

editor's note



RECENTLY, MY FAMILY AND I TOOK OUR FIRST TRIP TO THE WISCONSIN DELLS. If you're from the Midwest, you'll immediately recognize the name as the waterpark capital of the world. (If you're from the East, think Niagara Falls with all the tourist trappings but without the scenery.)

As you might expect, my children's expectations were substantially higher than mine. But surprisingly, I loved our vacation. The waterpark was everything you'd expect, and yes, there were tacky wax museums and other attractions, but there was also a wonderful sense of excitement and the surrounding area is also amazingly beautiful.

Most destinations come with expectations both good and bad. Some of these expectations are imagined (I was disappointed in Santa Fe not because it wasn't a fascinating city but because it didn't live up to the Shangri-La-like expectations in my imagination) while others are based on stories you might have heard or your past experiences.

When I first visited Pittsburgh nearly 20 years ago, it was exactly what I had heard it was: a city very slowly transitioning from its industrial roots to a modern metropolis. There wasn't much excitement in the air, there wasn't much to see, and there wasn't much to do. Which was why I was so shocked during a more recent trip.

By coincidence, my friend Mike Engestrom was also in Pittsburgh that same week so we met for dinner atop Mt. Washington. To get there, we took the Duquesne Incline (if you're not familiar with the Pittsburgh inclines, think of an elevator going diagonally up the steep slope of a small mountain). From atop Mt. Washington we had a glorious view of what is today a very beautiful city.

But my pleasure with Pittsburgh didn't stop with the fabulous views. Whether it was the food (I sampled meals both elegant and unique—for the truly adventurous, visit the original Primanti Brothers Restaurant and order a sandwich stuffed with sizzling meat, melted cheese, french fries, tomato, and coleslaw) or the sites, Pittsburgh proved to be a great destination. It's a tough decision whether to visit one of the Carnegie Museums (I particularly recommend the Hall of Architecture), the fascinating Heinz History Center, or the Phipps Conservatory. And if you have the time, visit the Strip District filled with unique shops, restaurants, and clubs (no, not the type you'd expect by the name) or take in a

game at one of the most beautiful ballparks in America—PNC Park.

And if you're looking for an excuse to visit, there's no better reason than to attend the 2011 NASCC: The Steel Conference. Scheduled for May 11-14, this year's conference offers more than 90 technical sessions and is the premier educational event for structural engineers, fabricators, erectors, and detailers. In addition to practical seminars on the latest design concepts and construction techniques, the Conference offers nearly 200 exhibitors (featuring products ranging from structural software to fabrication equipment) and plentiful networking opportunities. It's a once-a-year opportunity to learn the latest techniques, see the most innovative products, and network with your peers and clients. And one low registration fee gains you admittance to technical sessions, keynote address, the T.R. Higgins Lecture, and the exhibition hall.

Unlike other conferences that issue a general call for papers, NASCC carefully selects topics of interest and then seeks out the top experts and presenters. Some of the presenters are very well known (such as Lawrence Griffis from Walter P Moore and Duane Miller from The Lincoln Electric Co.), while others may not be household names but still bring a distinct expertise to the program (such as Brent Maxfield on Mathcad and Greg Peterson on estimating). We even have celebrities such as Jerome Hajjar, who recently appeared in *Popular Mechanics* magazine!

If you've attended a Steel Conference during the past few years, you already know how valuable an event it is. If you haven't, I urge you to talk to one of the 3,700 people who attended last year.

To view the complete program and to register, visit www.aisc.org/nascc.

I hope to see you in Pittsburgh!

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