Sustainability

Got an hour?

Leave Jester and cross the golden-bricked Speedway Mall

16. Patton Hall (RLP) GPS +30.285253, -97.734345
This LEED Gold building houses one of the newest of the 156 undergraduate programs: the popular B.A. in Sustainability Studies with 280 declared majors (2019). The program is housed in the Department of Geography, and its curriculum includes classes from nearly every college on campus. The traffic circle median contains a special grass, Habi-turf, developed with years of research by the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. The turf is drought tolerant & ideal for Texas’ extreme weather. Cross Memorial Bridge—the oldest bridge across Waller—near CLA and follow W bank to the S. Or return to San Jacinto and walk S.

17. Umlauf Sculpture and Cypress GPS +30.284643, -97.734743
Charles Umlauf taught fine art at UT for 40 years, and this bronze statue exemplifies his work. Tree 4036, a 65 ft tall bald cypress (Taxodium distichum) planted in 1936, provides an estimated yearly ecobenefits of $367. Waller Creek is UT’s largest “classroom” and is the site of years of research and inspiration. Leaving path, turn west at 21st Street to bridge.

18. Waller Creek at 21st GPS +30.284336, -97.734419
Waller Creek is a 3662 acre watershed on top of Cretaceous limestone; Austin is on the eastern edge of what had been a shallow sea. Look upstream to see if you can spot urban wildlife, including herons, red-shouldered hawks, blotched water-snakes, foxes, and raccoons. Cross to S side of 21st Street & walk W; turn into courtyard past Roberts Hall and turn into courtyard.

19. UT Farm Stand and Gardening GPS +30.283081, -97.735706
UT Farm Stand (formerly GreenCorps) is a student group that built the Jester and Kin-solving gardens in 2013. The group grows food, educates the dorm community about sustainability, and operates a farm stand several times a term (nationally recognized by the National Association of Food Service in Higher Education). Produce grown at this location is used by chefs, and the 7,000 gal tank captures rainwater and irrigates the crops with a solar-powered pump. Continue W and go into Jester Center.

20. Jester Center (JES) GPS +30.282993, -97.736732
When this dorm opened in 1969, it was the largest in the U.S. with a home for 3,000 stu-dents. Sustainability in UT Housing and Dining has reduced waste related to food pro-duction & consumption—important given that 30,000 meals are served daily. Changes include the introduction of reusable ECO2GO containers with over 1 million uses, the addition of compostable paper plates, the preference that 25% of food purchased is locally grown, the addition of Meatless Monday, and new choices in packaging to achieve zero waste goals. Beginning in 2008, students conducted plate waste studies to determine the amount of edible food wasted in buffet-style dining halls. These studies led to changes such as the elimination of trays, which in turn led to a 50% reduction in food wasted. Leave Jester and cross the golden-bricked Speedway Mall.

21. Speedway Mall GPS +30.283124, -97.737444
Extending the campus living room to the outdoors, the Speedway renovation turned an asphalt road into a walkable mall. The project highlights the live oaks & decreases impervious pavement by 20%. The Austin B-cycle station outside of JES is one of nine that provides inexpensive alternative transport for UT students. Time out: head S to the Blanton Art Museum and the new Ellsworth Kelly meditative space, or continue W to Library Plaza.

22. Solar Charging Station GPS +30.283196, -97.737986
This solar charging station near the library (PCL) is a student project that received a Green fund grant. Charge your phones and laptops here! Walk west up 21st, crossing to north side of street at top of hill.

23. Littlefield Fountain GPS +30.283757, -97.739654
Fountains only operate on special occasions because of UT’s water conser-vation plan. UT uses a central system to manage the irrigation usage across campus and has reduced irrigation usage by 66% since 2010, conserving over 100 million gallons of water (or $719,000) annually. Continue W on 21st and cut over to HRC.

24. Harry Ransom Center (HRC) GPS +30.284174, -97.740731
Students who lived in Dobie thought the HRC garden needed a refresh and, with the collaboration of landscaping and HRC, found a way to revitalize the space with a Green Fund grant for native plants. Like much of campus, HRC’s exterior is made of Cordova Shell Limestone quarried near Austin and displays clams that lived at the same time as dinosaurs. Time out: visit the exhibit inside HRC. Or walk N to Inner Campus Drive.

25. Thermal Lab GPS +30.284965, -97.740314
Look up to see two silver blocks on a metal platform off West Mall Building (WMB) where School of Architecture (UTSOA) tests building materials like window treatments, glazings, facade designs and others to reduce energy consumption. UTSOA degree pro-grams focus on sustainable design and city planning. Walk E on Inner Campus Drive.

The removal of Confederate and other statues from this area gained national attention, so this is a great spot to look at the Texas Capitol and reflect that sustainability is also about how society functions. Looking south, check out the expanse of grass where UT Land-scape Services initiated their current practice of maintaining plants without chemicals. The live oaks are part of broad tree conservation efforts to reduce impact to root systems. UT has been part of Tree Campus USA for the last decade. Continue E, crossing Speed-way, to SAC and enter building.

27. William C. Powers Student Activity Center GPS +30.284973, -97.737143
Students led the drive in 2009 for this campus hub to achieve LEED Gold in 2012. See the Student Commitment to Sustainability plaque on the wall in the corridor. For a different look at UT, head to the 3rd floor roof garden that includes a UT Landmarks piece by James Turrell, The Color Inside.
1. Martin Luther King Jr Statue GPS +30.285410, -97.736091
Sustainability deserves a visit to locate the building and in social science. The United States was the 4th statue of the civil
rights leaders on a college campus. Students initiated the project in the late
1980s, and students in the 1990s founded the sculpture $1/student/semester
over 4 years. Walk W through East Mall toward the Main Building and the Tower
of the Main.

2. Environmental Science Institute (JGB) GPS +30.283710, -97.736626
One of the first academic programs affiliated with sustainability at UT Austin is a B.S. in Environmental Science (begun in 2010) with 126 graduates of the program in 8 years. JGB includes a public outreach program begun in 2000: for looking up Hot Science—
Cool Talks or watch videos online (hotsciencecooltalks.org). Walk W across Speedway &
up steps. This is the original Forty Acres—a hill set aside for a university in 1840—bound by Speed, 21st, Guadalupe & 24th. UT today—430 acres. The two unimproved lots titled The West, is one of 28 sculptures on loan to UT’s Landmarks (landmark@utexas.edu).

3. Razed Beds with Native Xeriscape GPS +30.285545, -97.738573
After a xeriscape is established, watering can be reduced as much as 75%. These beds of
native plants (red yucca, prickly pear, and Texas sotol) were developed in 2011, replacing high maintenance, traditional roses, jasmine and boxwood.
Note the deciduous, native honey mesquite (Prosopis glandulosa) to the N; these thorny, deeply rooted trees were common on the Forty Acres in 1883
when UT opened. Walk SW to Tower’s S side.

4. Main Tower (MAI) GPS +30.285493, -97.739415
Built in 1937 of limestone made of millions of fossilized Eocene bivalves and quarried in Bedford, Indiana. UT’s Main Building was designed by Paul Philippe Cret and is 4 ft shorter than the Capitol. A preternatural falcon has a nest box on the N side. Every year, Tower lights are turned off for an hour to highlight energy conservation. Walk W toward Guadalupe (The Drag) & turn slightly S.

5. Cesar Chavez Statue and Battle Hall (BTL) GPS +30.285666, -97.740390
In 2007, a statue—initiated and funded by students—of labor leader Cesar Chavez was unveiled, the first depiction of a Latino on campus. Battle Hall (BTL) is listed on the National Register of Historic Places & was the first building on campus to employ the signature motif of the Forty Acres: modified Spanish Renaissance. Walk W toward Guadalupe (The Drag) & turn slightly S.

6. Living Wall Framing GOL Door GPS +30.285683, -97.741465
A project by the School of Architecture and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, this living wall exemplifies research using the campus as a living laboratory. It is funded by Green Fund, pool of money contributed to by all enrolled that totals a half million/year. Since 2013, Green Fund has helped students, faculty and staff complete over 120 projects on campus, from adding new water bottle filling stations to researching the best landscape design for UT Austin’s McDonald Observatory in West Texas. Walk N to the Texas Union Building.

7. The Student Union (UNB) GPS +30.286016, -97.741062
UNB was designed by Cret to be a campus community center. Look for bins and signage in the Union demonstrating UT’s Zero Waste goal to divert 90% of the total waste from landfill. Recycling is single-stream: paper, cardboard, plastics, aluminum and glass are recycled together. Recycling at UT started in the 1960’s and—with a 2002 effort to start outdoor collection of recyclables—led to the creation of the largest environmental student organization, Campus Environmental Center (environment.org). CEC has served as an incubator for green ideas on campus: past projects have become permanent programs (Tailgate Recycling, Orange Bike Project & Green Offices). Exit the north end of the Union and walk to large live oaks.

The three largest live oaks (Quercus faxiflora) have been rooted on this hill for about 300 years. Dr. James Battle prevented their destruction in 1923. The bronze statue of
these thorny, deeply rooted trees were common on the Forty Acres in 1883
when UT opened. Walk SW to Tower’s S side.

9. Turtle Pond GPS +30.286077, -97.739487
The turtle pond was finished in 1939 and is home to a few dozen turtles of multiple species, including snapping turtles. If you look E, the greenhouse is being used for research in aquaponics by Engineers for a Sustainable World. Funded by Green Fund, tomatoes, broccoli and other veggies are grown in water, supplied by piping up to 90% of the water used for tradition. Walk N (Turn in Gearing Hall (GEA); check historic fashion exhibit off of main hall) and turn E down 24th Street.

10. Tree Inventory GPS +30.287386, -97.737702
Inventory trees on campus are tagged, and utaustin.mytreekeepersoftware.com has
info about each using the aluminum “UT 2016” tag. Tree 1405 is an osage orange (Maclura pomifera) that provides an estimated $173/year in ecosystem services to campus. This species was preferred for bow construction and had a native range restricted to the Red River drainage of OK, TX & AR but was likely planted in MO where Meriwether Lewis collected it. Look across the street to the live oaks on N side of 24th; these trees are transplants, relocated to make way for the Hackermeister chemistry building. UT has successfully moved over 50 mature trees since 2005. Walk E to Speedway intersection.

11. Hackermeister (NHB) GPS +30.287462, -97.737312
In a decade, UT has added over 3.6 million sq ft of green, LEED-certified building space. Completed in 2010 and named for a former UT president and professor, this LEED Gold building has solar water heating panels on the roof (look back at Stop 12), an energy effi cient HVAC system, and chilled water that runs 40 feet underground and is connected to a 4 million gallon water storage tank. Hackermeister is also a science building with Green Labs, a certification program that reduces waste, power, water and usage and includes recycling of batteries, Styrofoam, nitrile gloves, & cold packs. The site-specific sculpture of 70 repurposed canoes is Monochrome for Austin by Nancy Rubins, (UT Landmarks). Continue down hill on W side of 24th St. You might see a white fox (Sciurus niger), one of 6 species (2 genera) of squirrels in North America. UT legend calls them albino (they are not) and says sticking one brings luck on a test (let’s hope so!). Please do not feed the squirrels: as their population increases, trees are damaged.

12. Hal Weaver Power Plant GPS +30.287154, -97.733952
UT has had its own power source for nearly a century and in the 1980s switched from coal to cleaner natural gas at the insistence of Professor Carl Eckhardt. One of the most efficient power plants of its kind in the world, UT’s overall efficiency increased from 48% to 86% from 1976 to 2013, over that time period, campus grew but met all energy needs without more fuel. In a typical year, 345,000,000 kWh is produced, 70% for campus and 30% to chill water in 18 chillers that cool campus (UT saves 100 million gal of potable water/year in chillers using groundwater and recovered A/C condensation). Energy savings are also gained through optimizing buildings like RLP (Stop 16) which reduced consumption by 25%. In 2014, UT received the first ever PEER Campus designation for infrastructure with the addition of 15,000 ton Chilling Station 7 and a 4 million gallon thermal storage tank to support Dell Medical School. Complete to San Jacinto and cross to N side of 24th Street:Jaciacoimoctrossing Walker Creek to 2 cement benches

13. Pollinators & Benches GPS +30.287259, -97.733836
The Orchard, started in 2013, highlights fruit trees that grow well in this region of Texas (peach, plum, Japanese persimmon, fig, and others). A small pollinator garden of native and adapted plants is a new addition, as is a bench made of wood harvested from a campus oak tree made by the Carpenter Shop. New projects include monarch butterfly way stations and a larger pollinator garden on the S side of the Swim Center. Time out: head to the Texas Memorial Museum for dinosaurs & dioramas, or walk S on Jan Jacinto following Waller Creek to 2 cement benches.

14. Urban Ecology in Waller Creek GPS +30.286413, -97.733810
UT’s Landscape Services has recently removed invasive, non-native vegetation from Waller Creek, often leaving stumps to inhibit erosion. The Texas Palmettos (Sabal mexicana) are volunteer naturalizing north of their historic range. These palms are likely descendants of the old palm planted at Arno Nowotny Building and are thriving in Waller Creek with the aid of a warming climate & the Austin urban heat island. Texas’ flora has included palms for millions of years, and petrified Sabal palmwood is the Texas State Stone. Tree 3947 is a Durand oak, a rare species with a highly fragmented population, it prefers to grow in sandy soils near waterways. Continue S on San Jacinto, Time out: Visual Arts Center to the AR.

15. Sustainability Squad & Transportation GPS +30.285128, -97.738825
In 2017, the Sustainability Squad & Transportation
for research in aquaponics by Engineers for a Sustainable World. Funded
with a UT ID, making the shuttle system one of the largest university systems with 5.2
million passengers/year. Carpooling, car sharing and biking are also options for getting
70,000 students, faculty and staff to campus. Cross Waller Creek and walk on the S side of the traffic circle.