

Robin Kear and Carrie Donovan

Unlocking Pittsburgh

Navigating and exploring the local secrets of our host city

Pittsburgh is known as the only city with an entrance, due to the breathtaking views for travelers coming through the Fort Pitt Tunnel onto the top deck of the Fort Pitt Bridge overlooking the city. From this vantage point, the confluence of all three rivers and the glittering skyscrapers of downtown are visible, creating a dramatic reveal of the city during both day and night. This iconic moment has been immortalized by creatives who call Pittsburgh their hometown in such films as *Anything's Possible*, the directorial debut of Billy Porter, and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, based on the coming-of-age novel by Stephen Chbosky. Make sure to have your own main character playlist cued up for your trip through the Fort Pitt tunnel if you are arriving by car from the south or west.

ACRL 2023 attendees traveling downtown from the Pittsburgh airport will have the opportunity to experience this spectacular entrance first-hand. The airport is about 20 miles from downtown and the trip can take from 45 minutes to an hour, depending on the traffic. A variety of transportation options are available for travelers exiting the airport at baggage claim. Tickets on the 28X Bus (Airport Flyer) are \$2.75 paid in cash at the farebox upon boarding the bus (exact change is required). Alternatively, a taxi or car service will cost approximately \$40 depending on the day and time. Those conference-goers who are coming into Pittsburgh by train will disembark at Union Station, just steps away from many of the ACRL conference hotels.

Getting around

For anyone accustomed to cities planned on grid systems, getting around downtown Pittsburgh can be a bit disorienting at first because of its triangle shape. On the plus side, downtown is relatively small, so it does not take long to get where you're going. Remember to keep your GPS at-the-ready to guide you to specific locations, and do not hesitate to stop by the ACRL Local Experts Desk in the convention center for directions.

Pittsburgh Regional Transit operates city buses and a light rail system to transport you around downtown or to other neighborhoods. Single fares are \$2.75, and a refillable ConnectCard may be purchased at the downtown light rail station. Pittsburgh Regional Transit also operates two historic inclines, the Duquesne and the Monongahela, which traverse Mt. Washington and provide a historic and memorable experience for travelers. The view from the top of Mt. Washington offers some of the most sweeping vistas of Pittsburgh on a clear day. Visit Pittsburgh Regional Transit (<https://www.rideprt.org>) for transit schedules, or

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From Mt. Washington, a view of the Duquesne Incline which still operates with its original cars.

download a Pittsburgh transit app to track arrivals and departures in real time (“Momego” is a good one).

For those walking or biking, Pittsburgh offers a varied landscape through which you can experience waterways, bridges, mountains, parks, and art. Take advantage of Pittsburgh’s public bike-sharing program, POGO, to ride on standard or e-pedal assist bikes (<https://pogoh.com>). The Three Rivers Heritage Trail runs along the riverfronts, giving walkers and bikers access to major attractions or a traffic-free space to enjoy the sights. Many of Pittsburgh’s 297 automobile bridges have dedicated pedestrian walkways,¹ making it possible to cross the city’s many railways, waterways, and highways as if, magically, on air.² The three bridges visible from the Convention Center that connect downtown Pittsburgh to the north side are named for Pittsburgh legends Roberto Clemente, Andy Warhol, and Rachel Carson. Because of their similar construction, color, and proximity positioned at 6th, 7th, and 9th Streets, respectively, they are known as the Three Sisters and provide pedestrians many options for crossing the Allegheny River. The Smithfield Bridge on the other side of downtown crosses the Monongahela River to the south side and is, like the Three Sisters, featured on the National Register of Historic Places.

Just as we rely on Pittsburgh’s bridges to cross its rivers and valleys, the city steps of Pittsburgh were constructed to take us up and down its hills and hollows. There are an estimated 739 sets of city steps throughout Pittsburgh that are designated as public rights-of-way.³ Some are stand-alone staircases, others serve as sidewalks along steep streets, and there are some

that act as streets in themselves and are named accordingly. Starting in the late nineteenth century, the people of Pittsburgh used the steps to make their way up and down the steep hillsides of the city's hilliest neighborhoods. Today they are still used for practical purposes, but more frequently as a form of exercise. Although downtown is relatively flat, if you are interested in experiencing the city steps the neighborhood of the South Side Slopes is a good area to explore. Find photos, maps, and walking tours from Mis.Steps (<http://mis-steps.com/resources>).

Moments for reflection

As you explore our city and seek some reflective time outdoors as a break during the conference schedule, you are encouraged to reflect upon the past, present, and future of the land upon which Pittsburgh now sits. It was the ancestral land of the Adena culture, Hopewell culture, and Monongahela peoples. These Indigenous lands were later stolen from the Iroquois (also known as Haudenosaunee, represented by the Seneca), as well as the Shawnee and Delaware (also called the Leni Lenape) peoples,⁴ by settlers who arrived in the mid-late eighteenth century. Since then, the region has undergone many changes, especially during the era of industrialization, with rivers being used more for transportation of goods and the development of homes on hillsides farther away from factories. More recently, Pittsburgh has been making strides in environmentalism. Although we cannot change the past, Pittsburghers are committed to showing our gratitude for nature, along with ongoing respect and stewardship of the land, each other, and future generations. A big part of this is the development of sustainable modes of transportation through increasingly greener urban spaces with bike lanes, pedestrian paths, and a fleet of buses that is transitioning to zero-emissions by 2045. As you make your way around Pittsburgh, we hope your mindfulness of the past will inform your enjoyment of the journey of getting from place to place.

Secret Pittsburgh

Whether you're exploring Pittsburgh by foot, incline, bike, rail, or trail, keep your eyes out for some of its secret (and not so secret) places. The digital guide Secret Pittsburgh (<https://secretpittsburgh.org/>) is a yearslong project created and maintained by University of Pittsburgh English Department faculty and undergraduate students as part of a semester-long literature course titled "Secret Pittsburgh." According to Jess FitzPatrick, co-creator of the class, "the Secret Pittsburgh class invites students to explore spaces of the city, connect with the communities who bring meaning to those places, and contend with questions at the intersection of storytelling, placemaking, and representation. Applying frameworks from spatial theory, and cultural studies, students explore connections among topics like politics, environment, and history across on-site experiences and a range of texts (spanning poems, 360-videos, promotional websites, and archival letters)."

As they travel around the city to identify cultural and historical places to include in the guide and collaborate on new entries that tell the story of these places through mixed media, Pitt's University Library System (ULS) librarians work collaboratively with the students in FitzPatrick's class, helping them research Pittsburgh and discussing the role of libraries more generally. ULS Archives and Special Collections archivists introduce the students to historical material about Pittsburgh and how to use historical images and documents in their projects. Of the collaboration with the library, FitzPatrick states, "You can't have a course

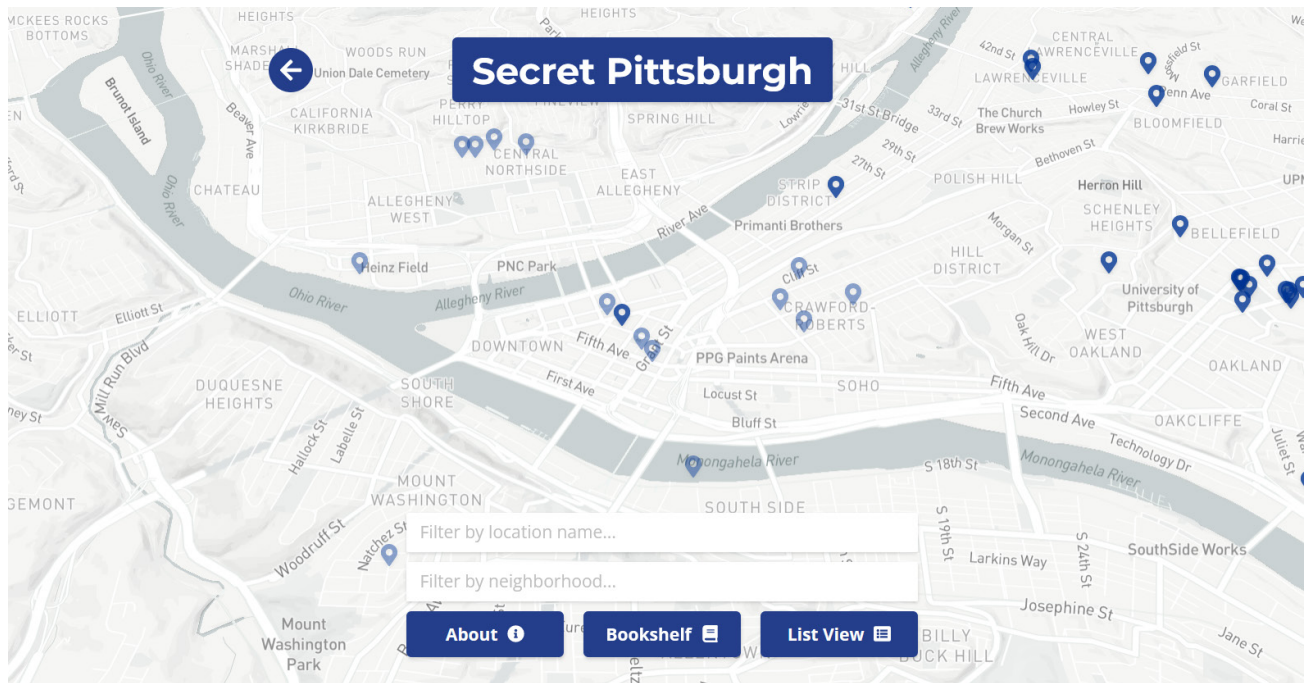


Image of the homepage of Secret Pittsburgh, a stylized map of the city with secret Pittsburgh locations.

which explores the dynamic connection between story and place without addressing and using the library. Libraries are where we can access multiple guidebooks and learn about the genre of a ‘guide.’ We depend on libraries to provide access to the diverse readings for our ever-changing sites and topics (the evolution of the cemetery, poems about our neighborhoods, artbooks contending with memory, children’s books about Rachel Carson, films that reimagine the cityscape, personal papers of famous local storytellers like August Wilson and George Romero) and offer primary sources students need to draw upon for their guidebook stories. Operating the class requires a close working relationship with archivists, department liaison librarians, digital scholarship specialists, and media equipment collection managers. They expand what is possible and offer new connections and possibilities for visits and assignments. Their expertise expands how we design stories about place.”

Different from any other Pittsburgh guidebook, each entry and accompanying essays are written entirely by the students and guided by their instructor. They use photos they have taken of their chosen secret place, sometimes interspersed with historical items. Students can also add essays to an existing entry if they connect with that place. Some essays include the difficult history of a place or event. Other essays expand into a discussion of the space, related issues, and how they personally experienced it.

On the Bookshelf, you will find an annotated bibliography with more ways to learn about our amazing and continually changing city. As this website is a work in progress by the students, please excuse any errors when accessing the content. After selecting a place to explore, read the overview and be sure to go to the Articles section to read the essays.

Notable places easily accessible from the ACRL 2023 Conference site

Downtown—several points of interest are near the convention center. Be sure to visit the green space of Point State Park to see the fountain and the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers into the Ohio River. The fountain is fed by Pittsburgh’s fourth river,

an underground aqueduct. Nearby Market Square has many good restaurants for people watching.

- The Allegheny Courthouse is an architectural marvel. You can even self-tour the jail that used to be attached, which now holds court offices. For more, read the essay “Properties of Space” (<https://secretpittsburgh.org/article/properties-of-space/>), by Alexander Leighton.
- There are a few green spaces downtown. Read about the changing of one private green space after protests in “Mellon Green: How A Space Changed Through Time” (<https://secretpittsburgh.org/article/mellon-green-how-a-space-changed-through-time/>), by Blair Drake.

North Side (<https://secretpittsburgh.org/location/north-side/>)—a 15–20 minute walk from the convention center, to get there walk across one of the sister bridges on 6th (Roberto Clemente), 7th (Andy Warhol), or 9th Street (Rachel Carson) to explore this neighborhood.

- The North Side neighborhood used to be its own city until it became part of Pittsburgh. There are three great places to visit here: Randyland, City of Asylum, and the Mattress Factory in the area also known as the Mexican War Streets, an 1840s plan of streets named for people and places in the Mexican-American War.
- Check out these North Side essays to get the pulse of this area:
 - “The Historical Tapestry of Pittsburgh: Northside Then vs. Now” (<https://secretpittsburgh.org/article/the-historical-tapestry-of-pittsburgh-northside-then-vs-now/>), by Anmol Baxi
 - “Finding City of Asylum” (<https://secretpittsburgh.org/article/finding-city-of-asylum/>), by Ny’Ara Willis
 - “Walking in a Pittsburgh Wonderland” (<https://secretpittsburgh.org/article/walking-in-a-pittsburgh-wonderland/>), by Acadia Kear

Hill District (<https://secretpittsburgh.org/location/freedom-corner-and-the-hill-district/>)—a 20–25 minute walk from the convention center and, as you can guess by the name, it is uphill from downtown.

- There are several gems here to explore including the original Crawford Grill location (a famous jazz club), the August Wilson House, and the Hill House Association.
- For good overviews on the history in the Hill District, check out these essays:
 - “Two Takes on the Hill” (<https://secretpittsburgh.org/article/two-takes-on-the-hill/>), by Everett Benson
 - “Community Renaissance: August Wilson’s Living Legacy” (<https://secretpittsburgh.org/article/community-renaissance-august-wilson-s-living-legacy/>), by Ryann Nieberle
 - “The Crawford Grill: Culture & Music in Pittsburgh” (<https://secretpittsburgh.org/article/the-crawford-grill-culture-and-music-in-pittsburgh/>), by Tia Balaji

South Side neighborhood and Mt. Washington—for those who are willing to go farther afield and take a car service, incline, or bus ride, or a much longer walk:

- A unique Pittsburgh feature are our city steps. Because Pittsburgh is so very hilly, these

are built into many neighborhoods in the city. The South Side Steps (<https://secretpittsburgh.org/location/south-side-steps/>) are some of the most extensive and will give you gorgeous views if you make it to the top, or even halfway!

- Check out this essay: “The South Side Slopes: Climbing the Millworker’s Stairways” (<https://secretpittsburgh.org/article/the-south-side-slopes-climbing-the-millworker-s-stairways/>), by Jackie Bender
- You can also take an incline, either the Duquesne or the Monongahela, and visit Mt. Washington. The views are beautiful from either incline, and if you have time you can also explore the neighborhood (<https://secretpittsburgh.org/location/mt-washington-the-neighborhood/>). If you need help choosing, the Duquesne Incline has a small museum at the top and you can self-tour underneath to see the machinery. The Monongahela Incline puts you closer to the row of overlooks on Mt. Washington with views of downtown and the river.

According to FitzPatrick, “I’m always excited by the secrets of the places we visit—more than any other class, I am always learning. It is wonderful how the momentum builds—you read one story which leads to a new contact who tells you about this archival object which the archivists explain is related to another one in the holdings which springboards into a new place. . . . I always tell people I believe our course model can work anywhere, but that I’m lucky to run it in Pittsburgh.” Secret Pittsburgh (<https://secretpittsburgh.org/>) provides a great way to acquaint yourself with Pittsburgh before you arrive for ACRL 2023, and we hope you will love our city as you unlock secrets of your own. ✍

Notes

1. Mark Houser, “Does Pittsburgh Really Have More Bridges Than Any Other City?,” *Pittsburgh Magazine*, March 16, 2022, <https://www.pittsburghmagazine.com/does-pittsburgh-really-have-more-bridges-than-any-other-city/>.
2. Rick Sebak, *Flying Off the Bridge to Nowhere*, 58:31, WQED Communications, 1993, <https://www.wqed.org/watch/pittsburgh-history-series/flying-bridge-nowhere-fqwlth>.
3. Bob Regan, *Pittsburgh Steps: The Story of the City’s Public Stairways* (Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot, 2015), 1.
4. Association of College and Research Libraries, “ACRL Conference 2023 Land Acknowledgement,” August 2022, <https://acrl2023.us2.pathable.com/land-acknowledgement>.