MODERN MOCKTAILS:
a summer essential

Beauty in a beat:
FAST SUMMER LOOK FIXES

5 PLACES TO BURY
your nose in a book

bayou city

Experience it!



Tourist in Your Town



Ice cream as big as your head and 50+ other cool things to do this summer in the Bayou City.

> PAGE 55

Art *Attack*

From fine art to science to history, Houston's museums and galleries have got you covered.

> PAGE 68





The **Luxe** *Life*

Not just an enclave for Houston's most wealthy, River Oaks is a place anyone can enjoy a day of indulgence.

BY BETSY DENSON

The ultimate planned community before the phrase was even coined, River Oaks was the brainchild of Hogg brothers William and Michael, who established it in the 1920s. Lots in the new community went for about $2,000 a piece. Oh, to have a time machine.

Today, this tony area between downtown and Uptown has grown to more than 1,000 acres. And with housing values that start at $1 million, it is one of the most prestigious neighborhoods in the U.S. The almost 15,000 residents have the per capita income to match, with many well-known professionals and socialites among their ranks.

River Oaks is also a favorite spot among Houston food, fashion and art lovers. From fine dining, to posh boutiques, to distinctive art spaces, this historic and iconic Houston neighborhood has got it all.

SHOP

Looking for the perfect cocktail ring? Odds are it's waiting for you at **à bientôt** [2501 River Oaks Blvd.] in the expansive jewelry selection, accompanied by shoes, bags and clothing. If the ring you're after is of the engagement variety, stop in at **Reiner's Fine Jewelry** [2210 Westheimer], which started in 1918 in New Orleans, but has been in Houston 69 years. Gemologist Steven Reiner says the halo design is popular but he will do whatever design the customer wants.

A good book is always within reach at **River Oaks Bookstore** [3270 Westheimer], where co-owner and former journalist Jeanne Jard will give you coffee and a cookie to boot. A piano is a bigger investment, but those in the market should check out **Steinway Piano Gallery of Houston** [2001 W. Gray St.], where prices range from $5,000 to $150,000.

Find out what the interior designers already know by visiting **Carol Piper Rugs** [1809 W. Gray St.], where you can pick up a high-end antique carpet or a new rug, maybe from the store line made in India and Nepal.

At **Area** [3735 Westheimer], the customer service is a standout as is the eclectic mix of home furnishings. If it's you who needs refurbishment, head no further than **Sid Mashburn** and its sister store **Ann Mashburn** [2515 River Oaks Blvd.], where the apparel and accessories are just as swanky as the zip code.

SID MASHBURN/ANN MASHBURN | MARK LIPCZYNSKI

scan this page
to find these River Oaks luxe locales.







DINE

The sign at **Brenner's Steakhouse on the Bayou** (1 Birdsall St.) says it's been around since 1936, but it has occupied this bucolic spot since 2007. Come for the lobster bisque and whole stuffed quail, served with a bayou view.

Elouise Jones may have started delivery of brown sack lunches in the neighborhood, but now she's preparing to celebrate the 20th anniversary of **Ouisie's Table** (3939 San Felipe St.), showcasing her family's Southern fare. Offshoot **The Bird & The Bear** (2810 Westheimer) features more Mediterranean and Mexican influences and just introduced a new executive chef.

There's not a miss on the menu at the **Epicure Café** (2005 W. Gray St.) and that's especially true for the homemade chocolate pistachio ice cream. Their Salsa, Classical and Flamenco all-inclusive dinners are also a draw.

An unassuming storefront should not discourage a visit to **the Hot Bagel Shop** (2009 S. Shepherd Drive), where the jalapeño cream cheese will really put a skip in your step. **River Oaks Donuts** (3601 Westheimer) specializes in that circle of sugary goodness, but save room for a kolache, too.

What's the Union Jack doing on Shepherd Drive? Beckoning expats and anglophiles to the **Red Lion Pub** (2316 S. Shepherd Drive) for a pint and some fish and chips.

DO

It may not have all the bells and whistles of a new multiplex, but the Art Deco **River Oaks Theatre** (2009 W. Gray St.) built in 1939 does show all the films you can't see anywhere else. Consider channeling your inner Goth at their monthly "Rocky Horror Picture Show" extravaganza.

ROCO anyone? The **River Oaks Chamber Orchestra** (1973 W. Gray St.) is a 40-piece group that performs at venues around town, including St. John the Divine.

You may not be a member of the **River Oaks Country Club** (1600 River Oaks Blvd.), but if you know someone, you might be able to swing a round at their Donald Ross-designed golf course.

Date night, girls night out or something to occupy the kids this summer, **The Mad Potter** (1963 W. Gray St.) works for them all. Don't panic if you over paint. Even something that looks like a Rorschach test comes out of their kiln looking masterpiece-ish.

Midway between River Oaks and Montrose, **Stages Repertory Theatre** (3201 Allen Parkway) is an intimate venue that makes watching one of their innovative, oftentimes quirky, shows that much more enjoyable.

SEE

Not just a stop on the Christmas lights circuit, the **River Oaks** neighborhood is worth a drive anytime. Architectural historian Stephen Fox lists nearly 60 locales of architectural importance in the latest edition of the *AIA Architecture Guide*.

One area home open to the public is **Rienzi** (1406 Kirby Drive), which was left to the Museum of Fine Arts Houston (MFAH) by philanthropists Carroll Sterling Masterson and Harris Masterson III, along with their impressive collection of 18th-century European art.

The MFAH also maintains Ima Hogg's Latin Colonial home, now the **Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens** (6003 Memorial Drive). The grounds give backyard oasis a whole new meaning, while the comprehensive collection of American decorative art and paintings are a tactile history lesson.

A must for any history buff is a trip to **College Memorial Park** (3600 W. Dallas Ave.), one of Houston's three remaining African-American cemeteries. Get your fix of local and regional artists at the **Houston Arts Alliance** exhibition space (3201 Allen Parkway).

Lastly, you probably won't be able to hitch a ride to the ball at **River Oaks Park** (3600 Locke Lane), aka Pumpkin Park, but it does feature its own work of art: an iron replica of Cinderella's carriage.

MARK LIPCZYNSKI | PAUL HESTER