

Home » Issue 76 » Top 25 Big Cities for Art

Top 25 Big Cities for Art

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The top 25 big cities for art for 2011 are:

1. New York City

Arts enthusiasts travel to New York City with one goal in mind. They want to be part of the action. And what action there is! AmericanStyle reader, January Holmes of Atlanta, Ga., explains, "New York is very art friendly and well versed in the diversity of contemporary art in terms of styles, mediums and overall background of the artists. It presents a wonderful selection of thought-provoking and visually stimulating works."



Bustling Columbus Circle is the artistic heart of New York City. Credit: © NYC & Company

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Museum of Arts & Design and The Museum of Modern Art are just three of the many major arts institutions you'll want to see. But for

a change of pace, check out some of the city's more intimate venues, including the American Folk Art Museum and the newly renovated Morgan Library.

WHAT'S NEW?

Up for a little elevated walking? Head for the pedestrian-friendly High Line in the Meatpacking District. Originally an elevated railway, it was converted two years ago into a park blooming with native flowers and public art, and offers sweeping views of the Hudson River. Most of the High Line is located in Chelsea, which is also home to one of the country's largest concentrations of art galleries.

Eight-hundred yards off of Manhattan in New York Harbor is Governors Island—a 87-acre green space where public art reigns. Currently on display until Sept. 25 is "Mark di Suvero at Governors Island," the largest outdoor presentation of the iconic American sculptor's work to be shown in New York City in 30 years. Plan your trip when the island is open every Friday, Saturday and Sunday from May 27 through Sept. 25.

UP AND COMING

Sculpture by renowned British artist Anthony Caro takes over the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden this summer at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Running through Oct. 30, it features works spanning the first 50 years of the artist's career.

The Pulitzer Fountain at the Grand Army Plaza is getting a makeover, courtesy of Chinese artist Ai Weiwei. "Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads," 12 monumental bronzes he fashioned after each animal of the Chinese zodiac, will remain on view there through July 15.

2. Chicago



Opened on its present site at Michigan Avenue and Adams Street in 1893, The Art Institute of Chicago and its school have been a Windy City landmark for more than 140 years. Credit: © City of Chicago/GRC

From its architecture to its public art, from its arts institutions to its arts enclaves, Chicago just keeps getting better at grabbing visitors' undivided attention. For a birds-eye view of the city in all its glory, make The Ledge, a series of all-glass bays extending out from the 103rd floor of the Skydeck Chicago, your first stop. "In Chicago, art is not just in its fabulous museums, it is on every street corner and in the flower beds all over downtown every summer. You can't walk down the sidewalk without encountering ART," says reader Pam Cichon of St. Petersburg, Fla.

Major museums with permanent collections and special exhibitions include The Art Institute of Chicago and the Museum of Contemporary Art. Millennium Park maintains its well-deserved reputation as the city's unofficial town square, offering hundreds of free things to see and do in a magnificently landscaped park surrounded by city skyline.

WHAT'S NEW?

"Interconnected: The Sculptures of Yvonne Domenge," four large-scale sculptures from the acclaimed Mexican artist, will be on view at the Boeing Galleries in Millennium Park through October 2012.

For a first-hand look at new work by contemporary artists, head for River North. Once a gritty warehouse district, this neighborhood just north of downtown has transformed itself into a cultural hub with nearly 70 world-class art galleries, as well as antiques shops and boutiques.

UP AND COMING

Chicago plays host to numerous arts festivals every summer, but the Bucktown Arts Fest is one of its longest-running. This year's 26th edition is slated for Aug. 27-28, with close to 200 participating artists.

The Museum of Contemporary Art will examine the work of Chicago-based artist Joseph Cornell in "Pandora's Box: Joseph Cornell Unlocks the Collection," June 18 through Oct. 16. The exhibit features more than 60 years of his work paired with pieces from MCA's permanent collection.

3. Washington, D.C.

Our readers' choice for third place in the Big Cities category is the land of the free... museums! AmericanStyle reader Nicole Hayes of Seminole, Fla., notes, "I adore Washington, D.C.'s art scene because it is so expansive and free! It's a beautiful city that is a perfect destination to house such lovely art."



The Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian Art Museum features the best of American craft. Credit: Courtesy of the Smithsonian

The Smithsonian Institution alone offers open admission to all of its 19 museums and galleries, including the American Art Museum, the Portrait Gallery, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Gardens, and the Renwick Gallery, which focuses on decorative art and American craft. Other must-sees in the District's museums pantheon include the National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden, the National Museum of Women in the Arts and the Textile Museum.

WHAT'S NEW?

The newest addition on the National Mall, the Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial, will be dedicated on Aug. 28, preceded by a week of special events honoring Dr. King's leadership role in promoting freedom, opportunity and justice through non-violent means.

The Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery showcases the best of the best craft artists with "History in the Making: Renwick Craft Invitational 2011," through July 31. The fifth in the museum's biennial series, the exhibit features the work of silversmith Ubaldo Vitali, ceramic artist Cliff Lee, glass artist Judith Schaechter, and furniture maker Matthias Pliessnig.

UP AND COMING

The Smithsonian Folklife Festival sets up tents on the Mall from June 30 to July 4 and July 7 to 11. This year's edition features programs on Colombia and the Peace Corps. It's the largest annual cultural event in the U.S. capital, and it's all free. Go on July 4, and you get a bonus: the spectacular holiday fireworks display over the Washington Monument.

Every Friday from May to September The National Gallery of Art's Sculpture Garden hosts an open-air jazz fest. Prepare for a picnic or stop at nearby food truck or the garden's Pavilion Cafe. Just be sure to get there early to guarantee a spot. Oh, yes, and it's free!

4. San Francisco, Calif.
5. Boston, Mass.
6. Albuquerque, N.M.
7. Atlanta, Ga.
8. Philadelphia, Pa.
9. Baltimore, Md.
10. Seattle, Wash.
11. Portland, Ore.
12. Los Angeles, Calif.
13. Austin, Texas
14. Denver, Colo.
15. Phoenix, Ariz.
16. Charlotte, N.C.
17. San Diego, Calif.
18. Tucson, Ariz.
19. Nashville, Tenn.
20. Milwaukee, Wis.
21. San Antonio, Texas
22. Las Vegas, Nev.
23. Columbus, Ohio
24. Dallas, Texas
25. Houston, Texas