



## Off the Brochure Travel Guide: Salt Lake City, Utah



*Think Salt Lake City is destination reserved for Mormons and skiers?*

*Well, that's certainly a part of it, but Ann Cochran uncovers some unexpected gems in the "Crossroads of the West."*

*Join her as she explores everything from funky neighborhoods to ... craft brew pubs?*

Salt Lake City has dual mecca status: religious and athletic.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is based in and around glorious Temple Square and there are seven world-class ski resorts 30 to 45 minutes away, 11 within an hour's drive.

Utah's tourism slogan, "Life Elevated," couldn't be a more appropriate personification of its state capital.

Salt Lake City is orderly, clean, flowered and treed. The rugged Wasatch Mountains provide a movie-set backdrop for a vibrant downtown where broad boulevards and avenues are usually free of traffic. The valley is blessed with good weather—in the winter, daytime temperatures are usually above freezing, while the surrounding slopes are blanketed in dry powder.

The secret to Utah's fluffy snow (the average annual snowfall is an impressive 500 inches) is the vast lake and its proximity to mountains. Storms passing over the Great Salt Lake absorb its moisture and dump it on the mountains. The salty lake water contributes to the area snow's light powder consistency for nearby Alta, Brighton, Snowbird, and Solitude ski resorts.



Park City's slopes also benefit from this lake-effect snow but not as much as the closer-in Salt Lake resorts do. It isn't all downhill racing around Salt Lake: Brighton is popular with snowboarders, and Thousand Peaks is great for snowmobiling.

For more on Park City, Utah, check out [Sundance Film Festival Travel: When Hollywood Takes Over a Small Mountain Town](#). The Salt Lake City area is also a major center for [Adaptive & Accessible Hiking](#).

## OLYMPIC HERITAGE



In 2002, Salt Lake hosted the Winter Olympics, and the facilities are open to the public for tours, shows, rides and sports. The Utah Olympic Oval is located in Kearns, about 30 minutes from downtown.

At the Utah Olympic Park in Park City, you can fly along the world's steepest zipline at 50 miles an hour. The

Comet bobsled ride is billed as the most intense minute of your life. A trained pilot takes up to three passengers, reaching speeds up to 70 mph. The park's European-style alpine slide, the first in North America, is a steel track where riders experience what it's like to be a luge, skeleton or bobsled athlete. [www.utaholympicpark.com](http://www.utaholympicpark.com)



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## THE MORMON SCENE

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) has 13 million members worldwide, and Salt Lake's population is a bit over 50 percent LDS. There isn't an off-the-brochure way to tour its version of Vatican City, Temple Square, Utah's top tourist attraction. For all LDS sites in Salt Lake City, go to [www.lds.org/placestovisit](http://www.lds.org/placestovisit) and click on Utah, then Salt Lake City.

Private guides are not credentialed to conduct tours of Temple Square, but that doesn't mean you should miss it. Young missionaries serve as tour guides, and they do it in every language known to man. They are there to share the beautiful buildings and grounds, and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, but they do not press their gospel. Honest.





## BEER AND COCKTAILS



A surprise to many visitors, Salt Lake has long been home to numerous brew pubs, award-winning brewmasters (and mistresses) and fun nightlife. It's not a particularly surprising misconception, since Utah's population is majority (60 percent) LDS, and for decades there have been odd 'private club' liquor laws. Relief came in June 2009 when legislators passed sweeping changes to the state's liquor laws, eliminating the private club system.

Lagers and ales are brewed on site at **Squatters** ([www.squatters.com](http://www.squatters.com)), well known for creating new beers for every occasion. One of

the latest, called Hop Rising, is an unusually high 9 percent alcohol.

**Kristauf's Martini Bar** ([www.martinibarslc.com](http://www.martinibarslc.com)) on West Market Street has 80 martini varieties to choose from—including the crisp pear martini—and live music.

**Red Door** ([www.behindthereddoor.com](http://www.behindthereddoor.com)), often crowded and loud, is known for its cool vibe, edgy décor, loud live music, wine and martinis.

Meanwhile, **The Depot** ([www.depotslc.com](http://www.depotslc.com)) on West South Temple draws national acts and hosts theme parties. It accommodates 1,200 people in its four-story structure, the old Union Pacific railroad depot.

## COOL NEIGHBORHOOD: SUGAR HOUSE



One of the city's oldest neighborhoods, Sugar House is post-1950s bungalows, interesting restaurants, funky boutiques, antique stores and art studios. **Mountain Body** bills itself as an "herbal cosmetic dell and spa." A knowledgeable, friendly staff and well-edited selection of all types of books are highlights of **The King's English** ([www.kingsenglish.com](http://www.kingsenglish.com)), a

charming bookstore with creaking floors.

**Eggs in the City** is a converted garage with an open kitchen, friendly atmosphere, and great morning cuisine at reasonable prices. [www.eggsinthecityslc.com](http://www.eggsinthecityslc.com)

For lunch or dinner, Memphis or Cajun, try **SugarHouse Barbeque Company** on South 700 East, consistently voted the best barbecue in Utah. [www.sugarhousebbq.com](http://www.sugarhousebbq.com)

**The Paris Bistro** is more upscale, dinner only, with a menu inspired by Italian, French and Mediterranean cultures and an award-winning wine list, and a classic zinc bar. Conversions are popular in Salt Lake City, no pun intended: the bistro used to be a drug store with a soda fountain. [www.theparis.net](http://www.theparis.net)

## SHOPPING

### Gateway Center

[www.shopthegateway.com](http://www.shopthegateway.com)) is a mall filled with all the usual suspects, but also features many one-of-a-kind stores in Salt Lake: Sam Weller's is Utah's largest bookstore, for new and used books; Ken Sanders Rare Books has works by 19th-century Western explorers; at Anthony's Antiques, treasures include a marble statue created in 1858 for the palace of Napoleon III.



**Utah ArtistHands** ([www.utahands.com](http://www.utahands.com)) sells fine art, photography, pottery, glass, wood, jewelry, and more, made exclusively by local artists. **Q Street Fine Crafts** ([www.qstreetfinecrafts.com](http://www.qstreetfinecrafts.com)) has range, whether one is shopping for classy decorative items or a practical purchase.





The **Salt Lake City Public Library** is something to behold. A six-story curving, walkable wall hugs a public plaza. A multi-level reading area on the southern facade looks out onto stunning city views and the Wasatch Mountains. From the roof-top garden there's a 360-degree view of the Salt Lake Valley.

[www.slcppl.lib.ut.us](http://www.slcppl.lib.ut.us)

**Tracy Aviary**, one of two free-standing aviaries in the U.S., claims eight acres of land in the heart of Salt Lake City. Approximately 400 birds representing 135 species, many rare or endangered, cohabitate here. [www.tracyaviary.org](http://www.tracyaviary.org)

Asia comes to Utah at **The Kura Door**, a restful spa inspired by all things Japanese: baths, treatments, lanterns, artwork, furniture, garden and traditional tea room.

[www.thekuradoor.com](http://www.thekuradoor.com)

## DINING OUT

**Hires Big H** recently found its pastrami burger lauded in *The New York Times*. This is a favorite fast food joint known for classic burgers, fresh-cut fries, and, natch, Hires root beer.

[www.hiresbigh.com](http://www.hiresbigh.com)

For a more communal vibe, **One World Everybody Eats**, is a pay-what-you-can organic, vegan-friendly, buffet restaurant. Customers who can't pay can earn a meal by volunteering one hour; the clientele is diverse and appreciate the fresh food as well as the cause.

[www.oneworldeverybodyeats.org](http://www.oneworldeverybodyeats.org)

Long-time locals' favorite **Red Iguana** is one of the few Mexican restaurants anywhere that





Meanwhile, **The Metropolitan** wouldn't be out of place in Manhattan with its industrial-chic bar, open kitchen, and creative cuisine prepared by a team of chefs. The seasonally changing menu has far flung influences, the presentation is beautiful, and the food is well-reviewed. [www.themetropolitan.com](http://www.themetropolitan.com)

## COFFEE, TEA AND CHOCOLATE



Caffeine-addicts congregate at **Caffe d'Bolla** ([www.caffedbolla.com](http://www.caffedbolla.com)) for single-origin coffee, as well as great gelato and fine teas, or at Alchemy (801-322-0735), a small place with cool art, located next to a tattoo parlor for extra ambience.

Sweets-lovers get their fix at **Mini's Cupcakes**: the Twisted Sister has dark Belgian cake, dark chocolate frosting, and salty pretzel and caramel drizzle topping; the Doris Day, a buttery sweet yellow cake, is filled with house-made chocolate pudding and topped with fresh sweet cream. [www.mini-cupcakes.com](http://www.mini-cupcakes.com)

Bring home a taste of Salt Lake City from **C. Kay Cummings Candles** where recipes have been handed down for 80 years, but new creations keep things current. [www.finecandies.com](http://www.finecandies.com)

## GETTING AROUND

Bus and light-rail TRAX pass is only \$5 per day. (801-363-4646, [www.rideuta.com](http://www.rideuta.com).) The city is a grid, with Temple Square the center point. Streets are numbered in hundreds in relation to the Square, so 100 South is the first street south of Temple Square, and so on. Sometimes you will hear 100 South referred to as 1st South. The intersection of 500 E and 500 S would be Fifth East and Fifth South. The layout may seem confusing until you focus for a minute and get the hang of it.

*By Ann Cochran for PeterGreenberg.com. Ann is a freelance writer based in Washington, DC. Visit her on the Web at [www.annpcochran.com](http://www.annpcochran.com).*