



Columbus at dusk



Have a blast at Wholly Craft!



The author gets her kicks at Used Kids

# columbus, ohio

HAVE A BALL IN THE HEART OF IT ALL

[BY LIBBY ZAY]

**CROSS THE BORDER** into Ohio and the road sign overhead welcomes you to “The Heart of it All”—if landmasses had bodily organs, this Midwest state’s shape and geographic location would make it America’s anatomical ticker. But locals know the real heart lies in Ohio’s culture and the diversity of the people who live here. Columbus, the capital, is smack in the middle of the state, nestled where the Scioto and Olentangy Rivers meet, and is home to the country’s largest university, Ohio State. Summers sizzle and winters are snowy, so plan accordingly. If you think Ohio is only full of cornfields and conservatives, one visit to this “big little city” will make you change your mind.

Start with the **Short North** neighborhood (High St. between 5th Ave. and Nationwide Blvd.), an artsy section of town along Columbus’ main drag, which is framed and illuminated by historic arches. Gallery Hop, a free gala of fine art and food, happens here on the first Saturday of every month starting at 4 p.m., when all of the galleries on High St. open their doors and unveil new exhibits. It’s an event that fills the sidewalk, bars, cafés, and specialty shops along the strip with shoppers, antique collectors, and art critics alike. While you’re there, don’t miss **Flower Child** (989 N. High St.), a boutique whose unoriginal name does little justice to the maze of one-of-a-kind

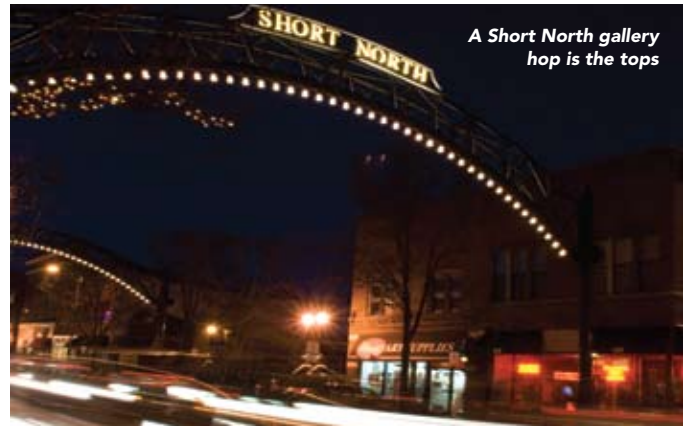
vintage treasures inside, and **Posh Pets** (743 N. High St.), the place to go if you want to grab a midwestern souvenir for your pup.

After you’ve wined and cheested, it’s high time for another drink, so mosey on over to the **Surly Girl Saloon** (1126 N. High St.), a women-owned bar that’s dressed up like a Wild West bordello. Kick up your boots and order a Surly Temple—vodka and red soda that’s always \$3 a pop—or choose from a wide array of lady-brewed beers featured on the menu. If Old West isn’t your style, head back down the street to Short North, where **Betty’s Fine Food and Spirits** (680 N. High St.), a retro-style cocktail lounge, pays homage to pin-up beauty.

**Wholly Craft!** (3171 N. High St.) is by far the best place to pick up a handmade keepsake, pore over a ‘zine, or enroll in a knitting workshop. The bright, magenta storefront is impossible to miss, and DIYers will be glad they stopped in. Nearby is **Studio 35 Cinema & Draft House** (3055 Indianola Ave.), a single-screen movie theater, where you can catch a classic flick or watch a live floor show along with a screening of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, while enjoying fine brew and fresh pizza. Support the **Ohio Roller Girls** by catching a bout at the Ohio Expo Center (717 E. 17th Ave.), or strike up some fun of your own at **Capri Lanes**



Get your appetite ready for Betty's



A Short North gallery hop is the tops



Fulfill your ice cream dreams at Jeni's



Feast your eyes on North Market's wares

bowling alley (5860 Roche Dr.).

Columbus also proudly boasts a large lesbian and gay population, so pick up a copy of **Outlook Weekly**, the city's LGBT newspaper, to find bars with lively beats and cheap drinks. Ladies on the prowl should head to **An Open Book** (1209 N. High St.), a bookstore specializing in LGBT lit, to find a gal pal to crush on between the aisles. And all girls should make a stop at **The Garden** (1174 N. High St.), a steamy adult shop that sells lingerie for sexy women of every shape and size.

While Columbus is home base for greasy fast-food favorites Wendy's and White Castle, it's certainly not lacking in the area of fine dining, and people who prefer to keep their diets meat-free have plenty of options, too. The critically acclaimed **Dragonfly Neo-V Cuisine** (247 King Ave.) is a swanky vegan establishment with an adjoining art space whose kitchen garden, where the restaurant grows produce and herbs, ensures the absolute freshest ingredients. For grub that is just as tasty but easier on the budget, try a gourmet veggie burger at **Northstar Café** (951 N. High St.). Just down the street, **Yau's Chinese Bistro** (1493 N. High St.) is another local favorite that offers plenty of tofu dishes

and mouthwatering boba tea.

Vendors at the city's warehouse-style **North Market** (59 Spruce St.) sell a variety of gourmet specialties and ethnic selections alongside traditional butchers and bakers. As you stroll through, tantalize your taste buds by sampling **Jeni's Splendid Ice Cream**, whose out-of-the-ordinary flavors, such as Salty Caramel, Thai Chili, and Black Coffee, are handmade in small batches and can be served atop a piping hot, made-to-order waffle. If you don't make it to North Market, you can visit Jeni's Short North location (714 N. High St.), instead.

Visitors can also explore Columbus' many historic neighborhoods and immigrant communities, especially **German Village**, where you'll fall in love with its cobblestone streets and quaint gardens. Bibliophiles will dig perusing the stacks at **The Book Loft** (631 S. Third St.), where 32 rooms offer a literal labyrinth of knowledge. Afterward, snatch up some schnitzel at **Schmidt's Sausage Haus** (240 E. Kossuth St.), a historic stable that's been converted into a traditional German restaurant.

There are a handful of places to get an audio fix, but **Used Kids** (1980 N. High St.) record shop is a true rock 'n' roll mecca of recycled music. Collectors won't want to

miss Vinyl Mondays, where wax is 20 percent off and shoppers chow free pizza while a DJ spins. Folks decked out in outrageous '80s garb flock to **Skully's Music-Diner** (1151 N. High St.) every Thursday for the bar's Ladies Eighties Night dance party (gals get in free). And live music of all kinds is easy to find throughout the city—just pick up a copy of the weekly alternative publication, **The Other Paper**, to find out what's happening in your scene.

Although music venues vary from dive bar to concert hall, one thing is certain: after the show, everyone meets up at the legendary **Buckeye Donuts** (1998 N. High St.), a teeny-tiny 24-hour joint that guarantees coffee, crullers, and cool conversation. **The Blue Danube** (2439 N. High St.) is another iconic late-night hangout with good brew and cheap eats. Treat yourself to The Dube Dinner Deluxe, a classy meal that consists of two grilled cheese sandwiches and a bottle of Dom Perignon.

For entertainment that is always free, yell "O-H" at any passerby and you're sure to get an enthusiastic "I-O" reply. I guarantee, from the bottom of my heart, that one visit to Columbus will make you claim our state the best in the Midwest.