



**TRAVEL** BY TAMMIE DOOLEY

## OKLAHOMA CITY AFTER HOURS

*The state's capital city is just a few hours away. Try these dining and entertainment suggestions for a where-the-locals-go look at Tulsa's sister city.*

**IT'S OUR** capital city and as interesting and beautiful a capital city as there is.

And if you doubt it, then you've not had a good look around Oklahoma City. For there you'll find all the appeal of a city that teeters masterfully on the fine line dividing mass-produced modernity and swashbuckling American individualism.

And maybe no time is more conducive to the discovery of the city's unique treasures as the hours that bookend the day.

So you've seen Bricktown. But have you walked the grounds of the Capitol at daybreak? Nosed around downtown after dark until you found the tucked-away treasures of the "Curious Organism," "1889" and "Galaxy" sculptures? Stood in the middle of the massive Land Run bronzes at sunset imagining the choke of dust kicked up at the start? Snooped and sniffed until you stumbled upon the underground tunnel entrances? Or watched in the hushed silence of night the twinkling lights of hope that illuminate the chairs at the Oklahoma City National Memorial?

No? Then head over for a weekend, book a room downtown, and stroll.

### OKLAHOMA CITY'S LITTLE BLACK BOOK

#### Where to eat

These restaurants top my list of places that offer a combination of fantastic food and captivating environments.

**Cheever's Café.** I never visit Oklahoma City without a meal at Cheever's. If there is no time for Cheever's, the trip can't be justified. Some establishments instill that sort of devotion by



**Automobile Alley in downtown Oklahoma City is home to art galleries, upscale lofts, offices and eateries.**

Candi Coffman

doing something repeatedly that few can emulate – they earn it. I have three menu favorites from which I can't break away. The chicken tortilla soup has no equal. During the most recent feast, the chef shared the recipe with me (see sidebar on p. 100). The roasted quail short stack consists of farm-raised quail layered between corn tortillas with an ancho chili sauce and Mexican cheeses – all baked and topped with avocado salsa verde. Mixed seafood tamales suspend large chunks of shrimp, lobster, halibut and scallops in

a handmade sweet potato masa drizzled with a sublime ancho cream. Decadent. There's a technique to eating these – don't be shy about asking your waiter. Portions are generous. (405) 525-7007, 2409 N. Hudson Ave., [www.cheeverscafe.com](http://www.cheeverscafe.com)

**Nic's Grill.** For under \$10, you'll have the cheeseburger experience of a lifetime. No superlatives can do this culinary experience justice. With only enough space to seat 15 people, the line forms outside well before owner **Justin Nicholas**

begins spreading lunchtime smiles at 11 a.m. (Nic's opens at 7 a.m. for breakfast). Be early, or wait around until closer to the 2 p.m. closing. And if you order the burger for takeout, be prepared to eat it in your parked car – that's as far as you'll get. Nic's was featured on the Food Network's hit series "Diners, Drive-ins and Dives."

1201 N. Pennsylvania Ave., (405) 524-0999. There are no call-aheads for takeout orders and Nic takes off weekends. Call in sick and head over.

**Metro Wine Bar & Bistro.** Go for the bread. Try to maintain room for the food. And if you're part of the early-evening crowd, ask the waiter when you walk through the door to put the bread in the oven. My pick for a special dinner.

6418 N. Western Ave., (405) 840-9463, [www.metrowinebar.com](http://www.metrowinebar.com)

**Rococo Restaurant.** Start at the bar gazing at the gargantuan jar of pineapple slices steeping in vodka and proceed from there to the Fisherman's Stew.

2824 N. Pennsylvania Ave., (405) 528-2824, [www.rococo-restaurant.com](http://www.rococo-restaurant.com)

**Iron Starr Barbeque.** Try the pulled pork sandwich (topped with coleslaw) or the bacon-wrapped quail breast. And no matter the entrée, order the side of fried okra. The small, tender pods are fried whole.

3700 N. Shartel Ave., (405) 524-5925, [www.ironstarrbbq.com](http://www.ironstarrbbq.com)

**Deep Deuce Grill** (as opposed to the Deep Fork Grill – also good). Cozy gas lamps. In the historic Deep Deuce hotel and historic jazz district.

307 N.E. Second St., (405) 235-9100, [www.deepdeucegrillokc.com](http://www.deepdeucegrillokc.com)

The bronze "1889" sculptures near the Oklahoma River depict the Land Run that put Oklahoma on the map.



Tammie Dooley

## Where to stay

Downtown is still what sets our major cities apart, and Oklahoma City is no exception. Stay downtown and wander around after dark. There are unimaginable surprises. Bricktown is but one.

The **Colcord Hotel** became Oklahoma City's first skyscraper when **Charles Francis Colcord** built it in 1910. Ninety-six years later, a \$16 million renovation by The Coury Collection transformed the 12-floor building into an upscale boutique hotel. Large-scale construction was going on in an adjacent lot when I visited in late March. Ask about it before you book a room.

15 N. Robinson Ave., (405) 601-4300, [www.colcordhotel.com](http://www.colcordhotel.com)

The historic **Skirvin Hilton Hotel** is on the National Register of Historic Places and garners AAA's four-diamond rating. 1 Park Ave., (405) 272-3040, [www.hilton.com](http://www.hilton.com)

**Marriott's Renaissance Convention Center Hotel** is another AAA four-diamond hotel in the heart of downtown.

10 N. Broadway Ave., (800) 468-3571, [www.renaissanceoklahomacity.com](http://www.renaissanceoklahomacity.com)

The **Sheraton Hotel** is consistent, modern and an excellent value. Nice people at the front desk.

1 N. Broadway Ave., (405) 235-2780, [www.sheratonokc.com](http://www.sheratonokc.com)

## What to see in downtown OKC/surrounding area

### SIGHTS WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF THE HOTELS AT LEFT:

**Oklahoma City Museum of Art.** Closed Monday; open 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Tuesday-Saturday; 10 a.m.-9 p.m., Thursday; noon-5 p.m., Sunday. Cocktails on the Skyline in the Museum Café, 5-10:30 p.m., Thursday evenings in May through October. 415 Couch Drive, (405) 236-3100, [www.okcmoa.com](http://www.okcmoa.com)

**Chihuly Glass Sculpture, "The Eleanor Blake Kirkpatrick Memorial Tower."** Dale Chihuly's largest permanent exhibit can be found at the Oklahoma City Museum of Art (see above). At 10 tons and 55 vertical feet of writhing, jewel-colored blown glass by world-renowned glass sculptor Chihuly, the tower piece is illuminated 24 hours a day. Best appreciated by night.

**The Underground.** A three-quarter-mile tunnel system that links 16 blocks and more than 30 buildings in downtown. The original tunnel link was built in 1931 because **William Balse Skirvin** wanted to have an underground passage from his Skirvin Hotel on one side of Broadway to his new hotel, The Skirvin Towers, on the other side. Most of the remaining system was developed in the 1970s. The Invited Artists Gallery sits beneath the intersection of North Robinson and Robert S. Kerr avenues with entrances from all adjacent buildings.

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## Public art

- **"1889."** Dedicated in 1960 and commissioned by the Kerr McGee Corp., this bronze inspires. At the intersection of North Robinson Avenue and Couch Drive. The "Galaxy" is right across the street.
- **"Galaxy."** Fourteen tons of "Lieberman Red" sculpture. Leadership Square.
- **Air Force Monument.** Erected in 1964, the monument pays tribute to the U.S. Air Force. Visit it in Couch Park, located between Broadway and Robinson avenues at Robert S. Kerr, adjacent to Kerr Park.
- **"The Curious Organism."** Created to pique the public's curiosity about The Underground (see p. 99). The tentacles extend more than 100 feet into the tunnel system. Northeast corner of North Broadway and Robert S. Kerr avenues.

### SIGHTS REQUIRING SHORT DRIVES FROM DOWNTOWN HOTELS

**State Capitol.** Check out the oil wells and the 17-foot-tall bronze Native American statue, "The Guardian," on top of the dome honoring Oklahoma's Native American heritage. 2300 N. Lincoln Blvd., (405) 522-0836, [www.oklahomadome.com](http://www.oklahomadome.com)

**Oklahoma Centennial Land Run Monument.** A must-see. Moving. Southern edge of Bricktown on the canal (far side of Bass Pro Shops' parking lot). [www.crownartsinc.com](http://www.crownartsinc.com)

**Oklahoma National Memorial and Museum.** The memorial and museum are dedicated to educating visitors about the impact of the Oklahoma City bombing and inspiring hope and healing through lessons learned by those affected. 620 N. Harvey Ave., 888-542-4673, [www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org](http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org)

**Automobile Alley** A popular retail district in the 1920s, Automobile Alley was home to



Tammie Dooley

**Visit Oklahoma's state Capitol building to see oil wells and the 17-foot-tall bronze statue "The Guardian" on top of the dome.**

most of the city's car dealerships. Today a stroll through the area will take you past the art deco architecture tucked away in galleries, upscale lofts and offices.

**North Broadway Avenue from West Park Place (just north of 10th Street) to Northwest Fourth Street, [www.automobilealley.org](http://www.automobilealley.org)**

## Where to shop

**The Paseo Arts District.** Located at 28th Street and North Walker Avenue to 30th Street and North Dewey Avenue, this is the oldest arts district community in Oklahoma City. The Spanish-style architecture is home to a vibrant group of artists with substantial involvement and support from the larger community. They continue to build the district into one of the most creative art venues in the country. The Paseo is home to 17 galleries and more than 60 artists, all within walking distance. Intermingled with the galleries are restaurants, a coffee house, clothing boutiques, a gift shop, yoga studio and graphic arts studio. (405) 525-2688, [www.thepaseo.com](http://www.thepaseo.com)

**Nichols Hills Plaza.** This high-end shopping center is located minutes away from downtown Oklahoma City and Bricktown. 6484 Avondale Drive, Nichols Hills; (405) 842-6558

**50 Penn Place.** The most notable address in Oklahoma

City, this three-story building is filled with shops and restaurants both familiar and unusual. 1900 Northwest Expressway, (405) 848-7588, [www.50pennplace.info](http://www.50pennplace.info)

**Penn Square Mall.** The one and only and still slightly infamous. Intersection of Pennsylvania Avenue and Northwest Expressway. (405) 842-4424

**The Consortium.** Home items. Clothing. 4415 N. Western Ave., (405) 602-5005

## Just for the night vibe

**"Cocktails on the Skyline" in the Museum Café.** See address and hours on p. 99 for the Oklahoma City Museum of Art.

**La Baguette at the Colcord Hotel.** Now incorporates the Oyster Bar. 15 N. Robinson Ave., (405) 601-3800

**Interurban Express** Great for lunch or after-work-hour cocktails.

Hours: 11 a.m.-8 p.m.; kitchen open until 6:30 p.m. 204 N. Robinson Ave., (405) 235-4448, [www.iucityexpress.com](http://www.iucityexpress.com)

**Makers Cigar Lounge.** Home to a hidden, quiet cigar lounge with leather couches and dark-paneled walls. Visit for after-dinner drinks or just a place to relax. 25 S. Oklahoma Ave., (405) 606-9000 [www.makerscigarlounge.com](http://www.makerscigarlounge.com)

**Nonna's Purple Bar.** Fun. Different from anything you've seen.

1 Mickey Mantle Drive on the second floor of Nonna's Restaurant; (405) 235-4410; [www.purplebarokc.com](http://www.purplebarokc.com) ■

## Cheever's Café chicken tortilla soup from Head Chef Ryan Lawson

1/2 of a yellow onion  
Olive oil  
2 1/2 cans (16 ounces) diced tomatoes  
4-ounce can green chilies  
3/4 pound cream cheese  
Chili powder  
Salt  
Cumin  
Cayenne  
Minced garlic  
1 bay leaf  
1 pound diced cooked chicken plus 1 1/2 quarts chicken stock

### METHOD:

Sauté the onions in the olive oil. Add tomatoes, green chilies and spices to taste. Simmer for 20 minutes. Add cream cheese and gently bring to a boil. Mash the mixture to fully incorporate ingredients. Add the chicken stock and bring to boil. Simmer for 10 more minutes. Garnish with fried tortilla strips.