

SPECIAL REPORT: LIFE-CHANGING TRIPS THAT HELP THE WORLD

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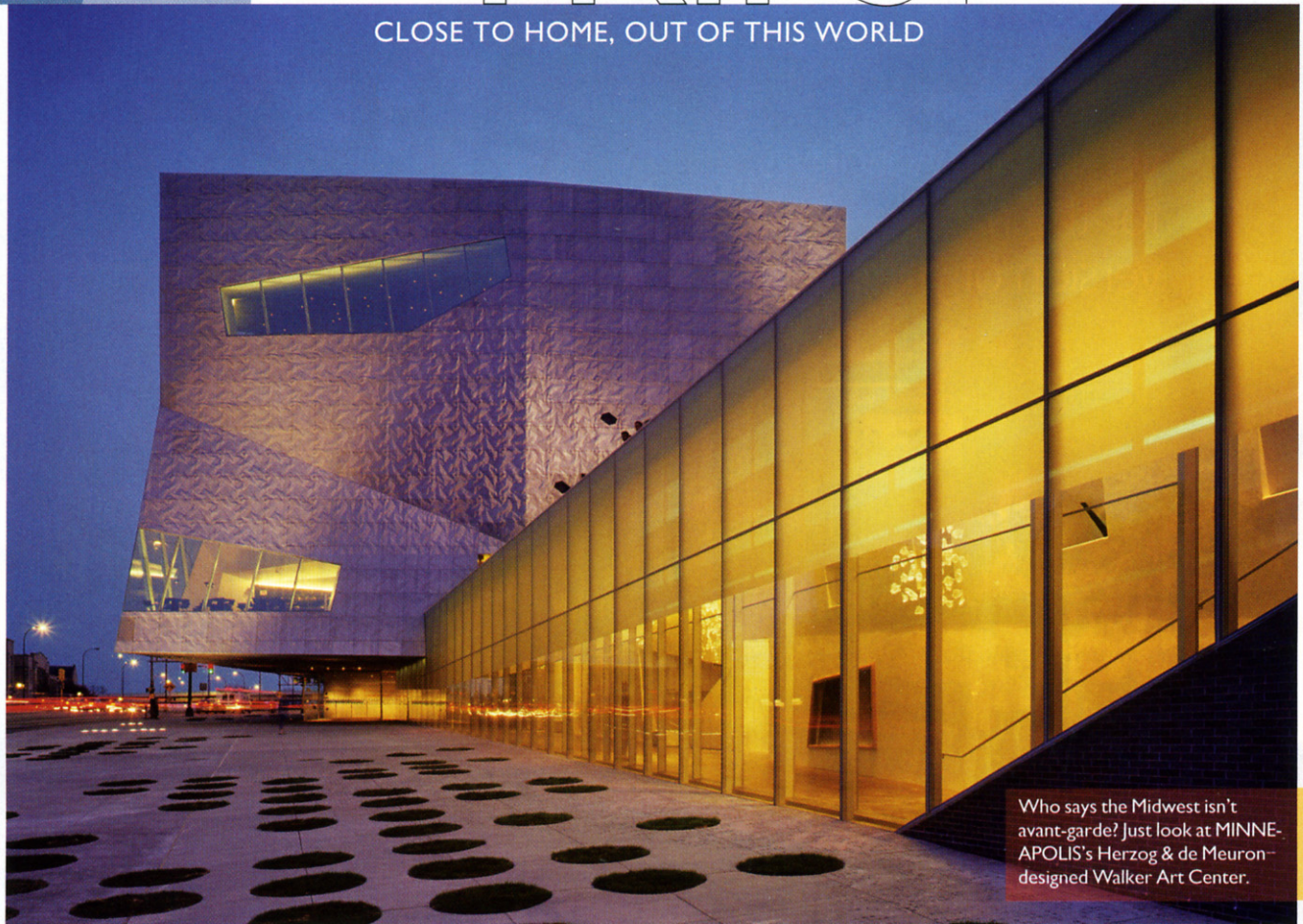
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QUICK TRIPS



CLOSE TO HOME, OUT OF THIS WORLD



The Culture Fix

Your guide to: *High art in Minneapolis... Midcentury architecture in Palm Springs... Minimalism in Beacon... Good grooves in Austin*

FROM THE  MIDWEST
Minneapolis
MINNESOTA

*** Why** A slew of high-profile architectural projects—from Jean Nouvel's stunning Guthrie Theater on the Mississippi to Cesar Pelli's luminous Central Library—have people flocking to the Midwest's cultural capital. A rich theater scene and fantastic food seal the deal.

*** What You'll Need** Brutal winters give way to glorious late-spring weather: 70 degrees and sunny during the day,

and just chilly enough after dark to warrant a light jacket. Minneapolis is a casual town—jeans are appropriate even for a night at the theater—but you're more likely to see wrap dresses than flannel at hot spots like the Chambers.

*** How to Get There** Northwest Airlines accounts for more than 80 percent of the traffic at Minneapolis-St. Paul airport, with daily nonstops to Chicago (1.5 hours), Detroit (2.5 hours), and Indianapolis (2.5 hours). Unless you're planning to head to the far-off suburbs, you can get around very well using public transportation: The Hiawatha Line light-rail makes for a quick (15 minutes) and painless ride from the airport to downtown, and buses are constantly streaming up

QUICK TRIPS



and down Hennepin Avenue, the city's main drag (metrotransit.org; airport train, \$1.50)

*** Where to Stay:** By far the city's hippest hotel, the **Chambers** is the brainchild of art collector Ralph Burnet, whose extensive collection of contemporary pieces—by artists like Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin—is on display. Jean-Georges Vongerichten's bi-level **Chambers Kitchen** attracts scenesters with its artfully plated rice cracker-crust seared tuna. From here, it's an easy walk to many downtown theaters and music venues (612-767-6900; doubles, \$305–\$450; entrées, \$18–\$34). The **Graves 601**, also downtown, is set inside the kitschy Block E shopping center but has a glossy look and efficient service (612-677-1100; doubles, \$229–\$489).

*** What to Do** Ever since it unveiled its futuristic Herzog & de Meuron expansion in 2005, the **Walker Art Center** has been the city's hottest ticket. Get there by 11 A.M. to beat the crowds (or better yet, come on a Thursday or a Friday, when it stays open until 9 P.M.). Pick up an iPod loaded with guided tours at the front desk, or use your cell phone to dial in to the museum's Art on Call system. On your way out, stop by the slim, well-edited gift shop that has such goodies as I AM ART baby suits (612-375-7600). Leave time to wander around the expansive **Minneapolis Sculpture Garden**—don't miss Frank Gehry's *Standing Glass Fish* in the Cowles Conservatory (garden.walkerart.org). Head across the street to Loring Park, where you can get a wide-angle view of the shimmering silver Walker Art Center; locals love the lamb burgers and open-air balcony at **Joe's Garage**, on the perimeter of the park (1610 Harmon Pl.; 612-904-1163; entrées, \$8–\$12). Just a few doors down, **Lunalux** stocks vintage letterpress stationery and cheeky greeting cards, many by independent Midwest designers (1618 Harmon Pl.; 612-373-0526). See at least one show while you're in town; the **Guthrie Theater** recently relocated to a stunning Jean Nouvel-designed compound on the Mississippi River, with three separate stages. Whatever tickets you get, be sure to grab a drink at the fourth-floor Target Lounge and stroll out

onto the building's 175-foot cantilevered "Endless Bridge." Backstage tours let you poke around the costume and prop workrooms (612-377-2224; tickets, \$24–\$69; 45-minute tour, \$10). Or you can head over to the **Theatre de la Jeune Lune**. Housed in an old warehouse, it's known for its dynamic, commedia dell'arte-style productions (612-333-6200; jeunelune.org; tickets, \$25–\$30).

Minneapolis's 112 Eatery feels like a neighborhood joint, but the food is exceptional: Try the sweet sea scallops

The next day, start at the other marquee museum, the **Minneapolis Institute of Arts**, which is set in a pretty residential area. Unless you're an Asian art buff (the collection is world-class), go straight to the top floor. There's too much to see in a day, but the comprehensive audio guide makes it fun to get lost, moving from pre-1800s Dutch oils to twentieth-century industrial design to painstakingly re-created period rooms. The museum's northern side is made almost entirely of dramatic picture windows facing downtown; "The Minneapolis Skyline: A Work in Progress," between galleries 300 and 307, has a numbered guide to help you identify the city's most dramatic edifices (612-870-3131; artsmia.org). For kids, or the young at heart, the attached **Children's Theatre** stages award-winning productions (612-874-0400). A ten-minute bus ride from downtown, the Uptown neighborhood has the quirky **Bryant Lake Bowl**, where you can bowl a game and then have some terrific fried walleye (810 W. Lake St.; bowling, \$3.75). Just down the street, the much-loved **Barbette** has bistro fare and occasional live music (1600 W. Lake St.; 612-827-5710; entrées, \$8–\$15). Back downtown, check out the late-night jazz at the **Dakota**, which showcases local hotshots as well as nationally famous acts (1010 Nicollet Mall; 612-332-1010; prices vary).

*** Where to Eat** Downtown's **Hell's Kitchen** has the city's best brunch, plus Ralph Steadman drawings on the walls. Wait times can be over an hour, but it's worth it—try the towering huevos rancheros, and don't leave without a jar of homemade chunky peanut butter (89 S. 10th St.; 612-332-4700; entrées, \$5–\$15). With red-brick walls and cozy booths, **112 Eatery**

feels like a neighborhood joint, but the food is exceptional: Try the sweet sea scallops with silky oyster mushrooms and satiny butterscotch budino sprinkled with sea salt (112 N. 3rd St.; 612-343-7696; entrées, \$16–\$28). Across the street, newcomer **Saffron** has high ceilings, huge windows, and a great late-night menu: mini BLTs made with lamb bacon, tomato jam, and arugula; kofta meatballs with spicy harissa; and french fries with feta fondue (123 N. 3rd St.; 612-746-5533; happy hour dishes, \$3.50). Finally, at **Spoonriver**, chef Brenda Langton's farm-fresh eatery across from the Guthrie, have the fabulous Fischer Farm pork tenderloin with miso caramel glaze (750 S. 2nd St.; 612-436-2236; entrées, \$15–\$22). Langton co-founded the **Mill City Farmers Market**, which takes place outside the restaurant's door every Saturday from 8 A.M. until 1 P.M. (May–Oct.).

*** And Don't Miss Art-A-Whirl's** studio open houses and tours in the Northeast Minneapolis gallery district (art-a-whirl.com; May 16–18), and the Minneapolis Institute of Art's **Art in Bloom**, which has more than 100 floral arrangements inspired by the museum's collection as well as garden-themed lectures (artsmia.org; May 1–4).

—Mollie Chen

FROM THE  WEST COAST

Palm Springs

CALIFORNIA

*** Why** Design buffs come here to witness the fruits of the midcentury modernist movement, that particularly American architectural zeitgeist which inspired thousands of homes in Palm Springs between 1945 and 1965. Today, the area's been given new life by artists such as Andrea Zittel and Jack Pierson, who are turning the small towns off Route 62 into a sort of groovy post-punk Marfa, Texas, and dotting the desert landscape with sculptures and other public art.

*** What You'll Need** Palm Springs is perpetually sunny and daytime temperatures rarely dip below the 60s, even in winter, but the surrounding mountains can be up to 30 degrees colder. To be on the safe side, pack both sandals and rugged walking shoes, along with a lightweight jacket.

*** How to Get There** From Los Angeles, leave early for the 120-mile drive east, stopping five minutes outside Palm Springs on Interstate 10 to admire an icon of eco-energy, the windmills of the San Geronio