



# MILWAUKEE

**Welcome to the New Milwaukee. Over the past decade, the city has come of age.**

**W**hile jogging along the emerald shoreline of Lake Michigan, past the urban backdrop of high-style high-rises and a world-class art museum, I'm thinking, "Chicago...Eat your heart out!"

Welcome to the New Milwaukee. Over the past decade, the city has come of age. Today, it's where Chicagoans flock to get their culture fix, roam elegant boutiques, and score dining finds. The experience is friendlier, safer, and—oh, yeah—cheaper than That Other City.

And, talk about slick? Waltz into the Iron Horse, a boutique hotel with faux-zebra carpets that slink between walls of chocolate and aqua, dressing a gentrified 1907 factory. Rehearse your look of laid-back cool in prep for storming the adjoining Third Ward—a Soho on steroids. Its anchor, the Public Market, coddles not squash and tomatoes, but an enclave of eateries such as St. Paul Fish Company (lobster dinner \$12, backed by Schlitz for a buck), as well as a breadsmith, chocolatier, wine guy, margarita taqueria, and more.

Then shop. You'll drop—at least, your jaw—at the likes of luxe Lela, sporting high-style frocks by local designers (vintage, too); Lorena Sarbu, set to outfit Oscar Night; Shoo, to sole your feet with \$300 one-of-a-kind;



(Above) Milwaukee's skyline at night. Photo Courtesy of visitmilwaukee.org. (Below) River Skyline Day. Photo Courtesy of DCD



(Clockwise from upper left) Miller Park interior; Milwaukee Theatre; Harbor. Photos Courtesy of visitmilwaukee.org

## FOR A GAY OLD TIME, CRUISE THE BARS IN BAYVIEW, AKA GAYVIEW, INCLUDING LA CAGE, BALLGAME, BOOM & THE ROOM, FLUID, D.I.X., AND A DOZEN MORE.

and even Retique, the Goodwill outlet that has culled the glam castoffs of high society to suit you up for openings at neighboring art galleries. Check out the live theater and opera on offer. Go all locovore at Hinterland, a gastropub matching flights of brews to flights of fancy such as pork cheeks with apple slaw; walleye with wild rice, almonds, and cranberries in parsnip-tahini sauce; or elk tenderloin bathed with a date/wine reduction.

Stride the planks of RiverWalk, a three-mile hike from the Third Ward to Third Street, where brick buildings from the 1800s harbor classic food finds like Wisconsin Cheese Mart, boasting 200 varieties curated by brothers Ken and Alan; marble-clad Usinger's Famous Sausage, purveying 125 varieties; Spice House, with four types of hand-ground cinnamon alone; and Mader's, since 1902 a cavern of armor and dirndls, papered with autographed photos of satiated celebs, from Frank Sinatra and Audrey Hepburn to Bill Clinton. For the insider skinny, join Milwaukee Food Tours, a two-hour tasting tromp—[www.milwaukeefoodtours.com](http://www.milwaukeefoodtours.com).

Calls for a bit of liquid refreshment, and Milwaukee has a tour for that, too. Lakefront

offers what its laff-a-minute leader calls the best-rated brewery tour—"because you don't have to wait till the end of the tour to start drinking." Imbibe Beermaking 101 while sampling Lakefront's four pours. Fish fry and polka band on Fridays, too.

Hard-core, are you? Then Great Lakes Distillery is your equal, with tour and tasting of its new plant producing vodka, absinthe, and Roamin' Dave's Rum. Shaken, not stirred? That's the drill at the Safe House, an unmarked bar on a dark, unmarked alley, home of 007-type high jinks. Trick mirrors, secret passages, even magicians. Cajole a buddy for the password, or you'll be given the third degree in the form of, say, performing a humbling chicken dance.

For a gay old time, cruise the bars in Bayview, AKA Gayview, including La Cage, Ballgame, Boom & The Room, Fluid, D.I.X., and a dozen more. Downtown, the Intercontinental Hotel is launching GLBT Thursdays in its snazzy bar, zenden.

And if it's cool, look for TV personality John McGivern. He and his boyfriend are huge fans of The Invasion—a gay-only Final Friday, 400-strong invasion of a straight

bar whose location is announced at the very last minute to an evite list—so popular that clubs beg to be featured. You also will spot McGivern at PrideFest Milwaukee, one of the largest in the nation, featuring entertainment by the likes of Joan Rivers.

The festival grounds lie in Milwaukee's most famous shadow—that of its stunning lakefront Art Museum, designed by Calatrava, Spain's primo architect. "It's the Sydney Opera House of Milwaukee," the locals boast. Inside the graceful silhouette, the collection ranges from mummies to Monets.

Fueled by caffeine at Alterra, a local coffee-roaster steaming things up in a former lakeside pump house, proceed to Grohmann Museum, celebrating men at work: 700 paintings by masters, old and older, portraying arduous occupations, from blacksmithing to hoeing fields and milling steel. Don't miss the grassy rooftop sculpture garden.

Haggerty Art Museum hosts its own gem of a collection—ranging from etchings by Hogarth to photos of Black Panthers—near a Medieval chapel moved here from Joan of Arc's hometown, both on the gorgeous Marquette University campus. Next, ➔



(Clockwise from left) Summerfest night; Public Museum; Milwaukee Theatre marquee. Photos Courtesy of visitmilwaukee.org

## PRIDEFEST MILWAUKEE, ONE OF THE LARGEST IN THE NATION, FEATURES ENTERTAINMENT BY THE LIKES OF JOAN RIVERS.

it's on to the new Jewish Museum, boasting a tapestry created for it by Marc Chagall in honor of Milwaukee-born Golda Meir, an early Prime Minister of Israel. The museum weaves the story of Jewish immigrants to Milwaukee and their accomplishments with the heart-rending testimony of the city's Holocaust survivors.

Now for a horse of a different color: a museum of chic industrial demeanor portraying the magic—and mechanics—of the iron horse Harley Davidson, showcasing a pristine model of each year from its inception in 1903, along with tidbits of social history. It was marketed after World War I to gals as a “ladies’ experience”; adopted after World War II by biker clubs; and subsequently customized by masters of the glue gun, such as Elvis Presley’s hog and another for homeboy Liberace.

Time for dinner, and do I have some tips for you. For the finest of fine dining in the cosy contempo setting that once housed his parents’ grocery store, Sandy D’Amato maintains Sanford’s high standards with a seasonal menu that segues from mussel timbale to roasted tomato soup, and from cumin-dusted salmon to plum tart aside ice

cream perfumed with lemon verbena. Just as tasty: my friend’s crepinette of pheasant and sweetbread with roasted parsnips and truffle-thyme brown butter.

The Bartoletta Boys also have put Milwaukee on a knowing diner’s map with several concepts tapping their Italian roots. In their fab French café perched above the lake, Lake Park Bistro, the James Beard Award-winning chef honors classics like mussels/frites, singular pâtés, and oeufs mollet (deep-fried softboiled eggs with mushrooms, frisee, and truffle vinaigrette), along with duck confit, grilled salmon, and role-model steak/frites (more pencil-slender fries).

Roots lives its mantra—farm to table food—in a relaxed setting where guests can gobble salmon with chile-polenta relleno, black beans, and tomatillos, or succumb to pork scallops with sweetbread falafel, beet tahini, and minted almonds. For dessert: tomato jam with honey/plum sorbet.

Distil is the new kid on Wisconsin Street, Downtown Milwaukee’s restaurant row, winning applause for its dead-simple concept: predinner and postdinner list of Bourbons, hand-crafted cocktails, wine flights—what-

ever—accompanied by elite cheese or charcuterie choices, plus, um, unusual desserts, including ice creams flavored with bacon (no!), charred barrel (mildly scented vanilla), and tarragon (bring it on!).

Head to Café at the Plaza, anchoring a shabby-chic hotel of Art Deco days, for smart updates of diner fare: eggs with black truffle oil; scrambled smoked trout; or banana pancakes served with almond butter and banana syrup.

Thus assured your clothes no longer fit, the places for fellas to regarb lead off with Roger Stevens, within the ubergorgeous grande dame hotel, the Pfister, source of classic custom wear. At Aala Read, on eccentric Brady Street—once Italian (stop in the oldtime grocery for a whiff of the motherland), then a hippie haven, and now a scener’s scene—win style points for starting your gym shoe collection (they’re worse than potato chips...can’t stop with just one), along with affordable office-to-playtime wear.

Eager to get it on? Contact <visitmilwaukee.org>. But first, a vocabulary lesson: Locals use only two syllables—M’waukee—not a wasteful excess of three. **CARLA WALDEMAR**