

25 Suggestions for How to Love Your City (Because Your City Needs Your Love)

Written by Gillian Wegener

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President, Modesto-Stanislaus Poetry Center

1. Learn the names of plants – especially the weeds that grow out of the asphalt, especially the hard-luck parking lot trees.
2. Admire the gum stains on the sidewalk outside the library – how they make their own constellations.
3. Know exactly how many species of birds will cross your yard each morning. Know their favorite seeds: millet for this one, sunflower for that.
4. Take the backroad to the market, the alleyway to the hardware store.
5. Consider the shattered mirror bits on the corner – how they reflect back the bluest sky.
6. Study the hands of someone you know like the back of your own hands.
7. Visit the all the local attractions, take in all the views. Don't wait until you have visitors.
8. Be safe in the knowledge that the firecrackers at midnight are most likely just firecrackers.
9. Make up a new recipe using your own dandelion greens and the zucchini your neighbor gave you.
10. Find a street you've never been on and drive it slowly, windows down.
11. The moon, the stars, the stars, the moon. Stand in your driveway and stare up at them.
12. Give flowers to the street-sweeper – the man and the machine.
13. Go out at dawn and photograph what you consider too familiar.
14. Explain to your visitor why the city motto is what it is, why it isn't what it isn't.
15. Weave a blanket for your city of long dry grasses, of shoelaces, of electrical wire, and of the lost feathers of blue jays.
16. Listen to the stories. Weave those in too.
17. Know why your city has two different street grids. Love the north-south. Love the north-east/south-west.
18. Walk your neighborhood every day and see how the colors of the houses depend on the slant of sunlight.

19. Say thank you. Say please. We owe each other nothing, and also everything.
20. Eat elote in summer. Eat tamales in winter. Eat phò year-round.
21. Keep in mind that the city's favorite color is green – the exterior green of everything alive, the interior green of hope for being better.
22. Paint a self-portrait of you and your city: the city as protagonist, as muse, as open-armed and whistling.
23. Visit all the thrift shops. Pay careful attention to what's in the corners, the coffee urns, the housedresses, the yellowing paperback books.
24. When someone groans about your city, buy them a coffee and tell the histories of the people for whom the streets were named, the ones who were here before the streets had even been planned.
25. Write your city a poem and then another and then another and then another.