



The City of Steel

Pittsburgh may play second fiddle to Philadelphia as the cosmopolitan capital of Pennsylvania, and the State Capitol is housed in Harrisburg but it is Pittsburgh that is climbing up the liveable cities ladder.

former 'Steel City' is now known colloquially as the 'City of Bridges'. Pittsburgh also features 151 high rise buildings, offering a distinct skyline.

One of the premier areas to view the skyline is Mt Washington in the South Side district. At the base of this slope sits an upmarket shopping area with a selection of restaurants called Station Square. The restaurants are actually set back from the river, but a fountain and plaza area with a few cart vendors provides an attractive resting spot. Across the road is one of Pittsburgh's distinctive features; a cable powered funicular designed for transportation between the river valley and the overlooking bluff. At one time Pittsburgh had about fifteen inclines. Now only two remain. The cars are pulled up and down the inclined track, hence the name 'Incline', by a cable driven by an engine in the upper station where the operator works. The Monongahela Incline is the closest to Station Square. After ascent, it is less than a mile to walk along the bluff to

The image of Pittsburgh that springs to mind is one of steel mills belching smoke over an industrial city and this image is not unfounded. During World War II at the height of production Pittsburgh produced 95 million tons of steel and the ensuing pollution from burning coal and steel factories created a blanket of black smog which famously led author James Parton to dub the city '...hell with the lid off'. Today, however, Pittsburgh presents an entirely different face to the world. Most of the steel plants have closed down, replaced by burgeoning healthcare, education, technology, robotics, and financial services industries. Pittsburgh has had a makeover and it worked, with *National Geographic Traveller* ranking the city

as one of the best places in the world to visit in its 2012 list of the Best of the World. It has also been ranked 'Most liveable city in the United States' by publications including *Places Rated Almanac* (2007), *Forbes* (2010), and *The Economist* (2011). This explains why at last count almost 306,000 people now call Pittsburgh home. Not bad for a former hell.

Downtown Pittsburgh is a compact wedge, situated on a slice of land carved by the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers, which form the Ohio River. No less than 440 bridges span these rivers, connecting the downtown with the suburbs, contained within four distinct districts. It is no surprise then that the

Previous Page
 Top left: PPG Place
 Top right: Window washer statue

This page top to bottom
 Monangahela Incline
 Entrance of the Andy Warhol Museum
 The Andy Warhol Bridge
 Point State Park and the CBD

Opposite
 Top left: PPG Place fountain
 Top right: Washington's Landing



the Duquesne Incline which offers some of the most dramatic views of the city. From this perspective, just off the tip of the wedge, you can see Point State Park and the famous fountain which appears on many a postcard. Ironically the fountain has actually been turned off since 2009 but restoration work is in progress with an anticipated completion date of spring 2013. Point State Park itself is pleasant to walk through but nothing exceptional.



Dotted cross the blocks near the park are random, rather realistic statues of people doing every day things. A window washer cleans the windows of a restaurant, while nearby a young girl swings around a stop sign. A man hails a taxi, while a couple gaze down the block. All leave visitors to the city wondering why. Another sight that is bound to leave visitors with more questions than it answers is the Andy Warhol Museum on the north side, just over the Andy Warhol Bridge. Campbell's soup can anyone? The Museum is a tribute to the founder of pop art, who happened to be a Pittsburgh native, and it houses more than 4,000 works of art including paintings, drawings, prints, photographs, films, and videos.



Also on the north side, if baseball is your thing, is Heinz Field. This flash baseball stadium is a relatively new addition to the city, completed in 2001, at a cost of nearly \$300 million. The Heinz Field is capable of accommodating over 65,000 spectators and is nicknamed the 'Big Ketchup Bottle' courtesy of the Heinz corporate naming rights. Walk up tours are available from April to October. Heinz corporate headquarters are located in Pittsburgh but the field is the more interesting of the two.



Close by are the Mexican War Streets. This may sound like a gang area best avoided but in reality it is a lovely neighbourhood where nearly all of the architectural types popular in the Victorian era are represented, from Italianate to Gothic Revival, Richardson Romanesque, Empire



and Queen Anne. A number of historically significant houses are listed in the National Registry of Historic Places. If the Andy Warhol Museum was not enough quirkiness for one day, you can also drop in to The Mattress Factory while you are in the Mexican War Streets area. This is a museum of contemporary art that

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presents art you can get into - room sized environments, created by in-residence artists. Fifteen artists from around the world are invited each year to design and build their art in place at the museum housed in an old mattress factory, hence the name. In the downtown area PPG Place captures much public attention, with dark glass pinnacles that make the building resemble a modern fairy tale castle despite the simple office function. The fountain in the central plaza area is often populated by children running through the water



For more information about Pittsburgh see: www.visitpittsburgh.com

jets. Beside these towering structures are a number of historic buildings from the early 20th century, built by the biggest names in industry at the time. Of note is H.H. Richardson's Allegheny County Courthouse and Jail, both gorgeous stone structures that belie their purpose and still serve as government buildings.

If you opt for two wheels there is much talk of The Great Allegheny Passage rail trail, stretching from Pittsburgh to Washington DC over 325 miles away. Before you plan a grand tour, be aware that the final mile from Homestead to Pittsburgh is still under construction. For petit tours, try the 20 miles or so of traffic-free bike paths that border all three rivers. Paths vary in ambience from running beside major roads to the peaceful tree-lined trail that runs down to Washington's Landing, a 42 acre island in the Allegheny River.

One unique Pittsburgh experience is

dining at Primanti Brothers. Make sure

you go hungry as the specialty in this unprepossessing diner is an enormous sandwich loaded with the cold cut of your choice (pastrami is the most popular), cheese, a fistful of coleslaw, tomato and French Fries. Yes, French Fries inside the sandwich. The cuisine was invented during the Depression so that day labourers could hold their entire lunch in one hand. This makes the sandwich approximately 1.5 times bigger than the largest jaw can open and twice as large as a standard meal. Doggie bags are the norm across all four Primanti Brothers locations.

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Quirky facts about Pittsburgh:

1. It was Pittsburgh, not Hollywood, which opened the first motion picture theatre in the United States in 1905.
2. Pittsburgh is the largest inland port in the U.S
3. Pittsburgh lost the 'h' in its spelling in 1891, but after twenty years of protest, the U.S. Board on Geographic Names relented and it was restored to its rightful place.
4. The Dark Night Rises was partly filmed in Pittsburgh. So was Flashdance, Groundhog Day, Inspector Gadget and Night of the Living Dead amongst others.
5. The first Internet emoticon, the smiley, was created by Scott Fahlman, a computer scientist at Pittsburgh's Carnegie Mellon University.