



PHOTO CREDIT: TOLBERT PHOTOGRAPHY

What I About West Chester


37 THINGS YOU'LL LOVE, TOO

Cara Corridoni

LOCATED JUST UNDER 30 miles west of Philadelphia and home to just over 24,000 people, the Borough of West Chester is the county seat of Chester County. It's also the county's de facto restaurant capital, bubble tea capital and, with six options in a roughly 1-mile radius, its fried chicken capital, too.


The town is home to West Chester University, the fourth-largest university in the Philadelphia region. Major employers include Chester County Hospital, the West Chester Area School District and everyone's favorite shopping network, QVC (we're rooting for its survival). There are 12 parks, two museums and even a walking tour or three.

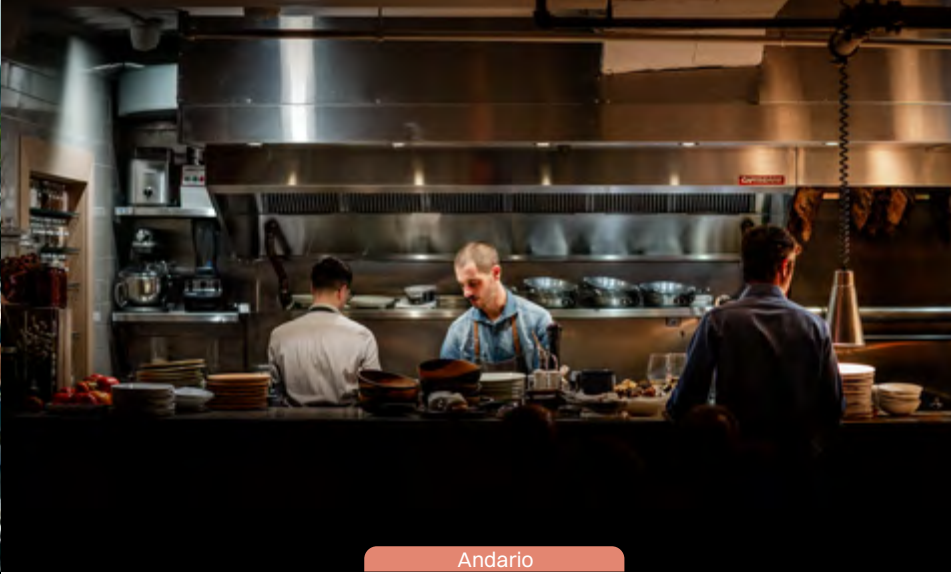
From the restaurants to the retail to the events and the amazing people, West Chester undoubtedly has plenty going for it. Here are some of my picks for reasons to love it.

 **Score a last-minute dinner from an award-winning chef.** West Chester is home to **Andiario**, led by James Beard-nominated chef Anthony Andiario, and named an essential Philadelphia restaurant by the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, two years running — no easy feat for a spot a good 45 minutes outside the city.

Andiario is best known for its rustic handmade pasta dishes and hard-to-score reservations. While the latter are getting a little easier, just set a reminder for the 20th of the month, when a new month's worth of reservations open up. Or score a reservation by following the restaurant on Instagram, where they post cancellations and last-minute openings. Really, what better surprise is there than enjoying a multi-course meal prepared by a nationally acclaimed chef on a night you'd planned to be cooking?

 Didn't win in reservation game? Don't worry, there are plenty of other worthy options. Pop into **Turks Head Wines** for one of their award-winning choices. (The winery, which sources fruit from California, had a standout showing at the 2026 San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition, earning multiple Double Gold, Gold, Silver and Bronze medals for multiple vintages.) Then head over to the **The Original Spence Cafe**, **The Mediterranean Restaurant** or one of West Chester's several other BYOBs for a handcrafted meal you won't quickly forget.

 **Stroll down the middle of Gay Street.** For 319 days a year, Gay Street is one of West Chester's busiest streets. It's often choked with cars, Ubers and delivery vans, but for 23 weekends, which started on May 1 and extends through



Andiario



The Mediterranean Restaurant




Turks Head Wines

September, the street closes to traffic and the restaurant tables and umbrellas come out for the **Open-Air Market**. The street closure, which began as a Covid invention designed to protect the Borough's vibrant restaurant scene, has continued to residents' and visitors' delight.

On weekend evenings, stroll undisturbed as the sound of live music drifts by or dine surrounded by the night air as kids entertain themselves with sidewalk chalk or games of tag. Later, dance in the streets, if the beat moves you. New activities have been added over the years. Some weekends you'll find skateboarders doing tricks, drummers in a circle, or mini-golf or yoga set up in the street. A major project is now underway installing bollards to improve the overall safety and infrastructure of the street closure.

 **Tour the vibrant mural art scene.** Over the past decade, West Chester has worked to extend its outdoor arts scene, and it's worked. The Borough is now home to more than a half dozen paintings that range in size up to an entire building wall. Charming brick sidewalks, expertly preserved historic buildings and tree-lined sidewalks provide the perfect backdrop for exploring works of public art from modern to classical. The **"Votes for Women" mural** on East Market

Street is a bold celebration befitting the 19th Amendment. The glittery gem of a mural on the east wall of the **Care Center Foundation** on South Matlack Street is by renowned muralist Paul Santoleri. Can you find it? The West Chester Art Loop map will help get you started. And be on the lookout for the planned **America250 mural** by Al Moretti coming to the side wall at 240 East Gay Street.

 End the art tour with a selfie at the **Horace Pippin bench**. Located in Everhart Park and painted a bright cherry red, the bench stands as a reminder of the famous self-trained West Chester painter known for his landscapes and portraits tackling difficult subjects such as war, slavery and racial segregation.

 **Throw frisbees with the next generation.** While much has changed in the world of higher education since the turn of the 21st century, some things have not. On any warm day during the academic year, you'll find dozens of students tossing frisbees, kicking a hacky sack or just lounging in **West Chester University's Quad**, the open grassy space tucked just behind Main Hall on High Street.

 While on campus, see if you can catch a performance at the **Wells**



Open-Air Market



Horace Pippin, "The Park Bench (Man on a Bench)," 1946

PHOTO CREDIT: PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART, REQUEST OF DANIEL W. DITTRICH II, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2021



"Votes for Women" mural

PHOTO CREDIT: TIMLYN VAUGHAN



Más Mexicali Cantina rooftop

PHOTO CREDIT: LEIGH VOGEL/CHESTER COUNTY'S BRANDYWINE VALLEY



Farmers and Mechanics building, left, and Historic Courthouse, center

PHOTO CREDIT: TIMLYN VAUGHAN



West Chester University Quad



D'Ascenzo's Gelato



Gemelli Café gelato

School of Music. Each year, this nationally accredited music school hosts more than 200 concerts with performances by the school's talented faculty, students and surprise guests. In March, the university hosted its annual Jazz Festival. Now in its 30th year, the four-day event combines Grammy-winning performances with local favorites. Most of the concerts are free.

After your campus experience, you'll want to get caffeinated, so head to **Twin Valley Coffee** on North Church Street for one of their popular cold brew coffees. Add a bit of sweet cream and savor your college memories.

Eat ice cream like an Italian. Many American towns can claim an ice cream shop they'd recommend to visitors who comes to town, but how many can claim not one but two gelato shops worthy of the streets of Rome? West Chester's love of this Italian treat, known for its lower fat content and dense texture, began in 2004 when West Chester couple Glenn and Kristin D'Ascenzo began selling their small-batch, Old World gelato to residents of the Borough from a storefront on East Gay Street. In 2019, *Travel + Leisure* magazine selected **D'Ascenzo's Gelato** one of the best gelato shops in Pennsylvania.

But why settle for one award-winning gelato shop when you can have two? In 2014, Ferrara, Italy native Vincenzo Tettamanti opened **Gemelli Café** on East Market Street. He, too, relies on farm-fresh ingredients and from-scratch cooking methods — and he's caught the attention of critics well outside the region. Gemelli was named "best gelato in North America" by the James Beard Foundation during their Gelato World Tour. So, really, which is better? The only way to know for sure is to try them both.

Catch the view from the **Más rooftop**. When the temperatures start to warm and the nights get longer, it's time to hit the **Más Mexicali Cantina** rooftop for a pitcher of margaritas and a bird's-eye view of the Borough with a side of sunset. As you sip and relax, take a minute to locate some of West Chester's famed architectural landmarks.

To your west, you'll find the **Historic Courthouse**. Designed by American architect Thomas U. Walter, it's distinguished by its six Corinthian columns and its size. The courthouse is the largest of the surviving West Chester buildings designed by Walter, who's also known as an architect of the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C.

Just across Market Street is the **Farmers and Mechanics Building**. West Chester's first skyscraper is striking with its hand-cut marble and Beaux Arts design. Move in the other direction along High Street and see if you can spot the swooping edges of the **Hotel Warner**. This Art Deco building was constructed in the 1930s and for years housed the Warner movie theater. In 1970, it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Have more time? There's also the historic **West Chester Railroad**, the **Chester County Visitor's Center**, the **Mather Planetarium** on the WCU campus, **Chester County History Center's True Crime on Trial** interactive event and the **Turks Head Music Festival** on June 7.

Oh, and breakfast in the **Roots Cafe** courtyard, an espresso martini from **Pietro's Prime**, tiny treats from **Rose's Little**



Hotel Warner, right

PHOTO CREDIT: TIMLYN VAUGHAN



West Chester Railroad

PHOTO CREDIT: BILL MONAGHAN

Donuts, pretzels at **Bierhul Townhouse**, music at **Marshall Square Park**, West Chester's **four record stores**, **five vintage shops**, and did I mention the newly arrived **Biscuit Lady**?

Really, what's not to love? I mean — besides the parking? And even that's got a new solution on the way. ♦



West Chester Events

Chester County History Center

ONGOING

CCHC features permanent exhibits telling the story of the county's roots, early beginnings, evolution and more. 225 N. High St. Wed-Sat, \$5-\$10. MyCCHC.org

Open-Air Market in West Chester

THROUGH SEPTEMBER 27

Gay Street is closed to vehicles Friday morning through Monday morning. Restaurants and shops line the street for strolling, eating, exploring. DowntownWestChester.com

West Chester TAPS

MAY 27-AUGUST 26, Wednesdays

Unwind with friends every Wednesday, 4 to 7 pm. Participating locations offer select \$5 beers, \$6 wines and \$7 cocktails plus half-price appetizers. DowntownWestChester.com

1st Friday Summer Concert Series

JUNE 5-SEPTEMBER 4

Come out to enjoy bands performing at locations across in the borough from 5:30 to 7:30 pm. Chester County Historic Courthouse, 21 W. Market St., and Jack Loew Plaza, 44 W. Gay St. DowntownWestChester.com

Uptown Knauer Performing Arts Center

JUNE 6-INTO SEPTEMBER

June 6, The Rebel Queens: A Tribute to Joan Jett & Pat Benatar; June 11, The Breakers: A Tribute

to Tom Petty; June 12, Nefesh Mountain; June 26, Forever Donna Tribute to Donna Summer. 226 N. High St. More shows, tickets and times, UptownWestChester.org.

Turk's Head Music Festival

JUNE 7

Seven bands, 50+ crafters and booths, food vendors, rides and games and more in Everhart Park, 100 S. Brandywine St. Noon to 7 pm. Free. TurksHeadFestival.com

Mini Golf on Gay St.

JUNE 20

18 holes of mini golf between Matlack and Darlington Sts. on Gay St. during the Open-Air Market. Noon to 4. Age 12 and under, \$5; 13 and above, \$8. West-Chester.com

Summer Solstice Music Festival

JUNE 13

A family-friendly music festival supporting live local music and celebrating the start of summer. Benefits and held at Brandywine Red Clay Alliance, 1760 Unionville Wawaset Rd. 2 to 10 pm. \$25-\$75. WayKool.com

Movies in the Park

JUNE 12, JULY 10, AUGUST 21

Pack a picnic, blanket, chairs and the family, and enjoy a movie, TBD. Food trucks on site. June 12, Horace Pippin Park, 520 W. Market St. July 10, Barclay Park, 535 N. Church St. Aug. 21, Hoopes Park, 700 Hoopes Park Ln. Starts at dusk. West-Chester.com

Music at Marshall Square Park

JUNE 19, JULY 10, 31, AUGUST 21

Picnic concerts with food trucks opening at 5 pm. Music at 6:30. Check website for weather updates and bands. 200 E. Marshall St. Free. MarshallSquarePark.org

World Music Day

JUNE 21

Showcasing local musical talent. Stroll through town and listen to musicians perform on street corners, sidewalks, plazas and more. 1 to 7 pm. Free. DowntownWestChester.com

Concerts in the Park

JUNE 18, AUGUST 21

Bring a chair or blanket and kick back to enjoy live music. Food trucks on site. Bands TBD. June 18, John O. Green Park, S. Matlack & E. Miner Sts. Aug. 21, Everhart Park, 100 S. Brandywine St. 6:30 pm. West-Chester.com

Pop-Up Biergarten Series at Uptown

JUNE 26, JULY 24, AUG. 21, SEPT. 26, OCT. 17

Open-air celebration of community, live music and fun. Perfect for all ages and free to attend. Enjoy lawn games and kick back to the sound of live music before heading inside for a night of unforgettable entertainment. 226 N. High St. UptownWestChester.org ♦

DOWNTOWN WEST CHESTER



COUNTY LINES
MAGAZINE

■ Parking Lot or Garage

RESTAURANT GUIDE

1. Roots Cafe
2. The Social
3. West Chester Seafood Kitchen
4. Jolene's
5. Mayday Coffee Shop
6. The Original Spence Café
7. DP Dough
8. The Tomato Shack
9. Buddy's Burgers, Breasts/Fries
10. The Biscuit Lady
11. Kooma Japanese Restaurant
12. Turks Head Wines
13. La Tartine
14. Dim Sum Taste
15. Saloon 151
16. dolce Zola
17. Fire-Nashville Hot Chicken
18. Taco Mar
19. Bar Avalon
20. Bierhaul Townhouse
21. Opa Taverna
22. Teca
23. Side Bar & Restaurant
24. Lorenzo & Sons Pizza
25. Mino Sushi & Ramen
26. Jaco Juice & Taco Bar
27. Kildare's Irish Pub
28. Sedona Taphouse
29. LaScala's Fire
30. Greystone Oyster Bar
31. Slow Hand
32. New Haven Style Pizza
33. Penn's Table
34. Andiaro
35. Ryan's Pub & Restaurant
36. Jitters West Chester
37. The Mediterranean
38. Stove & Tap
39. Good Bad & Ugly
40. Wrong Crowd Brewing
41. Artillery Brewing
42. Nudy's Café
43. La Baguette Magique
44. Carlino's Specialty Foods
45. Pietro's Prime
46. Bier & Loathing
47. Love Again Local
48. Mercato Ristorante & Bar
49. Tsunami Sushi/Asian Cuisine
50. Market Street Grill
51. 9 Prime
52. Playa Bowls
53. West Chester Chicken
54. Mimi's Tea Cottage
55. Barnaby's
56. Santino's Tap & Table
57. Shawarma Kebab
58. Saucey's Pizza
59. Limoncello Ristorante
60. Más Mexicali Cantina
61. Bonchon Chicken
62. Rai Rai Ramen
63. Crisp Chick'n
64. Poké Bros.
65. Pizza West Chester
66. Station 142
67. Manjé Caribbean Cuisine
68. America's Pie
69. Arianna's Cafe & Catering
70. La Rancherita Mexican Taqueria
71. Momo Sushi Cafe
72. Cousin's Burger
73. Amore Pizza & Restaurant
74. Nanu's Hot Chicken