The first surprise that greets visitors to downtown Salt Lake City is the prodigious width of its thoroughfares and distance between intersections. Each block measures 10 square acres—the largest of any American city—so “just up the road” can mean a 20-minute walk. That’s because Utah’s capital originally was plotted in 1847 to accommodate homesteading Mormon families on farms of sufficient size. Founder Brigham Young, who led the settlers through the desert to escape persecution and served as the second president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) as well as the territory’s first governor, famously designed the streets so drivers could turn around their oxen carts “without resorting to profanity.”

Though cars have replaced covered wagons, the city remains surprisingly easy to navigate thanks to its well-regarded public transportation system. Equally remarkable is the abundance of fascinating things to see and do—from history to hiking to home brew—in this center of Mormon faith and culture. Blocks once devoted to single-family farms now brim with pioneering restaurants, subterranean speakeasies, a vibrant music and arts scene, and unique museums, such as the Family History Library, the world’s largest genealogical repository, with staffers ready to help trace your roots. The city also has grown more diverse; fewer than half the residents belong to the LDS Church, and there are sizeable communities of transplants from Latin America, Bosnia, Sri Lanka, and the Pacific island nations of Tonga and Samoa. All maintain SLC’s proud tradition of welcoming visitors to the “Crossroads of the West” with smiles as wide as its streets.
performances also are open to the public. Rehearsals move from the Tabernacle to the Conference Center. Sunday The choir holds an open practice on Thursdays from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., rehearsal or performance of the world-famous Mormon Tabernacle Choir. any time of the day or night. For the full Temple Square experience, catch a sentiment they have here. There really is a sense of industriousness and cohesive teamwork that I relate to, even though I'm not religious.” A stroll around the picturesque grounds makes for a memorable excursion Reminders of Utah’s nickname—the Beehive State—crop up on virtually every corner. Highway signs are shaped like hives and there are beehive pavers in the sidewalks. At day’s end, The Beehive bar (2117 Penn Avenue) will welcome you for a drink. That buzz of enterprise—the University of Utah was ranked No. 1 for entrepreneurship programs last year—appeals to many engineers, especially those at the U, as the state’s flagship institution is known locally. The College of Engineering is known as much for the diversity of its programs as it is for its notable contributions to the field. Edwin Catmull, Pixar’s founder, honed his graphics chops in the U’s computer science labs. The world’s first implanted artificial heart was invented there, as were the Frisbees that students toss around the quad between classes. The university also boasts the country’s only chemical engineering makerspace, an 840-square-foot chemistry lab that also contains machining tools and an electrical and sensor bench. The lab recently made up 150 sensors that they will distribute across the city to create an air-quality heat map of the city. Another signature space is the new Lassonde Entrepreneur Institute dorm. While technically hosted through the business school, the living-learning community is open to students from all disciplines, including engineering and fine arts. The first floor is a massive makerspace, complete with tool vending machines, business development advisors, and legal services offices. All other floors are living spaces where entrepreneurial-minded students can crash after a day of brainstorming start-up ideas. The campus also houses several exceptional museums. At the Natural History Museum, a state-university partnership, visitors walk over, under, and through fully completed dinosaur skeletons in dynamic poses. The researchers also are on display, viewable in their labs as they meticulously separate soil from fossils. There’s more to experience than old bones, however. This summer, the museum will feature an exhibit on the living creatures that are animals, explaining how crocodile jaws work, for example, and how a giraffe’s heart can pump blood to great heights. Engineers interested in biomimicry will not want to miss this! Right next door are the Red Butte Gardens, perfect for a stroll through the mountains. Among the artful and winding paths are the unexpectedly beautiful and hardy plants and animals that call the inhospitable desert home. Most startling (and for some, frightening) is the children’s garden riddled with snakes, where kids can frolic in water fountains that erupt from the mouths of six rattlesnakes and play hide-and-seek through the fanged mouth and gullet of a giant topiary serpent. Signs warn that visitors may encounter real snakes, too, and what to do if they spot one. (Hint: don’t pick it up.) Temple Square, home of the Mormon Tabernacle and headquarters of the Church of Latter-day Saints, forms Salt Lake City’s geographical core—literally. All streets reference their distance from the fountain-filled gardens and soaring spires that occupy the center of grid. Thus, the first street south of the square is 100 South, three blocks east of the square is 300 East, and so forth. “They wanted you to know just how far you were from God at any given point,” jokes Laura Podratz, an adjunct professor of geography and geology at Westminster College and Salt Lake Community College. “But seriously, I identify with the beehive Podratz, an adjunct professor of geography and geology at Westminster College and Salt Lake Community College. “But seriously, I identify with the beehive Podratz, an adjunct professor of geography and geology at Westminster College and Salt Lake Community College. “But seriously, I identify with the beehive Podratz, an adjunct professor of geography and geology at Westminster College and Salt Lake Community College. “But seriously, I identify with the beehive Podratz, an adjunct professor of geography and geology at Westminster College and Salt Lake Community College. “But seriously, I identify with the beehive Podratz, an adjunct professor of geography and geology at Westminster College and Salt Lake Community College. “But seriously, I identify with the beehive Podratz, an adjunct professor of geography and geology at Westminster College and Salt Lake Community College. “But seriously, I identify with the beehive Podratz, an adjunct professor of geography and geology at Westminster College and Salt Lake Community College. “But seriously, I identify with the beehive Podratz, an adjunct professor of geography and geology at Westminster College and Salt Lake Community College. “But seriously, I identify with the beehive
sessions. Three of its five miles of trails follow City Creek itself. One path eventually leads to a wilderness sanctuary in the north corner of Memory Grove Park, which features a multi-ton temple and memorials to Utahans who lost their lives to war. The state capitol building, with its sweeping views, is a quick, but steep, climb from the park.

The capitol building itself is the recent beneficiary of a great feat of engineering. Retrofitting it with seismic shock absorbers “Geologists think that a major earthquake is overdue in Salt Lake City,” explains Westminster College’s Podratz, and the building sits almost directly on the Wasatch Fault. The state worked with local firms to help retrofit the capitol in preparation for a magnitude-7.3 earthquake in 2004. The $260 million renovation, the first of its kind, entailed removing and replacing the capitol’s entire foundation and installing a base isolation system. “When I toured the project, saw its scale and learned of its cost, I asked whether it would have been less trouble and expense to replace the capitol’s entire foundation and installing a base isolation system.”

Because of the city’s wide-open spaces, it can be deceptively hard to walk everywhere. If you do, you’ll be treated to scenic views—and definitely make your step count for the day! Otherwise, consider renting a car, especially if you wish to make the trek to Park City—or any of the other Utah ski resorts that offer summer entertainment, such as wildflower hikes, scenic chair lift rides, and zip-lining. For the more fitness-minded, the GREENbike offers such as wildflower hikes, scenic chair lift rides, and zip-lining. For the more fitness-minded, the GREENbike offers

SLC is a foodie paradise, full of tempting fare that is fresh, local, and often unique. Eva’s Bakery should be the first stop for those who need a kick of sugar to jumpstart their morning. The pastries at this traditional French boulangerie are to die for, particularly its specialty, the Kouign- amann (pronounced QUEEN-ah-mahn). These caramelized vanilla bean croissants take a full day to make, and that is reflected in the taste. If you’re near the University of Utah, start your day at Eggs in the City. Their stick-to-your-ribs menu features flavorful cinnamon roll pancakes and orders of huevos rancheros bigger than your head.

The Red Iguana is Mexican food like you’ve never tasted before—more Aztec than Tex-Mex. Their specialty is mole of all different types. While chocolate mole is the best-known and most traditional type, the Red Iguana’s chefs’ creativity also extends to red, green, and yellow mole based in chili and pumpkin seeds, poblanos, and golden raisins, respectively. One notable special: a strawberry mole that tastes sweet, savory, and spicy. “I was surprised when a friend from Austin, Texas said that he comes to Salt Lake City when he wanted great Mexican food,” says engineering dean Brown. “The Red Iguana is definitely a dive, but it’s the best Mexican food you can find.” Expect a long line out the door, but the wait is worth it—so much so, a second restaurant, the Red Iguana 2, opened a few blocks away with the same menu. Or, sample a fast-food version at the Taste of the Red Iguana across from the Salt Palace conference center.

For a high-end meal, head to Valter’s Osteria, an authentic Italian restaurant that transports you to Valter Nassi’s family kitchen in Tuscany. The setting is white linens with fresh flowers and glinting stemware, but the vibe far from snooty. “We put together color, taste, and quality.” It is beautiful!” says Nassi, who has been cooking in SLC for 20 years and welcomes you like family.

Squatter’s Pub is an iconic SLC staple. While the beers are bottled and sold throughout the state, they are best tasted in-house with a giant pile of messy wings or the pub’s signature black-and-blue burger. Built in 1989, Squatter’s is older than many of its customers and a hub of urban social life. “I recommend the Hop Rising ale because hops are very in right now” says Jessica Means, a bartender there for 15 years. “But I also think everyone should try the Immigration Amber. It was the first brew we made in 1989.”

For culinary (and environmental) adventure, explore The Rest. The quirky upscale speakeasy is hidden beneath Bodega, a tiny dive bar that caters to a “primarily younger crowd,” says owner Sara Lund. There they offer shots and Tecate beer for $2. Bodega has a pinball machine and a few tables, but really, “the design was a glorified waiting room for The Rest.” Indeed, the entrance to the secret speakeasy is a nondescript door in the middle of the room with a flickering neon sign that reads: The Restroom—but “room” is burned out. Once inside, the décor turns decidedly…odd. Outfitted like an eccentric rich uncle’s library, full of mounted wild game, oil paintings, and carved wooden sculptures, The Rest offers creative craft cocktails and an ever-changing menu that is never online. One season, the food might follow a Southern Contemporary American theme; the next, it could be Scandinavian fare. No matter what, Lund hopes her diners will find the experience surprising—and emerge with a story.

For works by local artisans and a bit of antiques that cluttered their home. The tiny business was started when Dee Jackmon’s wife forced him to get rid of the thousands of antiques that filled their home. “The tiny shop bursts at the seams with airplanes and action figures, old-time cameras, and kites. A jumbled tool section at the back has levers and pulleys and oddments for measuring wagon wheels. For such a small store, it’s easy to get lost!”

Jitterbug is Ken Sanders Rare Books, a giant maze of used and antique tomes interspersed with couches and chair. The side of the building encourages passers-by to “come in and remember what a book smells like.” It’s the perfect place to sit down and find a lost world. For works by local artisans and a bit of antiques that cluttered their home. The tiny business was started when Dee Jackmon’s wife forced him to get rid of the thousands of antiques that filled their home. “The tiny shop bursts at the seams with airplanes and action figures, old-time cameras, and kites. A jumbled tool section at the back has levers and pulleys and oddments for measuring wagon wheels. For such a small store, it’s easy to get lost!”

Just around the corner from Jitterbug is Kinds Rare Books, a giant maze of used and antique tomes interspersed with couches and chair. The side of the building encourages passers-by to “come in and remember what a book smells like.” It’s the perfect place to sit down and find a lost world. For works by local artisans and a bit of antiques that cluttered their home. The tiny business was started when Dee Jackmon’s wife forced him to get rid of the thousands of antiques that filled their home. “The tiny shop bursts at the seams with airplanes and action figures, old-time cameras, and kites. A jumbled tool section at the back has levers and pulleys and oddments for measuring wagon wheels. For such a small store, it’s easy to get lost!”

Whether your tastes run to high fashion or Trippery, Salt Lake City’s shops have you covered. Directly across from the Salt Palace, the upscale City Creek Center features luxury brands including Tiffany & Co. and Porsche Design. The mall’s most interesting attraction, however, is the water. A stream flows through it, with City Creek trout that the public can feed on Saturdays. There is also a dancing fountain that spouts in time to music and lights, making the mall a fun destination for sightseers as well as shoppers.