

Friday

For the week of December 25, 2006



We'll take you there

A coming-home guide to the cool places you've been missing. **PAGES 4-6**

COVER STORY



LONNIE TIMMONS III | PLAIN DEALER FILE

Christmas colors on the Terminal Tower make for a seasonal skyline. Show visiting Cleveland expats parts of the city they won't so easily recognize.

Home for the holidays? Let us show you around

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The New York Times called Cleveland one of its “52 Places to Go in 2015.” Cleveland has also earned praise from Travel + Leisure, Fodor’s Travel and the Los Angeles Times in the last two years. ¶ It’s a great place to visit, they say. ¶ We’ve always known that.

When Cleveland expats returning for the holiday season, it’s time to show off. This year, there’s more than ever to brag about, especially the new Flats East Bank, which brought more than a dozen restaurants, clubs and bars to the riverfront — a riverfront many returnees may remember as one huge drunken frat bash in the 1980s and ‘90s.

With the holidays upon us, I’m prepping to play tour guide. Here are some must-sees on my list.

I’ve looked beyond such obvious choices as the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, Playhouse Square and Christmas Story House and Museum — all absolutely worth a visit — to whole neighborhoods and places that define our city, yesterday, today and tomorrow.

The new

Flats East Bank: This is definitely not the Flats you remember. Beginning in earnest with the August opening of Zack Bruell’s swanky Alley Cat Oyster Bar and culminating in the fall with Beerhead’s craft beer, more than a dozen new bars, restaurants and clubs have opened in the \$750 million Flats East Bank development. These also include Steve Schimoler’s Crop bar-restaurant complex, which features a fantastic rock-themed menu at Crop Rocks; Big Bang dueling piano bar; Flip Side gourmet burgers on Front Avenue; a boardwalk with spectacular views; and the 27,000 square-foot Punch Bowl Social Club, part restaurant, part bar, part bowling alley and part arcade.

Batuqui: 12706 Larchmere Blvd., Cleveland, 216-801-0227, batuquicleveland.com: The charming eatery in a Victorian century house is

the first place for Clevelanders to sample the multilayered cuisines of Brazil since beloved Sergio’s and Sarava restaurants closed in 2012. Batuqui’s simple, rustic menu highlights the cuisine of the coastal Afro-Brazilian state of Bahia, and the inland state of Minas Gerais, where flavors of the native Indians abound. Located in the historic Larchmere antique district, it’s a perfect pre-, post- or during-shopping break spot, too.

Fast Eddie’s: 7729 W. Ridge-wood Drive, Parma, 440-340-4423, fasteddiesparma.com: This isn’t the same old Parmatown expats may remember. Nowhere is the new Parma vibe more apparent than at Fast Eddie’s fantastic modern comfort food restaurant, opened earlier this fall. Owned by chef Eddie Cerino, Fast Eddie’s is an update of the Fast Eddie’s that stood on Pearl Road in

Parma from 1985 to ‘94. Known for “creative burger cuisine” (long before hipster chefs in trendier areas discovered it) and comfort faves such as city chicken and meatloaf. They still serve all of those, plus a wide array of small plates and craft cocktails in their sleek new industrial-chic cafe.

Sarita: 14523 Madison Ave., Lakewood, 216-226-5200; sarita-restaurant.com: Longtime Clevelanders will lament the loss of Players on Madison in Lakewood — but not for too long. The spirit of the beloved Italian-American restaurant lives on in the new Sarita, opened by longtime Players executive chef Anthony Romano this fall. With an emphasis on small plates such as pizzettes and flat breads, plus new and classic takes on beef, duck and other meats and seafood, and craft cocktails, the creative flavor of Players is still there.