

12 HOURS IN SALT LAKE CITY

CLEAN CITY FUN
BY RAY COLLINS

WAYS TO ROCK A STAYCATION
RIGHT IN YOUR OWN DOWNTOWN
RAY COLLINS

I'm the kind that likes to make the most of vacations, jam as much as I can into one day—and sleep later. After a great week in Park City, Utah, I thought it would have been short-sighted not to spend time in the city in which we flew in and out. So, we saved our final day to absorb the capital of Utah, Salt Lake City!

It looked like any other medium-sized city—but cleaner and surrounded by mountains. The state capitol in the middle of downtown looked like a Norman Rockwell painting: a classic dome but a city-scene in the front and mountains in the back. Beautiful—and unique.

Salt Lake City is also the capitol of the Mormon religion—or as it is often referred to “LDS,” which stands for Latter Day Saints. I asked our Uber driver how prevalent it is—and she said she was a follower.

The church funded the City Creek Center in the middle of downtown, one of the largest and most impressive shopping malls on this side of Short Hills, New Jersey.

City Creek Center consumes several city blocks and is stunning. Almost 100 stores ranging from Tiffany's to Forever 21. It's indoor-outdoor, it has an arcade design (so you can see the floors above and below from the hallway) and it is squeaky clean.



It was time for lunch—and everyone I talked to about Salt Lake City said we had to eat at a Mexican restaurant called “The Red Iguana.” So, with those endorsements, we got a ride out of downtown and were surprised to be dropped off in an industrial section of the city. The restaurant itself is non-descript but the line out front at 2pm was impressive! Workers even brought bottles of water out to us while we waited in line on the sidewalk.

The interior was remarkably ordinary, the service was...average—but the food absolutely lived up to the advance billing. They’re best known for their moles (two syllables!) which is “a slow-cooked sauce with up to 23 ingredients.” Two tacos up!

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We asked the friendly staff at the visitors’ center to recommend a cool place to spend our afternoon during our half day in town. They directed us toward a neighborhood southeast of downtown called “Sugar House,” a trendy area with a lively retail and restaurant district. (The name came from a former sugar beet factory in the area.)

We walked a few blocks to Sugar House Park which had a large pond and a nature walk—and a lot of activity. Joggers, bikers and people enjoying the large space once occupied by a prison.

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After a long walk and an Uber ride back downtown, it was time for dinner. We found a new restaurant called Franklin Avenue Cocktails & Kitchen. Historians say this spot used to be a theatre in 1891 that was best known for a secret door above the stage that led to a saloon.

No reason to sneak around anymore. You can drink—and eat—out in the open and we did. Great atmosphere, excellent service and reasonably priced. Erin and I were joined by a former colleague of mine from 35 years ago who has since relocated to Salt Lake City. The three of us sat in a charming basement booth and tried a variety of appetizers, from dill pickle chips to Brussels sprouts.

(www.franklinaveslc.com)

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We came out to a setting sun over the state capitol and the streets bustling with activity. As we boarded our final Uber of the day for our short trip to the airport, we looked back fondly on our twelve hours in this friendly, clean and interesting city. We hope to come back--when we have more time.

Ray Collins is a Realtor, media consultant, elected official and travel writer who has written more than a hundred articles about destinations around the continent (www.raycollinsmedia.com/articles)



