

Texas Monthly

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Street Smarts
A QUICKIE GUIDE TO . . .



Marfa

This out-of-the-way retreat turned West Texas hot spot still buzzes, thanks to new shops and old standbys.

BY KRISTIE RAMIREZ



The Thunderbird Hotel

1. THE THUNDERBIRD HOTEL

Spare but chic sums up this refurbished motor court. A cowhide rug, a wood-and-metal table, and a single framed art poster is the extent of the interior decor, but you never feel deprived of accoutrements. After a day of sightseeing, take a splash in the pool or walk across the street to the office, where you'll find a wine bar and free Wi-Fi. Before leaving, stock up on lollipops embedded with scorpions and tin votives from the gift shop. **601 W. San Antonio, 432-729-1984, thunderbirdmarfa.com**

2. COCHINEAL

Grab a copy of the Sunday *New York Times* around the corner at the Get Go grocery—the only place in town to buy one—then come here to eat and read your morning away in the minimalist courtyard. A table inside is set up with help-yourself coffee, cream, and sugar, but the rest of the menu is full-service. Try the fluffy egg-white omelet or the sourdough French toast with powdered sugar and maple syrup. Either will keep you satiated for a day of gallery hopping. **107 W. San Antonio, 432-729-3300**

3. THE PIZZA FOUNDATION

Housed in a former gas station, this pizza joint was one of the first in a wave of restaurants opened by East Coasters who now call this speck of a town home. Saarin Keck and her staff turn out made-from-scratch slices with a thin crust that is both satisfyingly chewy and crisp. Even those on a pie-free diet can take part by ordering the yummy spinach salad topped with warm bacon, blue cheese, and tangy balsamic dressing. **100 E. San Antonio, 432-729-3377, pizzafoundation.com**

CORN IN A CUP, MAIYA'S (\$5)



Best Bite
Wish List



Little Big Bend, Marfa Book Company (4) \$34.95



Copper necklace, Fancy Pony Land (7) \$68



Marfa Brand glassware, JM Dry Goods (8) four for \$30

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Ballroom Marfa

4. MARFA BOOK COMPANY

Before an abundance of galleries and restaurants transformed downtown, this bookstore was the place to gather and socialize—and it still is. Proprietor Tim Johnson stocks weighty coffee-table books, collections of poetry, and best-sellers, but a big draw is the selection of reads dedicated to Texas history and culture. A regular rotation of musicians traveling between gigs stops in to play sets in the evenings. **105 S. Highland Ave., 432-729-3906, marfabookco.com**

5. MAIYA'S

Weathered locals, tattooed transplants, and young road-trippers make up the lively group of hungry patrons who gather at this seven-year-old establishment for the eclectic Italian- and Mexican-influenced menu. The Corn in a Cup app updates Mexico's street-style esquites by adding a dash of cayenne, a spritz of lime, and a sprinkle of Parmesan, and the penne pesto trades predictable pine nuts for hearty walnuts. After dinner sit at the concrete bar and down a Tequila Cooler, the restaurant's take on the traditional Paloma, made with fresh grapefruit

juice instead of grapefruit soda. **103 N. Highland Ave., 432-729-4410, mayasrestaurant.com**

6. BALLROOM MARFA

If there is any standard to which art galleries should strive, this is it. Two large exhibition spaces showcase contemporary art in all its media, from visual and performance art to music and film. The influential board of trustees—actress and producer Allison Sarofim and sculptor Leo Villareal are both members—equals access to nationally and internationally acclaimed artists who normally reserve their work for big-city shows. **108 E. San Antonio, 432-729-3600, ballroommarfa.org**

7. FANCY PONY LAND

Part studio, part boutique, this hub of creativity is owner Lorna Leedy's fashion design paradise. Her custom-made clothing and jewelry are playful nods to the West Texas landscape: Skirts and shirts are emblazoned with vinyl and leather appli-

ques of roadrunners, ocotillos, and armadillos, while necklaces made of cascading copper discs are forged from dozens of pennies flattened on a nearby railroad track. **203 E. San Antonio, 432-729-1850, fancyponyland.com**

8. JM DRY GOODS

Named after owner Michelle Teague's son, Jack Maverick, this vintage-clothing and gift store is filled with carefully selected finds that provide a peek into border-town style. Utilitarian Levi's, broken-in cowboy boots, and old embroidered Mexican wedding dresses can make anyone look (and feel) like a local. Teague rounds out the apparel with friend Ginger Griffice's Marfa Brand, a line of herbal-scented soaps and souvenir-worthy glassware crafted from recycled Topo Chico bottles the ladies haul back from their trips to Ojinaga. **107 S. Dean, no phone, jmdrygoodsmarfa.com**

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Take a virtual tour of Marfa.