Come Home to Iron & Steel Country

Explore the Iron & Steel Heritage and Recreation region located in and around the Schuylkill Highlands Conservation Landscape and Hopewell Big Woods, the finest natural preserve in our region. Etched into the natural landscape of portions of Pennsylvania’s Chester, Berks, Montgomery and Lancaster Counties are the sites that celebrate the iron and steel industries which literally forged our nation. We invite you to enjoy waterways, woodlands, farms and fields; to explore historic towns and villages; and to discover the ironmaster mansions and 300 years of industrial sites which reflect the contrast between technology and rural living in this region.

Starting in the early 1700’s, immigrants came seeking a better life. Using the area’s natural resources, they helped build a nation during the American Revolution. In the 1800’s, they were joined by other immigrants from around the world fighting to save the country during the Civil War, and then leading it into massive industrialization and on to become a world power. This region saw the struggle to end slavery and welcomed the nation’s first female industrialists. Its stories and places boast a longer history with the iron and steel industry than any other region in the nation.

The new Schuylkill Highlands Iron and Steel Heritage Scenic Byway along Route 29 from Valley Forge National Historical Park to Elverson Borough is an all inclusive gateway. From National Parks to farms and vineyards, 18th and 19th century communities, to urban night life...morning, noon, and night we have it all!

😍😍 Iron & Steel Trail 😍😍

We invite you to explore the Iron & Steel Trail to experience the industrial past and present. You can also select a complimentary self-guided heritage tour blending history and recreation to discover the Iron & Steel landscape’s many “Faces of Freedom.”

For more information, we encourage you to visit our website at ironandsteelheritage.org
Forging Freedom Tour
Both literally and figuratively the ironmasters of this region supported their emerging nation by forging freedom. Early ironmasters resented British laws that required them to ship pig iron to England and then buy back the finished product. When war came to North America in 1775, the iron industry forged freedom by supplying munitions to Washington’s beleaguered army. The Forging Freedom Tour follows this beginning at Hopewell Furnace, which provided war materiel for the American Revolution and the Civil War, and experienced every social and political event of the 19th century. It tours neighboring furnaces, critical to the war effort and growth of the new country.

SUGGESTED START: Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site Visitor’s Center
ALLOW: 7 hours to tour; 2 days to explore
IRON & STEEL SITES: Hopewell Furnace, Warwick County Park, Coventryville, Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, and Pino Forge
HERITAGE & RECREATION: French Creek State Park, Country Woods Preserve, Wohlenkirk, Historic Villages to Shop & Eat: Vietnam Village Trailhead, Monroe Hill Recreation Area, and Crow’s Nest Preserve

Supplying Freedom Tour
This area of Chester County supplied the fight for freedom with iron products, food, medicines, and textiles. Washington’s army at Valley Forge would not have survived the winter of 1777-1778 without support from the surrounding countryside. Unfortunately, the area also supplied freedom with the sacrifice of soldiers and the leaving of civilian property during the Philadelphia Campaign of 1777. The Supplying Freedom Tour begins at Historic Yellow Springs, where Washington set up his headquarters after the Battle of the Clouds and the first military hospital in the United States was built. It continues to explore this theme with visits to the Paoli Battlefield and three mills which provided gunpowder, flour, and cloth.

SUGGESTED START: Historic Yellow Springs
ALLOW: 4 hours to tour; 1 day to explore
HERITAGE & RECREATION: The Woolen Mill of Charlestown, Mill at Anselma, Continental Powder Works and Rapps Dam Covered Bridge, Historic Sugartown, Historic Yellow Springs, Birchrunville, Sheeder-Hall Covered Bridge, and French Creek Trail
HISTORIC VILLAGES TO SHOP & EAT: Rapps Dam River Trailhead; 4 hours to tour; 1 day to explore

Building Freedom Tour
At the end of the American Revolution, a new nation offered some, but not all, of its citizens unprecedented advantages both politically and economically. To build freedom, however, the citizens of Chester County fought to end slavery and accepted an unprecedented role for women. Rebecca Lukens took over her family’s company in 1825 and saved it from bankruptcy to become Lukens Steel, the longest continuously operating firm in the American iron and steel industry. Beginning at the Lukens National Historic District, the Building Freedom Tour explores the evolution from the 18th and 19th century ironmasters to the steel masters of the 20th century.

SUGGESTED START: Hibernia Village, Downingtown Historical District and Marshallton Village
ALLOW: 3 hours to tour; ½ -1 day to explore
HERITAGE & RECREATION: National Iron & Steel Heritage Museum, Hibernia Mansion, Isabella Furnace, Dowlin Forge Park, and Wyebrook Farm Iron Tour
HISTORIC VILLAGES TO SHOP & EAT: Hibernia, Upland, and Springton Manor Farm

Powering Freedom Tour
Winning independence from Great Britain established the United States of America. Many European countries wanted the new country to fail. However, in the late 18th and 19th centuries industrial development in this region helped guarantee that the new country would thrive and remain independent. The Powering Freedom Tour follows part of the Schuylkill River Trail. The Schuylkill River Heritage Center, located in the historic Foundry Building, adjacent to a portion of the Schuylkill River Trail in Phoenixville, showcases the industrial legacy of the Phoenixville and the Schuylkill River. Interactive exhibits and videos tell the story of the industries that grew up all along the river because development in this region helped guarantee that the new country would thrive and remain independent. How ever, in the late 18th and 19th centuries industrial development in this region helped guarantee that the new country would thrive and remain independent. The Powering Freedom Tour follows part of the Schuylkill River Trail. The Schuylkill River Heritage Center, located in the historic Foundry Building, adjacent to a portion of the Schuylkill River Trail in Phoenixville, showcases the industrial legacy of the Phoenixville area and the Schuylkill River. Interactive exhibits and videos tell the story of the industries that grew up all along the river because the transportation routes provided by the Schuylkill Canal, and later, the expansion of the railroads throughout the region.

SUGGESTED START: Valley Forge National Historical Park
ALLOW: 4 hours to tour; 1 day to explore
IRON & STEEL SITES: Schuylkill River Heritage Center at Phoenixville, Pottsgrove Manor and Colebrookdale Railroad
HERITAGE & RECREATION: Valley Forge National Historical Park, Black Rock Sanctuary, Lock 60, Fricks Lock Village Trailhead, Schuylkill River Trailhead, Riverfront Park Trailhead, Spring Ford Area Historical Society, and Tow Path Park
HISTORIC VILLAGES TO SHOP & EAT: Phoenixville Historic District, Roversford, Spring City, and Historic Pottstown