

# BEST SWIMMING IN AUSTIN AND CENTRAL TEXAS

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## 1. Barton Springs

Forget about the best swimming spot in Austin. Barton Springs may be the best swimming spot on earth. Cool, clear, and teeming with life, this 1,100 foot-long spring-fed pool is one of the largest non-chlorinated swimming pools in the country. Ducks, bass, crawfish, and double-crested cormorants splash alongside lap swimmers and UT students desperately working on their tans. Open year round. Subject to closure during times of heavy rainfall (call 867-3080). From 5am to 9am and 9pm to 10pm you can swim, but there are no lifeguards on duty. From 9am to 9pm, the red-suited lifeguards will watch your every move. Closed 9am to 7pm on Thursdays for cleaning. Admission: Adult, \$2.50 weekday, \$2.75 on weekends, \$0.75 for ages 12 - 17, \$0.50 for 11 and under.

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## 2. Hamilton Pool Preserve

There are many reasons to visit this spot: a sand beach, a 75-foot waterfall and a huge rock formation that can be explored from the water or from a path that circles the pool. Hundreds of cliff swallows live above the pool in tiny nests and are constantly coming and going. The park also has good hiking trails and numerous species of birds. Open from 9am to 6pm. No glass, camping, fires, or pets allowed. Be sure to take drinking water. Admission is \$5 per vehicle. The pool is usually closed to swimmers after heavy rains. Call 512-264-2740.

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## 3. Deep Eddy Pool

The huge shallow end, cool water, and massive cottonwood trees make this place a family favorite. Lap swimmers have their own pool, so the kids can frolic to their heart's content without getting in the way of the serious swimmers. Recreational swimming and lap swimming available from 10am to 9pm. Admission: \$2 for adults, \$.75 for ages 12 to 17 and \$.50 for 11 and under. Call 472-8546. Located west of Mopac at 401 Deep Eddy Dr.

## 4. San Marcos River

Tube it, snorkel it, or swim it. This spot is worth the 30-minute drive from Austin. Fed by San Marcos Springs, there are several spots that are fun to explore along this river. The falls just below Peppers Restaurant have long been a favorite of the locals. I like to wear a life jacket, swim mask, and snorkel and float down the river a mile or two. The river is full of wildlife, including rare plants, turtles, and fish. However, the river has many cans and glass bottles in it, so be sure to protect your feet. (Not Pictured)

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## 5. Sculpture Falls on Barton Creek

When the creek is flowing, this is an urban oasis. You'll quickly forget you're in the middle of town, as the waterfall drowns out the noise of the city. Located about 1.3 miles upstream of the Mopac bridge, the only way to get to Sculpture is by walking or cycling, which keeps the amateurs at bay. Curfew on city trails is from 10pm to 7am. Also remember that alcohol and glass are illegal in city parks.

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## 6. Stacy Pool

This is the place to swim during cold weather. Heated by a natural warm spring, this pool has been around since it was built by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s. It's not big, and there's not a lot of shade, but it's still popular, particularly with lap swimmers. Open 6am to 8pm during the week and noon to 7pm on weekends. During the week the pool is reserved from 6am to 8am for adult lap swimming and from 8am to 10am for swim team practice. Run by the city's aquatics department (476-4521). Admission is free. Located at 800 E. Live Oak. (Not Pictured)

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## 7. Krause Springs in Spicewood

This is one of the best, least-known swimming spots around. Privately owned, Krause has a regular cement swimming pool as well as a rustic swimming spot on Little Cypress Creek. Overnight camping is available. Take Highway 71 west to Spicewood. Once you get into the small town, look for the signs to Krause Springs on the right. Call (210) 693-4181 for more information.

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## 8. Hippie Hollow

In addition to being one of the best places on earth to see the rare black-capped vireo, a federally protected songbird, Hippie Hollow is one of the few public swimming spots in Texas where clothing is optional. So take your binoculars (just kidding). Located on Lake Travis, the swimming here isn't as good as some of the other parks on Lake Travis, but it's still an interesting stop. No one under 18 admitted. Admission: \$5 per vehicle. Open from 8am to 9pm. No camping, cooking, glass or pets. From FM 620, go west 1.5 miles on Comanche Trail just past the Oasis Restaurant. 473-9437.

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## 9. Blue Hole in Georgetown

Located on the San Gabriel River, this spot is underdeveloped, but worth the effort. A small dam near the Austin Avenue bridge keeps water in this stretch of the river year-round and there's grassy area on the riverbank that's good for picnics. From the Williamson County Courthouse in Georgetown, go north on U.S. 81, (Austin Avenue), turn left on 2nd Street then right on Rock Street to the river. Admission is free.

## 10. Blue Hole in Wimberley

Located on Cypress Creek one quarter mile east of the town square, this privately owned campground/swimming area attracts people from all over Central Texas. Rope swings hang from the huge cypress trees that line the spring-fed creek. Admission for a group of up to five costs \$50 for a seasonal membership plus \$1 per head; for more than five people, admission is \$3 per person plus the seasonal membership. Day use hours are 9am to 7pm. No pets are allowed for day use. No minors without parents. No glass. Camping is available with fees starting at \$15 per night, plus a weekly membership for an additional \$15. Kid friendly. Call (512) 847-9127.