



WHY I LOVE...

Pittsburgh

ACTRESS **GILLIAN JACOBS** SAYS HER HOMETOWN IS MORE ARTISTIC AND VIBRANT THAN OUTSIDERS MIGHT THINK

Gillian Jacobs has encountered more than one snobby comment when she tells people she's from Pittsburgh. "They'll say, 'Oh, I'm sorry,' and that just makes you instantly livid," says Jacobs, who now lives in Los Angeles.

Pittsburgh suffers from an outdated reputation, she says. It's "come a long way from people's perceptions of it as a really polluted, smoky city at the height of the steel industry to actually a very clean city now," she says. "It's got a lot going on in the tech industry and a lot going on in the arts scene."

Jacobs is best known for playing Britta Perry on cult favorite *Community*, canceled this year by NBC but revived by Yahoo for a sixth season to air online. She also stars in *Hot Tub Time Machine 2*, out Christmas Day, and Judd Apatow's forthcoming Netflix series, premiering in 2016.

She grew up in the Pittsburgh suburb of Mt. Lebanon, where she lived until she moved to New York at 17 to attend the Juilliard School. Her childhood acting experience in Pittsburgh was good preparation for the prestigious arts school.

"I was really lucky because there was a lot to do as a kid in the theater in Pittsburgh," she says. "I was pretty much always in a play, from third grade until I graduated high school."

Every Friday, Jacobs and her mother looked for audition notices. She did it all: musicals, dinner theater, classics, modern plays. She remembers the moment she fell in love with acting; she was 12, and had a tiny part—as a boy—in a Pittsburgh Public Theater production of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. She was in awe of her adult co-stars, actors from New York and Boston, and of being a part of their world.

"I thought the set was really cool, and I thought my costume was really cool, and the actors would play poker backstage and I would watch them ... it just felt really, really cool," she says.

It's not just actors who find opportunity here, Jacobs says. The city is home to a vibrant visual arts scene, thanks to strong local university programs and the city's many museums. Also, artists can afford to live in Pittsburgh, which can be a problem in larger cities. Art "doesn't feel so unattainable growing up in Pittsburgh," she says. "It feels like a part of the life of the city."

Hollywood has taken notice; Pittsburgh has recently hosted filming for movies including *The Fault in Our Stars* and *The Dark Knight Rises*. And Jacobs has noticed that she hears fewer rude comments and more praise.

"More and more I meet people in L.A. who have spent time there and love it," she says. "I think it really surprises people."

—Meredith Heagney

★ THE BEST PLACES TO ... ★

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EONS FASHION ANTIQUE

"A (vintage) place that I loved in high school, and I still go back to every time I'm home. ... I got all my dresses for high school dances there."

5850 Ellsworth Ave.
412-361-3368

Sit and read

CARNEGIE LIBRARY OF PITTSBURGH

"I have such fond memories of going to the main Carnegie Library in (the neighborhood of) Oakland as a kid and sitting in the window-sill there and reading books."

4400 Forbes Ave.
carnegielibrary.org;
412-622-3114



See live theater

PITTSBURGH PUBLIC THEATER

"I acted there a lot as a kid. They do a really great mixture of new plays and also classical plays and musical theater."

621 Penn Ave.
ppt.org; 412-316-1600

Appreciate art

THE MATTRESS FACTORY ART MUSEUM

It's "all contemporary and installation art pieces, and they actually have residences for artists who live and make work there. I think that's some of the most exciting art in Pittsburgh."

500 Sampsonia Way
mattress.org; 412-231-3169