

# Urban Hiking

## Explore downtown Oklahoma City on foot

BY MORGAN HARRIS. PHOTOS BY HARRIS AND PROVIDED.

Is it really hiking if you aren't walking on dirt paths? As a passionate explorer of urban landscapes, I choose to define hiking as any walk undertaken with the intent to discover the wonders of my environment. The heart of downtown Oklahoma City has changed so much in the past decade, and it's the perfect locale for your family's next adventure.

### Before you walk – park

Parking in downtown Oklahoma City can feel overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be. All metered parking is free on the weekends. Early on Saturday mornings, there is almost always plenty of parking around the north and west sides of Scissortail Park and starting your hike there is an easy option, although you could park anywhere along the route and adjust your starting point accordingly.

If you plan your hike on a weekday, you will likely need to pay for parking. I use the Flowbird app that connects to all the parking meters downtown. This will save time and the hassle of walking to the nearest parking meter. If your hike takes longer than expected, you can easily add more funds from your phone.



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## About the route

This urban hike spans approximately 3 miles and can be completed in about an hour at an adult's walking pace. I like to start and end at The National, located at the corner of Robinson and Park avenues. But the route is flexible. If you're unfamiliar with downtown or planning your explorations on a weekday when parking downtown can be difficult, park near the boathouse on the west side of Scissortail Park instead.

From the west side of Scissortail, find the path that leads over the bridge, then curve to the right around the lake and head toward Union Station. Next, walk east to cross over I-40 via the Skydance Bridge. Explore the park south of I-40, then return north across the bridge. Keep going north along Robinson Avenue. As you travel north, you'll pass Scissortail's splash pad and children's playground. If the kiddos need a break from walking, these are great places to pause and play.

Continue north to cross the intersection of Robinson and Oklahoma City Boulevard. Cross the street at Reno and enter the Myriad Gardens. Stick to the east side of the park and keep heading north.

Using the walk lights for safety, cross Sheridan and travel north on Robinson. As you approach Main Street on your right, take a peek to your left to discover one of my favorite sculpture parks. One more block north and you'll come to Park Avenue, where you cross Robinson to arrive at what used to be the First National Bank. Now called The National, it houses shops, restaurants, a hotel and apartments. Head inside the main doors on Robinson Avenue and take the escalators up to enjoy the beautiful Great Hall.

When you exit The National, turn left to walk south along Robinson Avenue and head back to the Myriad Gardens. Wander



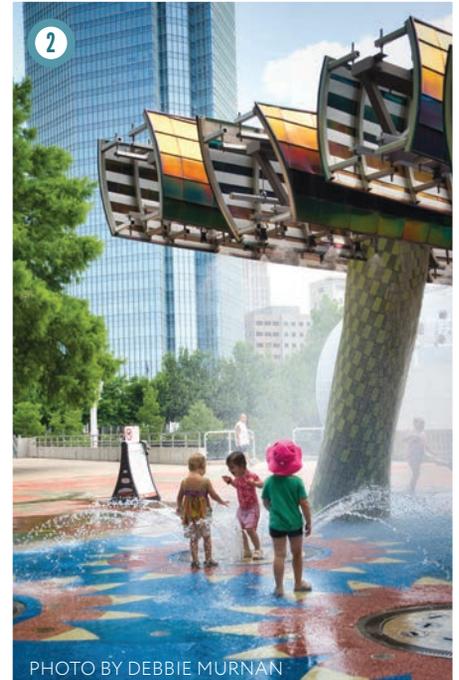


PHOTO BY DEBBIE MURNAN

southwest past the Crystal Bridge and cross the suspension bridge over the lake. Don't miss the Children's Garden, Thunder Fountain (open during the summer) and Mo's Carousel.

Exit the gardens at the south entrance to the Crystal Bridge and walk east to Robinson, back toward Scissortail Park. You did it!

This hike is great any time of year, but it's especially lovely in early fall. Different seasons bring different colors, flowers and vistas, so there's always something to see.

Looking for something a little longer? You can easily extend the journey exploring off-shoot paths and the attractions along the way. Wander through the Myriad Gardens, linger at the playgrounds and embrace the spirit of exploration.

- B Bathrooms
- P Parking
- Hiking route

### Prepare for your adventure

One of the beauties of urban hiking is its accessibility. No specialized gear required – just slip on walking shoes and dress for the weather. Don't forget sunscreen and a hat, particularly during the hot summer months. I prefer to wear SPF long-sleeve shirts over short sleeves and sunscreen, even in hot weather.



"TAKING FLIGHT: LIGHT AS A FEATHER" BY JASON KLIMOSKI AND LESLEY CHANG STANDS AT THE CORNER OF OKLAHOMA CITY BOULEVARD AND SOUTH ROBINSON STREET IN SCISSORTAIL PARK.

## Top spots along the route

- Pause for the **view of the Oklahoma City skyline** as you walk north across Skydance Bridge.
- Venture onto the **winding wood chip path** just south of the Skydance Bridge. It's a short path that inspires a sense of wonder amidst the urban jungle.
- Stop in to **The National** and ride the escalator up into **The Great Hall**. This public space is awe-inspiring. Whether you bring a book to read or a card game to play with the family, this sanctuary offers a respite from the bustling city outside. While you're there, grab a coffee from **The Gilded Acorn** on the ground floor.
- **Union Station** is not just a relic of the past but will soon become a community hub. After years of service as a passenger rail station, the building has been underutilized or empty for decades. Fortunately, it was well-cared for and is slated to become an event center.
- The **Scissortail Farmer's Market** takes place on Saturdays, April through October, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Consider parking near the northeast corner of Scissortail Park and adjusting your route to end near the market. Pick up some locally grown fruits, vegetables and even bison meat before heading home.

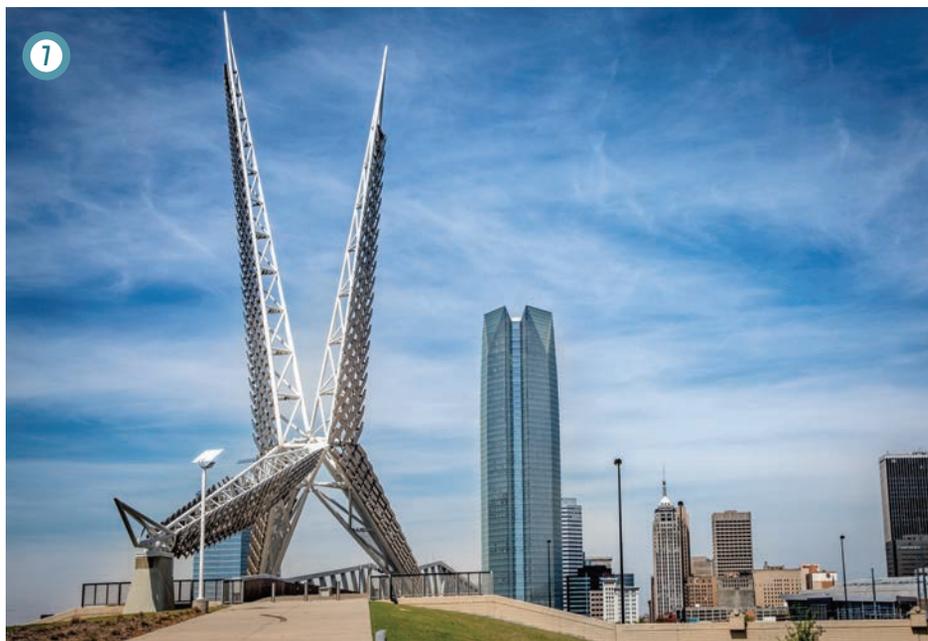


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## Bathroom breaks

One of the most family-friendly aspects of this hike is the abundance of restroom facilities along the route. At Scissortail Park, you'll find restrooms at the boathouse on the west end, the playground across from the Convention Center and near the soccer fields on the south end. Plus, there are public restrooms at the Myriad's Children's Garden and in The National just off The Great Hall. Whether you're wrangling toddlers or older kids, relief is always within reach.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF VISIT OKC



## Urban adventure awaits

I love downtown Oklahoma City. My husband and I lived in the area years ago, before there was quite as much to do and enjoy. Returning now feels like entering a whole new world, full of activity, beautiful plants and art installations. Urban hiking is a perfect mix of adventure and convenience, especially for families wanting to connect with nature in the city. So put on your walking shoes, load up the family and start exploring downtown Oklahoma City. 📍