

FALLS CLASSIC:
Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater is just one attraction in the Laurel Highlands.

TAKE A DRIVE: INTO THE HIGHLANDS

Even if you love our town, it's nice to get away. This month: a part of Pennsylvania teeming with untamed beauty—but not tourists.

By Renee Sklarew

ONE OF THE MOST CELEBRATED BUILDINGS IN AMERICA, Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater sits just 3½ hours from DC, in the Laurel Highlands of southwestern Pennsylvania. The house's majesty is partly due to the surrounding woods, rivers, and mountains, all of which Wright made the most of. Yet despite being a region of untamed beauty, the area isn't touristy. Sure, whitewater paddlers and rafters come from around the world to tackle the Youghiogheny River, and restaurateurs were sourcing food from local farms and rivers before the phrase "farm to table" sprouted on menus everywhere. But the vibe, like the attractions, is natural and inviting.

DO

Wright's masterpiece, **Fallingwater** (1491 Mill Run Rd., Mill Run; 724-329-8501) sits atop a thundering 30-foot waterfall in the Bear Run Nature Reserve, the house's terraces hovering in the air and its stairs descending to the falls. Wright believed that "a building should appear to grow

easily from its site and be shaped to harmonize with its surroundings." Fallingwater is a perfect example. Visitors can tour the grounds and the residence—designed for a wealthy Pittsburgh family in 1936—to learn how the structure was built and the challenges of maintaining it today.

Just down the road is another Wright-designed dwelling, **Kentuck Knob** (723 Kentuck Rd., Chalk Hill; 724-329-1901). Though less well known, Kentuck Knob was one of Wright's "Usonian" homes, an eco-friendly and affordable prototype intended to house the masses in 1950s suburban America. The residence sits on a mountaintop and is landscaped with modern sculptures by artists such as Claes Oldenburg. Touring both houses helps to understand the architect's mission: to design buildings "expressed in organic simplicity."

Spring's chilly snowmelt is when the Youghiogheny River is at its most thrilling. **Ohiopyle Trading Post & River Tours** (4 Negley St., Ohiopyle; 724-329-1450) has rafting guides to



ALONG THE WAY



WITHIN AN HOUR AND A HALF

Stop at Maryland's **Monocacy National Battlefield Visitor Center** (5201 Urbana Pike, Frederick; 301-662-3515) to learn about the Civil War clash that kept Confederate soldiers from marching on Washington. You can stretch your legs on a one-mile loop hike past a gristmill and the Monocacy River.



TWO AND A HALF HOURS IN

The historic town of Cumberland, Maryland, is a good place to stop for coffee and a bite. **Café Mark/Jennifer's Desserts** (37 Baltimore St.; 301-759-0276) is a cozy cafe and bakery serving breakfast and lunch. Before getting back on the highway, take a peek at **George Washington's Headquarters** (38 Greene St.; 301-777-5132). While fighting the French and Indian War, the young general bunked in this log cabin; later, he slept there as President during the Whiskey Rebellion.



THREE HOURS IN

The **Laurel Highlands Falls Area Visitor Center** (124 Main St., Ohiopyle; 724-329-8591) has a spacious deck overlooking the Youghiogheny River's 18-foot-high waterfall. Inside the building are floor-to-ceiling windows with exhibits illustrating the region's landmarks, animal species, and history. From here, you can walk down to the river gorge or reach the Great Allegheny Passage Trail, designed for pedestrians and bicyclists.

help navigate the Class III to V rapids. It also rents Trek bikes to cycle the nine-mile paved trail between the towns of Ohiopyle and Confluence, a rails-to-trails path that's part of the 150-mile Great Allegheny Passage. Kiosks along the way describe life on the frontier.

SHOP

Don't miss the **Fallingwater Museum Store** (724-329-8501), a cache of jewelry, pottery, books, and homegoods inspired by Wright's designs. Need new hiking boots? In downtown Ohiopyle, outfitters sell outdoor gear alongside antiques and locally produced jams.

STAY

Seven miles from Ohiopyle, **Nemacolin Woodlands Resort** (1001 Lafayette Dr., Farmington; 866-344-6957) has a variety of accommodations, from Falling Rock, a posh boutique hotel, to budget-friendly townhouses that sleep six. The resort's Adventure Center, open to guests and non-guests, is an adrenaline junkie's dream:




Nemacolin's Adventure Center

There's a high-flying ropes course, a 50-foot bungee jump, and a 60-mile-an-hour racing zipline. You can take a "safari tour" through Nemacolin's wildlife preserve (which includes some very vocal lions), ride a horse through the lush forest, or steer a Jeep Rubicon over boulders and rivers of mud at the Off-Road Driving Academy. There are art and wine classes, a Holistic Healing Center for acupuncture and meditation, and a terrific spa.

EAT

In Ohiopyle's laid-back taverns, everyone dresses casually and kids are welcome. **Ohiopyle House Cafe** (144 Grant St.; 724-329-1122) serves tasty sandwiches with chips made to order. **Falls City Restaurant & Pub** (112 Garrett St.; 724-329-3000), at the Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail's terminus, is Ohiopyle's favorite hang-out for a reason: The beer selection rivals that of any craft-brew-centric restaurant in Washington.

Charming Bittersweet Café (205 Farmington-Ohiopyle Rd., Farmington; 724-329-4411) offers a seasonal selection of pies and buttery cookies. Nemacolin's **Lautrec** (866-344-6957) is for special occasions; chef Kristin Butterworth's restaurant earned five stars from *Forbes Travel Guide*. Also at Nemacolin, guests can enjoy panoramic views and a menu focused on seafood and steak at **Aqueous** (866-344-6957). 

Renee Sklarew is coauthor of "60 Hikes Within 60 Miles of Washington DC," due out in September. On Twitter, she's @dcwritermom.

KENTUCK KNOB

Overlooking the Youghiogheny River Gorge in the Laurel Highlands of southwestern Pennsylvania, stands a Frank Lloyd Wright masterpiece, The House on Kentucky Knob. Designed on a hexagonal module, Kentucky Knob is a one-story Usonian house - a signature design of Wright. Both dramatic and serene, the house is situated just below the crest of a hill and appears almost part of the mountain itself. Cantilevered overhangs and great expanses of glass effortlessly integrate the inside with the outside.

Kentucky Knob offers a seamless experience of architecture, art, and nature. Tours are offered daily March through November, weekends in December, and the week after Christmas. Your tour experience includes an optional walk on our lovely woodland trail interspersed with sculptures by contemporary artists such as Andy Goldsworthy, Sir Anthony Caro, and George Rickey.



Frank Lloyd Wright's House on Kentucky Knob
National Historic Landmark
724.329.1901 | Kentuckknob.com
723 Kentucky Road, Chalk Hill, PA 15421