

ACTIVE CITIES

# We Have Liftoff

HOUSTON GETS A BAD RAP: FLAT, BORING, CONCRETE. THE FLAT PART? THAT'S TRUE. BUT THE REST COULDN'T BE MORE WRONG.

by **Chris Cohen**

## 1. Pull Some Plastic

Boulders are scarce around here, so get your send on at the **Texas Rock Gym** ([texasrockgym.com](http://texasrockgym.com)), then sign up for the two-day outdoor skills clinic so you're primed for a week-end of cragging in nearby Austin.

## 2. High Mileage

**Terry Hershey Park** and its mixed-use trail are for going long. "We use it for marathon training," says Mark Coleman, president of the Houston Striders. "It's 30 miles out and back. No matter what you're preparing for, you can get your distance."

## 3. Trail Mix

Some 10,000 people run in **Memorial Park** every day, and it's easy to see why: the 2.9-mile loop is a Strava test piece, there's a track for speed work, and trails allow you to escape asphalt. Bonus: it's not just for runners. Many of the trails are mountain-bike legal.

## 4. Breakfast

Bakeries don't typically have a chef who trained at El Bulli, but **Common Bond** ([wearecommonbond.com](http://wearecommonbond.com)) isn't a normal bakery. There's a yogurt parfait if you're feeling virtuous, and the duck breast with a soft-boiled egg on rye is great after a long run in Memorial Park.

## 8. Swamp Thing

Houston is a maze of 2,500 miles of jungle-like waterways, and the folks at **Bayou City Adventures** ([bayoucityadventures.org](http://bayoucityadventures.org)), in Buffalo Bayou Park, will rent you a SUP or kayak to explore them. If there are waves in Galveston, they'll also hook you up with a surfboard.

## 7. Rubber Side Down

With espresso machines and fridges full of beer, **Ham Cycles** ([hamcycles.com](http://hamcycles.com)) feels more like a clubhouse than a bike shop, but you can still get a brightly colored Cinelli or a cough-syrup-themed water bottle (a nod to the local rap scene).

## 6. Dinner

Houston is still full of steakhouses where oil barons wheel and deal while gnawing on cigars. But you can eat well without the artery impact, too. The best restaurant in town, **Oxheart**, ([oxhearthouston.com](http://oxhearthouston.com)) offers a six-course vegetable tasting menu infused with Indian and Japanese flavors.

## 5. Lunch

**The Hobbit Café** ([myhobbitcafe.com](http://myhobbitcafe.com)) opened in 1972, but the OG health-food spot has expanded its clientele beyond Middle Earth crunchies. (Paleos: the menu added meat in '78.) It's now a local classic. Try the Smaug's Delight, a turkey and avocado melt.