



## Day trip to Doylestown: art, history, shopping and more

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*(Photo: Stephanie Kalina-Metzger)*



DOYLESTOWN - There's a little bit of an explorer in every one of us, and for those who enjoy poking around interesting towns, Doylestown more than fits the bill. Just 27 miles north of Philadelphia, the small town with the cosmopolitan vibe is within striking distance for those who love long weekends.

The art enthusiast, the history buff, the bibliophile, the foodie and even shopaholics will find their niche in this welcoming town.

### **Overnight lodging**

The Hargrave House, built in 1813, combines history and luxury, with convenience and hospitality.

Located downtown near restaurants, shops and art galleries, the Georgian-style stone house was once home to a doctor, a Bucks county judge and a monument carver by the name of Thomas Hargrave. Today, the seven-room B&B offers a luxurious respite for guests visiting the area, with most of the oversized suites featuring jetted tubs, perfect to soothe the muscles after hours of exploring.

Innkeeper Lorna Woodson is always happy to provide guests with details of the building's rich history, or they can learn more at the Doylestown Historical Society, just a few steps away.

### **Shopping opportunities abound**

The downtown area is filled with shops offering an array of items, from clothing, to gifts, beauty, home décor and more.

Just a short walk from the Hargrave House is Serendipity, described as “many shops within one storefront,” where 20 vendors sell their sometimes quirky wares, from homemade purses to candles, furniture, jewelry and more. For those who seem to have everything, a unique, one-of-a-kind gift can likely be found here. A mini-mall and other standalone shops are all within walking distance of each other.

Bibliophiles will discover used book bargains within walking distance at Central Books, 35 W. State St.; and for new books, the Doylestown Bookshop at 16 South Main offers a wide selection.

### **Henry Chapman Mercer**

Doylestown is the prime hub for learning about Henry Chapman Mercer, and Fonthill Castle, his former abode, is a must see while in the area. Mercer, a leader in the turn-of-the-century Arts and Crafts movement, built the medieval style concrete structure with the help of his faithful workhorse “Lucy.”

Tours are conducted seven days a week by the Bucks County Historical Society, which now owns the 44-room building.

During the 1.5-hour tour, guests will learn about the eccentric and energetic genius, his penchant for entertaining, his boundless creativity and his love for tile, which is on full display in the castle. Tiles are embedded on ceilings, stairs, walls and practically everywhere in between. Mercer is also known for creating the 400 tiles which decorate the floor of the Capitol in Harrisburg and represent 254 scenes of artifacts, animals, birds, insects and industries.

Guests who visit the Mercer Museum in downtown Doylestown will have the opportunity to learn more about Mercer’s passion for collecting. The six-story-high concrete structure contains 50,000 artifacts that tell the story of American progress and craftsmanship through tool displays.

Mercer first indulged his penchant for collecting by attending auctions and rummaging through barns, attics and yards of junk dealers. Eventually people learned of his passion and began contacting him and saving him the trouble.

More than 60 Early American trades from blacksmithing to butchering, tanning and fishing are represented in a series of rooms and alcoves, with large artifacts like whaling boats and sleighs hanging from the ceiling of the central atrium.

### **James Michener Art Museum**

The Michener Art Museum is located directly across the street from the Mercer Museum and occupies the same site as the former Bucks County Prison. Several of the original prison walls and the main entrance of the prison have been incorporated into the architectural design of the museum, which is named after the Pulitzer-prize-winning author James Michener. Michener resided in Bucks County and supported the initial idea of the art museum by providing seed money that was subsequently misused, according to guide Diane Morgan.

The project eventually came to fruition after an arts council was established, and today he is celebrated with a room dedicated to his memory. Located to the left of the entrance, the area showcases Michener artifacts like his typewriter, manuscripts and other ephemera.

Known as a center for the study of Pennsylvania Impressionism, the James Michener Art Museum houses a world-class group of paintings. The permanent collection contains more than 2,800 objects that represent the region's artistic and cultural heritage. Artists like Daniel Garber, Edward W. Redfield and William Langston Lathrop all settled in Bucks County and captured the beauty of the area landscape.

Schedule a guided tour and you'll learn more about the spectacular collection, including the story about the "Wooded Watershed Lunette" painted by Garber and almost lost to history.

Morgan describes Pennsylvania Impressionism as a very important movement in the history of art, and says the James A. Michener Museum has the "finest collection of Pennsylvania Impressionistic art in public hands."

### Grabbing a bite

If you work up an appetite while touring, Doylestown offers plenty of restaurants from which to choose, from casual to fine dining.

For those who prefer a casual vibe, a visit to the Hickory Kitchen on Court Street is within walking distance of the Hargrave House and serves what some describe as the best finger-licking ribs you'll experience.

For a more upscale experience, foodies are flocking to a cozy boîte located across from the County Theatre. Genevieve's Kitchen accommodates about 34 patrons for those choosing to dine inside and an additional 28 patrons who enjoy their meals al fresco.

Open for brunch, lunch and dinner, Genevieve's focuses on organic and naturally grown foods procured locally. Herb pecorino stuffed duck breast is just one of the outstanding dishes served at the BYOB located at 19 E. State Street.

Homemade pasta, grilled hen, pork tenderloin and wild halibut are just a few of the other features folks are raving about, so be sure to check it out, just don't forget to make reservations.

These are but a few suggestions to make your trip to Doylestown both educational and fun - and summertime is always the right time to schedule a much-needed getaway.

