



# ONE FINE DAY

Spend sunrise to sunset  
exploring restaurants,  
outdoor attractions,  
shopping and more in  
suburban destinations



# Kenosha

## Dinosaurs, cheese and authentic biergarten just across border

BY PHILIP POTEMPA | News-Sun

Kenosha's location along the southern Wisconsin lakefront makes it a centralized destination of about an hour's drive from both Milwaukee and Chicago.

Nearly 90 percent of Kenosha's Lake Michigan shoreline is publicly accessible, and a ranking reason why it is a favorite playground of beaches, fascinating museums, and a distinct downtown dining and shopping stretch.

Visitors are whisked from here to there by transportation which harkens to yesteryear, like Kenosha's electric streetcar system and tall ship sailing tours departing from the marina. But beyond the downtown and lakefront, further fun and opportunities abound in the surrounding rolling hills and winding roads, where hidden treasures like a German biergarten with live entertainment and farm-to-table dining await.

### Morning

Coffee paired with arts and culture is a great way to start the day. The Buzz Cafe (5621 Sixth Ave., 262-220-7782, [www.buzzcafekenosha.com](http://www.buzzcafekenosha.com)) is an early morning haven for artists and anyone who has an appetite for fresh pastries paired with caffeine in surroundings that foster creative forces. Local artwork is showcased on the exposed brick walls, and it's not unusual to see an inspired musician strumming a guitar. Better yet, besides the assorted teas and

coffee variations, as the day progresses, the menu also includes more than 200 wines by the bottle and almost as many craft beers in both bottles and cans, plus more than 20 rotating beers on draft. From savory soups like tomato basil, sumptuous salads and custom wraps and panini sandwiches capped off with tempting sweets, the choices are as plentiful as the portions to satisfy any craving.

At the beginning of time is a great place to begin Kenosha adventures, with a

stop at the Dinosaur Discovery Museum (5608 10th Ave., 262-653-4450, [museums.kenosha.org/dinosaur](http://museums.kenosha.org/dinosaur)) for a blast from the past. The museum's main room includes all the meat-eating theropods (giant dino greats) from 65 million years ago, with life-scale replica skeletons of Tyrannosaurus rex, gallimimus and ceratosaurus. The museum promotes this collection as "the nation's largest display of meat-eating dinosaurs all in one room." The Carthage Institute of Paleontology is located in the lower



PHILIP POTEMPA/NEWS-SUN PHOTOS

Shiny vintage automobiles, all AMC Javelin car models, are gathered and showcased for a new expanded exhibit at the Kenosha History Center titled "AMX: A New and Bold Direction."

level of the museum and provides an assortment of hands-on "research" activities for children.

### Afternoon

Something spot on awaits as a favorite drive-by lunch pick in Kenosha, themed as a wink back to yesteryear.

Since 1945, The Spot Drive-In (2117 75th St., 262-654-9294, [www.spotdrivein.com](http://www.spotdrivein.com)) has offered patrons year-round window carhop service. The traditions founded by the DuBois family continue today with homemade, fresh all-beef hamburgers and breaded, deep-fried green beans as a tasty side, fried in peanut oil. Everything is washed down with delicious homemade orange soda or root beer, both served in frosted glass mugs.

Time travel continues at the Kenosha History Center (220 51st Place, 262-654-5770, [www.kenoshahistorycenter.org](http://www.kenoshahistorycenter.org)), introducing new generations to the rich and innovating roots of the community still running deep today. This large museum highlights life-size displays depicting what life was like in Kenosha a century ago, with re-creations of a one-room schoolhouse, a grocery store and blacksmith shop. The Rambler Legacy Gallery applauds Kenosha's longtime association as an auto manufacturer. Until 1974, Kenosha boasted the U.S. manufacturing headquarters for the AMC Javelin. A new expanded exhibit at the Kenosha History Center titled "AMX: A New and Bold Direction" salutes the innovation of the design of this car line with dozens of vehicles paraded and explained in the main hall gallery.

Kenosha's expressway focal point landmark is Mars Cheese Castle (2800 W. Frontage Road, 800-655-6147, [www.marscheese.com](http://www.marscheese.com)), founded in 1947 after Martha and Mario Ventura Sr. opened the first cheese store in an old schoolhouse. More than 70 years later, it is still family-operated by second and third generations, with more than 700 cheese selections sold. An expansion of the expressway forced the business to move farther back from the highway in 2011. Fortunately the castle motif was retained, with the new structure still sporting the business' signature towers and medieval features, but doubled in size to include a dining room, tavern, bakery, gift shop and more retail space.

## Evening

An out-of-the-way dining discovery is always a novel idea for new noshing possibilities. The Red Oak (4410 200th Ave., Bristol, 262-857-8588, [www.theredoakrestaurant.com](http://www.theredoakrestaurant.com)), on the border of Kenosha and Bristol, serves a farm-to-table menu with local produce and specialties from the farms, dairies and orchards of Kenosha. Situated in the wooded acres in Paris Township of Kenosha County, cream of mushroom soup, fresh bread, steaks, salmon and garden salads are fresh and inviting to guests. The great dining hall is unique with local artwork and an illuminated chandelier made from strings of twinkle lights entwined in a large tree branch suspended from the ceiling.

As the sun goes down, owner Mike Grab beams with pride welcoming thirsty visitors to Petrifying Springs Biergarten (5555 Seventh St., 262-221-5040, [www.petsbiergarten.com](http://www.petsbiergarten.com)), which is branded as Kenosha's first authentic German beer garden. It's located in the rustic pavilion at Petrifying Springs Park, which is Kenosha's oldest county park. The variety of beers on tap include favorites from Munich, as well as a healthy selection of



Towering dinosaur skeleton re-creations, including the menacing T. rex, are the focus of a crowded exhibit of prehistoric favorites at the Dinosaur Discovery Museum.



The neon light framed corner sign for The Spot Drive-In, dating back to 1945, has become just as famous as the food served at this nostalgic carhop dining landscape.

wines. Plenty of outdoor seating and a free music stage provide local entertainment as well as a menu filled with specialties like brats, warm and soft pretzels, currywurst and other delights. The space is family- and dog-friendly, and some nights include the option of outdoor movies with lawn seating.

*Philip Potempa is a freelance reporter.*