

Kristi L. Palmer

Introduction to Indy

Walk, cycle, ride the Cultural Trail

All my jokes are Indianapolis. All my attitudes are Indianapolis. My adenoids are Indianapolis. If I ever severed myself from Indianapolis, I would be out of business. What people like about me is Indianapolis.—Kurt Vonnegut, 1986



The city, businesses, cultural institutions, but, most importantly, people of Indianapolis welcome ACRL 2013 with open arms. Quickly becoming a regular venue for other high-attendance conferences, such as the international Fire Department Instructors Conference (the world's largest firefighter training conference), and major sporting events such as Super Bowl XLVI, Indianapolis (commonly shortened to Indy) boasts delicious dining, first-rate shopping, and diverse entertainment venues. Many conference goers will arrive at the stunning newly built Indianapolis International Airport and travel by bus via the IndyGo Green Line, cab, or hotel shuttle to downtown. Other IndyGo bus routes are great options for destinations such as the Indianapolis Museum Art (with a newly developed outdoor art park), 100 Acres, and

the Indianapolis Children's Museum—the largest and, according to *Child* magazine, the best children's museum in the world. If you plan on sticking close to downtown check out the IndyGo Red Line. For many, the ride from the airport will be the last time gas-powered transport is required within Indy, as one of our most noted characteristics is the city's walkability.

Indy's original one-square mile design and more hotel rooms (4,700 at 12 properties) connected by skywalk to our convention center than any U.S. city, allows for easy and free access by foot to conference events. The eight miles of the Indianapolis Cultural Trail, connecting all six designated cultural districts to downtown, make personal pursuits a breeze to navigate. Indy was named by the Project for Public Spaces as one of five worldwide



Cultural Trail intersection

success stories (we are in good company with Hong Kong, Zurich, Melbourne, and

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IUPUI University Library

puses located an hour south and north respectively). Better known as IUPUI, this university is one of the top five “up and coming” American universities, according to *U.S. News and World Report*. IUPUI is also the fourth largest employer in Indianapolis, including yours truly. Indy is home to nine other higher education institutions, including the 2010 underdog NCAA basketball final runner-up, Butler University. I cycle towards the Canal.

Originating in 1837, the Canal was constructed as a means of interstate transportation for goods. It now serves

Bogota). What better way to introduce ACRL conference goes to Indy’s diverse than through a photographic trek (I rode my bike and you can too, bike rentals are available at Indy Bike Hub) around Indy’s Cultural Trail (with a few meanderings).

Easily recognized, the Cultural Trail is brick bordered by native plant life with street intersections marked in a web of green. My cycle journey begins at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (an urban mesh of two universities with the main cam-



NCAA Headquarters



Slow food urban garden

as scenic route for walkers, runners, and cyclists and shares its banks with the NCAA national headquarters; the Indiana State Museum; the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art; the Indiana Historical Society; the green space, public art, and the Wishard Slow Food Garden of White River State Park; two hotels; and the casual and fine dining options at Bugg’s Temple.

I ride past Victory Field, home of the minor league Indianapolis Indians baseball team. The park itself has been cited as the “Best Minor League Ballpark in America” by prominent publications such as *Baseball America* and *Sports Illustrated* and is another inexpensive, highly entertaining option for an evening out, even if you aren’t a sports

fan. Across the street from Victory Field, gracing the Indy skyline with its blue curvilinear glass, is our newest luxury hotel, JW Marriott.

I head south to take a peak at newest edition to the Indiana Convention Center, which will house many of the official ACRL 2013 sessions. Between sessions you might consider taking a peek at Convention Center's neighbor, Lucas Oil Stadium, home of the NFL Indianapolis Colts and Super Bowl XLVI.

Moving east on Washington St. towards the heart of downtown you begin to see the comforting usual suspects. Circle Centre Mall (owned by Simon Malls, which is also headquartered in Indianapolis) houses major shops such as Coach, H & M, Carson Pirie Scott, and a variety of fast, casual, and fine dining options, including Auntie Anne's Pretzels, California Pizza Kitchen, Weber Grill, and Ruth's Chris Steakhouse.

Diverging a bit from the Cultural Trail, I move one block east on Washing-

ton St. and turn north onto Meridian St. Before me is Monument Circle (locals call it The Circle), a brick circular street that is the city's center. Originally, the center circle's land was

intended to house the governor's mansion, but word has it that a squeamish first lady was hesitant to hang her unmentionables for all to view. The never occupied man-

sion was razed in 1857, and the Soldiers and Sailors Monument that now stands in its place was erected in 1901. A lovely place to sit on a warm afternoon, I highly recommend climbing the stairs (or riding the \$1 elevator) to the monument's pinnacle. It's a lovely view opportunity that is often neglected

by Indy's own residents. Address holders of Monument Circle include the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra (boasting Maestro Krzysztof Urbanski who, at age 28, is the youngest music director among major orchestras in the United States); the Chocolate Cafe; and the Christ Church Cathedral, the

oldest structure on Monument Circle, built in 1857.

Heading around the brick Circle and north on Meridian St., you will connect again with the Cultural Trail at Walnut St. Looking west the trail stretches behind renovated brick

warehouses to connect with the northern edge of the Canal walk, but I continue north on the trail towards the Indianapolis Marion County Public Library. The Main Library



Circle Centre Mall



Indianapolis Marion County Public Library

recently completed a \$40 million addition and renovation. I personally love the juxtaposition of the original 1917 Greek Doric architecture with the steel and glass of the 2007 addition. Opinions vary and will be shared rampantly by downtown residents, but no one doubts the tremendous collection and services offered by the library.



Saffron Café

in Indy, Mass Ave. Greeting me at the corner of East St. and Walnut St. is one of downtown's several bed and breakfast options, the Nestle Inn. One of four streets that historically jutted at a 45-degree angle from the city's center, Mass Ave. is an arts district with boutique shopping, pubs, art

galleries, salons, live music, and general milling about of people. Within a span of four store fronts you can pick up a bottle of Terra Andina Pinot Noir, sample a cardamom truffle, fetch an organic dog biscuit, and get inked with an "I Heart My Library" tattoo. If that doesn't scream great city, I'm not sure what does.

On Mass Ave. pieces of the trail are laid with historic brick and entice walkers into Diagon Alley-like ways only to open to patios brimming with laughter and libations.

Speaking of libations, downtown Indy houses four local beer breweries, two of which offer free tastings (Sun King Brewery



Prairie Module sculptures

and also a two-block jaunt off the Cultural Trail, is the Kurt Vonnegut Memorial Library. Stop by to view Indianapolis born Vonnegut's typewriter.

Heading south on Pennsylvania St., I pick up the familiar brick of the Cultural Trail, passing by Saffron Café, one of Indy's many scrumptious ethnic dining options and then under Prairie Modules 1 & 2, sculptures that include prairie grass and panels encompassing the first public art installation in Indy to return solar power to the electrical grid. I am quickly approaching my favorite district



Athenæum

and FLAT 12 Bierworks). I stop briefly to snap a photo of the Athenæum, formerly Das Deutsche Haus (renamed during WWI to avoid anti-German sentiments). This 1849 structure originally housed German immigrant social, musical, political, and athletic clubs. It continues its German roots with the Rathskellar, a popular dining and outdoor music venue. Also located in the building are the American Cabaret Theatre and a branch of the YMCA.

The Cultural Trail continues south down Alabama St., I come upon urban dwellers' grocery store, Marsh Supermarket, and cross Market St., one of the spokes that leads back to the Circle and will also get you close to Conseco Fieldhouse, home of the NBA Indianapolis Pacers. The Cultural Trail curves back around to Washington St. and meets with a southeastern tentacle of the

trail leading to the Fountain Square district. Well worth the extra travel time, Fountain Square includes another highly recommend eat, Siam Square, duck pin bowling (mini pins and balls), scores of antique and thrift stores, and, my sources tell me, a soon-to-be open hair salon specializing in retro hairdos.

As I swing back around to Washington St. (also a section of U.S. 40 or the National Road), I see all of the great clubs, restaurants, historic buildings, and shops that there simply isn't room to detail here. I hope I have whet your appetite enough to come back and read the more detailed articles to follow on the history, food, and fun of Indianapolis.

I am thrilled to share my hometown with library colleagues and hope you too will come to feel connected to Indy as both Mr. Vonnegut and I have. *zz*



 

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