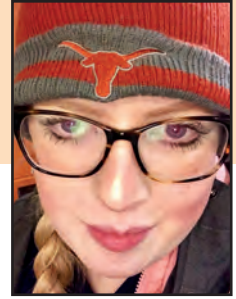


# The Platinum Houstonian

By Nimrah F. Saleem



Squinting in the bright sunlight, I pull out my phone to check Google Maps as I plan my route to work. The estimated arrival time of bus #60 is 15 minutes. I sigh and open my umbrella, attempting to shield myself from the harsh rays of sunlight.

I am a proud Houstonian. I have lived in Houston almost all my life, aside from the four years that I spent pursuing my undergraduate degree in Austin. Although the 100 degree heat and sweltering humidity is not ideal, too much time away from Houston has me missing the diverse cuisine, the bustling midtown night life, and the

plethora of job and learning opportunities in the Texas Medical Center, my current place of employment and education. Because I have lived in Houston since I was a baby, I have developed some techniques for coping with the climate and my urban surroundings. Though I speak specifically of Houston, I hope my advice can support those living in other sunny areas.

1. Location, location, location. This may be the most difficult advice to follow, but if living in Houston is your plan, consider moving to housing that is within the loop—

that is, central Houston. You'll find that by living in the inner loop, you will have access to bus routes and the Metro RAIL train routes. Many of the neighborhoods here are walkable, and if you can get housing close to downtown, you won't need to depend on a car. The downside is that living in this area can often be expensive, with prime real estate rents that are sky high. For that reason, I have found apartment living to be the most feasible.

2. Hats and umbrellas are fashionable and functional. Buy floppy hats in every color of the rainbow, one for every outfit. I support the Houston Astros with a baseball cap that protects me from the sun. I keep an umbrella clipped to my backpack so that I always have protection from the sun if there's no shade at the bus stop.

3. Use smartphone apps that will save you time and frustration.

Ridesharing apps have been such a blessing in a city as car-dependent as Houston. Though rides can be expensive, timing and location can get you a more reasonable price. You can

track your upcoming rides, notify your driver ahead of time if you have a visual impairment and are concerned about pickup, and even share your ride details with a friend if you want some assurance and safety.

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Thanks to Instacart, gone are the days of having to wait for a friend or relative to drive you to the grocery store. Now, get all the groceries you need at the touch of a button. This app lets you choose from a variety of grocery stores, where you can create lists based on your preferences. Delivery charges range from \$4.00 to \$8.00; groceries are delivered within two hours. NO need to leave your home— a shopper and driver will have all your groceries packed and delivered to you. For added savings, you can subscribe to Instacart Express, an annual \$99 fee that allows for free deliveries on unlimited purchases.

And who says that delicious restaurant food is only for those that can drive? Not UberEATS, that's for sure. This app allows you to indulge in whatever food you crave, within your price range. I find myself shamelessly ordering crepes from my local bakery when I'm craving something sweet or getting a gourmet burger from a delicious diner nearby that would otherwise have not been accessible. Plan ahead and you can find some good deals here too.

4. Incorporate SPF into your daily routine. Find a moisturizer that has a high SPF— it will protect your skin and serve as a great base for your makeup. My favorite is the Neutrogena Sport moisturizer, which is SPF 100+ and is not greasy at all.



5. Make an appointment with the University of Houston College of Optometry. For all the traffic and lack of walkability, this has to be Houston's one redeeming factor for people with albinism. The College of Optometry (UHCO) has a low vision clinic especially geared towards assistive technology for blind and low vision individuals. They helped me obtain my first monocular lens, introduced me

to life-changing technology like the CCTV and bioptic lens, and even introduced me to a community called iBug that specializes in adaptive computer technology for low vision users. UHCO specialists are caring and highly knowledgeable, and they have opened up a world of possibilities for me that I once did not believe existed.