

# TRAVEL



**TOP LEFT:** The Ann Arbor Farmers Market is bustling on Saturday mornings. **TOP RIGHT:** You can sample almost anything at Ann Arbor's Zingerman's Deli. **BOTTOM:** The Blue Llama Jazz Club, a new addition to downtown Ann Arbor that opened in April, showcases local talent as well as larger acts.

## Exploring Ann Arbor, Michigan's Austin cousin

By Cynthia J. Drake  
Special to the American-Statesman

**L**iterati Bookstore is a perfect welcome mat for Ann Arbor, Mich. The sunlight streaming through the windows of this space, which smells of freshly milled paper and promise, makes you wonder if Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks might meet here in a "You've Got Mail" sequel. The independent bookstore is a thriving underdog business in a city that seems wholly directed toward supporting underdogs — and intellect.

I take a seat at the Hermes 3000 public typewriter in the bookstore's basement and tap out a message on its green keys: "Home is where spring is magic and people say 'pop.'" This is home for me — well, not

Ann Arbor exactly, but close enough that I have good memories of visiting the town while I was growing up. I fancied attending the University of Michigan for a time but ended up at rival Michigan State.

Since I moved to Austin five years ago, I find myself missing the annual Michigan spring rites, when the thermometer surges up to a balmy 50 degrees and people practically dance in the streets in praise of the elusive sun, which they always jokingly refer to as a "mysterious glowing orb." And pop. I miss ordering "pop."

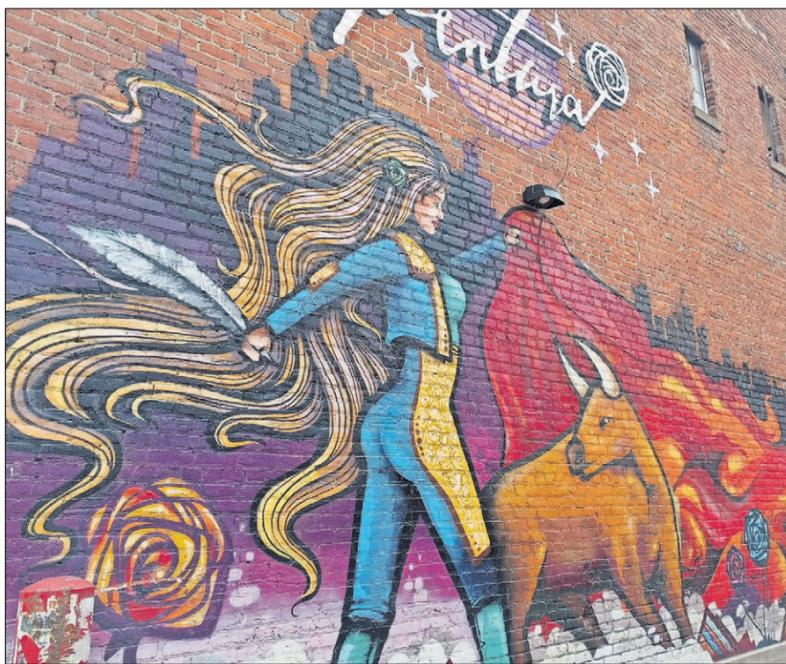
### Food that brings joy

I'm in Michigan during my annual pilgrimage back home and hoping to

See ANN ARBOR, D13



Literati, an independent bookstore in Ann Arbor, Mich.



**LEFT:** A mural outside the restaurant Aventura in downtown Ann Arbor. **RIGHT:** A pair of mastodons greet you at the entrance to the University of Michigan Natural History Museum, which opened in its new location in the spring. [PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED BY CYNTHIA J. DRAKE]

## In Orlando or Anaheim for a Disney vacation?



A table full of cocktails and snacks at the Fifth, a rooftop bar and restaurant in Anaheim, Calif., with a prime view of Disneyland's nightly fireworks. [CONTRIBUTED BY THE FIFTH]

### Explore the cities beyond the gates, too

By Noy Thrupkaew and Jim Webster  
The Washington Post

When you vacation at the Disney resorts in Florida or California, every moment of every day can be filled with Disney-related activities. You can go to a Disney theme park. You can shop at the Disney retail centers, eat

at Disney restaurants, hire a Disney babysitter so you can dance the night away at a Disney club. You can pay for everything with the wristband you get at check-in, which is also your hotel room key and your ticket to the theme parks. This vacation by immersion is affectionately known among fans as the Disney Bubble. But what if you want to burst out of that bubble?

See ORLANDO, D14



NEXT WEEK  
**BEACH TRIP**  
Take a jaunt to Rockport-Fulton

# Take in Iceland's steamiest geothermal sights

By Rick Steves  
Special to the  
American-Statesman

Iceland, formed long ago by volcanoes, is known for its otherworldly landscape, with steaming fields and percolating mud. The volcanic activity produces naturally heated water, which Icelanders have cleverly harnessed not just as an energy source, but for thermal baths and pools. Geothermal experiences — both visual and immersive — are worth seeking out on a visit here.

Wandering through the colorful terrain of a geothermal field is a classic Icelandic treat. The most visited geothermal sight is Geysir, home to the world's first-known geyser, on Iceland's most famous tourist route, the Golden Circle. The original Geysir is now mostly dormant, but the field around it still steams and bubbles nonstop, periodically punctuated by a dramatic eruption of scalding water from the one predictably active geyser, Strokkur. Strokkur erupts about every five minutes, shooting about 50 feet into the air.

Though it lacks a spouting geyser, a more impressive thermal area is at Námafjall, in North Iceland along the Ring Road that encircles most of the island nation. It's surrounded by mountains and far less crowded than Geysir. Námafjall's pungent sulfurous fumes are worth the stink — plug your nose — to explore the fumaroles (little stacked-rock vents spitting steam), bubbling pools and a terrain brushed in vivid hues.

Closer to the capital city Reykjavík, the Seltún area on the Reykjanes Peninsula is also striking. This steaming and smelly landscape hints at the geothermal power just underfoot. A boardwalk and marked paths outline a 15-minute circuit through the field over boiling hot water

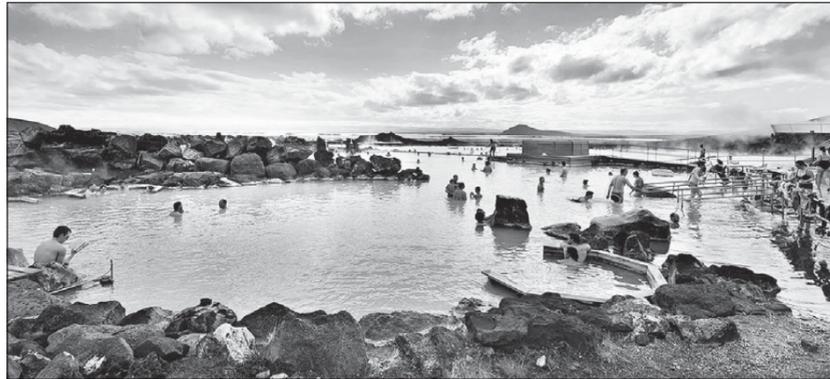


**Námafjall, along the Ring Road that circles Iceland, is one of the island's most accessible and impressive geothermal areas.** [PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED BY CAMERON HEWITT]

and steam. Partway through the loop, a hilltop viewpoint overlooks the entire area, with Kleifarvatn lake just beyond. The environment here is impacted by botched attempts to exploit the geothermal field for energy — first in the 1750s and most recently in the 1940s. In 1999, one of the boreholes from the last attempt got plugged up and exploded violently, creating a 30-foot crater now filled with water.

Along with marveling at the natural phenomena, I enjoy learning just how the country harnesses the substantial power of its thermal waters. Just off the Golden Circle loop, the exhibition at Hellisheiði Power Plant (Hellisheiðarvirkjun) gave me a good look at turbine machinery at work. The hot water from the ground (which is piped to homes for heating) drives the turbines that generate electricity.

For many, the best way to experience Iceland's geothermal delights is to literally plunge into one of Iceland's naturally



**The naturally heated Mývatn Nature Baths have fine views over North Iceland's volcanic countryside.** [CONTRIBUTED BY CAMERON HEWITT]

occurring thermal baths. The most famous (and most expensive) is the spa-like Blue Lagoon, with milky blue water filling a volcanic reservoir on the Reykjanes Peninsula, near Keflavík Airport. Nestled in a lunar-like landscape, this steamy oasis is a sprawling hot-water playground for grown-ups. I like to splish and splash around, exploring the hidden nooks and crannies of the interconnected pools, and head to the hot, thundering waterfalls to give my shoulders a pounding. The naturally heated water is thoroughly relaxing. Also relaxing is the swim-up bar,

where each bather gets a drink included with admission.

Other premium but less upscale pools are Fontana (on the Golden Circle route); Mývatn Nature Baths (part-way around the Ring Road, in North Iceland); and Krauma (in West Iceland).

While those baths have big marketing budgets and attract lots of international visitors, they're rarely frequented by Icelanders — who know that you can bathe in equally luxuriant water for a fraction of the price, albeit in simpler surroundings, at one of the country's many thermal swimming

pools. Every community of even a few hundred people seems to have a well-maintained pool complex, often with a warm lap pool and smaller hot pools (called "hot pots"); many also have saunas, steam rooms and waterslides. These pools provide a pleasantly authentic Icelandic experience, and an opportunity to rub elbows with locals. Various websites list Iceland's thermal pools, including Sundlaugar.is and Hot Pot Iceland.

Those who love the out-of-doors can find free opportunities for an al fresco soak in thermal springs throughout the countryside. Some are

easy to reach by car, while others require a bit of a hike — but your reward is a long soak in toasty water surrounded by an incredible landscape. Above the town of Hveragerði, near the end of the Golden Circle route, is the thermal river of Reykjadalur (literally "Steamy Valley"). Stepping out of your car at the end-of-the-road parking lot, you're surrounded by steaming hillsides. After about an hour hike up the valley, you reach the stream.

The water is shallow — you need to lie down to be submerged — but wonderfully warm and soothing. Reykjadalur is far from undiscovered, so there's usually plenty of company to enjoy the experience before the hike back to your car.

After nearly 1,200 years of taming their volatile island, Icelanders have harnessed geothermal energy in ways both practical and hedonistic. From gazing upon chromatic, steaming lakes to soaking in a thermal bath, Icelandic visits are impacted by the country's powerful natural forces.

## ANN ARBOR

From Page D12

explore new tastes, sites and sounds in a city that feels a bit like Austin, if Austin had more flannel in its wardrobe.

If you're new to Ann Arbor, most folks will direct you to Zingerman's, referring to the downtown deli with long lines to the counter on most weekdays. The sandwiches here are legendary, apparently even counting Oprah Winfrey and former President Barack Obama among the fans of the pastrami.

For nearly four decades, Zingerman's not only has built an empire in Ann Arbor by expanding its business to the nearby Zingerman's Roadhouse, plus a robust mail-order company as well as cheese and candy shops, but it also functions as a business incubator for other local restaurants.

One such restaurant is Miss Kim, a trendy Korean cafe and passion project of Ji Hye Kim, who studied economics and political science at U of M before turning to food as a passion.

"When I asked myself what it is that I want to do, I wanted to do something that brings me joy," said Kim. "Food brings me joy."

Using some of her mother's recipes and her memories of food growing

up in Seoul, Kim created her own Korean syllabus filled with regional cookbooks and culinary history to invent new takes on treasured dishes such as bibimbap and the Korean spirit called soju. She infuses hers with flavors like black sesame and rose.

Miss Kim is a fair wage restaurant, which means tipping is optional.

"I have this wonderful memory of my mother in the fall sitting around with other women in the neighborhood saying, 'Should we do 50 heads of cabbage or 100 this time?'" she says, introducing her kimchi. Try to catch her during a slow service — her storytelling is almost as good as the food.

Not to be missed: Kim's tteokbokki, a traditional Korean street food made with rice cake and her house-made gochujang sauce, topped with a poached egg, black sesame seeds and strands of saffron. As a child, she used to trade the milk carton from her school lunch to buy tteokbokki from local vendors. One bite and you understand why it landed on the menu.

In the neighboring town of Ypsilanti, stop at Casablanca, a Moroccan restaurant located in a former Taco Bell building where Hamzah Mohammad is connecting diners with richly spiced cuisine from his home country, including



**You can't go wrong with a pastrami sandwich from Zingerman's Deli, an Ann Arbor institution for nearly 40 years.** [CONTRIBUTED BY CYNTHIA J. DRAKE]

bistilla, phyllo stuffed with herbed chicken, lightly flavored with cinnamon and orange blossom and dusted with powdered sugar.

Much like the community's enthusiasm for independent bookstores, Ann Arbor seems eager to support local restaurants and food producers, from a perennially crowded weekend farmers market to a for-profit local grocer, Argus Farm Stop, stocked exclusively with locally grown produce and goods.

### Honoring the spring rites

Because you can't eat every moment of your trip (though it's worth a try), there are other activities worth exploring in Ann Arbor.

I took my first fly-fishing lesson here on the Huron River, a haven for small-mouth bass. Sun sparkled on the gently flowing water while I practiced casting my line over and over again under

the patient tutelage of Capt. Colten Decker from Schultz Outfitters.

We didn't catch anything (and due to health advisories, all fishing is catch and release, anyway), but the time in nature during Michigan's spring and summer was priceless.

Michigan is known for its lakes, but its rivers are vastly underappreciated places where it's not unusual to spend afternoons being guided by herons or saluted by turtles sunning themselves on river rocks.

"Spring in Michigan is magical," Decker said as we watched birds and people emerging along the riverbank in the sunshine after a long winter — words I later immortalized on the Literati typewriter.

In downtown Ann Arbor, treat yourself to tickets for a live show at the Ark, renowned for storytelling festivals (the Moth story slams are regular events here) and thousands of

singer-songwriters in all stages of their careers. Next door, stop in at the Blue LLama Jazz Club for a musical set and a cocktail before or after the show.

U of M boasts several museums that are free and open to the public, including the Natural History Museum, which just opened in its new location in April and is unveiling three more exhibit spaces at the end of this year.

The museum's focus on peeling back the layers on what it means to do research means the public can interact with scientists doing their work right before their eyes, such as in the paleontology lab — and in some cases, even contribute to the research by helping with crowdsourced "citizen science."

"We're really trying to break down the intimidation factor," said museum director Amy Harris.

Make sure to leave enough time to simply wander the shops in the Kerrytown district and Elsewhere (Liberty Street Robot & Repair piqued my curiosity, in addition to the Ann Arbor outpost of Detroit watchmaker Shinola).

No matter where you go, you'd never be too far from a cozy spot to curl up with a good book and a mug of coffee (from an independent roaster, of course), or a pop — a recipe for a perfect afternoon to get lost in your thoughts.

### IF YOU GO

#### Stay

**Kensington Hotel**  
3500 S. State St.  
kcourtaa.com  
**The Graduate**  
615 E. Huron St.  
graduatehotels.com/  
ann-arbor

#### Eat

**Zingerman's Deli**  
422 Detroit St.  
zingermansdeli.com  
**Miss Kim**  
415 N. 5th Ave.  
misskimannarbor.com  
**Casablanca**  
2333 Washtenaw Ave.  
casablancaysilanti.com  
**Mani Osteria & Bar**  
341 E. Liberty St.  
maniosteria.com

#### Do

**Literati Bookstore**  
124 E. Washington St.  
literatibookstore.com  
**Ann Arbor Farmers Market**  
315 Detroit St.  
a2farmersmarket.org  
**University of Michigan Natural History Museum**  
1105 N. University Ave  
lsa.umich.edu/umnh  
**The Ark**  
316 S. Main St.  
theark.org  
**Kerrytown shops**  
407 N. Fifth Ave  
kerrytown.com

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