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THE GREAT AMERICAN HEARTLAND

Greetings from CINCINNATI

48 hours, solo, at your own pace

POCKET EDITION · 2027

48-HOUR GUIDE · SAFETY GUIDE · PLANNING CALENDAR

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Welcome to Cincinnati

Cincinnati is the most underrated city on the Ohio River, and one of the easiest in the Midwest to enjoy alone. A compact downtown, a restored 19th-century neighborhood full of brick Italianate buildings, and a riverfront with a bridge older than Brooklyn's all sit within a short walk or a one-dollar streetcar ride.

Traveling solo here works because Cincinnati's best experiences are built for one: a stool at a chili parlor counter, a stroll through a century-and-a-half-old market, a seat at the back of a brewery taproom. Nobody hurries you, and nobody asks who you are with.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read through once before you go. Day One covers Over-the-Rhine, the market, and the riverfront bridge. Day Two crosses the river into Kentucky and climbs to Mount Adams for the best views in town. Section 03 is the new-for-2027 feature on Cincinnati chili, the city's strangest and best-loved dish. A car helps for the airport and the outer neighborhoods, but this itinerary works on foot and by streetcar.

ESSENTIAL QUICK FACTS

CURRENCY
US dollar (cards accepted nearly everywhere)

TRANSIT
Cincinnati Bell Connector streetcar · about $1

TIME ZONE
Eastern (UTC–5; UTC–4 in summer)

EMERGENCY
911

TIPPING
18–20% in restaurants

SALES TAX
About 7.8% — added at the register

01 DAY ONE

Over-the-Rhine · Findlay Market · Downtown · The Banks

The first day stays in the historic center, where the city's German brewing heritage, its oldest public market, and its riverfront all sit within a mile of each other.

MORNING · 8:30 AM – 1:00 PM

8:30 AM

Findlay Market

Ohio's oldest continuously operated public market, open since 1855. Wander the butchers, bakers, and produce stalls and pick up coffee and a pastry for the walk south.

The market is closed on Mondays; Saturdays are the liveliest.

10:00 AM

Over-the-Rhine on Foot

Walk south through the largest intact urban historic district of Italianate architecture in the country. Pass Washington Park, Music Hall (1878), and the murals along Vine Street.

Look up at the cornices and ironwork; the best details are above eye level.

12:30 PM

Lunch — Camp Washington Chili

A short rideshare north of downtown, this counter-service chili parlor has served the city since 1940 and won a James Beard America's Classics award in 2000.

Order a three-way and a cheese coney, and sit at the counter.

AFTERNOON · 2:00 PM – 6:00 PM

2:00 PM

Cincinnati Art Museum & Eden Park

General admission is free. Spend an hour with the collection, then walk the park's overlook above the Ohio River and its quiet Mirror Lake.

Special exhibitions are ticketed; the permanent collection alone fills a happy afternoon.

4:30 PM

Cincinnati Union Terminal

The Art Deco train station is a National Historic Landmark. Stand in the huge domed rotunda under Winold Reiss's mosaic murals; it is home to the Cincinnati Museum Center.

Look for the mural panels that trace the city's industries.

EVENING · 6:30 PM – 10:00 PM

6:30 PM

Dinner — The Eagle OTR

A neighborhood restaurant famous for fried chicken, with bar seats and a lively, casual room. Arrive early on weekends.

Ask the bartender what is pouring from Cincinnati's local breweries.

8:30 PM

Roebling Suspension Bridge at Dusk

Walk across the 1866 bridge that John A. Roebling built as the prototype for his Brooklyn Bridge. The skyline lights up on both banks.

Start on the Cincinnati side and cross to Covington and back.

02 DAY TWO

The Riverfront · Covington · Mount Adams

The second day moves to the riverbank, crosses into Kentucky, and ends on the city's best overlooks.

MORNING · 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

9:00 AM

Smale Riverfront Park

A free riverfront park with fountains, giant swings, and wide lawns along the Ohio River. It is the best place to see how close Kentucky really is.

Walk the park's lower terrace for a view of the Roebling Bridge.

10:30 AM

National Underground Railroad Freedom Center

A museum on the riverbank, a short walk from the water that people escaping slavery crossed to reach freedom. It is a powerful two hours, so go before lunch while you are fresh.

Tickets are timed on busy days; buy ahead online.

12:30 PM

Lunch — Skyline Chili

Skyline opened in 1949, founded by a former Empress Chili employee. Try a three-way, with oyster crackers on the side.

Eat it with a fork, cutting the spaghetti with the side of the tines.

AFTERNOON · 2:00 PM – 6:00 PM

2:00 PM

Covington's MainStrasse Village

Cross the Roebling Bridge on foot to Kentucky's German-heritage district, with brick storefronts, small shops, and the Goose Girl Fountain.

The walk from downtown takes about 15 minutes.

4:30 PM

Mount Adams

Climb the hill behind Eden Park for the best views of the downtown skyline. The Holy Cross-Immaculata Church steps are the classic photograph.

Go an hour before sunset for the light.

EVENING · 7:00 PM – LATE

7:00 PM

Dinner — Eli's BBQ

A family-run riverside barbecue joint in Columbia-Tusculum with counter ordering and picnic tables.

Order at the window and eat outside when the weather allows.

9:00 PM

Rhinegeist or a Reds Game

Take a rooftop seat at Rhinegeist, a taproom in the old Moerlein bottling plant, or catch a Reds home game at Great American Ball Park from April through September.

Reds tickets are easy to find on game day, and the ballpark welcomes single-seat buyers.

03 CINCINNATI CHILI

Cincinnati Chili, Defined

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know Cincinnati chili is not served in a bowl, and is not really chili?

It is a thin, Mediterranean-spiced meat sauce poured over spaghetti and buried in shredded cheddar. Two Greek brothers, Tom and John Kiradjieff, began selling it in 1922 from a stand next to the Empress burlesque theater, and the city has been arguing about it ever since.

THE WAYS

Every order is counted in ways. A two-way is spaghetti and chili; a three-way adds shredded cheddar; a four-way adds onions or beans; a five-way adds both. A coney is a hot dog under the same sauce, with mustard, onions, and a heap of cheese.

HOW TO EAT IT

Oyster crackers come on the side, and locals cut the spaghetti with the side of the fork instead of twirling it. Skyline, founded in 1949, and Gold Star, from 1965, are the big chains; Camp Washington Chili is the independent favorite. Pick two parlors and compare.

WHEN TO GO

Chili parlors serve every day of the year, but Cincinnati is at its best from April through October. Time a chili stop before or after a Reds home game at Great American Ball Park for the full local ritual.

04 WHERE TO EAT

Counters, markets, and chili parlors

Cincinnati's best meals are counter meals. Most places seat a single diner right away, and prices are lower than in either coast.

BREAKFAST & LUNCH

Findlay Market
OVER-THE-RHINE · $5–15
Ohio's oldest public market. Stalls sell everything from waffles to sausages, and there are tables to eat at.

Camp Washington Chili
CAMP WASHINGTON · $8–14
A counter-service chili parlor since 1940, and a James Beard America's Classics winner.

Skyline Chili
CITYWIDE · $7–13
The best-known chain, since 1949. Three-ways and coneys are the staples.

Taste of Belgium
OVER-THE-RHINE · $9–16
Belgian waffles and crepes near Findlay Market. A sweet start to the morning.

DINNER & LATE NIGHT

The Eagle OTR
OVER-THE-RHINE · $15–28
Fried chicken and Southern comfort food in a lively, casual room. Sit at the bar.

Eli's BBQ
COLUMBIA-TUSCULUM · $12–22
Riverside barbecue with counter ordering and picnic tables.

Rhinegeist Brewery
OVER-THE-RHINE · $7–15
A taproom with rooftop seating in an old brewery building.

Graeter's Ice Cream
CITYWIDE · $5–9
Scoops since 1870, made in small French-pot batches. Order the black raspberry chip.

05 GETTING AROUND

Navigating Cincinnati

Downtown, Over-the-Rhine, and the riverfront are walkable. A car helps beyond them, but the streetcar and a few rideshares cover everything in this guide.

Streetcar	about $1	The Cincinnati Bell Connector loops through The Banks, downtown, Over-the-Rhine, and Findlay Market. Buy at the stop or in the app.
Airport (CVG)	Rideshare	The airport is across the river in Kentucky, about 20 minutes from downtown without traffic. There is no rail link.
Metro buses	low fare	Service covers the city and nearby suburbs. Check the app for times; late-night service is limited.
Red Bike	by the ride	Docked bike share, with stations downtown, in Over-the-Rhine, and along the riverfront.
Walking	Free	The Roebling Bridge links downtown to Covington, Kentucky, in about 15 minutes on foot.

The city has steep hills; wear good shoes and plan on rideshare for Mount Adams and Eden Park after dark.

06 BACKUP PLANS

Cincinnati on a rainy afternoon

The river valley gets plenty of rain. These stay open and make for a good afternoon indoors.

EDEN PARK · FREE

Cincinnati Art Museum

A broad collection with free general admission.

UNION TERMINAL

Cincinnati Museum Center

A history museum, a natural history museum, and a children's museum in a stunning Art Deco station.

RIVERFRONT

Freedom Center

A museum on slavery and freedom, a few steps from the Ohio River.

OVER-THE-RHINE

Music Hall

Tour the 1878 hall that is home to the symphony and opera.

OVER-THE-RHINE

American Sign Museum

A quirky museum of neon and signs, a short drive from downtown.

DOWNTOWN

Taft Museum of Art

A historic house filled with masterworks, small enough to see in an hour.

07 NEIGHBORHOODS

Know your neighborhoods

HISTORIC & HIP

Over-the-Rhine

The nation's largest intact urban historic district, with restaurants, breweries, and Findlay Market.

DOWNTOWN & RIVERFRONT

Downtown & The Banks

Fountain Square, the ballpark, and the Roebling Bridge along the water.

HILLTOP VIEWS

Mount Adams

Steep streets, the best skyline views, and a quiet neighborhood feel.

ACROSS THE RIVER

Covington & Newport

Kentucky's German-heritage MainStrasse and the riverside Levee, a short walk across the bridge.

EAST SIDE

Hyde Park & Oakley

Upscale squares, bookstores, and relaxed restaurants east of downtown.

CREATIVE NORTH

Northside

A neighborhood of independent shops, bars, and music venues.

08 GOOD TO KNOW

What nobody tells you

- Chili is ordered in ways: a three-way is spaghetti, chili, and cheese. Pronounce it with a straight face.
- Dress for hills. Over-the-Rhine is flat, but Mount Adams, Eden Park, and Walnut Hills are steep.
- The Reds play at Great American Ball Park from April through September, and downtown restaurants get busy before and after.
- Findlay Market is closed on Mondays and busiest on Saturday mornings.
- Cincinnati straddles the Ohio River; Covington and Newport are in Kentucky. A pedestrian bridge links them to downtown.
- Tip 18–20% in restaurants. The sales tax is added at the register.

WHEN TO GO

Apr–Jun	Best overall	Warm, green, and full of festivals, with the Reds in season.
Jul–Aug	Peak season	Hot and humid. Plan outdoor activities for mornings and evenings.
Sep–Oct	Second best	Comfortable weather and Oktoberfest Zinzinnati.
Nov–Mar	Off-season	Cold and gray, but quieter, with holiday lights at the zoo.

09 SOLO TRAVELER SAFETY

Is Cincinnati safe?

Safe in the places visitors go, with standard city awareness. Downtown, Over-the-Rhine, Mount Adams, and the riverfront are busy and well-lit. Stay on main streets after dark, and use rideshare between neighborhoods late in the evening.

NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY AT A GLANCE

Mount Adams	●●●●●
Hyde Park / Oakley	●●●●●
Downtown & The Banks	●●●●○
Over-the-Rhine	●●●●○
Covington / Newport	●●●●○
Northside	●●●●○
Outside the tourist core	●●○○○

COMMON SCAMS

Panhandling is common downtown and in Over-the-Rhine; a polite no is enough. Keep valuables out of sight in parked cars, since smash-and-grab theft is the most common crime against visitors.

HEALTH & MEDICAL

The University of Cincinnati Medical Center and several other hospitals serve the downtown area. Pharmacies such as Walgreens and Kroger are widely available. Carry travel insurance.

SOLO TRAVELERS

Share your plan with someone back home, keep your phone charged, and use rideshare for steep or dark stretches. The streetcar and downtown are well-lit and busy until the evening.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Police, fire, medical	911
Poison Control	1-800-222-1222
Nearest ER (Clifton)	UC Medical Center · 234 Goodman St.

10 PLANNING CALENDAR

Cincinnati, month by month

Exact dates shift each year, so confirm before booking.

MAR OPENING DAY

- Bockfest celebrates the start of bock beer season in Over-the-Rhine, and the Findlay Market Opening Day Parade welcomes the baseball season.

MAY SPRING

- The Flying Pig Marathon fills the streets, and Taste of Cincinnati takes over the riverfront on Memorial Day weekend.

JUN–AUG SUMMER

- Reds home games, outdoor concerts, and riverfront festivals. Expect heat and humidity.

SEP OKTOBERFEST

- Oktoberfest Zinzinnati, one of the largest in the country, fills downtown in September.

OCT FALL

- The Reds' season winds down, and the hills along the Ohio River turn color.

NOV–DEC HOLIDAYS

- Lights fill the Cincinnati Zoo, and downtown and Over-the-Rhine are decorated for the season.

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Every Stop, Mapped

Scan the code to open the free interactive Cincinnati map — every stop in this guide, filterable by day, food, and transport.

goingsolo.life/maps/cincinnati

TRAVEL ALONE. LIVE FULLY.
GoingSolo.Life · U.S. Series · The Great American Heartland
48-Hour Guide · Safety Guide · Planning Calendar
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