



Places to visit for a day or a weekend...

## Pennsylvania

### English Now!

#### Why You Should Go

Pennsylvania is not far from Maryland and offers many destinations that are rich in history and culture. Much of the state is an easy drive from the Washington, D.C. area. Many of the following destinations are even accessible for a well-planned day trip away.

#### Philadelphia

Philadelphia is Pennsylvania's largest city. It is only 140 miles from Bethesda. Though not as famous an international destination as New York or Washington, D.C., the "City of Brotherly Love" (Philadelphia's nickname), can be as rewarding as its bigger neighbors. It has its own distinct traditions, and outsize food, music and art scenes – and is generally less expensive as a place to visit or place to live. Because the city's oldest buildings in the **Downtown** area are so well preserved, America's early history and its role in building democracy is sometimes more accessible here than in the nation's capital. Moreover, it's a beautiful place that is easy and rewarding to explore, its streets dotted with gracious squares and linked with cobbled alleys.

For a time in its early years, Philadelphia was the second-largest city in the British Empire after London. From the start of the Revolutionary War until 1790 (when Washington, D.C., was founded), it was the new nation's capital. Eventually, New York City rose as a cultural, commercial and industrial center, and Philadelphia slipped into a decline, losing many industrial jobs. Some areas of the city are still blighted, but its core, from the **manicured campuses of the University of Pennsylvania** to the **redbrick buildings of Old City**, is well-maintained and nice for a walking tour.

Most visitors also enjoy the **Liberty Bell Center**, where a glass-walled building protects the famous Liberty Bell from the elements. You can peek from outside, or join the line to file past, reading about the 2080 pound object's history along the way. The line starts on the building's north end, where the foundations of George Washington's house are marked. The famous bell was made in 1751, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Pennsylvania's constitution. Mounted in **Independence Hall**, another top Philadelphia destination, it tolled on the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence.

#### Lancaster County

Perhaps the top cultural destinations in Pennsylvania, located only 120 miles from Bethesda, are the distinctive **Amish, Mennonite, and Brethren religious communities** in the Lancaster County area. These are communities and cultures of Germanic roots, originally established here in the 18th century. One common cultural theme: all are devoted to various degrees to low-tech, plain living.

Somewhat paradoxically, the simple lifestyles of these people, with picturesque **horse-drawn buggies and ox teams tilling fields**, attract many visitors. The tourist industry surrounding these old-fashioned, small towns can bring many thousands of people to the area on a busy weekend. But if you get onto the back roads, you can appreciate the quiet these religious orders have preserved. And some of this small-town atmosphere can make for a memorable view of another side of the remarkably diverse United States.

The city of Lancaster, population 60,000, has a nice old downtown and some good restaurants that use the fruits of the surrounding farmland; **Lancaster's First Friday arts & crafts event** on Prince Street, held on the first Friday of each month starting at 5:00pm, is a great way to wind up a visit to the area if you can visit on a Friday. The main Pennsylvania Dutch tourist zone is east of here: along Route 30 and Old Philadelphia Pike (Route 340), and includes the towns of **Ronks, Bird-in-Hand, Intercourse**, and **Paradise**. The stretch is essentially farmland interrupted by strip malls and attractions such as a theme park called **Dutch Wonderland**, and a huge **souvenir shop called Dutch Haven**, shaped like a windmill (which makes a well-known dish called shoo-fly pie as well as birch-flavored beer).

### **Gettysburg**

Gettysburg, a small town only 75 miles from Bethesda, now quite tranquil and pretty, was the location of one of the bloodiest battles of the American Civil War. Over three days in July 1863, some 8000 people were killed there. Later that year, U.S. President Abraham Lincoln delivered his famous **Gettysburg Address** ('Four score and seven years ago...'), setting out the war's mission of equality. **Gettysburg National Military Park** covers 8 sq miles of land marked with monuments and trails. The **museum at the visitors center** is very well designed and shows a life-size, 360-degree painting of Pickett's Charge, the especially disastrous battle on the last day. Originally painted in 1884, the painting was restored and reinstalled in 2008, with a dramatic light show and narration. Out in the park, you can explore on your own, or on a bus tour or – most recommended – on a two-hour ranger-led tour in your own car. While in Gettysburg you can also visit the **Eisenhower National Historic Site**, the farm and home where American President Dwight Eisenhower and his popular wife Mamie retired after he served two terms as President in the 1950s. This museum offers a glimpse of the life of the now-departed World War Two veterans called the "Greatest Generation" by American historians and sociologists.

### **Hershey & Harrisburg**

Less than two hours from Bethesda is a favorite for kids: the town of Hershey, home to many destinations related to Milton Hershey's chocolate empire. The principal attraction is **Hershey Park**, an amusement park with more than 60 thrill rides, a zoo, water park plus various performances and frequent fireworks displays. While there you can also tour the chocolate factory and, providing information via a computer screen, make your very own chocolate bar at the **Create Your Own Candy Bar** (\$15) attraction, part of **Hershey's Chocolate World**, a mock factory and massive candy store with singing characters and (some) free chocolate. For a more low-key informational visit, try the **Hershey Story, The Museum on Chocolate Avenue**, which explores the life and fascinating legacy of Mr. Hershey through interactive history exhibits; try molding your own candy in the hands-on 'Chocolate Lab.'

Just west of Hershey is Harrisburg, the capital of Pennsylvania, on the banks of the Susquehanna River. The ornate **dome of the Capitol** dominates the skyline; when the structure was dedicated in 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt said, "It's the handsomest building I ever saw." Visitors can tour this historic structure and marvel at its sheer size: the structure covers five and a half acres.

Visitors can also take in performances at the **Harrisburg Shakespeare Festival**, attend a **Harrisburg Senators** minor league baseball game, or check out the **Susquehanna Museum of Art**. Every year in January, the **Pennsylvania Farm Show**, the largest indoor agricultural event in the country, delights 400,000 locals and tourists with exhibits, competitions, and plenty of food.

### **Pittsburg**

Finally, a longer drive from Bethesda – approximately 3.5-4.0 hours – and located in the southwestern corner of the state, Pittsburg is a fun and interesting weekend destination surrounded by three rivers, valleys, and hills. This city was once home of the U.S. steel and coal industries. As a result, it was very polluted. But by the 1970's, all of the steel and coal production was moved overseas. After the factories moved, Pittsburg became a rather forgotten, quiet city. But, today it has been transformed into a clean, environmentally conscientious, and green city. Here you can find **fantastic restaurants, cafes, museums, universities, parks, and sports stadiums**. Living here is less expensive than the more crowded east coast cities. And that has so many advantages. You can get more for your buck (it's cheaper to do fun things!). If you are a Andy Warhol fan, you can visit the **Andy Warhol Museum** in downtown Pittsburg. If you like science, then you really must visit the **Carnegie Science Center**. This Center has a lot of hands-on exhibits. Next door to this museum is the **Carnegie Mellon SportsWorks**. Here you can explore how the human body works by working out and having fun! Young kids and adults can spend hours exploring this museum. You can watch free films in the summer, go for walks, and eat at cafes at **Schenley Park in the Oakland district** (a university area). There are also fantastic beer breweries around the city; check out "Church Brew Works" <http://www.churchbrew.com/history.html>. Here you can learn the **history of the immigrants** who lived in and around Pittsburgh, while sampling local beer and eating great food. Finally, if you like amusement parks, then visit the **Kentwood Amusement Park**; founded in 1898, this is one of the oldest amusement parks in the U.S. A final recommendation: bring a great guide called "Moon Pittsburgh" along on your trip.

**Getting There.** Pennsylvania is not far from Maryland. All of the above recommended cities and towns are accessible by car; Amtrak train goes to Philadelphia. You can also fly to Philadelphia or Pittsburgh, but it would not save you much time, it's expensive, and you won't be able to make stops along the way.

**Where to Stay.** There are many chain hotels in Pennsylvania. One favorite of travelers is Hampton Inn Suites; rooms with two double beds usually cost around \$100-125/night and include breakfast. These hotels have pools too. In Philadelphia, it's best to stay close to the historical area, while in Pittsburg it's better not too stay in the immediate downtown area, try hotels in the Oakland area.

**For More Information.** Please let Paul or Kirstie know if you are traveling to Pennsylvania. We would love to hear about your plans, and we would love to hear how your trip goes, after you return, so that we can share what you learn with other students.