

Austin

Deep in the heart of Texas sits a thriving oasis known as Austin. Daniela Nuñez has lived there her whole life. A self-described socially networked vegan and animal-rights activist, she has witnessed the increasing number of veg options and blossoming activism in her hometown. "Austin deserves to be called veg-friendly," she says.

"About five years ago, there were fewer vegan-friendly restaurants you could depend on," Nuñez reports. "Now we're seeing more choices for where to eat and where to connect with other vegans. We have a couple of all-vegan restaurants and food trucks, and it seems like I hear about new vegan options every day."

Like many cities, Austin hosts a rapidly expanding and popular Vegan Drinks meet-up. Recent outreach connected with several hundred people in conjunction with SXSW—Austin's premier music and film festival that is quickly becoming the most prominent of its kind in the country.

This capital city is more than a college town,



Whole Foods' ready-to-go vegan options.



but it's decidedly youth-centric. Surrounded on all sides by ranches and cowboy country, Austin breeds tough-skinned vegans whose hearts are full of compassion, like Nuñez, who concludes with this parting dictum: "Bacon-loving hipsters can kiss my vegan ass!"

Number of vegan restaurants: 7

Favorite local find: Counter Culture is an all-vegan and raw-foods trailer run by chef Sue Davis, who has veganized American favorites from Philly cheesesteaks to tuna

salad sandwiches. With raw desserts and an incredible Sunday brunch, what's not to love?

Why living here rocks: Home to the first-ever Whole Foods Market, which opened in 1980, you can find a healthy vegan culture here, smack in the middle of Texas. Vegans Rock Austin, a group formed in 2003, bolsters the cruelty-free community with bake sales, meet-ups, and parties.

Boston

With its concentration of colleges and a tradition of liberal thought, it seems surprising that it has taken so long for the vegetarian and vegan impact to reach Boston, but like pilgrims to nearby Plymouth, the ship has come in. Sure, it's always been there, lurking in compassionate shadows—the Boston Vegetarian Society was founded in 1986, Wheeler's Black Label Vegan Ice Cream began in 1987, and Grasshopper has been serving up Vietnamese vegan cuisine and hosting third Sunday buffets for as long as anyone can remember—but this year, animal-friendly New Englanders can really claim their city as their own.

Eric Prescott, who moved to Boston two-and-a-half years ago, notes the increase and diversification of veg restaurants, including Peace o' Pie, a gourmet vegan pizzeria he co-founded last fall. Prescott is also the president of the Boston Vegan Association, which offers "vegan community, activist education, and [an] outlet for animal-rights advocacy work."

For the best bubble tea of your life, don't miss My Thai Vegan Café, just across from Boston Common. Perhaps it's a bit too much to claim to make tofu from the legumes of Beantown, but it's nice to see that local patriots can have soymilk at their tea party.

Number of vegan restaurants: 8

Favorite local find: The Spike's Junkyard Dogs chain offers veggie dogs and burgers to go with its famously gigantic assortment of condiments.

Why living here rocks: The annual Boston Vegetarian Food Festival, now in its 15th year, is the longest-running, all-veg food festival in the country.



Strolling by the Charles River is tastier with a slice of vegan pie and bubble tea.

