

36 HOURS Dallas



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FROM LEFT The Meyerson Symphony Center in the Arts District; the cantilevered pool of the hotel bar at the Joule; La Duni Latin Cafe; the Rattlesnake Bar at the Ritz-Carlton, Dallas.

By **LUISITA LOPEZ TORREGROSA**
DALLAS may not be a world-class city, but it's pulling out all the stops to get there. This oil-rich city is pumping millions of dollars into a new Dallas Center for the Performing Arts in the Arts District. When completed, the district will rank among the largest urban arts centers in the nation. Meanwhile, glamorous subterranean bars and edgy Asian restaurants are giving the city a cosmopolitan aura. But when it comes to entertainment, its No. 1 attraction is still the Cowboys, especially when the new, \$1.2 billion football stadium opens this year, featuring one of the largest retractable roofs and high-definition televisions in the world.

Street; 214-242-5100; www.nashersculpturecenter.org), a museum designed by Renzo Piano with a lush garden that features works from a collection that includes Rodin, Henry Moore and George Segal.

7 p.m.

2 Cheerleading Cocktails

Size up the city's trend setters and assorted poseurs in their alligator boots and butter-soft tailored jackets at the Rattlesnake Bar, a plush lounge with mahogany-paneled walls and chocolate-brown leather sofas at the new Ritz-Carlton, Dallas (2121 McKinney Avenue; 214-922-4848; www.ritzcarlton.com/dallas). Order the Dean's Margarita with organic agave nectar (\$12), nibble on spring rolls withachiote pulled pork (\$14), and watch heads turn whenever a posse of lanky blondes in skinny jeans and designer heels sidles up to the bar.

8 p.m.

3 Southwest Supreme

Not so long ago, Dallas was a culinary wasteland, save for its famous barbecue. But in recent years, celebrity chefs like Nobu Matsuhisa, Tom Colicchio and Charlie Palmer have planted their flags in Dallas, joining a fresh crop of hometown talent. At the top is Fearing's (2121 McKinney Avenue; 214-922-4848; www.fearingsrestaurant.com), a casual but chic restaurant that serves imaginative Southwest-rooted cuisine at the Ritz-Carlton. Opened in 2007, Fearing's already enjoys national acclaim: Zagat named it No. 1 in domestic hotel dining, and Frank Bruni, the restaurant critic for The New York Times, called it one of the country's top 10 new restaurants outside of New York last year. The current menu includes lobster coconut bisque (\$14) and wood-grilled Australian lamb chops on pecorino polenta (\$44). Dinner for two, about \$200.

10:30 p.m.

4 Party High

There are still men's clubs, honky-tonks and jukebox joints in Dallas, but the city's night life has gotten decidedly sleeker and flashier, with velvet-roped discos and bottle-service lounges. If you want a stellar view of the stars and the city's bright lights, go to the rooftop bar of the Joule hotel (1530 Main Street; 214-748-1300; www.luxurycollection.com/joule). It features bedlike sofas and coconlike chairs arrayed along a slender, cantilevered swimming pool that juts out 10 stories above the sidewalk. Or, for an even better view, go to Five-Sixty, Wolfgang Puck's new Asian-style restaurant in the glowing ball atop the 560-foot-high Reunion Tower (300 Reunion Boulevard; 214-741-5560). The rotating bar, which serves a dozen kinds of sake, offers magnificent views of a skyline edged in colorful lights and the suburban sprawl beyond.



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ue; 214-559-4510; www.fortyfiveten.com). The prices are shocking but it's worth a visit. Recent finds included a vintage trolley case by Globe-Trotter (\$1,175) and an iron vase by the Texan artist Jan Barboglio (\$550).

8:30 p.m.

9 Mex-Mex

This is the land of Tex-Mex. And while cheesy tacos and greasy nachos are the standard fare, more authentic Mexican cuisine has roots in Dallas as well. One of the most popular spots for original Mexican fare is La Duni Latin Cafe (4620 McKinney Avenue; 214-520-7300; www.laduni.com), which offers a terrific dish called tacos de picanha (beef loin strips on tortillas, \$19.75). But for more inventive cuisine, try Trece: Mexican Kitchen & Tequila Lounge (4513 Travis Street; 214-780-1900; www.trecestaurant.com). The formal dining room, dressed in cream, cacao and sepia colors, invites celebration. Kick things off with a jalapeño caipirinha (\$11) or a blueberry mojito (\$11) before tucking into the braised short ribs in cabernet and chile molasses (\$21).

11:30 p.m.

10 Cool Kids

Once a ramshackle district, the historic Cedar Springs neighborhood has a new energy, with gay-friendly discos, curio shops, burger bars, boutiques and galleries. To mingle with the neighborhood's varied stripes, hop over to J.R.'s Bar & Grill (3923 Cedar Springs Road; 214-528-1004; www.partyattheblock.com), a cavernous club with brick walls, a tin-ceiling and a scuffed dance floor that draws gays, straights, middle-aged couples, midnight cowboys, frat boys and Amy Winehouse lookalikes. Nothing gets going before midnight, when the pub crawlers and night lizards come out to play.

Sunday

11:30 p.m.

11 Sports Madness

If it's Sunday in Dallas, do as the locals do and hit a sports bar. There are dozens in town, if not hundreds, but a favorite is the McKinney Avenue Tavern (2822 McKinney Avenue; 214-969-1984; www.mckinneyavenuetavern.com), affectionately nicknamed the Mat. There is a carved-wood bar with two dozen or so rickety tables fronting the 30-odd television screens that show nothing but sports, day and night. When the Cowboys play, the joint is bedlam. Rule No. 1: Go early, stay late.

Friday

4 p.m.

1 Architecture Park

See what the buzz is all about. Go on a walking tour of the Dallas Arts District (www.artsdistrict.org), a 19-block area straddling downtown office skyscrapers and uptown luxury hotels. Highlights include the new Dallas Center for the Performing Arts (2100 Ross Avenue, Suite 650; 214-954-9925; www.dallasperformingarts.org), a four-venue complex for music, opera, theater and dance in a parklike setting that's scheduled for a fall opening. The center will include a drum-shaped opera house designed by Norman Foster and a cube-shaped theater designed by Rem Koolhaas. To take it all in, find a bench at the Nasher Sculpture Center (2001 Flora

THE BASICS

American, Delta, Continental and other major airlines serve the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport. A recent Web search turned up a nonstop American flight from La Guardia starting at \$269 for travel in February. A car rental is optional; there are plenty of taxis in the city.

Dallas has plenty of luxury hotels. The Ritz-Carlton, Dallas (2121 McKinney Avenue; 214-922-0200; www.ritzcarlton.com/dallas) ranks near the top, with one of the finest restaurants (Fearing's), a spa and other amenities. Rooms start at \$299 and go much higher.

The Joule (1530 Main Street; 214-748-1300; www.luxurycollection.com/joule) is a new and trendy hotel in downtown Dallas, and features a Charlie Palmer restaurant, a jazzy basement nightclub called PM, and a rooftop bar with a pool. Rooms start at about \$325.

The Belmont (901 Fort Worth Avenue; 866-870-8010; www.belmontdallas.com) brings back 1940s charm with modern amenities. Set across the Trinity River, this recently restored hotel has a terrace bar and inviting midcentury-style rooms done in vibrant colors. Rooms start at \$125.

Saturday

9:30 a.m.

5 Morning Glory

Need a breath of fresh air after a late night out? Head to Katy Trail (entrance at Knox Street at Abbott Avenue; 214-303-1180; www.katytraildallas.org), a 3.5-mile greenway that winds through the city's wooded parks and urban neighborhoods. Built along old railroad tracks, the trail is a favorite of young and old, bikers and runners, strollers and dog walkers.

11 a.m.

6 Digging for Art

From the air, Dallas might look like a forest of faceless skyscrapers, but there are pockets of bohemia. The talk this season centers on Dragon Street in the Design District, where warehouses are becoming cool galleries, and boxy apartments and studios are being built. The street may still feel a tad empty on weekends, but the top draws include the Gerald Peters Gallery (1019 Dragon Street; 214-969-9410; www.gpgallery.com), with its sleek spaces and smart mix of paintings and sculptures, and the Holly Johnson Gallery (1411 Dragon Street; 214-369-0169; www.hollyjohnsongallery.com), a gleaming space devoted to contemporary artists.

1 p.m.

7 Slower Food

Chicken-fried everything may be a staple in Texas, but in Dallas organic salads and other light fare is just as popular. A trendy spot is Rise No. 1 (5360 West Lovers Lane; 214-366-9900; www.risesouffle.com), a charming bistro with a grass-green facade that serves up wonderful soufflés — a slow-paced antidote to Dallas's manic drive-and-shop lifestyle. Try the truffle-infused mushroom soufflé (\$15) with a glass of dry white.

3 p.m.

8 Retail Overload

Shopping is a local sport here, but there's more to Dallas than Neiman Marcus. For slow-paced window shopping, stroll around Inwood Village (West Lovers Lane and Inwood Road; www.inwoodvillage.com), a landmark 1949 shopping center with an eclectic range of signature stores. Retail highlights include Rich Hippie (5350 West Lovers Lane No. 127; 214-358-1968; www.richhippie.com) for retro and avant-garde clothing like a finely tooled pink leather jacket (\$728). Next door is Haute Baby (5350 West Lovers Lane No. 128; 214-357-3068) for cute toddler wear, like a yellow slicker with hoodie (\$110). But perhaps the chicest boutique is Forty Five Ten (4510 McKinney Ave-