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Stockyards, saloons and sushi: a local's guide to Fort Worth, Texas

Hotelier Jonathan Morris has his finger on the pulse of this historic city in north Texas, where tradition and modernity live side-by-side. Here, he shares some of the most 'smoking' places to check out right now ...



 The longhorn state: Fort Worth is the urban embodiment of Texas culture. Photograph: Jeremy Pawlowski/Stocksy United

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If you're visiting Fort Worth for the first time, there are certain things every visitor should do: a trip to the [Fort Worth zoo](#), which is considered one of the best in the US, is a must, as is a visit to [Stockyards](#) to see one of the twice-daily cattle runs. And don't forget to catch a rodeo at [Cowtown Coliseum](#) - a big part of the city's age-old cowboy and cowgirl cache, which you can explore further at the nearby [National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame](#) and [John Wayne: an American Experience](#).

But you also owe it to yourself to pay a visit to Jonathan Morris at the boutique [Hotel Dryce](#) to see a different side of the city. A native son of Fort Worth who has gone on to style himself as an entrepreneur (he also owns the undeniably hip [Fort Worth Barber Shop](#)) and has moonlighted as a TV show host, Morris has his finger on the pulse of what's good locally - "I think it's good to have things that insiders know, but not necessarily everybody knows," he says. Here are a few of his current favourites.

Food and drink

You don't need to go any farther than five minutes down the street from Hotel Dryce to experience what is "arguably some of the best Mexican food in the country", according to Morris: [Don Artemio](#) has landed James Beard nominations for its north-east Mexican cuisine, from *nopalitos fritos* (cactus tacos) to *filete de res asado* (filet mignon in chipotle sauce).

For sushi, head to [Hatsuyuki Handroll Bar](#). "I think it's one of the best things smoking in Fort Worth," says Morris. "It's no reservations, walk up only. The sushi chefs are right there in front of you, and they do all sorts of nigiri and specialise in hand rolls. I don't think people come to Fort Worth with the anticipation of having the best Japanese food they may have ever had."

Finally, head to Morris's "home bar", [the Holly](#), for a selection of natural wines in a bright, modern space.



📷 'If you know, you know': the not-quite speakeasy Nickel City (left); and local live music favourite Tulips. Composite: PR/Guardian Design

Nightlife

There's nothing quite like cozying up on the velvety couches inside the Hotel Dryce lobby with a craft cocktail listening to the crackly vinyl sounds of a playlist specially created by Morris. Throughout the week at Hotel Dryce, you'll find something fun to do in the evening, whether it's vinyl night, Silent Book Club, or DJs doing live sets on the weekend. A vibrant lobby experience, where locals hang out with newcomers, is something Morris has worked hard to curate, and it's worth checking out when you're in town.

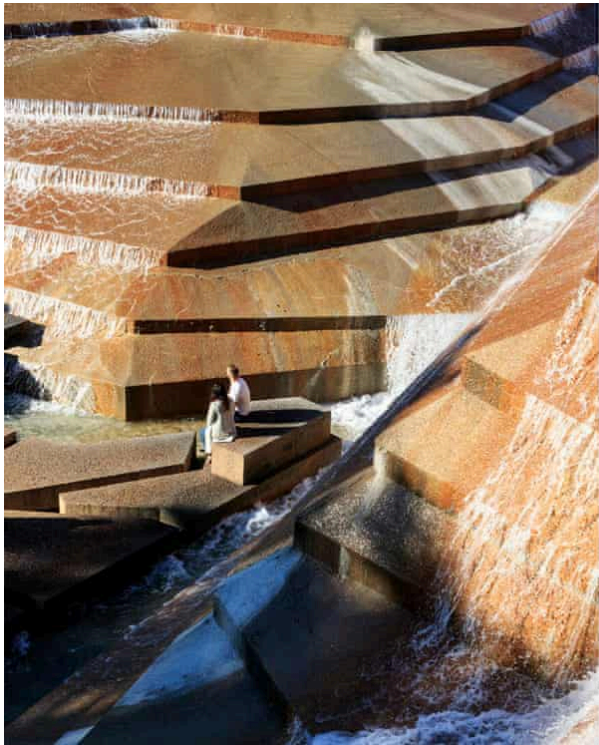
Then head to Bar Bagazo, a tiny mezcaleria hidden in the back of another bar called Nickel City in Fort Worth. "It's a bar inside a bar - not a speakeasy necessarily, but it's kind of like, 'if you know, you know'. It's a favourite of mine," says Morris.

Another local favourite with a side of live music is LowDoubt Bar on the south side of Fort Worth. The name is a play on the words "load out", for the area where bands load their equipment. It's located next to Tulips, another live music venue.

Outdoors, sports and adventure

Though it's part of one of the largest metroplexes in the country, Fort Worth offers plenty of tranquil outdoor spaces that feel like an escape from the urban hustle. The Trinity Trails are 100 miles of hike and bike routes that weave around the city and offer a great way to stay active while sightseeing. "I love just walking along the trails, specifically around Trinity Park," says Morris.

Another great relaxing and scenic spot is the [Japanese Garden](#) at the [Fort Worth Botanic Garden](#), with scenic ponds, flowering cherry trees, and Japanese maples that turn vibrant colours in autumn.



📷 The Fort Worth Water Gardens, a modernist landscape marvel (left); saloon hospitality at the Stockyards. Composite: Alamy/Getty Images

Morris also recommends the [Fort Worth Water Gardens](#), which were designed by architect Philip Johnson, and have been described as an “otherworldly” example of modernist landscape architecture right in the heart of the city.

History and heritage

Memories of Fort Worth's origin as a prime destination along the historic cattle-driving Chisholm Trail are kept alive in the historic [Stockyards](#), an area of the city that is also evolving to include new restaurants and sights, in addition to its [twice-daily cattle drives](#) featuring cowboys and longhorn cattle sauntering along the red-brick paved streets.

“If you’re coming to Fort Worth, you’ve got to check out the Stockyards. There’s a lot of new things over there that I think do a good job of encapsulating the history of the development, but also adding newer versions of the modern West,” says Morris.

In particular, head to [Sidesaddle Saloon](#), a hip contemporary cowgirl-themed bar that pays homage to Texas’s rich legacy of women barrel racers in rodeo culture.

Music, arts and culture

Fort Worth may surprise you with its wealth of incredible art museums, all situated in the city’s Cultural District: [The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth](#),

Amon Carter Museum of American Art and the Kimbell Art Museum are all located within the same block and feature internationally renowned artwork.



📷 The midcentury exterior of The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. Photograph: Alamy

"The Modern is my No 1 go-to, it's my favourite of our larger institutions," says Morris, who also loves the attached Cafe Modern for inventive cuisine.

Down the street from Hotel Dryce, Dickies Arena opened in late 2019 and has been ushering in major acts, including Justin Timberlake and Janet Jackson recently.

There is also a vibrant local gallery scene showcasing some homegrown artistic talent. "One group that I think is doing interesting things right now is Kinfolk House with artists Sedrick and Letitia Huckaby. Sedrick taught George W Bush to paint, and is an incredible artist himself."

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