

Escape to Buffalo: A Skeptic's Guide to a Great Weekend Getaway

Six reasons why New York's second city is a seriously underappreciated destination—including the Buffalo wings that'll ruin you for all others



Frank Lloyd Wright's Graycliff. PHOTO: NOAH KALINA

By Jennifer Fernandez Sept. 6, 2018 12:18 p.m. ET

1. The Architecture Spoils

Only knuckleheads—and the obstinately unenlightened—write off Buffalo, N.Y., as nothing more than a winter icebox and the birthplace of a certain sports-bar delicacy. In the late 19th century, the city emerged as a cultural beacon, spurred by industrial boom times and the construction of the Erie Canal. One of the first U.S. urban areas to adopt electric lighting—thanks to the hydroelectric power of neighboring Niagara Falls—it attracted big-name architects to build everything from office buildings to private homes. Start your edifice appreciation tour with a guided spin around downtown organized by the nonprofit Explore Buffalo (explorebuffalo.org). Among the highlights: Poking around the 1896 Guaranty Building, a prototype for modern skyscrapers by architects Louis Sullivan and Dankmar Adler, and Buffalo City Hall, an Art Deco beauty erected in 1932. Then go solo to cruise down the section of Delaware Avenue known as Millionaires' Row, taking in the

Georgian and Tudor-Revival homes of 20th-century banking barons on your way to the newly spiffed-up Darwin Martin complex (martinhouse.org). Nestled within the historic Parkside neighborhood, the mansion-museum, originally designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1903 offers tours. You can also pop over to Graycliff, the lake house Wright built for the Martin family, about a 40-minute drive away (experiencegraycliff.org). Finally, don't leave Buffalo without a stroll around Delaware Park, Frederick Law Olmsted's lesser-known New York commission.



The Albright-Knox Art Gallery, one of the oldest art museums in the U.S.

PHOTO: ALAMY

2. A Deeply Rooted Art Scene

While in Delaware Park, don't miss the Albright-Knox Art Gallery (est. 1862), one of the nation's oldest public museums (albrightknox.org). Here, you'll stumble across a staggering lineup, from Pollock to Picasso. Across the street, the Burchfield Penney Art Center highlights the work of watercolorist Charles E. Burchfield and other regional New York artists (burchfieldpenney.org).

3. The Secret History of Niagara Falls

Housed in an 1863 building within earshot of Niagara Falls, the Underground Railroad Heritage Center showcases the pre-Civil War revolutionaries—both famous (Harriet Tubman) and not (the waiters of the nearby Cataract House restaurant)—who conducted slaves to Canada via the area's punishing waterways. niagarafallsundergroundrailroad.org



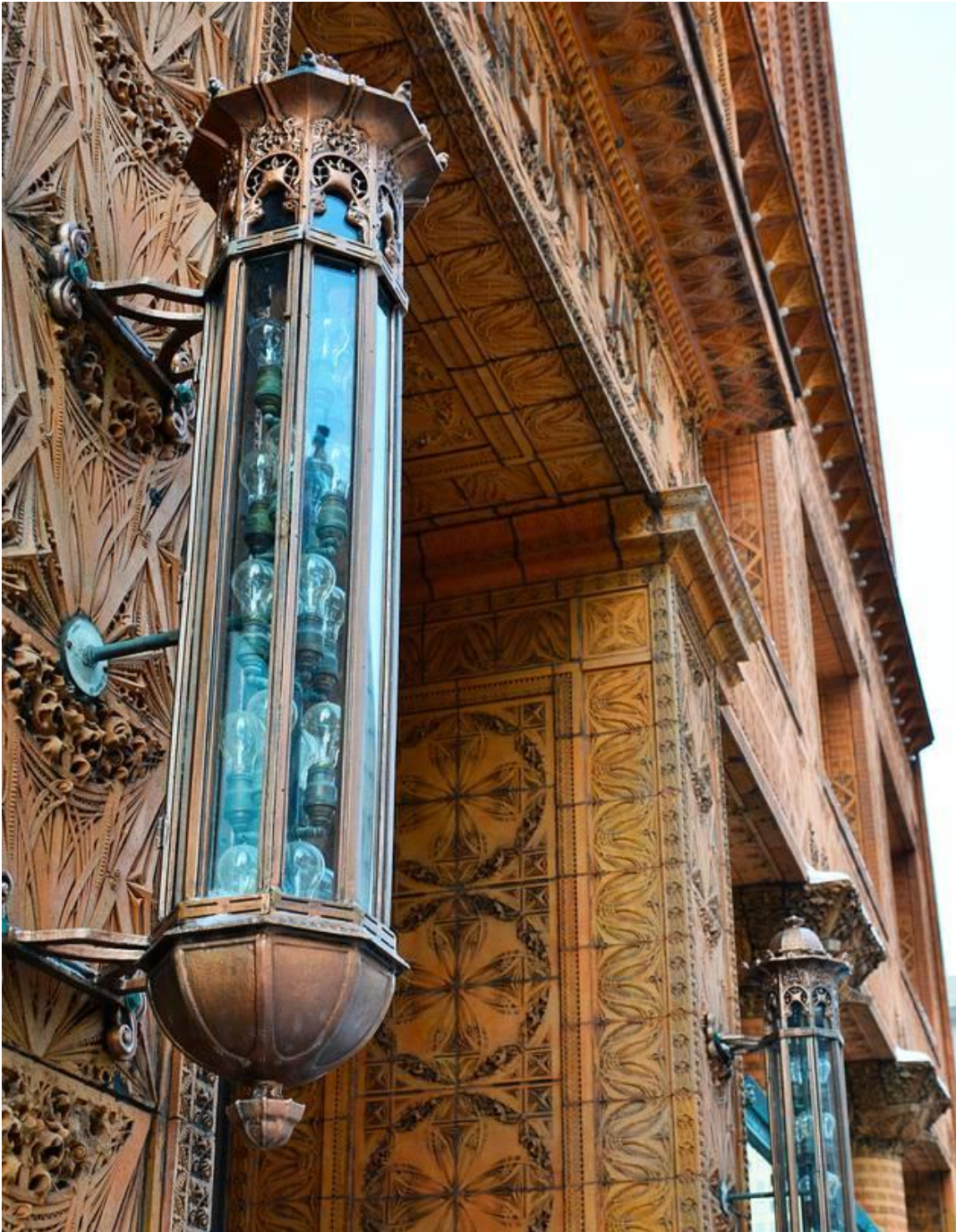
The Underground Railroad Heritage Center. PHOTO: UNDERGROUND RAILROAD HERITAGE CENTER

4. A Jazz Pilgrimage Site

Countless heavyweights in the jazz world—including Count Basie, Duke Ellington, John Coltrane and Miles Davis—took to the stage and bar over the years at the Colored Musicians Club. Though it opened in its current space in the 1930s, the club dates back to 1917, formed by African-American musicians who established their own union after being denied admission to the all-white union. Visit the on-site museum or take in a performance or jam session, typically held on weekend evenings. cmctheclub.com

5. The Wings, Obviously

Anchor Bar claims to have birthed the city's eponymous, notoriously messy comfort food in 1964, and it's as fine a place as any to start your binge (anchorbar.com). In fact, it's the first stop on the Buffalo Wing Trail, a confederation of 12 pubs that will ruin you for saucy drumettes elsewhere. Go for a double order of the traditional at Gabriel's Gate, in the bohemian Allentown neighborhood (gabrielsgate.page.tl), or try more exotic flavors: Bar-Bill Tavern's Cajun (barbill.com), Lenox Grill's barbecue honey sriracha (lenoxgrill.com) or Glen Park Tavern's jumbo Sicilian wings, tossed in Parmesan, garlic, basil and oregano (glenparktavernbuffalo.com).



The Guaranty Building (aka the Prudential Building) PHOTO: ALAMY

6. Beyond the Bar Snacks

Given the locals' penchant for All-American fare like beef-on-weck (a truly juicy roast beef sandwich) and charcoal-broiled dogs, you might not expect to find a wealth of other influences in Buffalo's impressive food scene. Among the newer standouts: Las Puertas, a modern-Mexican bistro (laspuertas-buffalo.com), and Dobutsu, an Asian-inspired seafood restaurant (dobutsubuffalo.com) and farm-to-table front-runners, the Dapper Goose (thedappergoose.com) and Marble + Rye (marbleandrye.net), where even the cocktails employ seasonal ingredients.



Las Puertas, a modern-Mexican bistro.