

The best of [My City]

Alumni-generated travel guides

By Anna Reynolds



ATLANTA

Susan Bilkey '82 BS has been living in Johns Creek, Ga., a northern suburb of Atlanta, for 11 years, where she is a U.S. marketing communications manager at Xerox Corporation.

What do you love most about your city?

The weather in January and February! I also love driving home from business trips at night and seeing the lights of the city of Atlanta sparkling in the distance as I come over the hill on the freeway.

Two best restaurants

It's hard to choose just two! The Atlanta area is very multi-cultural and there are some fantastic Vietnamese restaurants—as well as Mexican, Cuban, Peruvian and Ethiopian. Now that my teenage son works at Outback Steakhouse, I should mention it as a favorite as well.

Secret spots

There are no secrets here. Everyone knows about everything! There's always a crowd...

Favorite activities

I love to host dinner parties. I can seat up to 14 friends in my home; love and laughter fills my dining room. I also enjoy going to the High Museum when they're closing a major exhibit, they always have a party and it's a great atmosphere to take in and view the art. For listening to live music, my favorite spot is Chastain Park; you can rent a table and bring your own picnic basket, candles and other table decorations and then eat and enjoy the music.

Must see locations

In Atlanta it would be the Aquarium, the World of Coke, the CNN Center and all visitors should take in a Braves game if they are here during the baseball season. If you're in Johns Creek, come to a dinner party.



ST. LOUIS

L. Sandy MacLean '56 BA and his wife, Judi, have lived in Clayton, Mo., a suburb of St. Louis, for 31 years. MacLean retired as vice chancellor for student affairs-emeritus at the University of Missouri-St. Louis in 1999.

What do you love most about your city?

St. Louis has Forest Park, one of the nation's largest parks and includes the Zoo, History Museum, Art Museum, Science Museum and four municipal nine-hole golf courses.

Two best restaurants

Almonds (southern Cajun) and Ocean Bistro (seafood), both are within walking distance of our home.

Secret spots

The St. Louis region has many restaurants with patio dining that make for a most pleasant experience in the evenings.

Favorite activities

Enjoy whatever Forest Park is offering that day, e.g., golfing, jogging or visiting a museum.



Must see locations

Visit the Gateway Arch and its museum in the National Park, as well as Forest Park and one or more of its attractions, or just take a walk in the park.



NORTH POLE, ALASKA

Jack "Moit" Daly '81 BS lives in North Pole (12 miles southeast of Fairbanks and 360 miles north of Anchorage), where he is a special education teacher aide at Lathrop High School in Fairbanks.

What do you love most about your city?

The address cannot be beat! It starts many conversations with people when I am traveling or in town and tourists ask where I am from. They think I actually live in "The" North Pole.

Two best restaurants

The Pagoda, a Chinese restaurant has great food and great service, and the Country Kitchen is the best breakfast place!

Secret spots

The greater Fairbanks area has many places that one could visit and take advantage of, but North Pole just doesn't have any real secret places. March is a great month to visit our area since this is when the Aurora Borealis is the best and also when the World Ice Art Carving Championships take place.

Favorite activities

I would tell you to come to Alaska in the summer and take a few days to enjoy the midnight sun. Come and stroll around this small community and look at the abundance of hanging flower plants and home gardens, which grow in the midnight sun. Any time of the year someone could find things to do in our city/area. North Pole/Fairbanks is really a jumping-off point to drive to Denali National Park, which is about three hours southwest on the "Parks Highway." The Richardson Highway leads southeast of Fairbanks and takes you to the beginning of the 1,500 mile ALCAN Highway through Canada. The Richardson will take you to Valdez, Alaska, about six hours away and has some of the best alpine scenery and fishing in the world.

Must see locations

Must see book is "The Milepost," the planning tool to Alaska. Must see events are the Aurora Borealis viewing in March and the Midnight Sun Festival during the summer solstice in June.



Carissa, left, with Wildcats, Nathan Leach and Megan Waters.

CHICAGO

Six years ago, after graduating from Northern and moving around the Midwest, Carissa Waters '04 BSN settled back in her hometown, Chicago, where she is a nurse at Rush University Medical Center.

What do you love most about your city?

What I love most about Chicago is that there are endless opportunities both professionally and personally, but it's still a generally friendly and welcoming city. There are so many different neighborhoods and areas that help it to not feel overwhelming. It's located centrally in the Midwest; if the city life gets to be too much, I can head out of town and find a more low-key escape.

Two best restaurants

Brasserie by LM (French cuisine) and a number of tapas restaurants: Café Baba Reba, Chilam Balam, Twist, Bull-eh-dias (the list goes on!).

Secret spots

Every neighborhood has hidden gems that mostly only locals know about. Parks that appear around a corner, pubs that are like that neighborhood's version of "Cheers" and hidden coves along the lakefront that make you feel like you're on some quiet island, instead of on the edge of a large city. The fun part of exploring Chicago is that if you go off the beaten path (being mindful of your safety of course) you will find "secret spots" all over.

Favorite activities

One of my favorites is to just walk around and see where I end up. I live close to Lincoln Park Zoo, which is free. Visit Millennium Park and walk around the beautiful city gardens. Shedd Aquarium, the Art Institute and the Field Museum are all incredible.

Must see locations

Navy Pier is really fun. There is a lot of history and it's like an amusement park for all ages, with great views of the city skyline. During the summer, every Wednesday and Saturday evening they have a fireworks show from the Pier that is usually accompanied by a live orchestra. On a nice evening, Buckingham Fountain is a great place to sit and take in the sites. Plus, there are great viewing areas from the Sears Tower (technically renamed the Willis Tower, but don't ever call it that to a native Chicagoan) or the Hancock Building.



Fabiana with her father at Point of View, a bar atop the W Hotel.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Fabiana Perera '05 BS has lived in the nation's capital since 2007, where she is the program manager for Boston University Washington Programs, a PhD student in the department of political science at the George Washington University and an avid volunteer in the community.

What do you love most about your city?

I love absolutely everything about my city. A couple of years ago I started a running list on Facebook of things that I love about DC. It became really popular and now it's on a blog (fabifabiana.wordpress.com). There are 365 things on the list!

Two best restaurants

Founding Farmers is located on Pennsylvania Ave, close to the White House, the World Bank, the IMF and GWU. Everything in the restaurant comes directly from farms. They make their own ketchup and even the water tastes different...better. My two favorite things on the menu are the fish and chips and lobster macaroni and cheese. My second favorite is a tie between Tacklebox, a casual a seafood place in Georgetown, and Ben's Chili Bowl, a DC institution.

Secret spots

Visit the National Portrait Gallery and the Phillips Collection. If you are more into science there is a National Geographic Museum, the National Zoo and the National Arboretum. There are also lots of outdoor statues and memorials that people miss. My favorite is the statue of Albert Einstein by the National Academies of Science. This is a city of neighborhoods, and it's worth checking out at least a couple of them.

Favorite activities

I like to play an hour-long podcast and walk around DC looking for things I haven't seen before. It's a very pedestrian-friendly town. Walk along the Potomac River, by the monuments and through neighborhoods. My favorite walk is to cross the Key Bridge from Virginia into Georgetown. I also love to eat brunch.

Must see locations

The four spots: White House, the Capitol, the memorials and Air and Space. I think the two Jima Memorial should also be a must see.



SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA

Eric Bolduc '94 BS has been living in Scottsdale, Ariz. for nearly 11 years where he is an insurance broker and risk management consultant for Holmes Murphy & Associates.

What do you love most about your city?

The weather.

Two best restaurants

Greasewood Flats, an outdoor bar/restaurant (more bar than restaurant). It is in North Scottsdale in a beautiful setting. It's a great place for a burger and beer. There is live music there Thursday-Sunday, and it has been a legendary spot since 1975. I also enjoy Carolina's, a "hole in the wall" Mexican restaurant with three different locations and excellent food. I was actually introduced to this spot by a fellow NMU alumnus.

Secret spots

If the weather is closer to 100 or below, the Desert Botanical Garden is a great secret spot.

Favorite activities

My favorite thing to do in my city is hike. There are a ton of great trails throughout the city to enjoy.

Must see locations

Summer in Phoenix is tough—however, an Arizona Diamondback game is a must do. You could also venture to the Desert Botanical Garden. Most folks like to head north to check out Sedona and the Grand Canyon. During the winter I enjoy golf...you can relax at some of the best resorts in the country. The PGA Tour Waste Management Open, Barrett Jackson Car Show and several equestrian events in the West World are great winter events.

