



Wherever you travel, look for lesser-known museums

[By Kay Grant]

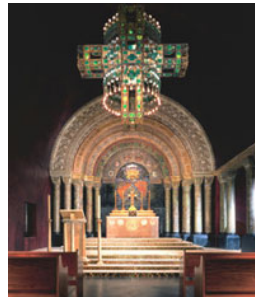
We know about New York's marvelous Metropolitan Museum of Art, the incredible Cleveland Museum of Art, Los Angeles' great Getty Museum, the awesome Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City, and other large and well-publicized museums around the country. But scattered around the United States are many other lesser-known and worthwhile museums dedicated to history, arts, sports, industry and technology.

The Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio is a wonderful cultural experience and repository of objects (photos, native costumes, artifacts, farm equipment, tools, kitchenware, musical instruments and more) from more than 20 of the original ethnic groups that settled in the Lone Star State. The spacious gallery showcases sights and sounds from Italians, African-Americans, Jews, Czechs, Swedes, Hungarians, Japanese, Native Americans, Belgians and many more. They even have a black Wendish wedding dress. Nearby: Old Time Wooden Nickel Museum, Buckhorn Saloon and Museum, and the Alamo. Web site: www.texancultures.utsa.edu.

Near Orlando, Fla., is a spectacular museum that is unfamiliar even to some locals. In Winter Park, the Morse Museum is home to the world's most extensive collection of Louis Comfort Tiffany stained glass, as well as other decorative arts. Of special note is the Byzantine Chapel, which brought the artist acclaim at the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition. The chapel was out of the public eye for nearly a century before being put on display here. Nearby: Albin Polasek Museum and Sculpture Gardens, Orlando Museum of Art, and Ripley's Believe It or Not. Web site: www.morsemuseum.org.

The Bowers Museum in Santa Ana, Calif., is envied for its collection of Pre-Columbian pieces and art from other indigenous peoples. This Orange County treasure also offers high-quality touring exhibits. Currently it has a show-stopping exhibit of gems that includes a 25-carat diamond crystal, a rare red emerald, antique jewelry and much

more. A block away is the Bowers Kidseum, which provides hands-on arts experiences for youngsters. Nearby: Richard Nixon Library and Birthplace, Gene Autry National Center and Mission San Juan Capistrano. Web site: www.bowers.org.



Tucked away in the beautiful Allegheny Mountains of western Pennsylvania is the Heritage Discovery Center in Johnstown, featuring a look at turn-of-the-century America through immigrants' eyes and voices. Wonderfully presented with interactive displays, the stories are told as each visitor follows an immigrant's path from arrival through finding housing and jobs, experiencing culture shock, loneliness and assimilation. Viewers learn firsthand of the hardships these people faced. Nearby: Flight 93 National Memorial, Johnstown Flood Museum, Altoona Railroader's Museum and Jimmy Stewart Museum. Web site: www.jaha.org.

Albuquerque, N.M., is known around the world for its annual October Balloon Festival, so it stands to reason that it would have a museum dedicated to its favorite sport. The Anderson-Abruzzo Albuquerque International Balloon Museum, located near the balloon launch field, takes visitors back

to early ballooning in France in 1783 (the first passengers were a duck, sheep and rooster to test if oxygen extended above the ground). The original gondola of the Double Eagle V (the first balloon to cross the Pacific) is on display. Nearby: National Atomic Museum, National Hispanic Cultural Center, Indian Pueblo Cultural Center and Tinkertown (handcrafted miniatures). Web site: www.balloonmuseum.com.

In Little Rock, Ark., the Old State House Museum in the historic Greek Revival structure houses galleries devoted to Arkansas history, Arkansas' first families (including inaugural gowns), 1800s chambers of the House of Representatives and period rooms. Nearby: Clinton Presidential Center, Central High School (scene of 1957 civil rights demonstrations) and MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History. Web site: www.oldstatehouse.com.

In the heart of New York's beautiful Finger Lakes region is the Corning Museum of Glass, in the town of Corning. In addition to an extensive exhibition of glass through 35 centuries, they offer glass-blowing demonstrations, interactive science exhibits, one-of-a-kind glass objects for purchase and - best of all - an opportunity to make your own piece of glass art (aided by staff who work with the fiery-hot ovens). Nearby: Glenn H. Curtiss Museum (aviation history), National Soaring Museum and the Lucille Ball-Desi Arnaz Center in Jamestown. Web site: www.cmog.org.

Think of San Francisco and you think of cable cars. At the Cable Car Museum, visitors can



see antique cable cars, historic photos and mechanical equipment used for maintaining America's only moving historic landmark. On display are the winding wheels that pull the cables under the streets of San Francisco, huge engines, tracks, brakes and more. It's a fascinating place to spend an afternoon. Nearby: Cartoon Art Museum, Musee Mechanique (antique arcade machines), Zeum (interactive performing arts) and Filoli Mansion (San Mateo County). Web site: www.cablecarmuseum.org.



Tacoma, Wash., is home to glass artist Dale Chihuly, and Tacoma has other treasures, such as the Karpeles Manuscript Museum across the street from the botanical garden. Many locals don't know about this wonderful resource. David Karpeles has the world's largest collection of private manuscripts, and the exhibits rotate among his eight museums (see Web site for list). Because many original manuscripts are sold at auction and are never seen again by the public, Karpeles wanted people to see these treasures. Currently at the Tacoma location are manuscripts of American 19th century authors. Nearby: Washington State History Museum, LeMay Car Museum, Tacoma Museum of Art and Bridge of Glass. Web site: www.rain.org/~karpeles/taqfrm.html.

Wherever you travel, watch for community historic museums. Some have exhibits of local artists, and others showcase their region's offerings.

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