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TRAVEL

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YOU'RE GOING WHERE?

Pittsburgh

Known for its grit and love of the Steelers, a working-class city has world-class gems

BY MELANIE D.G. KAPLAN

I've stopped counting the number of cities I've fallen in love with. But I think Pittsburgh might be the first city to have loved me back. ¶ On a Sunday morning in February, the sun broke through rain clouds, and I walked along Pittsburgh's waterfront to a 10-foot-tall bronze sculpture of Mister Rogers tying his shoes. I heard his voice through overhead speakers. "Did you know that wondering about things is one of the first steps to understanding them?" Birds chirped, a freight train rumbled, and I looked upriver toward the sparkling skyline. I'd intended to make this a quick stop, but I couldn't step away from that familiar voice. By the time Fred had reminded me that there's nobody else in the world who is exactly like me, I had cried, laughed and called my mom. ¶ Steel City remains gritty. On dreary days in Western Pennsylvania, the pitter-patter of rain is the soundtrack for a setting that's scorned for its gruffness, car-eating potholes, legal smoking in some bars and obsession with the 1970s Steelers. And yet. The city is full of gems: world-class art museums, three inviting rivers and cuisine worth writing home about (including a July festival called Picklesburgh). Pittsburgh is a vast Rust Belt city of dozens of colorful neighborhoods — including August Wilson's Hill District, Bloomfield (a.k.a. Little Italy) and Polish Hill. Some areas are so hilly that you feel as if you're on a mezzanine level looking down on an urban lobby. ¶ After I left Mister Rogers, feeling confident and loved, I went to a community yoga class at the Ace Hotel. In a playful style, the instructor told us to wiggle our fingers like we were "tickling the sun" and stretch our arms like we were "making room for wings to break out." As light streamed into the ballroom, she ended class by telling us to remember, "You are not only enough, you are almost too much sauce for your own cup." Thank you, Pittsburgh.

SEE PITTSBURGH ON F4

A solo quest to find the source of the mighty Rhine

BY WALTER NICKLIN

How did it happen that I'm now slicing into what might be the world's biggest schnitzel, to be washed down by a half-liter of local brew, in a medieval castle perched atop a hill overlooking an Austrian border town I've never heard of? The castle, whose tower — the "keep" — was built around 1265, is called Schattenburg, and the town is Feldkirch, built on the banks of a Rhine tributary. And that is the answer to my question: I'm here to explore the Rhine upstream of Basel, Switzerland, which is where typical cruises start and/or end.

It's a solitary quest, indulging my fantasy of being reincarnated as a 19th-century explorer discovering the source of a mighty river. That the Rhine has been well-mapped for millennia doesn't matter; there are still personal discoveries to be had. Traveling alone means I can go where I like, when I like.

Even the most desultory student of Western Europe's history and

SEE RHINE ON F6

Places for solace in Paris after the Notre Dame fire

BY MARY WINSTON NICKLIN

PARIS — Smoke billowed from the heart of the city Monday night as firefighters sought to control the inferno that engulfed Notre Dame Cathedral. Time seemed to stop as we watched the flames topple the spire, ravage the roof and threaten the towers. Crowds of emotional bystanders, some with tears streaming down their faces, gathered on the quays in a hushed, horrified silence that occasionally was broken by collective song and prayer. "Ave Maria," they sang. "We salute you, Maria."

Miraculously — and we needed a miracle during this Holy Week catastrophe — the 400 Parisian pompiers were able to extinguish the fire and save the edifice. They worked late into the night, pumping water directly from the Seine to spray on the blaze. (The fragility of the 850-year-old structure meant that dropping water from the air would cause considerable damage.) Arriving on the scene, French President Emmanuel Macron vowed that the cathedral

SEE CATHEDRAL ON F3

THE NAVIGATOR

Emergency exit rows provide more legroom, but require extra duties. F2

TOP: The Duquesne Incline, just west of the Fort Pitt Bridge, features a red car that might remind riders of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" and offers a spectacular view of the Steel City.
 ABOVE LEFT: Customers have several olive bar options at the Pennsylvania Macaroni Company.
 ABOVE RIGHT: Volunteer David Bennett, left, at St. Nicholas Croatian Catholic Church in Millvale, Pa.

SCIENCE

Those photos of wildlife cramming your phone can help scientists. F5

Home of Rogers is more than neighborly

PITTSBURGH FROM F1

Go

Local faves

Not only does **Kayak Pittsburgh** offer a free hour's rental on your birthday, but on your half birthday as well. These are my people. Part of the nonprofit organization Venture Outdoors, Kayak Pittsburgh's most popular launch site is the North Shore one under the Roberto Clemente Bridge, just steps from the Pirates' PNC Park. You'll enjoy a fantastic view of the skyline as you paddle the Allegheny, which has less barge traffic than the other rivers. During home games, join organized paddles and catch game-night fireworks from the water. For the overachiever: Catch a homer. Kayak or SUP upstream to Washington's Landing (an island where the first president is said to have slept) or down the river to Point State Park, where the Allegheny and Monongahela (the "Mon") merge to form the Ohio River. Discounts for bringing your dog, going on Tuesday or being a college student or senior. Prefer your terra firmer? Check out the Three Rivers Heritage Trail, with segments on both banks of the city's rivers.

Craving some crafting? Stop by **Contemporary Craft**, the exhibit and education center in the Strip District, which features a free drop-in studio. When I visited, the do-it-yourself project used found objects. Even if you can't imagine the fantastic necklaces one can make with bottle caps, sections of twinkly lights and plastic ice cream tops, have a go at it; your bottled-up creativity will thank you. After browsing the exhibits, which can focus on social justice, cultural boundaries and the environment, visit the artist-in-residence, who makes quirky, large-headed Kreepey Dolls from strips of fabric. Contemporary Craft (moving to Lawrenceville next year) offers a wide range of classes every week, including upcoming workshops on rod puppetry, hand-painted clay tiles and papermaking from hops (part of the Crafts & Drafts series, which includes two drinks). Sustain the art buzz at the Carnegie Museum of Art, the Andy Warhol Museum and the Frick Pittsburgh.

Guidebook musts

Trying to make it a snappy new day? The bronze sculpture of Mister Rogers on the North Shore, below Heinz Field, is a must. Called "**Tribute to Children**," the monument — with its accompanying audio of Rogersisms — could be renamed "Inspirational Site for Grown-Ups That Also has Killer Views." If you're yearning for more, follow that trolley to the Heinz History Center, where you can see "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" artifacts, including the entryway where Rogers laced up his shoes, Mr. McFeely's "Speedy Delivery" tricycle and the Great Oak Tree where X the Owl lived. The Children's Museum of Pittsburgh is home to puppets King Friday XIII, Daniel Striped Tiger and Henrietta Pussycat; and on the Fred Rogers Trail, you can explore the Fred Rogers Center at Saint Vincent College (which houses the original trolley) and the spot where Rogers is buried, both about an hour east in his hometown of Latrobe.

Looking for a reason to use "funicular" in a sentence? Now's the time. The **Monongahela Incline** is the country's oldest continuously operating funicular, or cable railway. It was built in 1870 to help transport workers from Mount Washington down to factories and mills, and is still used for public transportation. The Mon Incline is close to downtown and accessible by foot or bike across the Smithfield Street Bridge. At the top, you'll find casual bars and restaurants on Shiloh Street. The nearby Duquesne Incline, just west of the Fort Pitt Bridge, is more touristy (the red car may remind you of a certain miniature neighborhood trolley), with swankier dining atop, including Altius and Monterey Bay Fish Grotto. No matter what you spend for dinner, both inclines deliver money views of the city. Some visitors take one incline up, walk a mile on Grandview Avenue and take the other down.



FROM TOP: Drivers travel in and out of Pittsburgh, as seen from a hole in the fence along a pedestrian bridge over Interstate 279. The Oaklander hotel has 167 guest rooms, a 10th-floor lobby and overlooks the neighborhood's limestone buildings and oak trees. **MIDDLE LEFT:** At Contemporary Craft, visitors can make necklaces using items such as bottle caps and twinkly lights. **MIDDLE RIGHT:** Enrico Biscotti Cafe is located in the city's Strip District and holds regular classes on making pizza and bread. **ABOVE:** Bryttnie Jones checks out Wildcard in the Lawrenceville District. The shop features countless Pittsburgh-themed items, including bonsai note cards, pierogi tea towels and a tin of Mister Rogers Encouragemints.

For more photos and an interactive map, visit wapo.st/Pittsburgh

Eat

Local faves

I popped into **Brugge on North** for brunch, with an appetite for roasted cauliflower frittata and hungry to see the City of Asylum Bookstore, which shares space with the restaurant. (Both are under the Alphabet City umbrella.) At the bar, I sat beside a few locals ordering drinks after a drag show. The Belgian-inspired restaurant serves lunch and dinner, with favorites like mussels, twice-cooked fries with tarragon mayonnaise, and beet and fennel salad, as well as grilled cheese on sourdough. Its sister restaurants are the neighborhoody Point Brugge in Point Breeze and Park Bruges in Highland Park. City of Asylum, a sanctuary for writers whose voices have been silenced in their home countries, is a hub for writers, readers and musicians, and the space has regular jazz concerts, author readings and films. The bookstore is known for translated titles and those by immigrants and refugees. Walk a few blocks to the Mattress Factory, a contemporary art museum.

Of course, pierogies were on my list. Luckily, I found **Apteka**, a small, plant-based, Polish cafe that a local couple opened three years ago. I arrived early on a Sunday, and the dinner line was so long that I ended up sharing a table with an engineer from California. We both ordered pierogies, heavenly little pockets of sauerkraut and mushroom or smoked cabbage and potato. "There's a lot of Polish pride in Pittsburgh," said co-owner and co-chef Tomasz Skowronski, who grew up foraging for mushrooms while visiting relatives in Warsaw. Now, he goes through 140 pounds of shrooms a week. I ordered the Kluski Slaskie, a generous portion of baby lima beans with potato dumplings and fried buckwheat, and my tablemate shared her cake with roasted apricot. "Lonely No More" is Apteka's popular Sunday late-night DJ event with \$5 cocktails, where you may hear Soviet-era jazz or yodeling. Another vegan must, and not only for the cleverly named menu items: Onion Maiden, a cash-only, Iron Maiden-themed restaurant in the Allentown neighborhood that makes cashew cheese and serves Munster Mash.

Guidebook musts

Food memories are the best. Years ago, I relished the "Greens and Beans" from **Enrico Biscotti Cafe** — slow-cooked kale and white beans — and just walking past the restaurant on my recent visit, I could practically taste it all over again. In the Strip District, behind Enrico's bakery storefront (where you can still buy a cookie for 50 cents, as well as chocolate babka, focaccia, panettone and, of course, biscotti), the cafe is down an alley in a former auto mechanic's shop. Open for breakfast and lunch, the menu include greens, eggs and ham; truffle mushroom scramble; mozzarella and fig jam brick-oven pizza; and "Sangaweeches" made on pizza dough. The cafe has regular pizza- and bread-making classes, and every first Friday hosts a family-style dinner for 30, served at one communal table that stretches across the restaurant. BYO wine and leave with a full belly — and some new friends.

Perfect for travelers who can't
SEE PITTSBURGH ON F5

In Steelers country, plenty of colorful attractions beyond the black and gold

PITTSBURGH FROM F4

agree on cuisine, the ubiquitous food hall, court or, in this case, “galley” (so named because the co-founders were inspired by the communal mealtime vibe on naval vessels) is a welcome option. **Smallman Galley** in the Strip District takes the concept a step further as a restaurant incubator, giving start-up chefs the space to develop concepts before they venture out solo. Fare includes Vietnamese street food, Detroit-style pizza (hint: it’s rectangular), high-end comfort food and Southern barbecue-influenced tacos. You’ll find innovative dishes at all four spots, as well as at the bar. Right now, the specialty drinks are themed around the neighborhood; how could you not thirst for a cocktail called, “The Hole on 21st Street: A Pittsburgh Love Story”? Drinks are half off from 5 to 7 p.m. on weekdays. Go early on weekends to beat the crowds. Sister operation Federal Galley opened more recently on the North Shore.

Shop

Local faves

Even after two visits to **Wildcard**, a gift shop in the Lawrenceville shopping district, I had non-buyer’s remorse for all the gifts I could have bought. Like the box of bonsai note cards; pierogi tea towels; enamel mug covered in illustrations of mushrooms; Frank Lloyd Wright and Andy Warhol coloring books; and Empathy Postcards. (“I’m really sorry I haven’t been in touch. I didn’t know what to say.”) I did buy a “What Would Mr. Rogers Do?” T-shirt and tiny tin of Mister Rogers’ Encouragemints for my sister, and I studied greeting cards to familiarize myself with the local lingo, e.g., “You’re the fries and slaw on my sammich.” (Pittsburgh has a thing for surprising items on sandwiches.) It was on a shirt here that I first saw “Yinz,” as in “Pittsburgh vs. All Yinz,” which is ‘burgh-speak for “y’all.” Wildcard is surrounded by fun, indie shopping; local favorite

Row House Cinema is one block to the south.

With a nod to the bygone steel industry, **PG&H** celebrates the producers of today’s Pittsburgh: woodworkers, silversmiths, glass blowers and cloth stitchers. The new downtown shop carries only locally produced home wares, such as 3-D-printed ceramics, wallpaper with woodpeckers, beautiful wooden cases for your pencils and smartphone, Pittsburgh prints and vintage furniture. I discovered some colored triangular dessert plates from Riverside Design Group, just like a set I received as a gift years ago; I was delighted to learn their provenance. Bonus in the shop: Redhawk sells locally roasted coffee. For more made-in-PGH shopping, head to Make + Matter (clothing, accessories and home goods) in Lawrenceville, and love, Pittsburgh (toys, books, cards and jewelry) and Moop (felt and canvas bags) downtown.

Guidebook musts

Over pasta one night, a Pittsburgh friend offered a refresher on the 1790s Whiskey Rebellion and his city’s love of that spirit. “Men, women and children drank it, because it was cleaner than the water,” he said. Today, the city offers potable water and award-winning whiskey. Family-owned **Wigle Whiskey** is milled, fermented, distilled, aged, bottled and labeled in Pittsburgh. At Wigle’s tasting room in the Strip District, an employee poured me a sample of coffee liquor and explained that Philip Wigle was a key figure in the rebellion. His German name is now pronounced “Wiggle,” he said, “because Pittsburghers tend to mispronounce everything.” On the cocktail menu: The Monhattan, Turmeric Me Over & Pour Me Out and the Carda-Gin Sweater. I eyed the wall of colorful bottles for sale — whiskey, gin, rum, liquor, absinthe, bitters — and bought a book, “The Whiskey Rebellion and the Re-



MICHAEL HENNINGER FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Penguins, Pirates and Steelers items line the street outside a shop in Pittsburgh’s Strip District.

birth of Rye.” Tours on Saturdays. Visit the Ross Park Mall location if you want to fill your own bottle from a barrel.

Grab a grocery basket at the Strip District’s **Pennsylvania Macaroni Company**. You’ll need it as you peruse more than 5,000 imported Italian and specialty food items. I expected to just browse but was soon juggling boxes of dinosaur- and star-shaped pasta. The family-run Italian grocery, founded in 1902 and known by locals as PennMac, sells bulk spices and olive oil and an impressive selection of Italian cheeses, meats and oils. Don’t miss the wholesale ingredients, like 110-ounce cans of pizza sauce and roasted red peppers. The olive bar has nearly as many options as Baskin-Robbins. And the dry pasta section is particularly pleasing, with shapes and sizes that my pantry has never imagined. I went back to the front door and picked up a basket for all the pasta, justifying my purchases because, obviously, things taste better when they’re shaped like bronto-

sauruses.

Stay

Local fave

If the Stan Smith tennis shoe had its own hotel, it would be the sporty and retro **Ace Hotel Pittsburgh**. The hotel opened in 2015 in a former YMCA building, which was built in 1920 in the prettified East Liberty neighborhood. Thankfully, Ace kept many of the fabulous design elements, such as the gymnasium with its original track (a gathering place where you can play corn hole and buy drinks at a portable bar), the marble staircase (now lined with black and white photographs, including some of Pirates Hall of Famer Roberto Clemente), ornate light fixtures and terrazzo floors. Weekly events include a lobby DJ on Mondays and donation-based community yoga on Sundays in the high-ceilinged, black and red-floored ballroom. Rooms start at \$149; some come with turntables and vinyl. Whitfield, off the lobby, serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. Next door is the striking East

Liberty Presbyterian Church, and nearby is the Pittsburgh Glass Center, which offers “hot date night” glass-blowing classes. For downtown lodging, try Hotel Monaco.

Guidebook must

New this spring, the **Oaklander** has generated buzz as the Oakland neighborhood’s first luxe hotel. With 167 guest rooms, a classy 10th-floor lobby (with black and white marble, gold mirrors and oak paneling) and an all-day brasserie with 360-degree views, the new property looks right at home amid the neighborhood’s elegant limestone buildings and oak trees. The Oaklander is adjacent to the University of Pittsburgh and across from the campus’s iconic 42-floor Cathedral of Learning. It’s also a short walk from Carnegie Mellon University and Carnegie’s art and natural history museums, Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens and Caliban Book Shop. The pet-friendly property, the first Autograph Collection hotel in Pennsylvania, has luxurious Frette linens and 24-hour room service; rates start at \$249. Opening in May in a century-old former vocational school in Lawrenceville: TRYP by Wyndham Pittsburgh.

Explore

Local fave

Cross the 40th Street Bridge from Lawrenceville to reach **Millvale**, a working-class borough known for its beloved music venue, Mr. Smalls. Located in a converted church, the theater hosts a variety of indie, hip-hop and punk acts, including Cat Power last year and Son Volt, Rhett Miller and the Mountain Goats this spring. (Go early and play Millvale-opoly in the cafe.) St. Nicholas Croatian Catholic Church sits on the bank of the Allegheny, home to the masterpiece murals painted by Croatian immigrant Maxo Vanka, who David Byrne called the “Diego Rivera of Pittsburgh.” The provocative

murals (half of which have been stunningly restored and lit) tell stories of immigration, sacrifice, capitalism and injustice. Weekly tours on Saturdays and monthly drawing sessions (starting in June). Stop at nearby Pamela’s Diner for a malted milkshake and Jean-Marc Chatellier’s French Bakery for sweet and savory pastries, then head to Esther’s Hobby Shop for your model railroad set and Steel City Salt Company for some black truffle sea salt. End your excursion at Strange Roots Experimental Ales taproom or dog-friendly Grist House Craft Brewery, where every second Monday is Millvale MASH open mic.

Guidebook must

Once home to iron mills, foundries and glass factories, the **Strip District**, just east of downtown, runs from 11th to 33rd streets, with shops and restaurants mostly along Penn Avenue and Smallman Street. Here, you’ll find quintessential Pittsburgh: In addition to the businesses mentioned earlier, I came across wholesale supplies, street vendors hawking black and gold T-shirts and a dude selling homemade ravioli out of his car. Start at Wholey’s century-old fish market and continue your consumables shopping at Penzeys Spices, PennMac, Enrico Biscotti Company, Mon Aimee Chocolat (imported chocolates, salty licorice) and Grandpa Joe’s Candy Shop (old-fashioned, glass-bottled sarsaparilla). Head to Roxanne’s Dried Flowers, a surprisingly liberating shop if you have a knack for killing plants, and Hot Haute Hot for rag rugs or funky chandeliers. Sit down for a civilized meal at Bar Marco, which has a five-course dinner in its wine cellar; or DiAnoia’s Eatery, which locals deem the “it” Italian restaurant del giorno.

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