



Bethlehem's Main Street preserves and celebrates its colorful past.

## Lingering in the Lehigh Valley

Steeped in history, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, lures visitors with colorful museums and shops, unique restaurants and outdoor fun.

BETHLEHEM, PENNSYLVANIA

BY GERALD BARTELL

A plaque above an ornate fountain on Main Street in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, invites a “pilgrim” to “drink here ... and refresh thy spirit.”

☆ But more than water refreshes a wayfarer visiting this city. Bethlehem has taken its rich past and turned it into a vibrant present, offering fascinating museums, engaging stores and bracing outdoor pursuits.

Consider, for example, the **Hotel Bethlehem**. Built in 1922, this once-grand structure fell upon threadbare times late

in the last millennium. Determined to save the hotel, a group of Bethlehem's Lehigh University alumni teamed up with the Radisson hotel chain to restore the property. Now Cole Porter tunes spring from the lobby's grand piano, perfectly underscoring an elegant setting of palms, marble columns, tiled floors and Palladian windows. Guest rooms are furnished with dark, traditional furniture, and many of them afford panoramic views of the Lehigh Valley's gentle hills.

The hotel anchors Main Street, its slate and brick sidewalks and Victorian lamps drawing visitors outside for a walking

tour of the city. The best place to begin is near the foot of Main Street at the **Moravian Museum**. The museum is located in the Gemeinhaus, which was built in 1741 and is one of the largest 18th-century log structures in the United States. (Bethlehem claims to have more existing 18th-century buildings than Williamsburg, Virginia.)

The museum offers a look at the Moravians' early life in Pennsylvania. Their worship room, or Saal, has been recreated, as have family rooms typical of their cottages. In one of these rooms, blue ribbons trim a mannequin's farm dress, indicating its wearer was married. (Following the Moravian culture's “ribbon code,” young girls wore red ribbons and widows wore white ribbons.) Old musical instruments and a rare four-way music stand with candleholders show the Moravians' love of culture and the arts.

The Moravian influence in Bethlehem is evident farther up Main Street at the **Moravian Book Shop**. Founded in 1745, the shop is the oldest continuously operating bookstore in the world. Over the centuries, its original inventory of hymnals,

devotionals, and missionary stories has been expanded to include secular fiction and nonfiction. The store has also expanded physically by annexing adjacent properties. Now one can amble through a café, a gourmet shop (offering great chocolates), and a section stocked with locally crafted goods.

Heading up the street and turning down an alley, a visitor discovers one of Bethlehem's most refreshing spots, **Granny McCarthy's Tea Room**.

Here, founder Neville Gardner, a native of Ireland, pours an extensive selection of teas imported from Great Britain. Granny's also serves soups, sandwiches and shortbreads on wooden tables. From the open and aromatic kitchen come platters of fish and chips on Friday nights and Celtic breakfasts (Irish bacon, potato scones, sausage, eggs and grilled tomato) on Saturdays.

Adjoining Granny's is **Donegal Square Celtic Imports**, offering a wide range of gifts from the auld sod — teas, tweeds, teapots and jewelry.

More history and more good food await on Main at the **Sun Inn**. In this stone edifice, guides in colonial dress give tours through a first-floor museum. There are bedrooms, such as the ones George and Martha Washington slept in, and an open-hearth kitchen, which served dinners that prompted John Adams to write to his wife Abigail that the inn was one of the best he'd ever visited.

What sated Adams then continues to please visitors now at lunch and dinner in the Sun's second-floor dining room. Sitting on spindle chairs at tables covered with white cloths, guests can spoon black butternut squash soup, then dig into Ethan Allen's lamb chops or Benjamin



Shop at Cabela's sports outfitters and stay for a burger at the in-store restaurant.

Franklin's almond trout.

The Lehigh Valley surrounding Bethlehem abounds in recreational pastimes. Visitors who want to sample these outdoor pursuits can equip themselves at **Cabela's** in nearby Hamburg. On its 250,000 square feet of space, this sports outfitter must offer every type of fishing fly, shotgun shell and stream wader known to man. Also on the premises are an indoor archery range, a walkthrough aquarium and a restaurant.

Sharpshooters can try **Lehigh Valley Sporting Clays**. Instructors guide visitors through a 17-station course of clay pigeon targets. Sporting Clays stands on the site of an abandoned limestone quarry, so anyone uninterested in shooting can stroll bucolic paths winding safely away from the shooting sites.

Anglers ply several streams in the area, including some that run right through Bethlehem. The **Delaware River Fly Fishing Guide Service** provides equipment and instruction — guide Gary Mauz stands ready with rods, tackle and advice.

"It's like holding a phone and throwing a dart," Mauz says as he tutors a novice in the skill of bait casting.

Another popular outdoor draw is biking and canoeing the Lehigh River on one of the **Wildlands Conservancy's Bike and Boat** excursions.

Once black with industrial waste, the river is now a clear, inviting stream coursing through woods and islands in the center of Bethlehem. Conservancy guides lead visitors on four-mile river trips, then head bike excursions over the towpath beside the remains of the Lehigh Navigation Canal.

To cap off a visit to Bethlehem, head to **Clover Hill Vineyards and Winery**. At sunset, retire to a bench outside the winery, sample a Clover Hill red, and look out over a verdant valley of cornfields and grape arbors. Then return to the Hotel Bethlehem for dinner at its **Colonnade Steakhouse**. On its walls are murals depicting Bethlehem's past, painted in 1937 by artist George Gray. Looking at the pictures while working on a salmon steak with a lemon dill beurre blanc, a visitor can savor Bethlehem's refreshing blend of past and present.

## IF YOU GO...

**Lehigh Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau**, 800/747-0561.  
www.lehighvalley.org

**Raddisson Hotel Bethlehem**,  
437 Main St., Bethlehem, Pa.,  
610/625-5000, 800/333-3333.  
Rates: \$119-\$254 for two.

**Moravian Museum**, 66 West Church St.,  
Bethlehem, Pa., 610/867-0173,  
800/360-TOUR. www.historicbethlehem.org. Tues.-Sun. noon-4 p.m.

**Moravian Book Shop**, 428 Main St.,  
Bethlehem, Pa., 888/661-2888, daily  
10 a.m.-6 p.m.

**Granny McCarthy's Tea Room and Donegal Square Celtic Imports**, 534 Main St., Bethlehem, Pa., 610/861-7631, www.donegal.com. Mon.-Wed. 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Thur.-Fri. 10 a.m.-8 p.m., Sat. 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Sun. noon-4 p.m.

**Sun Inn**, 564 Main St., Bethlehem, Pa.,  
610/866-1758 (museum), 610/974-

9451 (restaurant). www.suninnbethlehem.org. Museum: Tues.-Sun 11 a.m.-4 p.m., Fri.-Sat. 5-9 p.m. Restaurant: lunch, Tues.-Sat. 11 a.m.-4 p.m.; dinner Tues.-Sat 4:30-9 p.m., Fri.-Sat 4:30-10 p.m. Call for museum admission fee.

**Cabela's**, 100 Cabela Dr., Hamburg, Pa.,  
610/929-7000. www.cabelas.com

**Lehigh Valley Sporting Clays**,  
2750 Limestone St., Coplay, Pa.,  
610/261-9616. www.lvclays.com/

**Delaware Valley Fly Fishing Guide Service**, 879 Euclid Ave., Warrington, Pa., 215/343-1720.  
www.flyfishingguideservice.com

**Wildlands Conservancy's Bike and Boat**,  
3901 Orchid Pl., Emmaus, Pa.,  
610/965-4397. www.wildlandspa.org

**Clover Hill Winery**, 3901 9850  
Newington Rd., Breinigsville, Pa.,  
610/395-2468. .cloverhillwinery.com

