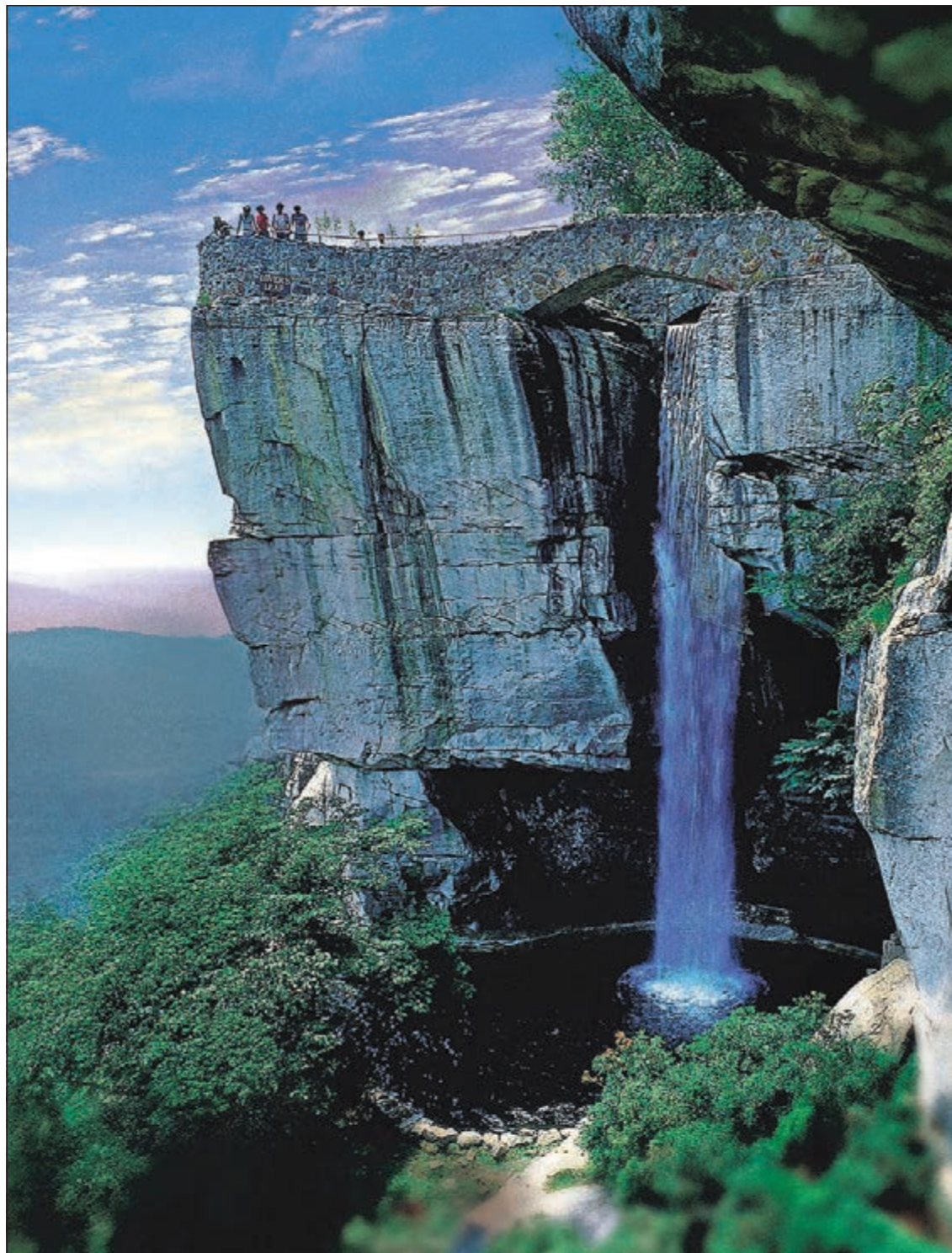


TRAVEL

Chattanooga

River at the heart of this vibrant Southern city



Rock City Gardens Lovers Leap. [CHATTANOOGA CVB PHOTOS]

By Zenda Douglas
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Visitors to Chattanooga, Tennessee, have many options for taking in the sights of this vibrant city: by foot from the top of a mountain, by riverboat tour, by car or by train.

Chattanooga sits at the intersections of I-75, I-24 and I-59. Much of the city's history relates to the pristine river that runs through it — and today's exciting attractions and activities lie along the expansive downtown riverfront.

Downtown is designed to be extremely walkable. Be sure to meander along one of the longest pedestrian bridges in the world,

which connects the north and south shores, as well as a 13-mile riverwalk. There's also a free electric shuttle that covers all of downtown and connects to the north shore. The South's first citywide bike share system is here, with 300 bikes at 35 locations.

Save time to visit the enlightening Hunter Museum of American Art, which is built on a 90-foot limestone bluff overlooking the Tennessee River and showcases 100 years of architecture and one of the finest collections of American art in the Southeast. The impressive Tennessee Aquarium invites you to discover penguins, sharks, alligators, otters and more. There is also a butterfly garden there. Grab a cup of coffee and meander through the Bluff View Art District.



Hunter Museum of Art.



Kayaking on the downtown riverfront.

Put on your walking shoes and visit Ruby Falls, an underground waterfall, and Rock City Gardens. From the See Seven States Overlook, admire breathtaking views of parts of Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia and Kentucky.

With all this activity, hunger will set in, and you won't be disappointed at the dining choices available. Enjoy contemporary comfort food at The Blue Plate and farm-fresh cuisine at The Feed Co. For exciting fine dining, visit Easy Bistro, located in the world's first Coca-Cola bottling plant building. The exciting menu options are made with ingredients raised and grown at local farms.

A special part of a Chattanooga visit will be your temporary home in one of the city's unique hotels or bed and breakfast inns. From a historic railroad sleeper car to a bluff overlooking the river, you can find it all in Chattanooga. Indulge yourself at the AAA four-diamond Chattanooga Hotel, located in the heart of downtown but with spectacular views of Lookout Mountain.

Upcoming events:

- **4 Bridges Arts Festival, First Tennessee Pavilion, April 13-14:** This nationally ranked arts festival draws more than 12,000 people annually and features visual and fine art, an art market, Creative Kids area, live music, great local food and more. 4BridgesArtsFestival.org

- **Riverbend Festival, downtown riverfront, June, dates TBA:** Over the past 35 years, this has been one of Chattanooga's signature events. It has grown from a small gathering of performers for a weekend of music to a riverfront-spanning destination event that draws nearly 700,000 people. Performers have included Kid Rock, Jars of Clay and Brooks & Dunn. riverbendfestival.com

- **Pops on the River & Fireworks, Coolidge Park, July 3:** Bring your blankets, lawn chairs and picnic baskets to celebrate Independence Day with a concert by the Chattanooga Symphony & Opera. After the music, there'll be a fireworks finale over the Tennessee River. Free. chattanoogaapops.com

Tracking down the origin of the Reuben

By Steve Stephens
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I always associate Reuben sandwiches, which I love, with New York delis, which I also love.

And although it's true that Reuben's Delicatessen in New York City claims to be the birthplace of the scrumptious creation (corned beef, sauerkraut, Swiss cheese and Russian dressing on rye), on a recent trip through the Midwest I learned of another claimant.

As the story goes, Reuben Kulakofsky, a local grocer, created the sandwich for a poker game he frequented at the Blackstone Hotel in midtown Omaha, Nebraska, which started serving the "Reuben" on its lunch menu in the 1920s to great acclaim.

Tracking down the Reuben's possible birthplace was a great excuse to stop in Nebraska's biggest city. And though I didn't run

into local multimillionaire Warren Buffett (he must not have known I was in town), I did take the opportunity to check out a few other Omaha highlights.

I spent several pleasant hours exploring the shops, bars and restaurants of the historic Old Market district, and walking and riding a rental bike through scenic Heartland of America Park along the Missouri River.

I stopped by the Durham Museum, Omaha's city museum, housed in the beautiful Art Deco-style Union Station. The magnificent Great Hall harkens back to 1931 to 1971, when arriving and departing train passengers bustled across the terrazzo tile floor beneath a gold-leafed ceiling.

Exhibits include the station's original and still-working soda fountain offering drinks and sandwiches, the Byron Reed (an American pioneer and real-estate businessman)



A Blackstone Reuben sandwich is served at the Crescent Moon Tavern, Omaha, Nebraska. [STEVE STEPHENS]

collection of rare coins and documents, and a replica of the Buffett Grocery Store, a family-owned business that operated from 1869 through 1969, and where Warren Buffett earned his first dollar and gained some of his business acumen.

Another can't-miss Omaha stop is Lauritzen Gardens, a beautiful, 100-acre oasis with a variety of themed gardens, a

17,500-square-foot conservatory and an installation featuring two of the most powerful locomotives ever built, perched on a hilltop overlook with views of I-80 and the Missouri River.

Although I spent my morning and evening downtown, at lunchtime I ventured west into the city's Midtown district to find the site of the old

Blackstone Hotel — and, I hoped, a Reuben sandwich.

The Blackstone building is still at the corner of South 36th and Farnam streets. Now known as the Blackstone Center, the building is a National Historic Landmark but, as it turns out, neither a hotel nor a restaurant.

Fortunately, the venerable Crescent Moon Tavern, directly across Farnam Street from the old hotel, has taken up the Reuben mantle, the old recipe and the perpetuation of the legend. It also serves great beer, which adds to any Reuben experience.

The "Blackstone Reuben" is made with locally sourced corned beef, trimmed and cooked for a day. The meat is so tender that it can't be sliced but is served as chunks.

Not surprisingly, I loved the Blackstone Reuben, the story behind it and the city where it just might have been born.