

A Quick Guide to Ann Arbor or how to eat yourself to death in one day

Lillian Huang
Ann Arbor native
honestly homesick
will be living vicariously through you
say hi to pranav and my mom 4 me

April 23, 2019

1 Introduction

Although Ann Arbor is but a small college town, it is one of the biggest cultural epicenters of Michigan (probably. I'm biased). This is almost certainly because of the university, which is liberal to a fault, generally a well-respected institution, and fucking enormous, all traits that contribute to Ann Arbor's overall feeling of superiority over other Michigan cities. The University of Michigan is a great place (except on Game Day Saturdays—God help you if you want to do errands before or after a football game), but you are here to experience the city around the university. Thus, there are distinctions to be made. Ann Arbor is kind of like the artsy, slightly more reckless or shady but also more interesting sibling to University of Michigan's veneer of importance and bougieness. Ann Arbor is full of great restaurants, interesting cultural events, and a much wider variety of people. But, they inform each other; Ann Arbor could not be what it is without the opportunities having the university affords, and the university would not be as interesting a place without the people of Ann Arbor. In any case, this guide is geared more to the Ann Arbor side than the university side. It will have too much information on it because I am too excited and will recommend too much, but at least that gives you plenty of options to pick from. I hope you are as charmed by my hometown as I am.

2 Food

2.1 Breakfast and Brunch

- **Frank's Restaurant:** This is a small diner-type restaurant, in a sort of blink-and-you'll-miss-it location in a side street (on Maynard). Apparently, Pranav used to go here every week with "the bois" as a tradition. The

atmosphere is really great; it's one of those places that feels old-timey and familiar, where the staff knows people by name and by regular order. Over winter break I went twice in 2 days (to meet up with different groups of friends), and I had no regrets.

- **Angelo's:** This place is on Catherine St. and a lot bougier; it is more expensive and generally college kids only go if their parents were in town (and thus paying). However, their food is really good, and if you're visiting for a day you might as well get the good stuff.
- **Pastry Peddler:** This isn't really a classic brunch place, it's more of a patisserie (I think there's no seating), but I mention it because they make pasties and those are the fucking bomb. It's just off Packard on a little street across from a Jimmy Johns. I recommend going and getting a breakfast pasty, which has warmed many a student on their way to a 9am class. This place is only open till 2pm though, so keep that in mind if you want to try it out.
- **Spencer:** I've never been, but recently Pranav told me that he had some life-changing scrambled eggs here, which for him is saying a lot because he doesn't usually get *too* excited about food. They were apparently ramp scrambled eggs and they were extremely rich and decadent, to the point where he felt a little queasy afterward. However, Spencer changes the menu every day, so you wouldn't be able to experience these same "life-changing eggs." Still, if you go there, it's probably a good bet you'd still eat something fantastic.

2.2 Sandwiches/Lunch

- **Zingerman's Delicatessen:** This is the number one Ann Arbor staple. This is the place Obama went when he visited in like 2008. If you go, keep in mind that they are most famous for their Reuben, with good cause. I've personally only gone a couple times, but every time I get a different Reuben (they have many kinds with different meats and things). Every time it is a great fucking Reuben. Zingerman's is in Kerrytown and is also known for its many baked goods, like brownies, cookies, cakes, pies, breads, etc. so if you're up to it, I'd split something sweet with your friend at the end of the meal. I think my favorite thing they make are the pies, specifically their pecan pie, but obviously a whole pie might be a bit much. However, they sometimes have lil mini pies, which might be more doable. Their brownies are nice too.
- **The Lunch Room:** This came recommended by Pranav; it is in Kerrytown and is a lunch/dinner place. He says it's pretty good; I trust his judgement.

2.3 Coffee/Tea

- **Comet Coffee:** This is a tiny little coffee shop in the middle of Nichols Arcade on State Street. It's pretty hipster in terms of vibe, and I've been told it has good coffee (though not sure how it'll compare to your origin brews la di da). I do know that it has a mean almond croissant, though. Maybe this time if you get one, don't drop it on the floor.
- **Mighty Good Coffee:** This is on Main Street and I've never been here, but again Pranav says it's dank. It's also going to close soon so I guess you should go while you can? Pranav recommends getting an oat milk latte if you check it out.
- **Teahaus:** I have spent many a morning or early afternoon here with friends, drinking tea and eating the finger sandwiches. It's very much an aesthetic, but I do actually enjoy the many teas they have, and they have these flaky buttery scones with lemon curd and jam. They also sell macarons, which often people get to go and eat on their way out.
- **Literati:** This is very close to Teahaus and is a bookstore and cafe. There's a public typewriter in the basement, which people can use and feel schmancy. It's got that small bookstore feel where the selection is pretty curated and the employees write little blurbs about their favorite books, all of which can be found around the shelves next to the books in question. I've only ever been to the cafe part of Literati maybe two times, but it seems like a nice spot. Again, no idea how the coffee actually is, but I think the bookstore is cute.

2.4 Dinner

Note that if you're in Ann Arbor and walk down Main Street or across Liberty with all the bougie nice restaurants, any of those restaurants would probably be really good. These are just some that I've been to that I'm a particular fan of, but there are many more that I've had that are delicious, and even more that I've never had but have heard good things about.

- **Hong Hua:** So I know this is not Ann Arbor, but i'm gonna squeeze this in here. Hong Hua is in Farmington Hills and is a great Chinese restaurant—the only Chinese restaurant my parents actually feel is worthy of bringing visitors to, probably because of it's higher-class ambiance and because the food is actually good (hard to find good Chinese food in Ann Arbor unfortunately). If you come here, definitely get Peking Duck, which as I've mentioned before will be served in 3 courses: skin, meat, and bones. My parents also get hot and sour soup as a starter, and then there's also a really good dish with lotus roots and shrimp, but the shrimp is made into this sort of shrimp cake or patty or something. (I'm so sorry but I don't know the name of that one.) There's also good beef stir fried with scallions

(again sorry I don't know the names), and for dessert highly recommend getting the mango or red bean pudding (slight preference for mango).

- **Jolly Pumpkin:** This is the *other* place Obama went when he visited Ann Arbor the second time (I think in 2012). This is a brewery on Main Street and has great beer and food. The best thing I've had here though are the truffle fries—you have to get them if you go here.
- **Mani:** This is an extremely bougie Italian place on Liberty. I think technically it's supposed to be like small plates to share, but honestly the portion sizes are pretty big. If you get pizza, be sure to get the black truffle pizza. It's a nice place to take people who are visiting if you want to feel all fancy. (This is also where my parents discovered affogatos and probably why they've since gained some weight.)
- **Aventura:** I actually don't remember if I've ever been here, but it's been highly recommended by multiple friends. It's a Spanish tapas restaurant in that general Main Street/Liberty Street area, and if it's the same one I've gone to, then it's definitely worth checking out if you have the time.

2.5 Dessert

- **Blank Slate:** I literally do not need to tell you more about Blank Slate. Get a flight. Have fun. (Please snapchat me so I can pretend I'm there too.)
- **The Dolce Vita:** This is another bougie place on Main Street. It's all Italian desserts; I've been twice, both times for my friend's birthday. It's a good place to go for special occasions.
- **Cherry Republic:** I'm kind of including this as a joke, but it's nostalgic. This is not an actual restaurant or anything, it's just a store on Liberty that sells all sorts of cherry products (Michigan produces a lot of cherries), like jams and candies and whatnot. Whenever I was downtown with friends and in that area, we'd go in and take a bunch of free samples for dessert and leave without buying anything. This is obviously shitty, but we were young and poor and honestly it's such a mood that I'm gonna recommend it to you too.

3 Culture

- **Hill Auditorium:** Again, perfect acoustics, and a pretty long history of cool performances (I think Rachmaninoff has been there). If you can get a UMS ticket, you should try to experience the hall for yourself, but I don't know if anything is playing when you'll be there.

- **Michigan Theater:** Fun fact: I used to volunteer here at the guest services desk! (If you see Lee say hi for me. Actually idk if he remembers me but whatever) Michigan Theater is this beautiful theater originally built in the 20s, and it's gilded everywhere and a somewhat popular wedding spot. If you can catch a movie here (or even want to) it's definitely a fun experience; the main theater is in an auditorium and there's usually an organ performance right before. Even if you don't catch a show though, it's worth taking a few minutes to walk in and look around.
- **Kerrytown:** This is Ann Arbor's market district, and also where Zingerman's is. There's a lot of nice shops and restaurants in this area, and generally it's nice to just stroll through. There's a concert house here that's literally just an old house, and it's a frequent venue for music students (like a younger me) to put on recitals. Another fun fact: They have a spicy model C grand Steinway, meaning it's 8 feet long, not 7 or 9 like most. Coo moving on
- **Nichol's Arboretum:** I think this is technically a University of Michigan-operated place, but whatever, I'm not gatekeeping. It's a really big swath of nature through which lots of people walk, run, bike, and generally spend a chill afternoon. You can also get to the Huron river through the Arb and dip your toes in.

4 Bars

Please note I literally know nothing about bars; I went to like 3 bars during my entire undergrad and really don't know what's up with bar life. These are actually Pranav's recommendations; if you check them out and enjoy, you can thank him.

- **The Last Word:** Pranav has actually told me about this place multiple times and we've talked about going but I've still never gone. Apparently it's a speakeasy-style place? He says it's hype.
- **The Ravens Club:** This is a whiskey bar. IDK, Pranav said it's good so I'll include it.

Cool that was helpful thank u next

5 Weed

Ann Arbor has a bit of a stoner culture. Smoking weed has been decriminalized for years in Ann Arbor (meaning you'd just get a small fine for smoking), even though in Michigan, smoking marijuana has only just become legalized as of December 2018. I wanted to include this section because it might be worth figuring out how to get weed in Ann Arbor, but honestly I have no experience

in this (re: I was extremely sheltered) and I don't even know who to ask to figure out more. But, in case you wanted to get high, I just thought I'd point out it would probably be relatively easy to do so. There's a place called Smoke's Chocolate that Brinda told me about where you can get chocolate and weed?? I don't know if it's still open because I looked it up and apparently it closed for a while when the owner finished his degree. Anyway I felt like I'd be remiss if I didn't mention this, so I included it. Again suuuuuper helpful I'm sure omg what am i doing this is literally 5.5 pages of latex

6 People

- **Pranav Srinivasan:** Clearly, Pranav has helped me make this list, and now he has mentioned that he is open to meeting you provided it doesn't conflict with his exam on May 1. Please don't feel pressured to actually meet him if you and your friend want to just chill on your own, but I'm floating the possibility if you wanted someone to show you around. In case you do, his number is +1 (248) 703-4570. Feel free to text him, or not.
- **Bing Zhou and Suzhou Huang:** These are my parents. You will probably not see my dad around unless he's at the university meeting with professors. You may catch a glimpse of my mom if you're around West Hall or the Diag. If you're brave enough you can go ask her if you can get a reservation at Chez Zhou or even if you can go into her office to sneak peeks at all the derpy photos she has of me on her wall. I would not recommend either option.

7 Discussion

nah i'm not gonna add a discussion lmao i'm just meming at this point go and have fun