

Milwaukee Trip Guide | Midwest Living



Pfister Hotel.

+ enlarge

Milwaukee has an uncanny ability to balance 21st-century energy with 19th-century German heritage. In just one weekend, you can explore an 1892 beer baron's mansion, throw calorie counts away at a Friday night fish fry, browse a high-end art festival along Lake Michigan, go for a virtual ride on a vintage Harley-Davidson motorcycle and nibble stuffed grape leaves on leather couches at a Turkish restaurant. And that's just the beginning. Milwaukee's diversity—and its ability to turn gritty warehouses into condos and storefronts—gives it an authentic city feel. But its relatively small size and compact downtown make it easy for first-timers to navigate.

Do

Brewery tours Miller Brewing Company has a free one-hour tour that ends with samples in the Bavarian-style Miller Inn (millercoors.com). Learn the history of Pabst beers at Best Place at the Historic

Pabst Brewery (bestplacemilwaukee.com). Also recommended: Sprecher (sprecherbrewery.com) and Lakefront breweries (lakefrontbrewery.com).

Chudnow Museum of Yesteryear Get a fascinating peek at classic Americana with vignettes and displays that include a turn-of-the-19th-century grocery store, a 1920s-era doctor's office and an old-timey movie palace at this low-cost museum. chudnowmuseum.org

Discovery World Labs, shows and interactive exhibits bring to life the cutting edge of science and technology. discoveryworld.org

Festivals Summerfest is the biggest. summerfest.com Many others reflect the city's heritage, such as [Irish Fest](#) and [German Fest](#). The Wisconsin State Fair near Milwaukee also is a big draw (be sure to sample a cream puff, a state fair tradition). wistatefair.com

Grohmann Museum at the Milwaukee School of Engineering Hundreds of paintings and sculptures celebrate human achievement.. msoe.edu/museum

Harley-Davidson Museum The 20-acre campus is a must-see for its hands-on exhibits and nine Harleys to "ride" past farms and rivers. h-dmuseum.com

Historic Third Ward A 12-square-block neighborhood of 1890s warehouses now holds boutiques, galleries, cafes and the Broadway Theatre Center. A highlight: Milwaukee Public Market, a collection of specialty food growers and shops selling goods and serving lunch and dinner. (414) 273-1173; historicthirdward.org

Historic Milwaukee Inc. Walking Tours Passionate volunteers lead the preservation society's architectural tours in downtown and outlying areas. historicmilwaukee.org

Milwaukee Art Museum A recently completed renovation brightened galleries displaying the 25,000-piece collection dating from antiquity. Try to be there when its "wings" open or close. mam.org

Milwaukee Boat Line Double-deckers ply the Milwaukee River and Lake Michigan for brunch, dinner and concerts. mkeboat.com

Milwaukee Food Tours Choose from the popular pizza tour, a bloody mary brunch walk, Eats on Brady Street (an Italian and Polish enclave) and other neighborhood outings. milwaukeefoodtours.com

Milwaukee Kayak Company A locally-owned operation celebrates waterways by renting kayaks, canoes and paddleboards from its riverside location in Walkers Point.

Milwaukee Public Museum Discover what the city was like during the 1880s in *The Streets of Old Milwaukee exhibit* (refreshed last year for its 50th anniversary). Or walk through Africa or Living Oceans. mpm.edu

Miller Park Catch the Milwaukee Brewers in this major-league ballpark with a retractable roof and reasonably priced tickets. Also, behind-the-scenes tours take visitors to the dugout, luxury suite [level](#) and other areas. [brewers.com](#)

Old World Third Street This former German community has restaurants, 19th-century storefronts and cobbled streets. Usinger's, a fourth-generation business, sells 70 sausage varieties. (414) 276-9105; [usinger.com](#)

Pabst Mansion Beer baron Frederick Pabst built this 1890s Flemish Renaissance mansion; the restored home hosts exhibits and tours. [pabstmansion.com](#)

Riverwalk Zigzag between past and present as you walk these 2 miles linking the Historic Third Ward, downtown and the Beerline B area along the Milwaukee River. (And snap a selfie with the Fonz.) [visitmilwaukee.org/riverwalk](#)

Sea Dog Sailing From June through August, the 38-foot Quinn Marie sails from McKinley Marina for 90-minute daytime excursions and two-hour sunset cruises. [seadogsailingmilwaukee.com](#)

Theaters Whether you seek a Broadway production (Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, [marcuscenter.org](#)) or a play written and produced by women (Renaissance Theaterworks, [r-t-w.com](#)), there's a venue for you.

Eat

AJ Bombers Peanut shells litter the floor, and there's crayon graffiti on walls. What you won't find are salads: Burgers are the focus. [ajbombers.com](#)

Balzac Mismatched chairs, cherubs and taxidermy set a fun mood for wine and sharing small plates. [balzacwinebar.com](#)

Bartolotta's Lake Park Bistro Chef Adam Siegel, a 2008 James Beard award winner, delivers seasonal French cuisine at this pastoral spot along Lake Michigan. [lakeparkbistro.com](#)

Braise About 400 Wisconsin farmers supply the ingredients for the braised dishes that will please discerning palates. [braiselocalfood.com](#)

Cafe Benelux and Market With 40 pages of beers to choose from, you're sure to find one to go with your European-style meal of mussels and mac 'n' cheese with Brie. [cafebenelux.com](#)

Colectivo Coffee This local coffee cafe serves tasty cookies, huge yogurt parfaits and sandwiches, plus offers free Wi-Fi and great joe, of course. You'll find 10 local branches, but our favorite is the one along the lakefront in the historic Milwaukee River Flushing Station. [colectivocoffee.com](#)

Coquette Cafe Find high-end service and ambiance—and incredible food—in the Historic Third Ward.

Try the grilled Berkshire pork loin with mustard spaetzle and a house brew. coquettecafe.com

Harbor House Waterfront dining is at its best with Lake Michigan views and in-season fish, like trout and whitefish. harborhousemke.com

Hinterland Erie Street Gastropub Executive chef Dan Van Rite has been named a James Beard-award nominee for Best Chef Midwest three times, a fact that's obvious once your food arrives. hinterlandbeer.com/restaurants/milwaukee/

Karl Ratzsch's Dirndl-skirted waitresses serve authentic German specialties. karlratzsch.com

Kopp's Frozen Custard Locals call this frozen custard their fave. kopps.com

Mader's Open since 1902, Mader's wealth of art and antiques turns dinner into a gallery visit. The recipes are as German as they come. Odd Duck Each day's new tapas menu keeps things fresh at this Bay View spot. Made with organic, locally sourced ingredients, these inventive dishes have international spins like duck confit spring rolls and flatbreads with spicy chorizo. madersrestaurant.com

Milwaukee Ale House Microbrews are cold and live music is hot at the Historic Third Ward restaurant. ale-house.com

The Safe House At the tongue-in-cheek spy-chic institution, the fun atmosphere outshines the food. You need a password to enter, and a martini whizzes overhead through pneumatic tubes. safe-house.com

Sobelmans At the classic, blue-collar Milwaukee bar, we love the Sobelman Burger, topped with Swiss, cheddar and American cheeses; bacon; fried onions; and fried jalapenos. milwaukeesbestburgers.com

Stack'd Bar Burgers, beer and milk shakes go high-class at a slick Fifth Ward bar. The German Stack is a potent mix of beer brat patty, raw onion, spicy mustard and sauerkraut. stackedbar.com

Uber Tap Room and Cheese Bar Next door to the venerable Wisconsin Cheese Mart, this classy spot offers flights of cheese and beer. ubertaproom.com

Stay

Brewhouse Inn and Suites Gleaming copper brewing kettles anchor the lobby in the refurbished Pabst Brewery Complex, which has 90 guest suites. brewhousesuites.com

Hilton Milwaukee City Center The lakefront, museums and other downtown attractions are easy to access from this Art Deco hotel. hilton.com

Hotel Metro A 63-suite Art Deco boutique lodging downtown offers a variety of accommodations including pet-friendly suites, spa suites and conference suites. hotelmetro.com

The Iron Horse Hotel An edgy yet welcoming downtown hotel mixes biker-inspired decor with

sophisticated guest rooms. theironhorsehotel.com

Pfister Hotel Opulent architectural details, antique furniture and an artist in residence combine with modern comforts. thepfisterhotel.com

Tags: