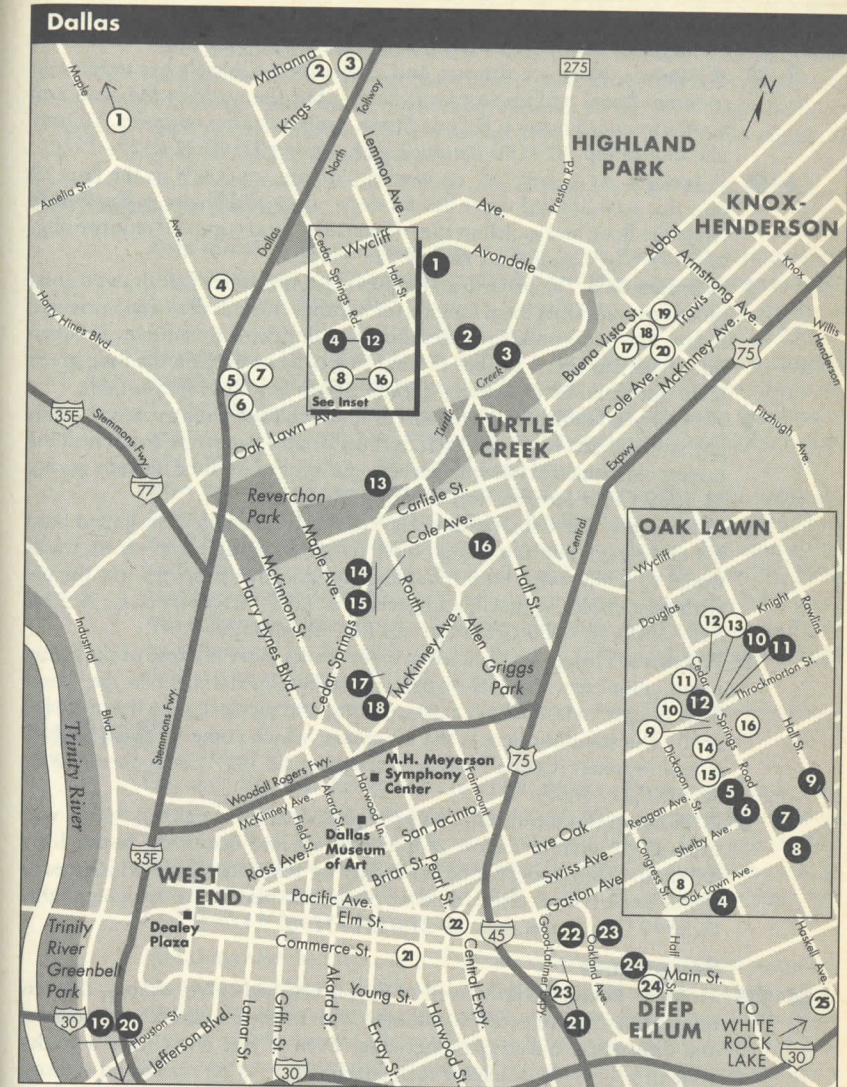
\$\$\$\$ X **Old Warsaw.** This windowless spot has been one of the city's most formal French restaurants for years. Expect fine china and crystal, a piano-and-violin duo, and waiters in tuxedos—it's more than a little retro. Save room (and money) for any of the lavish dessert soufflés. ☒ 2610 Maple Ave., ☎ 214/528-0032.

\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ X **Star Canyon.** It's tough to land a table at this dining room in the upscale Centrum Sports Complex, the service can be uppity, and some complain it's overrated. But it's hard to argue when the kitchen turns out phenomenal dishes like red snapper on Texas jambalaya. ☒ 3102 Oak Lawn Ave., Suite 144, ☎ 214/520-7827.

\$\$-\$\$\$ X **Bombay Cricket Club.** In a stately house near the Hotel St. Germain, this elegant Indian restaurant 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.

\$\$-\$\$\$ X **Parigi.** This much-discussed trattoria's marble tables, dainty wooden chairs, and lemon-yellow and pale-blue color scheme make for a chic atmosphere. The healthful bistro menu includes many whole-wheat pastas with delicious accents like shallot mashed potatoes and ginger-lime cream sauce. ☒ 3311 Oak Lawn Ave., ☎ 214/521-0295.

\$-\$\$ X **Bronx.** The best of the Crossroads eateries, the Bronx is inexpensive and untrendy. Come for the mom-style pot roast, London broil, omelets,



Eats ●

Bombay Cricket Club, 18
Bronx, 6
Cafe Brazil, 23
Cosmic Cup, 4
Dream Café, 15
Gloria's, 1
Green Room, 22
Hunky's, 10
Java Jones, 7
Lucky's, 2
Mansion on Turtle Creek, 13
Monica
Aca y Alla, 24
NorthSouth, 14

Old Warsaw, 17

Parigi, 9
Sambuca, 21
Spasso's, 11, 16
Star Canyon, 8
That Special Blend, 12
Tillman, 19
Vitto, 20
Zeko's, 5
ZuZu, 3

Scenes ○

Anchor Inn/Big Daddy's/Numbers, 12
Backstreet, 7
Bamboleo's, 2
Brick Bar, 5
Buddies II, 6
Club Collette's, 21
Club One, 24
Crews Inn, 20
Dallas Eagle, 1
Gridlock, 23
Hidden Door, 3
Hideaway Club, 17
J. R.'s, 10
Jugs, 8
Kolers, 4
Metro, 22
Moby Dick's, 11

Pub Pegasus, 18
Round-Up Saloon, 16
Side 2 Bar, 13
Sue Ellen's, 15
Throckmorton Mining Co., 9
The Trestle, 25
Village Station, 14
Zipper's, 19

and chicken cacciatore. It should be called the Bronx Zoo on weekend evenings. ☒ 3835 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/521-5821.

- \$-\$\$ ✕ **Gloria's.** Noisy, cavernous, and unromantic, Gloria's has unfinished concrete floors and green plastic chairs. But 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.
- \$-\$\$ ✕ **Lucky's.** At its best late on weekend nights, especially as the bars let out, this well-dressed diner has art deco tables and chairs, a black-and-white tile floor, and judicious use of neon. The food is good if unsurprising. ☒ 3531 Oak Lawn Ave., ☎ 214/522-3500.
- \$ ✕ **Dream Café.** The place to go for breakfast, this sunny café draws a great mix of people, all of them longing for another crack at the 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.
- \$ ✕ **Hunky's.** Hunky waitrons skirt around tables of hunky patrons at this gay study in fast food on Cedar Springs Road's bar strip. You'll find the juiciest old-fashioned hamburgers here, but none of the food is overly greasy. ☒ 4000 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/522-1212.
- \$ ✕ **Spasso's.** The Crossroads branch of this local chain is the gayest (and it's quite gay), but all of them serve mouthwatering pizza—from traditional to white, with both mundane and gourmet toppings (try the pie with goat cheese, spinach, and garlic). ☒ 3227 McKinney Ave., ☎ 214/520-6000; ☒ 4000 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/521-1141.
- \$ ✕ **Zeko's.** This queer Oak Lawn diner works more because of the funny menu, complete with goofy slogans and oddly named dishes (like the "Sassy Suzy Burger" with hickory sauce, onions, and pickles), than the ordinary grub. The standout here is the ice cream, which comes with an eclectic riot of toppings (Cocoa Puffs are a favorite). ☒ 3847 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/521-8009.
- \$ ✕ **ZuZu.** At this ultrabright, cheerful place (part of a regional chain), 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

- \$\$-\$\$\$ ✕ **Green Room.** Behind a veil of purple crushed-velvet drapes, this triumphantly bizarre eatery is jammed with musical instruments, posters, and alternative-music paraphernalia. Even if you don't have a funky bone in your body, come for such dazzling fare as New Zealand venison with applewood-smoked-bacon mashed potatoes, eggplant-pinot glaze, and bing cherry relish. ☒ 2715 Elm St., ☎ 214/748-7666.
- \$\$-\$\$\$ ✕ **Monica Aca y Alla.** This is the queerest and liveliest 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.** 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 postindustrial interior. Dishes include couscous, pasta, salmon over spinach, and the like. The nightly jazz shows are renowned. ☒ 2618 Elm St., ☎ 214/744-0820.

Oak Cliff

- \$-\$\$ ✕ **Tillman.** The cooking at this homey neighborhood restaurant ranges from haute (crab cakes with orange-chipotle sauce) to down-home (bringing to mind the "all you can stands" catfish dinner on Tuesday nights). ☒ 324 W. 7th St., ☎ 214/942-0988.

- \$ ✕ **Vitto.** Bright and sunny with yellow walls and a huge painting exploding with sunflowers, Vitto is another of Oak Cliff's popular queer hangouts. In addition to great pastas and a mean baked ratatouille, this upbeat café offers an assortment of not-so-conventional pizzas, including a hefty pie with spinach, bacon, pepperoni, and garlic butter (but no red sauce). ☒ 316 W. 7th St., ☎ 214/946-1212.

Coffeeshouse Culture

- Café Brazil.** When the Deep Ellum clubs close, droves of curious-looking slackers and hipsters crowd into this slick coffeeshouse, known as much for good sandwiches and salads as for espresso and desserts. By day it attracts a low-key, artsy bunch. ☒ 2815 Elm St., ☎ 214/747-2730.
- Cosmic Cup.** The dining room is filled with crunchy types perusing the small library of good-for-your-soul, New Age titles. A favorite dish is the "I Hate Eggplant" sandwich, which requires that you eat a good bit of eggplant, along with basil, tomatoes, and mozzarella. Good juice bar. ☒ 2912 Oak Lawn Ave., ☎ 214/521-6157.
- Java Jones.** Cool and jazzy, with live music some nights, Java Jones collars Oak Lawn's collared-shirt crowd. It's the best spot in the neighborhood for desserts—scrumptious fresh pastries and gelato. The sandwiches and pasta dishes are good, too. ☒ 3211 Oak Lawn Ave., ☎ 214/528-2099.
- That Special Blend.** Despite its plum location amid a few high-profile bars, this coffee shop doesn't exactly ooze atmosphere. Still, the boys and girls do linger here for hours, hoping to discover other new boys and girls. ☒ 4001A Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/522-3726.

SCENES

Gay nightlife in Dallas bubbles in small, dense pockets mostly near Oak Lawn. The bars along the Crossroads are the most heavily frequented by visitors. 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, these bars pour 50¢ well drinks for a half hour each.

Dallas may be the only city in America where people dress up to go out for a beer. At Moby Dick's or Sue Ellen's, a collared shirt is almost de rigueur. Places outside of the Crossroads are more casual, particularly those 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 Latino bars).

Prime Suspects

Anchor Inn/Big Daddy's/Numbers. The Anchor Inn has strippers, and a loud, fun-loving crowd watching them; Big Daddy's has two drag shows nightly; and Numbers is a hustler watering hole. Because the compound is technically part of the Crossroads, you see a surprising number of suits and guppies. ☒ 4024 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/526-4098. *Crowd: male, generally older, horny, 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. Lots 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—though 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 other, slimier, leather bars. Same owners as Moby Dick's (a free shuttle runs between the two bars on weekends). ☒ 4117 Maple Ave., ☎ 214/521-2024. *Crowd: mostly*

male, all ages, Levi's and leather, get-laid intensity, pretty gym boys and gruff but lovable bears.

Buddies II. Acclaimed for its swimming pool, spacious deck, and sand volleyball court, this down-to-earth dyke bar is packed on weekend afternoons. Every manner of lesbian (and more than a few men) drops by to laze in the sun and mingle. The crowds are fairly large at night, too—there's a main interior bar with videos and a dance floor, and a second, more intimate one that's ideal for conversation and more mingling. ☎ 4025 Maple Ave., ☎ 214/526-0887. *Crowd: 70/30 f/m, 20s to 50s, semi-butch but diverse, casual.*

J.R.'s. After falling behind Moby Dick's in popularity, this stand-and-model bar received a slick redo in 1997: A cool upstairs lounge with a balcony overlooking the hunk-infested street below was added. It has high pressed-tin ceilings, brass bar fixtures, and large windows. J.R.'s may not be as happening as it once was, but it's less attitude. Decent pub food. ☎ 3923 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/528-1004. *Crowd: 70/30 m/f, mixed ages, some suits, starched-shirt.*

Metro. This high-energy disco and drag club in Deep Ellum is the hub of Dallas's black gay scene. You'll find a midsize dance floor with house, disco, and hip-hop blaring most nights; a show lounge with top-name strippers from time to time, and smashing drag and lip-synch shows many nights. The 18-and-older nights, usually Wednesday and Sunday, are a major to-do. ☎ 2204 Elm St., ☎ 214/742-2101. *Crowd: mostly male, 20s and 30s, club kids, gym bodies, plenty of drag.*

Moby Dick's. Both floors of this poseurs' perch 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 palms bedecked with Christmas lights out front. ☎ 4011 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/520-6629. *Crowd: mostly male, 20s and 30s, buff and beautiful, starched-shirt, a bit narcissistic.*

Round-Up Saloon. The friendliest bar in the Crossroads, the Round-Up can still feel a bit intimidating, at least relative to other country-western bars. 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 typical Western (lots of wagon wheels). There's also a nice little room with pool tables off the main dance floor. This place could do a better job welcoming the ladies, who have no country-western club of their own. ☎ 3912 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/522-9611. *Crowd: mostly male, late 20s to early 40s, starched-shirt, country-western.*

Sue Ellen's. In the heart of the Crossroads, this terrific lesbian disco has a big dance floor, booth seating, clear windows showing onto the street, and a patio out back that is packed on weekends and has live music on Friday. The bar is well decorated and thoughtfully laid out—very conducive to chatting. Off the main room are pool tables and more seating. ☎ 3903 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/559-0707. *Crowd: 80/20 f/m, mostly under 35, lots of lipstick and mousse.*

Throckmorton Mining Co. Like other "Mining Companies," this one aims for a dark and forbidding leather look, but TMC is smack in the heart of the Crossroads, so it gets a lot of the same guys from neighboring J.R.'s. It is, nevertheless, dark, smoky, and devoid of ambience. One nice touch: peanuts served out of huge beer vats. ☎ 3014 Throckmorton St., ☎ 214/521-4205. *Crowd: mostly male, all ages, more Levi's than leather but some of both, a few guppies, lots of bears.*

Village Station. It's had other names, it's been burned to the ground, and it's been a shaggy dive. Now rebuilt in concrete, it's more crowded and roomier inside than you might think: There's a room with go-go dancers, the neighborhood's nicest patio bar, and the Rose Room, where you'll

find some of the best drag shows in the country. A mob on Saturday, and 18 and over on Wednesday and Thursday. ☎ 3911 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/526-7171. *Crowd: 80/20 m/f, mostly under 35, well-dressed, mixed racially, just about anybody who parties around the Crossroads.*

Neighborhood Haunts

Near the Crossroads, **Jugs** (☎ 3810 Congress St., ☎ 214/521-3474) is a racially diverse women's pool hall, and the tiny **Side 2 Bar** (☎ 4006 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/528-2026), right next to Hunky's, draws a cross-section of dykes and fags.

East of Oak Lawn, across Turtle Creek, Fitzhugh Avenue leads to a few spots popular with older guys turned off by the Crossroads attitude. The man's-man-oriented **Crews Inn** (☎ 3215 N. Fitzhugh Ave., ☎ 214/526-9510) is probably the most popular, especially on Tuesday. The **Hideaway Club** (☎ 4144 Buena Vista St., ☎ 214/559-2966), whose patio is lit with trillions of lights and colors, is the city's gay piano bar (some women attend). It also has drag shows. **Pub Pegasus** (☎ 3326 N. Fitzhugh Ave., ☎ 214/559-4663), your quintessential dive, has piano entertainment, a lovely neon Pegasus sign inside, and friendly bartenders. **Zipper's** (☎ 3333 N. Fitzhugh Ave., ☎ 214/526-9519) features male strippers.

Near the Brick Bar (*see above*) are several rough-and-raw bars. **Backstreet** (☎ 4020 Maple Ave., ☎ 214/522-4814) is across from the Brick. Up the street is **Kolors** (☎ 2525 Wycliff Ave., ☎ 214/520-2525), a cheesy show and dance bar that is decked in rainbow lights, walls, and curtains. There's usually a steep cover for the shows, which are sometimes good, but often not. A favorite with hard-core leather men, the **Dallas Eagle** (☎ 2515 Inwood Rd., No. 107, ☎ 214/357-4375) is crowded late on weekend nights.

Bamboleo's (☎ 5027 Lemmon Ave., ☎ 214/520-1124) has a mixed Hispanic following and some of the best Latin dancing you'll find in any gay club in Texas; the melodramatic drag shows are another reason to visit. Also cultivating a leather scene, the **Hidden Door** (☎ 5025 Bowser Rd., ☎ 214/526-0620) hosts several area leather groups and has the usual games, dim lighting, and raunchy atmosphere.

Near Deep Ellum, **Club Collette's** (☎ 2024½ Commerce St., ☎ 214/747-1449) draws primarily an African-American crowd. The **Trestle** (☎ 412 S. Haskell St., ☎ 214/826-9988), a gnarly hustler bar in a dicey neighborhood, gets raided from time to time. Horny locals swear by it.

Hangin' with the Hets

In Deep Ellum, the **Club One** (☎ 3025 Main St., ☎ 214/741-1111) is straight though gay-friendly; the queerest night is Friday. Nearby **Gridlock** (☎ 2612 Commerce St., ☎ 214/712-1721) is another gay-friendly favorite, known for its Saturday-night deep disco and house party called Milk Bar.

Action

Club Dallas (☎ 2616 Swiss Ave., ☎ 214/821-1990) is the city's bathhouse.

SLEEPS

Dallas has outstanding options close to things queer. Even the stodgiest hotels are used to gay travelers, though discretion is always wise. Thanks to its popularity as a trade-show site, Dallas has from two to five outposts of almost every major hotel chain, and 40,000 hotel rooms. The most interesting and historic hotels (*not* the chains) offer travelers per-

sonal attention, individually designed rooms, and great restaurants—though often at a price.

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

Hotels

- \$\$\$\$ ☒ **Adolphus.** The finest downtown hotel is this 21-story Beaux Arts beauty built by beer baron Adolphus Busch. The only problem with this 1912 structure is that it's a good distance from the grooviest restaurants and nightlife. ☎ 1321 Commerce St., 75202, ☎ 214/742-8200 or 800/221-9083, FAX 214/651-3588. 426 rooms. Restaurant, health club.
- \$\$\$\$ ☒ **Mansion on Turtle Creek.** Arguably the top hotel in the country, the Mansion is a 15-minute walk to the Crossroads. It has an amazing restaurant, a state-of-the-art health club, and plush rooms, 50 of which have recently been given sleek makeovers that include whirlpool tubs. ☎ 2821 Turtle Creek Blvd., 75219, ☎ 214/559-2100 or 800/527-5432, FAX 214/528-4187. 141 rooms. Restaurant, pool, health club.
- \$\$-\$\$\$ ☒ **Melrose.** It's only about 200 yards from the lobby of this stately hotel to most of the action on Cedar Springs Road and in Oak Lawn. Nearby is the popular Centrum Sports Club, at which guests have privileges. Rooms are nicely appointed. ☎ 3015 Oak Lawn Ave., 75219, ☎ 214/521-5151 or 800/637-7200, FAX 214/521-2470. 184 rooms. Restaurant.
- \$\$-\$\$\$ ☒ **Stoneleigh.** A moderately priced historic property, this 70-year-old brick building is where Oliver Stone stayed while filming *JFK*. It's close to Oak Lawn, convenient to many restaurants, and home to the Dallas Press Club. ☎ 2927 Maple Ave., 75201, ☎ 214/871-7111 or 800/255-9299, FAX 214/871-9379. 132 rooms. Restaurant, pool.
- \$ ☒ **La Quinta.** This is the best budget choice, across U.S. 75 from Travis Walk, in the Knox-Henderson area. ☎ 4440 N. Central Expressway, 75206, ☎ 214/821-4220 or 800/531-5900. 101 rooms.

Guest Houses and Small Hotels

- \$\$\$\$ ☒ **Hotel St. Germain.** The most luxurious of the city's small inns, this century-old house in southern Oak Lawn contains suites fitted with French and New Orleans antiques. The elaborate touches include canopied featherbeds, rich tapestries, marble bed stands, balconies, fireplaces, and, in two suites, Jacuzzis. ☎ 2516 Maple Ave., 75201, ☎ 214/871-2516 or 800/683-2516, FAX 214/871-0740. 7 rooms with phone, TV, and private bath.
- \$\$ ☒ **Inn on Fairmount.** Affordable and attracting a mostly gay crowd, this hotel matches some of Dallas's top hotels for service and amenities. You can walk to bars and restaurants. ☎ 3701 Fairmount, 75219, ☎ 214/522-2800, FAX 214/522-2898. 7 rooms with phone, TV, and private bath. Continental breakfast. Hot tub. Mixed gay/lesbian.

THE LITTLE BLACK BOOK

At Your Fingertips

AIDS Resource Center Hotline (☎ 214/521-5342, e-mail foundgay@on-ramp.net). **Dallas Convention and Visitors Bureau** (☎ 1201 Elm St., Suite 2000, 75270, ☎ 214/746-6677 or 800/232-5527). **Dallas Gay/Lesbian Line Web site** (www.cyberramp.net/~woofbyte). **Dallas Observer** (☎ 214/757-9000, Web site www.dallasobserver.com). **Dallas Visitors Information Center** (☎ West End Marketplace, 603 Munger Ave., ☎ 214/880-0405). **Gay and Lesbian Community Center** (☎ 2701 Reagan St., ☎ 214/521-5342, Web site www.fhu.org; switchboard, ☎ 214/528-0022). **Gay and Lesbian Information Line** (☎ 214/368-6283). **Lesbian Visionaries** (☎ 214/521-5342, ext. 844). **Stonewall Professional & Business Association** (☎ 214/526-3214). **Women's Business Network** (☎ 214/712-8976).

Gay Media

Dallas has no shortage of gay papers, all of them useful and well-written. The highly regarded **Dallas Voice** (☎ 214/754-8710, Web site www.dallasvoice.com) is a weekly news and entertainment magazine. **This Week in Texas** (☎ 214/521-0622, e-mail twtmag@aol.com), an entertainment-oriented magazine, has plenty of Dallas coverage. The **Texas Triangle** (☎ 214/599-0155) is a news-oriented weekly newspaper. The queer African-American community looks to the **Underground Station** (☎ 972/283-1047, e-mail undrgrdsta@aol.com), not only for club news and local resources and insights, but for news of Texas, Louisiana, and the South.

BOOKSTORES

The lesbian/gay bookstore **Crossroads Market** (☎ 3930 Cedar Springs Rd., ☎ 214/521-8919) carries lesbian and gay titles, plus gifts, cards, and porn mags.

Working Out

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).

- \$\$-\$\$\$ ☑ **Joan's on Jones.** If you're planning a long stay or simply want the privacy of your own studio apartment, consider the two suites on the ground level of this stunning 1883 town house. Both units are appointed with period antiques. The front one has a somewhat formal Georgian air while the rear one recalls the airy charm of New Orleans, with large windows overlooking a landscaped patio—it also has a full kitchen. ☑ 17 W. Jones St., 31401, ☎ 912/234-3863, FAX 912/234-1455. 2 rooms with phone, TV, and private bath. Continental breakfast. Mostly straight.
- \$\$ ☑ **Days Inn.** Another centrally located option, just steps from City Market and Club One, this typical Days Inn has clean rooms with pleasant but basic furnishings. ☑ 201 W. Bay St., 31401, ☎ 912/236-4440 or 800/325-2525, FAX 912/232-2725. 253 rooms. Restaurant, pool.
- \$ ☑ **912 Barnard.** The only gay-oriented B&B in Savannah, and also one of the least expensive, this dramatic yellow turn-of-the-century house is south of the main tourist district, in a transitional neighborhood that's close to Forsyth Park. It's been handsomely restored to its original splendor, with antiques and authentic colors that fully convey the ambience of the city. Beautiful gardens are in back of the house. ☑ 912 Barnard St., 31401, ☎ 912/234-9121. 2 rooms with phone, TV, and shared bath. Continental breakfast. Mixed gay male/lesbian.

The Little Black Book

The **Charleston Convention & Visitors Bureau** (☑ Box 975, 29402, ☎ 803/853-8000 or 800/868-8118; Visitors Center, ☑ 375 Meeting St.) is a one-stop source for Charleston visitor information. The **Savannah Area Convention & Visitors Bureau** (☑ 222 W. Oglethorpe Ave., Suite 100, Box 1628, Savannah, GA 31402, ☎ 912/944-0456) is the source for Savannah visitor info. In the absence of gay papers in the region, check out **UPWITH** (☎ 803/577-5304, Web site www.discovernet.com/upwith) in Charleston and **Creative Loafing Savannah** (☎ 912/231-0250, Web site www.creativeloafing.com) in Savannah for arts and entertainment coverage with a gay-friendly slant.

2 Out in Austin

IF YOU BELIEVE THE MANY MAGAZINE STORIES, Austin is a near-flawless metropolis with nothing but roses in its future. It's the nation's most physically fit city (*Walking*), the fifth-best urban area in which to start a business (*Entrepreneur*), the eighth-best place to live (*Money*), and has the fifth-most-knowledgeable work force (*Fortune*). Its citizens are both literate (the area has the highest per capita bookstore sales in the United States) and computer literate (Apple, Dell, and several other high-tech corporations operate in and around Austin). They support the country's sixth-largest concentration of artists, the most tuneful of which perform in the more than 100 live-music clubs here. It's no wonder, then, that Austin, the hub of Travis County and the capital of Texas, is one of the nation's fastest growing cities.

Its very desirability is Austin's only potential threat. Locals lament the skyrocketing cost of real estate. Rampant development in and around the city has created dense traffic and longer lines at restaurants and grocery checkouts. But despite some growing pains, the quality of life here remains sharply above that of most places in American.

The good life extends to gays and lesbians, who are highly visible and for the most part accepted and respected by the nongay majority—which in Austin is well to the left of the mainstream in the rest of Texas. The greatest worries expressed by queer locals concern how *easy* it is to be gay here, that perhaps an air of complacency prevents the community from recognizing and responding to the malevolence of right-wingers, of which there are plenty, especially in neighboring Williamson County.

The presence of the University of Texas (UT) accounts for much of Austin's appeal. The institution's 50,000 students make up almost 10% of the city's population of 568,000 (1,008,000 people live in the metropolitan area), and many stay here once they graduate. Parking attendants and burger flippers with PhDs are not unheard of—only so many top-level jobs exist, and even well-educated residents often must lower their expectations. Sometimes they do this all too well: Austin became synonymous with the term “slacker” when Richard Linklater's low-budget feature film *Slacker*, about the city's brightest and youngest do-nothings, achieved cult status a few years back.

Stroll by the coffeehouses and restaurants along Guadalupe Street, and you'll see more than a few disillusioned genXers hitting up passersby up for change. Mellow than the scruffians who inhabit San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury or New York's East Village, they lend a '90s countercultural edge to otherwise upstanding Austin. But slackerdom notwithstanding, residents know they've got a good thing going. And visitors, who arrive in ever greater numbers, come to savor cheap meals, catch a few bands, sun themselves

along the banks of Barton Creek or Travis Lake, browse through funky shops, and wonder why it is they live some place else.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

Central Austin straddles the banks of the Colorado River—known at this point as Town Lake—which meanders from east to west, due south of downtown. Beyond the central city are hilly, somewhat amorphous neighborhoods anchored by landmarks like Zilker Park, to the west of downtown, and the University of Texas, to the north. Interstate 35 cuts north-south through the east side of downtown, and the Mo-Pac Expressway parallels the interstate a few miles to the west. Lamar Boulevard travels north-south through downtown between the two highways and west of the University of Texas before intersecting with I-35.

Downtown

Austin's walkable **downtown** contains little in the way of sightseeing, but what it lacks in attractions, it makes up for with a bustling street scene, day and especially night. **Sixth Street** (also known as Old Pecan Street) is Austin's equivalent of Bourbon Street in New Orleans. All the street's lively diversions are more than welcoming to gays. **Red River Street**, which intersects 6th, has more of the same between about 4th and 8th streets. This neighborhood has some fine exploring and shopping; you'll find some up-and-coming restaurants and hot clubs (gay and straight) in the vibrant **warehouse district** to the south of 6th Street.

The Renaissance Revival **State Capitol Complex** (☒ 11th St. and Congress Ave., ☎ 512/463-0063) makes for a fascinating excursion. The capitol building was completely restored over the past several years at a cost of \$200 million. The **Paramount Theatre** (☒ 713 Congress Ave., ☎ 512/472-5411), another exquisite restoration project, presented vaudeville acts when it opened in 1915. Vintage movies now screen here in summer; the venue presents musicals and top-name music acts at other times of the year. Nearby, the interim space of the **Austin Museum of Art-Downtown** (☒ 823 Congress Ave., ☎ 512/495-9224) hosts special events and stages rotating exhibits.

South of downtown, the **Congress Avenue Bridge** crosses **Town Lake**. From March to November, 1.5 million Mexican free-tailed bats—the nation's largest urban bat colony—hang out beneath it. Curious onlookers gather at dusk on the walkway along the river to watch the creatures emerge from their daytime slumber and take to the skies.

South of Downtown

Barton Springs Road, the site of many slacker-infested shops and eateries, leads west from Congress Avenue to **Barton Springs**. Less prettified than downtown but still engaging, the neighborhood has as its centerpiece 350-acre **Zilker Park** (☒ 2201 Barton Springs Rd., ☎ 512/476-9044); **Barton Creek**, an offshoot of the Colorado River, snakes southwest out of the city through the park. A fine spot to tan your hide on sunny days, Zilker is a good place to meet some of the city's outgoing locals. Spring-fed **Barton Springs Pool**, a popular and enormous swimming hole here, remains an invigorating 68°F year-round.

University of Texas and Environs

North of downtown is the 357-acre campus of the **University of Texas** (☎ 512/475-7348 for tour information), whose attractions include the **Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library and Museum** (☒ 2313 Red River St., ☎ 512/482-5279). The **Texas Memorial Museum** (☒ 2400 Trinity St., ☎ 512/471-1604), also on campus, has exhibits on state history and local flora and fauna. The **Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery** (☒ 21st

and Guadalupe Sts., ☎ 512/471-7324) specializes in Latin American art and 20th-century American masterworks. **Guadalupe Street**, known along its border with UT as “The Drag,” is another haven of slackerdom as well as *the* place to shop for locally made arts and crafts, Longhorn memorabilia, and other offbeat goods. The **Dobie Cinema** (☒ 2021 Guadalupe St., ☎ 512/472-3456) often plays gay films.

West of the university is **Mount Bonnell** (☒ 3800 Mt. Bonnell Rd.), 785-foot-high mountain (well, hill is more like it) where horny teenagers rendezvous for late-night snogging sessions. By day, locals bring their visiting relatives for a glimpse of the lush countryside. The 99-step climb from the parking area to the beautiful promontory is a handy workout. The nearby Laguna Gloria branch of the **Austin Museum of Art** (☒ 3809 W. 35th St., ☎ 512/458-8191) is in a stately Mediterranean Revival villa at the west end of 35th Street. To satisfy your less cerebral cravings, drive over to **Amy's Ice Cream** (☒ 3500 Guadalupe St., ☎ 512/458-6895), a shrine to fattening dairy treats.

Lake Travis and Points West

A great way to spend a sunny afternoon is to drive out to **Lake Travis**. Pick up the Mo-Pac Expressway (Highway 1) heading north of the Colorado River. Exit to the west at Ranch Road 2222. After several miles, turn left onto Route 620, and a short bit farther take a right on Comanche Trail. This leads to the **Oasis** restaurant (*see Eats, below*), which overlooks **Lake Travis**. Farther on is **Hippie Hollow Park**, a gorgeous mecca for gay sunbathers.

Southwest of the city and also worth a tour is the **National Wildflower Research Center** (☒ 4801 La Crosse Ave., ☎ 512/292-4100), which Lady Bird Johnson founded in the early '80s. This 42-acre spread—take the Mo-Pac Expressway south for 10 miles from central Austin and follow the signs—has a visitor center, an observation tower, a nature trail, elaborate stone terraces, and flower-filled meadows.

GETTING AROUND

Austin's downtown is navigable on foot. You can definitely enjoy three or four days in Austin without wheels. But if you want to take advantage of greater Austin—the beautiful countryside west, many of the better restaurants, and the University of Texas—you'll need a car. Public transportation is minimal and basically useless outside downtown, and taxis are inconvenient and too expensive for long distances.

EATS

Downtown has the greatest concentration of memorable and gay-popular eateries, but almost every Austin neighborhood has a few good options. Many places are still hopping past 10 PM, especially on weekends. Mexican (including sophisticated regional fare, not just Tex-Mex) is a prevailing specialty. Slacker culture has developed its own, uniquely Austin style of dining, characterized by divey “alternadiners” with cheap but almost always delicious food, surly and overeducated waitrons, and tragically hip patrons.

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

Downtown Vicinity

\$\$\$–\$\$\$\$ **× Shoreline.** Your overall appreciation of this airy hot spot's perch overlooking the Congress Avenue Bridge may depend on the degree to which bat-watching whets your appetite, but the New American menu should put you in the mood to nosh. Flaky lump crab cakes with grilled shrimp

are served with a piquant mango sauce, and a half rack of ancho-cured lamb comes with caramelized onion potatoes and blackberry cascabel sauce.

☒ 98 San Jacinto Blvd., ☎ 512/477-3300.

\$\$-\$\$\$ ✕ **Manuel's.** Fancier than most of the Mexican restaurants in town, Manuel's is a sleek space with black leather banquettes, tall mirrors, and a sassy little bar in back. The specials are always a good bet, or try regular favorites like corn sautéed with garlic and roasted onion in a chili pasilla sauce. ☒ 310 Congress Ave., ☎ 512/472-7555.

\$\$-\$\$\$ ✕ **Mars.** An unprepossessing pale gray clapboard house contains 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, Indian, and Middle Eastern standards, including wonderful nan-bread pizzas. ☒ 1610 San Antonio St., ☎ 512/472-3901.

\$\$-\$\$\$ ✕ **Mezzaluna.** A trendy darling of the warehouse district, Mezzaluna has black-lacquered chairs and tables and stylish Wedgwood blue walls and tile floors that set the tone for fine northern Italian fare. Delicious pizzas include one with grilled chicken, onions, rosemary, tomatoes, and Gorgonzola. Or try the saffron linguine with garlic, toasted bread crumbs, and caramelized cauliflower. ☒ 310 Colorado St., ☎ 512/472-6770.

\$\$ ✕ **El Rinconcito.** Specials like jalapeño- and cheese-stuffed shrimp wrapped in bacon and simmered in a smoky chipotle sauce cram the blackboard menu of this little Mexican restaurant. Its intimate dining room, suffused with warm lighting, is decorated with authentic Mexican crafts. ☒ 1014-E N. Lamar Blvd., ☎ 512/476-5277.

\$ ✕ **Katz Deli.** Upbeat and contemporary, this busy deli has one of the cutest staffs in town. The half-pound sandwiches—the grilled three-cheese with tomatoes is especially good—are more than most diners can handle in one sitting. Many folks come here for cocktails after work—the martinis are killer. ☒ 618 W. 6th St., ☎ 512/472-2037.

\$ ✕ **Momma's Diner.** With a freaky portrait of Joan Crawford in many of its print ads, this diner positions itself as a place for post-clubbing fags to come for a touch of camp and a late-night meal (on weekends it's open 24 hours). Antique mirrors and vintage photos give Momma's a slightly ritzy feel, but the down-home food is affordable and pretty decent. The beer's cheap, too. ☒ 314 Congress Ave., ☎ 512/469-9369.

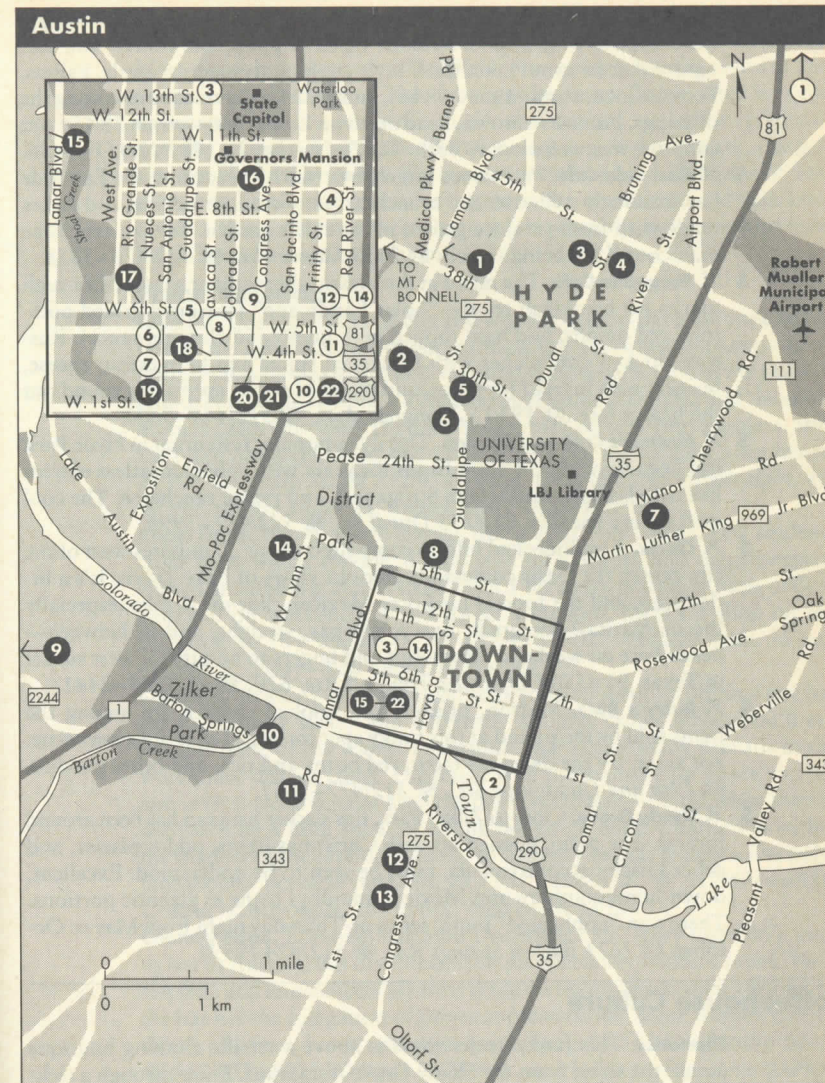
Greater Austin

\$\$\$\$ ✕ **Jeffrey's.** Dark and sexy Jeffrey's has the polish of a big-city supper club and a clientele that ranges from celebs and politicians to college students. The elk loin with roasted red potatoes and juniper-chipotle sauce and the duck and shrimp with black-bean ravioli and shiitake-mushroom sauce draw raves all around. There's also a slightly less pricey bistro menu. ☒ 1204 W. Lynn St., ☎ 512/477-5584.

\$\$-\$\$\$ ✕ **Granite Café.** This light-filled dining room and inviting terrace, one block east of Lamar Boulevard, is as upscale as Austin gets, but folks still come in jeans. Recent offerings have included sesame mahimahi on Asian noodles, soft-shell crab with banana chutney and black-bean salad, and wood-oven pizzas. ☒ 2905 San Gabriel St. ☎ 512/472-6483.

\$\$-\$\$ ✕ **Guero's.** A feed store turned divey taqueria, Guero's serves some of the best Mexican fare in town—from standard but artfully seasoned enchiladas and tamales to more innovative creations like marinated grilled pork on a corn tortilla with onions, cilantro, and fresh pineapple. ☒ 1412 S. Congress Ave., ☎ 512/447-7688.

\$\$-\$\$ ✕ **Hyde Park Bar and Grill.** An enormous silver fork—it must be 20 feet tall—rises from the ground in front of this hoppin' college hangout north of UT. The Grill prides itself on its diverse, healthful, and cheap menu, though the addictive buttermilk-battered Park fries aren't exactly good for you. ☒ 4206 Duval St., ☎ 512/458-3168.



Eats ●

East Side Cafe, **7**
El Rinconcito, **15**
Flipnotic's, **11**
Granite Café, **2**
Guero's, **12**
Hyde Park Bar and Grill, **3**
Jeffrey's, **14**
Katz Deli, **17**
Kerbey Lane, **1**
Little City, **16**
Magnolia Café, **13**

Manuel's, **20**
Mars, **8**
Mezzaluna, **19**
Mojo's Daily Grind, **6**
Momma's Diner, **21**
Mother's Café and Garden, **4**
Oasis, **9**
Ruby's BBQ, **5**
Ruta Maya Coffee, **18**
Shady Grove, **10**
Shoreline, **22**

Scenes ○

Area 52, **8**
'Bout Time, **1**
Casino El Camino, **14**
Chain Drive, **2**
Charlie's, **3**
Club Deville, **4**
Country Edge, **10**

Edge, **7**

Emo's, **12**
Esther's Follies, **13**
Forum, **9**
Oil Can Harry's, **6**
Paradox, **11**
Rainbow
Cattle Co., **5**

- §-§§ **× Kerbey Lane.** A late-night fave not far from Mount Bonnell, Kerbey Lane appeals to grungers, bookish types, yuppies, and others who recognize that its menu takes diner-style cooking to superior levels. Fajitas, Portobello mushroom sandwiches, and grilled tuna steaks are among the offerings. From downtown, head north on Lamar and west on 38½ Street; continue west at fork onto 35th. ☒ 3704 Kerbey La., ☎ 512/451-1436.
- § **× East Side Café.** Patronized largely by crunchy peaceniks, the East Side has amazingly well-attended brunches, sunny outdoor seating, and dishes made with fresh produce grown in the café's garden. Try the artichoke manicotti if it's being served. ☒ 2113 Manor Rd., ☎ 512/476-5858.
- § **× Magnolia Café.** The menu at this classic alternadiner scores extra-high marks for breakfast; try the "Solar Landscape" (seasoned grilled potatoes, red onions, and ham topped with queso and chipotle sauce). Russian chicken sandwiches with blackened spices and herb cream cheese, burgers with myriad toppings, and many Mexican specialties round out the hearty fare. ☒ 1920 S. Congress Ave., ☎ 512/445-0000.
- § **× Mother's Café and Garden.** This dyke-popular restaurant in Hyde Park has been drawing UT's veg-heads for years with robust meatless entrées like tofu lasagna, mushroom Stroganoff, and veggie rancheros. The cool staff is very friendly. ☒ 4215 Duval St., ☎ 512/451-3994.
- § **× Oasis.** A multidecked hilltop compound about 20 minutes west of the city center, the Oasis commands glorious views of Lake Travis. It's a little tacky, and 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, off Rte. 620, ☎ 512/266-2441.
- § **× Ruby's BBQ.** Mutton, brisket, and smoked chicken are among the items sold by the pound at this funky spot for real, Texas-style barbecue. For sides, try the delicious tacos, red beans and rice, and other goodies. ☒ 29th and Guadalupe Sts., ☎ 512/477-1651.
- § **× Shady Grove.** Close to Zilker Park, this slacker hangout has been around forever. The patio, gussied up with Christmas lights, odd topiaries, and other kitschy accoutrements, must be seen to be understood. Excellent, down-home southern and Mexican standbys come in gigantic portions. There's an "unplugged" music series on Thursday night from May to October. ☒ 1624 Barton Springs Rd., ☎ 512/474-9991.

Coffeehouse Culture

Flipnotics. This funky coffeehouse is above a terrific clothing boutique across the street from the Shady Grove restaurant. Enter through a rickety porch in back. The desserts are great. Musicians sometimes perform here. ☒ 1601 Barton Springs Rd., ☎ 512/322-9750.

Little City. The crowd at Little City is a little too hot for its own good, but this is a splendid perch from which to observe the rituals of Austin society. Great for a drink after a show at the nearby Paramount Theatre. ☒ 916 Congress Ave., ☎ 512/476-2489.

Mojo's Daily Grind. A major student hangout, Mojo's is on the north side of The Drag. Track lighting, comfy chairs, and ceiling fans lend the place a living-room atmosphere. Parking's a bitch, but there are a few spots in the alley out back. ☒ 2714 Guadalupe St., ☎ 512/477-6656.

Ruta Maya Coffee. The closest thing you'll find to a coffeehouse nightclub, Ruta Maya is in an ancient brick building. The front door was once a loading dock. Assets include live music and a queer, trendy, alternative following. ☒ 218 W. 4th St., ☎ 512/472-9637.

SCENES

Most places here are around Red River Street, 4th Street near Lavaca and Colorado, and 6th Street. The clubs have big dance floors, often host live music, and pull in equally mixed gay and straight (or, at the very least, partially straight) crowds. The bar scene is young and collegiate, a largely hip, nonconformist cadre. The names, locations, and clienteles of bars change at breakneck speed, leaving even the most dedicated club bunnies in a state of confusion; in the past few years, the only constants have been Chain Drive, Charlie's, and Oil Can Harry's.

Prime Suspects

Area 52. This high-tech cruising and voguing ground has a fantastic sound system and lighting, two levels of scaffolds and walkways, a spacious dance floor, an outdoor balcony, and a steamy atmosphere. One of the few 18-and-over clubs in Austin, it's become increasingly straight, and the smug attitude cases who work the door have turned off of former regulars. Still, the place has great music and often stays open for dancing after hours. ☒ 404 Colorado St., ☎ 512/474-4849. *Crowd: 60/40 gay/straight, 60/40 m/f, mostly under 25, trendy, dishy, cliquey, stylish.*

Chain Drive. If you're into leather, this is your only choice. Few students come here, which appeals to folks seeking a bearish and rugged experience. The rambling club is dark, even a bit seedy. A leather dress code is enforced on weekends; if you forget your gear, there's a shop on the premises. ☒ 504 Willow St., ☎ 512/480-9017. *Crowd: male, 35 and up, butch, cruisy—you know the routine.*

Charlie's. Working-class guys and suits come to Austin's original gay bar for the slightly sleazy and extremely amiable cruise scene; you'll encounter none of the wanna-be attitude that occasionally prevails in the warehouse-district clubs. The music is of the mainstream dance variety, and several video screens keep the patrons amused—that is when they're not catching a drag show or ogling the go-go boys. Charlie's is within the shadow of the capitol building, so you may be able to spot a few polymorphously perverse politicians. ☒ 1301 Lavaca St., ☎ 512/474-6481. *Crowd: mostly male, 20s to 60s, high cruise factor.*

Country Edge. A lesbian bar until December 1997 (they just don't seem to last in Austin), this cavernous club plays country-western tunes. Two-steppers and line-dancers ply their trade on the good-size dance floor, and the bar has the full gamut of games and diversions. Some women still get their kicks here, but it's mostly a guy's hang. ☒ 113 San Jacinto Blvd., ☎ 512/457-8010. *Crowd: 75/25 m/f, mostly 20s to 40s, some cowboy attire, friendly and approachable, cruisiest later in the evening.*

Forum. A 1997 remodeling of the downstairs dance area of this two-level space re-energized the crowd and seemed to beckon guys who have had enough of Area 52. Hunky guys staff the cozy lounge in back, and a delightful rooftop bar with a long railing commands skyline views. Bring along the breath mints—it's very romantic up here. ☒ 408 Congress Ave., ☎ 512/476-2900. *Crowd: 80/20 m/f, 20s to 40s, somewhat mixed racially, a few guppies, plenty of butch boys, edgy and eager, often cruisy.*

Oil Can Harry's. Austin's only true stand-and-model bar attracts a hot collegiate crowd. There are a couple of bars, a patio in back, amber lighting, a good (loud) sound system, a tiny action-packed dance floor, and high stools everywhere. For a guppie cruise bar, Harry's serves amazingly stiff drinks. The management must conduct national talent searches to find waiters so cute and friendly. ☒ 211 W. 4th St., ☎ 512/320-8823. *Crowd: 85/15 m/f(ag hags), mostly 20s to mid-30s, professional, buttoned-down, starched-shirt but not stuffed-shirt.*

Rainbow Cattle Co. The cavernous former site of the lesbian disco Nexus has evolved into Austin's prime country-western dance hall. The clientele is now mostly male, though dykes are more than welcome. Below a sea of wagon wheels and Wild West artifacts, two-steppers and line dancers sweep across the elevated dance floor. Chatty regulars sauce it up at the bar or trade tales in the booths. ☎ 305 W. 5th St., ☎ 512/472-5288. *Crowd: 80/20 m/f, mostly 30s and 40s, Travis Tritt fans with Nirvana tendencies, eclectic in dress and style, low-attitude.*

Neighborhood Haunts

Occupying an attractive space beside Oil Can Harry's, the **Edge** (☎ 213 W. 4th St., ☎ 512/480-8686), run by the owners of the Country Edge, attracts a mixed crowd but is one of Austin's few bars with a significant lesbian following. There's a small dance floor, several pool tables, and plenty of games. Austin's only real neighborhood dive, **'Bout Time** (☎ 9601 N. I-35 Access Rd., ☎ 512/832-5339), well north of downtown (just above Rundberg Street). It has an island bar, good lighting, plenty of seating, and pool tables.

Hangin' with the Hets

The live-music scene in Austin has launched the careers of countless stars, from the late guitar rocker Stevie Ray Vaughan to folksy chanteuse Shawn Colvin. Many of these places have strong followings in the community. Punkish, grungish, stylish, and freakish, **Casino El Camino** (☎ 517 E. 6th St., ☎ 512/469-9330) has the buzz of Greenwich Village—black-and-white walls, clever music (from punk to acid jazz to Cole Porter), and some pretty good bar food. Dress to impress. **Club Deville** (☎ 900 Red River St., ☎ 512/457-0900) books popular bands. Some folks find it horribly trendy and buttoned-down, which is exactly why others love it. Red-hot **Emo's** (☎ 603 Red River St., ☎ 512/477-3667) presents cutting-edge local and national bands. The renowned comedy club **Esther's Follies** (☎ 525 E. 6th St., ☎ 512/320-0553) has a penchant for drag and queer-theme humor. Sprawling **Paradox** (☎ 5th and Trinity Sts., ☎ 512/469-7615), a warehouse-style dance club that's neither gay nor straight, plays great house music. Saturday is especially queer.

Action

The **Austin Midtowne Spa** (☎ 5815 W. Airport Blvd., ☎ 512/302-9696), part of a regional chain, is the all-night spot for bathhouse fun. **Pease Park**, which straddles Shoal Canal northwest of downtown, is reputed to be very cruisy at times. **Hippie Hollow** (see Lake Travis and Points West in *The Lay of the Land, above*) is the spot to sun your buns and show your guns.

SLEEPS

Most bars, shops, and restaurants are close to downtown hotels. Room costs were low in the city until recently, but booming occupancy rates have driven them up. There are no gay-exclusive accommodations, but a couple of guest houses have gay followings.

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

Hotels

\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ ☎ **Four Seasons Austin.** The city's most luxurious hostelry has great views of the Congress Avenue Bridge, where Austin's legendary bats reside in the summer months. Southwestern decorative accents and fabrics lend a laid-back Texan air to the rooms, but the amenities are strictly deluxe. ☎ 98 San Jacinto Blvd., 78701, ☎ 512/478-4500 or 800/332-3442, FAX 512/478-3117. 278 rooms. Restaurant, pool, health club.

\$\$\$ ☎ **Hyatt Regency Austin.** A modern business hotel that works closely with the gay community, the Hyatt has classy, spacious rooms, many of which have terrific views of Town Lake and beyond. The pace of this conventioners' favorite can be hectic—the often ditzzy staff reflects this. ☎ 208 Barton Springs Rd., 78704, ☎ 512/477-1234 or 800/233-1234, FAX 512/480-2069. 446 rooms. Restaurants, pool, health club.

\$\$-\$\$\$ ☎ **Driskill Hotel.** Austin's gay-hospitable grande dame, an 1886 period piece with a spectacular lobby, attracts celebrities and politicians. The rooms, though not memorable, are some of the largest in town. If opulence matters, pay the extra dough for one of the recently renovated ones. ☎ 604 Brazos St., between 5th and 6th Sts., 78701, ☎ 512/474-5911 or 800/527-2008. 177 rooms. Restaurant.

\$\$ ☎ **Radisson Town Lake.** This riverside mid-rise has amiable, efficient service and roomy, well-maintained accommodations—it's tough to beat for value. ☎ 111 E. 1st St., 78701, ☎ 512/478-9611 or 800/333-3333, FAX 512/473-8399. 280 rooms. Restaurant, pool, exercise room.

\$ ☎ **La Quinta Capital Inn.** A stroll from the capitol building and midway between the bar district and UT, La Quinta is a fine budget hotel with clean, simple rooms. ☎ 300 E. 11th St., 78701, ☎ 512/476-1166 or 800/531-5900, FAX 512/476-6044. 148 rooms.

Guest Houses and Small Hotels

\$\$\$ ☎ **Citiview Bed & Breakfast.** A Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired compound adorned with sleek '30s furnishings, the Citiview sits amid tree-shaded grounds. There's a huge pool, an exercise solarium, and a sanctuary of llamas, goats, peacocks, wallabies, rabbits, and goats. ☎ 1405 E. Riverside St., 78714, ☎ 512/441-2606 or 800/278-8439, FAX 512/441-2949, Web site www.hyperweb.com/citiview. 8 rooms with phone, TV, and private bath. Full breakfast. Mixed gay/straight.

\$\$-\$\$\$ ☎ **Miller-Crockett House.** This restored 1888 house opened as an inn in 1997, but not before one of its rooms served as a set for the film *The Newton Boys* (starring Ethan Hawke and Matthew McConaughey). The rooms in the main house are furnished with period antiques, pressed-tin ceilings, and bright bathrooms. Two cottages provide more privacy but have a lower quaintness factor. ☎ 112 Academy Dr., 78704, ☎ 512/441-1600, Web site www.earthlink.net/~michelann/mc.html. 5 rooms with private bath, some with TV and phone. Full breakfast. Mixed gay/straight.

\$ ☎ **Summit House.** An informal gay-hosted property south of downtown, Summit House has the intimacy and personal touch of a European B&B—ideal if you're looking to save money and interact with the friendly owner, who can arrange a tour of downtown attractions and music clubs or point you in the direction of good restaurants and bars. The rooms are modest but characterful, filled with local art and a few antiques. ☎ 1204 Summit St., 78714, ☎ 512/445-5304. 3 rooms with phone and TV, one with private bath. Full breakfast. Mixed gay/straight.

THE LITTLE BLACK BOOK

At Your Fingertips

AIDS Services of Austin Hotline (☎ 512/458-2437). **Austin Chronicle** (☎ 512/454-5766, Web site www.auschron.com). **Austin Convention and Visitors Bureau** (☎ 201 E. 2nd St., 78701, ☎ 512/474-5171 or 800/926-2282, Web site www.austintexas.org). **Austin Stonewall Chamber of Commerce** (☎ 512/472-8299). **Capital Metro** (☎ 512/474-1200). **Cornerstone Gay and Lesbian Community Center** (☎ 1117 Red River St., ☎ 512/708-1515). **Yellow Cab** (☎ 512/472-1111).

Gay Media

The weekly *Texas Triangle* (☎ 512/459-1717), which covers the entire state, is the main source for Austin gay news. *This Week in Texas* (☎ 713/527-9111, e-mail twtmag@aol.com) has the top nightlife coverage.

BOOKSTORES

LOBO (☎ 3204A Guadalupe St., ☎ 512/454-5406), like its Houston branch, specializes in gay-male porn but also carries gay and lesbian titles. **Book Woman** (☎ 918 W. 12th St., ☎ 512/472-2785) is a great feminist bookstore with plenty of lesbian titles and information on the lesbian community. Shop for pride items, gifts, jewelry, and other fun queeriosities at **Sparks** (☎ W. 6th St. at Lamar Blvd., ☎ 512/477-2757). Progressive **Book People** (☎ 603 N. Lamar Blvd., ☎ 512/472-5050), which has been the best general-interest store in town, stocks New Age and gay and lesbian titles. It's next door to the queer-popular **Whole Foods Market** (☎ 601 N. Lamar Blvd., ☎ 512/476-1206). Also a hit with the gay set is **Travelfest** (☎ 1214 W. 6th St., ☎ 512/469-7906), which has an exhaustive selection of travel guides, a full travel agency, seminars, travel gear, and other cool stuff for the inveterate wanderer—if only every city had one of these.

Working Out

World Gym (☎ 115 E. 6th St., ☎ 512/479-0044) has a strong gay and lesbian following.

3 Out in Baltimore

JUST AN HOUR FROM WASHINGTON BY CAR and less than two hours from Philadelphia, quiet, unassuming Baltimore has experienced a rebirth in the past two decades, gaining back some of the ground it had lost during this century to flashier East Coast cities. The city's resurgence has been a remarkable urban comeback story. Local political and business leaders undertook a mammoth public and private rehabilitation of the Inner Harbor, converting its dilapidated piers and wharves into museums, shopping centers, restaurants, hotels, and condominiums. By the mid-1980s, Baltimore had virtually reinvented its skyline. Once the butt of jokes, Baltimore is now a legitimate tourist destination.

Fortunately, the city's success hasn't gone to its head. It's hard to find a more genuine and down-to-earth breed of urbanites than the residents of Baltimore, who retain a special affection for their hometown. This civic pride shows up in the works of locally bred filmmakers who set many of their works here. Director Barry Levinson's *Diner* and *The Tin Men*, set in the late-1950s and early 1960s, evoke a small-town sensibility that can still be felt in many Baltimore neighborhoods, and the films of camp queen John Waters, among them *Pink Flamingos* and *Hairspray*, lovingly poke fun at the city's fashion and other foibles.

Though not large, the local lesbian and gay community works hard to keep the city as free as possible from bigotry. You won't find many firebrands on the right or the left, and rare as well are egomaniacs and attention-seekers. Reasonable people used reasonable means to rehabilitate huge sections of the city; gay Baltimoreans employed similar tactics to gain passage of a queer-positive civil rights law, encourage the mayor to set up an efficient gay and lesbian task force, and prompt the police to respond effectively and with sensitivity to gay bashings.

Don't visit Baltimore with expectations of a dazzling gay scene. There are unusual shops and galleries and enough tourist attractions to keep you busy for several days, but it's less in Baltimore's nature to impress you with extremes than it is to charm you with friendly hellos, moderate prices, and low-key pleasures. If you live in any of the East Coast's more intense metropolises, a spell in Baltimore may be just what you need.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

Charles Street and Mount Vernon

Charles Street is the backbone of Baltimore, running from the Inner Harbor north to Johns Hopkins University and continuing into the suburbs of Baltimore County. Earlier this century, the lower stretch of Charles was a fashionable shopping district. Many storefronts that were boarded up

37 Out in San Antonio

SAN ANTONIO HAS THE LEAST PRONOUNCED gay scene of America's 10 largest cities, but a trip to Texas is not complete without a foray into this Western, multicultural metropolis. The legend of the Alamo, in which nearly 200 settlers sacrificed their lives in a battle with Mexico for independence, will forever symbolize the state's determination and valor. San Antonio is thus the state's spiritual, if not political, capital.

Franciscan Spanish missionaries began attempting to "civilize" the region's Native American population as far back as the 1690s, before establishing a permanent mission, now known as the Alamo, in 1718. After Texas finally secured independence from Mexico, San Antonio developed into a formidable cattle center, and later into a prosperous oil town. San Antonio's economy is now based on tourism, medical research and high-tech industrial concerns, and the military—four Air Force bases and the Army's Fort Sam Houston.

The most-visited city in Texas, San Antonio in many ways captures the essence that outsiders seek but never seem to find in Austin, Dallas, and Houston. For gay and lesbian visitors, discovering a quintessential Texan city may prove to be a mixed blessing. In serious abundance are family-oriented theme parks and touristy dance halls and drinkeries with decidedly straight and conservative clientele. You're not going to see as many queers checking out the World War II fighter planes on display at Lackland Air Force Base as you might, say, at a museum dedicated entirely to hometown diva Joan Crawford (would that such a shrine existed!).

Queer nightlife centers around a handful of bars, and the city has no gay ghetto. Perhaps because San Antonio is overwhelmingly Catholic and 60% Hispanic, it's never cultivated the free-spirited counterculturalism of California. This city respects traditions and family, and the gays who live here generally embrace such values. Nobody in San Antonio uses sexual orientation as a way to shake up the mainstream population. By the same token, few local civic and religious leaders take aim at the gay community. San Antonians respect each other's cultural and philosophical differences, and the city prospers as a result.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

San Antonio encompasses an enormous area, most of it encircled by Loop 1604 and I-410 and then crisscrossed by highways, all of which skirt downtown. More than half the city's major attractions are downtown, in the only highly walkable neighborhood. Other parks and museums, as well as most gay bars, numerous trendy restaurants, and several picturesque neighborhoods, are north of downtown.

Downtown

Downtown San Antonio has been forever protected by a zealous spirit of historic preservation. At the turn of the century, concerned local citizens fought developers bent on converting the Alamo into a hotel. Similar efforts led to the restoration of the San Antonio River, for which the city is now so famous, and to keeping countless older buildings intact and relatively few newer ones from going up.

Contrary to popular belief, the **Alamo** (☒ Alamo Plaza, ☎ 210/225-1391) was never a massive fortress, and what remains is even less imposing—only the small chapel whose facade has come to symbolize the pride and independence of Texas, and one of the barracks. The buildings are set within a tranquil walled plaza of lawns and gardens. Inside the chapel are plaques, letters, and artifacts commemorating the lives of the defenders.

The **River Walk** (Paseo del Rio) is one of the most enchanting urban settings in America. The San Antonio River, which is 15 feet below street level, cuts a loop through downtown and is lined with cobbled and flagstone paths, over which hang the drooping branches of cypress and willow trees. During weekdays it makes for a peaceful walk, but on weekends—especially at night—beware the rowdy crowds tanking up on margaritas at the bars and restaurants along the river; this is not an ideal spot for same-sex couples to saunter hand-in-hand.

Built in 1939, the River Walk came into its own during the 1968 World's Fair. River taxis ply the water, offering group tours, during which you'll get a good sense of the architecture and greenery. The taxis depart from a dock at **Rivercenter Mall** (☒ 849 E. Commerce St., ☎ 210/225-0000), at the east end of the river loop, which has a food court and the usual mid-price to high-end shops.

HemisFair Park (☒ 200 S. Alamo St., ☎ 210/207-8572), a few blocks south of the mall, contains the remnants of the World's Fair attractions, including the 750-foot **Tower of the Americas** (☒ 600 Hemisphere Park, ☎ 210/207-8610), the **Mexican Cultural Institute** (☒ 600 Hemisphere Park, ☎ 210/227-0123), and the **Institute of Texan Cultures** (☒ 801 S. Bowie St., ☎ 210/458-2300), whose exhibits and programs celebrate the state's rich ethnic heritage. Set aside an hour to visit nearby **La Villita** (☒ 418 Villita St., ☎ 210/207-8610), a complex of 26 arts and crafts shops. Visit one of the several working artists' studios, such as the **Nueva Street Gallery** (☒ 507 E. Nueva St., ☎ 210/229-9810), which shows the work of renowned local artist Henry Rayburn.

Head west of the River Walk along Commerce Street, past the magnificent 1749 **Spanish Governor's Palace** (☒ 105 Plaza De Armas, ☎ 210/224-0601), whose many rooms are decorated in the style of the period. The Palace sits at the eastern edge of **Market Square** (☒ 514 W. Commerce St., ☎ 210/207-8600), a fun but touristy brick mall of Mexican restaurants and shops, complete with fountains, benches, mariachi bands, and food stalls.

At the far northeastern edge of downtown, about a 15-minute walk from Alamo Plaza, you'll find the **San Antonio Museum of Art** (☒ 200 W. Jones St., ☎ 210/978-8100), which, in glorious contrast to the more traditional McNay Art Institute (*see Alamo Heights, below*), has been created out of the former Lone Star brewery. Inside this maze of glass elevators and skylights is a diverse collection of works from ancient Greece and Rome, as well as numerous ones from Latin America and Asia.

King William Historic District and Southtown

In its early days, San Antonio attracted many German immigrants. The well-to-do merchants among them constructed elaborate Victorian mansions south of downtown, now designated the **King William Historic District**. This area plunged into blight during the middle of this century, but restoration efforts have brought it back to life. The memorabilia and documents at the **Guenther House** (☒ 205 E. Guenther St., ☎ 210/227-1061), which sits on the river and dates from 1860, document San Antonio's German heritage.

Adjacent to King William is the more modest but up-and-coming **Southtown** neighborhood, in which early 20th-century homes have been bought up and restored during the past few years, and funky shops and businesses have opened. The **Blue Stars Arts Complex** (☒ Blue Star and S. Alamo Sts., ☎ 210/227-6960), a converted industrial complex of design shops, photo galleries, a contemporary art museum, and a microbrewery (see Eats, below), anchors Southtown.

The Missions

The chapel that remains of **Mission San Antonio de Valero** (the Alamo; see Downtown, above) was one of five missions built along the San Antonio River during the 18th century. The other four, which are south of downtown within 6 miles of one another, have been preserved and are open to the public, but you might first stop by the **San Antonio Missions National Historical Park** (☒ 2202 Roosevelt Ave., ☎ 210/534-8833), which administers them and can provide information on each. If you have time only for one, visit **Mission San Jose** (☒ 6701 San Jose Dr., ☎ 210/932-1001), which dates from 1777.

Monte Vista and Olmos Park

In the absence of a predominantly queer neighborhood, Monte Vista and Olmos Park—as well as Alamo Heights to the east—have as strong a gay residential following as any. **Monte Vista**, which begins north of U.S. 81/I-35, contains the gay bars along **Main and San Pedro avenues**, as well as the funky coffeehouses, bars, and restaurants along **North St. Mary's Street** (a.k.a. the North St. Mary's Strip). The latter are popular with students at nearby San Antonio College and Trinity University. Northern Monte Vista, where it begins to get hilly, has long been a fashionable place to live, as evidenced by the many courtly Spanish-style mansions and landscaped yards.

Olmos Park is a pleasant, queer-friendly, middle-class suburb north of Monte Vista, with a few gay-popular restaurants. A great throwback to a bygone era, **Olmos Pharmacy** (☒ 3902 McCullough Ave., ☎ 210/822-3361) is an old-fashioned drug store with a soda fountain serving vanilla malts and decent diner fare.

Alamo Heights

East of Olmos Park, on the other side of U.S. 281, is **Alamo Heights**, a yuppified suburb. The main drag, **Broadway**, also has more than its share of trendy coffeehouses and restaurants. The **Witte Museum** (pronounced witty) (☒ 3801 Broadway, ☎ 210/820-2181) focuses on regional history but also has exhibits on natural science, ecology, and anthropology; this great museum also presents a film and performing arts series.

The **San Antonio Botanical Gardens** (☒ 555 Funston St., ☎ 210/821-5115) has 33 acres of gardens and a 90,000-square-foot conservatory—it's one of the nation's best. Just north, the **Japanese Tea Gardens** (☒ 3800 N. St. Mary's St., ☎ 210/821-3120) have been laid out in a former limestone quarry and consist of winding paths, placid pools, stone footbridges, and a 60-foot waterfall. The **San Antonio Zoological Gardens and Aquarium** (☒ Brackenridge Park 3903 N. St. Mary's St., ☎ 210/734-7183) is notable for its large bird collection.

Its 23 acres of gardens and paths alone demand a visit, but the **McNay Art Institute** (☒ 6000 N. New Braunfels St., ☎ 210/824-5368) has assembled an acclaimed collection of 19th- and 20th-century art, including European and American drawings, prints, and sculpture. Van Gogh, Picasso, Cézanne, Pollack, and O'Keeffe are among the artists represented inside this Mediterranean Revival mansion.

Theme Parks

The most famous of San Antonio's theme and amusement parks is **Sea World of Texas** (☒ Hwy. 151 at Loop 1604, ☎ 210/523-3000). The other biggie is **Six Flags Fiesta Texas** (☒ I-10 at Loop 1604, ☎ 210/697-5050), which seems about the size of a major city.

GETTING AROUND

Although you can see downtown on foot, you'll need a car to get around the metro area. It's the only way to check out gay nightlife and to visit the missions, parks, and museums. San Antonio's network of highways can be confusing, so get a map. Parking downtown is not difficult; several garages are near the Alamo and River Walk. The city has an extensive bus system but it's mainly useful to residents, although Bus 7/40 loops from downtown to several tourist attractions. Streetcars travel four downtown routes, which hit most of the major sights.

EATS

San Antonio dining is neither as flashy nor quite as accomplished as in other major Texas cities. The region's ubiquitous but rather greasy Tex-Mex cooking has received new life in recent years, as local chefs continue to experiment with regional Mexican and southwestern recipes and ingredients. Steak houses and burger parlors remain a potent force. Chili con carne was invented here in the late 1800s, and you may from time to time stumble upon "chili queens." Not to be confused with "taco queens," the politically incorrect slang for gay gringos with a thing for Hispanic guys, chili queens were the Mexican-American women who for many years hawked hot chili at the city's open-air markets.

Restaurants north of downtown—in Monte Vista, Olmos Park, and Alamo Heights—tend to draw the most same-sexers. With a few exceptions, downtown is the domain of touristy or business-oriented eateries.

In addition to the restaurants reviewed below, a couple of inexpensive and gay-friendly Mexican eateries are downtown, including **Mi Tierra** (☒ 218 Produce Row, ☎ 210/225-1262), which is open 24 hours, and **Rosario's** (☒ 1014 S. Alamo St., ☎ 210/223-1806).

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

Downtown and South

☎-\$\$\$\$ **× Paesanos.** Pretty as it is, the River Walk attracts more than its share of forgettable restaurants. But this water-level, Northern Italian trattoria is outstanding and gay-friendly—and it's one of the few in this area favored by locals. The spinach gnocchi with fresh mozzarella, tomatoes, and roasted garlic, and the grilled amberjack with a Sicilian clam chowder rarely miss the mark. ☒ 111 W. Crockett St., ☎ 210/227-2782.

☎-\$\$\$ **× Blue Star.** Grilled antelope sausage, porterhouse steak, blackened-fish sandwiches, and shrimp-chipotle noodles are among the updated variations on "comfort food" doled out at this hip postindustrial microbrewery at the funky Blue Star Arts Space (see Lay of the Land, above) in Southtown. ☒ 1414 S. Alamo St., ☎ 210/212-5506.

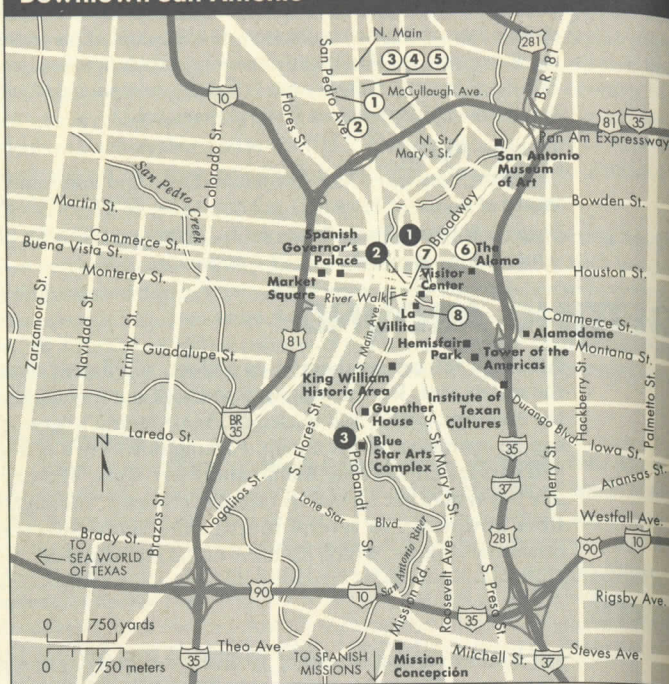
Eats ●

Blue Star, 3
Paesanos, 2
Pecan Street Market, 1

Scenes ○

Annex, 2
Bonham Exchange, 6
Captain's Crew, 7
El Jardin, 8
Pegasus, 3
Rebar, Woody's and Club W, 1
The Saint, 4
Silver Dollar Saloon, 5

Downtown San Antonio



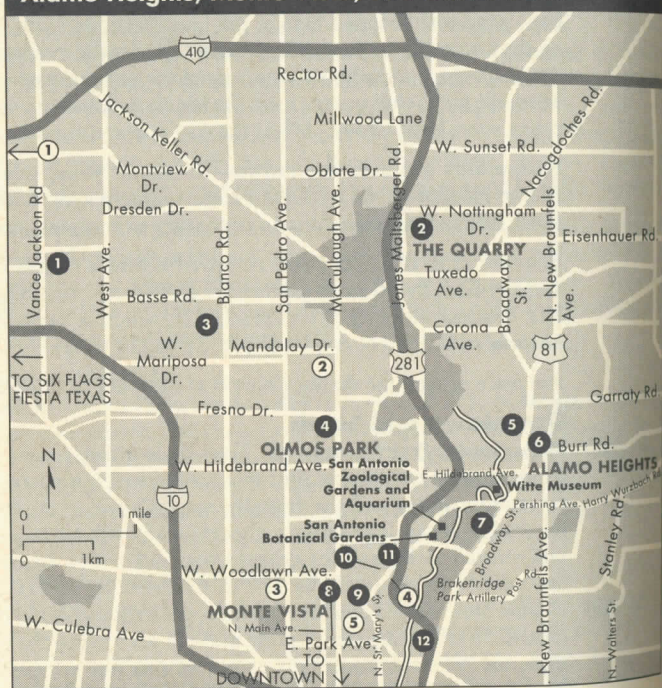
Eats ●

Barcelona, 5
Biga, 8
Camille, 10
Candlelight, 11
Earl Abel's, 6
Freedom, 9
La Fogata, 1
Liberty Bar, 12
Los Barrios, 3
Madhatters, 7
Stonerwerks at Quarry, 2
W. D. Deli, 4

Scenes ○

Eagle Mountain Saloon, 5
Mick's, 2
Nexus, 1
2015, 3
Tycoon Flats, 4

Alamo Heights, Monte Vista, and Olmos Park



Eats

✕ **Pecan Street Market.** This favorite downtown lunchery, set on the ground floor of the turn-of-the-century Exchange Building, retains a vintage feel. The sandwiches, soups, and salads are fashioned with considerable New American flair, and the desserts are always a knockout. ☎ 152 E. Pecan St., ☎ 210/227-3226.

Monte Vista, Olmos Park, and North St. Mary's

✕ **Biga.** The decor inside this turn-of-the-century mansion is Edwardian, but the crowd is cool and sassy, which is also true of the food. Highlights include habanero-spiked swordfish over risotto and game meats (most notably oak-roasted antelope). ☎ 206 E. Locust St., ☎ 210/225-0722.

✕ **Camille.** Great for a first date or an anniversary, this terrific purveyor of New American cooking is set in a rustic dining room with wood floors, Renoiresque murals, and antique mirrors. Roasted pork loin on scalloped potatoes with a balsamic-honey glaze is one of many standouts. ☎ 517 E. Woodlawn St., ☎ 210/735-2307.

✕ **La Fogata.** One of the most famous Mexican restaurants in Texas, "the Flame" is well north of Olmos Park. Despite the sometimes pissy service, it's worth the trip. The menu draws on Texas-influenced and Mexican recipes—a favorite is the smoky and sizzling *chile poblano al carbon* (poblano pepper stuffed with chicken and cheese and cooked under charcoal flame). ☎ 2427 Vance Jackson, ☎ 210/340-1337.

✕ **Liberty Bar.** The Liberty was a German-style beer garden for much of this century. Gay and straight locals drop by to mingle at the bar or nosh on pear and Stilton salad, peppered tenderloin, and venison sausage, plus traditional Mexican favorites. ☎ 328 E. Josephine St., ☎ 210/227-1187.

✕ **Los Barrios.** Not as high-profile as La Fogata, this vast family-run compound built around a former Dairy Queen is a huge favorite of the gay community. Terra-cotta-hued walls, tile floors, hanging plants, and upbeat music complement the tasty fare, including chicken in a piquant mole-poblano sauce and tender Mexican-style chicken-fried steak. ☎ 4223 Blanco Rd., ☎ 210/732-6071.

✕ **W. D. Deli.** A staple of Olmos Park's gay community, this cheerful deli has the best tortilla soup around, and healthful sandwiches (try the spinach-chicken) and salads. The inside dining area has wood floors, floor-to-ceiling windows, and hanging plants. Outside is a tree-shaded patio. ☎ 4227 McCullough Ave., ☎ 210/828-2322.

Alamo Heights and Northeast

✕ **Barcelona.** With saltillo-tile floors, Spanish art, wood-beam ceilings, and foliage-choked dining rooms and patios, this tapas restaurant captures the mood of its namesake. The food roams the Mediterranean, with robust and kicky dishes like potato rounds with prosciutto and *Manchego* (Spanish sheep's milk) cheese and duck breast with sun-dried cherry and ancho pepper sauce. ☎ 4901 Broadway, ☎ 210/822-6129.

✕ **Stonerwerks at Quarry.** Across the street from the acutely posh Quarry shopping complex, off U.S. 281 near the airport, Stonerwerks is a yuppie haven on weekends, when a taco bar and live music are featured. You'll find tasty pub-style food—burgers, nachos, salads—at this crowded adobe compound and garden. ☎ 7300 Jones Maltsberger Rd., ☎ 210/828-3508.

✕ **Earl Abel's.** This half-century-old tacky diner fills nightly with old ladies with big Texas hair—and quite a few drag queens with big Texas hair. It's sometimes hard to tell them apart. Doting waitresses race around serving plates of cornmeal-battered catfish, fried chicken, and coconut cream pie. ☎ 4200 Broadway, ☎ 210/822-3358.

Coffeeshop Culture

Candlelight. A living-room-like space with settees, arm chairs, and tables on which you can kick up your feet or set up a board game, Candlelight is the perfect blend of a wine bar, coffeeshop, café, and rainy-day hangout. In good weather enjoy the lushly landscaped patio. ☎ 3011 N. St. Mary's St., ☎ 210/738-0099.

Freedom. A hub of free-thinkers and New Agers, Freedom has food, coffees, and smoothies, but is best-known for its poetry readings, open-mike nights, herbal massage therapy, and other nontraditional services and festivities. ☎ 2407 N. St. Mary's St., ☎ 210/737-3363.

Madhatters. Attracting a "who's who" of local characters for the weekend jazz brunches, Madhatters is one of the best coffeeshops in Alamo Heights. Great sandwiches and the long list of Benedicts—topped with chipotle Hollandaise sauce and other goodies (grilled artichokes, perhaps)—make for memorable meals. ☎ 3606 Ave. B, ☎ 210/821-6555.

SCENES

Most San Antonio bars are clean and nicely decorated, with down-to-earth and approachable crowds. Many bars are northwest of downtown in Monte Vista, clustered along Main and San Pedro avenues, but a few are scattered elsewhere. There are a few small colleges in San Antonio, but this is not a college town, and under-35 singles—male and female—are less numerous here than in Austin, Dallas, and Houston. The scene is more about socializing and hanging out with friends than about cruising and putting on airs. Drag, which has long played a role in gay Hispanic culture, is a *major* force here. Women are welcome at many of the Monte Vista bars, but the best dyke bar, Nexus, is a half-hour drive northwest of downtown.

Prime Suspects

Annex. Come to Texas expecting every other guy to work on a ranch, drive a Chevy 4-by-4, and smoke unfiltered cigarettes, and you'll be in for a serious disappointment. More of them wear pumps than chaps. What macho dudes you will find favor this low-key bar that's bathed in red light. It's neither a dive nor a hard-core scene, but leather men like it here, and the sexual energy sometimes rises to a fever pitch. Despite the lusty ambience, women do hang here, especially early in the evening. ☎ 330 San Pedro Ave., ☎ 210/223-6957. *mostly male, mid-30s and up, some leather, bears, Levi's, cruisy.*

Bonham Exchange. This enormous historic building a few blocks east of the Alamo is the largest queer (technically mixed gay/straight) club in Texas, and when they open the upstairs ballroom (only for special parties and occasions) it's one of the biggest in the country. Open only on Friday and Saturday, the "Bottom Exchange" consists of a cruisy video lounge; a drag/show bar; a pool and games room; a two-level, high-energy disco with catwalks running high above the dance floor; and a pair of cozy lounges steps from the action. ☎ 411 Bonham St., ☎ 210/271-3811. *Crowd: mixed m/f, mixed gay/straight, 20s to early 30s, preppy gays, alternative and grungy straights, less of a cruise than at the Saint, upbeat.*

El Jardin. No visitor to San Antonio should miss this idiosyncratic bar that's been serving the community for several decades. All sorts of colorful folks wander in here day and night—including locals who laugh it off as a dive that they swear they'd never be caught dead in. Behind the slightly dingy facade lies a surprisingly cute space with a jukebox outfitted with boppy tunes, a strobe light (but no dance floor), a postage-stamp-size covered patio, and a funny framed caricature of J. Edgar Hoover in drag. ☎ 106 Navarro St., ☎ 210/223-7177. *Crowd: 60/40 m/f, mostly over 35, mixed racially, down-to-earth, talkative, dishy.*

Nexus. Northwest of the city, just beyond I-410, Nexus is the main dyke gathering spot on weekends. It's worth the drive if meeting women is your thing. In front is a rec room with plush seating, pool tables, and other games—it's a good spot to check out the crowd and strike up a conversation. There's a large dance floor and video bar, where you will hear the usual dance tunes on weekends and can catch karaoke on some weekdays. Some of the nicest bartenders in Texas. ☎ 8021 Pinebrook St., ☎ 210/341-2818. *Crowd: mostly female weekends, 75/25 f/m, weekdays, 20s to 50s, mixed bag, friendly.*

Pegasus. The guys who end up two-stepping next door at the Silver Dollar or voguing at the nearby Saint often begin the evening at this convivial video bar with a tropical-theme patio, swimming pool, beach, and volleyball court out back. On weekend afternoons the crowds enjoy the sand and swimming; late in the evening table-top go-go boys keep the regulars glued to their bar stools. ☎ 1402 N. Main Ave., ☎ 210/299-4222. *Crowd: mostly male, mostly 30s and 40s, a few stand-and-model boys, low-key and outgoing, cruisy.*

The Saint. This smartly decorated warehouse disco isn't as large as the Bonham Exchange, but because it's predominantly gay, it's at least as popular and considerably cruisier. Most of the action revolves around a dance floor and surrounding tiered standing areas—ideal for watching cute guys dancing or some of the best drag shows in Texas. All the city's bars are racially diverse, but of the major clubs the Saint has the strongest Hispanic presence. Open weekends only, the club has frequent 18-and-over nights. ☎ 1430 N. Main Ave., ☎ 210/225-7330. *Crowd: 80/20 m/f, late teens to 40s, mixed racially, collegiate, well-dressed, disco bunnies, drag queens and their admirers.*

Silver Dollar Saloon. With a great location sandwiched between two of San Antonio's most happening bars, Pegasus and the Saint, this country-western saloon always packs in a decent crowd. Cowboy hats and boots are commonplace, but the prime location also draws quite a few non-country patrons. Good sound system. ☎ 1418 N. Main Ave., ☎ 210/227-2623. *Crowd: Mostly male, late 20s and older, clean-cut, friendly.*

Neighborhood Haunts

Steps from the River Walk, the **Captain's Crew** (☎ 309 W. Market St., ☎ 210/223-0333) is a mellow spot with friendly bartenders and nautical kitsch on the walls. On weekends, **Eagle Mountain Saloon** (☎ 1902 McCullough Ave., ☎ 210/733-1516) is actually a bit more than a neighborhood bar, drawing drag queens, country-western fans, and regular guys and gals for line dancing and mug hoisting. Tiny **Mick's** (☎ 5307 McCullough Ave., ☎ 210/828-4222) is big with Olmos Park dykes and fags.

2015 (☎ 2015 San Pedro Ave., ☎ 210/733-3365) has mirrors, glittery lights, and a show stage—all the right ingredients for drag, but the place isn't a big draw. Although it's a large complex with three distinct bars, the two-level space comprising **Rebar**, **Woody's**, and **Club W** (☎ 820 San Pedro Ave., ☎ 210/271-9663) attracts mostly locals. Woody's has strippers and is kind of sleazy but fun; Rebar, which is upstairs, gets more of a leather and Levi's crowd; and Club W is a drag club with a large dance floor, a central bar, and a couple of pool tables.

One-Nighters

On Wednesday the student-oriented Tex-Mex and burger restaurant **Tycoon Flats** (☎ 2926 N. St. Mary's St., ☎ 210/737-1929) tosses a wild and well-attended queer party. Out in the courtyard, locally beloved acoustic guitar duo Lenny and Sylvia entertain the chatty crowd, which runs the rainbow gamut: male, female, 20s to 60s, all races, and zero attitude. Don't miss this one.

Action

Of the city's two bathhouses, **Alternative Clubs Incorporated** (☎ 827 E. Elmira St., ☎ 210/223-2177) is the nicer and more popular.

SLEEPS

The dozens of new hotels around the south side of downtown attest to the city's popularity as a leisure and business destination, but shun these cookie-cutter chain lodgings in favor of the many gay-friendly inns and historic hotels. Most of these properties are downtown, within walking distance of major attractions, but they also have the highest rates. For a chance to stay close to gay bars and some good restaurants, consider one of the more affordable B&Bs north of downtown.

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

Hotels

- \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ ☒ **La Mansion del Rio.** Converted into a luxury hotel during the 1968 World's Fair, this former Catholic seminary remains the jewel of San Antonio's hotel scene, replete with wrought-iron balconies, Moorish arches, and numerous Spanish Revival architectural details. Rooms overlook either the River Walk or a landscaped courtyard. ☎ 112 College St., 78205, ☎ 210/225-2581 or 800/292-7300, FAX 210/226-0389. 327 rooms. Restaurant, pool.
- \$\$-\$\$\$\$ ☒ **Menger.** The bland rooms in the Menger's 1940s wing are the most affordable, but all guests can enjoy this 1859 charmer's stunning public areas, warm staff, and top-notch facilities. If you are up for a splurge, rooms in the original section exude Victorian charm. ☎ 204 Alamo Plaza, 78205, ☎ 210/223-4361 or 800/345-9285, FAX 210/228-0022. 345 rooms. Restaurant, pool, exercise room.
- \$-\$\$ ☒ **Hampton Inn Riverwalk.** If all you require are clean rooms, convenience to downtown, and good value, try this well-managed chain property not far from Rivercenter Mall. ☎ 414 Bowie St., 78205, ☎ 210/225-8500 or 800/426-7866, FAX 210/225-8526. 169 rooms. Pool.

Guest Houses and Small Hotels

- \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ ☒ **Arbor House Hotel.** Opened in 1995 by two talented guys with an eye for bold artwork and innovative ideas about restoration, this intimate downtown hotel consists of four turn-of-the-century buildings, each with enormous suites—some with whirlpool baths, kitchenettes, and balconies. Brightly painted southwestern antiques, leopard-print rugs, claw-foot tubs, and a few retro-stylish furnishings salvaged from the old Las Vegas MGM hotel create a memorable yet amazingly tasteful impression. ☎ 339 S. Presa, 78204, ☎ 210/472-2005 or 888/272-6700, FAX 210/472-2007. 16 rooms with phone, TV, and private bath. Continental breakfast. Mixed gay/straight.
- \$\$-\$\$\$ ☒ **Adams House Bed & Breakfast.** Straight-owned but with extremely friendly innkeepers, this 1902 Italianate-inspired mansion sits on a historic street in the heart of King William, just a 15-minute walk from downtown attractions. Rooms have period pieces, and are elegant but not overdone. The breakfasts are quite memorable. ☎ 231 Adams St., 78205, ☎ 210/224-4791 or 800/666-4810, FAX 210/223-5125. 5 rooms with phone, TV, and private bath. Full breakfast. Mixed gay/straight.
- \$-\$\$ ☒ **Painted Lady Guest Hotel.** For many years this women-owned 1920s mansion has been a hit with queer travelers, who appreciate its proximity to downtown, reasonable rates, and yellow exterior offset by green balconies and white Doric columns. Rooms are filled with antiques. About the only drawback—at least in summer—is the absence of air-conditioning. Some rooms have kitchenettes. ☎ 620 Broadway, 78215, ☎ 210/220-1092, FAX 210/220-1092. 8 rooms with phone, TV, and private bath. Continental breakfast. Mixed gay/straight.

BOOKSTORES

The main lesbigay bookstore is **Obelisk** (☎ 1029 University Ave., ☎ 619/297-4171), on the Uptown District's Rainbow Block. More general-interest but also with a good selection of feminist, lesbian, and gay titles is **Blue Door Books** (☎ 3823 5th Ave., Hillcrest, ☎ 619/298-8610). **Gay Mart** (☎ 550 University Ave., 619/543-1221) sells queer gifts, mags, fashion, and accessories.

Working Out

Bodybuilders Gym (☎ 3647 India St., ☎ 619/299-2639), at the convergence of downtown, Hillcrest, and Old Town, is for muscle sculptors. **Hillcrest Gym** (☎ 142 University Ave., ☎ 619/299-7867) is for the see-and-be-seen set (small but clean, more for lifting than for aerobic work).

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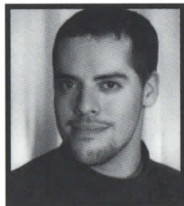
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