



Unique Lodgings

This summer, get away to a unique lodging experience. Try glamping, short for glamorous camping, or stay at a working farm.

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY CINDY ROSS

GLAMPING AT THE CAMPBELL FARM, SOMERSET COUNTY

WHEN YOU ARRIVE AS A GUEST at the Campbell Farm in the Laurel Highlands, you don't carry your luggage into the inn. Instead, you load it onto a pull-along wooden wagon with slatted sides, grasp the handle and move it across a grassy hillside. This approach to overnight accommodation suits the location and reminds you that you are leaving your busy life for a simpler, slower time more connected to the outdoors.

The spectacular Youghiogheny River comes into view through the gap in the hills as we pull our wagon toward a glamping site, or glamorous camping, on the top of Daniel's Hill. On this site named for their son, who spent many childhood nights camping here, Mona and Bryon Shissler have created a space for people looking for a new outdoor experience.

A multi-use structure—a combination of a kitchen, dining area and bath—was built in the Shisslers' barn and hauled to the hilltop. Beginning with a com-

mon back wall, the structure's sides are exposed to allow sunshine, breezes and birds to sweep through.

A path made of slate slabs leads to the bedroom, a 12-by-14-foot canvas wall tent. Furnished with a queen-size bed, oak furniture, electric lights and rugs, the room is larger than our bedroom back home. A space heater helps to ward off chilly spring and autumn nights. An 8-by-12-foot covered deck next to the tent provides the perfect spot to enjoy a meal.

The 65-acre property is boxed in by

Todd Gladfelter
relaxes on the porch
of the platform tent
during his “glamping”
experience at the
Campbell Farm in
Somerset County.



Cucumber Run with its three waterfalls and Casselman River. J. Campbell, the original property owner, acquired this land as a reward for serving in the Revolutionary War. The Shisslers display the original property deed, signed by Benjamin Franklin, on the wall of their 1786 home. Over the years, three generations of Campbells lived here, and today guests can walk the mowed grass paths to visit the family cemetery with its centuries-old tombstones.

For dinner that night, we use our glamp-

ing kitchen, complete with two-burner gas stove, refrigerator and sink with running water, to prepare a meal. Colorful tablecloths and vases of fresh flowers provide a homey touch. The bathroom, with its environmentally friendly composting toilet, is located a short distance from the tent along a solar-lit stone path.

Later, we sit in bentwood rockers on the porch and enjoy a glass of wine while watching the sun sink behind the Laurel Mountains. Other than a doe and her fawns feeding in a neighboring field, no

one else is around, and we feel as if we have all this beauty to ourselves. (In reality, it's reassuring to know the Shisslers are just over the hill and a quick phone call away if we really have a need.)

Before turning in for the night, I run a hot bath in the antique-looking clawfoot tub. As I lay back and prop up my feet on the rim, I watch the stars come out one by one and a fingernail moon rise in the lavender night sky.

I am already scheming about how to challenge my husband to design and build



a similar structure on our rural property back home. The time we spend outdoors here reminds me of a plaque that a friend gave to me a few years ago which reads, "The way to avoid housework is to live outdoors."

MOUNTAIN DALE FARM STAY, SNYDER COUNTY

Ken Hassinger has a problem with broken down and dying houses. He feels their plight, so he buys them (many at auctions and sales) and moves them to his Snyder County farm where they are carefully restored and added to a guest village where folks come and spend the night. Guests staying on the 175-acre Mountain Dale Farm at the base of Shade Mountain in Middlecreek Valley are guaranteed a rich and varied experience.

Hassinger and his wife, Sally, grow a variety of crops, including hay and corn, and raise many kinds of farm animals, some for meat and eggs and others simply because they enjoy living with animals. Sally, who specializes in animal husbandry, cares for the goats, pigs, chickens, rabbits, pigeons, turkeys, guinea fowl, horses, cows and steers that live on the farm.

An auctioneer as well as a farmer, Hassinger gathers antiques and collects

pieces of buildings and architecture, such as gingerbread, which he uses to decorate his rental cottages. Each structure has a different story associated with it.

During our visit, my husband and I stay in the Goss Cottage, which was originally a summer kitchen. Several years ago, after learning that his neighbors wanted to remove the kitchen while remodeling their large farmhouse, Hassinger trucked the structure five miles down the road to its new location in Mountain Dale.

Across the gravel drive from us sits the Marks Cottage, a pretty little building that had been a shoe shop and a Victorian funeral parlor. While eating dinner on the porch of our cottage, we noticed a light on in the Marks Cottage, even though we knew it was not rented for the night. Later, when we ask Hassinger about this, he explains that people are convinced the structure is haunted.

"Ghosts travel with some houses, I'm told," he adds.

With all the various lodging options available on the property, including rooms for rent in the Hassingers' 18th century farmhouse, the farm contains enough beds to accommodate 75 to 80 people. Hassinger, who takes great pride in what he has created at Mountain Dale, boasts

that the farm, with its buildings and animal shelters, has a water system that "rivals most towns."

In addition to joining in on chores at the farm, guests may attend public photography workshops hosted by the Hassingers several times a year. Large families often come to the farm to celebrate reunions or take part in private scrapbooking workshops. In their beautifully restored and reassembled barn, the Hassingers hold annual square dances or use the space to showcase many of the antiques they have collected through the years.

During our stay, I do chores with a family from Ambler whose three children work alongside me forking hay, gathering eggs, feeding pigs and throwing grain to ducks.

"I like these chores better than my house chores," 8-year-old Caleb declares. When our work is done, Sally rewards the children by bringing out a litter of baby bunnies to pet.

When it comes to farm vacations, living for a few days in the little village of reclaimed cottages here at Mountain Dale Farm ranks among the highest.

"You can't have too many buildings. They're like my friends," Hassinger explains. "Each is constructed differently,



and we can learn something different about each one.”

With so many choices of lodging — “Nine buildings are enough,” Sally reminds her husband — guests sometimes find it difficult to choose. An easy way to resolve that dilemma is by planning to return repeatedly to experience them all.

BERRY FIELDS FARM STAY, BRADFORD COUNTY

THE DRIVE TO Berry Fields Farm takes you along winding narrow roads through miles of rural countryside that provide just a hint of the peace and solitude awaiting your arrival.

Carved out of Cahill Mountain in Bradford County, Berry Fields Farm is the result of a 50-year relationship with the Endless Mountains that began when Charlie Gerlach hunted these woods as a youth.

After marrying, he and his wife, Barb, decided to create a wholesome, sustainable life for

themselves on this wild wooded land by growing their own organic food while Charlie worked as a designer and architect for 30 years and also operated a general contracting business. The couple built a home, constructed a barn and planted blueberry bushes on the property.

Those blueberry fields are now the symbol for a farm-stay destination where guests come to pick berries, dine in the organic restaurant and shop for farm-produced blueberry juice, jams, jellies and syrup as well as other organic canned and fresh food. The Gerlachs also raise cattle,

(far left) **Picture camping with a real bed, a kitchen and a clawfoot tub, and you’ve imagined what glamping is like at the Campbell Farm.**

(above) **Children feed a cow at Mountain Dale Farm Stay in Snyder County where the lodging is available in (below) individual cabins.**

goats, chickens and pigs and smoke their own sausages, including tasty kielbasi. All of these items are available in their shop, including in-season vegetables, which are sometimes taken right from the garden minutes before being purchased.

Dining is available to the general public (by reservation) on weekends at the Gerlachs’ Strawberry Restaurant. Whether you come for Friday evening pizza and salad, Saturday night dinner or Sunday brunch, you can expect meals prepared with fresh-farm organic ingredients accompanied by breads and desserts made in their onsite bake shop. The farm also serves as a learning





Berry Fields Farm features organic produce and food in its restaurant. Activities at the farm stay include egg collecting, animal feedings and even weeding, if so inclined. Of course, with a view like theirs (at right), a stay there cannot be all work.

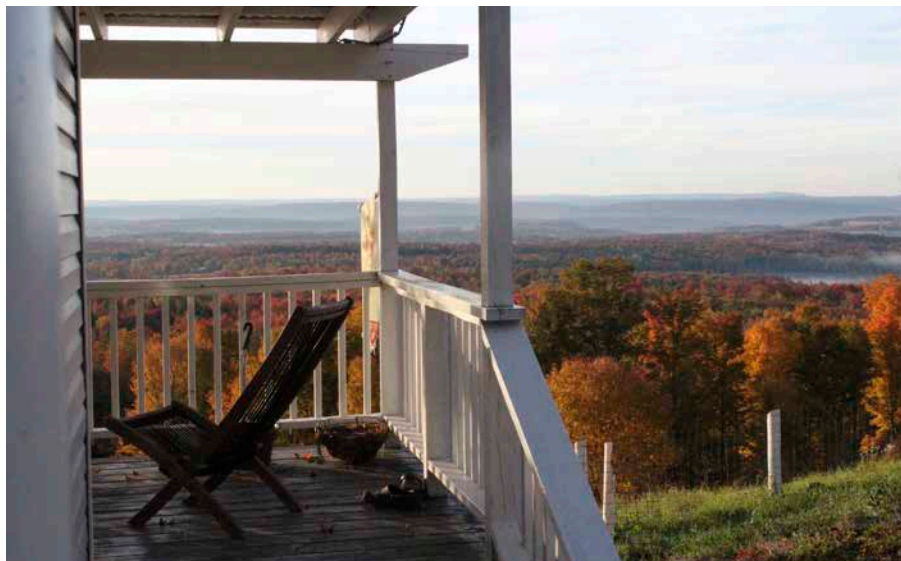
facility for interns hoping to develop their own organic restaurant or farm.

Guests on the farm can help with animal feedings, egg collecting and even weeding the garden, if they so desire. My family ate plates of warm blueberry pie and dishes of blueberry ice cream topped with blueberry syrup while we sat on the porch of the farm store, pet kittens and watched the sun set over the valley.

You can time your visit to pick your own blueberries in late summer or help to make maple syrup in early spring.

Over the years, the Gerlachs have done more than entertain guests at Berry Fields. They have offered a place of respite to escape the busyness of life, receive nourishment through delicious, wholesome foods and learn valuable lessons about how to make healthy food choices.

The *New York Times* listed Berry Fields Farm as one of 44 places to go in 2009, and after NBC's "The Today Show" filmed a segment at the farm in 2010, guests began arriving from all over the world.



"We never originally intended any of this," Barb admits.

"But, life is not worth much if you don't have a cause or a purpose," explains Charlie, who at 76 zips around the property with the speed and agility of a 40-year-old.

The duo demonstrates their purpose through the wholesome lifestyle they have created at Berry Fields Farm, and it's a lesson they constantly pass down to their guests. 🍷

—Cindy Ross of New Ringgold is a regular contributor who enjoys exploring Pennsylvania with family members.

WHEN YOU GO

Glamping is offered at the **Campbell Farm** at 1723 Fort Hill Road in Fort Hill, Somerset County. campbellfarmglamping.com; 814-395-5335. **Mountain Dale Farm** is located at 330 Hassinger Way in McClure, Snyder County. www.mountaindale.net; 570-658-3536.

Berry Fields Farm is located at 138 Berry Lane in New Albany, Bradford County. berryfieldfarm.net; 570-924-3019 📍