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Detroit: From Ruin Porn to Cool Again

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All of the major media have written exhaustively about Detroit's bleak prospects. "Detroit has been in steady, sprawling decline for years," wrote the [LA Times](#) in a stranger-than-fiction story about a would-be entrepreneur's scheme to save the city by opening a zombie-themed amusement park. "As the city's population flees and blight spreads, large swaths of Detroit have begun to crumble." Detroit's industrial collapse was the back story for Clint Eastwood's hit movie *Gran Torino*; it loomed large in the cult TV show *Detroit 1-8-7*.

Google "Detroit depression" and 17 million results pop up; "Detroit decline" and you'll get over 14 million. "Detroit decay" and "Detroit demise" have more than 4 million each.

Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre's book [Ruins of Detroit](#) has received enormous attention; *TIME* Magazine ran a photo essay by Sean Hemmerle called "[The Remains of Detroit](#)" that featured depressing images of abandoned schools, train stations, houses, churches and more. There have even been art exhibits dedicated to the theme, most recently in Detroit's backyard. Photographs by Andrew Moore are on display at the [Grand Rapids Art Museum](#). The exhibit, called "Detroit Disassembled," has also traveled to New York and Akron.

But recently that has begun to change. A *New York Post* article reads, "[The new Detroit Cool](#)." A PBS article asks, "[Is Detroit the new Brooklyn?](#)" People see it as a place of raw and gritty determination -- a city on the verge of a come back. Yes, Detroit has a lot of things that aren't in its favor: an unemployment rate north of 10 percent and a population decline of 25 percent in just ten years. But there's so much more positive than negative, from great universities and walkable neighborhoods, to cultural and natural amenities, the city and surrounding region have a lot to offer.

While I grew up 20 miles north of the city, I was deeply involved in the city's culture. My sisters and I wrote an advice column for the [Detroit News](#) for ten years. As a regular contributor to the local [Fox News](#) station, we reported stories from locations all over the city and took viewers' questions live on the air.

I worked in PR and marketing for many of the city of Detroit's cultural institutions, including the [Detroit Zoo](#), the nature center and aquarium. I also served on the board for the [Detroit Institute of Arts Founders Junior Council](#), Fan Club Foundation for the Arts, and worked on committees to support events for the [Detroit Symphony Orchestra](#).

I attended undergraduate and graduate school at Michigan State and Wayne State Universities. Though I eventually moved away, I still have family and friends there that my husband and I visit several times a year--which gives me plenty of opportunities to experience the great things the city and its wider metro region still have to offer.

Here are some of my favorites, many are in the city core and some are in the metro but most of them will surprise you.

Walkable Neighborhoods



Walkable Neighborhoods. There are so many beautiful, tree lined, walkable streets, everywhere from [Grosse Pointe](#), [English Village](#), and [Corktown](#) to the outer metros of [Royal Oak](#), [Ferndale](#), [Ann Arbor](#) and [Birmingham](#).

Photo credit: Flickr user Detroitmi97 Aka Mark The kid

A Golfer's Dream



A Golfer's Dream. Most people don't think of Detroit as a green golfing mecca but it boasts more than 35 places to tee up within a 20 mile range of the city.

Photo credit: www.livebetterbydesign.wordpress.com

World-Renowned Universities



World-Renowned Universities. The cluster of universities and research facilities is amazing: [The University of Michigan](#) in Ann Arbor, East Lansing's [Michigan State](#), and Detroit's [Wayne State](#) and [Oakland](#) Universities.

Photo credit: Flickr user Wayne State University

The Detroit Institute of Arts



[The Detroit Institute of Arts](#). Home of the famous [Diego Rivera Detroit Industry frescoes](#) (27 panels), as well as sculptures by [Henry Moore](#) and paintings by [Matisse](#), [Van Gogh](#), [John Singer Sargent](#), and countless other masters.

Photo credit: Flickr user Timothy Hartley Smith

Music Melting Pot



Music Melting Pot. From [Jack White](#) and [Eminem](#) to [Kid Rock](#), [Motown](#), [Iggy Pop](#), and the [Detroit Electronic Music Festival](#) (not to mention the [Detroit Symphony](#)), Detroit is bursting with great artists and great venues, like [St. Andrews Hall](#).

Photo credit: Flickr user redbull.com

Urban Oasis: Lafayette Park



Urban Oasis:[Lafayette Park](#). The largest collection of [Mies van der Rohe](#) homes to be found anywhere—and an oasis of green space in the midst of the bustling city.

Photo credit: Flickr user tomline43

World-Class Detroit Zoo



World-Class [Detroit Zoo](#). 125 acres, 3300 animals, 1.1 million visitors a year. Where else can you see polar bears swim under water in a simulated arctic tundra?

Photo credit: Mark M. Gaskill, Phoenix Innovate

Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport



[Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport](#). With six runways and 145 gates, the state-of-the-art Detroit Metropolitan Airport is the 16th busiest airport in the U.S. and the 24th busiest in the world for passenger traffic; when cargo flights are included, it is among the tenth busiest in the U.S.

Photo credit: Flickr user [scott_allen13](#)

One-of-a-Kind Restaurants and Bars



One-of-a-Kind Restaurants and Bars. Detroit has yet to be overrun by chains and generics so it still has a plethora of unique mom and pop establishments. There's something for every budget and palate—from the glamorous [Whitney](#) and the martini bar [Centaur](#) to the famous [Slows BBQ](#), [Mosaic Restaurant](#), [Sugar House](#) and [Astro Coffee](#).

Photo credit: Flickr user Devo(lutio)n

Real Lofts



Real Lofts. Not faux new spaces made to look like lofts, but real industrial lofts—great spaces to live or establish businesses, like recording studios or art galleries.

Photo credit: Flickr user dropsheet

Unique Shops



Unique Shops. With high end malls like [The Somerset Collection](#) setting up pop up [Saks](#), [Neiman Marcus](#), and [Barneys](#) stores in [The City Loft](#) and one of a kind boutiques like [Linda Dressner](#) and home town retailers like [Made In Detroit](#), Metro Detroit is a shoppers' paradise.

Photo credit: thesomersetcollection.com

Miles of Blue: Waterfront and Lakesides



Miles of Blue: Waterfront and Lakesides. Most people don't think of Detroit as a waterfront town, but lake culture, boats, and water sports are a big part of Detroiters' DNA. Detroit itself is on the water and [Lake Huron](#), [Lake St Clair](#), and [Lake Michigan](#) are just a few hours away by car.

Photo credit: Flickr user dnj_Brian

Gorgeous Cranbrook



Gorgeous Cranbrook. Beautiful grounds, museum and schools (boys' and girls' prep schools, [The Cranbrook Institute of Science](#), and the [Cranbrook Academy of Art](#)), designed by the great Finnish architect [Eliel Saarinen](#).

Photo credit: Flickr user Timothy Hartley Smith

Vibrant Eastern Market



Vibrant [Eastern Market](#). A six-block public market in the heart of Detroit with as many as 40,000 visitors each Saturday. 250 independent vendors, restaurants, shops, live music and street art create the perfect urban landscape for a unique weekend outing.

Photo credit: Flickr user BaldyGull

Undisputed Attitude



Undisputed Attitude. It's an intangible, but we Detroit natives value it the most. Detroit might be the underdog, but its vibe is urban and grungy and cool to the very core.

Photo credit: Flickr user hugo zabiegala