

THE STATE I'M IN #1

By Dorothy Kurtz

Hello and welcome to what, I hope, is the first of several yearly columns about attractions I've visited for the past year within my home state, New Jersey. Located between New York City and Philadelphia, NJ has been occupying a very busy section of the USA, if not the world. No wonder it's the most densely populated state in the USA. By writing this column, I'd like to prove that there is more to see and do in NJ than just visiting Atlantic City.

Wednesday, March 1, 2006: On a chilly day, I arrived in Princeton, NJ (Mercer County), via four commuter trains (1. PATCO High-Speed Line from Lindenwold, NJ, to Camden; 2. New Jersey Transit's River Line from Camden to Trenton; 3. NJ Transit train from Trenton to Princeton Junction; and 4. another NJ Transit train, the "Dinky," from Princeton Junction to Princeton). As I stepped into the campus of Princeton University on my way to the Frist Campus Center, I passed by buildings showings different architectural styles from elaborately-carved Victorian Gothic to some severe looking buildings from the 20th century. Once I arrived at the Frist Center, I ate a reasonably priced lunch at their food court before I took a student-led tour of the campus via the Orange Key Guide Service (609-258-1766). Along the tour, I learned more about the history and function of the buildings that I had admired a short while ago. In addition, our tour guide gave us a brief 250+ years of the University's history as well as some interesting anecdotes about student life. Then, we stepped inside of Nassau Hall, the oldest building (1756) on campus. (For a brief time in 1783, congress met in this Georgian-styled building when Princeton served as a temporary capital of the USA.) Besides the buildings, I also saw some lovely tree-lined walkways. Although the tours have been, for the most part, for high-school students (and their families), anybody could take those tours--despite one's SAT scores.

Sunday, April 2, 2006: It was a sunny but cool day when I visited the Jockey Hollow section (973-543-4030) of Morristown National Historical Park, off of Tempe Wick Rd., near Rt. 202, south of Morristown (Morris County). The winter of 1779-80 was one of the coldest in the 18th century. It was even worse if you were a soldier living in a small hut with several other soldiers who were freezing, hungry, and maybe ill, while waiting for food, money, and other supplies. After many delays from getting those needed rations, some soldiers deserted. I learned about these facts and more as I viewed a short film at the Visitor Center. Another part of the Visitor Center showed a reconstruction of a typical soldiers' hut displaying the straw bunk beds, weapons, clothes, and other items while I listened to an audio presentation about living conditions in those huts. On a short walk from the Visitor Center, I looked at the Wick Farm. The Wick family once owned this farm that included Jockey Hollow (about 1,000 acres). For the winter of 1779-80, General Arthur St. Clair and his aide rented out part of the farmhouse from the Wick family. In addition to touring the rooms in the Wick house, a park service employee, dressed in 18th-century-style clothing, answered questions about the farm, and she showed me how flax turned into linen. Other parts of the farm included the well, a barn, and a vegetable and herb garden. Finally, a drive through other parts of Jockey Hollow showed the areas where soldiers from different brigades camped--first in tents, then in those log-cabin huts.

Saturday, May 6: Except for occasional rain while traveling up the New Jersey Turnpike and Garden State Parkway, the day was sunny with temperatures in the 60s Fahrenheit when I visited Lambert Castle, 3

Valley Rd., Paterson (Passaic County) (973-278-9337). Once upon a time, Catholina Lambert (1834-1923), at age 17, emigrated from England to America to seek his fortune. By 1890, he owned one of the largest silk mills in Paterson, NJ. Then in 1892, Lambert had a castle built on Garret Mountain overlooking Paterson. At first, he filled his castle with European and American paintings and sculptures. Unfortunately for him, the 1913 silk strike put him in deep debt, and he had to sell most of his artworks in 1916. Nevertheless, he still lived in his castle until his death in 1923. After this, his son, Walter, sold the castle to the city of Paterson. For a few years, the city used this place as a day camp for disadvantaged children until 1928, when the Passaic County Park Commission took over the castle. Nowadays, this place has been serving as a museum and the headquarters for the Passaic County Historical Society. From the outside, I admired this Victorian-Gothic castle. Once inside, I became even more impressed as I toured the rooms on the ground floor containing mostly Victorian-Gothic furnishings. In addition, I noticed some artwork, pictures, and photos, especially of the Lambert family, as well as the elaborate room interiors: ceilings and arches as well as mantle pieces and floors. A dark-wood stairway led me up to the landing where I glanced at a stained-glass window in memory of Lambert's daughter, Florence, who died in her 20s. On the upper floor, the different rooms displayed pictures, texts, mementos, and other items about Passaic County's history and its industries. One of those rooms also presented a half-hour video about the history of Paterson. The top floor showed temporary exhibits. When I was there, I saw a special exhibition showing past historical-interpretation costumes, Halloween costumes from the 1920s and 30s, and theatrical costumes from vaudeville. Another temporary exhibit area displayed collections of spoons in many shapes and sizes as well as colors and materials. Finally, upon leaving here, I took a last look over both the city of Paterson and the distant Manhattan skyline.

Sunday, June 4: If you plan to visit New Jersey's largest historic village, Waterloo Village, 525 Waterloo Rd., Stanhope (Sussex County) (973-347-0900), wear your most comfortable shoes; you'll need them. With over 5,000 acres, this place included over two-dozen historic structures from the 18th and 19th centuries. Waterloo made its income from an ironworks in the 1700s; in the 1800s, the Morris Canal; and later in the 19th century, the Sussex Railroad. By the 1900s, a railroad bypass reduced Waterloo to a quiet-backwoods village; in 1964, the historic village opened to the public. Thus, with my most comfortable shoes on, I toured several of the buildings: an 1859 Methodist Church, different houses from the 1700s and 1800s, and an 1831 general store as well as a blacksmith shop, sawmill, and gristmill. After having a light lunch at the Towpath Tavern, I continued to tour some other buildings: a 1760 tavern & inn, a carriage house, and a farm as well as a pottery shed, an apothecary, and a re-created Lenape village. In many of the buildings, the guides, several of them dressed in 18th- and 19th-century-styled clothing, gave a tour of the houses or demonstrated different crafts and trades. I was especially impressed with the re-created Lenni-Lenape Village. Here, the guide explained about the everyday lives, before the days of contact with Europeans, of these Native Americans and what became of their descendants. Meanwhile, I looked at the tools they used, clothes they wore, and other items, especially some re-created Lenape structures: sweat lodge and wigwam as well as a shaman's lodge and long-house. Finally, the gift shop sold items, souvenirs, and literature from and about this section of NJ. My visit took from three to four hours, but it was time well spent.

Sunday, July 9: Although most others in NJ visited the Shore during mid-summer, I decided to go to NJ's largest city and visit the state's largest museum, the Newark Museum, 49 Washington St. (Essex County), in the city's downtown arts district (973-596-6550). Once I entered this museum, I made a beeline to the third floor of the north wing. Here, I looked at a huge section of Asian art from Japan, China, and Korea as well as India and other sections of Asia, especially Tibet. By way of pictures, sculptures, and household items as well as furniture, clothes, and other objects, I learned something about the daily lives, celebrations, and religious beliefs from the different cultures that live on earth's largest continent. I was especially impressed with the way the museum presented the wedding customs from Japan, China, and Korea as well as the details about Tibetan Buddhism that included a Buddhist altar. Afterward, I toured both the first and second floors in the north wing. This area showed American art in paintings, sculptures, and furniture dating from the 18th century into the 1990s. Meanwhile, when I was there, the temporary exhibit area displayed 500 Years of Jewelry. Thus, I learned why people adorned themselves with different kinds of jewels: cameos, brooches, and items made of precious metals and gemstones. Other displays presented religious jewelry, jewelry as art, and Newark's jewelry industry from the 1840s into the 20th century. In the main building, I observed the earth history gallery that covered the formation of the earth and both her past and present flora, fauna, and minerals, including a special section about NJ's natural history. Other exhibit areas showed Native American art; African art; and the art of Ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome via pictures, sculptures, and household items as well as jewelry, clothing and other objects. Because it was a Sunday afternoon in mid-summer, I almost had this museum to myself. Nevertheless, before I knew it, four hours had passed from the time I entered here.

Sunday, August 6: While it's no substitute for Walt Disney World, Six Flags Great Adventure, off county route 537, Jackson (Ocean County) (732-928-2000), made for an interesting day in itself. First off, I wasn't a big fan of thrill rides; I preferred seeing what entertainment the park had to offer, and I suspected some other people felt the same way as I did. To me, a well-rounded theme park offered a good balance of rides, both wild and tame, and entertainment. Thus, I started my day by watching (1) a dolphin show starring two dolphins and a sea lion doing some cute and silly antics. After lunch, I saw (2) Spirit of the Tiger where two tigers, with coaxing by their trainers, demonstrated their natural movements on both land and in the water. There were no circus tricks performed in this show. Later, (3) in Mission: Weekend Warriors, the Extreme Show, two rival teams exhibited their skills in roller skating, skate boarding, and different water sports, especially water skiing and high-speed boating. Next, I observed (4) Six Flags 45th Anniversary Parade. (It's been 45 years since the first Six Flags park opened: Six Flags Over Texas.) Here, the parade featured the Looney Tunes cartoon characters: Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Tweety, etc. and several super heroes riding on floats: Superman, Batman and Robin, Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, and The Flash. For the final show, (5) Welcome to the 60s, I reminisced as four performers sang songs from the 1960s and went through several costume changes. (I was a child during that decade.) Before leaving the park, (6) I rode one ride, Great Adventure's Ferris wheel called "the Big Wheel" that provided me with some birds-eye views of the park. Overall, I had a good day and the park proved worth visiting if you like amusement rides, watching low-key but fun entertainment, or just walking through the 11 theme areas of the park. On the other hand,

admission, parking, and items bought in the park, including food and drinks, were on the expensive side. Nevertheless, Six Flags offered discounts such as coupons, discounts for AAA members, and so on. Although you couldn't bring food into the park, except for pre-booked private picnics, some people saved money by getting their hand stamped and having a picnic at their cars in the parking lot (car park). The sound volume at the shows were loud, and there weren't enough shady areas; so, bring earplugs, sun block, and umbrellas. Because this was a large park, wear some comfortable walking shoes as well. If you can't find a printed show schedule for the day near the park's entrance, go to the Guest Relations office and request one. In addition, the park contained several rides from rides for small children to the highest roller coaster (as of the time I'm writing this).

Saturday, September 9: Did you think I would write this column without including some section of the NJ Shore? Of course not, and during the date listed above, I visited the NJ Shore's northernmost beach area: Sandy Hook (Monmouth County), part of the Gateway National Recreation Area (732-872-5970). Close to a few miles past the entrance, I stopped by the Visitor Center. Here, in a former life-saving station, I saw two videos: *NJ Coastal Trail* proved that there has been more to the NJ Shore than amusement parks, sand, and salt water. This video presented the natural and historic sights that visitors could see along both of NJ's shorelines: the Delaware Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. Then, a second video, *Life Saving Service Beach Apparatus Drill*, showed how the coast guard practiced for emergencies during the early-20th century. The rest of the Visitor Center exhibited objects, pictures, and texts explaining the floral and fauna of this 1,665-acre barrier beach, the years this building served as a life-saving station, and other facts about the area. After this, I traveled close to four miles north of the Visitor Center and walked along Sandy Hook's northernmost beach. Thus, on a clear day, visitors could see the skyline of New York City from this beach. I noticed a sizable number of people here although it was after the unofficial summer season (Memorial Day through Labor Day) and despite swimming at their own risks. (During the unofficial summer season, lifeguards are on duty and visitors have to pay a parking fee. The Visitor Center staff told me that the parking lots [car parks] are usually full by 10:00 am on summer weekends.) Other interesting sections of this peninsula included the 1764 Sandy Hook Lighthouse, the nation's oldest, and the Fort Hancock Historic District, an army fort from 1895 to 1974. Nowadays, environmental and education groups use the many buildings in this former fort, including Officers' Row. Throughout the year, the staff presented different events, especially ranger-led tours of this peninsula. In addition to the beach that I walked along, Sandy Hook had other beaches, particularly Gunnison Beach, a clothing-optional beach. (No, I didn't stop by there.) Anyhow, I had a relaxing time during my visit to the northernmost beach.

Sunday, October 1: The early-morning rain cleared up by the time I arrived at Six Flags Wild Safari, Jackson Township (Ocean County) (732-928-1821). This has been the largest safari outside of Africa, but unlike a safari in Africa, Six Flags Wild Safari included animals from six different continents. Although the public could drive through the park in their own hardtop cars, for an extra charge, I chose to sit back and ride the safari bus for a 45-minute tour. (For safety reasons, the park doesn't allow any soft-top cars or convertible-top cars.) On 350 acres, this park comprised almost 1,200 animals from nearly 57 species in nine different areas. Those areas covered an American Section, an Elephant & Rhino Section, the African Plains & Lion Section, the Bear

Country, a Bird Sanctuary, an Australian Section, the Tiger's Lair, an Asian Section, and the Monkey Jungle. Some of the animals, such as several hoofed mammals, elephants, and rhinos as well as kangaroos, ostriches, and different birds, walked freely around their different sections. This made for some very close encounters around the cars and safari bus--much closer than any zoo offered. (This is why the park officials warn the public to keep their car doors and windows closed.) Other animals, such as lions, tigers, and bears as well as monkeys were not free to roam around near the cars. Nevertheless, I still had a close view of them as they stood behind a special fence. Meanwhile, the monkeys seemed to have lined up along the fence to look at the different cars and safari bus in a similar way that many humans have looked at parade floats. Even though the safari bus cost extra, the advantages over driving outweighed the cost to me. I didn't have to concentrate on driving, and the bus driver provided a lively commentary about the different creatures that share this planet with us.

Sunday, November 5: Many people know of Mountain Creek, 200 Route 94, Vernon (Sussex County) (973-827-2000), as New Jersey's largest ski resort. During the winter months, this area offered different trails for skiing, snow boarding, and snow tubing for different levels of winter-sports fans from beginners to advanced. The resort also included both chair and gondola lifts. Because I wasn't a big winter-sports fan, I chose to visit for an overnight stay on Saturday, November 4. Mountain Creek offered me two choices of accommodations: The Appalachian, a resort hotel containing suites with fully-equipped kitchens; and Black Creek Sanctuary, townhouses with similar amenities as The Appalachian, plus a few more extras. I stayed at a one-bedroom townhouse in Black Creek, and as soon as I entered this gated section of the resort, I knew I was in a special place. The living room included a digital TV above a gas-powered fireplace, another digital TV was in my bedroom, and the view from this townhouse overlooked the lovely, hilly scenery of this part of NJ. Therefore, I could sit in front of a warm fireplace and either watch TV that included several channels, not the limited TV channels some hotels offered, or glance out of the glass doors and windows at the local scenery. When I was there, Mountain Creek was still constructing the rest of The Appalachian hotel as well as the rest of the townhouses of Black Creek. Nevertheless, both places displayed a rustic elegance using wood and stone exteriors as well as charming landscaping. The next day, I took a walk through the Black Creek Freshwater-Wetland Sanctuary. Here, on 30 acres, including a few trails, I took a closer look at the floral and fauna in this area as well as admired the fall foliage in general. Meanwhile, signs along the way advised visitors on what kinds of wildlife to look for around those trails. As I mentioned before, I wasn't a big winter-sports fan; that's why I enjoyed the quieter autumn season better than winter.

Sunday, December 10: A drive up to Somerset County, off Route 206, took me to the Duke Estate, one of the former homes of Doris Duke (1912-1993). My reason for visiting Duke Farms, 80 Route 206 South, Hillsborough (908-722-3700), was to take the Indoor-Display-Garden Tour. (These tours are very popular, and only a limited number of persons may take each tour; therefore, advanced reservations are required.) Because I arrived about an hour early before my set tour time, I watched two videos in the Visitors' Center. The first video covered Doris Duke's life: her early childhood as a tobacco and hydropower heiress; her homes in New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Hawaii; and her philanthropic activities. In the second video, I saw how and why Ms. Duke commissioned to have her Hawaii home built as well as why the interior was in Islamic style. Soon,

it was time for the tour where our friendly tour guide walked us over to a large glass house. Once inside, I looked at themed gardens presenting 11 different regions from around the world: (1) Italian, (2) Colonial, (3) Edwardian, (4) French, (5) English, (6) Desert, (7) Chinese, (8) Japanese, (9) Indo-Persian, (10) Tropical, and (11) Semi-Tropical. Each garden displayed its share of flowers and plants, and in some gardens, I noticed statues, bridges, ponds, or building facades. Overall, I felt as though I traveled to the world's gardens--without the jet lag.

Sunday, January 7, 2007: Although I seldom go to many shopping centers, I decided to visit Liberty Village Outlets, Flemington (Hunterdon County) (908-782-8550). Here among re-created 18th-century-styled buildings and red brick walkways, Liberty Village offered 60 outlet stores. On the other hand, don't expect very cheap prices; many of these outlet stores have regular branches in mostly upscale shopping malls. Unlike those shopping malls, however, the stores in Liberty Village mark down their prices from 25% to 65% everyday, not just during a sale, as in the mall stores. About half of the outlet stores sold clothing, and the rest sold shoes, luggage, and children's clothes as well as accessories, house wares, gifts, and food. Meanwhile, the information center supplied discount-coupon books, maps of Liberty Village, and free literature about New Jersey. Despite my purchasing some merchandise in only a few of those stores, I still enjoyed walking around this re-created colonial village and browsing at the fancier shops and goods. (New Jersey has no sales tax on clothing and shoes.)

Thursday, February 1: Back in 2005, I visited the New Jersey State House, 125 West State St., Trenton (609-633-2709). Because the 2005 visit was on a Saturday, I almost had this building to myself when I took the guided tour. This time, however, there were more people on this weekday working inside the capitol building. Just the same, my tour guide explained how New Jersey's government worked as she showed me the different rooms in this building. First, I saw the room under the rotunda displaying portraits of past NJ governors. In addition, I glanced at the elaborate Victorian interior of carved-wood trim around the stained-glass windows as well as the brass railings on the next two levels leading up to the salmon-colored interior dome. Then, the tour guide brought my attention to a porcelain sculpture that exhibited four state symbols: the state bird (American goldfinch) and the state insect (honeybee) as well as the state flower (violet) and the state tree (red oak). On the upper level, I viewed the Governor's Reception Room displaying more portraits of past NJ governors, including James McGreevey and Richard Codey. Next, I looked at the 1890s General Assembly Room with its lovely chandelier and the 1903 Senate Chamber with its colorful upper-wall murals symbolizing NJ's products or historical events. In those rooms, I noticed fancy carpeting on the floors, marble on the walls, and stained-glass windows and ceilings as well as intricate wood trim in the interiors and several handsome wood desks. Although the guide informed me that some of the "marble" and "wood" were really made of plaster, I couldn't tell the difference. No matter how well or badly you thought the lawmakers have been running NJ, once you toured the NJ State House, you couldn't deny that this building looked impressive. I found it impressive from its gold-exterior dome to its floors of marble, tile, or carpeting! (Nowadays, security is tighter here. I had to show a photo-ID as well as go through an airport-styled bag check and metal detector.)

If you would like more information about New Jersey, the NJ Office of Travel & Tourism, PO Box 820, Trenton, NJ 08625-0820 (609-292-2470 or 1-800-JERSEY-7) can help you.