

Columbus, OH

What are the hidden gems in Columbus, OH?

27 Answers



Miranda Marcus, lives in Columbus, OH

Answered Jul 16, 2016 · Author has 1.6k answers and 5.1m answer views

Olentangy Indian Caverns

1779 Home Rd, Delaware, OH 43015

In the middle of Delaware, there are some pretty awesome caverns and museum of Native American artifacts. You can also play minigolf there, do gem-mining, there is a playground for the little ones, a recreational area for grown up games (like bag toss), and a cute little store.

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[image of the “table” rock deep in the caves, upon which a variety of Native American artifacts were originally found]

Alum Creek State Park Beach

3615 S Old State Rd, Delaware, OH 43015

A beach! In Columbus! I didn't believe it either, but we went last week and it was pretty cool. We went on a weekday (staycation) and there was a decent crowd, but plenty of room to have our own section of beach front area. We brought a

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[image of the beach at Alum Creek]

Whole World Natural Restaurant and Bakery

3269 N High St, Columbus, OH 43202

Wonderful vegetarian and vegan food cooked fresh. The daily menu often rotates and, the last time I was there at least, was written on a board where you can go check out the specials. A bakery counter is located at the back where all manner of vegan treats can be found.

Yum!

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[image of the interior of Whole World, daily menu board on the left]

Volunteers of America Auto Auction

Need a cheap car? Know basic auto mechanics? Look no further than the VOA Auto Auction, held every two weeks. A few years ago we bought a mini van there which was a great help to our family and less than the cost would have been on the street or at a dealership.

Sometimes, there are even random other things like: boats, motorcycles, lawn mowers, and even jet skis.

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[image of a jet ski in the VOA parking lot]

Studio 35, Spagio, Jeni's Splendid Ice Cream, Dance Plus Studio

Grandview Ave. around W. 2nd St.

Head to Grandview, have dinner at Spagio, take a dancing lesson or go for Salsa Saturdays, get some ice cream and watch funky movie.

It's a great place to spend a few hours.

 Still have a question? Ask your own!

What is your question?

Ask



[image of Studio 35]

Topiary Garden in Old Deaf School Park

480 E Town St, Columbus, OH 43215

A garden of bushes placed and trimmed to recreated George Seurat's famous painting *A Sunday Afternoon on the Isle of La Grande Jatte*. Have you ever seen bushes made to look like a painting? Well, here's your chance.

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[image of the Topiary Garden]

Field of Corn

4995 Rings Rd, Dublin, OH 43017

This is one of truly odd things that happen sometimes with art. An expansive lawn filled with concrete statues of corn. Unlike the other things on this list, I haven't seen this in person (maybe I drove by once), but I definitely plan on checking it out someday.

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[image of concrete pillars of shucked corn on a perfectly mowed lawn]

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Larry Sanger, Lived in the area for ~20 years

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nice to visit, especially around the Oval, Library, and Mirror Lake; the Columbus Metropolitan Library downtown is one of the best public libraries in the country; Franklin Park Conservatory is a beautiful spot; the various metro parks make an excellent park system; you've probably heard of Ohio Caverns, which we love; and everybody has heard about the Hocking Hills. But if you live in the area, you probably know about those spots.

Here are some spots you might or might not have encountered yet, which we have visited several times (or plan to visit again) and which we (my family) love—from least hidden to most hidden.

10. Hoover Dam . This is the least “hidden” and perhaps it doesn't belong on the list, but I didn't know about it for a long time. This isn't an earthen dam like so many others in Ohio, it is a tall and wide concrete dam with a massive gushing spillway. You can walk all the way across the dam, as well as from the top of the dam to the marshy, blue heron-filled area at the bottom. At the observation area on the eastern side, last time we were there, there were a bunch of swallow nests. On both sides of the dam and on either side of Hoover Reservoir are places to walk, play, and picnic. Hoover Dam is just one of the nicest places in central Ohio.

9. Slate Run Living Historical Farm . Again, perhaps it's not so well hidden now. If you have little kids, and maybe even if you don't, this is a must-see. A well-maintained, apparently well-run farm following 19th century farming ways, Slate Run features an open farmhouse, a separate kitchen, gardens, root cellar,

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8. The Wilds . Again, many people know about this so perhaps it isn't very "hidden." (It's also pretty far from Columbus.) But if you haven't visited, you might find it to be a surprise. The bus and other tours allow you leisure to take in the unusual, vast, hilly landscape as well as the big animals scattered over a 14 square miles in giant paddocks. The animals we saw when we have visited in the past included rhinos, giraffes, unusual deer and oxen, zebras, bison, a cheetah, and many others. Like a safari, but fairly close to home. Also worth a mention is that the drive to the Wilds is quite nice, especially if you go through the very scenic Blue Rock Forest.

7. Conkles Hollow State Nature Preserve . Some of the Hocking Hills attractions, like Old Man's Cave and Cedar Falls, are unquestionably excellent and are far from "hidden." But one of our favorite spots is the less-visited but surprisingly awesome Conkles Hollow. The trail is very green and scenic, but flat and paved for most of the way, and thus excellent for small children. What awaits you at the end is stunning, resembling some landscapes I remember from the Grand Canyon or Zion National Park out west. The gorge is reputedly one of the deepest in Ohio and the end of it is a magical place.

6. Rising Park and Shallenberger State Nature Preserve . I put these together because they're both in the Lancaster area and they both feature similarly short, but steep hikes to the top of a hill, from which you get a beautiful view of the surrounding landscape. Rising Park is well-known (hardly a hidden gem) to the people of Lancaster, but worth a visit to those from outside

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Hills, but spotted it on a map and decided to visit one day. Very nice little preserve, short and scenic but steep hike to the top of a hill that overlooks the surrounding country in all directions, although leaves might get in the way in the summer.

5. Blackhand Gorge State Nature Preserve . Now we come to some of the slightly more hidden spots. On the east side of Newark is this lovely area, a paved bike and hiking trail—a converted rail bed—next to the Licking River going through a very scenic gorge. Apparently, it was called “Blackhand” after Indian hand paintings on the cliff walls. There are some nice little waterfalls in the tributary dales along the trail, as well as some sandstone cliffs of the sort you’ll find in the Hocking Hills. Old canal towpaths and locks are nearby. Also interesting is a notch or gap cut through a hillside, which is a little like a roofless tunnel.

4. Rockbridge State Nature Preserve . This is on the other side of 33 from the Hocking Hills, between Lancaster and Logan. The parking lot might take some finding, and the trails leading to the main attraction—a large natural bridge, or arch—take a bit of puzzling out. But Rockbridge itself is a stunning location, and the rugged hike to it is one of the nicer hikes central Ohio has to offer.

3. Tar Hollow State Park and Forest . One of the nicest areas just to take a drive would be Tar Hollow State Park and Forest, which we visited in the fall—highly recommended. Sweeping vistas. There’s a pretty reservoir, Pine Lake, with swimming and paddleboats. In the middle of the forest is a giant fire tower

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2. Rock Mill Park . This out-of-the way area is worth a bit of extra driving. The mill itself has been lovingly restored, with a giant mill wheel. To get to it, you walk across a particularly excellent example of an Ohio covered bridge—over a beautiful gorge—and if you proceed down a path from the mill, you'll come to one of the nicest waterfalls in the central Ohio area, which will strike you as a bit of the Hocking Hills, only a lot closer than you might have expected.

1. Wahkeena Nature Preserve . We first visited this preserve recently. We simply saw it on a map, read some intriguing descriptions, and decided to go. We're glad we did, because it's a very unusual, surprising place. Several things make it very special: beavers, a pine forest, wildflowers, an excellent free guide map, and an especially interesting nature center. There are two big beaver lodges at one edge of the pond. There are all sorts of other little surprises. There is a floating boardwalk across one end of the pond, which takes you by one of three beaver dams. There are some stunningly tall pine trees you'll walk by on the very nice 1.5 mile circuit—a fragrant bit of landscape, reminds me of California and other western forests. Wildflowers are abundant, identified handily on the excellent guide map. A family of geese with brand new goslings, hatched earlier the same day (April 24), was swimming about. Frogs galore of course. Near the top of the hill are sandstone cliffs of the typical Hocking Hills variety. The guide map has numbers and letters which match numbers and letters posted along the well-maintained trail, with naturalist notes we enjoyed reading—I wish more parks would do this. A barred owl and a red-shouldered

 Still have a question? Ask your own!

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members on hand. Absolutely perfect learning place for children.

Honorable mentions... [The Wagnalls Memorial Library](#) in Lithopolis is one of our favorite libraries, gorgeous old building, wonderful place to read. [Pigeon Roost Farm](#) is a great spot for fun, hay wagon rides, corn maze, etc., in the fall as a place to take little kids, although it's getting a little *too* popular so maybe doesn't qualify as a "hidden" gem. [Yoctangee Park](#) in Chillicothe has swans and beautiful trees—like Rising Park in Lancaster, not at all hidden to the residents of Chillicothe. [Charles Alley Park](#) on the south side of Lancaster has some very nice, scenic hikes in the hills above a reservoir. Close to home is one of our favorite places, maybe a "hidden gem" for some people not in the area: [Chestnut Ridge Metro Park](#) . Excellent hiking and views.

(Originally posted in [Top 10 hidden gems of central Ohio](#) .)

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Seth Aldridge, lives in Columbus, OH

Answered Nov 26, 2011

The Bookloft- German Village- 32 rooms worth of books to explore.

Pistacia Vera- German Village- A French patisserie with amazing macarons and tea cakes.

Pattycake Bakery- Clintonville- great cookies!

The Ringside- Downtown. It might not be a "gem" but the burgers are great (service is not so great) and it's hidden off of Pearl Alley just north of the

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and Whittier.

Tasi Cafe- Short North- Definitely hidden. Definitely a gem. Off of Pearl St.

That's a start...

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John Ferguson, Neuropharmacology, Technology, Project Management

Updated Oct 27, 2014 · Author has 188 answers and 1.2m answer views

Bodega -- Possibly the best beer selection of any bar in town. Their bottle list is staggering, and includes top-tier beers from all over the world, including some that are typically very hard to find in the US. They also keep excellent beers on draft all year round (the Old Rasputin Imperial Stout Nitro is a personal favorite that they never take off tap). There are 50 on draft, and they are all half-off between 4pm and 8pm. Their food, while expensive, is of fine-dining quality, and the specialty dishes created by their head chef Marcus never fail to impress.

Nida's Thai on High -- This place has blown me away every time I have been there. Essentially everything on the menu is good, but the "signature dishes" in particular are spectacular. They also have some incredible cocktails. Nida's only takes reservations in person, though, so take this into account if you plan to go on a Friday or Saturday night.

Evans' Auto Repair -- Very honest management, and highly competent mechanics. Hands down the best shop I have found in town for basic automotive

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you for any of their services.

Diaspora -- It's not fancy, but their sushi easily matches if not surpasses that of Haiku, Sushi Rock, or Two Fish at a substantially lower price relative to proportion size. While this is more of a lunch place than anything else, Diaspora makes perhaps the most impressive specialty sushi rolls in town.

The Columbus Symphony -- So Columbus actually has a phenomenal symphony. Who knew? The music selection couldn't be better. I've heard movements here so beautiful they have brought tears to my eyes. Oh, and the best part: for students, tickets are dirt cheap.

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Phil Shaffer, lives in Columbus, OH

Answered Aug 13, 2016

a lot of the answers have concentrated on food and outdoor experiences. Good and good.

There are some other lines of discussion, though. Admittedly not for everyone, but definitely for some:

Columbus music scene is a great thing. Yeah, there are the concert venues with many of the big acts here. But also many other venues. Try Natalie's Coal Fired Pizza in Worthington for great food and great music at a reasonable price. There

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Someone mentioned farmer's markets. The best is Worthington - 90 vendors or so every Saturday. AND pick up a great brunch at the same time at the Whitney house - some of the most inventive brunch dishes you will ever see. Worthington inn is great for this as well.

On another tack - OSU astronomy department has a seminar every morning at 10 - open to public, and well attended. The Columbus Astronomical Society is a great group and has public demonstrations monthly.

And what about the great cycling paths throughout central Ohio. Really excellent rides. Two I enjoy most are the path from Johnstown to Newark - paved through some beautiful woods and farmland. This path is often nearly deserted on weekdays. The path from Mt Vernon to Danville (Kokosing path) is also through beautiful woods

Oh - Columbus has some of the best golf in the world. Scioto, Brookside, Columbus Country Club, Muirfield Village, The Golf Club, Double Eagle, OSU Scarlet. All of these are private, but still among the best in the world. Public golf is good as well. the Granville Golf club - now known as the Denison golf club, I believe, is a Donald Ross course that has 15 of the original holes as Donald did them, and is a great test. The Longaberger golf club - about an hour east of town, is known as one of the best public courses in the US. Deer ridge is a great design and good bargain just an hour north of town near Mansfield.

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at

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- Creamy with no ice crystals, and uncommon delicious flavors to discover
- Orders can be shipped outside of Ohio too (a great gift)

Columbus Creative Industry Mixer:

- Unites a large and diverse creative community annually
- 6th Annual: May 2014
- [The Annual Columbus Creative Industry Mixer by Roharik Productions](#)

Roharik Productions:

- Nationally-recognized, award-winning studio based in Columbus
- [Professional Advertising and Commercial Photography Studio in Columbus Ohio](#)

The Book Loft:

- German Village
- A landmark & tourist destination but as a local I could spend hours there

Mukha:

- "A revolution in skin care" (consultation, custom mixed pigments, more)
- An intimate boutique and products by renowned make-up artist Tim Maurer
- A range of spa services
- [Page on mukhaspa.com](#)

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WaterFire Columbus:

- A magnificent array of bonfires reflecting on the waters of the Scioto River during an evening of natural art, music and activities.
- [About](#) Waterfire Columbus

Katzinger's Deli:

- German Village/downtown
- Best Macaroni salad ever, locally-celebrated
- [Home](#)

Moretti's:

- The best Italian I've had, and among the nation's top Italian restaurants
- Sawmill: [Moretti's On Sawmill- Italian Restaurants](#)
- Upper Arlington: [Moretti's of Arlington - Classic Italian Dining, Wine And Spirits, Italian ...](#)

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R Chabot, lives in Columbus, OH

Updated Dec 1, 2017

Book Loft - I agree with everyone who has already mentioned this place in German Village. Open Monday through Sunday, 10A-11P.

STARLINER DINER in Hilliard on the very western end of Cemetery Rd (right next to the railroad overpass). Cuban-ish food. Very ample portions. Decent beer

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Jan Province, 69 years living in Ohio

Answered Aug 13, 2016 · Author has **454** answers and **176.4k** answer views

Someone mentioned the Columbus Symphony. But, if, like me, you prefer older stuff, there's Promusica Chamber Orchestra. Older still, there are several organizations that specialize in medieval and Renaissance music—Early Interval comes to mind. Semi-pro: Brass Band of Columbus. Worthington Civic Orchestra. More. And the city is chock-full of surprisingly good community bands that give free performances in parks, retirement centers, and high school auditoriums. Greater Columbus Community Band. Dublin Wind Symphony. Hilliard Community Band. Reynoldsburg. Lancaster. Circleville **Pumpkin** Show Band. Every June, there is an all-day festival of bands, with an art show and a nice collection of food trucks, in a park in Westerville. (You're welcome to dust off your old instrument and join in; most of these groups don't require an audition, but once in, you will practice, practice, practice).

Hey, I completely forgot to mention Opera Columbus.

89 Views · Answer requested by Amy Mooney Stickel



Matthew Laser, Computers, Fashion

Answered Sep 17, 2013

Some key places already mentioned, but be sure to check out:

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variations I've ever had.

16-Bit - Right next to Dirty Frank's, a newly opened Bar + Arcade that features all the retro gaming you can handle combined with a friendly staff & cold beer.

Local Cantina - In Grandview hidden in a little shopping center. Delicious food and dirt cheap food. You could fill up for under \$5 (excluding beer, of course)

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Erica King, lives in Columbus, OH

Answered Feb 25, 2014

Fine dining: The Worthington Inn, Worthington. Its off high street.

Fun: Franklin Park Conservatory

Fun food: The Happy Greek. Short north.

Pizza: Yellow Brick Pizza, Old Towne East

Healthy Food: Northstar (several locations)

Just Food: Roosters, by Buckeye Village

College: Mamas Pasta and Brews

see whats going on for free at the university

see what bars have something cool going on (these bars are mainly college)

DUELING PIANO BAR-i think its called the big bang?? by nationwide arena.

VERY FUN.

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Columbus' best (Japanese) restaurant is tucked into an unassuming strip mall up on Federated boulevard. It's one of two places Anthony Bourdain visited in Columbus (and the only one currently still open).

They've got a great selection of authentic dishes, awesome sushi, and some incredibly creative offerings. If you can afford to part with a bunch of your hard-earned money for a special occasion, they have an amazing, adventurous omakase tasting menu.

Seriously, check out some of the reviews and photos:

[Kihachi Japanese Restaurant](#)

This place is fantastic.

2.2k Views · View Upvoters



Joe Francisco, Entrepreneur, Husband/Father, Outdoor Enthusiast

Updated Sep 20, 2012

- **Planks Pizza** on Parsons....very old school
- **Lindy's** - Very nice and one of the benchmarks of fine dinning in c-bus- German Village- Becks street then follow it up with a dive bar down the street at
- **Becks Tavern** on Beck

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• **BARCELONA ON WHITTIER STREET**

I cant believe these haven't been mentioned..... Makes me miss home....

GO BUCKS

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Kevin Lackey, lived in Columbus, OH

Answered Jun 2, 2016

Dirty Franks-hot dog joint on 4th St, by Nationwide.

Lotus Grill-Chinese restaurant on the North Side, of High Street by Marcus Crosswoods Movie Theater.

Carsonie's-Best Italian in town, in Westerville.

Carfagna's-Kosher market by 71 and 161.

Schuler's Bakery-Just outside of town in London, best sugar cookies in the entire world.

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Heather Broman, lives in Columbus, OH

Answered Feb 25, 2014

Explorer's Club... it's one of the best places to eat, not far from downtown.

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Answered May 19, 2014

It seems many of these are related to food, but Columbus has a lot to offer outside of cuisine, too!

- Check out the river walk along the Olentangy, I believe it goes over 30 miles, but if you walk/run sections it is beautiful or you can rent a bike at many of the kiosks around town and do the whole thing- grab lunch downtown while you are at it.
- Park of Roses is beautiful later in the year when everything is blooming
- 16 Bit deserves being mentioned again- awesome Barcade
- There is a rock climbing wall (huge) near campus that you can climb free
- Alum Creek dog park (my personal favorite) you can let the pups swim in a sectioned off portion of the reservoir and then take them to run and dry off in the larger section.
- Waterfalls- there is one in Dublin and another in Upper Arlington off the Scioto river, they are gorgeous
- The Big Bang- dueling piano bar, really great jams
- The Columbus Commons- food trucks every Thursday (I think, I know it is one day a week), they also have free fitness classes one day a week
- North Market- not really "hidden" but still a fantastic place to check out!

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United States), El Vaquero in Shawnee Hills, Mad Greek on East Broad (The owner, Khalid, is a wonderful proprietor and person), The Dublin Tavern in downtown Dublin.

14 Views · View Upvoters



Anthony Pichardo, lives in Columbus, OH

Answered Jul 6, 2016

Chinese Places/Buffer I love to go to are:

Golden House: It is by far the best chinese place I have been in Columbus. They food always hits the spot. Address: 3518 Cleveland Ave, Columbus, OH 43224

Asian Buffet: Best Chinese Buffet in Columbus in my opinion. They do a good job keeping the food fresh and the variety is on point from your Roast duck to your fried rice you will enjoy many of the dishes there. Address: 5666 W Broad St, Columbus, OH 43228

116 Views · View Upvoters



Ratinan Choochaimangkhal, former Associate at Baker & McKenzie

Answered Jun 20, 2016 · Author has **409** answers and **591k** answer views

For authentic Thai food (nothing fancy but just Thai food that tastes like Thai food in Thailand), go to **Bangkok restaurant on Refugee road**. My ex-boyfriend took me there and it surprised me that they had real basil (*kaprao*, not *horapa*). They have an Asian mini-supermarket too.

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