

RoadTrip

It's Mushroom Mania in Pennsylvania

The Paper Market specializes in one-of-a-kind handmade paper products, including mushroom-themed stationery and greeting cards.

Portabello's serves a large portobello mushroom stuffed with tomatoes and pesto and topped with melted mozzarella — a favorite at the new family-style Italian eatery.

The Mushroom Cap features a small mushroom museum and gift shop. Check out the cooler in back for a variety of fresh fungi.

Accessorize with earthy bling from **Bove Jewelers**, which crafts diamond-encrusted mushroom signet rings.

Discover mushrooms in their natural habitat at **Anson B. Nixon Park**, a 106-acre recreational space with walking trails, volleyball courts, an 18-hole disk golf course and an outdoor entertainment pavilion.

Join the queue at **La Michoacana**, which serves 55 flavors of artisanal ice cream, including corn with cinnamon powder. During the festival, stretch your palate with mushroom ice cream.

Sample fried local fungi in a spicy cheese sauce at the **Tavern at Kennett Square Inn**, which has a cozy bar that hosts live rock music every Monday night and on the first Friday of each month.

Some foodies wait up to a year to taste the mushroom masterpieces of chef Bryan Sikora, which are served at private, reservations-only dinners at **Talula's Table**. For smaller appetites, drop into the business's market at lunchtime for pastries and other simple fare.

WHERE: Kennett Square, Pa.

WHY: Fungi festival, top chefs and a mushroom museum.

HOW FAR: About three miles from start to finish, and about 110 miles from Washington.

Kennett Square bills itself as the mushroom capital of the world, and you don't have to be a mycologist to understand why. Cultivation around this little town in southern Chester County, Pa., accounts for 51 percent of all U.S. mushroom production, including such stir-fry, salad and sandwich varieties as creminis, portobellos, shiitakes, oysters and royal trumpets.

Mushroom farming began here in the late 1800s, when growers of roses and carnations began planting the edible fungi in their greenhouses to utilize otherwise fallow space. Mushrooms are grown indoors in vast climate-controlled warehouses and are the state's No. 1 cash crop, with nearly 500 million pounds produced each year.

Any day is a good day for mushrooming (the crop is harvested in all four seasons), but Kennett Square really trots out its beloved 'shrooms during the Mushroom Festival, now in its 23rd year. About 100,000 visitors are expected to turn out for two days of fungus-themed fun. A Mushroom Parade will start things off Saturday at 10 a.m., while more than 160 vendors, most selling mushroom-related foods and goods, set up booths for an open market that takes over the town. In addition, attendees can bob for mushrooms (plunge and pluck fast; you get only one minute), watch cooking demonstrations and hop on a bus for a farm tour.

On Sept. 7, area growers will compete for bragging rights during the mushroom judging contest. The winners will be available for purchase and subsequent consumption.

— Ben Chapman

Mushroom Festival: Saturday, 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; Sept. 7, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Various locations in Kennett Square. For a schedule and information, call 888-440-9920 or visit www.mushroomfestival.org. \$2, age 11 and younger free. Mushroom farm tours are \$5.

Road Trip maps are available at www.washingtonpost.com/roadtrip, as are addresses and hours of operation. (Be sure to check before you go.) Have an idea for a trip? E-mail roadtrip@washpost.com.

Phillips Mushroom Farms, the largest specialty grower in the country, offers an on-site store stocked with fresh portobellos, creminis and shiitakes.

Artworks exhibits a medley of locally made art in its three-level gallery, including mushroom-inspired pieces.

Wash down a wild-game sloppy Joe with a Pennsylvania microbrew from **Half Moon Restaurant & Saloon**.



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