

TAKE A BREAK

On your next tech trip to Austin, mix business with pleasure using these five fun day trips.

There are countless business-related reasons to visit Austin these days—it's one of the hubs of the tech industry in the United States and has earned the nickname Silicon Hills, thanks to its strong entrepreneurial culture and the presence of companies like Dell, Apple and IBM. It doesn't hurt that a little conference known as South by Southwest (SXSW), with an entire track dedicated to exploring tech and innovation, brings thousands of forward-thinkers to the city every year.



AUSTIN ITSELF OFFERS PLENTY TO DO, BUT IF YOU'VE GOT SOME EXTRA TIME, UNPLUG WITH ONE OF THESE DAY TRIPS:

FREDERICKSBURG

A charming community in Texas Hill Country, Fredericksburg is known for its German flavor, growing wine region, cute boutiques and rolling country roads, perfect for cycling. Grab a Caribbean-inspired lunch of mahi-mahi tacos and fries piled with pulled pork at Tubby's Ice House, then walk across the street to the National Museum of the Pacific War. You could easily spend the entire day at the only institution in the U.S. dedicated exclusively to telling the story of the Pacific theater in World War II, but you might want to leave a little time to explore the shops of Main Street, go wine tasting, hike Enchanted Rock or stroll through the gardens at Wildseed Farms. Cap off your day with dinner at Otto's, serving gourmet German fare like duck schnitzel and flammkuchen, a flatbread/pizza hybrid.

Time from Austin: 1 hour, 30 minutes

OTTO'S PHOTO BY CLAIRE MCCORMACK PHOTOGRAPHY



NEW BRAUNFELS

Water is a big attraction in New Braunfels, a small town founded by German settlers, and you've got options when it comes to enjoying it. Tubing is a popular pastime here, on both the Guadalupe River (which also offers year-round fishing) and the Comal River (with a water temperature of 70–72 degrees). If you're hoping to stay dryer, paddleboarding and canoeing are available at Landa Park. More wet-and-wild adventures await at Schlitterbahn, widely considered the mecca of water parks. Scream your way through the six-story-tall Master Blaster uphill water coaster and try to surf the Boogie Bahn, with 50,000 gallons of water raging a minute.

Time from Austin: 50 minutes

WACO

In recent years, college town Waco has become known as the home of Magnolia Market, a two-block shopping complex from Chip and Joanna Gaines of Fixer Upper. People come from miles around to get a little home décor inspiration—plus there’s a garden shop, a bakery serving Joanna’s personal recipes, food trucks and lawn games for families. But before there was HGTV, there was Dr Pepper, created in 1885 in Waco. How it got the name, no one knows for sure, but you can explore the theories at the Dr Pepper Museum, dedicated to the country’s oldest major soft drink. Be sure to stop by Frosty’s Soda Shop on your way out for a sweet, effervescent treat.

Time from Austin: 1 hour, 45 minutes



THIRA



INSIDER'S TIP

*Want to beat the crowds?
Take the trolley for free.*

The Silo District Downtown Trolley’s route makes it easy to get to and from Magnolia Market, and any of the shops, museums, and restaurants downtown Waco has to offer.

NIENABER



WIMBERLEY

This small town of less than 3,000 packs plenty of outdoor recreation. Cool off at artesian spring Jacob's Well, a popular swimming destination (from May 1 to October 1) that's 68 degrees year-round. On Saturdays at 9 a.m., a master naturalist covers the history of the well and the wildlife that live in the surrounding habitat. For more swimming, Blue Hole is another refreshing, spring-fed spot—just be sure to make reservations online first to ensure your chance to splash around. Then get a bird's-eye view of canyons and creeks as you soar over Texas Hill Country at Wimberley Zipline Adventures. You'll zoom at speeds north of 30 mph as you experience the 10 lines, ranging from 150 to 900 feet. Before heading back, stop by Bella Vista Ranch to sample fresh-pressed olive oil.

Time from Austin: 1 hour, 15 minutes

JOHNSON CITY

Step back into the 1960s on a tour of the Texas White House, where Lyndon B. Johnson spent nearly a quarter of his time during his presidency. On a guided tour, you'll see firsthand LBJ's love of electronics and learn about some of his quirks—for example, he required extremely high water pressure and took a nap almost every afternoon. The house is in the Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park, which is also a working ranch, with antique cattle that are descended from Johnson's time, shorter and stockier than the cows of today. For even more about the 36th president, visit the nearby Lyndon B. Johnson State Park & Historic Site, where a visitor center contains memorabilia from his years in office. Here, the Sauer-Beckmann Living History Farmstead gives visitors an authentic look at Texas pioneer life in the 19th century, as interpreters in period costume carry out the day-to-day chores of running a farm in this long-ago era.

Time from Austin: 1 hour ■

SMILE ARTISTRY