

Tour Detroit

Explore The D with some of these best-loved tours.

To some, city tours might conjure up images of buses crammed with fanny-packed rubbernecks. But in The D, where urban decay is being buffed away by innovation and opportunity, there's so much more to see beyond the bus window. And buses aren't the only way to see and learn more about the area. There are multiple opportunities to experience the city with your own individualized twist.

So follow your nose and taste buds on a gourmand's pilgrimage through the various bars and breweries in downtown Detroit. Take in the array of architectural styles while whizzing by on a Segway two-wheel electric vehicle or paddle boat. Or give yourself a more physical challenge with a bike ride or walking tour.

Whatever your speed, here's a roundup of some of the best-loved tours that will get you on the road to introducing – or reacquainting – yourself with the Motor City.

1 DAY | 1-3 HOURS

FEATURES

Art & Culture, Entertainment,
Food & Drink, Nightlife,
Outdoor, Sports & Recreation

DESTINATIONS

Downtown Detroit

1

CAR, BUS, BIKE AND BOAT TOURS



One of the best ways to experience Detroit is to get out in the fresh air, where the smells and sounds help paint a picture of the city today. In recent years, several local tour companies have sprung up to accommodate growing numbers of tourists and locals alike who are curious about the new face of The D.

Feet on the Street Tours provides walking, car and bus tours for an individual to groups of many. Tours are usually organized around a theme. **Prohibition in Detroit** explores Detroit's role in Prohibition and the origins of the legendary Purple Gang. A public tour of **Eastern Market** includes sampling delicious cuisine along the way. Tours can be customized to your preference as well.

Want to add a workout to your tour? Take in the vistas of the city by bicycle. **Wheelhouse Detroit** is a local favorite where you can rent cruisers, comfort hybrid and road bikes, as well as kid-friendly bikes and accessories. Tours (starting at \$25) include Eastern Market, Corktown, Grandmont Rosedale, southwest Detroit, Hamtramck, Belle Isle, historic churches and public art.

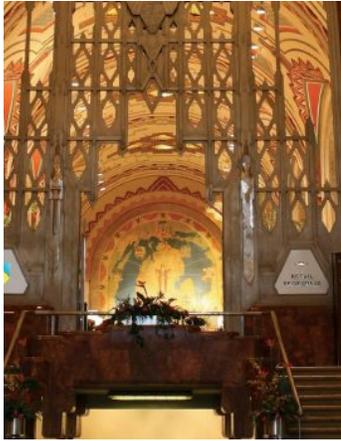
If you're feeling a little lazy and want someone else to do all the pedaling, take a rickshaw tour with **Rickshaw Detroit**. You can arrange personalized tours with your pedicab driver.

On a fine summer day, climb aboard the top deck of one of the boats in **Diamond Jack's** fleet. Tours include two-hour narrated cruises (\$20) on the Detroit River, the world's busiest international waterway, on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays June through the first week of September. You'll see the Detroit and Windsor skylines and glimpse some historical wonders along the river.



2

ART & ARCHITECTURE TOURS



The Detroit skyline is dotted with skyscrapers built during the pre-Depression era. In fact, Detroit is one of the only cities in the country so faithfully emblematic of this architectural style.

Names such as Albert Kahn, George D. Mason and Wirt C. Rowland are synonymous with Detroit architecture. Minoru Yamasaki, who later designed the World Trade Center, also got his start here, where he designed buildings including One Woodward Avenue.

To get a comprehensive glimpse of this work, your itinerary should include the vacant, but magnificent Michigan Central Depot; the Westin Book Cadillac Detroit hotel, built in the 1900s and given a \$200-million renovation in 2008; the Chicago style-influenced Penobscot Building, which was designed by Rowland and Detroit sculptor Corrado Parducci; the golden orange art deco Guardian Building; and the Fisher and General Motors Building (Cadillac Place), both designed by Kahn and located in Detroit's New Center area. Check out [self-guided tours](#) of Detroit's historic commercial buildings, churches, estates and neighborhoods. Or contact one of the many bus or walking tour companies to arrange for an architectural tour. Preservation Wayne, Detroit's oldest and largest architectural preservation organization, offers trips focusing on Kahn's buildings, downtown skyscrapers and more. Detroit Urban Adventures also offers a tour titled [Detroit's Rise, Fall & Renewal](#) that covers the old and the new.

A tour of the buildings that sprouted up during the city's heyday will inevitably reveal a few heartbreaking examples of grand structures forgotten. For those with a fascination for urban decay, you can take a [web-based tour](#) of some of Detroit's "fabulous ruins".

For a more upbeat interpretation on the topic, feast your eyes on Detroit's [Heidelberg Project](#), which has transformed abandoned houses into works of art – a thought-provoking commentary on decay and rebirth. It was recently announced that the Heidelberg Project will be evolving from a one man art installation to a thriving arts and culture community that will lift the entire neighborhood.

After visiting the Heidelberg Project, you'll want to continue to get inspired by the beautiful artistic imagination of other metro Detroiters and visiting artists who left their mark all around the city. Visit Joe Louis' sculpted fist, snap a picture of the Spirit of Detroit statue (sometimes decked out in Detroit Tigers or Red Wings jerseys) or pause to appreciate Detroit's Pewabic Pottery murals that brighten People Mover stations and Comerica Park.

Also get yourself over to the **Detroit Institute of Arts**, where you'll marvel at Diego Rivera's Detroit Industry fresco cycle, inspired by the grind and grit of the city's manufacturing glory days of the 1930s. Both docent-guided and audio tours are available.

Another worthwhile stop is the **Cranbrook Art Museum**. While there, architecture fans should stop by the art deco **Saarinen House**, which was the home and studio of Finnish-American designer Eliel Saarinen from 1930 through 1950.

3

FOOD & WINE TOURS



A great way to get to know a city is through your stomach. Detroit, with its delectable spanakopita, pierogi and Coney dogs, does not disappoint. Foodies should make their way to Eastern Market, the largest historic public market in the U.S., which has been serving up vegetables, breads, cheeses and spices since 1891. Greektown is a treasure trove of great cuisine and another must. You might also want to add the two famous dueling Coney joints on your itinerary: **American Coney Island** and **Lafayette Coney Island**. You can then decide who has the best dog and take part in the lively debate that has been taking place between metro Detroiters for years.

In the mood to imbibe? Sample the latest craft brews on a **Motor City Brew Tour**, with guided bus transportation, tours at local breweries, beer samples and snacks.



The wine crowd will toast to the southeast **Michigan Pioneer Wine Trail**, which includes **Burgdorf Winery** in Haslett; **Chateau Aeronautique Winery** in Jackson; **Cherry Creek Cellars** in Brooklyn; **Parma, J. Trees Cellars** in Blissfield; **Lone Oak Vineyard Estate** in Grass Lake; **Pentamere Winery** in Tecumseh; **Sandhill Crane Vineyards** in Jackson (a favorite of our editor); and **Sleeping Bear Winery** in Parma. Make a weekend out of exploring these award-winning vintners by car and visit pioneerwinetrail.com for upcoming events.



4

HISTORY & MUSIC TOURS



The American Revolution. The Underground Railroad. Birthplace of the automobile. The Civil Rights movement. If you didn't already realize it, The D's a goldmine for history geeks.

The best way to explore Detroit's historic sites is by taking a tour such as the ones offered by [Preservation Detroit](#). The organization offers tours through the city's Prohibition past, as well as **Mt. Elliott Cemetery**, which houses the city's earliest settlers, founding families and other notable figures.

You can also take the self-guided historic sites tour available on experiencedetroit.com, which includes the **Ford Rouge factory**, **Fort Wayne**, **Sainte Anne de Detroit church**, **Campus Martius**, **Motown Historical Museum** and **Ford Piquette Plant**.



The Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation is a definite must for history lovers, particularly for those interested in the birth of the automobile and the man whose dream put the nation on wheels. See how the car transformed American life; check out architect R. Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion House; view Abraham Lincoln's rocking chair (from the night of his assassination); and climb on board the bus where Detroit's Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white passenger, sparking the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott. Separate from the museum but also a worthwhile stop, The Henry Ford's Ford Rouge Factory Tour is the only Detroit automotive plant tour that is available to the public.

The city's rich African-American history is underscored by the fact that it was a key stop along the Underground Railroad (Detroit's codename along the legendary route was Midnight) and that Martin Luther King Jr. gave a first version of his I Have a Dream speech here.

The First Congregational Church of Detroit hid refugee slaves en route to Canada in its basement. It now houses the **Living Museum** and the **Underground Railroad Flight to Freedom Program Tour**, which gives groups of visitors a simulated experience of what it might have been like to be a runaway slave.



Visit the **Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History** to uncover more of the story of African-Americans in The D. Named for a Detroit physician committed to preserving black history, the museum houses the Harriet Tubman and Coleman A. Young collections, in addition to the permanent exhibit *And Still We Rise: Our Journey through African American History and Culture* which follows the journey of African-Americans across continents to present-day Detroit.

If you're interested in Holocaust history, visit the **Holocaust Memorial Center Zekelman Family Campus** in Farmington Hills for guided tours, which may include an opportunity to speak with a Holocaust survivor.

The **Detroit Historical Museum** is one of the oldest and largest museums dedicated to metropolitan history in the U.S., encompassing more than three centuries of metro Detroit history. Check out an assembly line, a 19th century street scene and more. Rotating exhibits focus on various themes in Detroit's past, such as major retailers, Vietnam veterans and the Underground Railroad.

The D is called Motown for good reason. Music lovers visiting the area will be richly rewarded when they fill their itineraries with historic sites and fill their ears with the sweet sounds that defined generations – and continue to influence music today.

No audiophile's journey to Motown is complete without a visit to the **Motown Museum**, the unassuming little building that launched some very big careers. (Allow us to name-drop: Stevie Wonder, Smokey Robinson, the Temptations, Diana Ross, the Jackson 5... We could go on and on and on, but there isn't enough space here.)

Catch even more Motown music fever with a Motown dinner cruise on the **Detroit Princess** riverboat. Docked in downtown Detroit, the Detroit Princess offers food, drink and live renditions of Motown favorites just about every weekend in the summer and fall.

Fast forward a few decades and you'll find that The D is also the home of one of the most contemporary music forms, as the birthplace of techno music. The annual **Movement** electronic music festival celebrates the experience of electronic music every May in Hart Plaza.

Turn a few heads and class up your tour with a luxury vehicle – a limousine, luxury SUV or limo bus with **Top Notch Bus and Limousine**.

5

BEHIND THE SCENES TOURS & MORE



While you're out and about, you'll also want to check out the following behind-the-scenes tours at:

- Comerica Park
- The Parade Company
- Ford Field
- Pewabic Pottery
- The Fox Theatre
- Morley Candy & Sanders
- Westview Orchards & Adventure Farm



Here are even more tours you may be interested in:

- Detroit Princess Riverboat
- Historic Indian Village
- Edsel & Eleanor Ford House
- Meadow Brook Hall
- [Elmwood Historic Cemetery](#)
- [The GM Renaissance Center](#)
- [Historic Boston-Edison](#)

Some tours require a minimum number of guests. Please call ahead for details.