

TRAVEL

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Enchanted in Cassis, a jewel of the French Riviera. **N3**



Schindler factory a stark museum in Krakow. **N4**

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Fresh goodies on the Pennsylvania Dutch smorgasbord

By Joanne C. McHugh
FOR THE INQUIRER

Our annual pilgrimage to wholesome all-American Lancaster County had become a bit tired. Could five native Pennsylvanians find some novel things to do on their umpteenth visit to Pennsylvania Dutch country?

Besides finding fresh places to visit this year, I devised a little game for my three school-age children. I would reveal each destination only after a round of clues that challenged them to guess the attraction or at least a secret word that started

with *P* associated with each one.

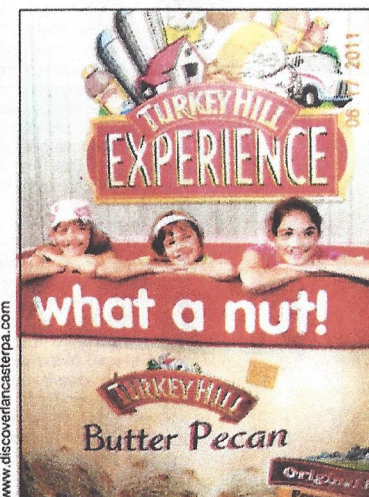
Early on a Tuesday morning, we set out on our "Panoply of P's: Pennsylvania Secret Adventure." My 13-year-old daughter came armed with a dictionary. When I asked if they knew what *panoply* meant, the 8-year-old chirped that it was a collection of things that they were supposed to find impressive. Had we any hope of living up to her expectations?

Clues that our first destination was founded in 1732 by a German immigrant who appreciated William Penn's vision for Pennsylvania

and was home to a community of celibate brothers and sisters who wanted to pursue religious, dutiful lives resulted in only quizzical looks. Because the oldest had recently prepared for confirmation, she was able to puzzle out the secret word — *piety* — but no one had heard of Ephrata Cloister.

A guided tour offered a window into the monastic existence of the colony of devout settlers. The girls gamely considered who might willingly sleep on an 18-inch-wide plank with a wood block for a pillow every

See **LANCASTER** on N2



Down the road a clip from Amish buggies and quilts, the Lancaster Barnstormers' mascot, Cylo, keeps company with fans, and visitors have total-immersion ice-cream fun at the Turkey Hill Experience.

JOANNE C. McHUGH

Lancaster

Continued from N1
night and consent to only one meal a day.

To raise the spirits of our 11-year-old after what she considered an inauspicious beginning, we stopped at the nearby Udder Choice, a family restaurant that the locals recommended, for lunch and some homemade ice cream. By mid-afternoon, we checked in at the Harrisburg-Hershey Residence Inn for a two-night stay.

Later, we approached our second major stop, at the opposite end of the morality spectrum from our first. The clue was ponies: We were off to the races at Penn National Race Course in Grantville, Pa., about 20 minutes up the country road from Hershey.

How did a gaming establishment end up on our itinerary? My 11-year-old, who loves thoroughbred racing.

Live racing at Penn National is an all-ages event as long as those under 18 are accompanied by a parent, and we were able to access the racetrack without crossing the Hollywood Casino floor. We found the box seats in the grandstand quite comfortable, with a sweeping view of the action and personal flat-screen TVs that provided closed-circuit coverage of the race, as well as to-the-minute rankings of each horse's odds.

A trackside table at the Mountainview Dining Restaurant meant we could still monitor the action while waiting for our meals. Everyone rooted on their favorite ponies, and eventually Dad fronted everyone \$2 so he could place bets on their chosen favorites for a race. Alas, we didn't hit the big one, but we came away \$15 richer.

To ensure that our adventure would be a success, I included proven crowd-pleasers. Wednesday brought a trip to a perennial favorite, Hersheypark. The kids guessed this destination and the secret word, *peanut butter cups*, even before we drove down the streets festooned with Hershey Kiss-shaped streetlights or breathed in the chocolate aroma that wafts through town.

Although it's more than a century old, Hersheypark has managed to keep up with the Joneses as far as roller coasters, and everyone in our party found something to like. The exceptionally comfortable weather kept Mom and Dad Hersheypark-happy, but made the kids reluctant to take a dip



Where it all begins: Milking a mechanical cow at the Turkey Hill Experience, which opened in June.

at the Boardwalk, its full-scale water park. Nonetheless, we found plenty to fill our day, and managed to fit in our first visit ever to the park's ZooAmerica area, an 11-acre mini-wildlife park that features animals native to North America. We capped our day with a visit to Hershey's Chocolate World and the complimentary Great American Chocolate Tour, a ride that explains how Hershey turns cocoa beans and milk into the chocolate that weighed down our shopping bags when we left.

Our third day found the kids eager to play the next round.

The 8-year-old came through in the clutch, guessing both of the secret words for the morning's destinations — *pretzels* and *potatoes* — impressing all with her ability to deduce our first stop because she knew that the 600,000 pounds of corn flour that Snyder's of Hanover uses every month go into the tortilla chips she loves.

The guided Snyder's factory tour offered perspective on some of the food in our pantry. We watched tortilla chips and pretzels tumble down the production line and marveled at the largely automated warehousing systems that enable Snyder's to efficiently distribute its products worldwide. Although we could have explored the observation galleries at Utz Potato Chips, too, we were hungry, so instead we ended our visit to Hanover with a stop at

the Utz Factory Outlet.

For our last night's stay, we checked in at Hilton's Double-Tree Resort at Willow Valley, where we've stayed since our oldest was 2, and was nice to see the facilities refreshed since its recent partnership with Hilton. After a dip in the indoor water playground, which features slides, sprayers, and sprinklers, we headed to another family favorite, the Good 'N Plenty Restaurant, for a smorgasbord dinner.

The Good 'N Plenty, started in an old farmhouse, has been feeding weary tourists for more than 40 years. Catering halls could learn a few lessons from these folks. They manage to feed down-home Pennsylvania Dutch cooking to hundreds of people at a time without sacrificing quality. As usual, we got a kick out of dining family style at long tables with fellow travelers (our companions this year were from Maryland and Rhode Island), and the fried chicken and buttered noodles were to die for.

After dinner, the kids determined that we were off to see the *players* — Lancaster's Barnstormers. Since 2005, the Barnstormers, part of the Atlantic League, an independent association of professional baseball teams not affiliated with Major League Baseball, have played in Clipper Magazine Stadium, in downtown Lancaster. The kids enjoyed the small-town feel of the modern ballpark,

along with the quirky games (mascot races, build-a-human-sandwich contests) played between innings. As a bonus, the forecasted showers held off until almost the end of the game, and the Barnstormers won.

Our last day featured something historical, but first something more whimsical. As we traveled to Columbia, about 13 miles from Lancaster, the girls reasoned out that we would be learning about ice cream (and they were even able to wrestle up *pistachio*). What awaited them at the Turkey Hill Experience, an attraction that opened in June, was better than they had hoped. They skipped from station to station, playing a videolike game that taught them about pasteurization, gave them samples of some of Turkey Hill's signature flavors, and let them design their own ice cream flavors.

Although the flavor design process was virtual, it was a hoot. After selecting the ingredients for Chocolate Marshmallow Cinnafun, my middle child went to another kiosk that let her create a package for her product. Then it was over to a mini TV studio to tape a commercial in which she played a starring role. Since all of her work was saved on a website via a create-your-own code, we were able to share it later with the grandparents and then save her creations, as well as her sisters' flavors, as souvenirs. The children were delighted to conclude their tour with a visit to the Turkey Hill Experience Creamery for lunch and, of course, ice cream.

The latter part of our day featured a visit to Wheatland, the Lancaster home of James Buchanan, the only occupant of the Oval Office to hail from our fair commonwealth. The kids worked out that the last series of clues would lead them to a *president*, but their enthusiasm lagged a bit — ice cream is a tough act to follow.

The setting of Wheatland was what you would expect — a mansion furnished with antiques and priceless keepsakes. We lucked out that our tour was led by an insightful guide. His succinct summary of the no-win situation that Buchanan faced on the eve of the Civil War provided food for thought for my husband and me. And our girls appreciated the dish he served about bachelor Buchanan's niece, who was befriended by England's royal family during Buchanan's tenure as minister to the Court of St. James's and later served as his de facto first lady.

If You Go

Ephrata Cloister

632 W. Main St., Ephrata, Pa.

Hours: Open daily, May through October; Tuesday to Sunday, November through December; Wednesday to Sunday, January through February; Tuesday to Sunday, March and April.

Admission: Adults, \$9; seniors, \$8; children 3-11, \$6.

Information: 717-733-6600; www.ephratacloister.com

Penn National Race Course

777 Hollywood Blvd., Grantville, Pa.

Hours: Schedule varies September through May.

Admission: Free; fees vary for box seats.

Information: 717-469-2211; www.hollywoodpnrc.com/Racing

Hersheypark

100 W. Hersheypark Dr., Hershey, Pa.

Hours: Open select weekends and some weekdays, September through December.

Admission: Ages 9-54, \$53.95; ages 55-69, \$32.95; ages 70 and older, \$21.95; children 3-8, \$32.95.

Information: 1-800-437-7439; www.hersheypark.com

Snyder's of Hanover Factory Tour

1350 York St., Hanover, Pa.

Hours: Tuesday to Thursday, year round.

Admission: Free

Information: 1-800-233-7125 Ext. 28592; www.snydersofhanover.com/history/tours/snydersofhanover

Utz Tour Gallery

900 High St., Hanover, Pa.

Hours: Monday to Thursday and some Fridays, year round.

Admission: Free

Information: 1-800-367-7629; www.utzsnacks.com

Barnstormers Baseball

Clipper Magazine Stadium, 650 N. Prince St., Lancaster

Hours: Regular season April through September.

Admission: Individual tickets \$5-\$12.

Information: 717-509-4487; www.lancasterbarnstormers.com

Turkey Hill Experience

301 Linden St., Columbia, Pa.

Hours: Open daily, June through December. January through May hours not yet posted.

Admission: Adults, \$11.50; seniors, \$9.50; children 5-17, \$9.50.

Information: 1-888-986-8784; www.turkeyhillexperience.com

James Buchanan's Wheatland

1120 Marietta Ave., Lancaster

Hours: Open Monday to Saturday, April through October; Friday and Saturday, and Monday to Thursday by appointment, November; yuletide tours, December; by appointment, January through March.

Admission: Adults, \$8.50; seniors, \$7.50; students 12 and older, \$6; children 6-11, \$4.

Information: 717-392-8721; www.lancasterhistory.org

With our trek at an end, I not to set her expectations low polled my travelers for a rating the next time I composed such of the secret adventure tour. a jaunt — and coming from a My oldest said she had learned teen, that's high praise.