

We invited 9 writers to take one cool tour of their hometown. Read why they loved getting a fresh perspective on familiar surroundings, and then book a tour in your backyard.



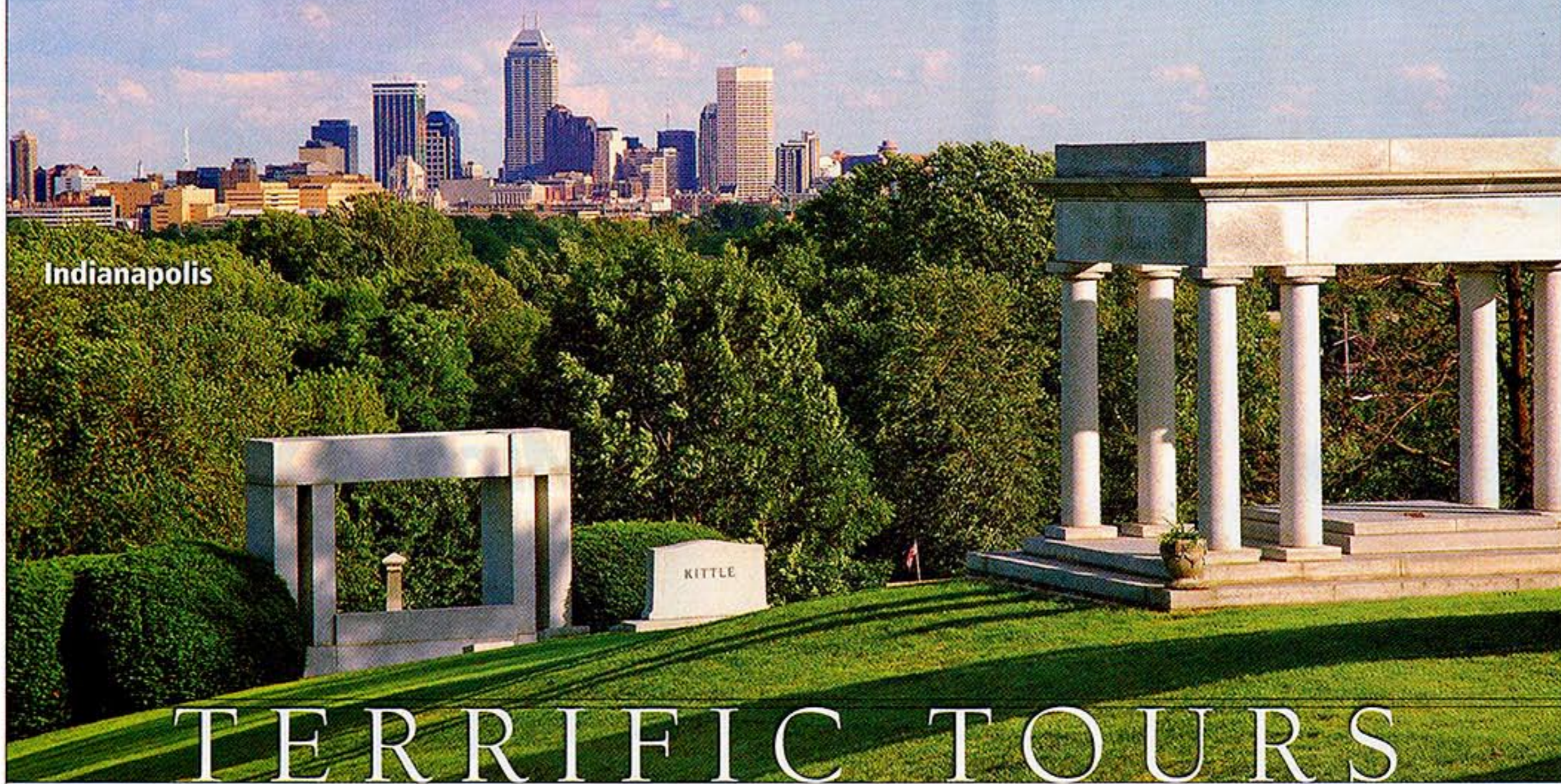
Cleveland



Detroit



Columbus



Indianapolis

## TERRIFIC TOURS

**Indianapolis****Crown Hill Cemetery**

Guide Tom Davis, who leads walking tours on these 550 acres, calls this Indy's "people museum." From \$5 (317/920-2726; [crownhillhf.org](http://crownhillhf.org)).

**WHY** You'll hear the stories of locals you've never heard of (and a few you have). Near gangster John Dillinger's grave, you'll see the resting

place of a World War I soldier who died in the 1918 influenza epidemic. And he's the one who captured my imagination. *Danny Lee*

**Cleveland****Historic Gateway Neighborhood Corp.**

Actors dressed as historical figures chat with visitors during free tours downtown through

a summertime program called Take a Hike! On weekends, dogs are welcome (216/771-1994; [historicgateway.org](http://historicgateway.org)).

**WHY** Lighthouse steps (but no lighthouse) and the buried storefront of a 19th-century theater? Throw in a "chance" encounter with John D. Rockefeller, and I'm suddenly hooked on the city's history. *Sarah Routh*

**Detroit****Wheelhouse Detroit**

Hip guided bicycle rides offer an intimate view of the Motor City, with an eye toward the city's rich history and postrecession bright spots. From \$25; bike rentals available (313/656-2453; [wheelhousedetroit.com](http://wheelhousedetroit.com)).

**WHY** On the Farm-to-Fork tour, we saw lush, verdant community

vegetable gardens flourishing in the shadow of dilapidated buildings. What a powerful tribute to this city's resiliency. *Emily Tennyson*

**Columbus**

**Columbus Food Adventures** Five food-theme van and walking tours include a dessert sampler, a German Village walking tour and



Chicago

a taste of the city's best taco trucks. From \$45 (614/440-3177; columbus foodadventures.com).

**WHY** Ditch your fears of "roach coaches" or language barriers, and learn how to order the amazing red enchiladas from Los Potosinos. *Cynthia Earhart*

## Omaha

### Durham Museum

Chatty, knowledgeable guides hop aboard Omaha's Ollie the Trolley (a local sightseeing staple) for five history tours that start at stunning Union Station. From \$15 (402/444-5071; durhammuseum.org).

**WHY** Seeing the stained-glass windows,

variegated marble and stately porte cocheres of the city's grand mansions made me daydream about the glamorous events that once led stars and presidents to these doors. *Tina King*

## Chicago

**Chicago Architecture Foundation** Architectural river cruises (several companies offer them) are a must-do, but if you want to delve deeper, the CAF's diverse tour menu includes Skyscraper Express, Macy's on State Street and Downtown Deco. From \$5 (312/922-3432; architecture.org).

**WHY** Chicago is an architectural think tank, and every CAF tour reveals something I didn't know about: a Henry Moore sculpture casually tucked in a lobby or Louis Sullivan stained-glass windows casting colored light on the place where Chicago Gospel was born. *Kit Bernardi*

## Saint Paul

### Summit Avenue

**Walking Tour** This stroll takes visitors past the 19th-century mansions on a truly spectacular residential street. On Saturdays, a musician plays the vintage pipe organ in the James J. Hill mansion, where tours begin. Reservations recommended. \$10 (651/297-2555; www.mnhs.org/hillhouse).

**WHY** F. Scott Fitzgerald grew up around here. Seeing how his neighbors used their massive homes

to show off their wealth and power, I understood in a new way his fascination with (and resentment of) affluence. *Gustave Axelson*

## Milwaukee

### Historic Milwaukee Inc.

Volunteers lead walking tours (and one boat trip), including a daily architecture tour that's a fun way to get fresh air during the work day. From \$10 (414/277-7795; historicmilwaukee.org).

**WHY** The architecture is interesting, but I'll remember the people and stories behind the buildings: territory disputes, the first white child (named Milwaukee) and the Polish immigrants who populated Brady Street in the 1800s. *Manya Kaczkowski*

## Cincinnati

### Queen City Under-

**ground** Evening tours of historic Over-the-Rhine take curiosity seekers through the crypt of St. Francis Church and down a makeshift stairwell to a Gothic cellar that once kept barrels of German beer cool. From \$20 (859/951-8560; queen cityunderground.com).

**WHY** Great storytelling backed up by extensive research (and the fact that you have to sign a safety waiver) makes it feel like you'll literally step into the colorful world of corrupt politicians, boxing stars, Franciscan monks, strong men and the first commissioner of baseball. *C.M. Tomlin* ■