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Pursue SOUTHEAST PA!

photo-Bob Fritz

by *Linda Stager*

Our state's tourism slogan, "Pursue Your Happiness," takes inspiration from the Declaration of Independence, signed right here in Pennsylvania. Our nation was created in Philadelphia, a place of legacy and historical significance. But, southeastern Pennsylvania is so much more—it's a region of diverse landscapes, urban vibrance, cultural mosaics and educational institutions.

On Pennsylvania's narrow Atlantic Coastal Plain, Philadelphia, the historically rich "City of Brotherly Love," sits between the Delaware River and the Schuylkill River basins and is an urban hub. Beyond its bustle, though, are fertile farmlands, rolling hills and rugged wilderness.

There is so much to explore in the 10 counties that comprise PA's southeast region. Visit national historical sites, a variety of state parks, wildlife preserves, the culturally rich, authentic Pennsylvania Dutch areas or any of the fantastic waterways here.

Treasured trail

Schuylkill River Trail and Schuylkill River

Water Trail: These interconnected trails celebrate the Schuylkill River (pronounced SKOO-kill), Dutch for Hidden River.

The Schuylkill River, a tributary of the Delaware River, flows southeastward from the mountains of Schuylkill County on a 135-mile journey through a variety of different environments. In rural areas, you'll find scenic landscapes, but its urban stretches flow through Philadelphia.

The Schuylkill River Trail is a multi-purpose path that offers a scenic route for walking, running, biking and other recreational activities. Most of the trail is built over





Schuylkill River Trail, Philadelphia



Conestoga River, Berks and Lancaster counties

photo-PFBC archives

abandoned railroad lines. Today, over 75 miles of paved and crushed stone trails are open to visitors.

One of our favorite segments is a 30-mile stretch of the trail starting at the 2,000-foot Schuylkill Banks Boardwalk. The trail travels to Valley Forge National Historical Park, past many of Philadelphia's most well-known attractions.

The corresponding Schuylkill River Water Trail is a paddler's paradise. There are multiple public access points to the river, from near Schuylkill Haven in the north to the Philadelphia Navy Yards on the Delaware River at its end. Beginners and novice kayakers will be drawn to the river's tranquil waters. Kayak rentals are readily available, and various outfitters offer

4- to 6-hour float trip itineraries. Outfitters help visitors negotiate dams and remnants of dams along the river.

Plan your trip at the right time of year, and the entire family can join the Schuylkill River Sojourn. This weeklong guided experience combines being on the river with educational programs about the importance of conservation. Do as little or as much of the sojourn as you want. All are welcome.

Popular waterways

Delaware River: The Delaware River forms Pennsylvania's eastern border. Not only is it one of the largest rivers in the eastern part of our country, it is a major shipping route, and

photo-Linda Stieger



Valley Forge National Historic Park, Montgomery and Chester counties

photo-Sherry Gilbert



Delaware River from Bowman's Hill Tower, Bucks County



photo-PFBC archives

Lake Nockamixon, Bucks County

it has played a significant role in colonial history. For anglers, it's also an extraordinary fishing destination.

The United States Congress has declared parts of the Delaware River a National Wild and Scenic River. There are no dams along its entire length.

Every spring, the American Shad migration on the river is something to behold. Schools of shad arrive in large numbers. Stand with other anglers on the river's shore and throw in your line. It's an experience you will never forget.

Following the shad up the river come big Striped Bass. "Stripers" can be massive fish, with some big females, who arrive first, occasionally weighing in excess of 60 pounds. By May, most of the stripers have arrived, now a mix of different sizes of fish, they are just as aggressive on the line.

If you want to fish these big, fun fish, check out the section of the Delaware River near Neshaminy State Park, Bucks County.

By summer, anglers are also fishing for catfish, Smallmouth Bass, Muskellunge and Walleyes, too. Bring a boat or fish from one of the many public piers on the river. Public access to the river is plentiful.

Lake Nockamixon: The largest lake in southeast PA is at Nockamixon State Park. It's a popular place to boat as well as fish.

A boat rental concession has canoes, motorboats, rowboats, sailboats, paddleboards and pontoon boats available during the summer months. There are also 3 miles of hiking trails, a 2.8-mile bicycle trail and 20 miles of equestrian trails.

A special event for whitewater enthusiasts usually happens semiannually when water is released from the dam, creating

suitable whitewater conditions downstream. Check the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources's website and social media accounts for release dates.

The lake is classified as a trophy bass lake. If you are a birder, look for bald eagle and great blue heron rookeries.

Not far from here is Ringing Rocks County Park, a geological landmark. Try your hand at tapping the rocks to see if you can get them to ring. Bring your own hammer.

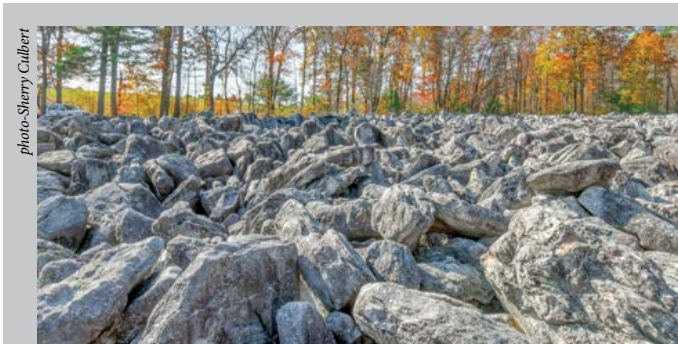


photo-Sherry Culbert

Ringing Rocks County Park, Bucks County



photo-PFBC archives

Neshaminy Creek, Tyler State Park, Bucks County

Points of interest

- American Music Theatre/Dutch Apple Dinner Theatre/Fulton Theatre/Sight & Sound Theatres, Lancaster, Lancaster County
- “Christmas City, USA”/SteelStacks/National Museum of Industrial History, Bethlehem, Lehigh and Northampton counties
- Crayola Experience, Easton, Northampton County (explore art and technology, express creativity and experience color in a whole new way through a day of activities)
- Green Dragon Farmers Market, Ephrata, Lancaster County, and Lancaster Central Market, Lancaster, Lancaster County
- The Mütter Museum, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County (museum of medical history with collections of anatomical specimens, models and medical instruments)
- Wissahickon Valley Park, Philadelphia, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties (dozens of miles of trails along Wissahickon Creek)

Best-loved adventures

Among our “must see” favorites are:

- **Philadelphia and the surrounding area:** Walk along Delaware River Waterfront, take in Independence Seaport Museum, look for tall ships in the harbor, and enjoy the vendors along the way. A hub for arts and culture, visit the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the African American Museum in Philadelphia, the Franklin Institute and the Reading Terminal Market. Bring your walking shoes and immerse your family into colonial history at Independence National Historical Park, complete with an exhibit of the famous Liberty Bell. A short drive out of the city to Kennett Square is Longwood Gardens and its indoor and outdoor garden displays. The popular botanical gardens are open year-round.

- **Lancaster and Pennsylvania Dutch Country:** Lancaster and the surrounding area are home to one of the oldest Amish communities in the country. Take a bus tour, visit a farm museum, and be sure to eat at one of the home-cooked meal restaurants. Lancaster County is also known for its covered bridges, so check out several of these “kissing bridges” for yourself on a self-guided driving tour.
- **Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area** is a wildlife preserve managed for wetland-dependent species. The annual migration of the snow geese here is a highlight for any birding enthusiast.



photo-Donna Dawson



Longwood Gardens, Chester County

photo-Linda Sager



A horse and buggy along the highway, Lancaster County.



Snow geese at the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area, Lancaster County.

The southeast region of Pennsylvania is a premier fishing and boating destination, with two major waterways and many lakes and streams. Add in the varied scenic landscapes and the large variety of things to do, and the whole family will find things they love.

You and your family will be able to “pursue your happiness”. ☐

Fuel for your adventure

It's important to “fuel up” our bodies when we are on the water for a day of fun. The right nutrition keeps us moving and focused all day long.

What's the right nutrition? First, think portable, non-perishable foods that slip easily into a daypack without too much weight.

Then, think about nutrients. Pick some high protein snacks with a good mix of carbohydrates and fats.

Here are some suggestions for hungry adventurers:

- Trail mix
- Potato chips or pretzels
- Jerky
- Granola bars
- Fruits and nuts
- Peanut butter

Next, think about hydration. Bring plenty of water to stay hydrated, especially if you're outdoors for an extended time. Sports drinks are okay too, for a sweeter drink. Plan on 64 ounces of water a day. That's what your body needs, maybe more depending on temperature and conditions.

We all need good fuel for the trip. Bring the right snacks and drinks for a fun day outdoors. And, wear sunscreen and a wide brimmed hat, too.

One more thing—trash in, trash out. Pack out your wrappers and bottles. We can all do our part to conserve and keep our special places clean.

Written by Linda Stager



Photos by the water

Anyone who thinks turtles are always slow has never tried walking up to one along the water's edge. They give you the side eye. Then, they're gone. Wariness is key to their survival, but it's frustrating when you want a good photo.

Approach wildlife from the water and things may be different. Creatures large and small may let a quiet, still paddler approach within easy photo-taking distance.

Having a camera, even the one on your phone, has other benefits afloat. Take photos of anglers with fish, fellow paddlers and landscapes. The only requirement is something to keep your gear dry. Dry boxes—hard-sided cases with rubber gaskets that seal tight—work great. Some, primarily for cell phones, come with a carabiner to clip to your life jacket or boat. Larger ones may have segmented foam inserts you pick out in pieces to custom fit your camera. Dry bags and snorkeler-style waterproof phone cases are other options.

Use a neck strap or lanyard specific to your phone to secure your camera when taking photos. Even if it falls from your hand, it's unlikely to go into the water.

When taking photos, look for opportunities to capture reflections. Shoot with your camera held directly above the water's surface for unique perspectives. Get out early and stay late for the most colorful skies. Above all, think creatively and have fun!

Written by Bob Frye



photo-Bob Frye

Turtles and other wildlife will often let a quiet paddler approach closer than they would a photographer on foot. But, don't get too close. Respect the wildlife.

Popular waterways

Southeast Region:

- Blue Marsh Lake
- Bushkill Creek
- Delaware River
- Lake Nockamixon
- Lehigh River
- Manatawny Creek
- Monocacy Creek
- Schuylkill River
- Tulpehocken Creek
- Wissahickon Creek



Pennsylvania state parks

Southeast Region:

- **Benjamin Rush State Park**, Philadelphia Co.
- **Big Elk Creek State Park**, Chester Co.
- **Delaware Canal State Park**, Bucks and Northampton counties (fishing and boating)
- **Evansburg State Park**, Montgomery Co. (fishing)
- **Fort Washington State Park**, Montgomery Co. (fishing)
- **French Creek State Park**, Berks and Chester counties (fishing and boating)
- **Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center**, Northampton Co. (fishing)
- **Locust Lake State Park**, Schuylkill Co. (fishing and boating)
- **Marsh Creek State Park**, Chester Co. (fishing and boating)
- **Neshaminy State Park**, Bucks Co. (fishing and boating)
- **Nockamixon State Park**, Bucks Co. (fishing and boating)
- **Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center**, Berks Co. (fishing)
- **Norristown Farm Park**, Montgomery Co. (fishing)
- **Ralph Stover State Park**, Bucks Co. (fishing and whitewater)
- **Ridley Creek State Park**, Delaware Co. (fishing)
- **Susquehannock State Park**, Lancaster Co.
- **Swatara State Park**, Lebanon and Schuylkill counties (fishing and paddling)
- **Tuscarora State Park**, Schuylkill Co. (fishing and boating)
- **Tyler State Park**, Bucks Co. (fishing and boating)
- **Washington Crossing Historic Park**, Bucks Co. (fishing and paddling)
- **White Clay Creek Preserve**, Chester Co. (fishing)



French Creek State Park, Berks and Chester counties

Regional designations are based on Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Law Enforcement regions.

artwork-Michael Kensinger

Popular State Game Lands

- **State Game Lands 46 (Middle Creek)**, Lancaster County: Nearly 6,000 acres, this Wildlife Management Area is managed by the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) for waterfowl, grassland nesting birds and wetland-dependent species. Middle Creek hosts an interactive visitor center, an archery range, a seasonal wildlife driving tour and over 20 miles of hiking trails. Other recreational opportunities include wildlife viewing, special hunts and non-motorized boating. Middle Creek is one of six Globally Important Bird Areas in the state.
- **State Game Lands 205**, Lehigh County: Encompassing just over 1,300 acres, there are many hunting, hiking, biking and horseback riding opportunities. A public shooting range is available for rifles, shotguns and archery. With the adjacent Trexler Nature Preserve, the PGC employs grassland management practices such as prescribed fires. Species of interest include the American kestrel, a grassland-dependent falcon and Pennsylvania's smallest raptor. Banding efforts are conducted every summer to track population sizes and nesting success rates.



American kestrel

- **State Game Lands 280**, Berks County: With 2,550 acres surrounding Blue Marsh Lake, it is managed in conjunction with 2,730 acres owned by the United States Army Corps of Engineers. Primary habitat management goals are converting agriculture fields to native early successional habitats and grasslands. Primary game species include deer, mourning doves, rabbits, squirrels and various waterfowl species. Fishing and boating are popular recreational activities at the lake.
- **State Game Lands 217**, Carbon (Northeast Region), Lehigh and Schuylkill counties: Made up of 8,600 acres, popular game species are deer, bears and turkeys. The Appalachian Trail traverses the entire length of these lands, so hiking is extremely popular. This area is also popular with birders, especially during the fall at Bake Oven Knob. Counters have been recording raptor migration data for over 50 years, one of the longest raptor migration studies in the world. During spring migration, birders view a multitude of warbler and other songbird species.

photo-J. Dingel