

small town Heaven

More miles of green open space than anywhere else in Chester County, a bounty of delectable dining destinations, and Good Neighbor Day.

If you're looking for small town heaven, look no farther than Downingtown.



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Photos by Andrew Seymour

A long historic Lincoln Highway—the first paved road to span from Atlantic to Pacific—lies Downingtown, just 33 miles west of Philadelphia. As part of one of the oldest counties in Pennsylvania—Chester County's history predates 1776—Downingtown has history to spare. Taking a trip downtown will leave you feeling like you stepped back into the past—and walked into the future—all at the same time.

The Last Stop

Originally using the unassuming name Milltown, the town began as a small village, home to the last mills before travelers ventured into the unsettled west—what today is bustling Lancaster County.

As one of the town's entrepreneurs and member of a prominent local family, Thomas Downing was responsible for developing an industrial mill complex along Lancaster Road. Today, the Downingtown Log House, built in 1705 and once home to Thomas's family, still stands in its original location. After a few name changes, Downingtown was the choice that stuck, a nod to the contributions of the Downing family.



Downingtown Christmas Parade

Kerr Park

Downingtown Good Neighbor Day Fireworks

The Orangery at Glen Isle

Georgio's Deli

Victory Brewing Company

Kerr Park

Downingtown Farmer's Market

Stella Rossa Ristorante

Stella Rossa Ristorante

Because of its location, Downingtown served as a hub for stagecoach service between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. As coaches gave way to railroads, Downingtown saw an industrial boom. New jobs were created and, in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, the once-small village's population exploded. The newly prosperous town became an example of the advantages of embracing change.

Visit Downingtown today and you'll see that change all around. Traveling along historic Lancaster Avenue will give visitors a glimpse into the past—with 20 historic structures reflecting Downingtown's rich history. Yet the town is ever evolving.

Green Living

Ask Mayor Joshua Maxwell to describe his town, and he'll smile and say it's, "small town heaven." It's easy to see why.

Although only 2.2 square miles in size, Downingtown has more open space than any other borough in Chester County. Its five parks have plenty of bike and hiking trails, ponds for fishing and lawns for picnicking. On April 19 and 26, you can head to the local Orvis store for Flyfishing 101, then onto the stream-stocked, trout-filled Brandywine River—five minutes away. You'll wish springtime had come a lot sooner this year!

In keeping with the Downingtown tradition of keeping up with the times, the town touts a developing Main Street district. But while the town may welcome the new, it still values the old.

Since 1950 Philip H. Bradley Antiques has specialized in 18th- and early 19th-century American tall case clocks, furniture and decorative accessories. The shop has long been a destination for antiques lovers and collectors. For some antiques excitement, stop by an auction at Pook & Pook, where a Philadelphia piecrust tea table once sold for \$1.4 million! Check their auction schedule online and mark your calendar for the auction on April 25 and 26.

What better way to be green than to buy antiques?

Destination Dining

If you're not lucky enough to call Downingtown home, trust that their dining scene is definitely worth the drive. From early morning tea to late night snacks, Downingtown serves up something tasty all day long.

Start with a cup of tea from Pureblend Tea. This darling of the farmer's markets has a bricks-and-mortar tea shop on Brandywine Avenue with over 25 organically grown blends to choose from. Join their Tea of the Month club to keep up with

flavorful blends like Clean Green and Alice in Wonderland.

Around lunchtime head for East Lancaster Ave. to family-owned Georgio's Restaurant and Bar, celebrating 30 years in business and serving three meals a day. You'll find a Mediterranean menu—gyros, souvlaki, stuffed pita and more—and as the weather gets warmer, ask to sit outside on the patio.

Relative newcomer Stella Rossa Ristorante, in the former space of Firecreek Restaurant, is another lunch option if you're craving Italian. Their signature hot and cold small plates are perfect for sharing, and if you're in the mood to sip, sample the selection of 50 Italian wines. Or come back for happy hour or dinner.

For farm fresh, seasonal cuisine, Amani's BYOB is a can't miss. Using ingredients from local farmers and helping promote local business, Chef Jonathan Amann—three-time Best Chef of Chester County—puts a delicious twist on the traditional BYOB. Try creative dishes featuring sublime sauces, like Meyer Lemon Air or Yuzo Pomegranate, over the best selections from land and sea.

Enjoy up-close and personal attention with chef-side dining at Avalon Pasta Bistro, prepared by Chef John Brandt-Lee—a multi-course meal that's great for celebrations.

If you'd like a side of history with your meal, dine at The Orangery at Glen Isle. Located in a secluded historic home, The Orangery offers authentic Tuscan cuisine. Insider tip: make your reservations early—there's only one seating per night.

To sample the local brew—Victory Brewing Company started in Downingtown—head for their Brewpub. The bar menu will make you want to stay for one more round. After a late night out, a local favorite is the Station Taproom for brunch—try Chicken & Waffles or Shrimp & Grits. Then stop back to sip something on tap or bottled—the list is long, the options top notch, so plan accordingly.

Or if you'd rather stay in and cook at home, all the freshest ingredients you'll need are available at Kimberton Whole Foods. Finally, for a snack fact—Auntie Anne's Pretzels started here, at a market stand in the Downingtown Farmer's Market.

Make a Day of It

Shake away the last vestiges of the polar vortex with a walk in the park. Located along the Brandywine Creek, Kerr Park offers a perfect option for open space and sunshine. Stop by for the Downingtown Farmer's Market, featuring the area's best farmers and food artisans, produce, poultry and dairy.

Meet your neighbors on Good Neighbor Day, held on July 4th every year. This day-long event is one of the most popular—the town nearly triples in size. Starting with a 5K for Freedom Walk, the event features fabulous food, crafts, vendors and family fun activities, with a grand finale of fireworks at dusk.

In September, don't miss the Downingtown Fall Fest. Hosted by Victory Brewing, the event is jam packed with live music and entertainment, with local gifts and goodies, and best of all—the Beer Garden.

If a visit to Downingtown isn't enough, consider calling it home. AVE Downingtown is the perfect place for those looking for a chic condo in a sophisticated resort-style community for both long-term and extended-stay rentals. Ashbridge Manor and Simpson Meadows offer another option for those looking to move to apartment communities perfect for seniors wanting to downscale in size, but upscale in lifestyle.

Don't wait another minute! With all these places to shop, eat and explore, plus exciting events all year long, you're sure to find your piece of small town heaven in Downingtown.

Maybe we'll see you there! ♦

For all the latest Downingtown news, visit Downingtown.org or DowningtownMainStreet.com.



"Welcome To Friendly Downingtown — No Need For Speed!" so say the four new signs that were erected last Friday at the entrances to the Borough by the Downingtown Chamber of Commerce. A fifth sign is to be put up on Rte. 113. The project took many months of negotiating with property owners, sign makers and the weather and the Chamber hopes that they will play some small part in persuading the transient motorist to slow down, enjoy our town and leave our children and fenders undamaged. (From *The Archive*, May 1951)

PHOTO BY ANDY EPPOLITO