

5 Ways to Experience Grand Rapids

A well-stocked wine bar? A trip to the art museum? We'll show you how to immerse yourself in West Michigan's culture hub.



1. ArtPrize

Like a round-the-clock, three-week Nuit Blanche, this five-year-old art competition draws over 400,000 spectators every September. The city centre – from the middle of Grand River to the local laundromat – is decorated with hundreds of works, some of which remain long after the festival ends. Art is everywhere – even on our hotel terrace, where we were joined one night by a giant illuminated sculpture of a dancer. And it's no wonder: Every participating artist, from anywhere in the world, is eligible to win part of the \$560,000 in prizes, which includes the two top prizes (one bestowed by a jury, the other awarded by the public) of \$200,000 each.

2. Amway Grand Plaza Hotel

Opened in 1913, half of this hotel is a grande dame (floor-to-ceiling crepe draperies, gold-leaf ceiling and grandiose chandeliers), while the other half, a contemporary add-on, has large rooms flooded with natural light. The glassed walkways that join the two halves offer spectacular sightlines from up high, including the many bridges crossing Grand River, which give the city a Parisian feel.

187 Monroe Ave. NW, 616-774-2000

3. Founders Brewing Co.

After a day of art hopping, you'll relish that first pint of Dirty Bastard Scotch ale, a silky, robust signature brew with the kick of 8.5-percent alcohol at the newly expanded Founders headquarters. The rising beer brand is now distributed in 32 states (plus the District of Columbia), but this spot feels like home – if your home includes a giant terrace with tall tables, stone benches and fire pits galore.

235 Grandville Ave. SW, 616-776-1195

4. Grand Rapids Art Museum

This white-walled concrete building, with its atrium and hushed atmosphere, is a defining structure in the city core. It's the world's first LEED Gold-certified art museum; plus, it's next to a park designed by Chinese-American artist Maya Lin. The museum's collection features contemporary American art but is also home to design pieces by Charles Eames, Tapio Wirkkala and Eugene Masselink, in keeping with the city's furniture history.

101 Monroe Center St. NW, 616-831-1000

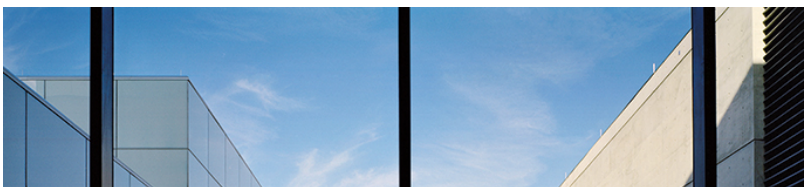




Photo: Reflecting Pool, Grand Rapids Art Museum/Steve Hall (Hedrich Blessing)

5. Reserve Wine & Food

The only thing likely to make you thirstier than the 102 wine bottles behind the bar (the second-largest by-the-glass selection in the country) is the outside painting that hangs over them: Open Water No. 24 by Ran Ortner. Sit at one of the illuminated tables with a glass of Bluestone chardonnay, the perfect mate to a plate of goat-cheese gnocchi with loose fennel sausage and tangy tomato broth.

201 Monroe Ave. NW, 616-855-9463

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Three Spots to Shop

Go to the Downtown Market Grand Rapids for the freshest local produce, lineup-worthy tacos, kettle corn and the best cherry pie of your life.

435 Ionia Ave. SW, 616-805-5308, downtownmarketgr.com

From house-designed jewellery to witty stationery, there's something for everyone at Blacklamb.

1310 Pendleton St., 513-421-4339, pendletonartcenter.com

At retail incubator MoDiv, stop by Scoops Ice Cream Shoppe for a serving of Salty Jack before heading to the Wolverine Company Store (a West Michigan brand).

40 Monroe Center st. nw, shopmodiv.com

let's stay in touch!

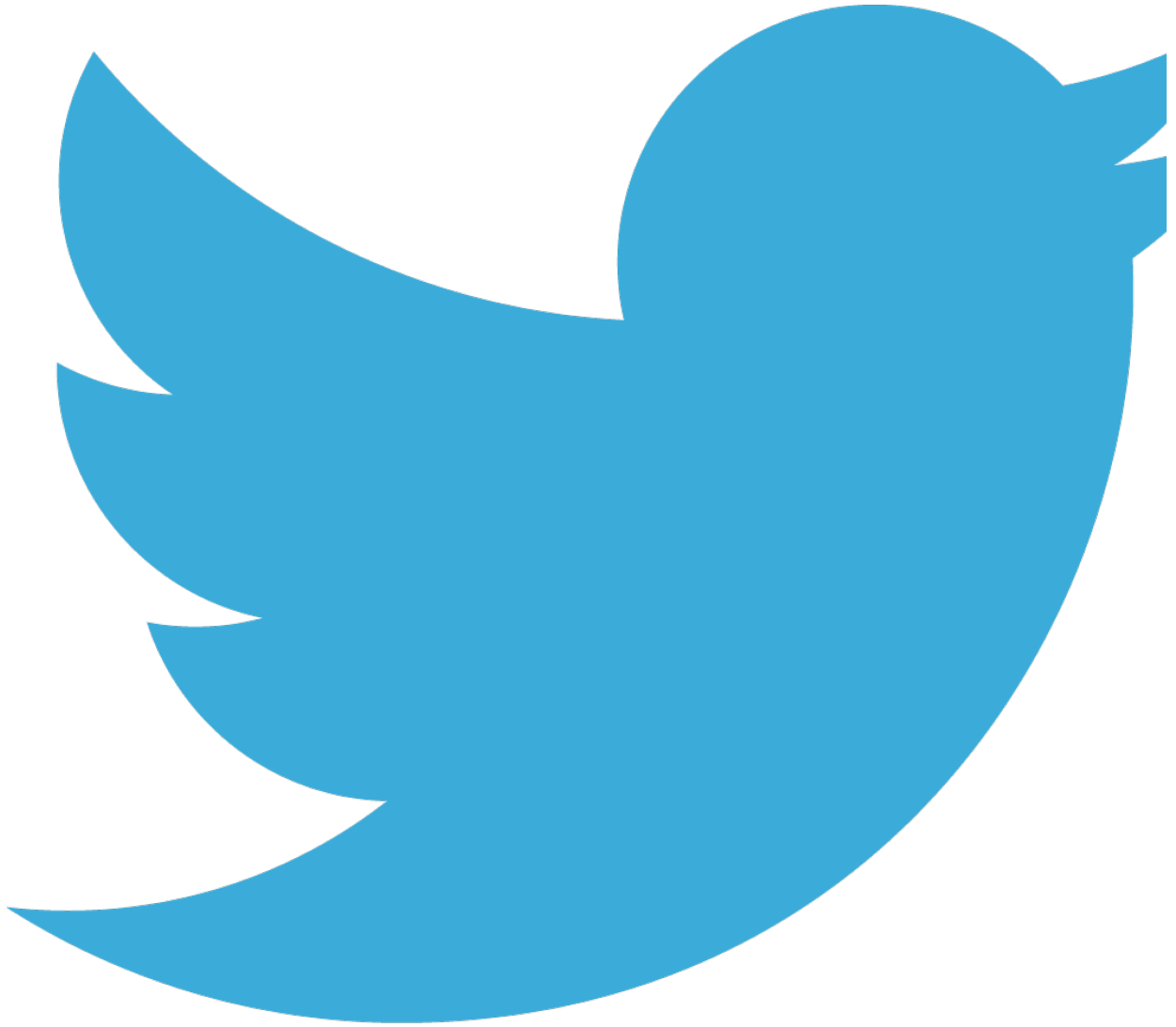
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