



# CINCINNATI

Notes from the Road

## SAY 'HELLO' TO YOUR NEW FAVORITE CITY



By Malik Anderson

**K**nowing about a city's walkability is one thing. Walking the streets from your hotel to the convention center to a dinner with colleagues all within two blocks is a different experience entirely. Cincinnati makes it easy—as easy as putting one foot in front of the other.

Although the city's Duke Energy Convention Center (DECC) is now closed for an 18-month renovation (to be followed by a skywalk-connected hotel in 2027), visitors will be able to see just how easily they can get around without the need for a car.

*Malik Anderson*



From top to bottom: Maplewood Kitchen and Bar; event at Sharonville Convention Center (SCC)

### SLEEP AND MEET

The 491-room **Hyatt Regency Cincinnati** is right across the street from DECC, offering more than 40,000 sq. ft. of event space. While the event space is something to see, as well as its Red Roost Tavern, something I found to be one of the hotel's best features was its 24-hour market, the only 24-hour coffee shop in Cincinnati. There's nothing worse than leaving something behind at home, or just needing a late-night coffee, and having zero ways to get it. This shop could be an attendee's savior.

And while DECC gets its makeover, there is another convention center in northern Cincinnati that acts as its suburban counterpart: **Sharonville Convention Center (SCC)**. About 20 minutes north of downtown Cincinnati and fresh off of an expansion, SCC now has an additional 20,000 sq. ft. of meeting space, giving it a total of 100,000 sq. ft. of traditional and nontraditional space. Its 40,000-square-foot Portune Hall features Northern Lights Bar & Grill *inside* of the hall's west side, which can also be split into a separate 20,000-square-foot space.

### EAT

Cincinnati is home to a wide range of places to eat, whether you want to experience the city like an everyday local or if you want to dine upscale.

I began the day at **Maplewood Kitchen and Bar** in downtown Cincinnati for a pre-event breakfast with colleagues; and if you're a "Today Show" viewer, perhaps you may've seen the lemon ricotta pancakes. Although

that dish was televised, there are others worthy of screen time, like the **Maplewood Omelet** and **Shakshuka**. The restaurant's vibrant, sunlit setting would even make for a great option to host the event itself.

For the uninitiated, making a stop at any **Skyline Chili** is a must. Its **Cincinnati Chili**—chili and cheese stacked on spaghetti noodles—is the star of the show. Even though I'm not big on spaghetti, I was hooked from the first bite. If I lived in Cincinnati, I'd probably go every day.

Following up Cincinnati Chili with a brew might lead you to **Moerlein Lager House**, which sits across the street from Great American Ballpark, home of MLB's Cincinnati Reds, the country's first baseball team. Moerlein is home to a working microbrewery that produces a line of craft beers, alongside a long list of main dishes, like steak frites, filet mignon, and cajun chicken and chorizo pasta, as well as protein bowls, soups and salads. Moerlein has several event spaces, including the 3,500-person Schmidlapp Event Lawn and the 20-person John Hauck Room.

Guests stopping by **Jeff Ruby's Steakhouse** can expect a long list of steaks, sushi and other seafood, as well as sides like macaroni and cheese. All accompanied by a comprehensive wine and cocktail list. Jeff Ruby can host events for 10-48 guests in its five private event rooms. Less than half a mile away is **The Lempicka Event Center**, a Jeff Ruby event space for 25 to 250 guests.

### EXPERIENCE

Cincinnati's **Music Hall** is the home of the Cincinnati Opera, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, May Festival and Cincinnati Ballet, hosting events like Paul McCartney's Liverpool Oratorio, A Jimmy Buffett Tribute and Cincinnati Coffee Festival. The venue encompasses spaces that can host large and small groups, like Springer Auditorium (capacity: 2,500), Music Hall Ballroom (200-1,400) and Corbett Tower (220-405).

Grabbing a cocktail and watching live music at **Ghost Baby** could be a great way to call it night—assuming you're able to find it. The speakeasy is split into two parts, The Rattle Room and The Den, where its live shows are hosted.



Cincinnati skyline