

A Guide for the Sober-Curious: Finding Peace, Sobriety, and Solace in the Great Outdoors

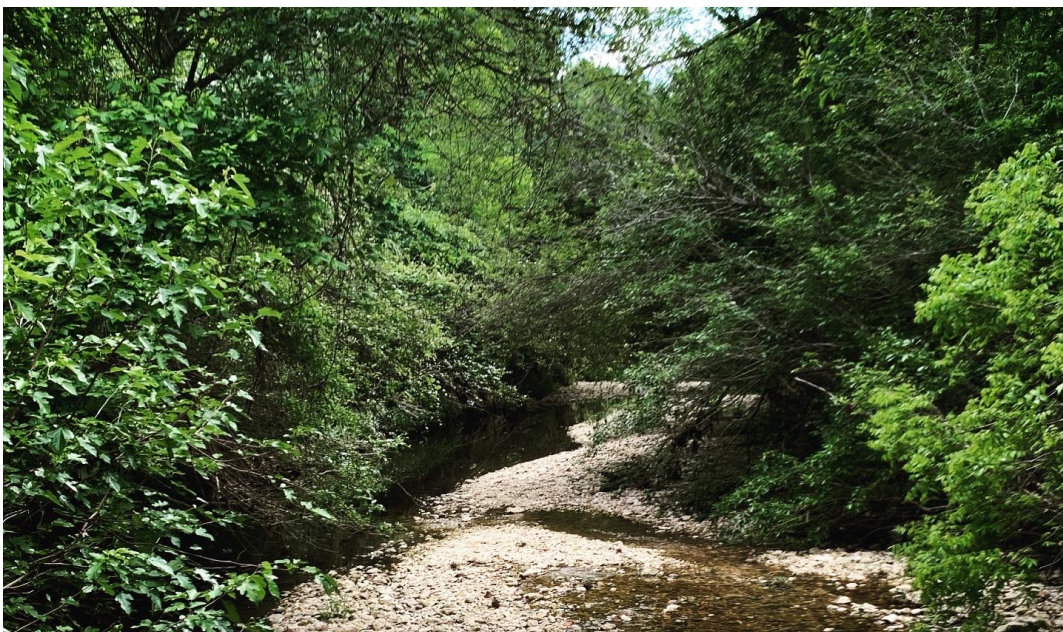
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For the rugged adventurer or athletic enthusiast, there's nothing that ruins a weekend more than a hangover. Choosing to abstain from the usual Friday margaritas after work—or decreasing how many you drink—is a choice that most outdoorsy folk won't regret, and it's a choice that will

allow your Saturday plans to flourish under the sun rather than melt under the covers. Whether you're a sober-curious individual who's looking to connect with nature or a newly sober adventurer looking for a hobby, there are plenty of outdoor activities in Austin to schedule for your Saturday morning as reason to put the margarita down. Here are three ideas to get you started on your journey.



1. Climb Mount Bonnell

While this suggestion may seem trite to the longtime Austinite, for the recently transplanted or the Austin veteran, climbing Mount Bonnell is a special and rewarding experience — even if you’ve already mastered the climb before. Open from 5AM to 10PM daily, this spot earns credit as one of Austin’s highest points at 781 feet ... which you can reach after the 102-stair climb. After an alcohol-free Friday night, what would be more rewarding than waking up to ascend this path while on your alcohol-free journey? Once you make it to the top, find a resting area to enjoy the beautiful views of Lake Austin (maybe while sipping on an NA beer or two) and relish in how refreshed your body feels and the work it did to make the climb.



2. Bike Riding in Mueller

When quitting or greatly decreasing alcohol intake, research shows that our dopamine levels drop, which can *add* stress and anxiety to our lives in those early sober days before alleviating it. One way to naturally increase dopamine levels is through exercise: This is because exercise

immediately changes our physical state, which can positively affect our mental state as well. So if you have a bike, air up the tires, clean the chains, and take it to Mueller Park. This beautiful park has miles of protected bike lanes—protected by concrete barriers that separate you from traffic—and dirt trails, depending on how you like to cycle and what kind of tires you have. Feeling the wind in your hair as you bike around this stunning 6.5-acre lake will be the highlight of your hangover-free morning and will get your dopamine going. Bonus: If you can make it on a Sunday morning, you may be able to enjoy the farmer’s market as well!



3. Kayaking on Lady Bird Lake

In 2014, marine biologist Dr. Wallace J. Nichols coined the term “The Blue Mind Effect” after studying the way our brains seem to release chemicals that make us feel at peace and happy when near water. His research showed that people entered a mildly meditative state just from being *near* water (or in it). For those on an alcohol-free journey, practicing meditation and finding ways to bring peace into our lives—especially if this journey is a new one—is an effective way to fill our time and our cups with something other than alcohol. Stop by one of the tried-and-true kayak stalls or paddle boarding rentals just off the lake to get your taste of the Blue Mind Effect. And after a long day on the water, stop by Sans Bar, Austin’s only fully alcohol-free bar, while you’re downtown.

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Making the transition to a sober lifestyle can be challenging, especially when first starting, but Austin has more than enough outdoor activities to keep your weekends busy and your mind motivated. Walk barefoot in Zilker Park, explore the Greenbelt, or play some tennis or pickleball at Austin Tennis Center. If you need some extra inspiration, follow Sober & Active - Austin on Instagram for some more ideas — your alcohol-free adventures await you!