

(tin) just his type

Photographer Earl Richardson revives
the rare art of tintype photography



Richardson spent 20 years working for newspapers, including *Lawrence Journal-World*, *Kansas City Star* and *Topeka Capital-Journal*. Now he does portraiture for family and friends.

Earl Richardson commissioned a reproduction of a Civil War-era camera, with original lenses from the mid-1800s.



Earl Richardson has known since childhood how he wanted to make his living. When his dad introduced him to photography, “It was just like somebody flipped a switch. From that point on I knew what I wanted to do professionally.”

Richardson earned a degree in photojournalism from the University of Kansas and spent the next 20 years from 1983 to 2003 working for newspapers, including the *Lawrence Journal-World*, *Kansas City Star* and *Topeka Capital-Journal* as the director of photography until he left to launch a freelance career. Along the way, he earned a law degree to help other photographers with copyright infringement. “I was bored,” he laughs.

These days, he produces high-quality photography for higher-education marketing. He also covers the occasional wedding and does portraiture for friends and family—some of the portraits with a vintage, 1800s appearance. His subjects are in modern dress, but the photos themselves are luminous and imperfect in nature, the result of a chemical photo process Richardson started exploring a couple years ago.

Richardson recently stumbled upon the art of making tintypes, taking photography back to its roots. “I started seeing some images out there with just a really different aesthetic,” he says.

When he first looked into it, the process seemed daunting. But Richardson reconnected with a photographer friend in Kansas City named Jeff Schotland, who had begun experimenting with tintypes and was willing to teach him. “I had a New Year’s resolution at the end of 2013 that I was going to get into tintypes,” Richardson says. After visiting with Schotland he thought, “Okay, I can do that.”

“I think with digital, everything looks too perfect sometimes. It’s nice to have something that feels a little more authentic.”

—EARL RICHARDSON

The process of creating a tintype is known as wet collodion and was developed by Frederick Scott Archer in the early 1850s. “Traditional film has an emulsion that holds light-sensitive silver in place to make your exposure. A collodion is kind of like the emulsion; it’s got collodion (nitrocellulose in alcohol) and ether, and some other chemicals like cadmium bromide. Those get mixed together and you pour them on a plate.”

Richardson says that the name “tintype” is actually a misnomer, as most tintypes weren’t—and still aren’t—made on tin. “They used something else, but they called them tintypes because tin was seen as being a cheap metal.” Richardson makes his tintypes on blackened aluminum, but says that glass or even Plexiglas works.

Wet collodion was a process that was in wide use for a fleeting amount of time, about 20–25 years. “And while it largely fell out of favor because of dry plates and film, it did see very limited use in the 20th century,” Richardson says.

The beauty—and the handicap—of tintype photography, Richardson says, is that everything has to be done while the plate is wet, which leads to some intriguing blemishes. “Most of my tintypes have a thumbprint in them,” he says, grinning.

“What I really find interesting is that even if you shoot the same setup over and over again, no two pictures are going to look alike. They’re all going to be slightly different, and I like the imperfections. I think with digital, everything looks too perfect sometimes. It’s nice to have something that feels a little more authentic.”

Richardson’s tintype “darkroom” consists of a cardboard box covered with a blanket that he takes with him in the field. “You don’t have to have a traditional darkroom. I do everything out of the back of my car when I am away from home,” he says.

It’s not super light sensitive, Richardson says, so you never have to be in complete darkness. It’s not sensitive to red light. As soon as development stops—which takes about 20 seconds—the tintypes are safe to be in broad daylight. “So you have this wonderful 19th-century aesthetic with kind of the immediacy of digital. You’ll have a picture in your hand in under 10 minutes, and an image on that metal that’s probably going to be archival for 150 years.”

And, he says, one doesn’t necessarily have to have an old camera to get started. “Basically you can do this with any sort of camera that you can make a film holder to hold a metal plate that’s wet. I’ve seen people do this with regular 35mm cameras.”

For himself, though, Richardson commissioned a reproduction of a Civil War-era camera. “It’s nothing fancy,” he says. “It’s basically a beautiful wooden box with a bellows.” Though the camera is a modern reproduction, the lenses are originals from the mid-1800s. “I often wonder, where have these been and what have they seen in the last 140 years?” Richardson says.

Because a tintype is essentially a negative on metal, images are mirrored. And though he’s definitely fond of the metal photographs, “I don’t look at this as my end product,” Richards says. “I look at this as a really nice negative that I can scan in and make big prints from.” He is also not against flipping the images digitally so that the print displays the image correctly. But, he says, “There are purists who won’t do that.”

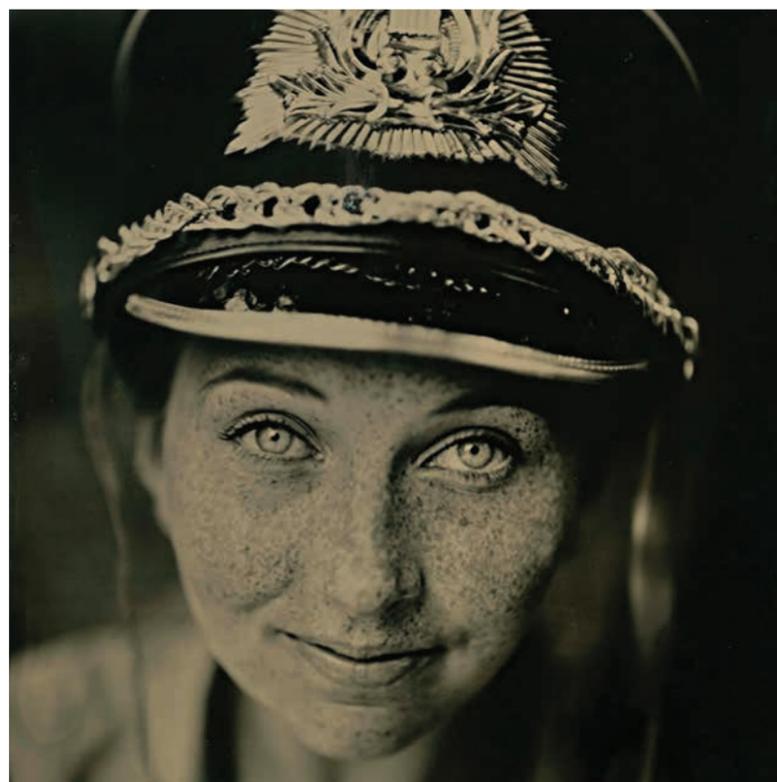
Richards often thinks about the tintype photographers who came before him. “It blows me away to think about all of those people during the Civil War taking all this stuff out in a horse-drawn wagon to a battlefield and making pictures, in pretty terrible conditions a lot of the time.”

Meanwhile, Richardson is able to talk about wet collodion with a Facebook group of enthusiasts who share tips and techniques.

“I think it’s a lot like cooking. You have to do it by experience and feel.” **KM**

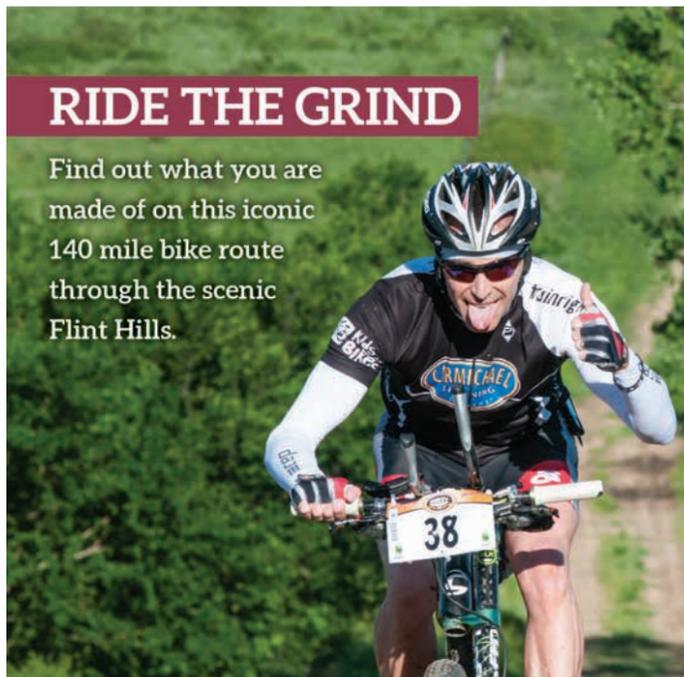


Hannah Heatherman is a senior at Ottawa High School and the drum major for the marching band. Her father commissioned Earl Richardson to shoot wet plate senior pictures for Hannah in fall 2015.



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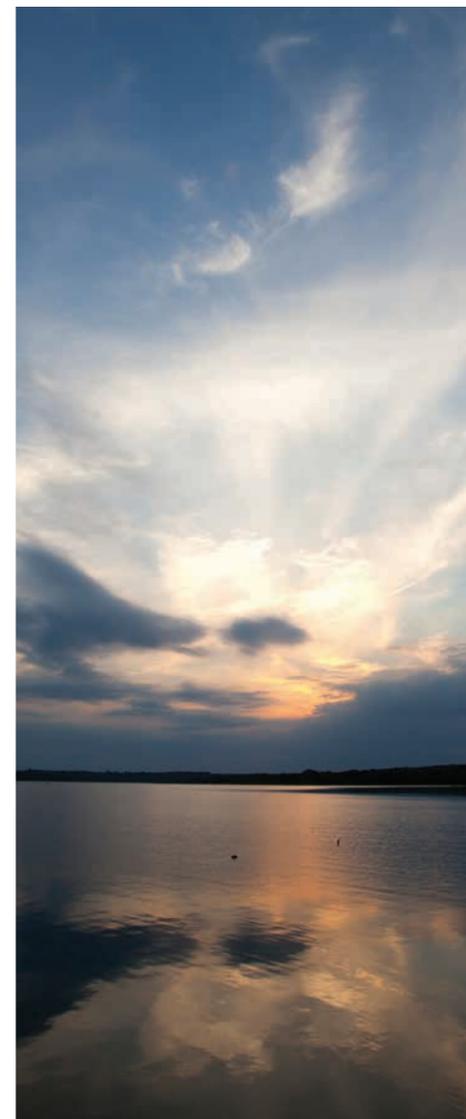
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Big and wild

A writer, artist and photographer explore the bold, oversized natural beauty of our state



SUNRISE ART

Eleven years ago, while recovering from the removal of two brain tumors, artist Debbie Wagner of Bennington pledged to paint the Kansas sunrise "for as long as it feels like a lovely process, which may very well be for the rest of my life."

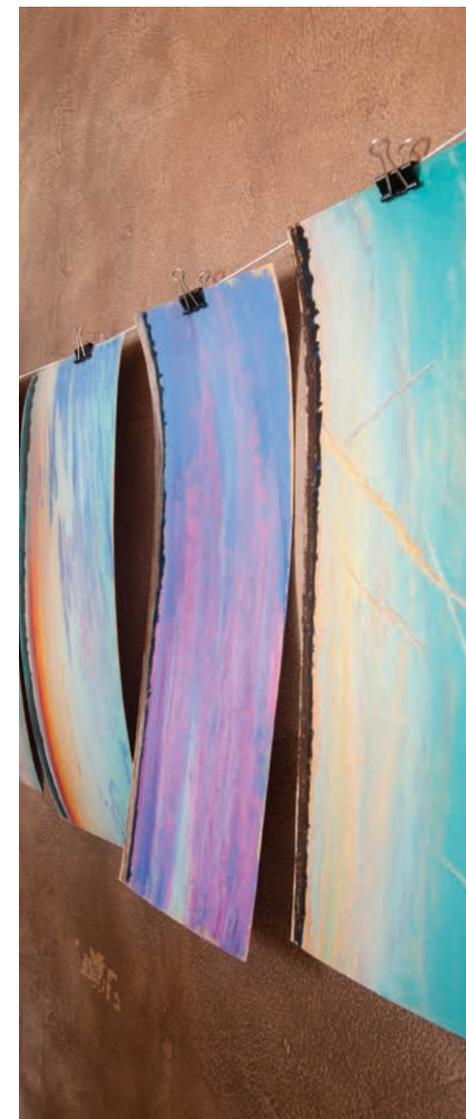
It is a ritual that Wagner continues to this day, rising each morning and capturing the mood of each Kansas sunrise. "The color of the sky changes according to the season, and of course depending on the amount of light," explains Wagner. And then, tucked into the landscape, are small reflections of the artist's daily life in a rural community.

"...for as long as it feels like a lovely process, which may very well be for the rest of my life."

—ARTIST DEBBIE WAGNER,
answering how long she will paint
each day's sunrise

Wagner explains how some colors she notes during the day, such as an unexpectedly beautiful shade of burgundy on the fields of milo, affect the colors she will choose for the tenuous strip of land that she pictures below the sky.

Over the years, Wagner's paintings have become popular gifts, as people purchase her sunrise art from particular dates to commemorate important life events.



to border, twelve months a year, at regularly scheduled intervals, every single day of the week.

Without fail, the Kansas sky produces spectacular pageants of luminous color at the beginning and ending of each and every day.

Pink, purple, and orange hues of predawn light spread across the dark edge of the earth each morning sunrise. Birdsong and the thrumming of wings can be heard in that final still moment just before that brilliant orange ball of fire pops up over the horizon. Long shadows of morning stretch across the prairie as dawn becomes day.

Each evening, displays of brilliant red and orange light play across the Western sky as the sun descends toward the horizon. Rays of sunlight reach between cloud formations, creating the illusion of mythical silver linings. And during the presence of storm clouds, thunder and lightning crisscross the evening

Kansas is blessed to have a landscape with a range of natural beauty that defies a uniform description. And wherever you are in Kansas you can enjoy a natural beauty that is big and wild.

THE BIG ATTRACTION

Patricia Ackerman praises the state's biggest, best, cannot-miss natural wonder

There are many places to experience the beauty of Kansas. You can drive across the state and visit the official tourist destination regions. You can attend sporting events and festivals with music, art and local cuisine. You can experience pioneer and Western history.

But regardless of which road you travel or which locations you visit, there is one natural attraction that Kansas visitors and residents should never take for granted. It can be witnessed in all regions, from border



sky to produce theatrical displays of light and color in motion. Adults and children have been known to hold their breath in that final moment, just before the sun melts into darkness.

Kansans often take their endless view of the sky for granted. In the course of living life, they forget to look up from cell phones, computers, and the tasks of daily life to appreciate the beauty that is ever-present and ever-changing. No two sunrises or sunsets are ever the same.

Artists and photographers try to capture the essence of what makes a sunrise or a sunset beautiful. This is not an easy task. No matter how many attempts are made, it is nearly impossible to capture the feeling of wonder that occurs in that fleeting moment when the last section of orange sun deflates below the horizon. *Hisssssss.*

So when you travel Kansas, take a break from your phone or GPS. Stop, pull over, and make time to watch the one-of-a-kind sunrise or sunset on the Kansas plains.

Kansas residents should schedule more sunrise and sunset breaks into their daily lives. Walk, bike, or drive to the edge of town. Alter the pace of life by starting or ending each day intentionally watching the sun rise or set. Introduce children to the beauty of the Kansas sky.

There is a place where one-of-a-kind magic happens every day.

There is a place. And the place is right here.

THE WILD

Photographer Josh Roesener writes about a lifetime of exploring Big Basin Prairie Preserve

I have lived my whole life in western Kansas and made countless trips to and through the Big

“Their majestic beauty—which I had enjoyed from afar—only increased at close proximity.”

—JOSH ROESENER

Basin. It has always fascinated me, perhaps because it is so close to my home, but just so different than my flat farm and pastureland.

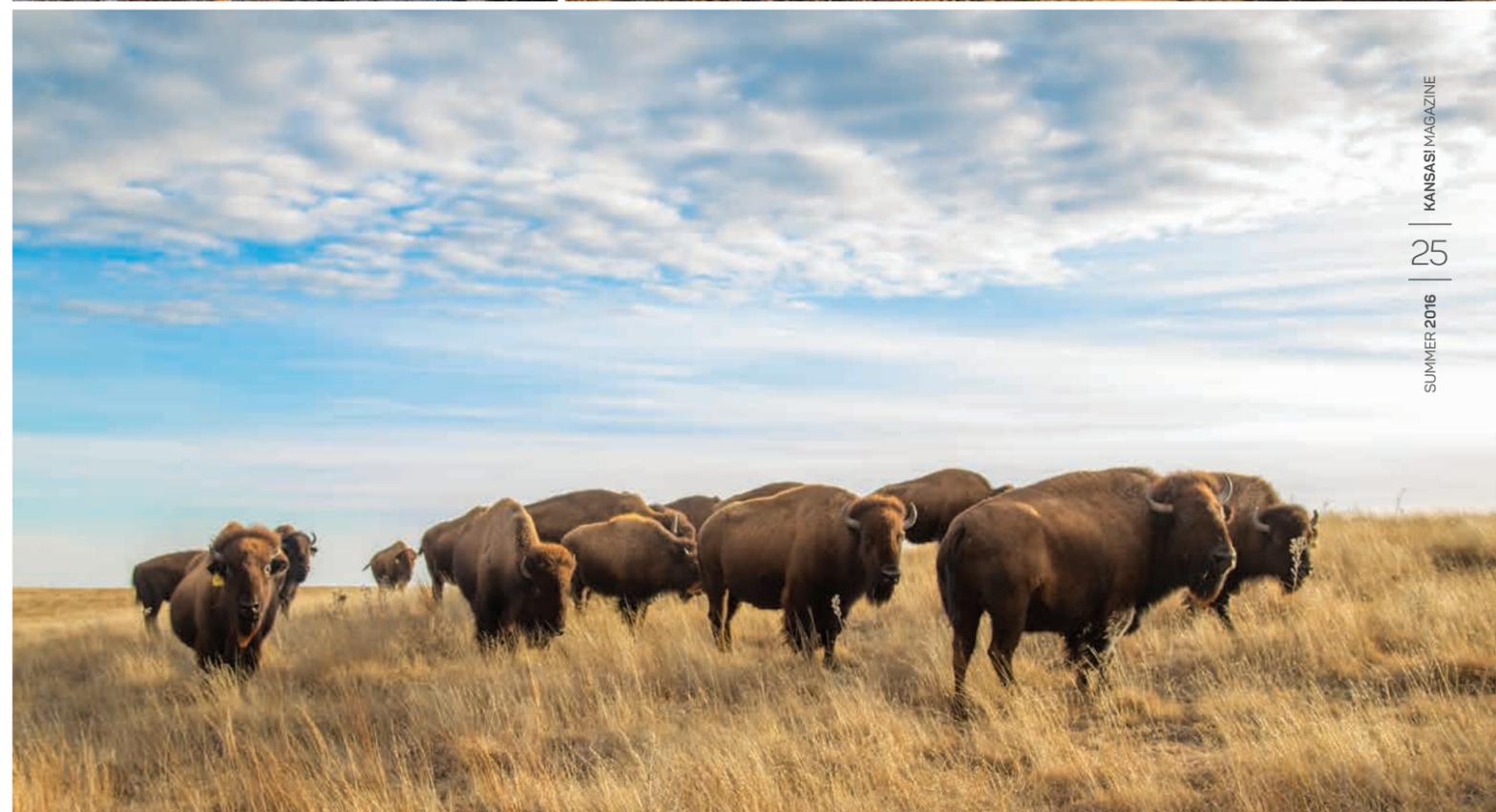
Of course, some of the magic might come from the herd of buffalo that lives at the preserve. When you turn off the well-traveled highway onto the rough gravel trails through the prairie and catch a glance of the herd, it is almost as if you are stepping back in time.

For my most recent return to Big Basin, I spent two afternoons photographing the area. On the first day, I climbed up the hill to the Living Water Monument and just sat and looked at nothing—and everything. I then snapped pictures of the natural, almost untouched beauty of the area until the sun slipped below the west rim of the basin, and I felt as if I was the only person on the planet, just me and those buffalo silently grazing on the basin floor.

On day two, I met with the superintendent of the preserve. He drove me to the buffalo herd to see the animals at close range. Of course, we remained inside our pickup because buffalo are much faster than we are. I was surprised to notice that the bison seemed almost as excited to see us as I was them. Apparently, they know that a pickup headed their way usually means they are getting grain. You really can't respect the size of a buffalo until you are next to one; many of these cows (female buffalo) stand almost 6 feet tall from their hoof to their hump. Their majestic beauty—which I had enjoyed from afar—only increased at close proximity. I was fascinated, but they weren't. The bison quickly lost interest when they realized we had no grain, yet for some reason they hung around the area, almost posing for me as I photographed away.

This was timeless beauty.

This was wild Kansas at its best. **KM**



PHOTOGRAPHS Josh Roesener

a city in the hills

Nestled in the Flint Hills, Manhattan offers an anything-goes atmosphere with a side of adventure



In Manhattan, Midwest charm meets big ideas. Your weekend is whatever you make it—heaven on a fork, local art, dancing the night away, or simply soaking up the soft beauty of the Flint Hills that surround “The Little Apple.” Regardless of what you choose to do, you’re sure to discover why the community is dubbed a family, and you’ll probably leave with more friends than you had when you arrived.

A good 36 hours in town is all you need, so we’ve provided you with an itinerary. Come Monday, however, don’t blame us when you need to burn a sick day to recuperate.

FRIDAY

Shop around, 2 p.m.

Begin with a little leisurely shopping. You’ll find a variety of local shops tucked into every corner of Manhattan’s revitalized downtown. Add some unique décor to your home with a piece from Gatherings at 3 Thirteen, or browse beautiful European-made housewares at BoxLab. Downtown Manhattan offers temptations for everyone, from yarn and party supplies to cocktail dresses and camping gear.

Explore the Flint Hills, 4 p.m.

Take a short walk to the Flint Hills Discovery Center. While the exhibits at the facility are great for children to explore, adults will also enjoy learning the story of the beautiful Flint Hills that

Enjoy Coco Bolos’ specialty, “loud food, spicy music,” if you’re in the mood for New Mexican cuisine.

Head downtown to shop for a few souvenirs. Stop at Gatherings at 3 Thirteen if you’re looking for a decorative accessory or home accent.

Be sure to start one of your mornings at Arrow Coffee Co. The first drink is on the house!

WHERE TO STAY

BLUEMONT HOTEL

The limestone and glass building is a new favorite among visitors, thanks to its upscale environment and proximity to the K-State campus and Aggieville.

HILTON GARDEN INN

Featuring plush guestrooms and free parking, this hotel is located within easy walking distance of shops and restaurants downtown.

THE HOMEPLACE AT PRAIRIEWOOD RETREAT

Plan your stay in advance to snag one of Prairiewood’s two exquisite suites, perfect for couples. Prairiewood is located near Liquid Art Winery.



surround Manhattan. Beginning in September, visit the temporary exhibit “Going Home: Hidden Histories of the Flint Hills.”

Spice it up, 6 p.m.

Coco Bolos, located in Aggieville, Manhattan’s entertainment district, lives up to its slogan, “loud food, spicy music.” Enjoy flavors from the Gulf Coast and Southern New Mexico, straight from the open-exhibit kitchen. The Tijuana Trainwreck—layers of corn tortillas, machaca chicken, chili verde, chili con carne, bolo beans, Monterey jack cheese, roasted corn and sour cream on top—is a local favorite.

Kick back, 8 p.m.

Since you’re already in Aggieville, it’s definitely worth it to take in a little nightlife fun. Mingle at Auntie Mae’s Parlor, a former speakeasy that opened beneath a plumbing shop during Prohibition.

SATURDAY

Get energized, 8 a.m.

Arrow Coffee Company’s beans are purchased from Messenger Coffee in Kansas City, which works with coffee farmers worldwide. Owner Ben Motley says this focus on people starts with the farmers and ends with the baristas smiling at customers. “From the people who get up before dawn and bake pastries, or spend months studying espresso before they even

wide open spaces



Linear Trail

touch a machine, to the customers who keep us in business—they all push us toward being better.” First-time customers are in for a treat as the first drink is on the house.

Take a walk, 9 a.m.

Enjoy a beautiful fall morning on Linear Park Trail. Choose a section from the nine-mile trail that leads you through tree-covered pathways alongside the Kansas River or simply enjoy a new perspective of the scenic Flint Hills.

Artful encounters, 10 a.m.

If the weather calls you indoors, enjoy regional artwork at Kansas State University’s Beach Museum of Art. Four permanent galleries are devoted to visual art, and new, thought-provoking exhibits rotate through the museum. No wallet required—admission is free.

Pack the purple, time varies

If you happen to be in town on a Wildcat game day, you don’t need a ticket to experience the excitement. At K-State, tailgating is an art form. Park in one of the lots adjacent to Bill Snyder Family Stadium and meet up with friends for grilled delicacies, lawn games, and a hearty dose of purple pride.

Have a sip, 4 p.m.

For a little more imbibing, Liquid Art Winery and Estate’s hilltop tasting room offers breathtaking 360-degree views of Manhattan and the Flint Hills. Danielle and David Tegmeier opened the 10-acre winery in spring of 2016 and added 7,000 grapevines. “Guests will be able to taste a flight of wine or hard cider, or buy it by the glass or bottle,” Danielle says.

Worthwhile indulgence, 7 p.m.

It’s should be illegal to visit Manhattan and skip out on Harry’s. Andrea Grier, Harry’s operating partner, says the restaurant is known for food so divine that you’ll taste it in your dreams; try the bruschetta or filet royale, two of Harry’s signature

LOOKING FOR MORE?

While this is a busy sampling of Manhattan culture for a weekend trip, it’s only the tip of the iceberg. From local breweries to fall craft shows, there’s so much more to discover. Visit manhattan.org to learn more.

dishes, Grier adds. “Harry’s soul is woven into the history of Downtown Manhattan,” she says. “Within the ornate, vintage Wareham hotel building, our team delivers a modern dining experience with a hyper-focus on our guests and a passion for handcrafting fresh, premium dishes.”

Lock into adventure, 9 p.m.

You’ll need that delicious fuel for the mental exercises ahead at Locked Manhattan, the city’s first escape-room adventure. Zachary Droge, co-founder, says it blends together mystery, problem-solving and adrenaline-inducing stories. “It’s a chance to escape reality and immerse yourself into what feels like a movie,” he adds.

You and a group of friends have one hour to unlock a room filled with puzzles that will lead you to your eventual escape.

Wind down, 10:30 p.m.

If you need a nightcap, wander to 4 Olives, to experience its standout cocktail program that mixes creativity with unexpected flavors. Grab a seat at the bar to watch the skilled bartenders practice their craft, whether that includes an egg white or flaming orange peel.

SUNDAY

A hearty breakfast, 10 a.m.

Meet The Chef, breakfast lovers. This local favorite serves down-home dishes that keep the brightly decorated space packed from open to close. Sink your fork into gooey crab cake eggs Benedict, or sip on a “manmosa,” made from light beer and orange juice.

Victory lap, noon

End your weekend with a stroll through K-State’s beautiful campus. With some of the prettiest fall foliage around and historic limestone buildings, you’ll feel like an undergrad again. After all, you know how to plan one heck of a weekend in The Little Apple. manhattan.org **KM**

wide open spaces



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Tailgating, Liquid Art Winery, Linear Trail, Kansas State University Beach Museum of Art, Harry’s, 4 Olives

