

# Auto Tours in Pennsylvania State Parks and Forests

11/2014

## Safety Tips for Scenic Driving

- Tell someone the route you plan to follow and when you expect to return.
- Make sure your vehicle is road-ready and mechanically sound.
- Pack an emergency kit that includes a blanket, flashlight, fresh water and food items.
- Be aware that in many areas on state forest land cell phone reception may not be available.
- Observe speed limits and road signs.
- Be alert for wildlife crossing roads.
- Never attempt to drive through standing or moving water.
- Use extra caution around blind turns, especially on narrow forest roads.
- Monitor weather forecast and check with park and forest offices for current road conditions and closures.



## Contacts

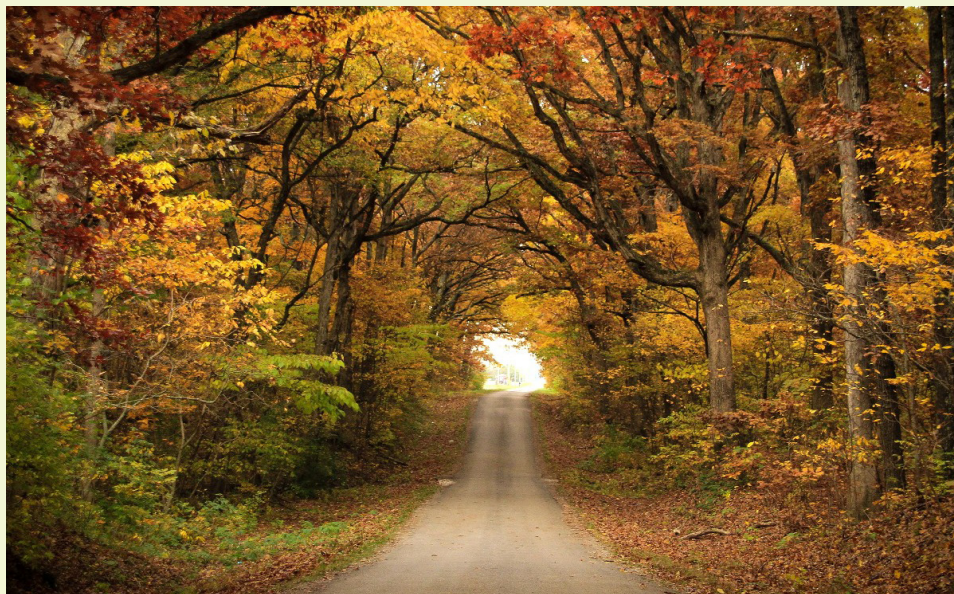
For more information, contact:

Bureau of Forestry  
PAForester@pa.gov  
717-787-2703

Bureau of State Parks  
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**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION  
AND NATURAL RESOURCES



## Scenic Driving

Many Pennsylvania treasures are found off-the-beaten-path along designated auto tours. A rich mosaic of scenery, abundant wildlife, history and geology can be experienced from the comfort of your vehicle when you follow a scenic drive. Scenic driving is a popular activity and the rewards include breathtaking views from mountaintop vistas, unexpected wildlife encounters, striking natural landforms and features, and a peek into the past. In addition to the following designated driving tours, most state forests have hundreds of miles of roads open to scenic driving. For more information on auto tours visit: [www.dcnr.state.pa.us](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us)

## Tours and Highlights

**Bucktail State Park Natural Area** – This unique state park stretches along the West Branch of the Susquehanna River and Sinnemahoning Creek. The 75-mile scenic drive follows the narrow valley from Emporium to Lock Haven along PA Route 120. It covers portions of Elk and Sproul state forests. The area is rich in American and pioneer history and was named after the Bucktail Rangers, a famous Civil War regiment of woodsmen. It is also the site of the Sinnemahoning Trail used by early Native Americans. The large forest tracts in the area hold white-tailed deer, elk, fisher, bobcat, black bears, turkeys, grouse and a host of forest interior songbirds. Mink, river otter, bald eagle, mergansers, belted kingfisher, wood ducks, and osprey are likely along the river and creeks.

**Elk Scenic Drive** – There is great wildlife viewing potential along this auto tour in north central Pennsylvania. The drive is accessible from Interstate 80 at Exit 111, PA Rt. 153, and at Exit 147, PA Rt. 144, Snow Shoe. Twenty-three viewing sites can be found along this 127-mile route. Drivers can begin at either end of the tour. Some highlights and side excursions include S.B. Elliott, Kettle Creek, Parker Dam and Sinnemahoning state parks. Sinnemahoning State Park includes a Wildlife Center and designated wildlife viewing areas where elk and bald eagles are often spotted. Four more designated wildlife viewing areas are found along this tour. They are Gilbert Farm and Dents Run elk viewing areas, and Hicks Run and Beaver Run Dam wildlife viewing areas. Elk are most prevalent during mating season in September and October. Dusk and dawn are best for encountering elk as well as white-tailed deer, gray fox, wild turkeys, coyotes and black bears.

The scenic drive includes Marion Brooks, Wykoff Run, Lower Jerry Run (accessible by foot only), Cranberry Swamp, East Branch Swamp and Johnson Run natural areas which also provide the opportunity to find wildlife. There are also scenic views and stops with grassland habitat that is unique to this forested region. The German Settlement Reclamation Project is a surface mine reclamation where grassland specialists like the eastern meadowlark, bobolink, grasshopper sparrow, northern harrier, and Henslow's sparrow may be found.

**Into the Woods: An Auto Tour of PA's Old Growth Forests** – The Old Growth Auto Tour is located within north central and northwest Pennsylvania. This tour takes drivers into the past for a sampling of what Penn's Woods may have looked like before early settlement and the lumber era of the nineteenth century. There are a total of 20 stops along the tour and many are natural areas that were set aside for their scientific, scenic and educational values. The tour is conveniently divided into four groups. Each group of stops will take at least a full day to experience, depending on driving pace and the amount of time taken at stops. Five areas along the tours are accessible by foot only.

**Tour sections and stops:**

- **North Central Area** – Quehanna Wild Area and Wyckoff Run Natural area; Johnson Run, Lower Jerry run, Bucktail, Cranberry Swamp and Forrest H. Dutlinger natural areas. There is another proposed old-growth stop in Sproul State Forest.
- **North West Area** – Anders Run Natural Area, Cook Forest State Park; and in the Allegheny National Forest, Heart's Content Scenic Area and Tionesta Scenic Natural Area.
- **North Area** – Pine Creek Gorge, Bark Cabin Natural Area, and Pennsylvania Lumber Museum.
- **South Central Section** – The Hook, Snyder Middleswarth, Tall Timbers, Detweiler Run, Bear Meadows and Alan Seeger natural areas.

**Audubon's Lehigh: A Guided Auto Tour** – In 1829, John James Audubon visited the Upper Lehigh River to study and paint the area's birds and wildlife. This 53-mile loop follows parts of that historic route beginning at either Jim Thorpe or White Haven. The tour passes through other quaint towns and stops at natural attractions and historic landmarks. An old grist mill, a one-room schoolhouse, remnants of a nineteenth century tannery and the beautiful Lehigh River are a few of the stops along this tour. Hickory Run State Park is one feature along the tour. The park holds a large boulder field of red sandstone and conglomerates, a National Natural Landmark. Lehigh Gorge State Park is also featured. Here the ruggedness and scenic beauty of the Lehigh River is displayed in steep forested hillsides, fast-moving water and tributary waterfalls. For more on this auto tour visit: [www.audubonslehigh.org](http://www.audubonslehigh.org).

**Laurel Highlands Scenic Driving** – The Laurel Highlands tour is divided into two sections. The rugged mountains and rolling farmland are scenic year-round but the region's hardwood forest species so prevalent at higher elevations add to the color palette. During fall the foliage blazes into hues of orange, red and yellow. Leaf-peeping typically peaks from mid to late October.

- **Discover Fall - Scenic Driving Tour Northern Loop** – This tour closely follows the Laurel Ridge. It is picturesque in fall and includes a stop at the third deepest gorge in Pennsylvania. The tour traverses Forbes State Forest and visits Laurel Ridge, Linn Run, Laurel Summit and Laurel Mountain state parks. There are also stops with short walks to overlooks. The northern loop covers 125 miles and takes at least four hours to complete.
- **Discover Fall – Scenic Driving Tour Southern Loop** – The tour travels between highland ridges and includes ridge top views of the Youghiogheny River and a contrasting view from the gorge. There are stops at Laurel Hill and Ohiopyle state parks and scenic overlooks. The Southern Loop is a 70-mile loop that requires approximately 2.5 hours depending on pace and stops.
- **Discover Birds and Blossoms** – Spring woodland wildflowers and the return of migratory bird species highlight this tour. Stops along the drive were selected for their wildflower and birding potential and include Spruce Flats Bog, Donegal Lake, Forbes State Forest and Laurel Hill State Park. Expect to see waterfowl and marsh birds, osprey and woodland songbirds. The tour is a loop of approximately 100 miles that requires a minimum of five hours depending on driving pace and stop time.
- **Discover Rocks, Ridges and Ravines** – This two-day tour combines interesting geology and architecture that was influenced by it. The tour guides visitors to one of the state's deepest gorges, its highest point and to the Laurel Caverns which is the largest and longest cave in PA. Local stone used in construction is displayed throughout the tour. Rock as old as 300 million years is quarried locally. Stone houses, churches, chimneys and garden walls exhibit local character and charm in stonework. This tour also makes stops at Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater and Christian Klay Winery, one of the highest elevation vineyards in the east.



## What to Bring

- A camera to capture wildlife and scenery.
- Blanket and picnic basket to stop at a park or forest picnic area.
- Friends and family to share the experience.
- A good road map, preferably one that contains minor and forest roads.
- A trash bag to carry out any refuse from your trip.
- A copy of your Pennsylvania State Park and State Forest Passport, available at [paparksandforests.org](http://paparksandforests.org)

