

Arrived in Urbana-Champaign for Reflections|Projections 2009

devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20091016-01

October 16, 2009



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Today was a long travel day. I left my office at 9:30am to catch the bus from Redmond to downtown Seattle, then took the train to the Tukwila station, then took the shuttle bus to Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (because Airport Station doesn't open until later this year), then flew to Chicago O'Hare airport, and then drove to Urbana-Champaign, with a stop at the Bourbonnais Steak and Shake on the recommendation of a friend as a good stopping point—about halfway—and an introduction to classic Midwest road food, arriving (after several wrong turns) at my hotel at midnight. If only there were a way I could have worked a ferry into that itinerary. This is only my second visit to the Midwest, and my first venture outside of the Chicago area. Things I had trouble with:

- Being in the correct lane for the exit I want to take.
- Getting into the cash lane for the toll booths.

It was a bit eerie driving along the highway and seeing names of cities that up until now were merely locations of legend (or product code names). Places like Chicago, St. Louis, Memphis, Des Moines, Indiana, Iowa. But now I'm in Urbana working the Job Fair and wondering whether I'm prepared for my talk tomorrow. **Bonus weird sign:** From the train, I saw a shop called *Best Cake Teriyaki*. I didn't know you could make cake teriyaki, and I'm not sure I ever want to see one. **Online mapping showdown:**

- [Google Maps](#) says to take I-80 towards "Lowa" (should be "Iowa") and then take exit I-57S towards "Memohis" (should be "Memphis"). It also has that street view thing so you can familiarize yourself with the intersections ahead of time.
- [Bing Maps](#) spells the geographic names correctly and also tells you whether the ramp is on the left or right. It also gives the streets between which the destination can be found, which is good when you're not familiar with the area. No street view, though.
- [Mapquest](#) also gets the spelling right and calls out the left ramps. (Otherwise, a right ramp is implied.) Also no street view.

As it happens, I used the Google directions as my primary reference and got lost multiple times because I more than once found myself in the wrong lane with no time to get into the correct lane before the exit was past, and then had to get off the highway, turn around, and try to recover. I didn't show it above, but Google also sent me down some back roads to get to my hotel instead of sticking to the main roads. I missed the tiny side street and didn't realize my mistake until I was two and a half miles past where I should've turned.

Next time, I'm going to use Bing as my primary reference and supplement with Google street view. (I'm sorry, Bing folks, for doubting you!)

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