

100 Great Things about Pittsburgh

... AN OUTSIDER'S PERSPECTIVE



by MJ Speights

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about
Pittsburgh

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DEDICATIONS:

For Petra, Joshua, Caleb, Lily, Ayla, and Jolina

For South Side's LifeStone Church

For Travis Shirley, Diehard Pittsburgher

And for the great people of Pittsburgh

Here We Go!

October 2010

We were no more excited about moving to Pittsburgh than we would have been if we were moving to Fresno. We were quite happy in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia, nestled between Virginia Beach, Hampton, Norfolk and Suffolk, just a hop, skip, and a jump from the Outer Banks. Nevertheless we packed up the house—only six of us at the time—to chase the modern equivalent of the gold rush.

I had been offered a job with a major oil & gas drilling contractor, a game changer as it would turn out. With a life in the Marine Corps in our rear view, we stepped forward into our eleventh relocation since being married in Budapest at age seventeen.

I have fifty-three countries under my belt; my wife, almost half as many. She speaks Hungarian & German, some Russian in her past. I speak German & French, and whatever I need to when I'm in a bind. Cultured, we'd like to think. We've been all over the States, Alaska, Hawaii, even parts of Pennsylvania. But never to Pittsburgh. Though we're 'glass half full' kind of people, we really weren't looking forward to this move.

In less than a month, we fell absolutely, unconditionally in love with this city, for all of the reasons I hope you'll love this city—as outlined in this book—and more. Welcome to our Pittsburgh.

I

BEST CITY VIEW

Seeing Pittsburgh from Mount Washington's Grandview Avenue affords viewers one of the most amazing urban overlooks in the USA, especially at night. You can either drive up there from South Side or take one of the two rail methods, the Monongahela Incline or the Duquesne (pronounced dooKANE) Incline. Last I remember, one-way fare is around two bucks. Keep small cash & quarters handy, because change must be exact. Coffee, ice cream, cold beer and lighter fare abound a short walk from the top of the Monongahela, while the Duquesne side offers upscale scenic-view restaurants and the *Point-of-View* sculpture, featuring George Washington and Seneca leader Guyasuta in an apparent standoff at the head of the Ohio River.

2

WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE

Pittsburgh is called the “City of Bridges,” and boasts more navigable bridges inside its borders than any other city in the world! With 446 bridges, Pittsburgh edged ahead of Venice by a difference of only three. The main bridges within the city have been painted either black or yellow, to match the city’s sports teams’ official colors.

3

PRIMANTI BROS.

A Pittsburgh staple with several nearby locations, this sandwich joint is the favored spot to enjoy any ‘Burgh game if you cannot be on the actual fifty-yard line, behind the goalie, or next to the dugout. Visitors to this “Almost Famous” establishment will find customers’ second favorite item listed on the menu, but not the first. It’s beer.

Don’t make the mistake we did three years ago, and pronounce it ‘Pri-MOHN-tees’. It’s Pri-MAN-ees. Our favorite Primanti’s locations, in order, are (1) Market District, (2) South Side, (3) South Hills – [restaurant style], and (4) the original Primanti Brothers at the Strip.

Primanti’s sandwiches are loaded with fries and slaw, easy on the pocket, and best washed down with a local brew. I suggest a pinch of salt & malt.

4

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK

This Strip District cannot be described on a page this small. It can't be captured by a book, or even by a camera lens. I've tried. The Strip District, which is Pittsburgh's jam-packed weekend marketplace, simply needs to be experienced. Whether it's the smell of fresh-roasted peanuts being hand-turned on the sidewalk in a classic Obici (Planters)-style roaster, or the sight of bakers kneading dough in the window of Mancini's, discovering fine rare gastronomic accoutrements at Penzey Spices, or heckling over thousands of types of cheese at the Pennsylvania Macaroni Company, *PennMac*. Fruits, vegetables, flowers, clothing, Wholey's fish market, meats, cafés, sports souvenirs, street musicians, performers & artisans. Plan to arrive early Saturday, eat @ Deluca's or Pam's before the line gets insane!

5

SOUTH SIDE FLATS

Pittsburgh's South Side is located along the southern edge of the Monongahela River (aka The Mon), across from downtown and just below Mt. Washington. The South Side is split into the 'Flats' and the 'Slopes'. Running right up the middle of the flats is East Carson Street, a virtual beehive of sprawling activity. The demographic concentration is artsifartsi and granola-eater, although there are a good number of places for carnivores to grab a bite to eat as well. There are around 100 bars, pubs, and restaurants crammed together in a 2-mile strip along Carson in the Flats, with favorites such as Primanti's, Fat Head's Saloon, Jack's, Nakama Sushi, the Bicycle Café, Emiliano's, Yo Yo Rita's Taqueria, Rowdy's, and the Milk Shake Factory. This area is deeply rooted in Slovak, Balkan, and other Eastern European culture, and was the site of many glass & steel factories.

6

SOUTHSIDE WORKS

At the end of South Side is one of our city's redeveloped hotspots, "South Side Works." You know, the type of place where Cheesecake Factory is located in any given metropolitan area. So in addition to the Cheesecake Factory, we have an REI, H&M, Puma store, BCBG Max Azria, McCormick & Schmick's, aerie, AE Outfitters, Sur la Table, White House Black Market, a lot of other great retailers, an old-fashioned-looking cinema, a bangin' wine bar, Claddagh Irish restaurant & pub, and the following fantastic hangout...

7

AUTHENTIC HOFBRAUHAUS

Have you ever been to Germany? If not, do you at least have some idea of what a Hofbräuhaus is all about? Hofbräuhaus is the oldest and most popular beer hall in the world today. Established in the 1500's and located in Munich, Germany—which is consequently the home of the original 180-year-old Oktoberfest, it is the official drinking building of HB (Hofbräu) beer. There are actually several in Germany.

In recent years, Hofbräu has seen fit to sanction four U.S. locations, where their original, natural ingredient beers are brewed on-location, and the style and ambiance of the beer halls closely matches that of the original Munich location.

Pittsburgh, like Chicago & Vegas, is blessed to be one of the chosen cities. With such a rich German heritage in the city, it fits!

8

COOL COPS

Now this is an odd one, but if you've ever lived in Florida, Virginia, or Ohio, you'll appreciate this... Imagine a place where traffic tickets are not a planned source of municipal income. Where folks pulled over on the side of the road is not a very common site. Where law enforcement officers are more helpful, and less like the boogie man. If this scenario describes your idyllic place to visit—or to live—then welcome to Pittsburgh! In fact, welcome to Pennsylvania, where the cops are cooler, existing to keep us all safe and keep the bad guys at bay. That doesn't mean you can speed all over the place.

9

THE STEEPEST PUBLIC ROAD IN AMERICA

The answer to that obscure trivia question is surprisingly not a street in San Francisco! According to Google Sightseeing, Pittsburgh has the #1 and #6 steepest streets in America, the first being Canton Avenue, a cobblestone road having a 37% grade (20.3 degree gradient). The sixth is Dornbush Street, at 31.98 percent grade (17.7 degree slope).

10

FALLING WATER

Built between 1936 and 1939 for a Pittsburgh family (the Kaufmanns), this house over a waterfall was instantly famous and is now a National Historic Landmark. This iconic landmark, designed by America's most famous architect, is actually located in the Laurel Highlands, about an hour south of the city. If you have an appreciation for architecture or historical buildings, then slide Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater to the top of your list!

II

CAVES, RAPIDS, WORLD-CLASS RESORT

After visiting Fallingwater (#10 on our list), take time to explore the rest of the Laurel Highlands area. All within a half-hour driving area of each other, you've got Laurel Caverns—better than the caves near Shenandoah but not quite Carlsbad; 20,500 acre Ohiopyle State Park with ADA-accessible overlooks, natural water slides, Class IV rapids, and trout fishing; and the Nemaquin Woodlands Resort, which offers lodging options up to and including the luxurious Forbes Five-Star, AAA Five-Diamond Falling Rock boutique hotel. The resort sits on 2,000 wooded acres and has amazing things for everyone, from zip lines and tigers to amazing spa, casino, and golf activities.

12

LOTS OF KETCHUP

Pittsburgh has been the global headquarters of Heinz for more than 100 years. With its first bottle of ketchup sold in 1876, and with current operations exceeding 650 million bottles in over 140 countries, it's no wonder that Heinz has continued to be a source of pride for Pittsburghers.

H.J. Heinz was recently acquired by 3G Capital and Warren Buffett-led Berkshire Hathaway.

13

STEEL CITY

In the 1870's, Pittsburgh native Andrew Carnegie began an unparalleled steel-producing operation in Pittsburgh that changed the entire world. He innovated and devised everything from an open-hearth furnace, to new ship designs and armor applications for the U.S. Navy, to proof-of-concept steel bridges, and eventually to steel-framed skyscrapers.

Locals are only two to three generations removed from the height of Pittsburgh's steel and iron production days, and stories are still told of the bars and pubs that would run 2-week tabs and cash the checks of plant and mill workers, who would grind for 12-16 hours per day in extremely hot and physically demanding work conditions.

Today, the United Steelworkers Union is headquartered in Pittsburgh is the largest industrial labor union in the United States.

14

OIL, GLASS, COAL, & GAS...

Pittsburgh's rich industrial history does not end with steel and iron production! For nearly a century, this city led in the production of glass lamp globes, food storage jars and bottles, and plate glass for home and automobile windows.

The Pittsburgh Coal Seam, originally mapped in 1751, is the thickest and most extensive source of coal in Appalachia. Coal mines and miners have been a part of this industrially-viable region of the U.S. since the early 1760's.

Right now, Pittsburgh is one epicenter of the four-region national shale gas boom. But it's no stranger to petroleum. The first producing oil well in the United States was built in 1859 by Colonel Edwin Drake, just an hour's drive north in Titusville, PA. The well site still exists and is preserved at what is now the Drake Well Museum.

15

ANDY WARHOL

If you arrived in Pittsburgh by air, you probably couldn't help but notice the wall-length pop-art collage of bright pink cows, or the exhibit on HM the Queen of England and other queens. Andy Warhol, a Pittsburgh native who died in 1987, is considered a founding father of American pop art culture. His works are some of the most expensive paintings ever sold (one sold for \$100 Million), and he is less-notably known for coining the term "15 Minutes of Fame."

The Andy Warhol Museum, one of four Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh, maintains the most exhaustive collection of his audio-visual works—more than 12,000 paintings, photos, videos, and mixed media.

16

ANYBODY ORDER A PIZZA?

Much like New York or Philly, Pittsburgh is home to a lot of Italians... and over 150 amazing pizza places. Some of the more popular spots, according to *Pittsburgh Magazine* and Valentina, the magazine's Restaurant Critic for November 2012's 25 *Superb Pittsburgh Pizzas*, are as follows (in no particular order):

Fiori's, Pasquarelli's Pizza House, Aiello's, Mineo's Pizza House, Slice on Broadway, Giovanni's Pizza & Pasta, Mama Lucia's, Graziano's, Il Pizzaiolo, and Piccolo Forno.

Chances are, any place you choose will be good. Pittsburghers are so critical about their pies, that I doubt a pizza joint would be in business long if it wasn't locally approved.

17

WON'T YOU BE MY NEIGHBOR

One of the greatest urban legends of the 21st Century, was that America's beloved children's television show hosts of all times—Mr. Rogers—was a Marine Scout Sniper with numerous tattoos commemorating his kills. “That’s why he always wore a long-sleeved sweater on his kids show,” the legend asserted.

Snopes.com will defame that myth. True, however, is the fact that Fred M. Rogers—you guessed it—hails from Pittsburgh. His place in history has been recognized by the federal government, the Presbyterian Church, the Smithsonian, and the Television Hall of Fame; he is immortalized locally as a statue outside of Heinz Field, and in a centerpiece display at the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh.

18

NATIONAL AVIARY

Relatively small but true to its name, the National Aviary is a wide-open display of avian beauty, where visitors can walk under an open jungle canopy to admire colorful birds of all types, or see the feeding and care processes of injured birds of prey, or get the best close-up views of penguins without the hindrance of glass or cages to obstruct quality photography. Our favorite display? The finch room, where a hundred dainty fowl, some in pairs, can be observed building nests and flirting in a close, cage-free environment.

19

STEELER NATION

In the late 1970's the Dallas Cowboys football team was dubbed "America's Team." Sorry Dallas fans, but that baton has long since been passed. The Pittsburgh Steelers, according to ESPN and other 'bleacher reports' over the past two decades, have the most faithful and "best traveling" fan base of any NFL team. In the past few years, the Steeler Nation has seen growing pockets of loyal Steeler fans explode across the nation and even the world.

Myself a lifelong Packers fan (and still a Packers fan), I found myself in a tough position when our first Super Bowl while living in Pittsburgh was Steelers vs. Packers. I will say that I have developed a deep respect for the Steeler coaches, the players, their sportsmanship, and their overwhelming fan base. It is impossible to live happily in Pittsburgh... without becoming a Steelers fan.

20

TERRIBLE, WONDERFUL TOWEL

In 1975, Steelers radio broadcaster Myron Cope called on fans to wave gold or yellow towels as symbols of team support during the December 27th playoff game against the Baltimore Colts. At kickoff, an estimated 30,000 towels twirled in the fists of fans, helping to lead their team to victory, and to their second consecutive Super Bowl win.

Since then, the Terrible Towel has become one of the most recognizable icons representing Pittsburgh. Since 1996, 100% of the proceeds from Terrible Towel sales have supported education programs at the Allegheny Valley School, which specializes in educating students with mental retardation and other physical disabilities.

21

THE IMMACULATE RECEPTION

This title, also coined by Myron Cope (see # 20), was given to what is arguably the greatest—and most controversial—football play of all time. I'll give you the nutshell version, though I highly recommend pulling it up on YouTube.

Steelers down by 1, Terry Bradshaw (Steelers QB) under pressure with 22 seconds left in the game. Passes to halfback John Fuqua, who tangles with Raiders safety Jack Tatum before the ball arrives. The football bounces off Fuqua (or controversially, Tatum), flies backwards on the field at high speed, and is received by Steelers fullback Franco Harris, who just finished blocking. He runs it in, under escort, for a touchdown and the win.

22

LITTLE ITALY

Bloomfield is a Pittsburgh neighborhood known to locals as ‘Little Italy’. Similar to an area of the same name in New York, and as its name implies, this area was settled by several Italian families at the turn of the 20th century. For five generations, the neighborhood has been a source of regional pride. Previously, the area was inhabited by German immigrants, though the Italians soon outnumbered the Germans. Together, these two groups of nationals defined the culture of this flavorful part of Pittsburgh. Today, Little Italy is a great place to catch authentic Italian fare such as scratch-made pastas or fine espresso. To amplify your experience, visit Bloomfield during Little Italy Days at the end of each summer. Regardless of when you visit Pittsburgh, don’t leave this spot off your list!

23

DEUSCHTOWN

East Allegheny, similarly to Little Italy, is a Pittsburgh neighborhood known better as ‘Deuschtown’. Deuschtown was established in the late 1700’s and retains a lot of the city’s German flair; it is listed as a national historic district. The community has several regular and periodically recurring events and areas such as their historic Main Street, Farmer’s Market, House Tour, Pumpkinfest, Music Festival, German Parade, and Celebration in the Park.

24

THE ALLEGHENY TRAIL

Beginning at Point Park in downtown Pittsburgh, and ending in Washington, D.C., the Allegheny Trail attracts an eclectic flavor of outdoor adventurers at all times of the year. Walkers (with or without dogs), runners, hikers, bikers, in-line skaters, skateboarders, cross-country skiers, even equestrian riders in some places... all come to enjoy the Allegheny Trail, its different segments, or its beautiful cross-trails. Some of it is paved, some of it is rugged, but for the most part it is comprised of pavement or hard-packed fine gravel. My family lives within sight of a large cross-trail in the South Hills, called the Montour Trail. For our active family, the trail network has been a major contributor to our love for the region.

25

YINZ & OTHER LOCAL LINGO

One of the first local-yokel books I came across when we moved here was a pocket how-to reader on Pittsburghese. I thought, “How can the local dialect be any more unique than that of Brooklyn or Boston?”

There are indeed similarities to both New Yorkers and New Englanders in the speech, and even a distinct way of ending statements like questions, similar to Minnesotans or Canadians. Anyway, here are a couple words for you.

Downtown is pronounced “DAHntahn;” the phrase *y’all* or *you guys* is replaced with “y’inz;” South Side is “SahSide,” and the epithet of choice is Jack-off, pronounced “jagOFF.” The word *slippery* is “slippy” around here. There’s a lot to it... I’d suggest finding one of those Pittsburgh language books!

26

PITTSBURGH MARATHON

I love marathons. Been running them since I was sixteen... Munich, Paris, Big Sur, Shamrock, Marine Corps, Rock & Rolls all over...

I have run the Pittsburgh Marathon twice now, and I absolutely love it. If you have the legs for it, you gotta run Pittsburgh. The course winds through every nook and cranny of the city, and the back third is largely downhill to the finish line. It receives overwhelming public support, and is well organized from start to finish.

It is also one of the few large races you'll participate in that offers bib transfers right up to the last minute, making it easy to jump on Craigslist and join the race the week before it happens, or bail if your best friend decides to get married on a whim the same day.

27

DAY TRIPS FROM PGH

Pittsburgh is within 500 miles of half the U.S. population. It is an excellent launch platform for seeing other parts of the country. In drive time, here's the city in reference to other spots:

Chicago – 7:30, New York City – 6:15,
Philadelphia – 5:00, Washington, D.C. – 4:20,
Nashville – 9:00, Outer Banks – 9:00, Niagara
Falls – 4:15, Bay City, MI – 6:00

In addition, the city is 3 hours from wild elk country (Benezette), 2 hours from a major Amish settlement (Smicksburg), 1:30 from the 9/11 Flight 93 Memorial (Stoystown), 4:20 from the impressive National Museum of the Air Force (Dayton, OH), 3:30 from the New River Gorge (Fayetteville, WV), 2:00 from Lake Erie (Erie, PA)... and you're always close to great food and great people.

28

MELTING POT

In this day and age, the entire world is a melting pot, getting smaller and smaller with the advent of new technologies. Some cities still stand out among others, though, and Pittsburgh hosts a staggering number of different cultures in a very small area.

Pittsburgh has twenty-four sister cities, located in Kazakhstan, Canada, Spain, Belgium, Vietnam, Ukraine, Paraguay, Turkey, Israel, Cuba, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Russia, Germany, Japan, Nicaragua, UK, Macedonia, Bulgaria, China, and Croatia. Its people are black, white, tan, and every shade between.

Traveling the region, you'll find that a number of people here identify with Italy, Ireland, Germany, Poland, Hungary, the Balkans, and a number of other Slovak & Eastern European countries. Largest Croatian population in the USA, and fifth largest Ukrainian population.

29

FISHING

Pennsylvania as a whole offers fantastic fishing! Salmon, three types of trout, yellow & white perch, five types of bass, muskie, pike, pickerel, flathead & channel catfish, walleye, saugeye, sauger, shad, sunfish, bluegill, crappie, and carp. All of these can be fished from within two hours of the 'Burgh.

For non-residents, a 2013 one-day permit with all stamps (trout / salmon / Lake Erie) runs \$26.70... for a non-resident annual license, it's double that plus about \$15 for the stamp combo. Other options available. Children under 16 do not require a license. Fish almost anywhere. See the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission website for more questions... or just visit the sports counter @ Wal-Mart for a guide.

30

BOOMING ART SCENE

This city is dripping with art. For starters, the Art Institute of Pittsburgh attracts students seeking to become professional photographers, fashion designers, audio producers, culinary professionals, and artists of all forms of media.

Secondly, more than 2,300 sculptures, murals, and other forms of public art abound in and around the city... the combined work of hundreds of artists.

From the Andy Warhol Museum, Carnegie Museum of Art, and Mattress Factory to the annual Three Rivers Art Festival, the Strip's weekly Artisan Market, or South Side's periodic I Made It Market, you'll find that both art and artists are deeply immersed in this city's culture.

31

THEATER DISTRICT

Over 120 different theaters, community centers, music & dance halls, stages and similar venues comprise the vibrant performing arts culture of Pittsburgh. Whether you're in the mood for *The Sound of Music*, *The Lion King*, *Wicked* or something less common, the Cultural District is the place to start!

The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust publishes regular events happening at the following venues in the cultural district: August Wilson Center, Benedum Center, Byham Theater, Heinz Hall, O'Reilly Theater, CLO Cabaret, and the Theater Square Box Office.

Some other popular spots include the Pittsburgh City Theater, Apple Hill Playhouse, Pittsburgh Opera, Pittsburgh Playhouse, and Hillman Center for Performing Arts.

32

MUSIC

In 2011, popular rap artist and Pittsburgher Wiz Khalifa honored his city with a #1 hit song on the pop charts, *Black and Yellow*, so named for the city's colors. Perry Como and Bobby Vinton were from Pittsburgh suburbs. Christina Aguilera, Henry Mancini, Billy Eckstine, Stephen Collins Foster, and Lorin Maazel also have Pittsburgh area roots. The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (PSO), directed by Manfred Honeck, plays regularly at Heinz Hall (if they're not touring somewhere else in the world).

With a musical theater, a musical academy, the Pittsburgh Musicians' Union, a regular music report and a number of musical venues and events, not to mention a number of street artists (guitar, violin, cello, flute, piccolo, and sax) who regularly perform throughout the city—mainly in the Strip District and South Side—I think it's safe to say that PGH embraces music.

33

PGH IN FILM

When *Batman: The Dark Knight Rises* was filmed in 2011, the majority of filming took place over several weeks in Pittsburgh. Snow was blown through the streets on warm sunny days, and the occasional glimpse of the Dark Knight himself was a common topic of conversation over lunch.

No stranger to the Silver Screen, Pittsburgh has been featured in over 1000 films and television shows since the late 1800's. Some famous titles are: *Angels in the Outfield*, *Night of the Living Dead*, *Slap Shot*, *The Deer Hunter*, *Dawn of the Dead*, *Flashdance*, *All the Right Moves*, *Reckless*, *the Muppets Take Manhattan*, *Gung Ho*, *RoboCop*, *The Awakening*, *The Silence of the Lambs*, *Hoffa*, *Groundhog Day*, *Boys on the Side*, *Striking Distance*, *The Clearing*, *Independence Day*, *Kingpin*, *Stigmata*, *Promised Land*, *Jack Reacher*, *The Avengers*, *Unstoppable*, and *Promised Land*.

34

WORLD'S FIRST MOVIE THEATER

Although it was not the first theater to play movies, a 1919 newspaper article declared that The Nickelodeon in Pittsburgh was the first known theater in the world dedicated to showing projected motion pictures.

The name—not the first time used in U.S. history, but the first time for this purpose—was a witty combination of nickel (the cost of admission) and Odeon, which was the famous Parisian indoor theater named after the roofed theater of ancient Greece. In a short time, nickelodeons popped up on city street corners across America.

Today, Pittsburgh is proud to have Paramount and Disney offices in the city, as well as the largest sound stage outside of NYC or L.A. It is also home to the annual *3R Film Festival*.

35

PIEROGIES

Pierogies (often called pierogi in both singular and plural form) are unleavened dough dumplings stuffed with mashed potatoes, cheese, and other ingredients, boiled and then baked or fried with sautéed onions. There are several variations of flavor and cooking style.

We first purchased pierogies in a “What the heck, let’s try something different” decision at the Cherry Point commissary in the 90’s. Since then, it’s been a household staple, though none of our friends had ever heard of a pierogi.

How ironic is it, that we would settle in the Pierogi Capital of the U.S.? That’s right, Pittsburgh’s the place where you can subscribe to the tweets of a roaming Polish Pierogie food truck, watch a Half Time pierogie-themed show, or observe the Pirates’ 2nd-String Pierogies post woeful comments and photos on Facebook. Apparently, our city consumes 11 times more pierogies as any other in the nation.

36

BUSY WITH BUSINESS

Pittsburgh was once the headquarters home to Westinghouse, Gulf Oil, and a number of other industrial giants; however, after an economic downturn in the 70's followed by massive layoffs, the city re-structured its economic vitality around education and healthcare. Each of these two industries will be covered later.

Today, in addition to holding impressive medical and higher learning portfolios, the Pittsburgh region is proud to be the home of the following corporations, among others:

Consol Energy, EQT, PNC Bank, Dick's Sporting Goods, HJ Heinz, Bayer USA, American Eagle Outfitters, GNC, Giant Eagle, Atlas America, Rand Corporation, FedEx Ground, Pittsburgh Jeans Co., the Del Monte Corporate Service Center, Rue 21, Highmark, 84 Lumber, BNY Mellon, and U.S. Steel.

37

HISTORY PRE- DATES THE REVOLUTION

At the very tip of the city's peninsula, on the river fork where the Ohio is formed, is a small area free of urbanization known as Point State Park. In 1754, the French established Fort Duquesne on this very site. The fort was eventually destroyed and abandoned by the French, then refortified nearby as Fort Pitt by the British, who held that crucial landmark during the French and Indian War. The last original structure of Ft. Pitt is a small outbuilding called the blockhouse, which today is open to the general public. The Fort Pitt Museum was erected nearby to resemble the original fort.

38

THEY HAIL FROM PITTSBURGH

Here is a list of some famous Pittsburghers who are not otherwise mentioned in this book:

Michael Keaton, Jeff Goldblum, Dennis Miller, Mary Cassatt, Bret Michaels, Dan Marino, Johnny Unitas, Joe Montana, Joe Namath, Mike Ditka, Ken Griffey Sr. / Jr., Stan Musial, Ron Paul, Demi Moore, Bette Ford, Charles Bronson, George C. Marshall, and the Warner Brothers make up some of the most commonly known. Pittsburgh is also the home of six astronauts, four Medal of Honor recipients, 25+ governors and mayors outside of Pennsylvania, the founder of the Boy Scouts of America, and “Lurch” from *The Addams Family*.

39

LOW CRIME

In 2007, Pittsburgh ranked 67th out of America's most dangerous cities, and 239th of America's most dangerous metropolitan areas. Crime stats for the nation, especially for the NorthEast, have improved dramatically in recent years. What that means, is that Pittsburgh is relatively safe in comparison to other U.S. cities.

In 2010, Forbes named Pittsburgh as America's #1 Most Livable City. One of the five weighing factors was crime rate.

Out of all seventy-two U.S. cities having a population of 250,000 or greater people, per capita crime data between 2011 and 2013 placed Pittsburgh below average for all combined crimes, with a particularly low incident of forcible rape.

40

2012-2013 ACCOLADES

Recently gleaned from VisitPittsburgh.com:

U-Haul currently reports Pittsburgh as the city with the highest growth percentage in US--9.04

Tripadvisor.com ranked the Pirates' PNC Park as the #1 ballpark in the USA

Forbes and Yahoo ranked Pgh as one of the 10 most unexpectedly romantic cities in the world

Kiplinger – 1 of 10 best cities to start a business

Amazon ranks Pittsburgh among the 10 most romantic cities in the U.S., based on relationship book, romance book & music sales

Careerbliss.com – 5th happiest city to work in

Sterling – #1 city to relocate to

Bloomberg – 11th of America's 50 best cities

41

WORLD-CLASS MEDICINE

The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) is the U.S. News' 10th Ranked Best Hospital in the U.S... *again*. This marks a trend in U.S. News' honor roll placement over the last decade. In addition, UPMC's Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh has ranked 7th and 6th in the nation over the past three years, and Magee Women's Hospital of UPMC was ranked 4th this year in nationwide gynecologic care.

Magee has also been regarded as the best women's hospital in America, and UPMC as one of the best places to work for a post-doctoral med career. The University of Pittsburgh's Medical School holds at roughly the fifteenth best overall in the nation.

42

AMAZING SCHOOLS

At the end of this past school year, our neighbors were sharing with us about how their son's college application process was going. He had applied largely to Ivy League schools. "Wow," I said, "Smart kid!" Both parents said, "Yes he is, but much of that credit goes to the local school system." "This region breeds very smart & successful students, and much like those of New England states, the graduates of our region's schools are shoo-ins for the nation's top universities."

Though the City of Pittsburgh itself ranks 6 of 10 on the most popular school rating website (greatschools.org), it is surrounded with school districts rated 8-10. We are in an '8' rated district, and we're absolutely amazed by the quality of education and musical opportunities the schools afford!

43

ORIGINAL EATERIES

My wife and I have a thing for original restaurants. You know, the what-you-see-is-what-you-get, not franchised or replicated (outside of their region) diners and dives. Pittsburgh has a ton of them! Here are a few great ones for you to try:

Primanti Bros. (see item # 3 in this book)
Essie's Original Hot Dog Shop – Oakland
Fat Head's Saloon – Southside
Jerome Bettis' Grill 36 – near Heinz Field
Monterey Bay Fish Grotto – Mt. Washington
Tin Angel – Mt. Washington
Mike & Tony's Gyros – South Side
Nakama Sushi – South Side
Salt of the Earth – Garfield
Mallorca / Ibiza – South Side
Carson Street Deli – South Side
Francuary – Lawrenceville
Burgatory – Robinson

44

CATHEDRAL OF LEARNING

Towering high over the University of Pittsburgh is the beautifully crafted Cathedral of Learning, which is the tallest educational building in the Western Hemisphere.

Free and open to the public, the cathedral is a peaceful place to find take your lunch and laptop to study or work in solitude under a high vaulted ceiling. The highlight of the 42-floor, 2,000-room Gothic style building is a series of 29 nationality-themed rooms.

The building was commissioned in 1921, formally completed and dedicated in the mid-30's, and is also the 2nd tallest Gothic building in the world.

45

STATION SQUARE

Just across the Smithfield Street Bridge, with downtown Pittsburgh to your back, is Station Square. Formerly the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad Station, this area has been redeveloped into a bustling magnet for Pittsburgh tourism. Visit Hard Rock Café, Bar Louie, The Melting Pot, Texas de Brazil churrascaria, Bar Room Pittsburgh, Buckhead Saloon, a Riverhounds soccer game at Highmark Stadium, and more...

Station Square is a multi-transport hub, with access to one Mt. Washington incline, the Pittsburgh light rail, city bus, walking or biking bridge, and a large parking garage.

The colorful, musically-choreographed Fountain at Bessemer Court is the centerpiece of this entertainment complex, with shows at the top of the hour, 9AM-Midnight, April through November. Come ready to dance!

46

VINTAGE ARCADE

Ever feel like bringing your kids down to a level of video game competition that you can handle? This town's got a place for that.

Games N' At, Pittsburgh's old school 'Arcade and Party Emporium', you can competitively crush your 12-year old and his or her advanced hand-and-eye coordination with a good old fashioned game of pinball, foosball, air hockey, duckpin bowling, or pool. Throwback arcade games like Pac-Man, Space Invaders, and Donkey Kong!

Located at 2010 Josephine Street on the South Side Slopes.

47

CLIFFS, CAVES, CANYONS & SALAMANDERS

When you finally get sick of all the shopping, great food, amazing football games and pinball, take an hour drive north of the city to experience one of the coolest, most unassuming outdoor exploration spots this side of the Mississippi. McConnell's Mill State Park, at first glance, looks like any other **yawn** sleepy park with an old-fashioned grist mill and covered bridge over a pretty little river.

If you leave the grist mill and travel across the covered bridge, however, you'll soon discover something a little more exciting. Travel up the hill from the bridge and take your first right. Drive a few hundred yards and park where it looks like others have. You'll find small adventures for all ages that will keep you busy all day long! Boulder around with your small children or bring your pro climbing gear!

48

SCENIC TERRAIN

Just as is true of the Pirates' PNC Park, when it comes to Western Pennsylvania landscape, there ain't a bad seat in the house.

Our favorite vistas are found outside the city during the fall, when rolling hills produce colors more vibrant than can be replicated with a thousand quality paints. Whether you travel south to the Laurel Highlands, west toward Ohio, north to Erie or east toward the middle of the state, after 30 minutes you'll begin to experience beautiful rolling hills, cornfields, forests or vineyards that go for miles and miles.

Another thing we noticed, and maybe you'll chuckle at the notion, is that the sunsets in this region are absolutely gorgeous—and far more frequently so than anywhere we've been.

49

CITY PRIDE

The first indication one has that they've arrived in Pittsburgh, is that the majority of people around them are wearing something to represent. Pittsburghers all wear black & gold on game days, at all regional schools on Fridays, and at church on Sundays. Well at our church, anyways.

The rest of the time, they still represent. Pittsburghers love Pittsburgh like New Yorkers love the Big Apple. They love their history, they love their lingo, and they love the local things that make them unique. Be forewarned: you're at a restaurant and you finally got your baby girl to fall asleep so you can eat. The Pens score a goal, the bar goes wild, and the whole restaurant explodes in yells and applause which scares the crap out of your baby. Don't worry... she'll come around. Ours just wakes up clapping now! We're proudly adapted & adopted Pittsburghers.

50

MARKET SQUARE

Reminiscent of a old European city hangout, Market Square is a downtown sit-and-chat-over coffee haven in the heart of the Golden Triangle (downtown).

Cafés, coffee shops, light eats and our favorite Primanti's are all located there. On occasion, the square will be rigged with speakers, playing live or recorded music for some event or another. One of the most festive times is during Christmastime, when the Holiday Market fills the square in the fashion of a German Weinachtsfest or Cristkindlmarkt.

To get there, locate the tall, mirrored castle-top PPG building from any vantage point outside the city. Now head that direction. Market Square is located near the base of the building, adjacent to one of the shorter sections of that mirrored *PPG Place*.

51

HISTORIC COURTHOUSE

Two of the oldest and coolest-looking buildings in Pittsburgh are the conjoined Allegheny County Courthouse and Jail. Partially covered in vines, these 19th century structures stand out in stark contrast to their modern urban surroundings. Modeled after early Roman parliament buildings, these combined structures have the look and feel of an impenetrable Gotham fortress.

The courthouse and jail are entered in the National Register of Historic Places. You can find these structures boxed in by the intersection of Forbes Avenue, Ross Street, and Grant Street... thoroughfares named after founders of Pittsburgh.

52

CITY CHICKEN

This working-class scrap meat, made famous during Pittsburgh's early 1900's industrial boom, is the equivalent of 'mystery meat,' BO_ (Blame it On _[whoever's name]_), or what American G.I.'s call 'sh-- on a shingle'. As you might have guessed, it is made of anything but chicken, usually served breaded and fried or cubed and grilled on a skewer, and can still be purchased at some local grocery stores under the label "City Chicken"... though usually found in the pork section.

53

MALLS & SHOPPING

Robinson Mall—in fact, the entire Robinson area—is full of food, shopping, and entertainment. Located between the airport and downtown.

Homestead Waterfront—Home to Dave & Buster's, The Improv, AMC Lowes Theatre, Venetian Salon & Spa, and over 100 stores

Ross Park Mall—Just north of the city, full of upscale retailers such as Burberry, Juicy Couture, and Louis Vuitton... as well as down-to-earth establishments like Five Guys Burgers & Fries.

Waterworks, the Shops @ PPG Place, South Hills Mall, Pittsburgh Mills—the largest shopping complex in Western PA, Grove Prime Outlets (North), Tanger Outlets (Washington), and Bakery Square (Larimer) are a few more.

54

THE PENNSYLVANIA CONDOR

Majestic, Critically Endangered, and extremely elusive, the Great Pennsylvania Condor enjoys solitude in its chosen habitat just two hours northeast of Pittsburgh. With a total wingspan of nine feet, you would think that one of the three survivors of the species might be easily distinguished in flight. Unfortunately, this rare creature can only be seen when smoking shoe leather in a meerschaum pipe on Tuesday, while wearing leotards and tap shoes under a full moon at the end of the rainbow—the opposite end of the pot of gold, because condors hate leprechauns. Everybody knows that.

Aah, comic relief. Okay, I'll give you the real # 54 on the next page.

54

A FEW GOOD MUSEUMS

When it comes to museums, a great place to start is with the Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh. One of them, previously mentioned, is the Andy Warhol Museum. Then there are the co-located Carnegie Museum of Art and Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Oakland, and finally the Carnegie Science Center & UPMC Sportworks (a must if you have kids) on the west side of Heinz Field. Family passes are available for year-round admission to all four museums.

Also great to check out: The Childrens Museum of Pittsburgh, the 7-story Senator John Heinz Pittsburgh History Center, The Mattress Factory, Photo Antiquities—Museum of Photographic History, the Air Heritage Museum, the Western Pennsylvania Model Railroad Museum, the Frick Art & Historical Museum, or one of three ‘gallery crawls’.

55

YESTERDAY'S AIRPORT OF TOMORROW

In 1953, the Greater Pittsburgh Airport was the second largest airport in the United States, next to what is now known as JFK airport in New York. It was very spacious and “modern.” This civilian airport was annexed onto an existing military airfield in Moon Township.

Today, Pittsburgh International Airport (PIT) has set up a display called Yesterday’s Airport of Tomorrow, in order to preserve the facility’s history and the region’s rich aviation heritage.

56

A M E R I C A N D R E A M E R S

One statistic that my wife and I found particularly interesting, is that the Pittsburgh boasts having homeowners with one of the highest paid off mortgage rates of any major metropolitan area in the country.

Okay, so what? What's that mean? It means that a lot of people over the last 30+ years have decided that this was a pretty good place to call "home." It also means that working-class families in the area—which historically have comprised the majority of the local population—have also probably also enjoyed slightly better mortgage loan qualification & approval rates than other areas.

57

LOL

SMILEYFACE

Pittsburgh and its surrounding suburbs boast a lot of ‘firsts’. Notables that have not otherwise been mentioned include:

Polio vaccine, Zippo lighter, Ferris wheel, first emoticon (☺), the Clark bar, first federal hospital, first steamboat: “New Orleans,” cable suspension bridge, petroleum refining process, continuous roll printing press, air brake, labor union, commercial aluminum production, aluminum-faced building, baseball World Series, banana split, gas station, road map, the game of Bingo, radio commercial, church service radio broadcast, first and second educational TV stations, nuke submarine engine, nuclear power plant, civic arena retractable roof, pull tabs on cans, Big Mac, heart / liver / kidney transplants, international telephone communications center, sky ballet, picture phone, and first African American Harvard professor to receive tenure.

58

JERRY'S RECORDS

Home of the “world’s finest vinyl,” Jerry’s Records is located in the Squirrel Hill district of Pittsburgh. This is where folks come from all over to buy LP’s, 45’s, CD’s, cassettes, and movies. Buy / sell / trade, over a million albums in stock. Saturday sidewalk sales in the summer offer overstock items for just a buck. “Best prices anywhere. ANYWHERE!” Jerry’s has been recognized by Rolling Stone and Paste magazines, and is widely regarded across the internet as ‘the best,’ ‘one of the best,’ or ‘one of the top 10’ record stores in the world or in the nation.

59

CHURCHES

I love this city's religious flair. Smack dab in the middle of the city are some of the oldest architectural treasures in the national inventory. Church bells ring loud on Sunday mornings. **First Trinity Church**, est. 1758, is the final resting place to several Native Americans, French, and British, and notably a ranking chief of the Shawnee Nation. **First Presbyterian Church** sometimes features a bagpiper atop the steps on special occasions. **Church Brew Works** – this cool building near the Strip District was decommissioned and restored as a brewery / restaurant. **St. Mary of the Mount** is the beautiful yellow church atop Mt. Washington. **Smithfield United Church of Christ** has the coolest steeple spire downtown. **St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Catholic** in South Side is gorgeous, as are **St. Bernard** of Mt. Lebanon and the abandoned **SS Peter & Paul**. For a fresh hipster church, check out our own **LifeStone** Church in SouthSide!

60

BASEBALL GREATS

Affectionately known by locals as the ‘Bucs’ or ‘Buccos’ (Buccaneers), the Pittsburgh Pirates have produced a number of greats who became tightly woven threads in the Americana cloth.

Willie “Pops” Stargell. Roberto Clemente. Bill Mazeroski. Honus Wagner. These baseball greats helped to affect the Pirates’ five World Series trophies and several of the 9 National League Pennants and 9 East Division titles. In my card-collecting days, Bobby Bonilla and Barry Bonds were two hot Pirates. Today, center fielder Andrew “Cutch” McCutchen is a top-ranked leader in hits and batting average across major league baseball.

This year, the Bucs are doing great!
Unfortunately, each of the handful of times we’ve been to a game, they lost. For the sake of the team’s record, we stopped going.

61

LOCAL BREWS

Pennsylvania is home to America's oldest brewery... Yeungling (since 1829). Until recent decades, Yeungling was not found far outside of Pennsylvania. Now it's up and down the East Coast and slowly trickling West. If you're looking for a regionally-favored lager, order Yeungling.

Pittsburgh has its own beers as well. Duquesne, best known for their pilsner, was brewed from 1899 to 1972, then reincarnated in 2008. Iron City Beer has been kicking out great lager since 1861.

Of course, these days, there are micro-breweries in every major non-dry city around the world. Pittsburgh has its share... too many to list in this book. I'd suggest Church Brew Works or East End Brewing Co., or visiting beeradvocate.com and selecting Pittsburgh, PA.

62

THE WINE SCENE

Sure, folks don't visit Pittsburgh for its wine. But why not? If you look at a U.S. wine map, you'd be surprised to see that Pittsburgh is close to the #2 region for size and quality in the country. Nevertheless, some excellent sweet and fruitier wines come out of Pennsylvania, especially in the north central and northeast sections of the State. We have a handful of well-known local wineries and vineyards within an hour's drive of Pittsburgh... here they are in order of proximity, beginning with the closest: Pittsburgh Winery (Strip District), Narcisi Winery (Butler), C.T. Miller Vineyard (Avella), Christian W. Klay Winery & Stone Villa Wine Cellars (Laurel Highlands). If wine *is* the reason you came to visit, head north to Erie, Penna (PA), and hook a right toward Buffalo. You won't be disappointed... 5,000 more acres of vines than in California's Sonoma Valley.

63

BEST FUEL PERKS & GROCERY STORE CHILD CARE

Shopping at regional favorites Giant Eagle or Giant Eagle Market District grocery stores can save you money on gas at GetGo gas stations. And we're not talking ten measly cents a gallon... after one or two of our bi-weekly shopping trips, we'll save anywhere from fifty cents to \$2.50 off per gallon for a single fill up!

Market District, FYI, is the local equivalent to your favorite upscale grocer back home. It's open 24/7 at most locations, has a wide variety of ethnic foods, and is focused on fresh. Thousands of types of cheeses, meats, artisan breads and local produce. Bulk oils, spreads, and hard-to-find spices. Clean, free childcare!

64

AMERICA'S LARGEST INLAND REGATTA

Every year, in the days immediately preceding July 4th, the rivers come alive with boats for the wildly popular Three Rivers Regatta. Events include the Powerboat Superleague North American Championships, sand sculptures to rival Virginia Beach's Neptune Fest, acrobatic canines, BRGR eating contest, singing & dancing, and an "anything that floats" boat race, not to mention tons of fireworks and the general ambiance that ensues from masses of boats and grills and cold drinks. It's a big city floating tailgate party!

65

BEST 4TH OF JULY

There aren't many bad places to view the amazing fireworks display that takes place in Pittsburgh, but there are a few exceptional ones. If the (Pittsburgh's own world-renowned Zambelli Fireworks) show alone is what you come to see, pack up some folding chairs and head out onto the West End Bridge. By dusk, the bridge will be teeming with people. You'll see the fireworks up close, with the city buildings shimmering as a backdrop. If you want to see the fireworks, and follow up afterward with ice cream or coffee, head up to Mt. Washington's Grandview Avenue. But if you want to see amazing fireworks, followed by a stroll along the river to grab a bite or a glass of wine, then you need to be plant your blankets or chairs right on the river, anywhere between Jerome Bettis' restaurant and Mr. Roger's memorial statue. Come early!

66

CLASSIC CAR HEAVEN

I am the son of the biggest old car buff I've ever met. And as such, I grew up listening to the Beach Boys and watching my pops tune his latest baby; I've even owned a lot of 50's to 70's classics myself. We used to travel the States in search of old cars, original diners, and cruisin' spots. Somehow we missed this place.

The Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix International Car Show takes place in Schenley Park at the end of each July. It's a free-for-all cruise-in. Come one, come all, no club membership required. All classic years, makes, & models... just shine and show. Then there's the Great American Car Show @ St. Joseph. Near our place in South Hills, there are regular car shows at Al's Café in Bethel Park on Wednesdays, Fridays at Mineral Beach, Chevy shows and Sonic cruise-ins in Bridgeville. There's always something car-related going on!

67

LOCAL FLORA

Pittsburgh is located in a fantastic zone for diversified plant growth. Many of the flowers, trees, and other plants that grow in the southern and eastern U.S. can be found here (or have been introduced and thrive here), such as sassafras, sweet gum, yellow poplar, sumac, red bay, bayberry, huckleberry, yucca, saw palmetto, azalea, wild orchid, wisteria, may apple, muscadine grapes, pecan, & even tulip trees and magnolia. At the same time, cooler-temperature plants also thrive... black walnut, apple varieties, several maples & oaks, ash, beech, birch, pine, linden, balsam fir, buckeye, lilac, mountain laurel, wintergreen, dewberry, wild ginger, toadstools, and edible morel mushrooms can all be found in, or within close proximity of, Pittsburgh. This is the first place we've lived where we can take a weekend trip to find our own wild spruce Christmas tree (there's a mountain full of them five hours northwest).

68

... **AND FAUNA**

No condors, sorry. In fact, there has been an exodus of animals from PA over the past century... the gray wolf, bison, moose, mountain lion, wolverine, badger, and one of the two types of rattlesnakes here... all gone. But we have chipmunks. Lots of 'em. And pitch-black squirrels, red squirrels, flying squirrels, and humongous Delmarva fox squirrels. Beautiful elk and snowshoe hares are found a couple hours northeast of the 'Burgh. The Baltimore Oriole, Indigo Bunting, & pheasant are relatively common in this area, and crazy amounts of wild turkeys. So many deer get killed between Pittsburgh and West Virginia each fall, you'll see them piled high on trailers to keep the roads clean daily. We hand feed deer and turkey at the front door of our house! Black bear, trout, salmon, beaver, porcupine, 10 types of bats, adorable tiny owls, coyote, red fox, gray fox, mink, weasel, and numerous amphibians & reptiles abound.

69

SHADYSIDE

Here we have another unique face of the city. Shadyside, like South Side and much of Lawrenceville, is a gluten-free, yoga-loving type of neighborhood. But it has some unique elements for those with this taste that the other areas don't have. Here are three:

Eden – described as “vegetarian heaven,” this fresh ingredient joint caters to veggies, vegans, and carnivores alike.

Prantl's Bakery – their Pittsburgh-famous, German-style burnt almond (gebrannte mandeln) “travel” torte can be ordered and shipped anywhere using the instructions on their website

Walnut Street – the street gets shut down for one day in June, July, and August, for a benefit concert called *Jam on Walnut*. Great cocktail bar out there called *Mardi Gras*. *Shadyside Art Festival* takes place on Walnut each August.

70

3.5 SEASONS

This is by far one of the best things about Pittsburgh in our opinion. Odds are you'll disagree, on the basis of too much snow, rain, and clouds. Here's our justification: Spring here is wet and miserable, but short. It's like going through weather puberty. Summer? Fantastic. Over the last few years, there has consistently been one really hot week, 95+ humid degrees, preceded and followed by summer temperatures between 65 and 85. Autumn is perfect. Get outside a lot in the fall, you'll really appreciate it! Winter... ah, that's what tips the scales. Pittsburghers generally hate snow because (1) they're used to it, and (2) snow = work. Non-northerners generally hate snow because (1) they're not used to it, and (2) there's an inexplicable predisposition for some folks to hate snow and cats. *There are no cats in Pittsburgh, and the streets are paved with cheese.* But there's snow 5 months out of the year. To love the 'Burgh, you gotta love snow.

71

ZERO NATURAL DISASTERS

Oh, this part's great. With the exception to the freak Superstorm Sandy last year, which produced no significant damage or health issues in Pittsburgh, this city has been historically free from the effects of tornadoes (last direct hit was in the 1800's), hurricanes (never), flash floods (history of flooding, not western-style flash flooding), forest fires (none), earthquakes (one in recent history, damaged a residential chimney... USGS survey gives probability of less than ½% of an earthquake being felt in Pittsburgh in the next 50 years).

Blizzards? Yes. But Pittsburghers just call them big snow dumps or 'rough winters'.

72

GO PENS!

From what you know about Pittsburgh so far, you would probably assume that all of the city's sports teams have a pretty loyal fan base... and of course, you'd be right. But the Penguins hockey team has something more that is deserving of loyalty... even with a cult-like following, these three-time Stanley Cup champions are super down-to-earth. Most of the team members—including their top stars—take regular part in hand-delivering tickets to season ticketholders before each season begins. Also, each September, the practice schedule is posted for fans, and practices are free and open to the public (Steelers do same, down in Laurel Highlands). Don't know about you, but I love that kind of openness in a team. Apparently, so does everyone else. Here's a challenge: during hockey season, count the number of folks you see in the city representing the Pens. Have a counterpart count the number of people not representing Pgh in any way. You'll win!

73

THE RINK @ PPG PLACE

On the subject of ice and skating (see 72), I couldn't stand to leave this one out. Directly at the base of the silver castle-top PPG building on the skyline, from mid-November to early March, is one of the best outdoor rinks you'll ever experience. The Rink at PPG Place is lit up with a huge Christmas tree at its center, and is a guaranteed good time for young and old, whether you're racing around the tree, holding hands while slow skating, or sipping hot chocolate and watching others at the indoor concessionaire or rink-side tables. What makes it even better, is the reflective nature of the PPG buildings that closely surround the rink. Kids and adults alike still gather and press against the glass walls to watch the Zamboni put a mirror finish on the ice every hour. This experience—especially for kids—is a memory-builder.

74

SUPER PATRIOTIC AMERICANS

Maybe it's the Marine in me, or maybe my overseas upbringing, but I get chills at the sight of a street full of American flags—especially when they're flying for no apparent reason. I'm not intentionally picking on anybody, but my home state of Indiana doesn't look like that. It doesn't look that way out west. Texas looks like that... with the Texas flag. Military base towns aren't that patriotic, unless half the town is deployed and on their way home. The American South has some pockets of deep patriotism, peppered with that ol' rebel spirit. Well, welcome to Pittsburgh, and to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and for that matter the Northeast. Our nation started here, our nation's heroes died here. This is a flag-waving state. Every day.

75

SKYBAR

Relatively new in concept to the U.S. entertainment scene, and spankin' new to our area, SkyBar Pittsburgh supposedly offers an unparalleled view of the city from the vantage point of a swimming pool by day turned cocktail lounge by night. I still haven't been, and it's too new to have reliable ratings, but if the venue is anything like Sky Bar Hilton Virginia Beach, Bricktown Skyy Bar in OKC, and Sky Bar Hollywood, I know it will up the ante on East Carson Street's already bangin' entertainment climate.

76

INDIAN ARTIFACTS

Not only of strategic and economic importance to past French, British, and modern American inhabitants of Pittsburgh, the geographic junction of three vital rivers was first valued by its original inhabitants, who were Native Americans. With the first battle of the French and Indian War having taken place at nearby Fort Necessity, and with a rich American Indian culture deeply rooted throughout the region, greater Pittsburgh has become a marked place of interest for historical and archeological study.

That's great, you say. Where are the artifacts? Your best bet is to rent a kayak, and head out to 9-Mile Island on the Allegheny River (9 miles from the 3-river union at Point State Park, not to be confused with 7-, 12-, and 14-Mile Islands). That's one little-known local spot to scout for new treasures that the river washes up.

77

BICYCLE FRIENDLY

Way friendly. My wife and I got a sitter one night for the kids, and headed to South Side for a date. We ate at Mallorca, sipped some wine, and then proceeded to take a walk down E. Carson. We were passed by probably 200 bikers (cyclists, not Harley types—we have those too), male & female... barely dressed. They were meeting up at the OTB Bicycle Café two blocks down, as part of their periodic Underwear Ride!

A ‘pedalist’ myself—albeit a clothed one—I can certainly appreciate the amount of bikes on the road and bike shops in and around the city. This is a bike-friendly city. It’s built like one, it feels like one, and the rides are amazing.

78

PHIPPS CONSERVATORY

I truly don't know where to begin with this one. Phipps is a really cool experience, and it's bigger than it looks from the outside. I can't find anything to back this up, but I believe Phipps Conservatory is much bigger than the National Botanical Garden in D.C.

With an ever-changing variety of collections and exhibits from around the world, this place will lure and calm you with a relaxing yet wondrous treat for the senses. Listen to the misting of plants and the trickle of water features, the occasional bird or soft themed music. Feel the intangible sense of wonder while experiencing the holiday displays. Feel the temperature and humidity shift from a tropical forest to cool and crisp environment. Gaze at hundreds of beautiful orchids, masterfully shaped bonsai, festive displays of lights, or incredible artisan glass creations.

79

PITT BEACH SUNBATHING

Pittsburgh is a long way from any beaches, unless you consider the Great Lakes to count. Still, that doesn't stop locals, particularly University of Pittsburgh students, from studying, picnicking, or sporting bikinis and chasing a tan at Schenley Plaza, which is nestled in the heart of Pitt Panther Country across from the Cathedral of Learning and next to two prominent Carnegie museums. The Porch, a conveniently co-located upscale dining café (indoor / outdoor, casual dress), is the perfect establishment to pacify your grumbly tummy while you're getting your tan on, and it's surprisingly easy on the pocket. Let your dog splash around in the huge fountain at the back of the plaza. You could also stroll up Forbes Avenue a block or two, to the heart of Oakland's eateries and central shops.

80

CLIPPER FLEET

Centrally docked at Station Square, the 5-vessel Gateway Clipper Fleet is a year-round operation that offers entertainment, transport, and one-of-a-kind tours of the city.

During ball games, a lot of folks who live outside the hub will take the bus or light rail to Station Square, board a Clipper and shuttle over to PNC Park or Heinz Field. It beats the traffic and the parking crowds.

Dining, dancing, beer and wine cruises, special occasions, corporate events, sightseeing cruises, you name it... all take place on the Gateway fleet.

81

I'LL HAVE A YEUNGLING... & A 6'ER TO GO

Pennsylvania has really weird laws for purchasing alcohol... took us a while to figure them out. Here's the gist: you can't buy beer or wine at Walmart. Only at state-controlled beverage stores, which are generally open from 9AM to 9PM and closed on Sundays, although this law is seemingly beginning to relax. Some supermarkets with a café or restaurant inside may sell alcohol at a separate register.

Well, once you get over it, you'll discover the absolutely awesome things about PA's alcohol laws. Buy a six pack from any bar or restaurant. Some even have a back door just for that purpose. A lot of great restaurants are BYOB (Beer or Bottle of wine). This adds an element of *different*; I've shared tables & conversation with groups of total strangers over interesting labels that were brought inside.

82

PGH PARKING

I'll never forget our first time at Phipps. I ran in to the gift shop to get change for the meter while my wife waited with the kids in the car. The lady at the gift store said, "Don't worry about it, they don't check the meters after 4 PM. You aren't from around here, are you?" She then proceeded to tell me how the city—which already has a history of more relaxed parking standards—was really on a mission to make parking easy on visitors. They have succeeded. If you plan on visiting the cultural district, download the ParkPGH app on your phone for up-to-the-minute parking availability. Also, if you know you'll be downtown tomorrow, you can pre-reserve a parking space at any of eleven major garages through PDP's *Reserved Parking Program* online. For what it's worth, we drive and park street-side all the time. Finding space is usually not an issue. Unlike many cities, the safety of the belongings in your vehicle isn't much of an issue, either.

83

LOCAL PRODUCE EVERYWHERE

One thing I particularly love about Pgh... it's a good region for growing stuff, as long as you're mindful of the late frosts. There are some great places to get your fresh produce, whether downtown or U-pick straight from the farm! Pittsburgh Public Market in the Strip is a popular spot when shopping in the city, as are the city park vendors (Monday – Friday during temperate months). For the latest schedule of farmers' market vendors in Pittsburgh's parks, visit: <http://pittsburghpa.gov/citiparks/farmers-market>. Outside the city, there are farms galore: Morris Farm in Sewickley Township, Sarvers Hill Farm in Westmoreland County, Simmons Farm in Peters Township (free cider on tap, awesome animal petting area for kids), Trax Farms Market in Finleyville, & Schramm Farm & Orchards in Jeannette... to name a few.

84

HARD SHELL, SOFT CENTER

The people of Pittsburgh are some of the nicest jagoffs you'll ever meet. On the outside, they're tough and hardy. They'll yell, kick, cuss, and snap at you, flip you off, and throw beer cans at you... especially if you're wearing the wrong colored jersey in one of our stadiums! They're a bunch of hard tack eatin' John Wayne types. Great to have in a bar fight if you're wearing the *right* colored jersey.

On the flipside, they've got HUGE hearts. First responders, helpers, good people by nature. In this regard, Pittsburghers are kind of like Marines...

“No better friend, no worse enemy.”

85

D A A A A T U B E S

Tunnels are part of the main thoroughfares in and out of Pittsburgh. There are the Fort Pitt tunnels, the Squirrel Hill tunnels, and the Liberty tunnels. But only some people call them tunnels. Others adamantly refer to the tunnels as tubes. Others still, only refer to the *Liberty* tunnels as tubes. If you ever hear anyone refer to “the” tubes, they’re talking about the Liberty Tubes. Confused? I still am.

I’ll never forget the first time we got directions that referenced the tubes. The guy who was giving directions, looked and sounded like the mustached version of “Norm” from *Cheers* in that *Saturday Night Live* skit *Da Bears*. It was our first introduction to the region’s lingo. Thanking the guy, we drove off, where I proceeded my lame jokester imitation of the directions, mixed with SNL nuances. So now, whenever we drive through a tunnel, we say “*Daaaaaaaaa Tubes!*” Even our 4-year old.

THE BIRD MAN

‘Feeding the birds’ might bring back memories of a depressing *Mary Poppins* song, or of the homeless lady on *Home Alone II*. But I think of something different. You know those popular ‘lazy eye’ posters from the early ‘90’s, the ones where you had to stare at them for a while before you could finally see the hidden image? And once you saw it, you always could? Well that’s my best way to describe Pittsburgh’s Bird Man. You’ll see him feeding birds once in Oakland, or downtown, or in South Side, and then you’ll recognize him forever. He’s hunched over and he has a wrinkled face, like on some of those funny birthday cards, but he has a big heart, a nice smile, and a lot of patience with those birds. They’ll swarm him, land on him, eat out of his hand, maybe poop on him... pigeons and sparrows and whatever flies. But when he’s not feeding birds, you’ll still recognize him, picking him out of a crowd again like a *Where’s Waldo* world champion.

87

BURGH MAN: THE CITY'S OWN SUPERHERO

That's right, we've got our own superhero. A real deal role model for Pittsburgh's youth. He rolls through the city on in-line skates with a lit-up cape, urging kids to explore their own talents and work against the influences of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, and violence. He even has his own website: www.burghman.com.

Personally, I love the guy and think we need more like him.

88

GAS BOOM

In 2003, the USGS reported a lot of natural gas under PA in the Marcellus Shale. In 2004, Range Resources punched a hole and the regional boom began. Half of Texas moved up here to poke holes all over! The biggest growth was between '09 and '11. Many small towns were economically revived. Then gas operators and drilling contractors started hiring local. Jobs picked up. The first center of activity was in the Northeast, between Williamsport & Montrose. Then the area just south of Pittsburgh became a more sustainable regional hub. In 2011, Chevron & Shell came to play. Natural gas pipelines began making history one foot at a time. Upstream drilling expanded west to Ohio, to tap the deeper Utica Shale, and briefly Michigan's K1 Shale. Today, it's also booming 3 hours south, in WV. Though extraction by 'fracking' has sparked global controversy, Pgh companies are continually improving the processes. We know industry.

89

DRINKING WATER QUALITY

This area is loaded with natural springs. There's one on the Montour Trail by our house, where we fill up the family's water bottles whenever we're walking or biking. The Point Park Fountain is actually fed by a mile-wide "Fourth River" in Pittsburgh, which is actually a subterranean natural aquifer called the Wisconsin Glacial Flow.

Perhaps it's the springs in the region, or the mass amounts of coal in our ground that provide the natural Brita-style carbon filtration for the springs, that our city currently scores better than 99% in water quality.

Pennsylvania American Water boasts having received over 150 state & national awards for quality, and consistent scoring among the highest of all water companies in the country.

90

TRAIN & RAIL HISTORY

The amazing thing about Pittsburgh's ties with the railroad is that it is not only a part of the city's past, but also a relevant part of its present—and future. In the mid-1800's, after the Erie Canal was built, the Pennsylvania & Reading Railroads revolutionized the industry and put Philadelphia & Pittsburgh commerce in direct competition with New York's. The Pennsylvania Railroad, at one point, was the largest corporation in America. Today, coal is shipped out of Pittsburgh in all directions to feed coal-fired power plants across the States. Pittsburgh is a main stop for Amtrak's 150 mph passenger train, the *Ascela*. In the future, this region is poised to be a domestic export hub for liquefied natural gas (LNG).

While here, do some digging... the train & rail history is amazing. Also, be sure to visit the Western PA Model Railroad Museum.

91

“STICK IT TO THE MAN” DRIVE-BY GUY

In recent years, there's been a big white vehicle that drives around the city—I think it's an early 80's El Dorado or something similar—that is tattooed with anti-establishment / anarchist messages, *loaded* with them, spelled out in what appears to be hot pink masking tape. If the driver is out and about, you will inevitably see the vehicle driving circles around, or parked out in front of, the big FBI building in South Side, or any municipal building that looks important. Add this vehicle to your scavenger hunt while visiting.

92

UNIQUE COFFEE SPOTS

Caribou coffee, big dog, don't forget your collectible mug from Starbucks!

Pittsburgh is home to a lot of original coffee joints. First off, I've got to give props to **Big Dog Coffee** in South Side. Great place to hang out, very good coffee. Okay, all these places have very good coffee too:

Crazy Mocha, a Pittsburgh original and favorite since 2000, multiple locations; **Beehive Coffeehouse & Dessertery**, South Side; Enrico's **Tazza D'Oro** Café & Espresso Bar, Squirrel Hill; **Espresso a Mano**, Lawrenceville; **Lili Coffee Shop, LLC.**, Polish Hill; **Prestogeorge Coffee & Tea**, Strip District; **Nicholas Coffee and Teas**, Market Square; and **21st Street Coffee and Tea**, Strip District... there are many more, but these are the most popular original java shops.

93

THE SOUTH SIDE FOOD TRUCK ROUNDUP

Periodically at LifeStone Church in Southside, they have a food truck roundup with live music and everything. BRGR, Polish Pierogi, Nakama Sushi, Franktuary, Oh My Grill, Pittshurgh Taco Shop, Fakuda Truck, Cake Eaters Sweet Shoppe, Pittsburgh Crepes, and more... all on site for an entire Sunday afternoon. Check up on the South Side or LifeStone Facebook pages for the next one.

94

DAVID L. LAWRENCE CONVENTION CENTER

This ultra-cool structure in downtown Pittsburgh is the only convention center in the world with a Gold LEED Certification in new construction and a Platinum LEED Cert in existing building. This spacious locale is the main place for large events such as the Steel City Tattoo Convention, the Pittsburgh Marathon race Expo, the Pittsburgh Pet Expo, the United Steelworkers Safety Conference, and numerous other events throughout the year. Opens to the river on one side, to the Cultural District on the other; features dynamic architecture and a long series of cascading pools surrounding a central walkway.

95

PONY LEAGUE BASEBALL

Pony League baseball is the most widely-accepted youth baseball organization in the world. Do you want to guess where it originated? Nope, not Pittsburgh. Rather, Washington, a suburb of Pittsburgh.

96

PUBLIC PARKS

Just when you thought we were running out of great things about Pittsburgh...

Let me tell you about the public parks!! You can find 18 holes of golf, basketball courts, skateboard park, baseball diamonds, tennis courts, running/bike/skate paths, mini-golf, boating, ice skating, horseshoe pits, cooking & picnic areas, pool swimming, lake swimming, boating, horseback riding, tons of playgrounds, remote control airplane fields, fishing, football, soccer, nature walks, and bird watching between giants North Park and South Park; White Oak Park in McKeesport; Raccoon Creek SP has famous mineral springs; inside the city is Schenley Park (18-hole also); rock climbing @ McConnell's Mill to the north... there are around twenty major parks in the area!

97

DOG FRIENDLY

Having a lot of public parks is great, but check this out: there are a lot of leash-free areas for dogs at those parks as well, many with baggies, trash cans, and fresh water.

Pittsburgh loves dogs. Lots of cafés and stores allow dogs (Doublewide Grill in South Side, Tazza D’Oro Café will bring out a water bowl upon request, etc.); there are around 33 dog-friendly restaurants, 53 dog-friendly hotels, and nearly 60 locations in and around Pittsburgh that are listed as “dog-friendly attractions” on www.bringfido.com.

98

CINEMA UNDER THE STARS

Not only does Pittsburgh have some excellent views, but it has some excellent outdoor cinemas with amazing surround views scattered throughout the city during the summertime, that play old movies like *Gone With the Wind* and the *Wizard of Oz*, as well as quality newer movies. The best part? Grab some Taco Bell, some Milk Duds and Twizzlers from the gas station, bring a blanket, a 2-liter and some styro cups, bring your dog... it's absolutely free. One of these spots overlooks the city. Gorgeous!

In the same category, by the way—it's worth mentioning that this is drive-in theater country, too... one of the last such regions in the States.

99

MAD WICKED SMART N'AT

To date, there are thirty-nine non-profit or not-for-profit institutes of higher learning in Pittsburgh, and twenty-nine for profit.

That's 68 colleges and universities.

Prominent schools include:

1. The University of Pittsburgh
2. Allegheny Community College
3. Carnegie Mellon University
4. Duquesne University
5. Indiana University of Pennsylvania
6. Art Institute of Pittsburgh
7. PA Institute of Health & Technology
8. Sanford-Brown Institute
9. California University of Pennsylvania
10. Robert Morris University
11. Point Park University...

... and fifty-seven more. Pretty brainy region.

100

EVERYTHING

ELSE

Ice cold beer wine pop... that's right, you're in
drive-thru beverage mart country... and pop
country

Cadillac Escalades... tons of them

Basements... eat our shorts, coastal dwellers!

Sweet tea! No sweet tea. Thank God for
McDonald's

Hot air balloons –breathhtaking, extraordinary,
and plenty for romantic hire

Unique 'burbs... get out and about around
Pittsburgh, check out our neck, the South Hills

Bach, Beethoven, and Brunch... one of many
cool happenings when the weather's good

101

WORLD'S GREATEST CAB DRIVER

This one's a freebie, 'cause it's incomplete.
Hope you find him...

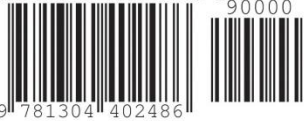
We had lived here two years already, when I met this guy coming back from a business trip in Dallas. He knew everything about this city, I mean everything. He was so passionate about it... *“Okay, that’s where Dan Marino grew up, in that house. You want to go to his old high school and see his trophies?”* *“Okay, write this down. The absolute best time and place to fish for salmon in Pennsylvania is...”* Anyway I lost his card so I can't even tell you his name. But if you're really lucky, he'll pick you up at the airport and drive you into town. I should have rolled video and paid him to just drive me around talking for hours.



Matty Speights is a U.S. Marine veteran and oil & gas professional who relocated to Pittsburgh with his wife and five children in 2010.

Their family is well traveled and may not be done moving... but they have found a home in Pittsburgh

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