



Hike

take a

LACE UP YOUR SNEAKERS OR
HIKING BOOTS AND HEAD OUTDOORS
FOR 10 OF THE BEST TRAILS
IN WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA.

Winter is over. Spring has begun to bloom. It's time to put away the parka, grab the sunscreen and head outdoors to experience Pittsburgh and the surrounding area in all of its glory: city sidewalks, urban green spaces, repurposed land, the great wide open. It's history in your own backyard, an art-inspired walk outside of your office door, a tranquil oasis five minutes from Downtown or hours away from everyone. An hour during lunchtime. Day trips. Overnight excursions. Best of all, they're free: a mile or 5 or 20 of sensory experiences that lure you around the bend or deep into the woods.

Each route connects you with a different area — some familiar, some new — that individually represents the synergy of tradition and innovation that has propelled this section of western Pennsylvania into one of the most livable. Meticulously and thoughtfully maintained, many of the hiking trails have come into existence thanks to a corps of dedicated volunteers. Others symbolize collective efforts years in the making. Within the city itself, nonprofit organizations such as the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation and Friends of the Riverfront have proven that walkability is more than just a buzzword — it's the gateway to getting you in step with the arts, the culture, the neighborhoods and the people who collectively represent a slice of Pittsburgh life.

So, go on — grab the significant other, bring along the kids, leash the dog. Go solo. Tag along with a friend. Take a breather to unwind, explore and absorb. It doesn't matter if you walk it, run it or hike it. Choose your own adventure, and get ready for the great outdoors.

by Kate Benz
photos by Chuck Beard & Laura Petrilla

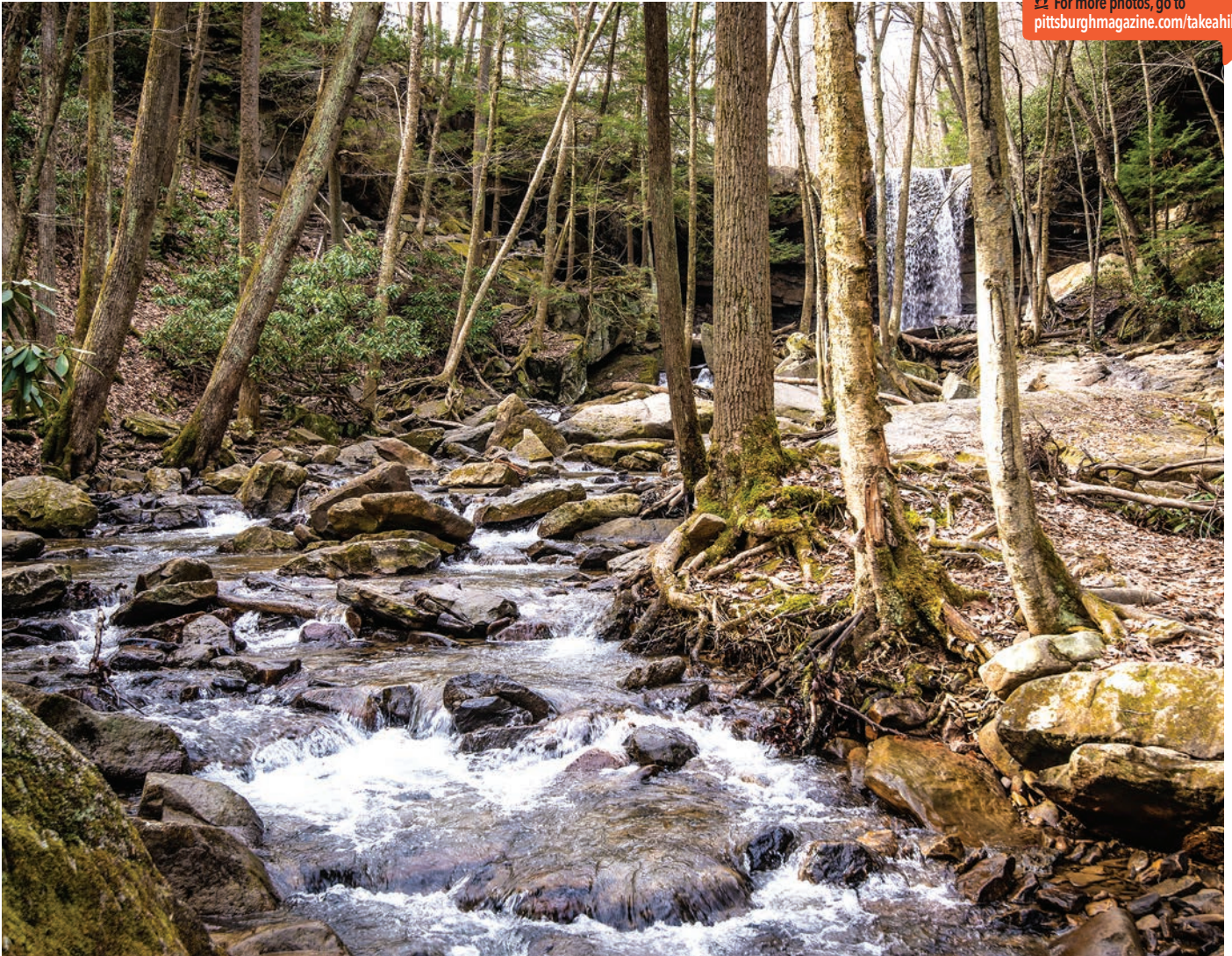


BEST WATERFALLS

Rise of the Falls

OHIOPILE

For more photos, go to
pittsburghmagazine.com/takeahike



TRAILHEAD

124 Main St., Ohiopyle,
Fayette County



LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Easy



DOG-FRIENDLY?

Yes



KID-FRIENDLY?

Yes



MILEAGE

3 miles

Considered to be two of the crown jewels of the 20,500-acre Ohiopyle State Park, Ohiopyle and Cucumber Falls can be accessed via a 3-mile loop that makes up the Rise of the Falls self-guided hike. Pop into the visitor's center at the trailhead for a comprehensive guide that explains the geological tug of war between water and rock that is responsible for the creation of these shimmering beauties. One of the remarkable aspects of Cucumber Falls: You can walk underneath it via a large rock ledge. The trail itself follows an old rail bed that once delivered coal from the town of Stonerville to Western Maryland Railway cars. Today, that trail is lush with old-growth timber: hemlock, chestnut, oak and beech, and in springtime it yields an abundance of wildflowers. dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/findapark/ohiopyle



DON'T MISS

Daredevils can cool off by taking a plunge down Meadow Run, several hundred feet of natural waterslides that cut a narrow gorge in the rock. Exercise extreme caution: When water levels are high, the current can be very swift.

North Country National Scenic Trail

BUTLER COUNTY

**TRAILHEAD**

Hells Hollow,
McConnells Mill State Park

**LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY**

Varies according to topography

**DOG-FRIENDLY?**

Varies

**KID-FRIENDLY?**

Varies

**MILEAGE**

15 miles

Designated as the longest national scenic trail in America, the North Country National Scenic Trail stretches more than 4,600 miles from Adirondack Park in eastern New York to Lake Sakakawea in the northern center of North Dakota. Lest your schedule not permit an extended excursion, enjoy a snack-sized outing that winds its way through the northern tip of Butler County. Skirting alongside Lake Arthur in Moraine State Park and through Jennings Environmental Nature Reserve, you'll experience an excellent slice of American topography as you pass by lakes, beaver ponds, farms and forests, as well as the surge of Slippery Rock Creek Gorge as it churns through McConnells Mill State Park. Created thousands of years ago as glacial lakes began to drain, McConnells Mill today is considered by many to be a natural national landmark. One thing to keep in mind: The trail does not loop, so you'll have to hike back to where you started. Maps are available online. northcountrytrail.org

**DON'T MISS**

On the northern shore of Moraine State Park, you can see the historic Davis Hollow Cabin. Construction of the hand-hewn log and hand-carved stone structure began prior to the start of the American Revolution. It's been lovingly restored and maintained by volunteers of the Davis Hollow North Country Trail Committee. Obtain permission by calling 724/575-0471, and you'll be welcome to rest your soles and stay for the night.

August Wilson: Pittsburgh Places in His Life and Plays

HILL DISTRICT

**TRAILHEAD**

Corner Monument, Centre Avenue
and Crawford Street

**LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY**

Easy

**DOG-FRIENDLY?**

Yes

**KID-FRIENDLY?**

Yes

**MILEAGE**

5 miles

Walk a mile — 5 actually — in the shoes of Pittsburgh son and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright August Wilson, passing sites that inspired roles in his Pittsburgh Cycle. Meticulously mapped by the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation, your journey begins at Freedom Corner at Centre Avenue and Crawford Street. Used since the 1960s as an assembly point to march in support of social justice, the corner offers an excellent view of the once-vibrant commercial heart of the Lower Hill. At the site of the former Mellon Arena, Bedford, Wylie and Centre avenues once intersected with Logan and Fullerton streets; Logan is significantly referenced in seven of Wilson's plays. From there, you'll hit 35 more points of interest, some designated by Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission markers. Highpoints include Wilson's childhood home at 1727 Bedford Ave., under renovation for use as a community arts and entertainment center; and Crawford Grill No. 2, the renowned jazz club where an electrifying performance in 1966 by saxophonist John Coltrane left Wilson with what he called "one of the most remarkable moments of my life."

phlf.org/product/august-wilson-pittsburgh-places-in-his-life-and-plays/

**DON'T MISS**

2172 Wylie Ave., the site of the former Eddie's Restaurant.

The rear booth served as a meeting place for Wilson and a coterie of artistic friends, and it's where he reportedly conceived the idea of "Jitney," the first of his Pittsburgh Cycle plays.

BEST OVERNIGHT HIKE

Gerard Hiking Trail

OIL CREEK STATE PARK



TRAILHEAD

1080 Petroleum Centre Road, Oil City, Venango County



LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Moderate to Difficult



DOG-FRIENDLY?

Yes (state laws apply)



KID-FRIENDLY?

Varies



MILEAGE

36 miles

Test your survival skills by packing up your gear for an overnight hike that will take you along the east and west sides of the Oil Creek Valley, a looping trail that passes scenic overlooks, steep hillsides, wetlands and seasonal waterfalls. Nature has reclaimed most of the former drilling areas in the region, providing a glimpse at how its beauty bloomed wild before the oil boom of 1859. You'll still see the historic Drake Well on the northern end of the park. It was named after Col. Edwin Drake, who oversaw the drilling of the world's first successful commercial oil well. No need to rush. Pre-pay a nominal fee to reserve charming, rustic Adirondack-style shelters that offer respite for up to four weary travelers for one-night stays. Their stone fireplaces provide warmth and the opportunity to savor open-range cooking, and water is provided in spring and summer. Communal metal bear boxes keep your snack supply from luring curious wild visitors. Maps are available online. dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/findapark/oilcreek



DON'T MISS

Miller Farm, Shaffer Farm, the Pioneer and Petroleum Centre, and Boughton, sites that played pivotal roles in the early drilling days. Keep an eye out for old oil barrels and machinery frozen in time. Also, the fly fishing is said to be tremendous.

Kane Woods Nature Area

SCOTT TOWNSHIP



rippled with the debt of the Revolutionary War, U.S. President George Washington instituted a whiskey tax in 1794 and entrusted his good buddy, Gen. John Neville, with the task of collecting it from local farmers. Furious at the prospect of their main form of income being depleted, the farmers formed an angry mob, descended upon Neville's estate on Bower Hill and burned his mansion and other buildings to the ground. When word got back to

Washington, he dispatched a few troops — 13,000 to be exact — to combat what became known as the Whiskey Rebellion. A historical marker near the 2 miles of trails of this 72-acre nature area in Scott Township commemorates the infamous march of the “Whiskey Boys.” The Scott Conservancy manages the property, the largest area of greenspace that remains in Scott Township. As temperatures rise, keep an eye out for may-apples, vibrant native wildflowers and the occasional wild turkey passing by. Trail maps are available online or at the Whiskey Point trailhead (1461 Scrubgrass Road) and two others.



DON'T MISS

The Mother Tree, an enormous red oak approximately 52 inches in diameter on the JCC Trail; the state forestry department officially dates it at 200-250 years old.

scottconservancy.org/kane.htm



TRAILHEAD

1461 Scrubgrass Road, Scott Township



LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Easy to Moderate



DOG-FRIENDLY?

Yes (2-dog maximum per person)



KID-FRIENDLY?

Yes



MILEAGE

2 miles, plus another ¾ mile of trail that has yet to be officially marked



WALK THE BURGH TOURS

Whether you're walking major arteries or discreet alleyways, Walk the Burgh Tours (walktheburgh.com) offers a living history lesson about the city's cultural and historical landmarks, public art spaces and more than one example of jaw-dropping architecture that highlights the many layers of our city's rich and diverse heritage. Along the way, you'll also be popping into various buildings, including the Frick, Omni William Penn Hotel and Union Trust, as you wind through the cultural and financial districts to Point State Park and the Golden Triangle. In the spring, look for the debut of a Downtown Architecture Tour and Public Art Tour.

DETAILS: Tours are offered daily at 11 a.m. and/or 3 p.m. \$19/2 hours.

MEETING POINT: 500 Ross St., Downtown (corner of Ross Street and Fifth Avenue)

RESERVATIONS: 412/246-9494 or hello@walktheburgh.com



Acclaimed travel writer and Sewickley native **Brandon Wilson** has conquered remote trails, retraced religious pilgrimages and scaled mountain peaks while hiking in nearly 100 nations all over the world. See his story at pittsburghmagazine.com/brandonwilson

BEST PLACE TO SPREAD YOUR WINGS

Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve

FOX CHAPEL



TRAILHEAD

614 Dorseyville Road, Fox Chapel



LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Easy



DOG-FRIENDLY?

No



KID-FRIENDLY?

Yes



MILEAGE

3.4 miles

Spread your wings a mere 10 miles outside of the city at the Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve in Fox Chapel. Headquarters of the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania, the 134-acre reserve is open to the public from dawn to dusk seven days a week, 365 days a year, and it promises to connect people with nature. Depending on the season, chances are good you'll see or hear a wide variety of the multiple species of birds that nest here: Mallards and Canadian Geese congregate around the pond with turtles and frogs, Indigo Buntings, Cardinals, Blue Jays, Red-shouldered Hawks, Scarlet Tanagers, Eastern Phoebe, Red-bellied Woodpeckers and Red-winged Blackbirds. Keep an eye out for the abundant wildlife, too. Those requiring handicap accessibility can enjoy the portion of Spring Hollow Trail that extends from the main building to the pond. Trail maps are available onsite or online. aswp.org



DON'T MISS

The Treetop, a canopy-level deck that extends from the hillside along Spring Hollow Trail and offers sweeping views of the topography.

Raccoon Creek State Park Wildflower Reserve

INDEPENDENCE TOWNSHIP

**TRAILHEAD**

Jennings Trail, 482 Route 30, Independence Township, Beaver County

**LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY**

Easy to Moderate

**DOG-FRIENDLY?**

No

**KID-FRIENDLY?**

Yes

**MILEAGE**

5 miles

A wide range of 700 species of wildflowers has been recorded in this 314-acre section of the park located along Raccoon Creek; the growth occurs because of a confluence of habitats in a relatively small area that include floodplains, hardwood forests of sycamore and oak-hickory as well as pine forests, meadows and recovering farm land. Although they are present throughout the growing season, blooms are at their peak from late April through early May and again from August through early September. On the heels of winter, the spring thaw will produce buds of trilliums and bluebells before summer brings forth crimson torches of iron weed and lively splashes of Joe-Pye weed. Cooling temps yield to vibrantly rich fall foliage. The hike is considered to be relatively easy; you must descend (and then ascend) a higher elevation to access the creek, however, so expect to get your heart pumping. After that, it's cake. Maps are available online. dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/findapark/raccooncreek/wildflowerreserve/index.htm

**DON'T MISS**

Shafer's Rock. Accessible from the high elevation of Audubon Trail, the overlook provides outstanding views of the floodplain and horseshoe bend in Raccoon Creek.

BEST OASIS IN THE CITY

Riverview Park

NORTH SIDE



TRAILHEAD

Mairdale Parking Lot, intersection of Mairdale and Woods Run avenues



LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Moderate



DOG-FRIENDLY?

Yes (leashed)



KID-FRIENDLY?

Varies



MILEAGE

10.6 miles

A lot of things in this 259-acre park will leave an impression, but the seclusion may make the most lasting one. While you're walking along 10.6 tranquil miles of densely wooded trails, a moderately challenging topography of steep hillsides intertwining with open valleys makes it hard to believe you're mere miles from the urban epicenter of Downtown. In the northern section of the park, just south of Perry Traditional Academy, the Archery, Snowflake and Wildflower trails wind through forests of large sugar maples and eastern hemlocks believed to be around 100 years old. In the spring, ephemeral wildflowers, including Dutchman's breeches, Virginia bluebells and Toothwort, bloom. In the Western section, Snyder's Point Trail loops around gently rolling meadows, providing an excellent vantage point of the Ohio River after the loss of fall foliage. The trails themselves tend not to get too crowded, although you shouldn't be surprised at the numbers of wildlife including deer and wild turkey that may cross your path. If you get tired, take a breather on one of many rock benches along the way. Maps are available online. pittsburghparks.org/riverview-park



DON'T MISS

The Allegheny Observatory (pitt.edu/~aobsvtry), run by the University of Pittsburgh, is one of the world's major astronomy-research institutions. Time your trek to coincide with one of the free public tours held on Thursday and Friday evenings from April through November. On a clear evening, your tour will end with a viewing of the many celestial objects that hang overhead.

BEST URBAN EXCURSION

Three Rivers Heritage Trail

ALLEGHENY COUNTY



TRAILHEAD

South Shore Riverfront Park,
South Side



LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Easy to Moderate



DOG-FRIENDLY?

Yes



KID-FRIENDLY?

Yes



MILEAGE

24 miles

There's no better way to savor a slice of Pittsburgh than by experiencing it via multiple neighborhoods. Park your car for free at the South Shore Riverfront Park and make your way down East Carson Street before crossing the Smithfield Street Bridge to Downtown. Loop around the Point and continue toward the 10th Street Water Feature at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center. There, the walkway descends nearly 20 feet from street level and meanders through a series of fountain pools. The Rachel Carson Bridge will take you to the North Shore, where art enthusiasts can continue their inspired trek as they enjoy the public art plazas, including Ned Smyth's Piazza Lavoro in the recently restored Allegheny Landing. Listen for the crack of a bat at PNC Park. Rent a kayak from Venture Outdoors under the Sixth Street Bridge. Catch glimpses of our strong industrial heritage from the Millvale section while keeping an eye out for rowers gliding across the Allegheny River. You'll see Bloomfield rising on the hill above Lawrenceville and sweeping views of the Downtown skyline. Choose your own adventure by cherry-picking your route or following the trail in its entirety through Chateau, the Strip District, Panther Hollow, Hazelwood, Duquesne Heights and Baldwin Borough. Maps are available online. traillink.com/trail/three-rivers-heritage-trail.aspx



DON'T MISS

An amazing vantage point to capture a sun rising or setting over the Golden Triangle can be seen between Heinz Field and PNC Park on the North Shore section of the trail.

BEST VIEWS

Grandview Avenue

MOUNT WASHINGTON



TRAILHEAD

Monongahela Incline



LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Easy to Moderate



DOG-FRIENDLY?

Yes



KID-FRIENDLY?

Yes



MILEAGE

2 miles

What's not to love about this bird's-eye view of the city's stunning skyline? From one of Pittsburgh's highest elevation points, you'll enjoy awe-inspiring views to the north, east and west — a sight even more spectacular as the sun goes down and lights turn on. There's plenty to see by walking the entirety of the avenue, including photo opps at one of the four overlooks, rides on the Monongahela and Duquesne inclines, and a pit stop at the 24-hour chapel of the St. Mary of the Mount church. A bench and kneeler enable you to view the stained glass and architecture of this historic parish 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Grandview's rolling topography ensures you'll feel the burn as you crest a few hills along the way, but no worries if you start to feel famished. Grab a bite to eat at any number of restaurants there or in the Shiloh Street corridor. visitpittsburgh.com/about-pittsburgh/neighborhoods/mt-washington



DON'T MISS

Chatham Village. Built in 1932, this 46-acre National Historic Landmark near Bigham Street, a few blocks from Grandview Avenue, brings the charm of an English countryside to an urban setting. The Georgian-style residences are flanked by interior courtyards, a village green and 26 acres of natural woodland.

Kate Benz has been a professional writer for 15 years, with bylines appearing in *Pittsburgh Magazine*, the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* and other publications. She also is the author of an *Images of America* book about Cranberry Township.