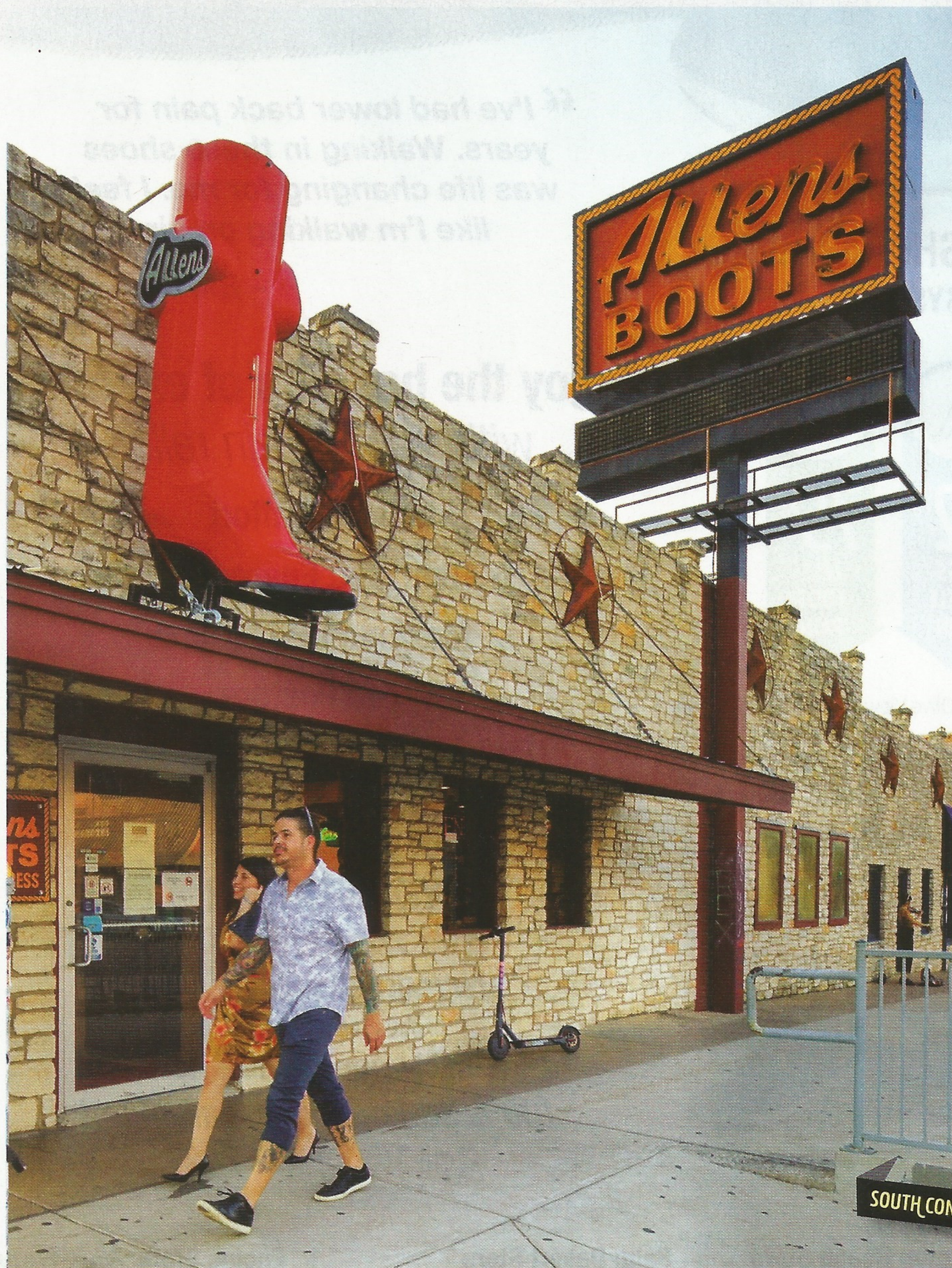
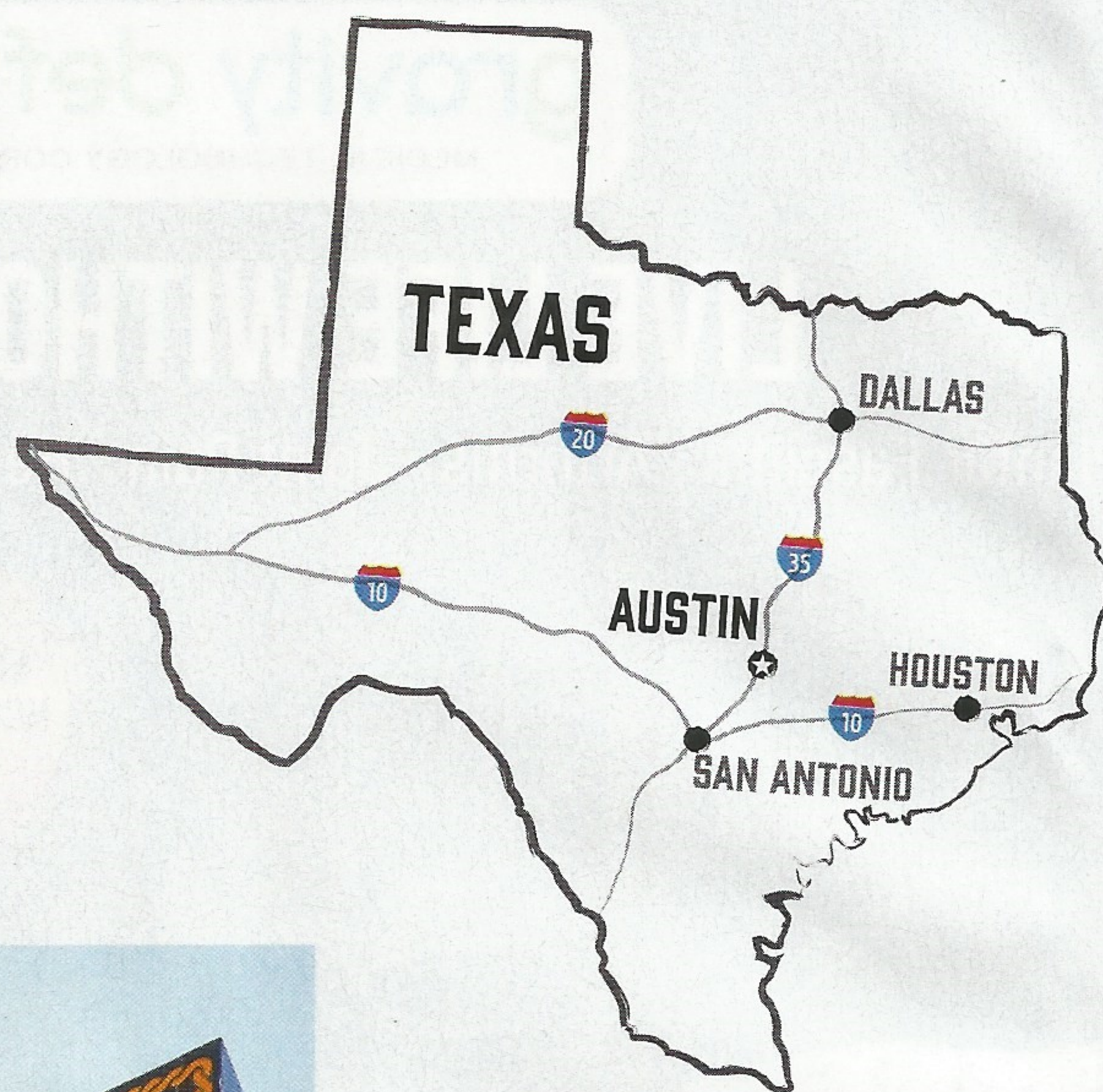


Austin Evolution

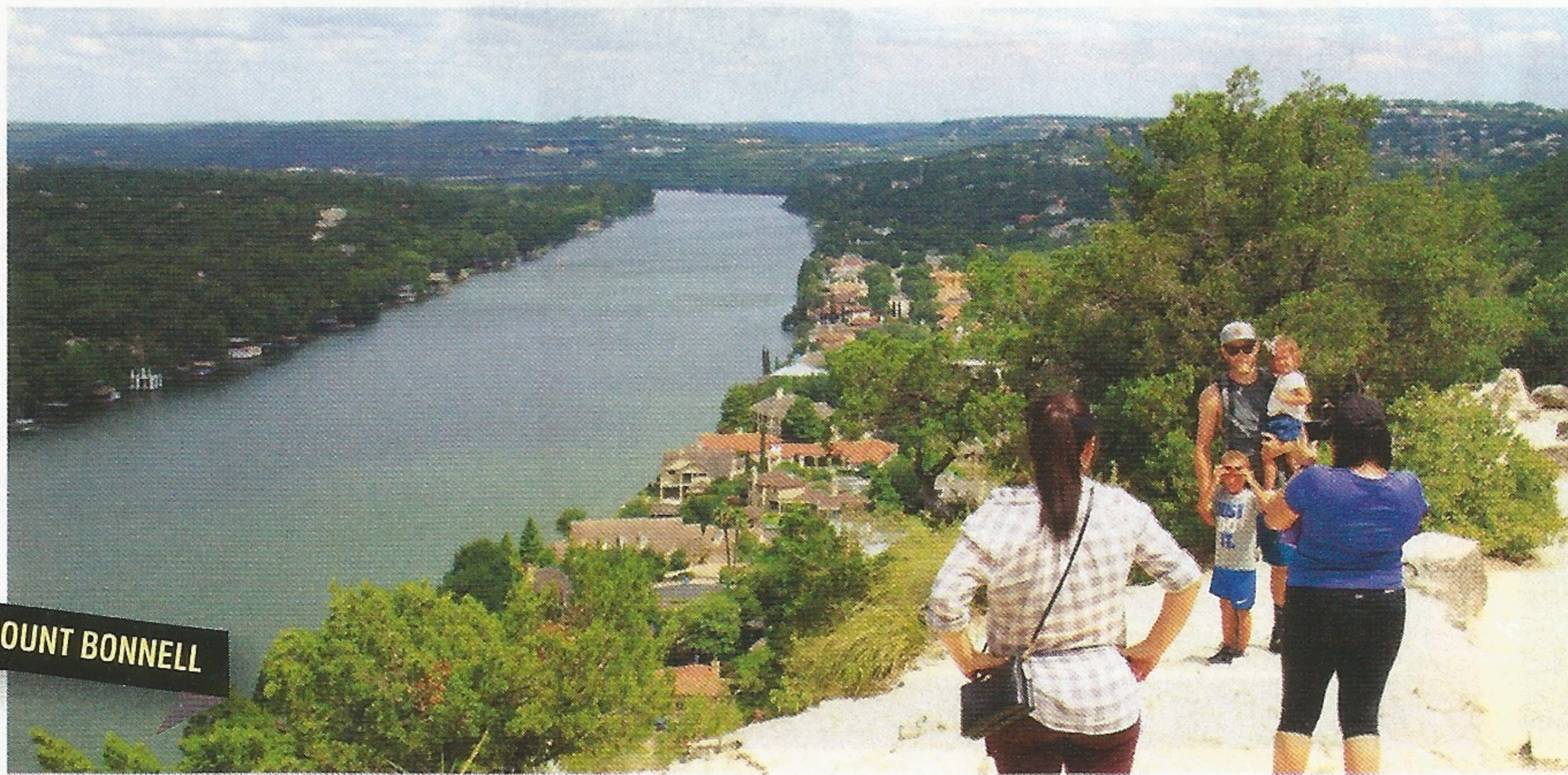
The Lone Star State's creative, techy capital makes for a great getaway

By Cynthia J. Drake ♦ Photographs by Kimberly Davis

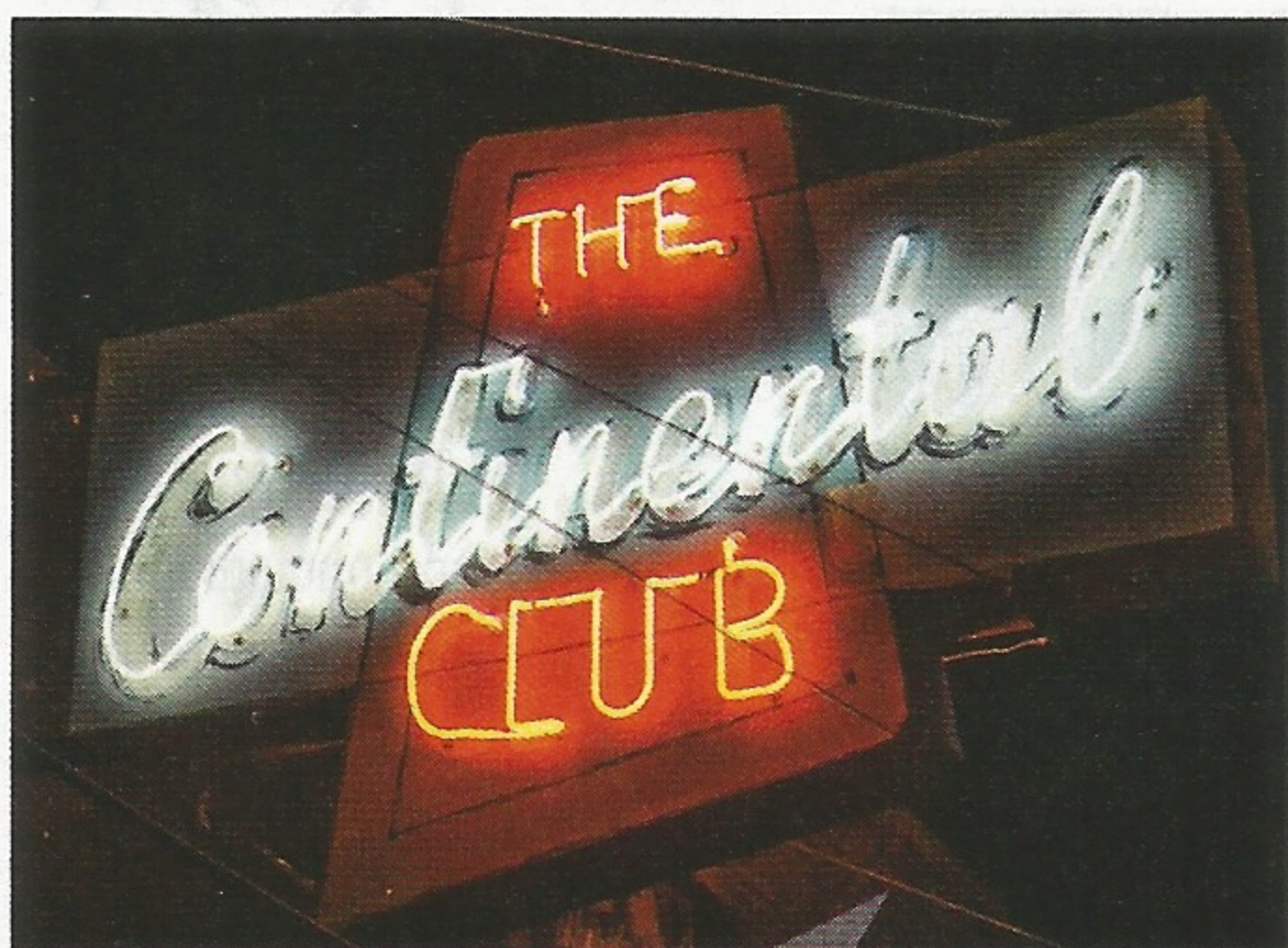


Austin gained a reputation as a music and countercultural capital in the 1970s, when the likes of Willie Nelson and Stevie Ray Vaughan rocked legendary music club Armadillo World Headquarters. The city has evolved considerably since then. Now dubbed “Silicon Hills,” Austin is home to tech companies such as Dell, Apple, and IBM. The annual SXSW festival has gone mainstream. Some are even questioning locals’ commitment to Keep Austin Weird (the slogan seen all over town). But the constant influx of newcomers also has given Austin a fresh vibe, as well as compelling new flavors and sounds. Austin is thriving—and now’s a great time to experience it.

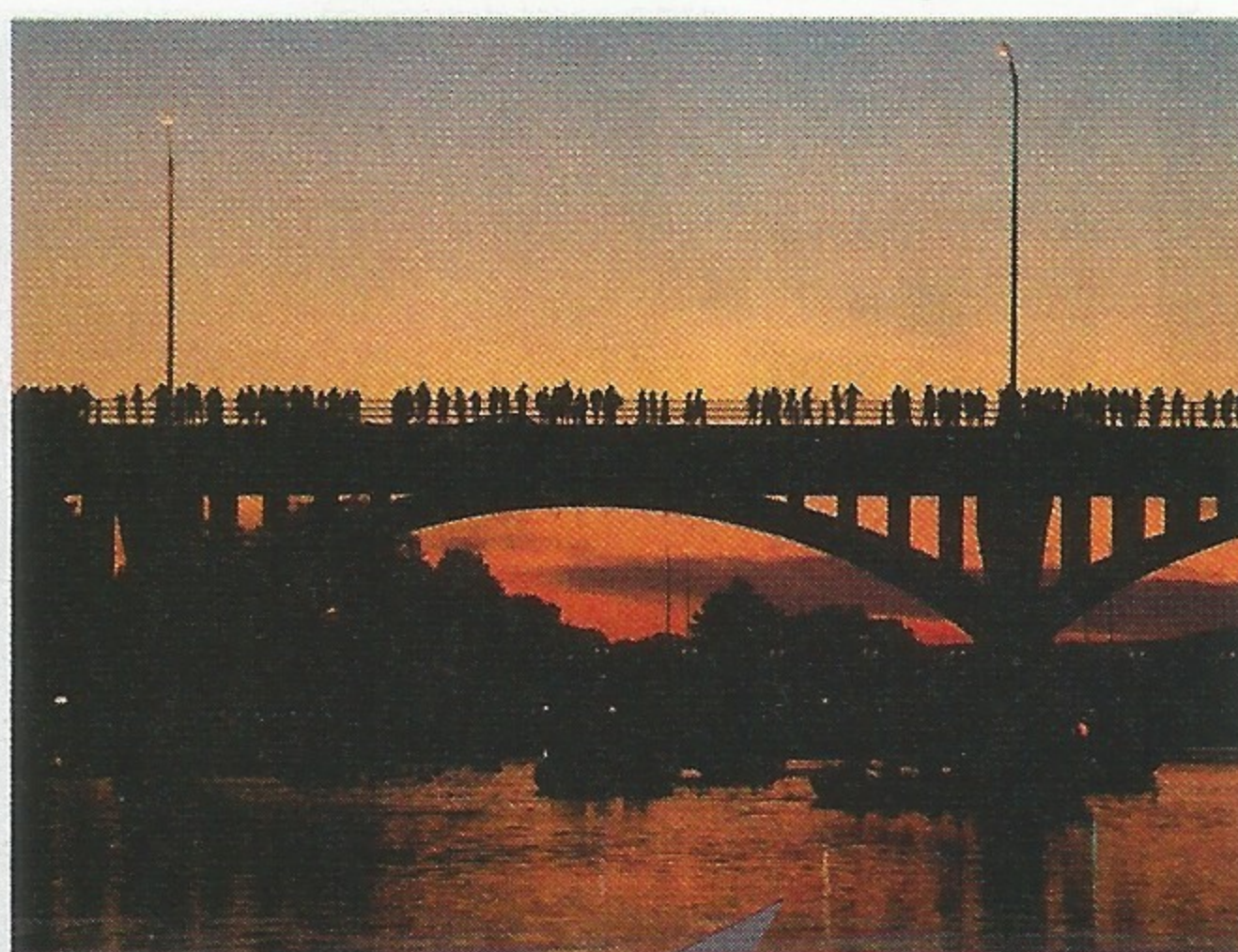
FUN FACT: Hours to kill before your flight home? Great! Austin-Bergstrom International Airport hosts frequent music performances and is home to great Austin restaurants—including Second Bar and Kitchen, Salt Lick Barbecue, and Peached Tortilla.



MOUNT BONNELL



THE CONTINENTAL CLUB



CONGRESS AVENUE BRIDGE

Day 2

SHOP SOCO: South Congress Avenue has long been an epicenter of Austin culture thanks to quirky shops and trendy restaurants. Like the rest of the city, SoCo is evolving, but you can still happily browse here for hours. Check out **Tesoros Trading** (tesoros.com), the old-school **Big Top Candy Shop** (bigtopcandyshop.com), and **Triple Z Threadz** (triplezthreadz.com), which upcycles vintage clothing with signature wacky embroidery designs.

CUE UP FOR 'CUE: No visit to Austin is complete without indulging in great barbecue. The logical starting point is still **Franklin's** (franklinbbq.com), where waiting in line is a sacred tradition (think lawn chairs and beverages, tailgate-style). But also consider trying **La Barbecue** (labarbecue.com) in East Austin or **Valentina's** (valentinastexmexbbq.com) in far South Austin for delicious Tex-Mex-style brisket tacos.

GO BATTY: Austin has embraced a colony of 1.5 million Mexican free-tailed bats that hang out under the Congress Avenue Bridge and can be seen taking flight around sunset. Though October is the tail end of bat season, you might still catch them before they leave town—one of the best ways is by boat via **Capital Cruises** (don't worry, guano droppings are said to bring good luck). (512) 480-9264; capitalcruises.com.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN MUSICAL ADVENTURE: Catch a show in the Live Music Capital of the World. Head to the **Elephant Room** (elephantroom.com) for jazz, **Broken Spoke** (brokenspokeaustintx.net) for country, **Antone's** for blues (antonesnightclub.com), and the **Cactus Café** (cactuscafe.org) for acoustic singer-songwriters. The granddaddy of Austin venues is the **Continental Club** (continentalclub.com), while the *Austin City Limits* stage at **Moody Theater** (acl-live.com) hosts major performers.

Day 3

FEED YOUR SOUL: If you're in town on a Sunday, head to **Stubb's Bar-B-Q** for **Gospel Brunch**, when this legendary live-music spot gets a dose of soul-stirring music. Your ticket (\$23 or \$29, depending on your view) includes a buffet and a DIY Bloody Mary bar. (512) 480-8341; stubbساustin.com.

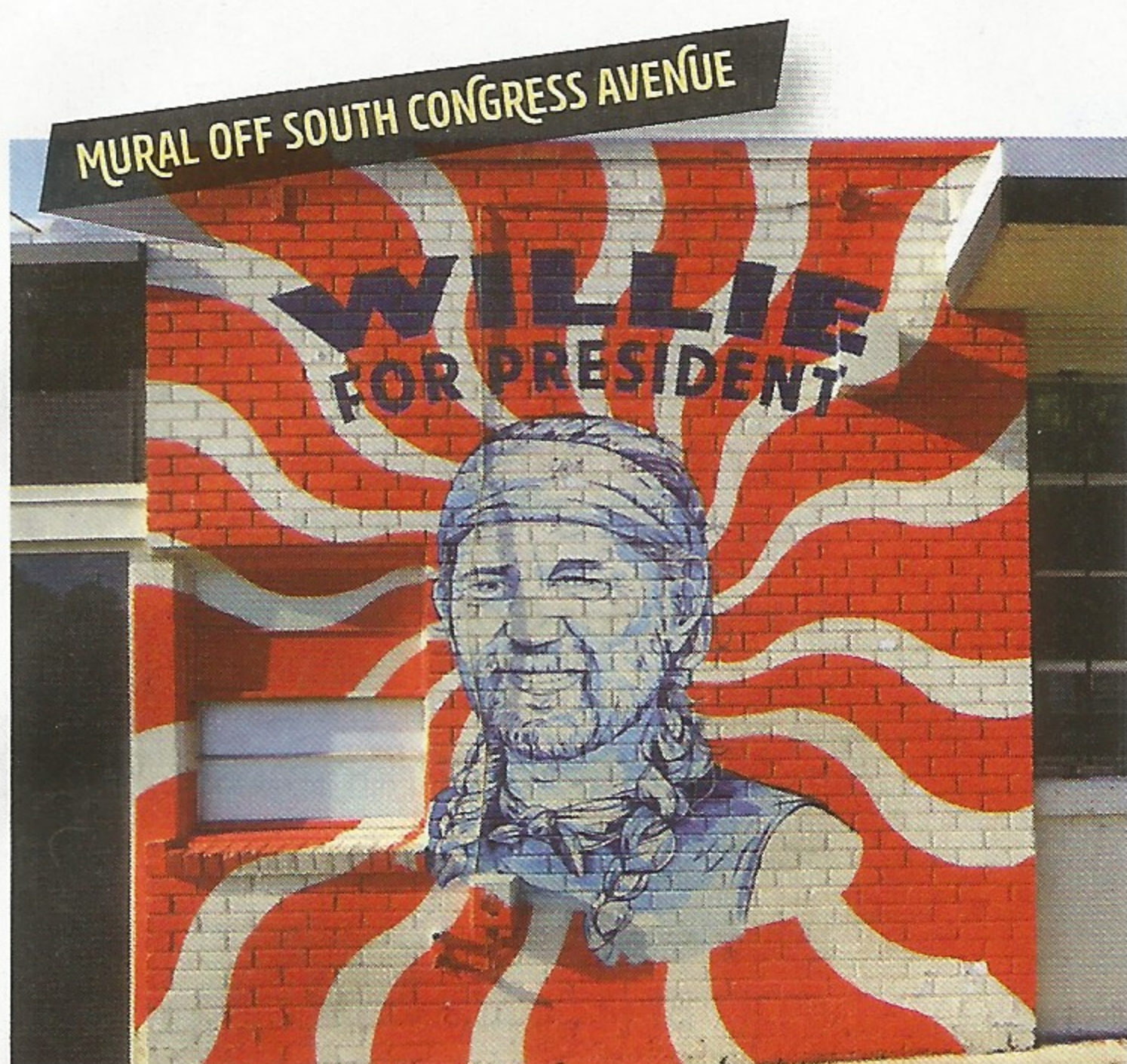
TAKE A HIKE: To get a classic Hill Country view of Lake Austin, climb 106 steps up **Mount Bonnell**. After making your way down, check out **Laguna Gloria**, a 14-acre outdoor sculpture and art installation park located just 1 mile away. Consider buying fixings for a picnic at the new French-Cajun café here, **Épicerie**. (512) 458-8191; thecontemporaryaustin.org.

BISCUITS, PLEASE: Treat yourself to an elevated Southern-style meal at **Olamaie**, featuring the culinary stylings of two-time James Beard Award finalist Michael Fojtasek. Start with the Ranger Cattle Beef Tartare and off-the-menu biscuits with honey butter. Reservations recommended. (512) 474-2796; olamaieaustin.com.

LAUGH IT UP: For offbeat sketch comedy and fresh takes on Texas life, head to **Esther's Follies**, a 40-year-old institution. Beware: The adults-only jokes run on the bawdy side and can lean a little to the left. (512) 320-0553; esthersfollies.com.

Austin-based **Cynthia J. Drake** recently volunteered to drink Topo Chico as an extra in a music video filmed at the Broken Spoke—practically a “cover-all” on an Austin bingo scorecard.

➔ Be sure to designate a driver if you plan to drink alcohol. ←



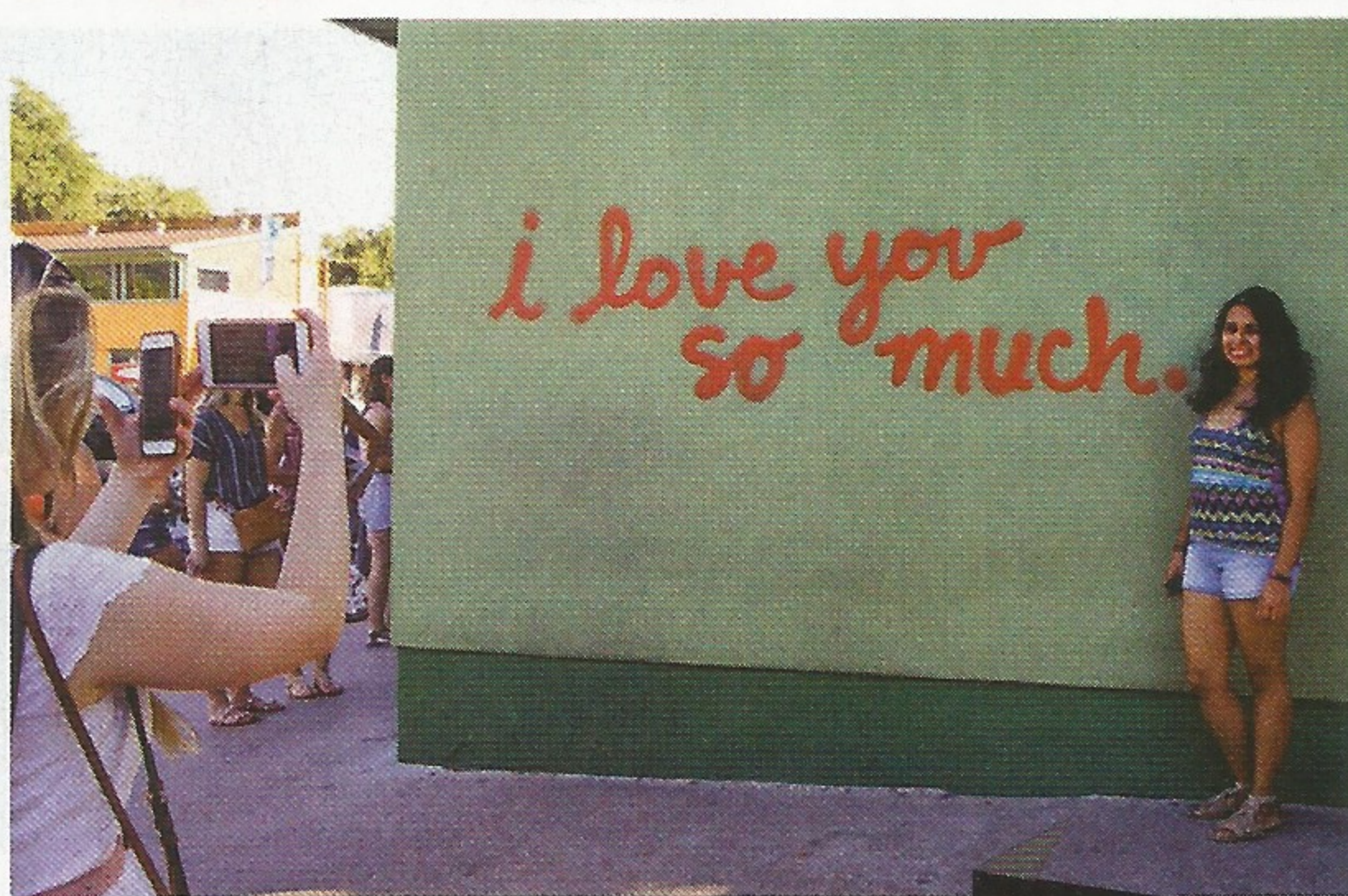
MURAL OFF SOUTH CONGRESS AVENUE



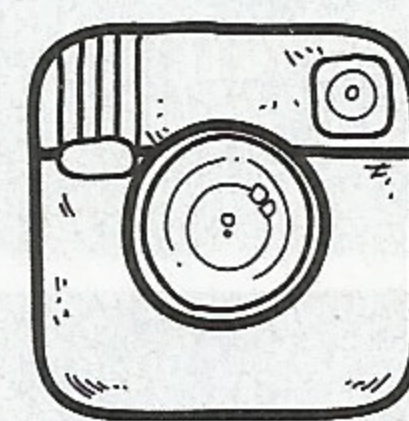
VERACRUZ ALL NATURAL



BARTON SPRINGS POOL



MURAL AT JO'S COFFEE



INSTA-WORTHY

Though Austin's most photographed graffiti park (HOPE Outdoor Gallery) closed this year, a new location is expected to open at Carson Creek Ranch. Meanwhile, people still line up on South Congress Avenue to snap a pic in front of **Jo's Coffee's "I love you so much" mural.**

Day 1

TACO 'BOUT A GOOD START: Austin is justifiably famous for its breakfast tacos, and once you've begun your day with a couple of them, you'll wonder why this tradition hasn't taken off everywhere. In a city where taco debates rage, **Veracruz All Natural** is a top choice. Find its food trucks on Manchaca Road or at the Mueller development on Airport Boulevard, or at its first brick-and-mortar restaurant at Highway 183 and Waterford Centre Boulevard. Order a *migas originales* (eggs, tortilla chips, avocado, and cheese) and a *migas poblanas* and savor your first taste of Austin. veracruzallnatural.com.

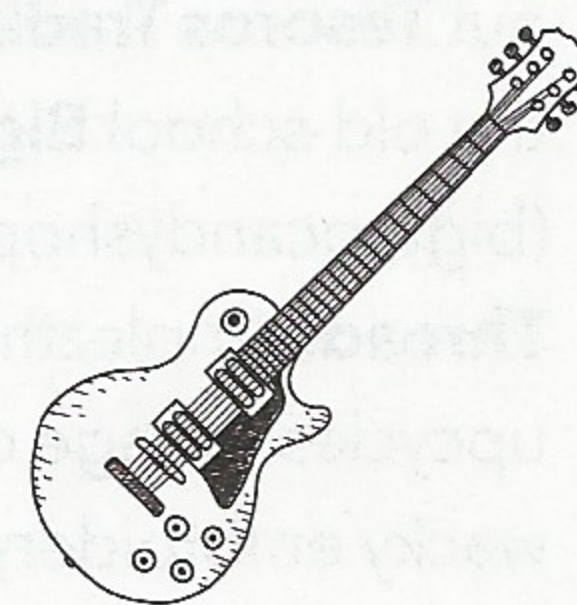
BIKE THE COLORADO RIVER: Rent a bike at one of the many Austin **B-cycle** stations around town (austincycle.com) and explore the 10-mile **Ann and Roy Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail**. Once you get to Zilker Park, consider cooling down with a dip at **Barton Springs Pool**, where a spring-fed, 70-degree public pool is open year-round. tinyurl.com/austintrail.

BOOK IT: A library might seem an unlikely must-see spot, but **Austin Central** is no ordinary library. Named one of the 100 World's Greatest Places by *Time* magazine in 2018, the six-floor

library has earned high marks for green features, including rainwater-powered bathrooms and a seed library. Don't miss the rooftop garden, a technology "petting zoo" where you can try out 3-D printers, and the **Cookbook Bar and Café**. (512) 974-7400; library.austintexas.gov.

ENJOY THE FARE: Austin has so many dining options that deciding where to go can be overwhelming. All the more reason to check out **Fareground**, Austin's first food hall, located on Congress Avenue and home to outposts of several of the city's hottest restaurants, including **Contigo, Henbit, Ni-Komé,** and **Dai Due Taqueria**. It makes for an easy DIY food crawl at lunch or dinner. faregroundaustin.com.

SLEEP HERE: The **East Austin Hotel**, which opened in May in trendy East Austin, is one of the city's newest accommodations. Embracing a midcentury aesthetic with locally sourced vintage furnishings, the hotel offers 75 traditional rooms or "cabins"—budget-friendly private rooms with shared bathrooms. The hotel also has three on-site restaurants and bars, each with a distinctly retro vibe. Rooms start at \$99. (737) 205-8888; eastaustinhotel.com.



HEADLINERS

The Austin City Limits Music Festival, which takes place Oct. 4-6 and Oct. 11-13 in Zilker Park, draws big names and large crowds to downtown. Later in the month, the **Texas Book Festival** celebrates literary love on Oct. 26-27.