



Andy Warhol
Bridge, Pittsburgh

PICTURE Visit Pittsburgh/
Dustin McGrew

Steel the show

A host of regeneration projects and new creative districts are giving the once-industrial city of Pittsburgh a new lease of life, reports **Lynn Houghton**

One thing most people know about Pittsburgh's history is its contribution to America's industrial heritage – a role so important that in the 1950s it accounted for almost half of the country's steel output. After decades of decline, the city is now capitalising on rising interest in industrial history to transform itself into a tourist destination.

Next year, the City of Steel will celebrate 150 years of the Edgar Thomson Steel Works, in continuous operation since 1875 and offering tours for visitors. The Carrie Blast Furnaces, now a National Historic Landmark, also has guided tours – as part of the Rivers of Steel initiative, which highlights the state's manufacturing heritage – that are nearly always sold out. The venue strikes a balance between legacy and leading edge and has become hugely popular for weddings and events. The perimeter wall that separates this iron mill from the river is covered in colourful graffiti featuring work by artists such as Victor Ayala Kart from León in the Mexican state of Guanajuato and Bel2 from Chicago – showcasing how art and industry can come together in all kinds of surprising ways.

POP, ART AND ICONS

Amid all this, it is the enigmatic figure of a pallid, bewigged Andy Warhol that has caught the imagination of locals and visitors alike. As the city's most famous son, Warhol's images of everyday objects such as tins of Campbell's soup and portraits of celebrities including Marilyn Monroe, Muhammad Ali and Chinese

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communist leader Chairman Mao made him the pre-eminent creative of the 1960s and 70s.

It's no surprise, then, that his hometown celebrates his work. The Andy Warhol Museum, which celebrated its 30th anniversary this year, occupies a seven-storey space, making it the largest single-artist museum in North America. It sits at the heart of Pittsburgh's new Pop ➤

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CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW: Andy Warhol Self-Portrait, The Andy Warhol Museum; Heinz History Center; Silver Street **PICTURES:** The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc; Visit Pittsburgh; Elisa Cevallos; Shutterstock/Markus Mainka



district, a six-block section of the North Shore that is being revamped as part of a 10-year project, heralding the regeneration of the city's art scene and creative life.

Pop's first phase was completed in 2021 with a work by local tile artist Laura Jean McLaughlin, which is featured on an outside wall of the museum. Sculptor KAWS' enormous teal creation *Together* has pride of place across the street at the Pop Park, while muralist Typoe's *Over the Rainbow* decorates another wall of the museum alongside an alley named Silver Street. This has now been converted to a community space and painted entirely in – you guessed it – silver, just like Warhol's Factory studio space in New York City, which was famously decorated with silver spray paint and foil.

A derelict office building in the same precinct is being refurbished and revived during phase two, with a community-minded Brave Bean coffee shop, plus production,

photography, printmaking facilities and working zones all incorporated in one property. The third phase will see the construction of a performance venue.

CHANGING FACES

Another recently opened redevelopment is the Strip District. Formerly the city docks and main train terminal for the town, it has been transformed into a vibrant shopping street attracting a young crowd with trendy eateries, a cool bowling alley, fabulous florists and more.

The train terminal is now the upmarket Grand Concourse Restaurant, specialising in steak and seafood. And on nearby Smallman Street, the popular Heinz History Centre celebrates the maker of the food brand, along with the diverse cultural contributions of the city, including exhibits on glassmaking and a nod to popular kids' TV series *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*.

At the heart of both these new districts is the desire to celebrate and develop local and youthful creativity, with the goal of ensuring that the next Andy Warhol will not have to leave this city in order to 'make it'. **TW**

BOOK IT

British Airways flies from Heathrow to Pittsburgh, with fares from £567 in February and March 2025. britishairways.com

North America Travel Service offers a five-night Pittsburgh City Break from £1,299 per person, based on double occupancy, departing in May 2025. The price includes economy-class BA flights, five nights in a Standard King Room at the DoubleTree by Hilton Pittsburgh Downtown, plus hop-on, hop-off sightseeing bus, a Bike and Brew tour and a Pittsburgh ghost tour. northamericatravelservice.co.uk

WHERE TO GO NEXT

Pittsburgh is a convenient starting point for a wider itinerary around Pennsylvania.

PHILADELPHIA: A five-hour drive east takes clients to Philadelphia, a walkable city known for its fascinating neighbourhoods and for being the first capital of the US. Seek out its history on visits to Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell, then get back to the modern day in lively Washington Square West, designated as the 'Gayborhood'. Don't miss a climb to the top of the City Hall for views of the city and neighbouring New Jersey.

LAUREL HIGHLANDS: A 90-minute drive north of Pittsburgh is the breathtakingly beautiful countryside of the Laurel Highlands, filled with waterways perfect for rafting and kayaking and miles of bike trails. Architect Frank Lloyd Wright built two mountain houses here: Kentuck Knob and Fallingwater. The latter, a cantilevered home suspended over a waterfall, was named a Unesco World Heritage Site in 2019.

OTHER CITIES: There are also connections to other major cities on the East Coast, with New York City, Boston, Washington DC and Baltimore all within reach by car or train. Take the Capitol Amtrak train from Pittsburgh to Chicago via Cleveland, Ohio and South Bend. There's also an Amtrak route to Tuscaloosa in Alabama.

