



Executive Travel

Five Must-Visit Austin Resorts

Dallas leadership development guru Beverley Wright finds there's no need to travel a great distance for luxurious R&R.

By Bianca R. Montes | May 10, 2021 | 10:00 am



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Lake Austin Spa



One thing is for sure; we all need a minute to breathe. The past year's extraordinary circumstances have challenged everything from where we work to how we live. They have also changed the way we travel. The good news is that Texas has myriad dreamy opportunities for recovery time. If you're looking for a getaway that blends culture, nature, and luxury, look no further than Austin. From the people to the places—and let's not forget about the food—the state capital has a bit of something for everyone. Plus, the



region's justifiably renowned resorts, spas, and golf retreats make it an ideal place to unwind—without having to board a plane.

Earlier this year, I began what would become a restorative series of Austin getaways.

Lake Austin Spa Resort

My first venture took me to the stunning **Lake Austin Spa Resort**. The 40-room, all-inclusive property sits on 19 acres along the Colorado River and is purposefully designed to promote relaxation and healing. There is absolutely no reason to leave the hotel unless you want to go to town to purchase some adult beverages, as alcohol is not a part of the inclusive package. The never-ending list of lakeside activities—morning hydro bike rides were my favorite—and impressive wellness classes and lectures pairs nicely with a tranquil spa (that offers some of the world's best ancient and modern therapeutic techniques) and an innovative gourmet menu. It is the type of destination you can visit for a weekend or a month.

Taking a page from Dallas leadership development guru Beverley Wright's playbook, I brought my best gal pal (who happens to be my sister) with me to the lush property. We were greeted with refreshing drinks and led to our charming bungalow—the resort has 40 rooms with no shared ventilation or air conditioning. The resort's calm vibe carries over well into the spacious rooms, designed with a light aqua, tan, and white color scheme. The resort's private-label lavender amenities made bath time feel like spa time. We had lunch in our room that day, a beautifully arranged picnic on our patio overlooking the lake, and then spent the afternoon on the water. Before retiring with a bucket of popcorn for a movie night, we enjoyed a low-calorie dinner (or two) crafted by the incredibly talented Chef Stéphane Beaucamp in the resort's dining room. Some of my favorite meals included the Texas Pecan Vegan Tacos and open-faced falafel burger.

We spent the next day enjoying spa treatments, meditating in the *Tibetan* singing bowl class, and, of course, spending more time on the water.



Laps of Luxury Secluded in the rolling hill country of Austin, Omni Barton Creek recently underwent a massive renovation—the pools were a major highlight.

Omni Barton Creek

Another Austin resort you'll wish you'd never have to leave is the recently renovated Omni Barton Creek. With about \$150 million in upgrades led by Dallas-based design-build firm The Beck Group, the property sits on a sprawling landscape (there are no bad views) and hosts four premier golf courses, including the 72-par Fazio Canyons, designed by the legendary Tom Fazio. Other property highlights include exercise amenities that rival top-tier gyms, three pools, a world-class spa, and seven dining options, including a taste of Dallas with an on-site Bob's Steak & Chop House. (Pro tip: order the creamed corn brûlée. It is beautifully spiced with jalapenos and flambeed to perfection.)

For this trip, I decided to take another great friend, my boss, Christine Perez. One of the many new highlights that came from the property's upgrade was the 13,000-square-foot Mokara Spa. Christine and I made it a point to unwind: she got the Nirvana Stress Relief massage, and I tried the Barton Springs Massage before sweating out some stress in the sauna and then relaxing in the hot tub.

On our final night, we enjoyed a delicious meal at Blind Salamander Kitchen & Bar while we watched the property's lawn turn into a winter wonderland as snow was pumped into the air at sunset and guests roasted smores over a fire pit. Menu highlights include the grilled yellowfish tuna and "three-day" Wagyu short ribs. If you are going to splurge on dessert, I highly recommend the *crème brûlée*.



Suite Views Four Seasons Austin might be in the heart of downtown, but Lady Bird Lake creates a resort-like feel.

Four Seasons Austin

If you're looking to be closer to the city, the Four Seasons Austin offers the best of both worlds. Perched on the banks of Lady Bird Lake, the hotel is right in the heart of downtown. Its impressive spa includes a Himalayan salt wall and Eucalyptus steam room. The guest service is some of the best I have ever experienced, and the onsite dining is impressive. At Ciclo, I made it a point to eat outdoors and enjoy the Parker rolls and a Tomahawk steak cooked on a Himalayan Salt Block and flambéed with tequila, tableside.

If you've ever stayed at a Four Seasons, then you know they are famous for their beds and linens. And while I took every opportunity to sleep in—and nap—I also relaxed in their heated salt-water pool, which overlooks Lady Bird Lake, and visited the 4,000-square-foot spa for the Lavender Dreams Body Wrap.



Aba outdoor patio

The hotel's location makes it perfect for an Austin getaway because it's easy to hop in an Uber and take in some attractions. I highly recommend Gingerbread pancakes for breakfast at Magnolia Café and then visiting some of the adorable shops and open-air market. I almost went home with a rhinestone steer skull. Lunch at one of the area's newest eateries, Aba, is a must. The Chicago import has not only the best garden patio in town but some of the tastiest hummus I have ever tried.



From left: Devil May Care; Ten-Ten



For dinner, I would suggest heading over to Ten-Ten on Sixth Street (get the charred edamame and Hamachi carpaccio with black truffle and Yuzu) or visit its sister restaurant across the street, Devil May Care, for an intimate experience. The below-ground eatery's pop-art environment makes you feel like you're in an Andy Warhol picture—and the Mediterranean food has met its apotheosis.



Auberge's Commodore Perry Estate is imbued with a sense of timeless elegance.

Commodore Perry Estate

I would be remiss not to mention two other unique Austin getaways: Auberge Resorts Collections' luxurious 1920s-era Commodore Perry Estate and Proper Hotel, an art lover's dream in the Second Street District. While I did not get a chance to stay overnight at Proper, I did stop by for breakfast at its La Piscina poolside eatery while visiting the Commodore on my final weekend trip. I leave you with five words: Breakfast fajitas changed my life.

Steeped in whimsical charm, the private 10-acre Commodore Perry Estate in Central Austin is like stepping back into a different time. It is perfect for a weekend getaway with your significant other. With 54 rooms and suites, the estate is small—and that is precisely what makes it stand out. Honestly, I felt like I was visiting my rich uncle for a weekend getaway—exceptional turn-down service helped push this narrative. The property's history also is fascinating: For starters, Commodore Edgar Perry was not an actual commodore. He just picked up the nickname after sinking his boat in the lake—at least that's how the rumor has it.

A fitness studio, pool, and lush grounds and gardens make up the property and its Lutie's Garden Restaurant headed by local chefs Bradley Nicholson and Susana Querejazu at the helm. The food was divine, and Susana's pastries (especially the rolls) melt in your mouth. I am not one to recommend a pork chop, but the one I ate there was as smooth as butter and something I would order repeatedly.



Like the Four Seasons Austin, Commodore is located in an ideal spot to take in all Austin offers. My boyfriend and I made a stop at Waterloo, where I picked up a Go-Go's Beauty and the Beat album, went back to SoCo to look at the rhinestone steer skull, took in the lake view—and delicious coffee—at Mozart's Coffee Roasters, and toured the campus of his alma mater, UT Austin.



There are plenty of spots around Miraval to enjoy the Hill Country views, but you can't go wrong with the one from their Serenity pool.

Miraval Austin

Another Austin option a bit further North is the Miraval Austin resort, nestled in Austin's surrounding Hills, near Lake Travis and the Balcones Canyon National Wildlife Refuge. An all-inclusive resort, Miraval's pricing factors in meals throughout the duration of guests' stay—think overnight oats, chocolate avocado desserts, and amazing mocktails—as well as some lectures and wellbeing experiences. Other activities, such as culinary workshops, beekeeping experiences, and aerial yoga, can be purchased for an additional fee. Having created my itinerary beforehand, I was looking forward to a few days free from the stresses of meal plans and scheduling.

My travel companion and I started our day with a two-mile nature hike, then conquered the resort's challenge course. In between the two activities, I enjoyed a relaxing River Flower treatment at Miraval's spa—a part of their first Bluebonnet Festival, in which some of their offered daily activities are themed around Texas' favorite flower. The treatment started with a dry brush exfoliation, then hydrated my skin with a phytonutrient masque and

botanical body butter and finished with relaxing scalp and foot massages.

We capped off our time at Miraval with two photography classes and a culinary experience. The photo instructor and I connected over a shared love for creativity, as he taught the group to better capture the surrounding nature, and later, how to create interesting, inverted shots through a crystal ball. Entitled Just Cook for Me, our culinary experience, a five-course food, and wine pairing, was arguably my favorite experience of the trip. Culinary specialist Lexi Ruse led our group of nine through delectable savory dishes and a dessert, explaining how she had curated each plate and selected each pairing as we laughed and ate together. Before leaving, we visited the resort's farm to pet horses, feed its 120 chickens, and learn about how the farm rotates crops to balance the chemical composition of the soil.

To read more about my recent trip to Miraval, [click here](#).

-Kelsey Vanderschoot

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