



WIDE

OPEN

By Stephanie Angelyn Casola

SPACES

The growing popularity of urban parks shows that simple pleasures can still be found, even in the middle of a metropolis.

Big cities have many advantages—access to cultural amenities, excellent restaurants, unique shopping, hot nightspots—but what they don't have in excess is space, especially the green kind. That is what makes urban parks so beloved. They give visitors a place to play and relax in the middle of the city bustle, and they offer countless amenities of their own, from museums to zoos to great city views.

Today, urban parks are seeing a renaissance in the U.S., as people pay more attention to green living and active lifestyles. Some parks, like Boston Common, have historic ties. Others, like Denver's Stapleton Central Park, represent a new approach in park design and preservation. Together, they share a singular purpose: When city life starts to feel stifling or skyscrapers begin to close in, an urban park offers much-needed refuge. Here are eight spots to check out (no shoes required):

1. CHAIN OF LAKES, MINNEAPOLIS

Minnesota is the land of 10,000 lakes, but with all that water there's still plenty of room for parks and recreation—especially when they center around the lakes. “[Minneapolis’] Chain of Lakes is

the second most popular tourist attraction in the state,” says Dawn Sommers of the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board. And it's easy to see why. The five lakes and the 13.3-mile shoreline parkway ringing around them offer all sorts of recreation: Visitors can

canoe from lake to lake, sign up for sailing lessons, run or bike the lakeside paths, stop for fish tacos at Tin Fish or listen to live music at the Lake Harriet Band Shell. The rose garden and bird sanctuary are good spots for nature lovers, while active-minded folks enjoy the stretches of open beach stocked with paddleboats and sand volleyball courts.

“The Chain of Lakes really is the heart of Minneapolis,” says Robert Payne, a business manager in Minneapolis. “I can leave our house on foot and be fly-fishing on Lake Harriet for scrappy bluegills in 15 minutes.”

“It's been referred to as an urban nirvana,” adds Sommers. “It really is an exciting place to be in the summertime.” Learn more at minneapolisparcs.org/grandrounds.

2. PROSPECT PARK, NEW YORK

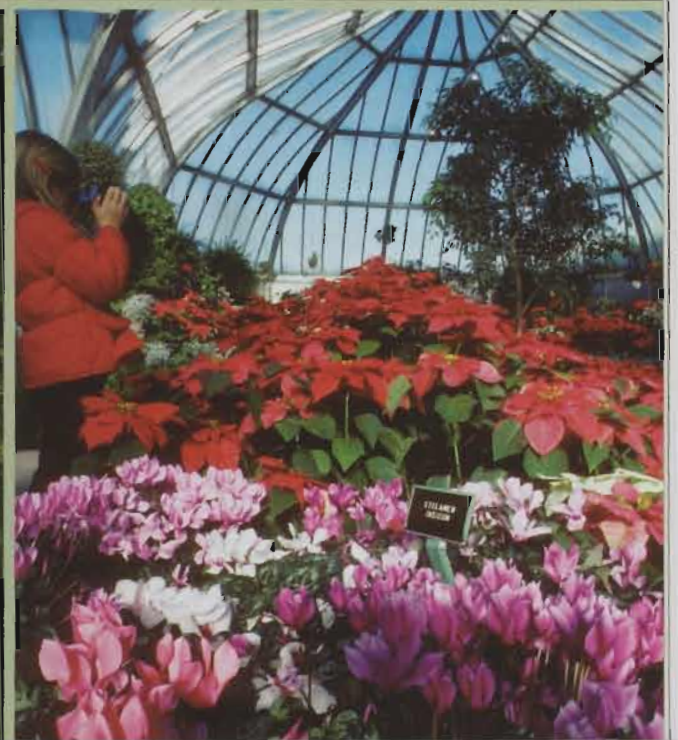
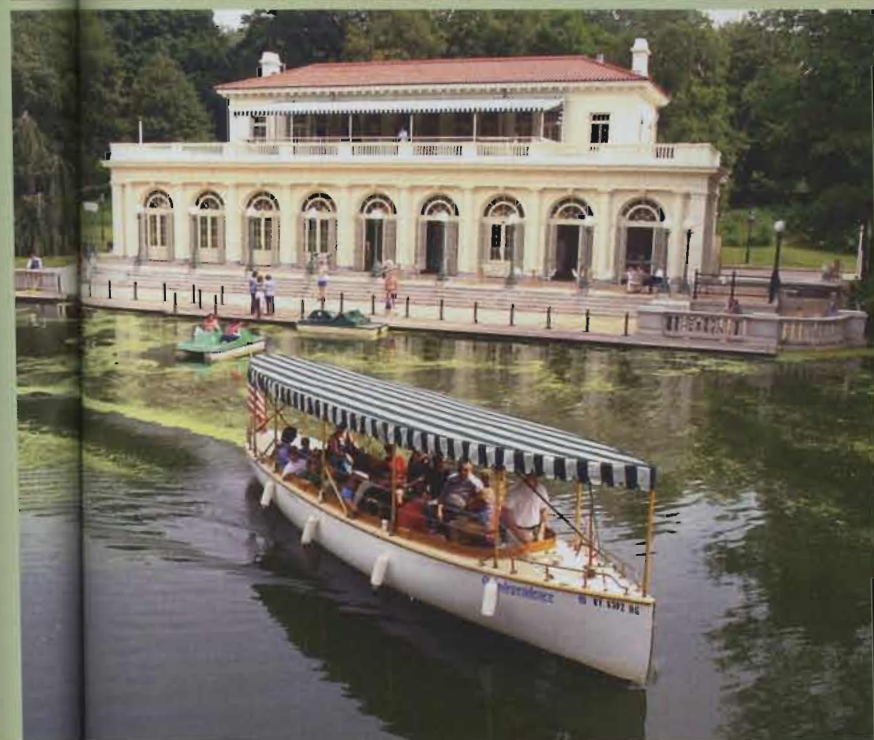
While Central Park wins the glory as the definitive New York City escape, Brooklynites will tell you to check out another work by the architectural team of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux: Prospect Park. In a borough of some 2.5 million residents, it's a remarkably peaceful retreat.

“People are always amazed how, as they walk into Prospect Park, the city recedes behind them,” says park spokesman Eugene Patron. The entrance gives way to open meadows, woodland trails, waterfalls and even a 60-acre fish-filled lake.

From picnics to pedal-boating parties to informal markets, a vibrant energy fills Prospect Park's 585 acres. Its signature space is undoubtedly the 90-acre Long Meadow, the longest unbroken meadow in any American park. Once home to grazing sheep, it now attracts sunbathers, Frisbee players and families flying kites. In summer, the mile-long meadow also plays host to outdoor movie nights and open-air concerts by the New York Philharmonic, so be sure to check the park's events calendar when you're in town. Learn more at prospectpark.org.



Above: Prospect Park's old-fashioned carousel. **Opposite page, clockwise from top:** Enjoying the view at Minneapolis' Lake Calhoun; Detroit's Belle Isle conservatory; boating in Brooklyn's Prospect Park.





FAMILY FUN
IN ORLANDO,
P. 18



NARITA'S
BEST SUSHI,
P. 24

JUNE 2008

nwa

WorldTraveler 

8 Great Urban Parks

Minneapolis, New York, San Francisco,
Boston, Denver, Detroit, Austin, New Orleans

RACE TO THE OLYMPICS

Team USA Takes Shape
at the Olympic Trials

EAT, SLEEP, PLAY:
PORTLAND, OREGON

