Welcome to Texas, y’all!

Prepared by Lisa Havel 2012 (updated 2013)
Welcome, new Longhorns!

Since you all will spend your first year of the UTMSI graduate school program in Austin while the rest of the graduate students are in Port Aransas and cannot offer explicit guidance and welcome, we have communally formed the “Austin Guidebook” to help orient you and get you on your feet in your new home. All students in Port Aransas unanimously feel that one year in Austin is not enough to experience all of the city, but had we known what we knew when we left we may have had a chance! Here we offer some advice on housing, personal testimonies to which classes you should or should not register for, and, though seemingly a plethora of “things to do,” merely a fraction of what Austin has within its city limits. Enjoy your time and take note of what we have left off this list of “highly recommended must-do’s” and add to them once you move down to Port Aransas. This list is not all-encompassing, so don’t ever hesitate to contact any graduate students in Port Aransas for questions or advice, and we’ll see you in a year!

All the best,
The Graduate Student Association of UTMSI
Housing in Austin
Housing

Most incoming graduate students live within a mile or two of campus. There’s plenty of public transportation (buses are free with UT ID), a lot to do in the area, and it’s easy to get to work. The neighborhood north of campus is Hyde Park (very pretty, lots of houses for rent), and there are a lot of apartments in West Campus as well (closer to campus but filled with undergrads, can be very loud depending on the property). Students have also lived in East Austin, which can be cheaper but a car (or a lot of biking) is recommended since less buses go through the area. If you want to live closer to downtown, there are plenty of apartments in South Austin as well (and lots of shops, restaurants, etc.) It is recommended to find an apartment as soon as possible since over 50,000 students are looking for housing in the same areas as you, and places go quickly.
Housing

Some places students have lived in the past & recommend:

• Waugh Properties, between Guadalupe and Speedway near 44th street and Avenue B. Address: 4310 Avenue B, Austin, TX, 78751.

• Oak Park Apartments, 45th and Duval(www.rainiermanagement.com/oak_park_apartments.htm)

• Lantana Apartments (18th and West) Pet friendly, pool. Run by Burlington Ventures.

• The Co-ops (collegehouses.org) can be really inexpensive, but depending on which co op you live in they may have group meals, not a lot of space or privacy, and a lot of drama. 21st street co op is crazy, the co ops in the super co op (like Nueces) are not quite as bad.

• Warwick Apartments; between 29th and 30th on West Ave. Cheap studio and 1BR apartments, pets allowed, the office staff weren’t stellar but no major issues.
Classes
Classes

Statistics

SSC 380C  Statistical Methods I
Review of introductory statistics
One student recommended this course as a review, another said it was a waste of time.

SSC 380D  Statistical Methods II with Dr. Hersch.
Continuation of Statistical Methods I
More complex statistics using the program R
Introduces and compares R with SAS
Opportunity to use SAS and R in every class (very application based)
Very useful & fairly easy
Recommendation: yes

PSY384K with Dr. Hixon.
Covers experimental design, ANOVA, and more. It came highly recommended.

Statistics for Applications with Dr. Sager.
Very informative, but was a lot of work. There were 8-10 problem sets throughout the semester that will take about 15 hours a week.
Recommendation: yes

PSY384M: Advanced Statistics Inferential.
The course title and description hint that this is an advanced statistics course but it is really quite basic. If you’ve already had an intro stats class that covered ANOVA, t-tests, what a p-value is, etc. then this class won’t be of much use.
Recommendation: no
Classes

Ecology, Evolution, Behavior

A lot of the students take the Intro to Ecology, Evolution and Behavior core courses (EEB I & II). They’re a great way to get a broad background in these fields and get to network with 6 professors and all the new EEB students. However, beware they are the two core courses for EEB and are graded so that half of the class will get an A, but the other half will get a B.

Other courses:

The 384K classes are hit or miss depending on the topic and teacher. They are discussion courses with minimal work but you can still learn a lot. Different topics came recommended but they change each semester.

BIO357 Evolutionary Ecology with Dr. Pianka
This undergrad course came highly recommended by one student and another student said to avoid it.

Conservation Biology with Dr. Fowler
It's taught as both a grad and undergrad class, which makes it a little simple at times, but it’s great for people who haven’t had any conservation classes before.

Ecological and Evolutionary Genetics with Dr. Juenger
Great for learning about all sorts of methods and analysis of genetics, with some introduction to genomics.

Phylogenetic Perspectives in Evolution, Ecology and Behavior with Dr. Hillis.
Discussion group, easy A and you learn a lot!

Phylogeography with Dr. Canatella (recommended)

Population Genetics with Dr. Kirkpatrick (recommended…he knows A LOT!)

Phycology (definitely take if you plan on studying plants or algae for your degree) with Dr. la Claire or Dr. Fowler. One student took it with la Claire, and it’s a lot of memorization and work. He curves the final course grade too, which no one knew about until after. Just try to stay on his good side, we’ve heard of other grad students getting bad grades because they didn’t get along with him. And go to class every day, he likes that.
Classes

Geology, Watersheds

Many students take CE 394K GIS in Water Resources with Dr. Maidment while in Austin & recommend it if you will be working with the program at all while in Port Aransas.

• Crash course introduction to ArcGIS
• Given semester-long project of your own chosen topic; otherwise large focus on freshwater resources, but lots of GIS practice.

Environmental Isotope Geochemistry from Geoscience Department with Dr. Breecker.

• Helpful to anyone who will be working with isotopes.
• Professor is very nice and willing to help students solve problems after class.

Recommendation: yes.

Avoid: GRG 384C Watershed Systems and Environmental Management with Dr. Hudson.

Just a semester on the Mississippi River.
Classes

Others

381M in Chemistry Advanced Analytical Chemistry with Dr. Stevenson.
Basic principles and instruments of analytical chemistry. The report homework is quite helpful to push you read some advanced analytical chemistry development and the report is only one page so won’t add too much burden. The professor keeps it interesting and teaches clearly.
Recommendation: yes.

Environmental Law and Policy with Dr. Rawlings.
Very informative and enjoyed the discussion format of the class. There are a lot of readings per class (about 30 pages for each class).
Recommendation: yes.

BIO 395J Molecular Biology
Core course for Cellular and Molecular Biology students. There is no review and very high expectations of established knowledge of methodology/terminology/processes, plus an Intense workload.
Recommendation: NO, unless you have extensive background in this subject.

Some students also recommended taking an upper division/departmental marine science elective course while in Austin if you can so you have less to take while in Port A.
Things to do
Things to do

Outside

Barton Springs!! Chilly water & open late!
http://austintexas.gov/department/barton-springs-pool

Running/walking/kayaking Lady Bird Lake
(Red Bud dog park is leash-free)

Zilker Park: sports, Blues on the Green, dog-friendly, great grass, picnics, nature preserve, botanical gardens
http://www.austintexas.gov/department/zilker-metropolitan-park

Mount Bonnell (go at sunset)

Join an Ultimate team (http://upla.austinultimate.org/)

Avenue F (between 38th & 45th) goes all out for Halloween & Christmas…parking can be difficult..walk if possible!

Cathedral of Junk (http://www.roadsideamerica.com/story/7816)

Wild Basin Wildness Preserve (http://www.wildbasin.org/)

Really any park (http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/GIS/ParksWeb/)

Discgolf on Shoal Creek Trail

Austin Farmer’s Market held every Saturday morning downtown (http://www.sfcfarmersmarket.org)

The Holiday Singalong & Downtown stroll (early Dec.)

Many races (Muddy Buddy, Zombie race, etc.)
(http://www.runningintheusa.com/race/List.aspx?State=TX)

Mayfield Park (http://mayfieldpark.org/)

Umlauf Sculpture Gardens (http://umlaufsculpture.org/)
Things to do

On Campus

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center
www.wildflower.org

Any of the museums!
(LBJ Library & Museum, Texas Memorial Museum, Blanton Museum of Art, Harry Ransom Center)

SPORTS!! Any & every.

The UT Tower (you can go up it and get great views, but need to buy tickets in advance) http://www.utexas.edu/tower/

Swimming in Gregory’s Outdoor pool (lined with palm trees)

If you play an instrument, try out for the UT basketball/volleyball band, as grad students they will let you join (but not have to sign up for credit), and are really generous to accommodate your schedule.
Things to do

Shopping

Domain Mall or Barton Springs Mall

San Marcos Outlet Mall (30 min south of Austin) and Round Rock Outlets (30 min north of Austin)

RunTex: a really great specialty store for running shoes, clothes, etc. (www.runtex.com)

City-wide garage sales (http://www.cwgs.com/)

China town: 10901 N Lamar Blvd # G Austin, TX 78753. Have MT supermarket where you can buy a lot of traditional Chinese food condiments, and dish ingredients which you cannot find in HEB or walmart. Around it some Chinese restaurants are also good.


The shops on South Congress

Whole Foods (it started in Austin!) & Central Market

Art store next to co-op – Great deals on most art supplies, counts toward your co-op rebate. Very convenient location. (http://www.universitycoop.com/ePOS/this_category=2023&store=108&level1_category=Tabs&form=shared3/gm/main.html&design=108)
Things to do

Indoors

Alamo Drafthouse (http://drafthouse.com/)
They play current movies, as well as crazy singalongs, random 80’s nights, etc. and they serve food and beer as well

Texas Stars Hockey (http://www.texasstarshockey.com/)

Tour the Texas Capitol Building (free..but get the guided tour)

Austin Comic Con: It’s a smaller convention than most but it’s a great place to start. Tons of stuff to see. Costumes. Vintage comic books. Special interest groups. Power Rangers. Steampunk! Artists (both famous and new) who are more than willing to sign stuff, take commissions, and chat. Meet writers. Meet and greet actors, WWE stars, film icons, etc. And tons of the most random merchandise you’d never think you want but you need.

All the Austin Museums! (http://www.austinmuseums.org/)

Violet Crown Movie House: shows lots of independent films (http://violetcrowncinema.com/)

Brewery tours: Independence (http://www.independencebrewing.com/)
& Live Oak (http://www.liveoakbrewing.com/)
These are part indoor/part outdoor
Things to do

Music

Austin is the Live Music Capital, so you can see music any and everywhere. The best part is seeing so many lesser-known bands for cheap. Here are our thoughts:

Good venues include but are not limited to Stubb’s, Emos, Antones, Mohawk, HeadHunters, Red7...keep track of the website [http://www.unlockaustin.com/](http://www.unlockaustin.com/).

A really good spot for blues is the Bar Nuno’s on 6th, no cover and cheap beer. For jazz, the Elephant room is really cool.

Every year there is Austin City Limits, one of the biggest music festivals in the country and we highly recommend going. However it usually sells out really fast, so get tickets soon! ([http://www.aclfestival.com/](http://www.aclfestival.com/))

Another crazy thing that happens in Austin is South by Southwest (SXSW), which started as a convention of musicians, movie makers and media producers and has evolved into 5 days of music all over town: literally thousands of shows. It usually occurs during spring break, and it will require some planning as the amount of shows is overwhelming. However if you are organized you can access to great shows only by signing up to lists online. There is a page on facebook for unofficial SXSW shows with all the details.

For dancing, there are plenty of clubs on 6th st. Other alternatives are the Beauty Bar and Barbarella. For salsa dancing, there is Ruta Maya and Copa.

Also check out the Frank Erwin Center and Texas Performing Arts Center for plays, concerts, etc.
Places to visit
Places to visit


New Braunfels – Yearly home of Wurstfest (German sausage and beer festival). Cute little touristy town. Schlitterbahn is here as well (always voted America's best water park) http://www.ci.new-braunfels.tx.us/ www.schlitterbahn.com


Pedernales State Park - http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/pedernales-falls

Also, Dallas is ~3 hours away and Houston is ~4 hours away (and you can always visit us in Port A (~3.5 hours away)!
Bars & Restaurants
Bars & Restaurants

Some favorites (in no particular order):

Juan in a Million (the best breakfast tacos EVER!)

Spider House (coffee/drinks/food near campus, open late, cool outdoor area)

Trudy’s (Tex-Mex, Mexi Mart Mondays $6 house mexi martinis, brunch drinks are $2.50 before noon on Sunday)

Chipotle (near campus)

Grilled Cheese Café

Freddy’s on south 1st

Kerbey Lane (open 24 hours, a few locations including one near campus… get the pancakes!)

Hula Hut (great views of the lake)

Green Mesquite (BBQ)

Home Slice (possibly the most renowned pizza in Austin)

Shady Grove

Lambert’s BBQ

La Zona Rosa

Momo’s
Bars & Restaurants

Continued (in no particular order):

Chuy’s (a few locations, winner of best chips & salsa in Austin)

Torchy’s Tacos (best tacos in Austin)

Magnolia Café (open 24 hours)

The Salt Lick (BEST. BBQ. A little outside of town but worth it)

Roundrock Donuts

Pluckers (a few locations…great for watching games & having wings & beer)

Mellow Mushroom (pizza near campus)

Juicytart Yogurt (froyo)

Mom’s Diner

Quack’s Bakery

Hopdaddy’s (great burgers)

Clay Pit (try the curry mussels…and anything else! Can be casual or fancy depending on how you want to dress http://claypit.com/contents/Claypit/)

Pho Saigon (Vietnamese…great pho)

Shoal Creek Saloon (Cajun - interesting smoked duck gumbo, good crawfish)

24 Diner (milkshakes!)

Perla’s (great seafood..best place to get fresh oysters)

Sushi Zushi (good Happy Hour M-F 3-7 great seafood bowl with udon)
Bars & Restaurants

Continued (in no particular order):

Uchi or Uchiko (amazing sushi & Japanese food...Chef Paul Qui won Top Chef)

Epoch (serves coffee in huge steins if you order a large. Open 24 hours. Outdoor seating with plugs available. Great for studying. Can get really crowded sometimes, but you can usually squeeze in somewhere. The pizza is delicious. http://www.epochcoffee.com/)

Mozart’s (Great view of Town lake. There is a shortage of plugs, so make sure to come with your laptop fully charged, or with other things to work on. Live music in the evenings sometimes, both in and outdoors. Parking can be tight, but there is an extra lot up a small hill where there are usually spaces. http://www.mozartscoffee.com/)

Mandola’s Italian Market in the Triangle (A small market to peruse, tasty food you can order at a counter and eat there, and a display case of fabulous desserts. http://www.mandolasmarket.com/Index.html)


Freebirds Burritos (Best darn burritos! So filling and so tasty. http://freebirds.com/locations/)

Madam mam’s (Thai food, delicious, good for leftovers, usually, because they give you plenty of food. http://www.madammam.com/)

Kismet Café (Really close to campus. You know it’s good because there is usually a line coming out the door (but don’t worry, the service is fast!). Very tasty Middle Eastern food at a great price. http://www.kismetcafe.net/)

Mr. Natural (2 locations...Mexican vegetarian and vegan bakery, restaurant and shop..so good!)
219 West (great happy hour with half off appetizers and really good drink specials)

Opal Divine’s (good food and a lot of varieties of beer)

Pita Pit (near campus…Mondays are double punch card days)

Shakespeare’s on 6th has $5 pitchers on Fridays

The Library on 6th has $1 well drinks on Thursdays

Double Dave’s (on Duval near campus) has $2 pint night on Thursdays

Double Dave’s Pizza Works (Speedway & 24th) has 2 for 1 pizza rolls on Tuesdays

Gorman’s (has amazing food, cheap appetizer specials)

Casino el Camino (meanest bloody Mary you’ll ever see)

Black Star Coop

Whip In

Jack Allen’s (Pricey but good)

Daily Juice (It’s Austin… a $4 juice might sound outrageous now, but just wait)

Reds Backporch

The Saxon Pub
Bars & Restaurants

Continued (in no particular order):

The Gingerman (a bar for beer lovers! Very nice beer garden downtown! When I go back to visit Austin, I always come back here...)

East Side Pies

Opa's

Highball

Mothers Vegetarian Restaurant

Veggie Heaven

Wholly Cow Burgers

Hole in the Wall (great bar near campus)

Crown and Anchor (great bar near campus with awesome bar food)

For going out, classier bars are around 4th and 5th St. For drinking cheap beer and listening to good music, there are many bars on 6th St. East 6th has good places like Rio Rita (good pizza here), Shangri-La, The Good Knight, The Liberty and Brixton, etc. and a hipster crowd. West 6th also has fun bars and more of a young professionals vibe. Middle 6th has great drink specials but is full of undergrads.

East Side Show Room (Vintage cocktails, live music, good food. Everything just seems like from a different era, which is part of the fun).

East Side Café (Great place for weekend brunch. Most of their produce is locally sourced and organic (some from on-site). Close to campus.

South Congress Cafe (On the pricier side, but a great place for brunch, dinner, or whatever. The menu is to die for. In the trendy SoCo area)
continued (in no particular order):

*Halcyon Cafe* (Coffee and booze in the same location. Good for people-watching on the weekends. Blocks away from 6th St and right across the street from some of the more colorful establishments in downtown Austin)

*The Oasis Restaurant* (Overlooking Lake Travis. Multiple outdoor decks offer spectacular views of Lake Travis. Great for hanging out and enjoying drinks with friends and/or family. Also, close to Hippie Hollow for the nudity-inclined)

*Thai Noodle House* (usually not as crowded as Madam mam’s, good Thai iced tea)

*Austin Java*

*Red House Pizza*

*Food Trucks*! (google them—there’s a good Korean BBQ one on 5th & Colorado)

*O’s Café* in the ACES building on campus

*Hoa-Hoa* (really good Chinese food in the Dobie Center on campus)

*La Tazza Fresca* (café)

*Café Medici* (café near campus- arguably the best espresso-- and if you don’t drink espresso or americanos yet, you will)

*Thunderbird Coffee*

*Bennu* (café)

*Cippolina’s* (wood burning oven for some authentic pizza and great wine)

*Food Heads* (amazing and creative sandwich shop; hit them up for lunch)
Bars & Restaurants

Continued (in no particular order):

**The Draught House** (on Medical Parkway...amazing beer selection on tap; feels like you are in Beowulf)

**Salvation Pizza** (a must-try!)

**Ken's Donuts** (near campus...they also have great empanadas)

**Max's Wine Dive** (can be a little pricey, but where else can you eat fried chicken and drink champagne??)

**Galaxy Café** (good for Sunday brunch and every other meal)

**Coco's café** (Chinese food...near campus. Milk tea there is especially great. Provide free soup when ordering meal. Cheap, $5-10 per meal)

**Tapioca House** (Chinese food...near campus...their tomato beef rice is recommended).

**Din Ho Chinese BBQ** (on Research Blvd...known as best Chinese restaurant in Austin. Food dishes are delicious and authentic Chinese food).

**Titaya's Thai cuisine** (N Lamar Blvd....best Thai food restaurant in Austin. Have their pineapple fried rice).

**Which wich** (near campus...you check off the ingredients you want and they make the sandwich for you).

**Sao Paulo's Brazilian Restaurant** (close to campus, get the queso!!, good happy hour for margaritas, mojitos, etc.)

**P. Terry's Burgers** (great veggie burger, fast food but better, local ingredients)

**Austin Land & Cattle** (for when your parents come to town and want a nice steak dinner...local ingredients & Texas beef)

**The Tigress Pub** (prohibition era drinks, prohibition era feel! Hyde Park area)
Good Luck!