

BUFFALO 2.0

BY DOUG WALLACE



A REVITALIZED QUEEN CITY
REVEALS A **COSMOPOLITAN CHARACTER**
STILL WRAPPED UP IN GOOD
OLD-FASHIONED HOSPITALITY

CANALSIDE



DREW BROWN

PORCHFEST

here's a live band in full swing on the veranda of **InnBuffalo Off Elmwood**. The lawn is filled with onlookers sipping their beers; the kids all wave streamers in time to the music. The annual **Porchfest** — one giant street party in the Elmwood Village — is the welcoming committee, my first impression of Buffalo. *Hello, everybody!*

Skirting all the excitement at the front, we sidle through the side door to check in. The walls of this former mansion, built in 1898, mute the party with a soothing calm that only a turn-of-the-century

ambience can evoke. All silk damask walls, stained glass, hand-painted ceilings, and gleaming oak, this is just one of several mansions lining the streets here, holdovers from a simpler time, the architecture doggedly outliving the past.

Buffalo, we soon discover, is filled with this kind of renewal; older properties not just rising to their former polished glory but surpassing it. It's like a quiet revival is taking place. Historic office towers are getting a new lease on life downtown, growing communities entice newcomers, once derelict parts of town are now the talk of the town.

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OUTER HARBOR



GRANT TAYLOR

Architectural revolution is nothing new to this city of 260,000. Iconic American architect Frank Lloyd Wright got that ball rolling more than a century ago, designing in Buffalo with his unique vision. Seven of Wright's masterworks still stand in and around the city, including the newly revitalized **Martin House Complex**, a profound example of how the legendary architect was ahead of his time.

After the Martin House, we decide to spend the whole day in the **Delaware Park** area. We hit the shops and cafés on **Hertel Avenue**, have a picnic near the Rose Garden, then wander into the **Burchfield Penney Art Center**, an enormous and bright space dedicated to art and artists from the Buffalo Niagara region, historic and contemporary. A series of patchwork-quilt portraits by Jack Edson from nearby Hamburg is paralyzingly beautiful.

Even more art can be found around the corner in the public spaces of the **Hotel Henry Urban Resort & Conference Center**, a boutique hotel, part of the redevelopment of the Romanesque-style buildings that once served as the Buffalo State Asylum. The modern experience here, set within heritage environs, underlines Buffalo's commitment to the adaptive reuse of its historic assets.

Buildings and galleries aren't the only players in Buffalo's new act. The re-development of **Canalside**, to the tune of \$300 million, has created a home for more than 1,000 events year-round, from kids' programs and concerts to charity runs. In winter, skate on the massive ice rink or go ice biking. Kayak or boat in the summer. The **Outer Harbor** has miles of bike trails, lakefront parks, fishing, and more cruising; chances are good that a visit to Buffalo will see you on, around or in the waterfront at some point.

With all this activity comes an appetite, of course. Happily, Buffalo has that covered, and with more than just chicken wings, (although you would be remiss not to try them). **Gabriel's Gate**, a stop on the **Buffalo Wing Trail**, is a highlight of our trip. I follow a Bloody Mary and plate of wings with a nice, long nap. At the other end of the scale, the intimate **Las Puertas** delivers a delicious take on modern Mexican cuisine, blending classic French techniques with traditional Mexican ingredients and flavors. Somewhere in the middle, you will find eateries like **Toutant**, a casual Southern Louisiana gem, where a traditional jambalaya is so melt-in-your-mouth perfect I want to crawl into it.

Buffalo's diversions don't end with the restaurants, either. Post-dinner, the entertainment value is high for night owls, thanks to venues like **Nietzsche's** with its broad range of live music, comedy acts, and burlesque shows. It's not just a local favorite, but also a well-regarded stop on the regional and national touring circuits. The bars and nightclubs of the **West Chippewa Street** strip swing on the weekends, most until 4 a.m., and the LGBTQ scene is robust and raucous in all the right places, the cluster of watering holes on **Allen and Franklin streets** all part of one big happy family.

I find Buffalo's friendly factor the golden thread woven through its laneways and boulevards, neatly tying everything and everyone together. People are quick with a simple nod—in store lineups, on street corners, bellying up to the bar, wherever you are. It's a warm, welcoming gesture in a cosmopolitan city that acts like a small town. When you realize that you are part of the community, even though you don't live here, you'll begin planning your next trip before this one is even over.

