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BEST COOL SPOTS IN THE BURBS

Even though you know the suburbs are dangerous places with lousy schools and not enough cars, sometimes circumstances dictate that you live, or at least visit, one of Dallas' ring cities. For those times, here's your best chance at finding something approximating big-city culture.

CITY				
GRAPEVINE	McKINNEY	PLANO	SOUTHLAKE	FRISCO
DESCRIPTION				
A vibrant, bustling center filled with sophisticated shops, galleries, music clubs, boutiques, and wineries. Shocking, but true.	Full of old-fashioned charm the historic parts of McKinney seem wonderfully at odds with the go-go growth and pre-fab development of the rest of Collin County.	Long derided as a soulless wonderland, Plano is now a mature city with pockets full of funky finds.	No longer just McMansions set atop farmland, Southlake now has a burgeoning town square. And, you may have heard, a football team.	It's the new Plano, embodying all our fears of plastic suburban life and our secret jealousies of cheap new homes and good schools.
EATING				
Bob's Steak & Chop House. Also planned in G-vine are new locations for Cuba Libre, Fireside Pies, and Coal Vines. 1255 S. Main St. 817-481-5555.	Café Malaga. Offers a surprisingly sophisticated and refreshing take on Mediterranean fare. 111 W. Virginia St. 972-542-9996.	Jasper's is a first-class rendition of Kent Rathbun's Abacus that has drawn the attention of the area's foodierati. 7161 Bishop Rd. 972-673-0873.	The Feed Store. The ribs fall off the bone at the first tear of the teeth. The Friday night we dined, Pat Summerall sat just behind us. 530 S. White Chapel. 817-488-1445.	Kotta Sushi Lounge. In the new Shops at Starwood, the Zen lounge, terrific sushi, and selection of hot and cold sakes make this a Friday night staple. 6959 Lebanon Rd., Ste. 108. 214-705-0090.
DRINKING				
Off the Vine...Into the Glass. You can buy and sample great wine here. 324 S. Main St. 817-421-1091.	Poppy's Garden Café has a great wine list to complement its eclectic New American menu. 107 S. Church St. 972-562-8386.	Olea Mediterranean Restaurant is a wonderful Mediterranean bistro that has a fantastic wine list. 4809 Preston Rd., Ste. 578. 972-378-0203.	X's and O's Tavern. The only bar we could find that wasn't really a restaurant, and it's darkly lit and leather-furnished, just like we like it. 1239 Main St. 817-251-6776.	Josephine's Wine Bar and Bistro. Great selection of fine wine, available (as we prefer them) by the flight. Private wine room and wireless connection. 6959 Lebanon Rd., Ste. 114. 972-712-4343.
SHOPPING				
The Red Shed Cottage & Antiques is a great place to find shabby chic "trash to treasure" creations. 317 Church St. 817-310-6006.	Doug & Lynda's Ski Shop offers more than 10,000 square feet of cool winter shopping, with tons of mitts and coats for kids. 227 E Louisiana St. 972-542-0214.	Barbwire Western Couture. Located in the Shops at Legacy, this Arizona-Texas store has kickin' designer jeans for every butt imaginable. 7205 Bishop Rd. 214-473-9473.	Owl's Nest Toys. How fitting to have a locally owned toy shop in the best town to raise a family. 1220 Prospect St. 817-251-0155.	Little Heiress. Okay, so all the cool places in Frisco are at Starwood, including this decadent kid's clothing store for the tragically hip, spoiled love of your life. 6959 Lebanon Rd., Ste. 103. 214-432-1612.
ENTERTAINMENT				
Tin Spirits. Live blues and jazz rule the entertainment calendar in this area the owner calls "the new Deep Ellum." 814 S. Main St. 817-310-3211.	Heard Natural Science Museum and Wildlife Sanctuary. An entirely private reserve of trails, habitats, and exhibits. 1 Nature Place. 972-562-5566.	Plano Symphony. Next month get your suburban culture on with a Tchaikovsky spectacular. 7317 Preston Rd. 972-473-7262.	Dragon Stadium. On a Friday night, people turn out for Southlake football games in droves. They arrive at 4 in the afternoon to grill and some stay long after the game. 1085 S. Kimball Ave. 817-949-8300.	Dr Pepper Ballpark. Where else? This classic, gorgeous home of the Frisco RoughRiders is a destination for families hours away. 7725 Gaylord Pkwy. 972-731-9200.