



By Matt Lynch

June 16, 2017

THE 21 BEST ROOFTOP BARS IN AMERICA



Drinking is fun. Drinking outside is more fun. Drinking outside on a rooftop, literally looking down on all the poor souls who *aren't* drinking outside on a rooftop, is inarguably the most fun.

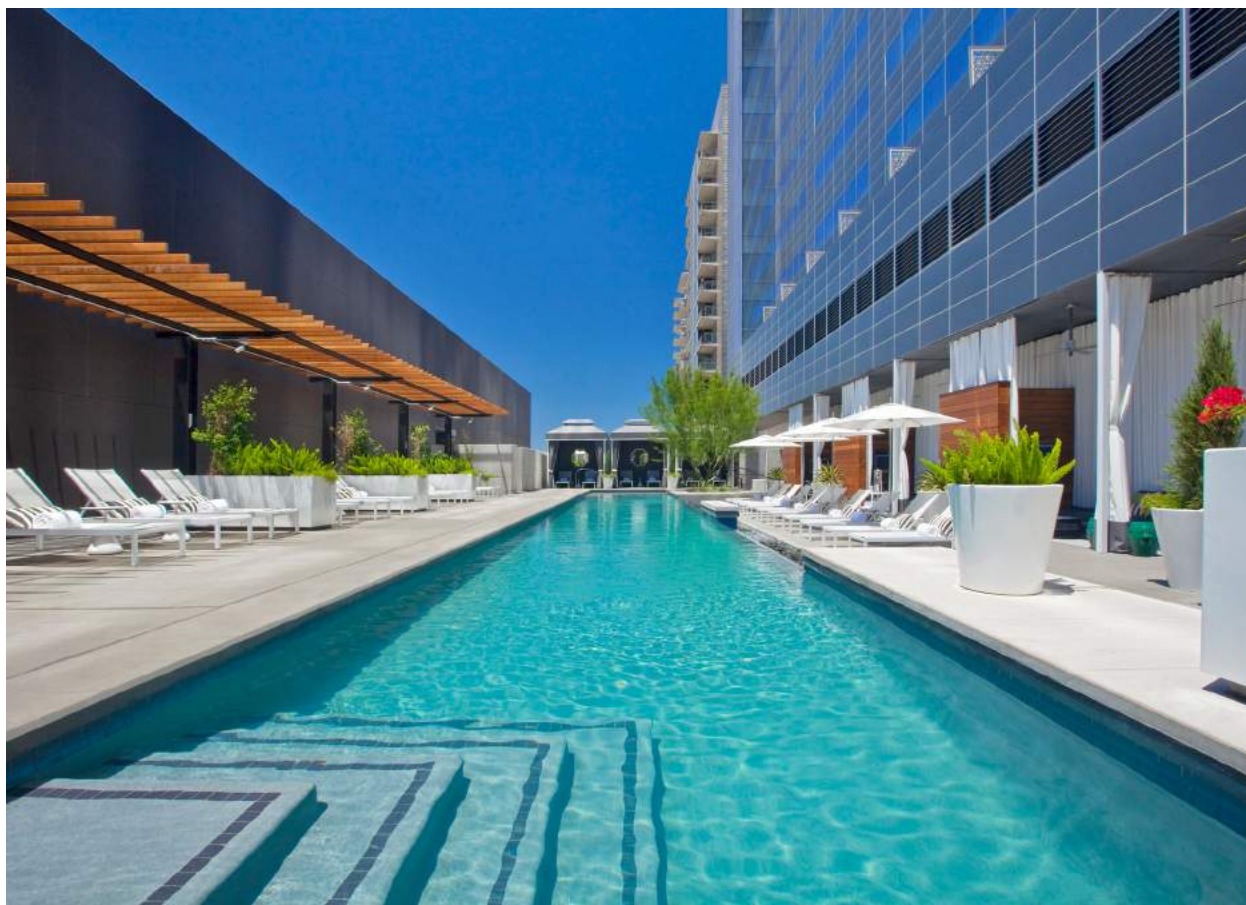
Of course, most Americans don't have access to an impeccably appointed private rooftop terrace in the sky. But it's written in the Constitution (I swear!) that each of us deserves the opportunity, at least once, to sip a refreshing beverage while enjoying a gentle breeze and surveying the horizon. Whenever you're ready, you'd do well to head to one of the following 21 stand-out bars scattered throughout the country.



SKYLOUNGE

ATLANTA

You'd be hard pressed to find a better vantage point overlooking Downtown Atlanta than this perch on the 11th floor of the Glenn Hotel, housed in a historic landmark building that dates back to 1923, though the lounge's roots are most decidedly the handiwork of a sleek 21st-century update -- buildings just didn't quite have their rooftop game on point yet during the Coolidge administration. But you won't spend much time pondering history here, you'll be too busy savoring the paprika salt rim on your Smoked Roka (think margarita with a pineapple kick), live music playing in the background while you watch the Ferris wheel rotating in Centennial Park, knowing that you undoubtedly made the superior entertainment decision for the evening.



THE WET DECK AT W

AUSTIN

Texas summers (and springs and autumns, for that matter) don't exactly make you think to yourself "I'd like to be closer to the sun," so luckily the W Hotel's WET Deck lives up to its name with an inviting pool that ensures you're not relying solely on libations for cooling-off purposes. Soundwave Sundays (soundtracked by DJ Bird Peterson along with some rotating special guests) might well be Austin's finest Sunday funday, and the complementary happy hour access after 5pm takes the good name of nightswimming back from an overwrought, wistful REM song.



ROOFTOP AT REVERE

BOSTON

Not even the harshest Bostonian pronunciation of “Reeve-ah” could possibly distract you from the alluring view of Back Bay from this recently renovated pool-equipped Theatre District rooftop. The lobster roll and tuna tartar tacos might have a shot at your attention, at least for the few brief moments before you dispatch them, and the same can be said for the Lady on Charles (tequila, grapefruit, Lillet Blanc, and agave). But in the end your eyes will always revert back to one of the most enviable views in Boston -- well, depending on who’s hanging out at the pool.



LOOKOUT AT ENVOY HOTEL

BOSTON

Speaking of enviable Boston views, the Envoy Hotel's Boston Harbor-adjacent overlook (ahem, lookout) has been one of the city's most sought after tables (or couches, as the case may be) since opening a few years back. Things aren't likely to slow this summer given the fact that you can pair said vantage point this summer with flights of rosé, pitchers of painkillers and tallboys of Hobo Life, a session-friendly IPA from local craft standout Lord Hobo, and a complete mischaracterization of how you're spending your evening.



CITY LIGHTS

CHARLOTTE

Le Meridien's expansive 19th-floor lounge is the biggest option for open-air partying with a view in Charlotte, but size alone isn't what sets it apart. Nothing says "I am enjoying summer in the most fun yet classy way possible" like taking down a Sparkle & Pop, which takes various varieties of bubbly and floats various flavors of King of Pops popsicles in them. Of course if combining such a concoction with the DJ-provided soundtrack might just be TOO much for you to handle you could just dial it back to a jalapeño pale ale from local Birdsong Brewing. In the NOT dialed back department, there's a \$30 endless rosé special on Sundays. It seems like there might be a clever way to express that that one could use for a hashtag or T-shirt.



CINDY'S

CHICAGO

The literal crowning achievement of the massive overhaul to the Chicago Athletic Association a few years back, Cindy's may not have the tallest view overlooking the Windy City (stares dagger at Sears "Don't Call Me Willis" Tower), but it's likely the one that will make you the happiest. For one thing, the sightlines to Millennium Park, The Art Institute, and the like are still killer. For another, the drinks are far better than they need to be given the view (that'll happen when your bar falls under the purview of Chicago cocktail legend Paul McGee). So snag a Spanish-style gin & tonic made with local Letherbee gin and house-made fennel-calamansi tonic, cool off with a creamsicle blending white chocolate gelato and blood orange sorbet, and know that all those suckers in skyscrapers are peering down at you enviously.



DEPARTURE ELEVATED

DENVER

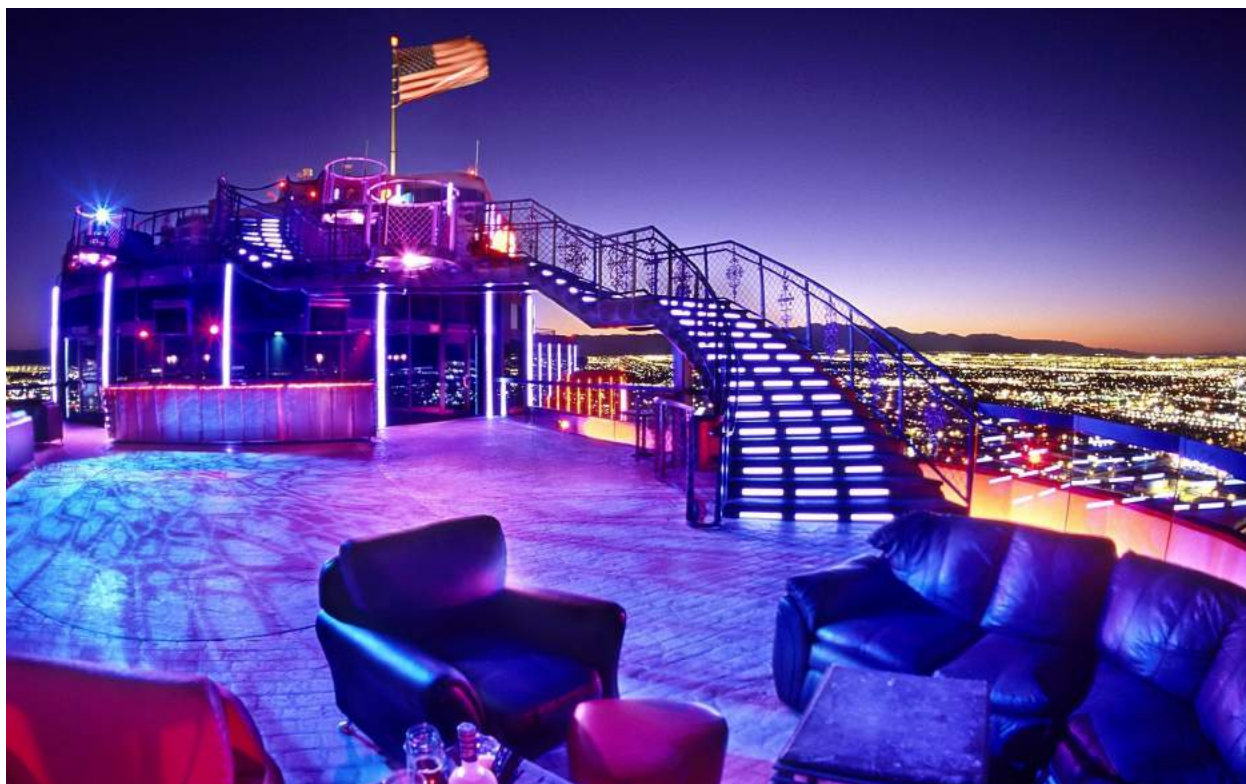
Now in its first full summer (it opened last September) atop the Halcyon Hotel in Cherry Creek, Departure Elevated has stunning views of the mountains... fine, that's not exactly a huge point of distinction for a rooftop bar in Denver. But how about roving dim sum carts slinging steamed pork buns and kushiyaki skewers that pair nicely with an Asian-leaning cocktail menu that includes large format options like the Full Bloom (St. Germain, junmai sake, bubbly). Now that you mention it, the mountains do look rather stunning, don't they?



ROSEMONT

HOUSTON

The plentiful shading and cabanas provide ample respite from the sun on Houston's hottest rooftop, while the surrounding greenery gives the whole thing a bit of a hidden-backyard-garden-party vibe. Of course, not many backyard parties offer up chicken tinga empanadas and frozen Jack & Cokes. Come Sunday there's a DJ-backed brunch party that lets you fight back against the aftereffects of Saturday with frozen vodka Gatorade and cookie butter French toast. Pro tip: Spend the whole weekend here.



VOODOO

LAS VEGAS

Vegas is hardly lacking in steakhouses, clubs packed with alarmingly attractive people, and spectacular views of the strip, but no establishment brings the three together quite so seamlessly as VooDoo. After you've mowed through the obligatory hunk of cow, step outside onto the rooftop deck towering a full 51 floors above Vegas' renowned but always impressive light show. Speaking of impressive shows (no, not Céline Dion), The Witch Doctor, a fishbowl cocktail harnessing the twin powers of rum and dry ice, completes your evening of Vegas-style excess.



MAMA SHELTER

LOS ANGELES

Still as strong a draw as ever since opening in LA a couple of summers back, Mama Shelter is an ideal setting for gazing up at the Hollywood sign while kicking back on one of the technicolor couches. Speaking of Hollywood, the cocktail menu's appropriately entertainment-themed, as in the Y Tu Mama Tambien (mezcal, almond syrup, lime, jalapeño, cucumber). The entertainment continues with everything from foosball to drag queen bingo on Saturdays to occasional outdoor film screenings. Hey, we can think of some cocktails that might fit that theme!



PAWN BROKER

MIAMI

Pawn Broker's 13th-story digs atop the Langford Hotel might look up at taller Miami structures like the Freedom Tower, but the cocktail menu here looks up at no one when it comes to creativity -- the Corn Pop fizz takes craft moonshine and Corn Pop syrup and crafts a damn elegant cocktail out of them. Or maybe you'd prefer the gin-based Giggle Water, served in a literal tiny bathtub (if you don't get it, do some reading about Prohibition) infused with Champagne syrup and topped with lavender foam. Who needs the beach, really?



SUGAR

MIAMI

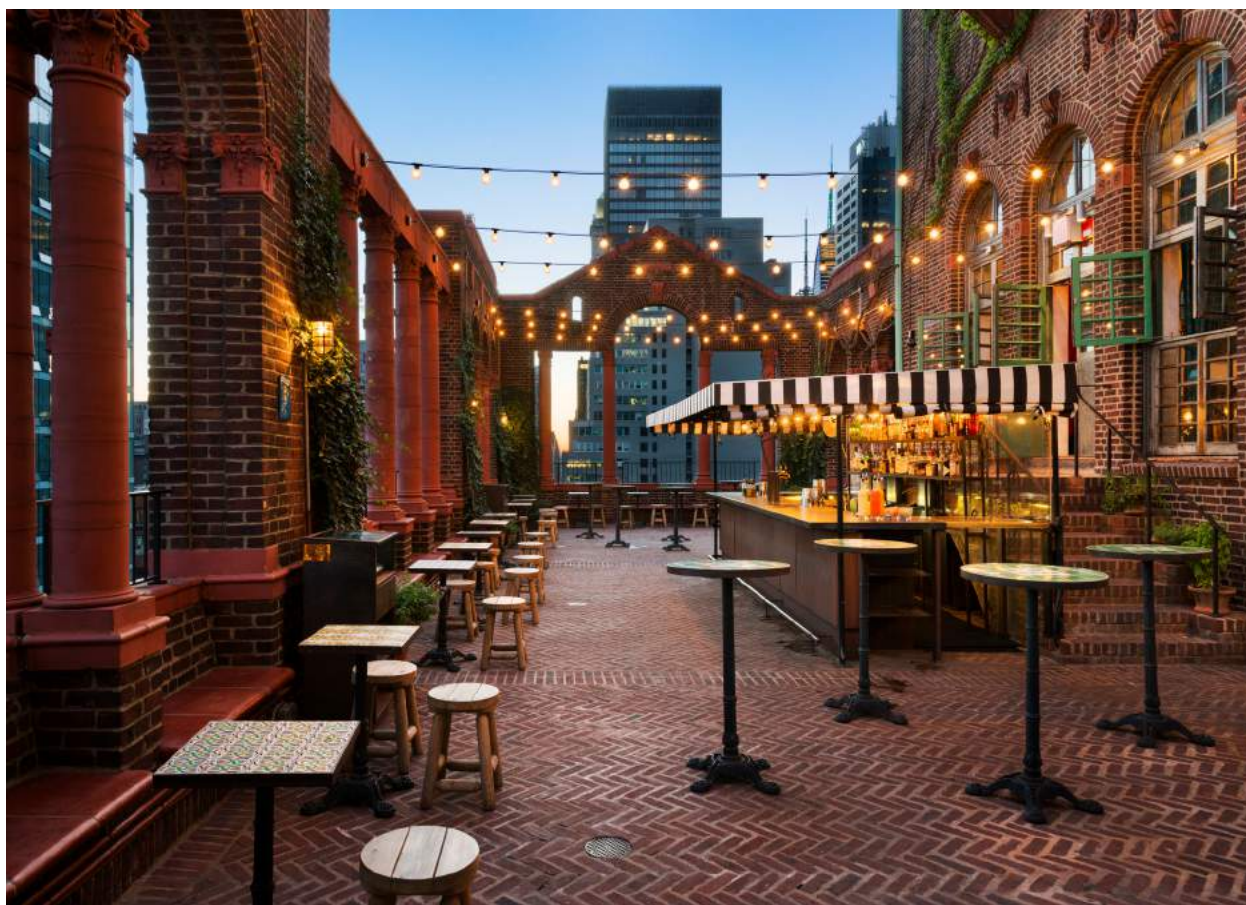
Situated 40 stories above Miami with a view of Biscayne Bay, Sugar's a stunning backdrop in its own right, with a lush Asian garden style thick with ferns and bamboo providing the setting for you to enjoy steamed prawn and scallop dumplings and killer boneless Korean chicken wings. Naturally there are plenty of specialty cocktails on offer, but the local beer selection here packs a stronger presence than it typically does at rooftop establishments, both on its own and in beer-infused cocktails like the Pichelada, a Thai chile-kicked riff on the michelada with Inlet brewing's Monk in the Trunk amber ale.



BRIT'S

MINNEAPOLIS

The go-to football (the overseas kind) viewing destination for Twin Cities anglophiles, what the UK-channeling institution may lack in height (the rooftop is merely a second-floor haunt) it makes up for in amenities. For example, there's a gloriously green court for bocce ball (ahem, lawn bowling). There's also an enviable selection of European ales and lagers. There's also the occasional freewheeling Shakespearean production because you're cultured, dammit. Most importantly, there's the knowledge that Minnesota summers are precious and you need to soak in every last moment of sunlight that you can.



POD 39

NEW YORK

The mix of brick pillars and columns and glowing lights strung overhead makes this 17th floor rooftop feel a bit more like an eclectic block party than one of New York's most sought-after post-work (or post-anything, really) drinking destinations. But the views of the Empire State Building and the Chrysler Building make it clear that this is no blocked-off side street. That clarity may be short lived, however, because pitchers of margaritas and Chilean sangria are waiting. Also awaiting you: the tacos from April Bloomfield's Salvation Taco downstairs.



WESTLIGHT

NEW YORK

Whether you're posted at an outdoor table or staking out a climate-controlled couch seat inside, Westlight's prime location atop Williamsburg's William Vale hotel offers a seriously impressive view of the Manhattan skyline, and the experience will only leave a deeper impression once you've polished off your New Kind of Kick (Scotch, fernet, thyme, orgeat, lemon & suze). Before you keep exploring the cocktail menu (from standout barkeep Anne Robinson), fortify yourself with bites like duck carnitas tacos and potato skins topped with caviar and yuzu hollandaise (from standout chef Andrew Carmellini). There's a reason [Aziz Ansari was taking Tinder dates here in Season 2 of Master of None](#).



ASSEMBLY

PHILADELPHIA

With a peaceful nine stories separating you from crowds along the Ben Franklin Parkway underneath, Assembly has firmly established its status as Philly's top rooftop draw since opening in spring 2016. Firepit-equipped pods provide a measure of privacy, so you and your crew can be (relatively) alone with your beverage of choice, be it the Fishhouse Punch (Appleton reserve rum, Hennessy VS, lemon, peach black tea), or the obligatory summertime helping of frosé. Swedish meatball sliders and tuna watermelon poke will keep you just even keeled enough that you don't fulfill a Philly stereotype and fight some guy from the next table over based on his poor hockey opinions.



ALTITUDE

SAN DIEGO

Living up to its name with the most elevated views of any drinking establishment in San Diego, Altitude's 22 stories provide such an enviable vantage point that you can actually peer into nearby Petco Park if the Padres are playing (though if the Padres are playing you may not WANT to see what's happening in Petco Park). Luckily, not even questionable baseball can impede your enjoyment of a bacon-wrapped, mayo-ketchup-poblano-topped TJ dog, or the \$7 cocktails during the 5-7pm weekday happy hour. What game?



EL TECHO

SAN FRANCISCO

The perpetually packed Mission rooftop nobly protects patrons against the capricious San Francisco weather patterns with heat lamps and windscreens, but truth be told you'd likely brave a variety of elements to score a table here, roll through a couple of pitchers of palomas (you brought friends, you aren't a maniac), and tear into some roasted corn empanadas and beer battered fish tacos. And if you're less into sharing your booze, cocktails like the Belafonte (rum, lime, banana, pineapple, cacao, ginger) will only serve to validate that decision.



MBAR

SEATTLE

MBar made its debut late last summer, and has entrenched itself as the premier destination for Seattle drinks with a view in the months since. A quick stop (or long stop, depending on the crowds) in the ground floor bar and waiting area gives way to an elevator ride and a neon-lit corridor that transports you to one of the better views you'll find of the Space Needle and its surroundings. It doesn't hurt that the menu you'll peruse when you get there comes from noted Seattle Chef Jason Stratton. The trio of some rabbit foie gras bolognese over soft polenta a Stratton Manhattan (kicked up with Amaro Montenegro and the whimsy of rhyme), and the aforementioned view will make you never want to repeat the decision of a certain NBA franchise we won't mention.



COLUMBIA ROOM

WASHINGTON, DC

When Derek Brown's game-changing DC cocktail bar relocated to a newer, larger space, its forthcoming rooftop (or "punch garden") if you will, was easily the most buzzed about new amenity. Truth be told, ANY additional seating in one of DC's most prized drinking dens would have been welcome. It's positively a revelation that some of said seating now involves twinkling strings of lights and fresh air enhanced by the smells of the herbs they're growing to enhance your cocktails, like the mint for their Ramos Gin Swizzle.



TOP OF THE GATE

WASHINGTON, DC

The recently renovated, always in-demand rooftop bar atop the Watergate Hotel (gosh that name is familiar... has it been in the news lately?) is much more fun than another viewing of *All the President's Men*, with playful drinking options like strawberry Negronis and boozy Hawaiian shaved ice -- OK fine that's closer to an eating option, but what's with the interrogation, are we on trial here? Sigh. End of jokes. Not a joke: the fact that they'll bring you fancy personal prosciutto pizzas in little delivery boxes. Also not a joke: that view of the Potomac.

<https://www.thrillist.com/drink/nation/best-rooftop-bars>