

When last we left off, I was stumbling out of House on the Rock feeling dazed and slightly in love. My plan was to leave here and motor over to Madison to check into my Airbnb. Except that a couple of miles down the highway I see a sign for “Frank Lloyd Wright Center”. Britt had just told me the day before to check out Taliesin, so I took an educated guess, slammed on the brakes and pulled in.

I walked into the center and did my usual routine when I end up somewhere random on the road. This consists of me cheerfully saying hello and then throwing myself blatantly at the mercy of whomever is there. “Where am I and what should I do here?” The answer was to sign up for the Taliesin Highlights Tour. It didn’t start for an hour, so I ordered a tasty lunch and ate and enjoyed a lovely view of the river. I was still buzzing from House on the Rock, so sitting inside the clean lines and wide views of a Frank Lloyd Wright building was perfect. I spent the whole tour feeling pretty disconcerted, like very opposites sides of my brain were being stimulated at the same time.

Here are a few pictures from the tour:



*First stop on the tour was the Taliesin School – apparently Frank Lloyd Wright told his students to build the room out to the tree in the front-right. Then, as the tree grew, to just keep cutting the roof back.*





*Taliesin Home*





*Taliesin Gardens. FLW had his office here (you can see his signature red square in the column on the right). The door to his office was a bit hard to find; he wanted his clients to wander in through the main entrance (a tight tunnel) and then be delighted to wander the gardens opening up before them before finally locating his door.*



*Wright incorporated various musical notes and piano imagery into this location. The grounds are beautiful.*

I'd texted my wonderfully flexible hostess at Airbnb that I'd be a tad late, so rushed off towards Madison after the tour. It was a nice ride, Wisconsin really is beautiful, and I showed up to be greeted happily by the owner and excitedly by The Local Furry Brigade. I suspect that people who have pets can't charge as much on Airbnb, and I'm both cheap and like pets of all shapes and sizes, so this is turning into the See America and Snuggle All The Pets Tour.

Madison, Wisconsin

I know you want to see pictures of random other people's pets. Well stick with me!





Madison, Wisconsin

*Zeke! So much excited Corgi love.*



*The stately Juno.*



*This is pretty much the morning situation. I actually spend the most time with Gidget, the cat, but it's nearly impossible to photograph and all black cat no matter how many times she helps*

*you work by laying on your lap between you and the laptop. Also: my foot.*

Um, right, so: Madison. This city is very cool. The downsides of aggressive winters and plethora of bugs might keep me from making it my first choice, but it feels like a super hippy smallish city. Pedestrians are aggressively given the right of way, there are bicyclists everywhere and there are an abundance restaurants serving tasty vegetarian food. Madison seems to also boast an above average number of breweries, which these days is saying something. The city itself is situated on an isthmus between two lakes, so it's easy to make a turn and end up with a great view of open water.

It's also the Wisconsin State Capitol, so a couple of requisite shots of the capitol building:







*Capitol Dome*

I actually ended up going twice, the second time so I could rush up to see the observation deck before it closed. Nice views of the city, the capitol building is built on a small hill so you can see both lakes, etc.



*Looking north and seeing both lakes from a panorama of the Capitol Building.*



You probably saw my picture on the last post from the Memorial Terrace at UW. They have a great open set of landings with a bunch of tables and chairs, a few food and beverage vendors, and strong WiFi you can register to use for free. It's an amazing space, and I was there on a lovely day so it was busy but so big there were tables to spare. Lots of students but definitely a number of families and locals as well. Eventually it started to get dark so I headed back.



*Lake Mendota from UW's Memorial Union*

Scooter parking everywhere! Well, I suspect that tiny scooters can park anywhere and they are piled all over campus. I remember the big scooter presence from when I visited Madison a few years back and they're still a big presence near campus. I snuck mine in by some on the sidewalk hoping the campus parking folks would give me a pass. Success!





*Big scooter in front of smaller scooters. Also only scooter (and rider) I ever saw wearing stuff like a helmet.*

Tuesday had beautiful weather, ever other day it rained at least part of the time.

Wednesday had impressive downpours that were nice enough to schedule themselves every time I hopped in somewhere. I ended up staying around the Atwood neighborhood where I'm staying, it's a bit out from down town but has lots of places to visit.



*Random sidewalk sculptures. Everything reminds me of House on the Rock at this point.*





*Lake Monona from a nearby park. You might be able to make out downtown and the capitol dome in the distance.*

I ended up wandering by the Olbrich Gardens, checked my phone and they were open for another hour so I took an increasingly dark tour of the gardens. Seems like an awesome local spot, very dense gardens chock full of sculptures, hidden towers (I made a circle around one and had no idea it was there, which is impressive given how close I was), and a Thai pavilion. It really was pretty dark, but I tried a couple of photographs.





*An almost dark & stormy night.*



*Thai Pavilion*

We did get a lot of rain while I was there so perhaps less exploring than I'd like, but I had a great time. I can totally see why folks love it here.

A few of the places I enjoyed here:

- Capitol Building, view from the Observation Deck is neat but it closes earlier than the rest of the building. Not necessarily worth a trip back.
- Walking down State Street is ... ok. I ended up doing it in my Great Hunt for a Madison Sticker (which was a total FAIL. Anthology is exactly the store that should have had this. "Oh, that's a really good idea, we should make one of those." Yes, yes you should). There are plenty of UW bumper stickers, but I just couldn't do it. Anyhow, find a destination on State Street and just go a few blocks each way from it.
- For example, go get an excellent Nepalese meal at Himal Chuli on State Street.
- There is a small green just off State Street where a local band of three women were rocking out. I grabbed ice cream and wandered over just as they started into a Cyndi Lauper cover so that was hilarious and cool.
- The Green Owl is another choice spot, tons of Vegetarian and Vegan options.
- Definitely hang out on UW's Memorial Union terrace.
- There is ice cream all over this city. YES!
- Nextdoor was a great, often quiet brewery down the block from my Airbnb. Most of this post was written there. I wouldn't go out of my way to stop by here, but if you're in the neighborhood it's a great place with wifi to enjoy some local beers and get work done during the week.

On Friday I finished work and hit the road, headed West towards The Badlands in South Dakota.