



An Amish girl sells homemade candles in a central market of the Amish country near Lancaster.



Travelling through the Amish country offers ample opportunities for a relaxing look at a simpler society.



Photos/Pennsylvania Dutch Visitors Bureau

In winter, the Amish often use sleighs to pick up children from school.

## Amish country

### Visitors to Pennsylvania get a close look at religious society

By Arline Zatz  
special writer

MORE THAN 14,000 Amish live in the heart of what is called Pennsylvania Dutch County, and their towns — Mt. Joy and Bird-in-Hand — are as quaint and colorful as the sound.

The Amish are classified into two groups known informally as "plain" and "fancy." The "plain" make up the Old Order Amish, strictly adhering to religious rules. The other group — Mennonites, Moravians and Lutherans — make up the "fancy," or more worldly sect.

Visitors to this scenic area of Pennsylvania will notice an absence of utility lines and telephone poles, as the Amish do not use automobiles, telephones, televisions, radios, or any other electrical appliances because it is against their religious beliefs.

Yet they survive, and very well, using horses and bugles, waterwheels, and propane gas for power, along with plain sweat and muscle to till their rich farmlands.

THE AMISH dress differently, too. Once married, the men do not shave; women wear the same clothing worn generations ago; and buttons, buckles and belts are forbidden on trousers or other clothing.

Though this may sound strange, it's understandable. The Amish don't want to resemble the military with uniforms sporting big brass buttons, belts and buckles because the military had persecuted them in Europe.

The Amish and more liberal Mennonites in Lancaster County share a common background originating in Switzerland during the sixteenth century. Fleeing religious persecution in Europe, they came to William Penn's newly settled land of freedom, Pennsylvania.

Here, quickly adapting to Lancaster County's rich, fertile land,

resembling the Rhine area they had left, they applied their agricultural skills, becoming self-sufficient.

THE AMISH HAVE large families and strong family ties. Their children learn to help tend the farm at an early age and attend one-room parochial schools through eighth grade, where they're taught basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills as well as three languages — the Pennsylvania Dutch dialect, German for the 16th century hymns used in religious services, and English as part of their formal education.

Though the Amish do not worship in separate church structures, they do take turns worshipping in each other's houses every other Sunday.

There is no doubt they do things differently, work hard, and are a religious people, but they also take time for fun and enjoy the fruits of their labor and life — especially at Christmas when they extend their period of joy by celebrating two days instead of one.

Christmas is different in other ways for the Amish. Unlike most Americans today, they don't put up Christmas trees or wait for Santa Claus. They do not give their children stereos or computers for the holiday.

INSTEAD, EACH child receives one or two simple gifts placed beside individual dishes filled with candy and nuts, to be opened on Christmas day.

Parents also exchange gifts, but only those considered practical, such as a new chair or candles. The rest of the day is spent quietly reading from the Bible or walking in the woods before enjoying a simple meal

of ham, mashed potatoes, vegetables, homemade bread and preserves.

On December 26, known as the Second Christmas, the Amish visit and feast with other family members, gathering at the home of either the husband or wife's parents.

According to the Amish, this Second Christmas is "a noisy day, one to be spent with the family, and a happy one in which we are thankful for what we receive."

STOP AT the tourist bureau at the Route 30 bypass in Lancaster to watch a 26-minute film that gets into the heart of local heritage, culture and daily life. You can then opt to take a two- or four-hour motorcoach tour of the area; suitable tours are offered by Conestoga Tours, 225 E. Chestnut, Lancaster, and Brunswick Tours, P.O. Box 4302, Lancaster.

Both include a drive through farmlands, a stop at a working Amish farm, a visit to a farmers' market, and a look at how Pennsylvania Dutch foods are prepared.

For exploring on your own, an excellent autolapour tour is available describing points of interest in the area. Tapes can be rented for \$8.50 each at many of the attractions, or ordered from CCLnc., P.O. Box 385, Scarsdale, N.Y. 10583 for \$11.70.

IT WON'T take long before you see one of the locals riding his horse-drawn carriage down the highway alongside lush, neat farms and fields of wheat, corn, alfalfa and tobacco. One of your first stops in this beautiful area should be the Amish Farm and House on Route 30, an operating replica of an Old Order Amish farm in the nineteenth century.

Or, for a look at a 200-year-old house and farm occupied by Amish farmers, visit the Amish Homestead at 2034 Lincoln Highway East in Lancaster.

Other excellent attractions include these places (which have admission charges):

- The People's Place on Route 340 in Intercourse, where the lifestyle and beliefs of the Amish and Mennonite people are presented on film and displays, along with samples of their arts and crafts. Numerous gifts and food shops are in the surrounding village.

- Donegal Mills Plantation on Trout Run Road in Mt. Joy is an authentic restoration of life in rural 18th and 19th century America, reflected in the mill, miller's house, bake house and mansion. Open Tuesday through Sunday.

- Ephrata Cloister at 632 W. Main Street, Ephrata, a cluster of buildings dating from 1732 when a Protestant communal society was founded by Conrad Beissel, a German Pietist mystic, offers tours by costumed guides through the buildings, illustrating the austere simplicity of these people's unique life style. Open Tuesday through Sunday.

- Hans Herr House, at 1849 Hans Herr Drive, in the town of Willow Street, is an outstanding example of medieval Germanic architecture, authentically restored. The oldest house in the county, it was built for Hans Herr, Bishop of the Mennonite Community established in 1710. Closed Sundays.

- Mount Hope Estate & Winery on Route 72 in Cornwall, offers tours through this beautiful mansion built in 1789 by Henry Bates Grubb, a

Cornwall ironmaster, featuring 24 rooms with ornate fireplaces and a greenhouse. Tours include formal tasting of wine made from grapes grown on the estate and events are scheduled throughout the year. Open Monday through Saturday.

- Rock Ford Plantation on Rock Ford Road, in Lancaster is the well-preserved home of physician, soldier and politician Edward Hand, best known as General George Washington's Revolutionary War adjutant general. The home dates to 1792 and tours are given by costumed guides. Open Tuesday through Sunday.

- Wheatland at 1120 Marietta Avenue in Lancaster is magnificent. Tours of the home, decorated in American Empire and Victorian style, are given by costumed guides. The mansion served as the residence of James Buchanan, 15th President of the United States. Open April through November daily and for a few days in December.

- Mill Bridge Village on S. Rooks Road in Strasburg, is a recreated village centered around Lancaster County's longest covered bridge and the 250-year-old John Herr's Mill. A broommaker, candlemaker and

blacksmith can be observed at their crafts and during holidays, special events are planned.

If you'd like to put your taste buds to work and learn how some products are made, Pennsylvania Dutch Country is the place to be. At the Bube's Brewery and Catcombs, you can see a brewery that was built before the Civil War.

The museum, located below ground in natural catacombs, offers visitors a look at the original vats and wooden casks used in beer-making over 100 years ago. It's located at 102 N. Market St., Mt. Joy, and is open daily May through October, other times by appointment.

AT ANDERSON'S Bakery, visitors walk on a specially designed, enclosed overhead catwalk to view the complete process of pretzel making at the world's largest pretzel bakery. Open Monday through Friday at 2062 Old Philadelphia Pike, Lancaster, Pa.

If you go, contact the Pennsylvania Dutch Visitors Bureau, 1799 Hempstead Road, Lancaster, PA 17601 or call (717) 299-8901, for a free map and brochure of attractions and hotels.

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