

Southern Demographic Association Knoxville Area Guide

Food, Coffee and Other Attractions

Orienting Yourself

Market Square—Market Square is a plaza filled with restaurants and shops. To get to Market Square walk out of the front door of the hotel and walk directly across the street. Proceed up the stairs so that you are walking between the two TVA towers. When you get to the top of the stairs you will see Market Square directly in front of you.

Downtown (Gay Street and beyond)—Most downtown dining and shopping venues are on Gay Street. From the front door of the hotel (which is on Summit Hill) turn left. The first cross-street is Gay Street. Turn right and proceed South (if you turn left you will be in the Old City).

The Old City—The Old City is the former immigrant (Irish and later Italian) ghetto of Knoxville. It is not older than downtown, but it looks it, a bit. This is the funkier, hipper part of downtown. To get to the Old City, follow the directions to downtown but turn left on Gay Street instead of right. Alternatively, turn left out of the hotel's front doors and follow the sidewalk down the street to Central Street (aka Central Avenue). Turn left. The Old City primarily consists of Gay Street and Central Street bounded by Summit Hill on the South and Jackson Street on the North.

Restaurants

Knoxville has many wonderful restaurants within walking distance of the Crowne Plaza. We've listed them alphabetically, rather than in any order of preference. There may also be downtown restaurants that we haven't listed, because we simply forgot about them or because new restaurants open up all the time. You shouldn't interpret an omission as an indicator of poor quality. Eat and enjoy. Knoxville also has many wonderful drinking establishments, which are listed in our bar guide.

Barley's (in the Old City)

<http://www.barleystaproom.com/>

200 E. Jackson Avenue

(865) 255-0504

Great pizza and sandwiches, huge list of beers on tap. Dependable, inexpensive, and great for a large group. This is a favorite of the graduate students in the Sociology Department. Nothing fancy here, but good cheap eats and drinks. Indoor and outdoor seating.

Café 4 (in Market Square)

<http://www.cafe4ms.com/>

4 Market Square

(865) 544-4144

A new, hip, and modern spot with a varied menu of creative new-South cuisine and moderate prices. They also have a bakery for breakfast (or other) take-out and a separate (very comfy) upstairs seating area for those who just want coffee and to work on their laptops. Free wi-fi. Indoor and outdoor seating.

Coolato Gelato (Downtown)

<http://www.coolatogelato.com/>

524 S. Gay Street

(865) 971-5449

Great gelato as well as paninis and espresso. Two (cheap) thumbs up!

Crown & Goose (in the Old City)

<http://www.thecrownandgoose.com/>

123 S. Central Avenue (AKA Central Street)

(865) 524-2100

British gastropub, which is somewhat elegant and expensive(ish). Fish & chips, cheese platters, stilton cheese soup, and other more unique dishes are available. Indoor and outdoor seating (lovely patio). You can also sit in the bar and watch British soap operas and the latest cricket match.

Downtown Bar and Grille (Downtown)

<http://www.downtownbrewery.com/>

424 Gay Street

(865) 633-8111

This is an inexplicably popular place with the locals. The beer is good, but we wouldn't want to eat there. Apparently we are in the minority on this. It's always crowded.

The French Market (Downtown)

<http://www.thefrenchmarketknoxville.com/>

526 S. Gay Street

(865) 540-4372

This is a little shop that sells French things, and those things include crepes, soup, and sandwiches. They also serve Lavazza coffee, which makes it a great breakfast place, in our opinion. Unfortunately, it does not open until 9 a.m.

La Costa (in Market Square)

<http://www.lacostaonmarketsquare.com/>

31 Market Square

(865) 566-0275

Fusion Latin theme, very good quality food. They have a great happy hour (4-6pm) where fish tacos and beer and wine are half price. Portion sizes here are smallish, so this is not a place for the hearty appetite, although most people will find the sizes just right. Indoor and outdoor seating.

Le Parigo (Downtown, South of Market Square)

<http://www.leparigo.net/>

416 W. Clinch Avenue

(865) 525-9214

Traditional French food in a café setting. Nice owner. The best restaurant downtown and the most expensive. I recommend the steak tartare with a nice sauternes, and the chef's vegetarian entre du jour is usually fantastic, even if you're not a vegetarian. The chef does things with soup that are probably not natural, they are so good. This restaurant is small, and they cannot accommodate groups larger than four or five. It may also be necessary to get reservations, especially on weekend nights.

Koi/Cocoa Moon (in Market Square)

19 Market Square
(865)521-3888

These are two beautiful, side-by-side restaurants that share a kitchen. The Koi side is Asian fusion. The Cocoa Moon side is Latin fusion. The food here is hit and miss. We recommend lunch over dinner and Koi over Cocoa Moon.

Mirage (Downtown)

<http://www.cairocafe-knoxville.com/>

718 S. Gay Street
(865) 521-5588

This is a hookah bar, but it also serves authentic Middle Eastern fare, according to their web site. They have belly dancing, too.

Nama (in the Old City)

<http://www.namasushibar.com/>

135 S. Gay Street
(865) 633-8539

A small, cool sushi place. Tasty, but not authentically Japanese, if that's what you're looking for. A lot of vegan options. From 4-6pm daily, a lot of stuff is half price including draft ales and maki rolls (so a plate of avocado maki is an incredible \$3.) Indoor and outdoor seating.

Market Square Kitchen (in Market Square)

<http://www.marketsquarekitchen.net/>

1 Market Square
(865) 546-4212

Open for breakfast and lunch only, but we don't recommend the lunch (which is fine, but not great). Breakfast is great and hearty, and the place opens at 7 a.m. The Mediterranean omelet (which isn't on the menu but always seems to be on their special board) is especially yummy and huge.

The Night Owl Café (in the Old City)

<http://www.thenightowlcafe.com/>

119 S. Central Avenue
(865) 474-9866

Great food, much of it vegetarian. Open *really* late nights.

Oodles (in Market Square)

<http://www.oodlesuncorked.com/>

18 Market Square
(865)-521-0600

This is a very large place (really good for big groups) with a great wine list and an extensive menu. There are really good dishes here, and there are really average dishes here (for example, the hummus appetizer is nothing special). We think the macaroni and cheese (which comes in two sizes, but the small is more than we can eat) is the best anywhere. The tofu salad, which sounds terrible, is *fantastic*. Portion sizes here are gigantic, and prices are moderate to fairly cheap.

Patrick Sullivan's (in the Old City)

<http://www.patricksullivan.com/>

100 N. Central Avenue

(865) 637-4255

Beautiful very old pub in the Old City. Jesse James used to hang out here. Probably the best place downtown for a steak, and they also serve great barbeque. This is *not* fine dining, but they have the nicest wait staff in town.

Pete's (Downtown, South of Market Square)

<http://www.petescoffee.com/>

540 Union Avenue

(865) 523-2860

Pete's is a Knoxville institution. It is only open for breakfast and lunch, and it's not open on Saturdays or Sundays. This is the place to go if you want two eggs over easy with some toast for breakfast, and you don't want to spend a lot of money. This is also the place to go if your idea of a great lunch is chicken salad on white bread. It's cheap, it's basic, and the staff is terrific. The place is always busy.

Regas (in the Old City)

<http://www.regassquare.com/regas.html>

318 N. Gay Street

(865) 637-3427

There are no words to describe this place, but we'll try anyway. It's the kind of place that your grandpa took your grandma on their first date when he was trying hard to impress her. Chances are the people who will wait on you are the same people who waited on your grandparents, and we guarantee that the menu hasn't changed. Dave Thomas, the founder of Wendy's, used to bus tables here when he was a kid. This place is great fun, very (unintentionally) retro, and you will expect the ghost of Dean Martin to walk in at any minute. If you are not in the mood for a steak with a baked potato and a side of steamed broccoli with a whiskey on the rocks (all reasonably well executed), you probably want to go somewhere else. Expect politicians or lawyers at the next table.

S&W Grand (in the Old City)

<http://www.swgrand.com/index.html>

516 S. Gay Street

(865) 566-9800

This is a new, fine dining restaurant recently opened by the owner of one of the tastiest French restaurants in West Knoxville. None of us have eaten here, and we've gotten mixed reviews that range from "it's the best restaurant in town" to "it's OK, but really expensive." Overall, the complaints we've heard are generally about the service, and we've heard nothing but praise of the food. We like the concept: this was formerly the S&W cafeteria which was a downtown institution in the 1950s and 1960s. Older Knoxvilleians remember going there as a child to eat and listen to live music performed on a grand piano. The owners have kept the grand piano (and piano player), and their menu is intentionally old school (but upscale) with features like beef stroganoff. It's probably worth a try for a nice night out, but plan to spend some money.

Sangrias (in Market Square)

35 Market Square

(865) 951-0165

Knoxville's authentic Spanish tapas restaurant, which also has really great paella. The food has been excellent (some of the best), but their chef recently got mad and quit, so we don't know if the standards have been upheld.

Sapphires (Downtown)

<http://www.sapphire-knoxville.com/alternate.html>

428 S. Gay Street

(865) 637-8181

This is mostly a high-end bar, but they have an intriguing small plates menu which includes everything from truffled potato chips to sushi. The décor is an eclectic mix of uber-modern blended with the antique trappings from the buildings' former life as a jewelry store. This is a good place to go if you want a little food with a lot of martinis. You can also buy a \$350 martini here.

Soccer Taco (in Market Square)

<http://soccertaco.com/>

9 Market Square

(865) 544-4471

A lot of people eat here. We don't know why. The food is terrible, and the health scores are usually just slightly about "we're shutting this place down" levels. If you must have Mexican, take a cab to Senior Taco on Broadway, or set your sights slightly further north of the border and eat Central American fusion at La Costa.

Tomato Head (in Market Square)

<http://www.thetomatohead.com/>

12 Market Square

(865) 637-4067

A personal favorite of most of the town's vegetarians (although *not* a vegetarian restaurant), this is a very vegan- and vegetarian friendly, very popular spot. They serve good and creative pizzas, sandwiches, salads (e.g., spinach with tofu + mushroom-sesame dressing), burritos, quesadillas and desserts for moderate prices. Indoor and outdoor seating.

Trio Café (in Market Square)

<http://www.trio-cafe.net/>

13 Market Square

(865) 246-2270

This restaurant books itself as healthy, fast food. We really like that it opens quite early in the morning, and it serves three types of eggs benedict, all of which are yummy. Get them with the cheese grits casserole. Lunch and dinner are less interesting than breakfast, in our opinion, but still good food for the price.

Coffee

If you want Starbucks's, it's served in the hotel restaurant and bar, and SDA provides free coffee outside the morning meeting rooms starting at 7 a.m. If you need your daily fix of half-caf, low-fat, double-shot cappuccino, then go to one of the places below. Everywher (we think) has free wi-fi.

Coffee and Chocolate (Downtown, near Market Square)

<http://www.coffeeandchocolateknoxville.com/>

327 Union Avenue

(865) 688-9244

This place has great coffee and even better dessert, including a scrumptious array of delectable hand-made chocolates. You can even get coffee made from beans that have previously gone through the digestive tract of a civet for \$22 a cup. Go before noon, when Corinne is working, and see if you can get her to sing for you.

Downtown Grind (Downtown)

418 S. Gay Street

(865) 524-4747

This is a small coffee shop and dry cleaners. Both the coffee and the dry cleaning are excellent. They have especially good chai here.

French Market (Downtown)

<http://www.thefrenchmarketknoxville.com/>

526 S. Gay Street

(865) 540-4372

The only place we know with Lavazza coffee.

Old City Java (in the Old City)

<http://www.oldcityjava.com/>

109 S. Central Street

(865) 523-9817

Routinely voted the best coffee in Knoxville, this place is commonly frequented by grad students and professors, so you may have to endure the heated discussion about Foucault at the next table.

Remedy (in the Old City)

<http://www.remedycoffee.com/>

125 W. Jackson Avenue

(865) 335-0967

This is our personal favorite. The space is lovely, the coffee is excellent, and the tea is even better. Also, much of the profits from this place are used to support the Knoxville Area Rescue Ministries, which provides housing, medical care, and counseling for many of the area's homeless and addicted. Very quiet and pretty.

Theatres

Tennessee Theatre

<http://www.tennesseetheatre.com/>

604 S. Gay Street

(865) 684-1200

Concerts, shows, some films

Bijou Theatre

<http://www.knoxbijou.com/>

803 S. Gay Street

(865) 522-0832

Concerts, shows, some films

Regal Riviera Stadium 8 Theatre

http://www.fandango.com/regalrivierastadium8_aauno/theaterpage

510 S. Gay Street

(865) 522-5160

A mainstream movie theatre, convenient location in Downtown Knoxville. New and very clean. It's attempt (but miss) at retro architecture has earned it the nickname, the Taco Bell Theater.

Theater Knoxville Downtown

<http://www.theatreknoxville.com/index.html>

319 N. Gay Street

(865) 544-1999

A small theater with local, low-budget productions. It has a fun (and cheap) vibe (e.g., seats are metal folding chairs), and you can see a play on most Thursday nights for \$8.

Transportation

Cab companies

Yellow Cab (865) 523-5151

Big Orange Taxi (865) 523-3400

Checker Cab Co. (865) 523-5152

Map of Knoxville area

<http://www.knoxville-tn.com/images/utmap.gif>

Downtown Knoxville street map

<http://www.knoxville-tn.com/images/knoxmap.gif>

Buses

<http://www.ci.knoxville.tn.us/kat/>

Trolleys (The Orange Line, though the trolleys themselves are red) run every 10 minutes between downtown and the University campus and are free. They run from 7am to 6pm; check hours here:

http://www.cityofknoxville.org/kat/web%20pages/Trolley/Trolley_Main.asp

Regular “KAT” buses: Have \$1.50 in exact change (dollars accepted) ready.

Bicycle rentals: River Sports (865) 523-0066 Located at Volunteer Landing in the center of a 16 mile greenway route, but expensive (\$30 per day).

Miscellaneous

East Tennessee Historical Society

<http://www.east-tennessee-history.org/>

601 South Gay Street

(865) 215-8824

Cool place! Call for hours.

Ijams Nature Center

<http://www.ijams.org>

2915 Island Home Avenue

(865) 577-4717

Hike minutes from the city, in this 175-acre wildlife sanctuary! (Open 8am to dusk.)

Knoxville Museum of Art

<http://www.knoxart.org/>

1050 World’s Fair Park

(865) 525-6101

Mostly contemporary work. Free admission. Closed Mondays; call for hours other days.

Market Square Farmers’ Market

<http://www.marketsquarefarmersmarket.org>

Market Square in Downtown Knoxville

Open two days a week from May to November: every Sat 9am-2pm and every Wed 11am-2pm.

Come get fresh, locally grown vegetables, homemade baked goods, crafts, and other goodies.

McClung Museum

<http://mcclungmuseum.utk.edu/index.shtml>

1327 Circle Park Drive

(865) 974-2144

A free and really cool and eclectic museum on the University of Tennessee campus. This museum is most famous for housing Lucy, the world’s oldest woman.

Zoo Knoxville

<http://www.knoxville-zoo.org/>

3500 Knoxville Zoo Drive

(865) 637-5331

A good-sized zoo for a smaller city, the zoo houses many exhibits you wouldn’t ordinarily see except in big city zoos such as a very large collection of red pandas and a white alligator.