

Get Healthy, Have Fun and Enjoy an amazing outdoor adventure in Mercer County By Peggy Mazyck Community Contributor (2014-02-01)

Diverse outdoor activities abound in Mercer County. On land, water or air, visitors and residents will delight in the beauty of the area's outdoor attractions.

Take your camera and have a great time in the wonderful outdoors. There is something special about outdoor activities that draws families and friends closer, makes getting healthy fun and leads to an adventure you will long remember. We have identified key outdoor attractions to put on your must-do list for 2014:

State/Federal Corps Parks

Maurice K. Goddard State Park-located near Sandy Lake, PA. Maurice K. Goddard State Park is one of Pennsylvania's finest state parks. The 2,856-acre state park features Lake Wilhelm a 1,860-acre that's very popular with anglers. 20 hp motors can be used and there is also a 168 space marina. During the summer months popular activities are boating, fishing, hiking, and biking. The park features a 12.2 mile scenic multi-use paved trail that loops around Lake Wilhelm. There is a lot of nature to view from this trail so don't be surprised to see Bald Eagles, Osprey or Trumpeter Swans.

Pymatuning State Park-located in Jamestown, PA. With a 17,088 acre reservoir Pymatuning Lake is Pennsylvania's largest manmade lake. 20 hp motors are permitted on the lake which is great for boating, fishing, swimming, picnicking and many more activities. More people visit Pymatuning than almost any other state park. There are many viewing areas for wildlife around the lake.

Shenango River Lake-a 3,560 acre River Lake situated adjacent to the Shenango Valley. Enjoy picnicking, camping, boating; jet skiing, water skiing or nature's beauty at one of the many recreation or access areas located on the lake. Fishing enthusiasts are attracted to the waters for the bass, walleye, muskellunge and a variety of panfish. Thousands of anglers are drawn to the dam's outflow area to fish for trout. Located at the lake is a trail for off road vehicles or for hiking. On shoreline are lovely picnic sites and pavilions to rent for a day of fun. Another popular activity at the lake is bird watching with a large variety of migratory birds stopping at the lake.

Trails

Hells Hollow Wildlife Adventure Trail - Have you ever explored a trail on buggy? Well you can do just that at Hells Hollow Wildlife Adventure Trail in Mercer (724-662-1999). Rent a trail buggy or hike and explore miles of historical, environmental and wildlife trails. See beaver dams, deer, wild turkey and try bird watching. Explore waterfalls, and one of Mercer County's first iron ore furnaces. See Hell's Hollow Farm with an old stone house built in 1824 and wander thru acres of Historic Indian hunting grounds. There are numerous smaller trails for your enjoyment including: Trout Island Trail in Sharpsville , a 2.6 mile paved scenic bicycle trail that follows the Shenango River, through low swamp land ending just short of Shenango Lake. The trail provides spectacular view of the dam and occasional sightings of eagles and other wild life. Self-guided nature trails managed by Shenango River Lake include the Seth Myers Nature Trail (a 1/2 mile self guided National Recreation Trail located northeast of the Shenango Dam) and Coonie Trail and Amphitheater (a 1/2 mile trail and amphitheater are located on the north side of Shenango River Lake and west of Route 18).

Upper Shenango River Water Trail -This trail provides 21 miles of scenic and easy paddling. The water trail starts at Pymatuning State Park, and running through the towns of Jamestown and Greenville, ends at the Army Corps of

Engineers facility at Shenango River Lake.

French Creek Water Trail - French Creek is great for boating, fishing, hiking, hunting, camping and viewing wildlife that is abundant along the creek. Recently French Creek received their designation as an official water trail. Originating in Chautauqua County in western New York, the French Creek water trail flows southerly through Erie, Mercer, Crawford, and Venango counties, ultimately joining the Allegheny River in Franklin, PA.

Community Parks

Brandy Spring Park-Mercer, PA. 40 acres with a fishing pond, swimming pools, picnic pavilions, baseball and softball fields, tennis courts and a playground.

Buhl Farm Park-Sharon/Hermitage, PA. 300 acre public park donated by Frank H. Buhl with hiking, tennis, fitness trail, swimming, playgrounds, baseball fields, picnicking, indoor and outdoor pavilions that are available to rent for any special occasion, an outdoor amphitheater and the only FREE public golf course in the United States.

Grove City Memorial Park-Grove City, PA. 265 acres with a swimming pool, horseshoes, athletic fields and a lake.
Riverside Park-Greenville, PA. 89 acres with a nature area, swimming, playgrounds, horseshoes, volleyball, trails and nature center.

Outdoor Fun

Kidds Mill Covered Bridge: built in 1868 and restored in 1990, Kidd's Mill is the last covered bridge in Mercer County, and the only remaining bridge in PA with an all-wood truss design. Its 120-foot length is open to hikers and bikers. Pymatuning Deer Park: located in Jamestown, PA features over 250 animals and birds from around the world. The animals will delight you with their antics. You will see lions and tigers from the far east and several species of deer. You can pet and feed many of the animals. There is a children's petting zoo that the little ones will love. Take a ride on the "Deer Park Express" train through the backwoods and count all the animals you will see. For the cowboys and cowgirls there are pony rides and a western town to enjoy.

Skydive Pennsylvania: located near Grove City, PA. Skydive Pennsylvania is a USPA affiliated full time commercial skydiving school. The school has the most progressive training program in Pennsylvania that exceeds USPA standards and has extremely experienced professional instructors. Advances in equipment and training have made it safer and easier for more people than ever to enjoy the incredible sensation of free falling and parachute flight.

Tribute

Avenue of 444 Flags and War on Terror Veterans Memorial: located in Hermitage, PA. You will see the breathtaking site of 444 flags flowing in the breeze in honor of the 53 Americans that were held hostage in Iran from November 4, 1979 to January 20, 1981. Also at this site the War on Terror Veterans Memorial honors military men and women who lost their life in the War on Terror.

To begin your outdoor adventure, contact VisitMercerCountyPA at 724-346-3771 to order your 2014-15 Outdoor Guide and Spring/Summer Calendar of events or visit us on line at www.visitmercercountypa.com. Mercer County, PA... We have outdoor excitement covered.



For more information about events in Mercer County, log onto www.VisitMercerCountyPa.com or call 1-800-637-2370.