

Traveling With Dogs

PLACES THAT WELCOME DOGS

by Stephanie Smith

Enjoy Music and Outdoor Trails in Historic Austin, Texas

LOOKING FOR SUPER LIVE MUSIC, HISTORIC sites and lots of outdoor trails to hike on with your dog? Head for Austin, Texas, "Live Music Capital of the World." Austin also happens to be the capital of the only state in the union to have been an independent country, so it is especially rich in history and traditions. Finally, Austin contains miles of hiking and biking trails to explore with your dog. There is a leash law, though, so keep your pet on leash and pick up after it.

WALKING TOURS

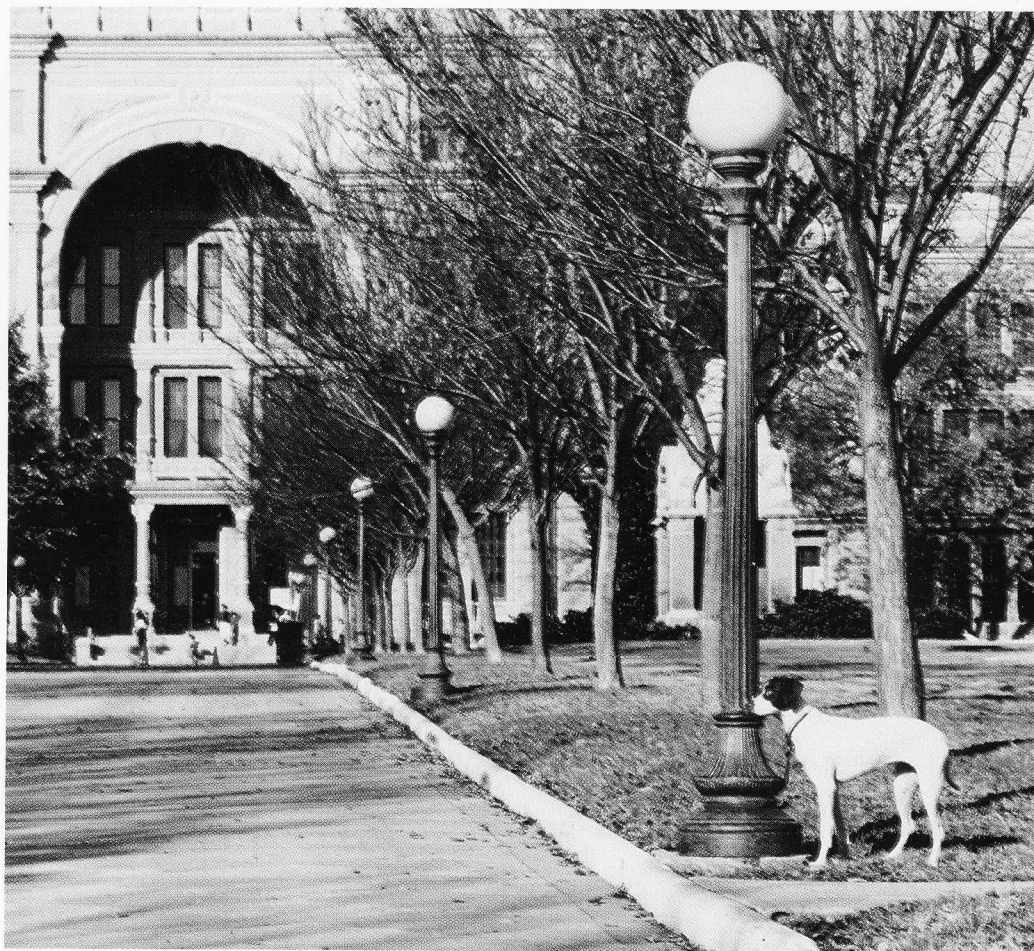
The Austin Visitors Information Center (201 E. 2nd St., [800] 926-2282) has information on several walking tours you can take with your dog. These tours cover two areas: Congress Avenue and East Sixth Street, and the Hyde Park area. Guided tours of Congress Avenue and East Sixth Street are available at 9 AM every Monday through Friday between March and November, or pick up a brochure at the Visitor's Information Center for a self-guided tour. Both tours cover the many historic buildings in the area and fill you in on some of the history and legends of the area. A self-guided tour of the Hyde Park area of Austin highlights the city's first planned community. This area has Victorian mansions interspersed with less pretentious Craftsman homes.

In addition to these walking tours, you will

want to explore the Capitol grounds and the State Cemetery. Dogs are not allowed inside the Capitol building, but there are plenty of interesting monuments and statues on the grounds to examine. There are also park benches and nice shady spots on the lawn just perfect for picnics. The State Cemetery has the graves of Stephen F. Austin, a number of state governors and many other important historical figures. Currently undergoing restoration, the cemetery is a beautiful and peaceful place to visit.

HIKING AND BIKING TRAILS

Austin has 30 miles of interconnected hiking and biking trails for outdoor enthusiasts. Dogs are required to be on a leash in all but a few areas (call [512] 477-PARD for a list of leash-free areas), but this law is widely ignored, so watch out for loose dogs while on the trails. Maps of the trails are available from the Austin Parks and Recreation Department ([512] 477-PARD). One of the most popular trails starts in Zilker Park, on the banks of Town Lake, and continues around the



Dogs are not allowed in the capitol building in Austin, but can sniff out interesting historical monuments and shady parks. In the "Music Capital of the World," you can enjoy outdoor trails at the many surrounding state parks, live music in the bars of Sixth Street and even Mexican freetail bats.

lake. Town Lake is a part of the Colorado River and is located just south of downtown Austin. Canoes are available for rent, and your dog is not only allowed in the canoe, but rides for free (Zilker Park Canoe Rental, [512] 478-3852).

Numerous state parks near Austin offer other places to hike and enjoy the outdoors. The three nearest parks are Bastrop State Park, in the lost pines area of Texas; Enchanted Rock Natural Area, featuring a two-mile-high mountain of granite you can hike up with your dog; and McKinney Falls State Park, featuring beautiful waterfalls. The fee for each park is \$3 per vehicle, and dogs are allowed on lead only.

OTHER SITES

A few things in Austin aren't to be missed but don't allow dogs. Sixth Street is a street of bars featuring live music that has helped to give Austin the title "Live Music Capital of the World." Some famous people who got their start in Austin include Willie Nelson and Stevie Ray Vaughn. If you enjoy railroads and steam locomotives, the Hill Country Flyer Steam Train Excursion is just the ticket. This is a restored 143-ton steam engine with five 1920s-era passenger coaches. The half-day excursion goes through some of the prettiest parts of Central Texas and is especially wonderful during the spring wildflower season. The train runs on Saturdays and Sundays. Reservations can be made by calling (512) 477-8486.

Finally, during evenings from March to November, the largest urban colony of Mexican freetail bats in North America emerges from underneath the Congress Avenue Bridge, where it crosses Town Lake. On the southeast side of the shore, next to the bridge, is a viewing area with exhibits about the bats and a place to watch them emerge for their evening meal. To find out what time the bats fly out, call (512) 416-5700, ext. 3636.

PET-FRIENDLY AUSTIN LODGING

The Guest Quarters Suites, near the Capitol at 303 W. 15th St., Austin, TX 78701; (512) 478-7000. Pets under 20 pounds are welcome, with a \$5 per-pet, per-night fee. Rates are \$130 to \$140 a night.

La Quinta Motor Inn, 300 E. 11th St., Austin, TX 78701; (512) 476-1166. No fee or size restrictions on pets. This place is more mid-priced, at \$52 to \$65 a night.✶

Stephanie Smith is a freelance writer based in Austin, Texas. This article was reprinted from the January/February 1995 issue of DogGone.

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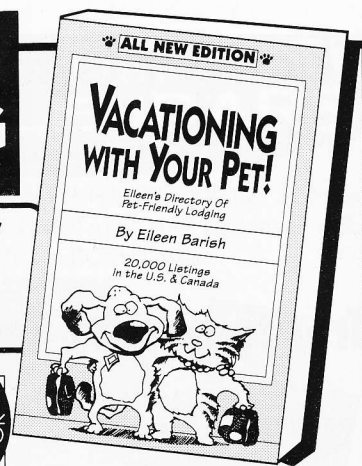
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