Daytripper September 2022

The weather is cooler and so this month's Daytripper will take us to some easy walks and places to visit that are close to GOV.

The first is only 20 minutes away and is full of history of the area. It is **Eckley Miners' Village**. Eckley is one of hundreds of company mining towns built in the anthracite region during the 19th century. They were often called coal camps or patches because they were small and usually only consisted of a few dozen frame houses with a company store and perhaps a chapel.

Eckley was founded in1854 and has retained its character for 146 years. It is located in Foster Township, Luzerne County, just across the Carbon County line. In 1859, more than 150 company houses had been built, along with 5 cottages for resident partners. Rent was deducted from the miners' pay. The village that year contained 3 schoolhouses, a store, a hotel, and Episcopal and Presbyterian churches all owned by the company. Eckley was made famous in the movie "The Molly Maguires" , starring Sean Connery about the band of Irish mine workers who fought for better working conditions in the anthracite region. I highly recommend the movie.

Eckley Breaker

You can visit the museum in the town on Thursday - Sunday 10:00 - 5:00. Tours of the village and of the inside of 4 of the buildings are held on Saturdays at 1:00. Admission to the museum is $8.00, $7.00 for seniors. The tour is an additional $2.00. They suggest to fully experience the exhibit hall and village, allot 2 - 2 1/2 hours. You can walk or drive the grounds free of charge.

Eckley Village is planning a Christmas weekend in December. There will be carolers to cocoa, crafts to St. Nick. The cost will be same as the admission costs. Not all plans are complete at this time.

The next place that is not far is the **Cranberry Bog** in Tannersville. Thousands of years ago, a large glacial lake occupied what is now a thick soup of peat moss. Of special interest at the "bog" are some of North America's most beautiful native orchids, including rose pogonia and the state-endangered heart-leaved twayblade. This is the southernmost low elevation boreal bog along the eastern seaboard.

The preserve is managed in partnership with the Kettle Creek Environmental Education Center. The bog just had a major restoration project in March-April of 2022. Restoring the diversity and vitality of the leatherleaf-cranberry bog was necessary to keep this ecosystem thriving. They had to remove woody, shade producing vegetation to allow the rare bog plants to reestablish themselves.

Cranberry Bog

Because of its fragile nature, the bog itself can be visited only during regular scheduled walks conducted by the Education Center. Private walks are available for groups upon request; dogs are not allowed on the boardwalk trail. Guided public walks are held weekly on Wednesday at the following times.

10:00 am - June 8 through September 7
1:00 pm - September 14 - November 9
They also have Saturday and Sunday walks.

There were several in the Spring and Summer, but there are 2 left this year. Sunday, September 11 at 11:00 am and Saturday, October 15 at 2:00 pm. The cost is $5.00 per person. Walks are held rain or shine. Visitors should wear commutable, closed-toed shoes. The tours last 2 1/2 hours. You must pre-register by calling Kettle Creek Environmental Education Center at 570-629-3061. According to their website, all participants must wear a mask. Not sure if this has changed or not.

There are 2 trails, the North Wood and the Fern Ridge that always permit public access.

The last place is very close to us. If you have not taken a drive over the **Francis E. Walter Dam**, you must venture there. The road to the dam is only a short distance east on 940. Shortly after crossing over the interchange intersection, you will see a sign having you turn left onto Francis E. Walter Dam Road

Francis E. Walter Dam is an 1,800 acre project, constructed in 1961 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It was primarily built for flood risk management, but recreation became a Congressionally-authorized purpose in 1988.

If you do nothing else at Francis Walter Dam, stop at the top of the dam, park the car, and walk over to the edge. It is a very pretty vista. Be sure to look both ways, toward the reservoir and toward the Lehigh River. There is a trail that you walk down to the Lehigh, just be prepared to make a very steep climb back up to your car. In the winter, the water will be frozen and you will see ice fishing and skaters enjoying the area.

Swimming is not permitted. Picnicking, hiking, and fishing are available, as is hunting, in season. The reservoir is also popular for kayaking and boating. There are 2 separate launch points into the reservoir: one for motor boats and one for kayaks and another human-powered watercraft. Motor boats are limited to 10 horsepower, so popular water sports like water-skiing aren'f feasible. Fishing is a common activity at the dam, both in the reservoir and the Lehigh River below the dam. Species commonly caught include trout and smallmouth bass. The PA Fish and Boat Commission regularly stock the Lehigh River at the dam with brown and rainbow trout.

There are also multiple fields for baseball, soccer, a disc golf course and other sports near the dam. The dam is surrounded by PA State Game Lands where licensed hunters can harvest deer, turkey, and other game.

There is a very nice shaded picnic ground along side the dam. You are also permitted to hike there. I do not think that there are any marked trails around the area.

Francis E. Walter Dam