

Explore the ultimate Pittsburgh bucket list with this new book

How many have you checked off?



The guidebook for your Pittsburgh adventure. PHOTO BY MICHAELWILL PHOTOGRAPHY ([HTTPS://MICHAELWILLPHOTOGRAPHY.COM/](https://MICHAELWILLPHOTOGRAPHY.COM/)).

Colin Deppen
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You may have [seen her on TV](https://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/video/program/750/4083848-ptl-books-may-13-2019/) (https://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/video/program/750/4083848-ptl-books-may-13-2019/). Maybe you [heard her on the radio](https://kdkradio.radio.com/articles/new-book-lists-100-things-you-need-do-pittsburgh-you-die) (https://kdkradio.radio.com/articles/new-book-lists-100-things-you-need-do-pittsburgh-you-die).

Our intrepid and essential director, Rossilynne Skena Culgan, has written a book, and she's been busy fielding interview requests ahead of its release.

The book, "100 Things to Do in Pittsburgh Before you Die (<https://100thingspittsburgh.weebly.com/>)," is a labor of love. It's a monument to the expertise she's gleaned from the decade she's spent writing about Pittsburgh as a destination, a culturally ascendant American city, and just a generally cool place to be.

Ahead of the book's release, Rossilynne is in demand – talking about the book on TV and radio and just about everywhere in between.

And that got us thinking.

We had questions of our own about the book, her writing process, how she whittled the list down to *just* 100, and what it's like being the person everyone comes to for planning advice.

So, to avoid letting everybody else scoop our news, we set up an interview. Our conversation follows below.

So, tell us about the book. How did this come about?

It was a combination of fate, luck, and good SEO. When publisher Reedy Press was looking for a second edition of the book "100 Things to Do in Pittsburgh Before You Die," they came across my work online (shout-out to all the web developers who made *The Incline's* SEO sparkle). I've always dreamed of writing a book, and I've devoted my career to writing about Pittsburgh, so it was a perfect fit.

How hard was it whittling the list down?

Very hard! I solicited opinions for the list from friends, family, and fellow Pittsburghers on Twitter and Facebook. Their suggestions numbered way more than 100. I narrowed down the list to include a mix of classics along with hidden gems, covering as many neighborhoods in Pittsburgh as possible.

What was the editing process like?

Also very hard! Everybody needs an editor, or in my case, like, a dozen editors. I owe so much gratitude to the professional copy editor at Reedy Press, as well as the many friends and family who served as editors. Special thanks to my Mom who, at the eleventh hour, saved me from a particularly embarrassing typo.

What was the writing process like?

You guessed it ... very hard! Two things I've learned about writing are (1) it takes way longer than I think and (2) it's always harder than I think it should be – so difficult that the only thing that motivates me is promising myself a [Trader Joe's dark chocolate caramel](https://jet.com/product/Trader-Joes-Dark-Chocolate-Covered-Caramels-10-oz/95c954f49de34600ac15d26c53bbe051?jcmp=plagg:grocery_catch_all:All%20Products:na:PLA_1728403324_68117438576_pla-317913278533_c:na:na:na:2PLA15&pid=kenshoo_int&c=1728403324&is_retargeting=true&clickid=38d1c71b-89c1-441c-bd0d-743a34183b8f&kclid=38d1c71b-89c1-441c-bd0d-743a34183b8f) (https://jet.com/product/Trader-Joes-Dark-Chocolate-Covered-Caramels-10-oz/95c954f49de34600ac15d26c53bbe051?jcmp=plagg:grocery_catch_all:All%20Products:na:PLA_1728403324_68117438576_pla-317913278533_c:na:na:na:2PLA15&pid=kenshoo_int&c=1728403324&is_retargeting=true&clickid=38d1c71b-89c1-441c-bd0d-743a34183b8f&kclid=38d1c71b-89c1-441c-bd0d-743a34183b8f) after I write 500 words (I'm not above bribing myself, ok?). I wrote this book in the evenings (well, actually the wee hours of the morning) after my day job here at *The Incline*. Despite the challenges, it was an absolute joy to write about the city I love and the people who make this place so special.

What kind of feedback have you gotten so far from those who've seen the book?

So far, so good. I've stumped even long-time Pittsburghers with things they had never heard of, so that makes me smile. Also, Chris Moore from WPXI/PCNC said the book reminded him of Rick Sebak, and that's the best compliment I could ever ask for.

How often do friends, family, or people you hardly know ask you for advice on what to do and where to go in Pittsburgh?

All the time, and I love it. Seriously. I have so much fun helping people plan their Pittsburgh adventures, based on what they like to do. I think I was a travel agent in another life. Even when I'm walking around Downtown, if I see someone who appears to be lost, I always ask how I can help and then give them directions and Pittsburgh tips.

Do you expect people will ask your advice more now?

Probably, yes, and now I have a book to reference, so I'm ready.

What is the ideal response to this book? What's the ideal reader experience in your mind?

Ideally, I'd like to encourage Pittsburghers to become hometown tourists. There's so much to do right here in our backyard. Get outside of your comfort zone. Try something new. Make a new friend. Learn something. And for folks who are tourists, I hope this book will help guide them and cut down on their time spent Googling for things to do. It's organized into itineraries by season and by subject matter (like, things for kids, ideas for date nights, activities for history buffs, etc.)

What surprised you or what did you learn in the course of writing this book?

I thought I knew a lot about Pittsburgh. I was wrong. I visited so many new places I'd never seen before (the Bayernhof, the Photo Antiquities Museum, and the Rachel Carson house, to name a few).

What do you think similar guidebooks get wrong about a place like Pittsburgh?

Oof. Great question. Well, a lot of coverage of Pittsburgh focuses on the same things over and over (so much that *The Incline* even made a [Pittsburgh hot-takes bingo card](https://theincline.com/2017/04/12/burgh-bingo-for-every-national-hot-take-ever-about-pittsburgh/) (<https://theincline.com/2017/04/12/burgh-bingo-for-every-national-hot-take-ever-about-pittsburgh/>)). Yes, you'll find a lot of those things in my book, but I took the story deeper striving to unearth off-the-beaten-path places. I also strived to be real about Pittsburgh. Yes, this book is pretty rah-rah about Pittsburgh, but it also doesn't shy away from places that highlight and address our region's challenges (like air quality, violence, and labor issues, for example).

What's the weirdest thing in the book?

There's a lot of wonderfully weird stuff in here, but one of my favorites is the pickle-juice drinking competition at Picklesburgh. It's stomach-turning, and I could never do it myself, but it's fascinating to watch. [Here are some photos](https://theincline.com/2017/07/29/this-guy-downed-32-ounces-of-pickle-juice-in-8-34-seconds-to-become-mayor-of-picklesburgh/) (<https://theincline.com/2017/07/29/this-guy-downed-32-ounces-of-pickle-juice-in-8-34-seconds-to-become-mayor-of-picklesburgh/>) to get you prepared for this spectacle.

What's your favorite thing in the book?

It's impossible to pick just one because they're all so dear to me. Honestly, my favorite is whichever one I'm doing that day. However, I will give a nod to a classic, Fallingwater, where I'm taking my Grandma for her first time later this summer, a trip inspired by this book. And that's exactly what I hope happens with this book – you take your grandma, your parents, your friend, whoever, to do something new and have an adventure together.

OK, I'm sold. How do I get a copy?

You can [order directly from me here for a signed copy](https://100thingspittsburgh.weebly.com/) (<https://100thingspittsburgh.weebly.com/>). Or [join me at an event](https://100thingspittsburgh.weebly.com/events.html) (<https://100thingspittsburgh.weebly.com/events.html>) this summer to hang out, talk about Pittsburgh, and pick up a copy for your bookshelf.