

PENNSYLVANIA WEEKENDERS

Mary Irene Dolan

From natural wonders and amusement parks, to music festivals and car shows—there's so much to see and do on a weekend away, right here in PA!



Go spelunking in Laurel Caverns, PA's largest cave.
PHOTO COURTESY LAUREL HIGHLANDS VISITORS BUREAU

OHIOPYLE 4.5 HOUR DRIVE

IF YOU'RE AN ADVENTURE SEEKER, DISCOVER IT OUT WEST IN the Laurel Highlands at Ohiopyle, PA. You'll find some of the best white water rafting and kayaking on the East Coast in Ohiopyle State Park's 19,000 acres. Choose between adrenaline-pumping, intense rapids for seasoned rafters or a more leisurely, novice-friendly float on the Youghiogheny River.

While you're there, take in the other sights including photogenic waterfalls—like Ohiopyle Falls and Cucumber Falls—and the sandstone water-slides in Meadow Run's nature-built waterpark. Land-lovers will have no shortage of things to do either with rock climbing, biking, hiking, camping and even zip lining at Ohiopyle Zip Line Adventure Park.

The Highlands are also home to PA's largest cave, the Laurel Caverns, covering three miles of passages where you can go caving—or spelunking as it's called—in the cave's natural state. *Tip:* The caves are very dark and you're required to bring at least two good light sources, so come prepared!

A final stop: Visit Frank Lloyd Wright's unique creations nearby at Falling-water (read more in our July 2015 issue) and Kentuck Knob for architecture that's built seamlessly into its surroundings. LaurelHighlands.org.

BETHLEHEM 1.5 HOUR DRIVE

GO WHERE HISTORY MEETS INDUSTRY IN THE OLD STEEL CITY of Bethlehem, PA. Once home to Bethlehem Steel—the second largest U.S. steel producer during its heyday—the city boasts the now-sleeping enormous blast furnaces of the Hoover-Mason Trestle that ran for almost a century, starting in 1907. It's now an elevated linear park that stands four stories above street level, serving as a pedestrian walkway and visitor must-see.

Another summer attraction is Bethlehem's wildly popular Musikfest, running Aug. 3–12. With over 450 performers on 14 stages, it continues to be the largest, non-gated free outdoor music festival in the country. Check out what else is playing at the ArtsQuest Center at SteelStacks throughout the summer.

Sample the thriving nightlife scene, too, with arts, food, drink and more. Visit First Fridays at the Banana Factory Arts Center—not surprisingly a former banana distribution warehouse—for glassblowing demos and open studios. Sit outside and sip along Main Street at Bethlehem Brew Works, grab a bite at modern gastropub The Broadway Social or try your luck at the Sands Casino. DiscoverLehighValley.com.

Enjoy the festivities at Musikfest and views of the Hoover-Mason Trestle. PHOTO COURTESY FRANK SMITH FOR DISCOVER LEHIGH VALLEY



Satisfy your need for speed at Carlisle's many summer car shows.
PHOTO COURTESY CUMBERLAND VALLEY VISITORS BUREAU

CARLISLE 2 HOUR DRIVE

WHERE CAN YOU SEE WORLD-CLASS CAR SHOWS, DIRT track racing, nature trails and food and drink tours all in one place? Just over an hour west of Lancaster City in the Carlisle PA area, of course!

For some of the largest auto events in the world, car enthusiasts will want to start their trip in Carlisle and plan their visit around one of its five summer car shows—including the Chrysler Nationals (July 13–15), Truck Nationals (Aug. 3–5) and Corvettes at Carlisle (Aug. 23–26). Satisfy your own need for speed at the Carlisle Sports Emporium with high-speed LED go-carts on three tracks. Plus there's laser tag, roller skating, mini golf and more to amp up the fun.

Nearby in aptly named Mechanicsburg, find professional 410 Sprint Car racing at the Williams Grove Speedway, and check out stunning Rolls Royce and Bentley motorcars at the Rolls Royce Museum.

If you'd rather walk, there are plenty of hiking and nature trails in the area—in addition to the famed Appalachian Trail about a half hour south. For more themed tours, the interactive Army Heritage Trail at the Education Center in Pine Grove Furnace State Park is a must-see for history buffs, while beer lovers might prefer their own trail—the Cumberland Valley Beer Trail. VisitCumberlandValley.com.

KNOEBELS 2.5 HOUR DRIVE

LOOKING FOR GOOD OLD-FASHIONED FUN FOR the whole family? Head to Knoebels Amusement Park—America's largest free-admission amusement park. Get your thrills on some of the park's nostalgic wooden rides—including two rollercoasters, a log flume and the only wooden bobsled rollercoaster in the world. Or check out classics like the Ferris wheel, bumper cars and carousel for the less adventurous.

Cool off and swim in Crystal Pool, practice your putting at Knoebels Three Ponds Golf Course and grab a bite to eat at one of the restaurants right on site. Then stay overnight at a local campground with your tent, camper or RV, rent a cozy country cottage for slightly more modern amenities, or check in at nearby Latorre House Red & Breakfast for even more comfort.

On the way home, take a 20-minute detour to the *Atlas Obscura*—recommended and now-abandoned ghost town of Centralia, where a coal fire continues to burn underneath the town since 1962. *Tip:* Don't bother the few inhabitants who still live there, and watch out for sinkholes! Also, don't stay long.

If that's more excitement than you want, stop instead in Pottsville to visit the Yuengling Brewery, America's oldest brewery. Tour Monday through Saturday, but sample the brews only if you're not the designated driver! Knoebels.com & Yuengling.com. ♦



Wooden rollercoasters, family-fun entertainment, camping and more await at Knoebels. PHOTO COURTESY KNOEBELS AMUSEMENT RESORT