

# A Guide to Waco



Waco, Texas, has come into its own as a vibrant college town and destination rather than just a way-point between Austin and Dallas. Tourists from across the U.S. (and even the world) come to enjoy the sights and shops made popular by *Fixer Upper* stars Chip and Joanna Gaines; Baylor University continues to draw undergraduates, graduate students, scholars, and faculty who fill the town's numerous coffee shops; a renewed downtown has drawn Waco residents back to the center of the city to enjoy unique dining, shopping, and entertainment options; and organizations like Mission Waco, the Texas Hunger Initiative, the World Hunger Relief Farm, and others like them have invested deeply in the people of Waco, strengthening the sense of community and providing healthy opportunities for widespread growth.

Many of Waco's best sights are all within just a few minutes of Baylor's campus. Below we list some of our favorite spots to visit and shop, as well as food and drink recommendations.

[Waco Tourist Information Center](#) — To find out more about what Waco offers, visit the [Waco: Heart of Texas](#) page

# Things to Do and Places to Visit

Waco Downtown Farmers Market is held on Washington Ave. across from the court house every Saturday from 9am-1pm. It offers high quality produce and artisanal goods from vendors within 150 miles of Waco. It's also one of the best places to catch breakfast or brunch from local food trucks and other eateries on Saturday mornings in Waco.

Located in downtown Waco

Fabled Bookshop & Cafe – Come here to find a book, a nook, and some coffee, tea, or a snack. Just down the road from Baylor on the corner of S. 4th St. and Franklin.

Brazos Books – If you're up for a drive, Brazos Books is a charming local place for "crazy cheap" books.

Magnolia Market at the Silos – One of Waco's most popular attractions for out-of-town tourists, Magnolia Market is *Fixer Upper* stars Chip and Joanna Gaines's signature attraction. It offers shopping, a variety of dining options, games, and plenty of seating for outdoor relaxation. Situated in the heart of downtown Waco, the Market and Silos are within walking distance of several hotels.

Homestead Heritage Craft Village — Homestead Heritage is an agrarian, Christian community. The Craft Village not only sells goods but also invites people to see how they are made. Visit the pottery house, cheese-making house or countless other specialty shops.

Spice Village — Spice Village offers a variety of boutiques in one location. Over 60 shops, featuring gifts, clothing, antiques, artisan goods, etc..

Waco Hippodrome – Located on Austin Avenue, the Hippodrome is a newly renovated historical theater that has been transformed into Waco's premier music hall. Enjoy live

concerts while eating at the Raleigh Dinner. Afterwards, you can stroll up to the Hightop Bar.

Mayborn Museum – The Mayborn Museum Complex is located on the edge of Baylor’s campus on University Parks. It features a natural science and cultural history museum focusing on Central Texas. Walk-in dioramas and exploration stations bring exhibits to life. There are also two floors of discovery rooms that encourage hands-on learning for all ages.

Texas Ranger Museum – This museum collects and preserves documents and artifacts related to the history of the legendary Texas Rangers. Get a glimpse into the rough and ready history of Texas’s early days and find out how the Rangers have shaped Texas’s unique identity. Located on the frontage road between Baylor’s main campus and McLane Stadium.

Waco Mammoth National Monument – The Waco Mammoth National Monument is a paleontological site featuring the only known remains of 24 Columbian mammoths. It is located out near the Waco Regional Airport.

Cameron Park Zoo – The Cameron Park Zoo is located just within the bounds of Cameron Park and offers 52 acres of habitats for more than 1,731 animals. Cameron Park and the zoo are located just a mile and half away down University Parks.

Suspension Bridge – The iconic Waco suspension bridge stretches across the Brazos River over the banks of East Waco. An iconic landmark along the legendary Chisholm Trail, the bridge marks the only spot on the Brazos River where cattlemen could cross with their steers in the early days of Waco’s history. The bridge is currently undergoing renovation, but may be open at the time of the conference.

Dr Pepper Museum — Learn about the history of Dr Pepper, which was invented in Waco and enjoy a cold Dr Pepper from the 1950s replica soda fountain; \$10 admission.

Melody Ranch — Country music & line dancing; Often live music; Opens at 8 pm; \$15 entrance

Smiley's Night Club — Live music & two-stepping

Waco History App — Download this free app that puts the history of Waco at your fingertips; Includes over 10 tours, curated by the Baylor University Institute for Oral History & The Texas Collection and the Waco History Team, including a tour of Women's History in Waco.

## Outdoors

Cameron Park – Cameron Park is one of the largest municipal parks in Texas. It covers 416 acres, and it has 20 miles of hiking, running, and biking trails. It also includes a disc-golf course and many playgrounds, and Cameron Park Zoo is at its center.

River Walk – The river path runs along both the eastern and western banks of the Brazos. The western side of the path takes walkers from Baylor University to Cameron Park.

BSR Cable Park is a world-renowned cable park and surfing resort. (Surprising for Waco, we know)! Although you can surf or wakeboard, we recommend a relaxing float down the Lazy River.

Carleen Bright Arboretum — 16 acres of botanical gardens

Waco Paddle Company — Rent paddleboards and kayaks so you can explore the Brazos River; Rentals start at \$20.

Fitness centers – Waco has several fitness centers where guests can pay for temporary use. Some options include Yoga8 or Duality Yoga for barre and yoga, Rush Cycle for indoor cycling and spin, Refit for a women-only fitness programs, Train Waco for

Cross-Fit, and [Refine31](#) and [OrangeTheory](#) for aerobics classes and other general fitness options.

## Food and Drink

As a university town, Waco might have more coffee shops per capita than Seattle. We exaggerate, but there are several excellent options for local coffee shops, all within either walking distance of Baylor or a short drive.

[Fabled Bookshop & Cafe](#) – Come here to find a book, a nook, and some coffee, tea, or a snack. Just down the road on the corner of S. 4th St. and Franklin.

[Pinewood Coffee Bar](#) – Serves some of the best coffee in town. Locals come here to study, read, and gather with friends. Located down Austin Ave.

[Common Grounds](#) – The university haunt. Quirky/trendy. Located just off Baylor's campus on S. 8th St.

[Bitty & Beau's Coffee](#) – New local coffee shop located across Franklin adjacent to other recommended shopping and dining options. This coffee shop advocates for the value, acceptance, and inclusion of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

[BRU Artisan Coffee Works](#) – Walking distance from several hotels down Franklin a few blocks. Small and dainty but tasty.

[Waco Cha](#) – Hand-crafted organic boba tea. Located just one mile down on Franklin.

[Lalo's Coffee and Pastries](#) – specializes in Mexican drinks. Located about two miles from Baylor on 15th and Colcord Ave.

Lighthouse Coffee and Wine – ethically sourced coffee, tea, hand-crafted cocktails, and curated wines. Located within walking distance, about half a mile down Washington Ave.

Magnolia Press Coffee Co. – Located at the Silos, it offers comfortable outdoor seating, sweet treats and a vintage aesthetic. If the inside looks crowded, you can order at the walk-up window located in the back patio.

## **Bars, Pubs, and Tastings**

Balcones Distilling – Balcones is a whiskey distillery that started under a bridge in Waco in 2008. In 2016, they opened their 65,000 sq.ft. distillery on the corner of 11th St. and Franklin Ave. and started hosting tours of the facility and tastings of their award-winning craft whiskeys.

Dichotomy Coffee & Spirits – Half coffee bar and half cocktail bar, Dichotomy is a popular Waco spot for studying during the day and for music and drinks during the evening and night. Check out the rooftop for a view of downtown Waco at sunset.

One Day – favorite classic cocktails, coffee, beer and wine with indoor and outdoor seating just half a mile down between 6th and 7th on Columbus Ave.

The Dancing Bear Pub – Best place in Waco for craft beer. Small and cozy but with plenty of indoor and outdoor seating. Located on Speight Ave. not far from Baylor's campus.

Pinewood Public House – Connected to the Pinewood Coffee Bar, Pinewood Pub has rapidly become a favorite of locals for its rotating menu of local and distinctive beers and ciders. It also offers a small selection of wines. The courtyard under a large tree hung with exposed lightbulbs is a particular draw. They offer a 20% discount for students (with IDs) and clergy (with clerical collar) on Wednesdays.

Wine Shoppe – Offers delicious and unique wine options with both bar seating inside and an outdoor patio.

Waco Winery Tasting Room/Rooftop – Wine served from a local vineyard in a delightful rooftop space overlooking Austin Ave., the main street through downtown. Within walking distance of hotels just half a mile away.

Waco Ale Brewing Company – Local craft beer and taproom. Located on Austin Ave.

Brotherwell Brewery – More local craft beer. Taproom open on weekends. Food trucks set up shop at the Brewery on the weekend, and there's plenty of outdoor seating. Located on E. Bridge St.

## Restaurants

Waco is currently experiencing a boom in new and exciting restaurants. From farm-to-table, to fusion cuisine food trucks to community eateries, Waco has something for you!

### Restaurants Downtown

On Franklin Ave, you can easily find Tex-Mex (Ninfa's – \$\$-\$\$\$), Thai (Bangkok Royal – \$\$), burgers (Billy Bob's Burgers and Grill – \$) and a steakhouse (DiamondBack's – \$\$\$\$). There is also a place for smoothies and fruit bowls (Mameka's Bowls – \$). Next to the Hilton, on University Parks, is one of Waco's food truck locations, where you can often find Krab Kingz (\$\$) and La-Tex Burger (\$\$).

Alpha Omega — Fresh mediterranean grill and bakery (\$).

Cafe Cappuccino — Local brunch spot (\$).

Hecho en Waco — Authentic fine Mexican cuisine (\$\$-\$\$\$).

J-Petal & Poke — Japanese crêpes, poke bowls, and Thai ice cream (\$\$).

Milo — Seasonal, farm-to-table Southern cuisine (\$\$-\$\$\$). Happy Hour from 3-5 pm, featuring many local favorites such as the Mad Burger and the Crispy Brussel Sprouts. Located next to Splendid Oaks Chocolates.

Revival Eastside Eatery — Farm-to table burgers, sandwiches and salads (\$\$). Brunch and lunch only during the week, but open 11 am-8 pm Friday and Saturday.

Silos Food Trucks — Located at the Silos, you can find a variety of food trucks featuring Texas BBQ, Asian fusion sandwiches, artisan grilled cheese, and even favorites from Chip & Jo's Magnolia Table.

Torchy's Tacos — Craft fast-casual tacos that often put new twists on classic flavors (\$).

Tru Jamaica — Authentic family-owned Jamaican restaurant. (\$\$)

Union Hall — A community dining experience with both indoor and outdoor seating that features over 20 eateries (\$-\$\$). For a caffeine break, enjoy KurbSide Coffee or Zuke's loose-leaf tea. Local favorite dining options include Wacoal Tacos & Tamales, KoKo Ramen and Whizzbang's Hamburgers. For dessert, grab a milkshake at Unshakeable or an international pastry at Around the World.

Various Fast Food Restaurants — If you are looking for a quick meal, head to "The Grease Pit" as it is affectionately called by the locals. Located between 5th and 12th and Jack Kutigen, there are over a dozen quick-eats restaurants in the same couple of blocks.

## **Restaurants a Short Drive Away**

Opal's Oysters — Coastal cuisine and cocktails. (\$\$-\$\$\$)



[Red Herring](#) — Eclectic coastal dining with live entertainment and artisanal cocktails in a historic, art deco-inspired space featuring a raw bar, open kitchen, and Chef's Table experience. (\$\$\$)

[Terry Black's Barbecue](#) — Terry Black's BBQ is Waco's premiere destination for legendary Texas barbecue. (\$\$-\$\$\$)

[Pignettis](#) — Eclectic and innovative Italian cuisine with a Lounge Bar for wines, cocktails and beers on tap. (\$\$-\$\$\$)

[Pivovar](#) — A preferred, European destination without ever leaving Waco, Pivovar provides an authentic and unique Czech cuisine featuring unique beer with a mixed menu combining European and Texan flavors. (\$\$-\$\$\$)

[Cafe Homestead](#) — Located outside Waco, everything in this farm-to-table restaurant is locally sourced—from the food to the dishes to the furniture. After eating at the Cafe, you can stroll through the Craft Village, farm and gardens.

[Cajun Craft](#) — Scratch made, Cajun food (\$\$-\$\$\$)

[Harvest on 25th](#) — Farm-to-table breakfast and lunch, featuring several excellent vegan and gluten-free options (\$\$)

[Magnolia Table](#) — Chip and Joanna Gaines' popular farm-to-table restaurant is located in a historical Waco landmark (\$\$). Although walk-ins are possible, if you are interested in eating at Magnolia Table, you might consider making a reservation in advance. You can also sample some of the Table favorites at a food truck located at the Silos.

[Moroso's Wood Fire Pizza](#) — Family-owned authentic Italian cuisine; Brunch, lunch and dinner options (\$\$)

[Saffron](#) — Authentic Pakistani/Indian food (\$\$)

Sascee's Southern Style Eatery — Buffet-style authentic Southern food (\$\$)

The Mix Cafe — Located next to Baylor's campus, the Mix features soup, salad and sandwiches (\$\$)

Vitek's — Texas BBQ (\$); Try the Gut Pack, a local favorite

Waffle Chic — Fried chicken and waffles; Sweet and savory options as well as gluten-free options; Food truck located next to Pinewood Coffee (\$)

World Cup Cafe — Breakfast and lunch diner that partners with Mission Waco, supporting those in need in North Waco (\$). After your meal, visit the Fair Trade Market next door. You can also cross the street and visit Urban Reap, learning about sustainable food and energy.

## **Desserts**

Heritage Creamery — Hand-crafted ice cream

Silos Baking Co. — Sweet & savory baked goods, including gluten-free options. Primarily known for their cupcakes.

Splendid Oaks Chocolates — Handmade chocolates and ice cream. Located next to Milo.

The Sweet Station — Candy and soda shop with a vintage aesthetic. Located next to the Silos.

## **Hotels**

These hotels are located within one or two blocks of most recommended dining and shopping locations and are within a short distance of Baylor University.

[Cambria Hotel Waco University Riverfront](#)

110 S M.L.K. Jr Blvd  
Waco, TX 76704  
Tel: +1 (254) 218-5374

[Hotel Herringbone](#)

319 S 4th St  
Waco, TX 76701  
Tel: +1 (254) 342-2220

[Hotel 1928](#)

701 Washington Ave  
Waco, TX 76701  
Tel: +1 (254) 342-3911

[Aloft Waco Downtown](#)

900 S 11th St  
Waco, TX 76706  
Tel: +1 (254) 870-4644

[Hotel Indigo Waco – Baylor](#)

211 Clay Ave  
Waco, TX 76706  
Tel: +1-254-754-7000

Courtyard by Marriott Waco

101 Washington Avenue, Waco, Texas 76701  
Tel: +1-254-752-8686

**Hilton Waco**

113 S University Parks Dr., Waco, Texas 76701

Tel: +1-254-754-8484

LaQuinta Inn Waco Downtown

911 S 10th Street, Waco, Texas 76706

Tel: +1-254-756-2929

\$109+/night

Aloft Waco Baylor

900 S 11th St., Waco, Texas 76706

Tel: +1-254-870-4644

\$156+/night

Residence Inn Waco

501 S. University Parks Dr., Waco, TX 76706

Tel: +1-254-714-1386

\$160+/night