



Visit Dallas
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50 Free Things to Do in Dallas

By Kali Dunson

Dallas offers a vibrant mix of culture, history, and outdoor adventures, all without spending a dime. Here's a guide categorized by interests:

Immerse Yourself in Culture



Art Enthusiasts:

- **Dallas Contemporary:** This museum, unlike most, doesn't hold a permanent collection. Instead, it acts as a platform for fresh exhibitions, performances, and discussions by regional, national, and international artists. Stroll through immersive exhibits, where captivating colors and images await.
- **The Meadows Museum of Art:** With one of the largest Spanish art collections outside of Spain, at Southern Methodist University entry is free every Thursday after 5:00 p.m.
- **African American Museum:** Engross yourself in the rich tapestry of Black history and culture at this Fair Park Museum. Through photographs, sculptures, and paintings, the museum brings African American experiences to life, offering a window into the past and a thriving culture of the present.
- **The Samurai Collection at The Ann & Gabriel Barbier-Mueller Museum:** Housed in a unique location on the second floor of the Saint Ann restaurant and bar, this collection that is over 100 years old dating back to the seventh century, includes Japanese armor, artwork, helmets, masks, horse armor, weaponry, and accessories. It's one of the largest collections of its type in the world.
- **Latino Cultural Center:** Explore traditional and contemporary arts & crafts or catch a captivating show. The Latino Cultural Center is a hub for local and national talent, featuring live performances, film screenings, art exhibits, and engaging activities for all ages.
- **Dallas Arts District:** Spanning 68 acres and 19 contiguous blocks, the Dallas Arts District is the largest urban arts district in the country. The area showcases more than a dozen different attractions and world-renowned venues, such as the AT&T Performing Arts Center and the Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center, Dallas Museum of Art, Nasher Sculpture Center, Crow Collection of Asian Art, Klyde Warren Park and much more.
- **NorthPark Center:** Browse trendy stores and upscale boutiques, then get your culture fix at the incredible 1.4-acre CenterPark. This landscaped garden isn't just beautiful - it's an art gallery too!

CenterPark doubles as a free community event space, so you might even catch a live performance or festival during your visit. Relax with a bite to eat surrounded by world-class sculptures and unwind in this urban oasis. Grab a complimentary NorthPark Art Tour map from the concierge to learn all about each masterpiece.

- **Bath House Cultural Center:** Art, history, and nature collide at the Bath House Cultural Center! Nestled on the scenic eastern shore of White Rock Lake, this landmark Art Deco building offers a vibrant space for the community. Catch a captivating performance, showcasing everything from concerts and festivals to theatrical productions.
 - **Oak Cliff Cultural Center:** This center offers art and cultural experiences that reflect the rich diversity of the neighborhood. Opened in 2010, the OCCC carries on the legacy of the Ice House Cultural Center. Engage in art exhibits, attend free theater workshops or dance classes, and mingle with fellow art enthusiasts at receptions.
 - **Adrian E. Flatt, M.D. Hand Collection at Baylor University Medical Center:** Located in the lobby of Baylor University Medical Center sits a fascinating collection of over 100 hand casts. This exhibit features bronze replicas of the mitts of historical figures, celebrities, and cultural icons. Started in the 1960s by Dr. Adrian Flatt, one of the foremost hand surgeons in the world, with a unique passion, the collection boasts casts of famous hands like Winston Churchill's, Katherine Hepburn, Dr. Seuss, Walt Disney, and even the legendary paws of Andre the Giant.
 - **Mural Walking Tour:** Download a self-guided mural tour app and discover the diverse street art scene in Deep Ellum, Bishop Arts District, or Lower Greenville.
 - **Sweet Pass Sculpture Park:** Unveiled in 2018, Sweet Pass Sculpture Park is a hidden gem showcasing contemporary sculptures on a one-acre plot. Explore thought-provoking artworks for free or pack a picnic and enjoy the fresh air amidst artistic inspiration. This park also supports sculptors through its residency program, enriching the collection and fostering artistic dialogue.
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History Buffs:

- **Dealey Plaza National Historic Landmark District:** Stand where history unfolded and learn about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy on this free self-guided walking tour.
- **Founder's Plaza:** Plane spotting and a history lesson? Founders' Plaza near DFW Airport delivers both! Watch in awe as planes take off and land, then step back in time with a replica of the city founder's cabin and a historical map. Free and open daily, it's a unique spot for the whole family.
- **Pioneer Plaza:** Commemorate Dallas' cattle drive legacy with a visit to Pioneer Plaza! This downtown landmark features a larger-than-life bronze sculpture by artist Robert Summers, depicting 70 steers and three trail riders on the actual Shawnee Trail drive path from the 1850s. Located in front of the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center at Young and Griffin Streets.
- **Dallas Heritage Village at Old City Park:** Step back in time at Old City Park! Explore 19 historically significant structures, including a saloon, mansion, and schoolhouse, all meticulously preserved from the 1800s. Timber-built architecture, old-timey signs, and cobblestone streets create a captivating scene, offering a free self-guided tour through Dallas' fascinating past.
- **Bonnie Parker's Final Resting Place:** Head to Crown Hill Memorial Park in North Dallas, the final resting place of Bonnie Parker, one half of the infamous Bonnie and Clyde duo. While Clyde's gravesite isn't accessible to the public, you can pay your respects to Bonnie at this historic cemetery.
- **J. Erik Jonsson Central Library:** The Dallas Public Library, a historic gem since 1901, boasts a massive collection and rare finds. Marvel at an original copy of the Declaration of Independence and Shakespeare's First Folio alongside countless books and fascinating artifacts like a Viking boat and Navajo treasures.
- **Mary Kay Cosmetic Museum:** Explore the inspiring legacy of Mary Kay Ash at the Mary Kay Cosmetics headquarters. This free museum delves into the company's remarkable story and celebrates

female empowerment. Walk through Mary Kay Ash's journey, learn about her groundbreaking business ideas, and be inspired by the achievements of top performers.

- **Freedman's Cemetery and Memorial:** This historic site was the final resting place for Dallas' early African-American community. Explore the grounds and admire the larger-than-life bronze sculptures by artist David Newton, honoring the legacy of those who built this rich community.
 - **Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas - The Economy in Action Exhibit:** Explore interactive exhibits and multimedia displays that bring the Federal Reserve, money, and economic concepts to life. See historical forms of currency, learn about the founding of the Federal Reserve, and discover how monetary policy impacts your everyday life.
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Live Shows:

- **Fine Arts Chamber Players:** The mission of the DFACP is to enrich and enhance the quality of life for North Texas area residents, especially families and children, through free concerts of classical music and educational activities.
- **Dallas Symphony Community Concert Series:** Catch the Dallas Symphony Orchestra rockin' the parks for FREE with their Community Concert Series! This springtime tradition brings live music to neighborhoods all around Dallas. Don't miss the iconic Memorial Day Concert at Flagpole Hill, complete with fireworks! Other locations change, so keep an eye out for a concert near you.
- **Indoor Venues:** Country enthusiasts can find free weekday shows at Adair's Saloon, while Opening Bell has a cozy café vibe and hosts open mic nights where aspiring musicians take the stage. Explore different genres at Balcony Club, where live performances of jazz, classic rock, and the blues light up the evenings.
- **Kitchen Dog Theater:** This intimate venue fosters a close connection between audience and actors, bringing both modern and classic plays to life. From Shakespearean works like Macbeth to contemporary productions, prepare to be swept away by the talent on stage.

- **Dallas Comedy Club:** Want a laugh without spending a dime? Head to Dallas Comedy Club on Wednesdays for their free open mic and improv nights! Witness up-and-coming comedians test their new material and experience the thrill of spontaneous improv skits.
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Landmark Lovers:

- **City Hall:** Dallas City Hall is one of the most distinctive and iconic structures in town. Designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect I.M. Pei, the inverted wedge shape is a site to see and features a 7-acre plaza with sculptures by Henry Moore.
- **Southern Methodist University:** This prestigious university provides a picturesque campus in central Dallas. Stroll tree-lined paths and admire the manicured landscapes. Marvel at Dallas Hall, an architectural masterpiece built in 1915 with a three-story rotunda inspired by ancient Greece. Art enthusiasts of all ages can explore the Meadows Museum's Spanish art collections, with free admission for those 18 and under.
- **Tour of Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center:** Even without a ticket, this stunning venue is worth a visit. Marvel at the architecture, admire the surrounding sculptures, and experience the cultural heart of the Arts District firsthand.
- **Fountain Place:** This dramatic skyscraper is more than just glass and steel - it boasts a lush green haven at its base. Stroll through colorful flowerbeds, admire cascading waterfalls, and be mesmerized by 172 playful bubblers. A central fountain, unlike any other. One of the world's most complex, with 217 water jets dancing in perfect harmony.
- **Pegasus Plaza:** This downtown gem, located at Main and Akard Streets, features a limestone fountain bubbling with natural spring water from deep beneath the city. The winding stream and fountain

anchor the plaza's design, creating a peaceful oasis in the heart of the city. Don't miss the iconic Pegasus sign soaring above the neighboring Magnolia Hotel – a symbol of Dallas's enduring spirit.

Explore Neighborhood Gems



- **Thanks-Giving Square:** Easily spotted for its iconic white spiral chapel, the square offers a haven of peace with flourishing greenery, a serene fountain, and beautiful stained-glass windows. Established as a public space for gratitude and focused on welcoming cross-cultural connections, this urban park is a perfect place to unwind and take in scenic views, all within the downtown core.
- **West End Historic District:** From warehouses to wow-factors! West End Historic District offers a diverse mix of art galleries, shops, and restored buildings alongside modern attractions. Explore the Sixth Floor Museum, marvel at the Dallas World Aquarium, or be dazzled by the Light Up Arches.
- **Bishop Arts District:** Browse unique shops, trendy restaurants, and local art galleries in stores, and street art all in this charming neighborhood.
- **Deep Ellum:** Dive into Dallas' musical soul at Deep Ellum! Once a haven for jazz and blues legends, this historic district now pulsates with an edgy vibe. Explore art galleries and vintage stores, all within a walkable area steeped in musical history.
- **D-Link:** A free transportation service provided by Dallas Area Rapid Transit, the D-Link is a shuttle that runs throughout all downtown and into the Bishop Arts District in Oak Cliff. Stops include Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center, Omni Dallas Hotel, The West End, The Sixth Floor Museum, Main Street Garden, Dallas Arts District, Deep Ellum, Victory Park and the Bishop Arts District in Oak Cliff.
- **Craft Your Own Dallas Adventure:** Explore diverse neighborhoods on foot. History enthusiasts can delve into the past at landmarks like Pike Park and Freedman's Cemetery Memorial. Art lovers will find murals and galleries in neighborhoods like Trinity Groves. From historic mansions in Swiss Avenue to modern luxury in Highland Park, discover Dallas' unique charm block by block.

- **Uptown and West Village:** Buzzing with energy, Uptown is Dallas' trendsetting haven! This eclectic neighborhood offers something for everyone - new apartments, trendy shops, and electrifying entertainment venues all collide for an unforgettable experience. Hop on the free M-Line Trolley for a scenic ride, or start your adventure at West Village, the unofficial heart of Uptown. Explore historic homes along McKinney Avenue, or simply soak up the energetic atmosphere. Uptown is where Dallas comes alive!
 - **Lower Greenville Avenue:** Lower Greenville is calling all night owls! This stretch of Greenville Avenue, south of Mockingbird Lane, explodes with energy. One bar spills into the next, then a cozy cafe, then a live music venue pumping out the tunes. Weekends are a guaranteed party, and weekdays still sizzle. Get your dancing shoes on and dive into Lower Greenville's nightlife scene!
 - **Window Shop:** Unleash your inner window shopper with a free exploration of Dallas' diverse stores. From authentic Western gear at Wild Bill's to designer labels peeking from the windows of Neiman Marcus, there's something for every taste to admire. Nature lovers will be awestruck by Highland Park Village's open-air luxury boutiques. And for a one-stop shop extravaganza, Galleria Dallas offers a dazzling array of department stores and trendy boutiques. With more shopping centers per capita than any other major U.S. city, buying may be hard to resist in Dallas!
 - **Highland Park Village**
 - **Mockingbird Station**
 - **Snider Plaza**
 - **Shops at Park Lane**
 - **West Village**
 - **Allen Premium Outlets**
 - **Grapevine Mills**
 - **Dallas Farmers Market:** Fresh foodies unite! Stock up on seasonal produce, free-range meats, and artisan finds, all bursting with Texas flavor. This bustling market isn't just about groceries - grab a bite, browse handmade crafts, and soak up the lively atmosphere.
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Active Adventures



- **White Rock Lake:** Enjoy hiking, biking, or kayaking on this scenic 1,150-acre lake. White Rock Lake Park offers free parking and stunning views. Located in the middle of central Dallas off Mockingbird Lane, White Rock Lake is a man-made water and park area build in 1911. A 9.3 -mile paved path around the lake is perfect for running and biking, and scenic views lend themselves to picturesque picnics.
- **Cedar Ridge Preserve:** This sprawling nature preserve, just 20 minutes from downtown Dallas, offers a haven for nature lovers. Hike along nine miles of scenic trails, winding through diverse terrain with breathtaking greenery. Keep your eyes peeled for abundant wildlife and blooming wildflowers as you explore this peaceful escape.

Family Fun



- **AT&T Discovery District:** Welcome to a portal where technology and art collide! This free, public plaza is more than just a place to hang out - it's an interactive playground for the curious. Explore cutting-edge exhibits and delve into the wonders of technology and innovation, all while soaking up the artistic atmosphere.
- **Klyde Warren Park:** Craving a downtown escape? This free urban oasis offers a playground paradise for kids, a serene Butterfly Garden for nature lovers, and a festive winter wonderland with the Christmas Dancing Water show. Unwind on the lawns with a picnic, catch live music, bring your fur baby to the dog park, or grab a bite to eat from a food truck – all in the heart of the city!
- **McKinney Avenue Trolley:** Cruise through Dallas in style aboard the M-Line Trolley! These restored vintage streetcars offer a free, scenic ride through Uptown and Downtown neighborhoods. Hop on and off at various points of interest, including the Dallas Arts District, West Village, trendy shops, and serene parks like Turtle Creek Park and Katy Trail. It's a charming and convenient way to explore the city while experiencing a touch of Dallas's history.
- **Fair Park:** Delve into history and art at Fair Park, the largest urban park in the US! Step back in time with the extensive collection of 1930s Art Deco architecture, a style not found anywhere else in North America. History buffs will be enthralled by the Hall of State, showcasing over 3 million historic documents and artifacts. Fair Park isn't just a museum, though! Lush green spaces, iconic landmarks like the Texas Woofus, and of course, the annual State Fair of Texas with its carnival rides, delicious food, and exciting events offer something for everyone.
- **Fantasy Landing at Kiest Park:** Calling all little adventurers, ready for playtime? This inclusive playground is a dream come true, featuring kid-sized fun for all abilities. Slide down vented chutes, explore accessible ramps, or conquer the pull-up tunnels with assist bars. Brightly colored paths guide the way for visually impaired explorers, making sure everyone gets in on the fun.!

- **More Dallas Parks:** It's not all skyscrapers around here. Beyond the bustling downtown, you'll find over 20,000 acres of expansive green spaces. Pack a picnic and a book for a relaxing afternoon or explore the miles of trails on foot or bike. With 18 lakes and 17 parks to choose from, there's something for everyone.
 - **Main Street Garden**
 - **Reverchon Park**
 - **Katy Trail**
 - **Trinity River Audubon Center**
 - **Oak Cliff Nature Preserve**
 - **Indoor Playgrounds:** The Treefort at Watermark Church has a three-story structure for climbing and exploring, with free playtime on weekdays. Head to Prestonwood Kidz Indoor Playground near Dallas for a multi-level play area with free playtimes during the week (closed weekends). Finally, the Play Place at Galleria Dallas offers a rainforest-themed soft play area within the mall.
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Bonus:



Catch the Game:

- **Free Fan Days/Events:** Calling all sports fanatics! Catch the fever for FREE in Dallas, a city obsessed with its teams. Hit up one of the many sports bars and soak up the electric atmosphere alongside fellow fans – all without spending a dime on tickets (drinks and snacks sold separately, of course!). So grab your jersey (or team spirit!) and dive into the heart of Dallas' sports mania.

- **Dallas Cowboys**
- **Dallas Stars**
- **Dallas Mavericks**
- **Dallas Wings**
- **Texas Rangers**
- **FC Dallas**

Annual Festivals:

- **Deep Ellum Arts Festival:** Immerse yourself in the creative energy of Deep Ellum at this vibrant arts festival.
- **Earth Day Texas (Dallas or Oak Cliff):** Celebrate our beautiful planet at Earth Day Texas, with eco-friendly activities and a commitment to sustainability.
- **St. Patrick's Day Parade:** Put on your green and join the festive chaos of the St. Patrick's Day Parade - a Dallas tradition! (Note: some events within the parade might have fees).
- **Dallas Cinco de Mayo:** Fiesta time! Celebrate Mexican culture with music, dance, and delicious food at Dallas' Cinco de Mayo festivities.
- **Asian Festival:** Explore the rich tapestry of Asian cultures at this lively festival, filled with music, food, and traditional performances.
- **Chinese New Year in Dallas Arts District:** Ring in the Lunar New Year with dazzling performances and cultural experiences in the heart of the Dallas Arts District.
- **Easter in Lee Park:** Easter fun meets furry friends! Celebrate with festivities and a pup parade - costumes encouraged!
- **Cottonwood Art Festival:** Art lovers unite! Browse stunning pieces and soak up the creative vibes at this festival.

Remember to check websites or call ahead to confirm hours and any free admission days or times that may have changed.

About the Author: Kali Dunson, the Marketing Communications Specialist at Tour Texas, is a devoted Texan who believes that everything, from the irresistible chips and salsa to spontaneous adventures, is simply better in the Lone Star State. When she's not celebrating Texas, she cherishes quality time with her family of five and enjoys losing herself in the pages of a good book.