



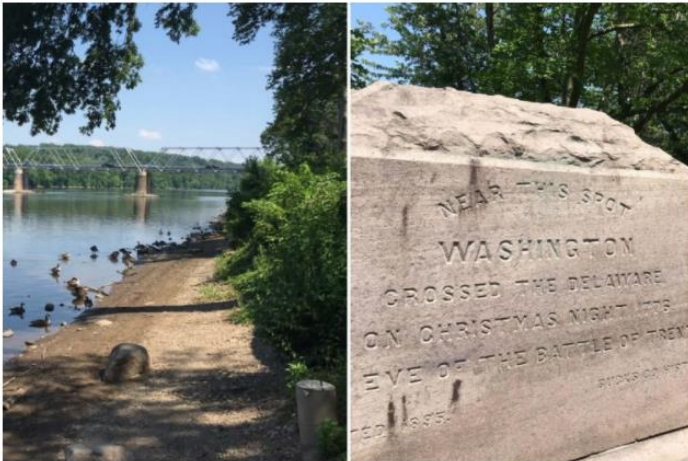
Your Day-by-Day Guide to the Perfect Family Weekend in Pennsylvania

For historic, eccentric, laid back family fun, look no further than this Friday-to-Sunday itinerary in scenic Bucks County, Pennsylvania, just 25 miles from Philadelphia.

BY AVIVA PATZ

Friday

Relive a key moment in the Revolutionary War



COURTESY AVIVA PATZ

Today the banks of the Delaware River at [Washington Crossing Historic Park](#) are a peaceful scene, with sunlight dappling the calm water and lush grass and trees. But if you close your eyes, you can imagine the war that took place here, on this very spot, during the cold winter of 1776. General George Washington led his men across the icy river under cover of darkness and, marching to Trenton, attacked the Hessians to turn the tide of the Revolutionary War. Even young kids can gaze across the span of the river and ponder the incredible events that helped shape American history. Check out the historic exhibits at the Visitor's Center behind the crossing, including a real cannon! Revolutionary War buffs will love [these military reenactments across the country](#).

Get a birds-eye view



COURTESY VISIT BUCKS COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA, COURTESY AVIVA PATZ

For climbing the winding staircase up 125 feet to the top of Bowman's Hill Tower, you'll be rewarded with a breathtaking view of Bucks County. (Or hop in an elevator—we won't tell.) The tower was built in 1929 to commemorate what may have been a lookout point for Washington's troops to scan for enemy activity on the river. Hold your camera tightly for those landscape shots—it's windy up there!

Shop and dine in downtown New Hope



COURTESY VISIT BUCKS COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA

Just a 15-minute drive from Washington Crossing is the picturesque city of New Hope, with a quaint main street featuring antique shops, hip clothing and jewelry boutiques, a super-kitchy retro shop, a Harley-Davidson store, a toy store, and the delightful Doylestown bookstore, among other fun shops. For lunch or dinner, depending on your timing, there's a United Nations of cuisine between New Hope and neighboring Lambertville, New Jersey, just across the bridge. Try Cuban at Mojito, vegetarian gourmet at Sprig & Vine, Louisiana cooking at Marsha Brown, or sandwiches and more at Blue Moose Café. This reporter's family opted for American continental at the al fresco dining room at the [Logan Inn](#), where live musicians entertained during our meal. Don't miss the small-batch Moo Hope Ice Cream a couple doors down (their mint chocolate chip is worth the hype).

Check into your hotel



COURTESY VISIT BUCKS COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA

Choose from over two dozen historic bed and breakfasts and country inns in the Bucks County area. We stayed at the charming [Fox & Hound Bed & Breakfast of New Hope](#), a former family farm on two landscaped acres a mile down the road from downtown New Hope. Check out the archaeological remains of the original stone barn that housed Revolutionary War soldiers for two cold winter weeks in 1776. The Eagle Room, where we stayed, includes a cozy fireplace, access to a rooftop deck, and lovely breakfast of apple-stuffed French toast in the communal dining room on the first floor. (Use these savvy secrets to score a free hotel room upgrade.)

Check out the nightlife



COURTESY AVIVA PATZ

If you don't have little ones to tuck in, now's your chance to experience the lively nightlife along the Delaware River, with shops that stay open after dark, bustling wineries and breweries, nightclubs with LED-lit dance floors, spooky lantern-led Ghost Tours of New Hope, and live theater at [Bucks County Playhouse](#), the site of a former grist mill that was saved from demolition by a band of artists.

Saturday

Tour Eccentric Fonthill Castle



COURTESY AVIVA PATZ

When you think "castle," you probably don't picture the all-concrete [Fonthill Castle](#)—an eclectic mix of Medieval, Gothic, and Byzantine architectural styles, lined floor to ceiling with colorful Moravian tiles featuring bees, trees, dragons, entire scenes and entire stories. And yet you will be amazed, amused, and delighted by the quirky personality and history behind this 1912 structure, now a museum. It was designed by Henry Chapman Mercer Fonthill, an archaeologist, anthropologist, and ceramist, to showcase his elaborate handmade tiles and prints. Fonthill was quite the eccentric: He never married, he slept only a few hours a night, and he once lit a bonfire on one of the castle's turrets to show that, made from concrete, the home wouldn't burn. When he died in 1930, Mercer left his "Castle for the New World" in a trust as a museum of decorative tiles and prints. You can buy some in the gift shop, as they're still produced today. (Did you know that you can rent a real castle on Airbnb?)

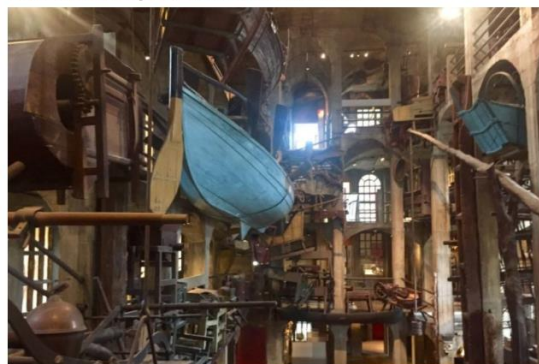
Lunch in Doylestown



COURTESY VISIT BUCKS COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA, COURTESY AVIVA PATZ

Head to nearby Doylestown for great restaurant options, from American BBQ at [Hickory Kitchen](#) to Spanish cuisine at [Bocccadito](#) to the vegetarian-friendly [Phi Vietnamese](#). This reporter opted to try the hidden gem [Empanada Mamas](#), which is literally hidden—you enter through a back parking lot, and enthusiastically recommends the Mexican Corn, Lentil Makhani, and Pesto Chicken empanadas. Stop into [Nonno's](#), an Italian coffeehouse, for an afternoon espresso and homemade gelato afterward.

Tour the Unexpected Mercer Museum



COURTESY AVIVA PATZ

In the heart of Doylestown is the [Mercer Museum](#), a rather curious museum that features little art, but rather, artifacts—the ordinary tools of everyday life in America during the 18th and 19th centuries. The 40,000-plus objects are actual tools people used to do things like make shoes, grind corn, mix medicines, build wagons, print wallpaper, and tan hides. The collection was amassed by the eccentric Henry Mercer Fonthill, of concrete castle fame. And yes, people did think he was nuts to collect those ordinary items at the time—like us collecting iPhones, humidifiers, and nail clippers—but today he's credited as a visionary for appreciating what those tools could someday teach future generations about life in American pre-Industrial Revolution.

Tour the Michener Museum



COURTESY AVIVA PATZ

Walk literally across the street to the **Michener Museum**—formerly the Bucks County prison!—with a permanent exhibit of the desk, journals, awards, and other personal effects of the Pulitzer Prize-winning writer and Doylestown native **James Michener**, author of *Tales of the South Pacific* and other well-known fiction and non-fiction. The museum also honors another local resident, the internationally known master woodworker George Nakashima. Visitors can sit in the George Nakashima Reading Room, designed in the traditional Japanese style, with several iconic pieces of Nakashima furniture. The Michener also has plenty of paintings, murals, and sculpture. At our visit, the current exhibit was Charles Sheeler: Fashion Photography and Sculptural Form, featuring the black and white glam shots of a former Conde Nast photographer—and mannequins dressed in period ensembles to match!

Check into your hotel



COURTESY VISIT BUCKS COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA

We stayed at the **Doylestown Inn**, a charming, 11-guestroom boutique hotel in the heart of Doylestown. Built in 1871, the landmark property was used over the years as a hattery, a cigar shop, a shoe store, and a speakeasy during prohibition before becoming a hotel. Though there's a great bar and restaurant at the hotel, you could also walk just a few blocks in any direction to great shops and restaurants. The sushi at Ooka didn't disappoint.

Sunday

Tube down the Delaware River



COURTESY VISIT BUCKS COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA

After Saturday's culture-fest, you've earned the right to laze along the Delaware River and take in the scenery. Just 20 minutes from downtown Doylestown is **Bucks County River Country**, a popular outdoor adventure place—family-owned for 50 years—that will outfit you with gear for two, three, or four hours of delightful tubing, kayaking, canoeing, or rafting. In the fall, this Point Pleasant, PA, spot becomes a destination for camping. Insider tip: Forget roasting hot dogs and follow the canal path to The Local, a cozy restaurant and beer garden with live music. Don't miss the [15 incredible American campsites](#) that should be on your bucket list.