

INSPIRATO

WINTER 2015

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CONNECT

SPEED CITY, TEXAS

The invasion of Formula 1 racing every fall turns Austin into the liveliest town in the Lone Star State.

BY ANDREW TILIN

“We’re trying to bring a level of an experience a la Monaco to Austin for that one weekend,” says My Yacht Group’s Nicholas Frankl about the Formula 1 race that comes to Texas every fall. And Frankl should know how to do it. The Los Angeles and London-based party-thrower for the rich and famous, like so many people connected to Formula 1 racing and its hyperbolic universe, seemingly lives with his feet off the ground. His specialty: “That client who spends 100,000 euros in an evening,” he says.

Each year, the global racing circus comes to Austin and descends on the 3.4-mile, winding racetrack called Circuit of the Americas that was built for Formula 1 competition. And each fall—mark the dates of

October 31 to November 2 on your calendar now—all that is over the top about Formula 1 turns an already spirited town into a mind-blowing, must-experience international destination.

Arrive in Texas for Formula 1 weekend and you’re in for sensory overload. You’ll watch and hear the world’s most sophisticated cars howl around the 20-turn course until they’ve raced for nearly 200 miles. Fantastic Texas barbecue tempts your taste buds. Dancers and musicians inspire you to swing and sway.

Then there’s the party that is Austin itself. A cultural mecca, it’s host to impressive dining and nightlife (It bills itself the Live Music Capital of the World). Mesh these two worlds together and the result is one of the more engaging atmospheres in North America.

TEXAS BULLFIGHT

The Red Bull Infiniti during last year’s race at the Circuit of Americas.

COURTESY OF COTA / STALEY

THE RACE

Luckily for Austinites and the many thousands of car racing's most rabid fans from around the globe, Formula 1 arrived in Austin two years ago courtesy of some previous U.S. misfires. The racing series, which dates back to 1950 and currently consists of 11 teams traveling to approximately 20 races held on five continents, bounced around U.S. venues for decades before withdrawing from this country after leaving sleepy Indiana and its Indianapolis Motor Speedway in 2007.

About three years later, Austin developers stood over 1,500 acres of open, rolling land 15 miles southeast of town and envisioned bringing auto racing's highest form of competition back to the United States, and specifically to central Texas. Formula 1 cars are wind-tunnel shaped and jammed with circuitry and innovation. Their 1.6-liter, turbocharged V-6 hybrid engines produce obscene amounts of horsepower (try more than 750), and they'll whine to 15,000 revolutions per minute as they thrust cars weighing as little as 1,500 pounds to 60 miles per hour in around two seconds. An F1 car, which fits its nearly supine driver like a tight carbon-fiber suit and features a steering wheel packed with dials and readouts, can top more than 200 miles per hour and pull in excess of 4 G's. Annual budgets for Formula 1 teams are outlandish; perennial favorite Scuderia Ferrari has reportedly burned more than \$400 million in a season.

The Circuit of the Americas (COTA) was designed with one nod toward Formula 1's heritage and nuance, and another toward Austin and Texas. Track connoisseurs will tell you that COTA's turns 3 through 5 were inspired by a sequence of bends from Silverstone (a storied F1

track in England), and that turns 13 through 15 bear close resemblance to a section of Hockenheimring (Germany). Some of COTA's corners subtly widen upon approach, which invites drivers to take different lines through the turns—and can make for more exciting racing.

The venue is also unquestionably Texan. Enjoy the race while chowing on barbecued sausage or brisket and stay for the post-event concert held at the Austin360 Amphitheater, which is surrounded on three sides by track, and accommodates 14,000 people. Last year's race entertainment was the high profile-rapper Pitbull.

But you don't have to sit still. Walking paths traverse the facility, though it's best to leave the Italian high heels or loafers at home, and instead hoof it over the long paths in a pair of locally bought snakeskin cowboy boots. Elevation changes throughout the venue make exploration both demanding and worthwhile.

"Folks in high-end hospitality often say 'I want to get out and walk the track,'" says COTA president and CEO Jason Dial. "There are a lot of amazing vantage points."

Whether paying \$169 for a three-day general admission pass or nearly \$8,000 per person for a long weekend's worth of exclusive and perk-filled opportunities (including skybox seating and access to an open patio overlooking the pit lane, closed-circuit TV race coverage, gourmet food and wine, and the potential to hobnob with celebrities), you should also make a trip to the top of COTA's 25-story Observation Tower. You'll find an expansive view of Austin, the Texas Hill Country and, of course, the racetrack. ➔



BY THE NUMBERS: F1 MEETS AUSTIN

700,000

Cubic yards of clay, gravel and limestone needed to construct Austin's 3.4-mile, Circuit of the Americas (COTA) Formula 1 track.

200

Estimate of the number of helicopters privately hired to shuttle fans over the snarled traffic headed from downtown Austin to the race.

568,000,000

In dollars, the economic impact on the state of Texas as a result of Austin hosting the race.

113,162

Race-day attendance for the 2013 Formula 1 U.S. Grand Prix, the sport's third-best attended event of the year.

75

Approximate lifespan, in miles driven, of a Formula 1 racing tire.

823.50

Cost, in dollars, of an official Lotus F1 Brake Disc Clock. The centerpiece of the pricey memento is a used, 11-inch carbon-fiber brake disc.

94

As a percentage, Austin's citywide hotel occupancy rate during Formula 1 weekend.

5.32

In miles, the cumulative length of all the hot dogs stocked at COTA track for the Formula 1 weekend.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:

Grid girls line up in starting positions; Aerial view of turns 13-16 from the observation deck; Paul di Resta rounding turn 4; Sergio Perez, McLaren MP4-28 Mercedes, makes a stop.



COURTESY COTA

THIS IS NOT A PRIUS

The down force created by the spoilers is powerful enough that the car could drive upside down at speeds greater than 95 mph.

Pit stops to swap in four new pre-heated tires take less than three seconds.

No fuel stops: The cars must complete the race on one tank of gas weighing no more than 220 pounds at the start of the race.

There are more active NASA astronauts (43) in the world than Formula 1 drivers (22).

The battery collects energy from regenerative braking and heat from the exhaust that is later accessed during acceleration.

ULTIMATE RIDE

The Red Bull Infiniti driven by last year's Formula 1 champ, Sebastian Vettel.



INSPIRATO RECOMMENDS



Texas Hill Country

Make yourself at home in the 4,800-square-foot, five-bedroom Waterstone Lodge, located on Lake Travis, an hour northwest of Austin.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT INSPIRATO'S SIGNATURE RESIDENCE, TURN TO PAGES 167.



Adam Gardell's picks
Inspirato
Personal
Vacation Advisor

MUSIC: The Moody Theater is home to **Austin City Limits**, the longest-running music series in American television history.

PLAY: Dive into the clear waters of **Krause Springs** in nearby Spicewood, a popular day trip for residents for more than 50 years.

SPA: Indulge yourself with a full-day of treatments at the award-winning **LakeHouse Spa** at the Lake Austin Spa Resort. Downtown? The **Viva Day Spa** on South Lamar is repeatedly ranked best by the locals.

EAT: Get your fill of some of the city's best Tex-Mex cuisine at **La Condesa**. Be sure to sample their crab, apple and coconut vinegar guacamole.

The mouthwatering brisket served at **Franklin Barbecue** is worth the long wait in line.

Truluck's seafood, steak and crabhouse sources its crustaceans from its own fisheries in southern Florida, delivered within 24 hours of being caught.

For a sophisticated night out downtown, **Eddie V's Prime Seafood** nails it.

Nov. 8 & 27, 2014

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

FOOTBALL Home games are a religious experience in Texas. See it for yourself.

Feb. 15, 2015

AUSTIN MARATHON & HALF-MARATHON

More than 16,000 runners take over the city.

March 13–22, 2015

SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST

(SXSW) Filmmakers, musicians and interactive media stars turn the city into a high-energy, cross-cultural romp.



AUSTIN CITY LIMITS

Of course for seasoned Formula 1 fans, some of whom follow the races from Bahrain to Monaco to Singapore, the demand for first-class dining, entertainment and excitement must extend beyond the cars, tracks and Sunday's race. Fortunately, Austin has what this crowd wants.

Iconic hotels like the W Austin and Four Seasons flank the city's fairly compact yet vibrant downtown, and make for good jumping off points. Colorful bars and eateries—including Clive Bar, Craft Pride and El Naranjo—are clustered in the Rainey Street Historic District. Italian (Vespaio), seafood (Perla's) and gourmet-burger (Hopdoddy) restaurants line South Congress Avenue. Nearby you'll find incredible sushi (Uchi) and Thai food (Sway).

But we're just getting started. Austin is known for its live music (laying claim to music royalty that includes Stevie Ray Vaughan, Joe Ely and Gary Clark, Jr.), and the gritty and hopping Red River Cultural District packs together established venues and international crowds into the night. "There's more than a dozen clubs in four blocks," says Jennifer Houlihan, executive director for the advocacy group Austin Music People. "They'll kind of save some of their best performers for that week, so the F1 crowd sees the best the city has to offer."

Meanwhile Fan Fest is COTA's Austin-based party: Last year, the 12-block, four-day-and-night, downtown gathering featured a

half-dozen stages with crowds of Brits wearing McLaren shirts and Germans in Mercedes AMG caps mingling with the locals. While some performances were free, a \$299 VIP pass put you right next to the Bud Light Main Stage and out of the beer lines.

But this being Formula 1, there's always entertainment that has aspirations in step with the sport's own determined and deep-pocketed teams seeking the best at any cost. For \$325 you can attend the dimly lit, Monaco nightclub-themed My Yacht Club party at the downtown Ballet Austin building hosted by the aforementioned Nicholas Frankl. The event begins at 10 p.m. and the imported European DJ as well as the bartenders don't stop working until 4 a.m. In 2012, millions of dollars worth of Lamborghinis were parked out front, and private tables, many manned with their own waitresses, went for \$4,500 and up.

"We built a custom stage for the client who bought the \$50,000 table, and had two security guards looking out for his guests," Frankl says. "He had two, custom, 24-carat gold Methuselahs of gold-infused champagne."

One would be hard-pressed to devise a better ending to a trip that's dedicated to the fast lane.

Andrew Tilin writes from Austin, Texas.

BOOMTOWN

Downtown Austin rises above Town Lake.

RACE DAY

Inspirato has access to the boxes and hospitality areas right over the pits at this year's race. Contact your Personal Vacation Advisor for more information.