

Steel the show

Pittsburgh's industrial heritage has given way to pop art, diverse cuisine and sports, discovers Jo Cooke

Not one but three rivers run through it, hills surround it, and 446 bridges link the land lying in between. It makes for a spectacular skyline, with high rises at the centre of Pittsburgh marking downtown and neighbourhoods of vintage houses peeping out from behind trees on the inclines.

Look carefully and you'll see

the odd factory smoke stack in the distance: odd now, but once a dominant feature. Pittsburgh was a city built on steel mills and the coal mines that powered them. When the industry collapsed in the 1980s, the city began to reinvent itself. Now it leads the way in robotics and medicine, and the cash generated, then as now, supports a groundbreaking

arts scene, cutting-edge culinary culture and a trio of showstopping sports teams.

Pennsylvania's second city has a small-town-meets-big-city feel. With a population of around 300,000, no traffic issues and walkable neighbourhoods, you can see a lot in a short time, quickly finding your favourite spots and soon feeling like a local.

▶ ART OF THE ACTION

Andy Warhol, the pop art powerhouse, hails from Pittsburgh. A museum dedicated exclusively to him starts with a touchingly tender account of his early years before bursting into life with floors of giant screen prints, movies and celebrity images (adults \$20, children \$10; warhol.org).



PICTURE: SHUTTERSTOCK

TOP TIP
For more information about Pittsburgh, see visitpittsburgh.com

➔ While installation art doesn't float everyone's boat, you're bound to get swept up in the optical illusions and abstract exhibits of The Mattress Factory, where international artists work with mirrors, plants and music to challenge your perspectives (adults \$20, children \$15; mattress.org).

Nearby Randyland is a more down-to-earth artistic statement, bringing discarded objects together to create a whimsical backyard to wander around (admission free; randy.land).

If classical is more your bag, The Frick Pittsburgh should give you your fix. The Frick family were industrialists and among the founding fathers of the city, and spent a chunk of their fortune on fine art, much of which can be seen when touring Clayton, their 19th-century home, and neighbouring Art Museum (adults \$15, children \$8; thefrickpittsburgh.org).

If all that has you itching to unleash your own creative urges, head to the Glass Center where a workshop on glassblowing sees visitors fashion a paperweight or flower within an hour (\$35; pittsburghglasscenter.org).

▶ TEAM TACTICS

Sports fans are in for a ball in Pittsburgh with three arenas in the heart of town and ticket prices a snip. Last-minute bench seats at PNC Park, home of the Pirates baseball team, for



LEFT: The Mattress Factory

BELOW: PNC Park, home of the Pittsburgh Pirates

example, can cost as little as \$12. You can tour the ballpark too, getting a peek behind the scenes.

Pittsburgh's football team is pretty handy. The Steelers scooped the Super Bowl four times between 1975 and 1980 and again in 2006 and 2009. A Penguins hockey game is also an all-American must-do. A thrilling family atmosphere surrounds a testosterone-fuelled battle on blades.

▶ FEED ME

Pittsburgh's thriving industries attracted a ream of migrants from across Europe. The workers sought home-from-home cooking and eateries sprung up around the Strip

District that backs the old railway lines and waterfront where freight was unloaded.

It's still thriving, with the offspring of early settlers continuing the tradition. Get a taster of ethnic foods, from cured sausage to hummus, pastries to pizza rolls, on a Burgh, Bits and Bites Food Tour (\$43; burghfoodtour.com).

For those who dig catching up-and-coming chefs before they hit the big time, there's Smallman Galley. An open-plan dining room with four kitchens gives punters the chance to order dishes from would-be restaurateurs, who showcase their concepts and boost their coffers before taking the plunge to go it alone. ➔



North America Travel Service offers four nights' room-only at the Kimpton Hotel Monaco Pittsburgh from £944 per person, including flights from Heathrow, for a September departure. northamericatravelservice.co.uk

Funway Holidays offers an 11-day fly-drive starting in Pittsburgh. The Appalachian Adventure includes flights, car rental and hotels, and costs from £1,890 for an October departure. funwayagents.co.uk





“Pittsburgh has a gritty-meets-quirky charm. Eat well, get cultured and cross lots of bridges!”

Meanwhile, the stylish 185-room Distrikt hotel, boasting a green wall and mid-century furnishings, is scheduled to join the Curio Collection by Hilton in June.

Staying in central Pittsburgh provides a springboard from which clients can explore the main attractions and distinct neighbourhoods. You'll find a ream of big names, from the swanky Fairmont to the boutique-style Kimpton Hotel Monaco (review, facing page) and Holiday Inn Express.

You can walk from all of the above properties to the Three Rivers Water Trail, where renting a bike, kayak or paddleboard gives you a chance to pootle along the Allegheny River.

Bike enthusiasts should also check out the phenomenal Bicycle Heaven, a warehouse stacked with historic and iconic cycles and bike parts (admission free; bicycleheaven.org).

STAY CENTRAL

With a growing bed count and exciting openings and upgrades, downtown Pittsburgh has all client groups covered. A 111-room Hotel Indigo is slated for downtown in 2018, while the 160-room Even Hotel is due to open this month with an emphasis on fitness and in-room gym equipment.

For those after fine dining with a panoramic view, it's hard to top Monterrey Bay Fish Grotto. Take the Duquesne Incline to get there. This funicular, dating back to 1877, was originally built to ferry workers between the hilly suburbs and the mills in the riverside valley (adults \$2.50, children \$1.25).

Breakfast in America is legendary and Pittsburgh doesn't let the side down. For a retro setting, head to Pamela's Diner in the Strip District, or the contemporary Geppetto's in trendy Lawrenceville. Both offer sweet and savoury crepes, waffles and french toast to write home about.



LEFT: Bicycle Heaven Museum

THE PRICE IS RIGHT

Anyone looking for an excuse to book a long weekend stateside need look no further than Pittsburgh. A fare of just £120 one-way gets you there, thanks to Wow Air (wowair.co.uk), the low-cost Icelandic carrier.

The flights from Gatwick, via Reykjavik, are surprisingly palatable: a stop in Iceland to stretch your legs leaves around six hours before you touch down in the US. The smaller aircraft that Wow Air operates have been kitted out with sleek, light, bright cabins that give an illusion of space, and although extras such as blankets, headsets, seatback entertainment and hold luggage must be purchased as add-ons, that just means clients can be clear over exactly what they're paying for.

Pittsburgh International Airport (flypittsburgh.com) is also geared up to make arrival and immigration as smooth as possible. No long lines as at some East Coast hubs, which is a huge plus for families, and reconfiguration plans starting in 2019 should further improve the passenger experience.

Traditional carriers such as American Airlines, United and Delta also serve the city with non-direct flights from London, while UK operators, including trade favourites Trafalgar, Travel 2 and Great Rail Journeys are singing the city's praises.

Malcolm Davies, destination product manager for Funway

Holidays, says: "Pittsburgh has a gritty-meets-quirky charm. Pack comfy shoes for a few days of eating well, getting cultured and crossing lots of bridges!"

Ruby Briggs, managing director for North America Travel Service, adds: "Pittsburgh is a much underestimated city and a great short-break destination for the whole family with parks, kids' activities, festivals and events." ^{TV}



KEY U.S. MARKETS
TOP NAME BRANDS
MILLIONS OF SHOPPERS

- ARIZONA**
Scottsdale Fashion Square, Biltmore Fashion Park, Kierland Commons, La Encantada
 - CALIFORNIA**
Santa Monica Place, Broadway Plaza, La Cumbre Plaza, Arden Fair
 - COLORADO**
Twenty Ninth Street
 - ILLINOIS**
The Shops at North Bridge, Fashion Outlets of Chicago
 - NEW YORK**
Queens Center, Fashion Outlets of Niagara Falls USA
 - OREGON**
Washington Square
 - PENNSYLVANIA**
Fashion District Philadelphia OPENING 2018
 - WASHINGTON, DC**
Tysons Corner Center
- MacerichTourism.com



Tried & Tested

KIMPTON HOTEL MONACO

A complimentary wine hour in a lounge adorned with diverse, chic furnishings, and a beer garden serving craft beers and bratwurst? Hospitality at the Monaco reflects Pittsburgh's arty, Europhile vibe. Beds are sumptuous, bathrooms big, and service cheery, making this 248-room property a good choice for the cultured and the gregarious.

Book it: From \$109 a night. monaco-pittsburgh.com



PICTURE: ADAM MILLIRON

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