



Berks County Heritage Center Field Trip Guide



(610) 374-8839

www.berkspa.gov

Welcome to the Berks County Heritage Center



The Berks County Heritage Center invites you and your students to explore and experience the transportation history of Berks County as well as the people, animals, and cultures who call this county home. The field trip options are substantial at the Heritage Center as students can tour a historic wagon factory while also enjoying opportunities to learn about the environment.

Please use this guide to learn more about the unique and exciting experiences the Heritage Center can offer you and your students. You will also find useful information about scheduling a field trip and how best to prepare for a meaningful learning experience at the Heritage Center.

If you have any questions, you can contact Jessica Chernich, Historic Resource Coordinator, at **(610) 374-8839, ext. 2633** or by email at **JChernich@berkspa.gov**

Table of Contents

About Us	3
Our Buildings & Programs at a Glance	3-5
PA Academic Standards & The Heritage Center	6
Reservations & Rates	7
Know Before You Go	8-9
Information for Chaperones	10
Map & Parking Instructions	11



Teachers are always welcome to visit the Heritage Center for *free* to plan a field trip!

We are happy to meet with you to discuss your field trip. To be sure that we are available, we ask that you make an appointment in advance.

About Us

The Berks County Heritage Center is one of nine parks within the Berks County Parks and Recreation Department and one of five located along the Tulpehocken Creek. We aim to provide an educational experience to groups and individuals of any age by leading high-quality tours of the two on-site museums and the variety of site features. In the following pages we offer information about the exciting museums and programs that you can explore at the Heritage Center.

We have a team of experienced guides who will lead groups between site features and volunteers who will explain topics that they have become well versed in. All sites can be experienced by any age group and guides will encourage students to ask questions. Employees and staff are required to have up to date PA Act 153 clearances.

Our Buildings and Programs at a Glance

Gruber Wagon Works

Tour Length: 50 minutes

The Gruber Wagon Works is one of two museums located at the Berks County Heritage Center. This building was originally located in Mt. Pleasant, PA, but was moved in 1976 following the creation of Blue Marsh Lake. Today, the Wagon Works is celebrated as a place where “Time Stands Still” as it still contains all the machines, tools, and hardware used throughout its time in operation.

The Wagon Works was founded by Franklin H. Gruber in 1882. He made a variety of wagons including box wagons and hay flats which were purchased by local farmers and business owners for transporting their goods from place to place. Once Franklin passed away, the business was purchased by his four sons who kept it in operation until 1972.



A typical tour of the wagon works leads students around the building while exploring the art of manufacturing a wagon by hand and later with the help of machines. Students will also learn about the Gruber family and how they maintained their business over the course of three generations.

Hiester Canal Museum

Tour Length: 40 minutes

The Hiester Canal Museum celebrates two canals that were once located in Berks County. The museum is named after Charles Howard Hiester whose ancestors owned a boatyard in Reading, PA. Mr. Hiester took it upon himself to honor his family’s legacy by collecting artifacts, documents, and photographs of the Schuylkill Navigation System and the Union Canal for future generations to enjoy. The Canal Museum tour includes a brief history of canals and how they operated, how boats were constructed and maintained, and how families lived, worked, and played on canals.

Epler's One Room Schoolhouse

Tour Length: 30 minutes

The newest addition to the Heritage Center is Epler's One Room Schoolhouse. The schoolhouse was built in 1847 at the corner of Van Reed Road and Leisczs Bridge Road (1.5 miles or 4 minutes away from the Heritage Center). The property was originally owned by Jared and Debora Epler who emigrated to America in 1737 from Germany. From 1847 until 1931, Epler's schoolhouse served this area of Bern Township by educating generations of local Children.

Following the creation of the Bern

Township Consolidated School in 1931, the Bern Township one room schools were auctioned off. Many of the ex-schoolhouses became private residences, including Epler's. In 1936, the schoolhouse was converted into a home. On July 7, 2020, the 145-ton schoolhouse was moved from its original location to the Berks County Heritage Center. The move took approximately four hours.

Members of the schoolhouse friends group teach students about what it was like for children in the 19th century to attend school. Weather and time permitting, they will also teach students about games from that time period.

Herb Garden

Tour Length: 15 minutes

The herb garden provides a fun way for students to learn about some of the flavors in their favorite foods and how they grow. The garden is planted to traditional 18th and 19th century practices and the herbs found inside would all have been common in gardens at that time. Members of the Penn State Extension Master Gardeners will guide students through the garden and explain how herbs were not just used for flavoring food, but also for medicine and dying fabrics.



Mildred the Houseboat

Tour Length: 30 minutes



The houseboat “Mildred” was originally built in the late 1800’s as a coal scow at the Hiester Boatyard, located at the foot of South Sixth Street in Reading. This was a small coal scow for hauling short distances. Around 1912, “Mildred” was converted into a houseboat for Reading grocer, Arthur McCarter, who kept it at Hain’s Lock in the summer, and at the boatyard in the off-season. Charles Howard Hiester bought the boat some time after that and kept it in a dry dock near his summer home where it was used for storage.

Students will continue to learn about family and fun on canals that was not discussed in the Canal Museum. Furthermore, students will engage with a variety of wooden toys that could have been found during the canal era.

Stream Study/Environment Program

Program Length: 45 minutes

The Stream study program is a fun and interactive way for students to learn about the different critters that call the Tulpehocken creek home. Our educators collect a variety of animals such as crayfish, caddisfly larva, and dragonfly nymphs to present to students. Students will learn about the animals and be guided on how to identify other stream creatures. Educators can also include environmental themed games and activities to further teach about our local ecosystems. This program can be added for no additional charge. Please notify Heritage Center staff when reserving a date that you would like to add this program.



Pennsylvania Academic Standards & the Heritage Center

We strive to ensure our site and programs fit the academic standards set forth by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. We have included the chart below for you to see which specific standards are addressed at the Heritage Center. If you have further questions about tour content, please contact Jessica Chernich, Historic Resource Coordinator, by phone at **(610) 374-8839, ext. 2633** or by email at **JChernich@berkspa.gov**.

Heritage Center Museums and Other Features

Economics	Environment & Ecology	History	Science and Technology
6.1.3 A, D	4.4.4 A, B, C	8.1.3 C, D	3.6.4 C
6.1.6 B	4.4.7 A	8.1.6 C, D	3.6.7 C
6.2.3	4.5.4 A	8.1.9 A, C, D	3.6.10 C
6.2.6 A, C, E, F	4.5.7 A	8.1.12 C, D	3.6.12 C
6.2.9 F		8.2.3 A, C, D	3.7.4 A, B
		8.2.6 A, C, D	3.7.7 A, B
		8.2.9 A, C	3.7.10 A
		8.2.12 C	3.7.12 A
		8.3.3 C, D	3.8.4 A, B, C
		8.3.6 C	3.8.7 A, B, C
		8.3.9 C	3.8.10 A, C
			3.8.12 A,

Stream Study Program

Environment & Ecology
4.1.4 A, B, C, E
4.1.7 A, C, E
4.1.10 A, B, C, E
4.1.12 B, C, E
4.3.4 A, B, C
4.6.4 A, B, C
4.6.7 A, C
4.6.10 A, B, C
4.6.12 B, C
4.7.4 A, B
4.7.7 A, B, C
4.7.10 A, B, C
4.8.4 C

Reservations & Rates

Reserving a Tour Date & Time

The Heritage Center is excited that you are booking a tour with us, and we look forward to meeting your and your students! Please see below for more details on how to schedule field trips.

How do I make a reservation for my group?

The first step to reserving a field trip spot is to give us a call or send us an email at **(610) 374-8839 ext. 2633** or **JChernich@berkspa.gov**. Provide your preferred date(s) and arrival and departure times and we will reach out and work with you as needed. Please also include any additional requests such as whether you want to add the stream study component or spend more or less time at any of our sites.

When scheduling your tour, please keep in mind that tours can be scheduled starting at **9:30 a.m.** and can conclude whenever your departure time must be. Guided tours must also be **scheduled a minimum of three weeks in advance**. The Berks County Heritage Center offers tours from the **last week in April to the last week in October**. Schools and other groups take advantage of our season to schedule tours, so be sure to schedule your visit as early as possible to ensure you get your preferred date!



Tour Rates Summary

Last week in April to last week in October – Wednesday to Friday

Maximum Group size – Approximately 120 students.

Prices (subject to change, prices will be given upon reservation)

- Students: \$3.00 per students
- Adults: \$5.00 per adult
- Chaperones and Teachers: Free

For further information on how we split groups for their tours, please see page 9 for more information.

Know Before you Go

When to Schedule a Trip

Guided Tours must be scheduled a minimum of three weeks in advance. The early summer and fall are when we see the most field trips. Make sure to schedule as soon as you can!

How Much Time Should You Allow?

On the next page, you will find a possible schedule which includes a 30-minute lunch break. You'll want to allow sufficient time in your itinerary for traffic delays, checking in, getting into your small groups, rest room breaks, and travel back to school.

Eating Lunch at the Heritage Center

All field trip schedules include a 30-minute lunch period. Lunches can be placed inside of the Heritage Center Visitor Center until your students are ready to break for lunch. It is up to you where you want to eat lunch. We are always prepared to have the visitor center set up with long tables and chairs to accommodate anyone eating inside, however, if the weather permits, our park has several picnic tables outside if students and teachers wish to eat outside. Following lunch, we ask that all visitors place their garbage in the trash bins provided.

Photography

Visitors may take pictures at any time.

Videography

Visitors may not video a tour without prior permission.

Chaperones

We suggest 1-2 accompanying adults (teacher/chaperone) for every 10 students. Younger groups might require more adults. We offer free admission to teachers and chaperones.



Payment

Payment for all group tours may be made with cash, check, or card. Payment may be made in the visitor center the day of your visit or in advance. Please notify us if you would like your school/organization to be invoiced.

Have an Exact Count of Students in your Group

Please have the correct count of students in your group when you arrive at the Heritage Center. It will expedite your check in so that the fun can start right away! We also appreciate if you predetermine your groups. Once lunches are put away, those groups can meet their guide and head off to the first stop.

Assigning Students to Groups

To provide groups with the best tour experience, we divide into tour groups of around 15 students. This number accounts for students only.

If you are visiting the Heritage Center with a variety of grades, we find it beneficial to break students into age/grade groups. We recommend contacting the Heritage Center if you have any questions with dividing your group. Arriving with your students pre-assigned to groups will allow your students to get started on their tour when they arrive.



The grids below show a timeline for a hypothetical tour with 22 students as they rotate between the museums and other sites at the Heritage Center. This field trip lasted from 9:30 – 1:30. Lunch is typically at the same time for groups, but in some instances may be staggered.

Group 1	
9:30-10:15	Gruber Wagon Works
10:20-11:05	Stream Study
11:10-11:25	Herb Garden
11:30-12:05	Canal Museum
12:05-12:35	Lunch
12:40-1:00	Epler's One Room Schoolhouse
1:05-1:25	Mildred the Houseboat

Group 2	
9:30-10:15	Stream Study
10:20-11:05	Gruber Wagon Works
11:10-11:45	Canal Museum
11:50-12:05	Garden
12:05-12:35	Lunch
12:40-1:00	Mildred the Houseboat
1:05-1:25	Epler's One Room Schoolhouse

Additional arrangements may be made for your students based on class sizes and arrival and departure times. Please contact the Heritage Center at (610) 374-8839 ext. 2633 or JChernich@berkspa.gov for more information.

Information for Chaperones

(If possible, chaperones should receive a copy of these instructions prior to arrival)

We kindly ask for your assistance and cooperation in making this field trip a worthwhile educational experience for your students. Thank you for your help. We look forward to meeting you!

Please Keep your Group Together

You should always keep the students in your section within your sight. Do not let students get ahead of your guide, wander away from your group, or lag behind.

Lunch

Please bring your lunches in to the museum before you start your tour. Our staff will hold them until your group is ready to eat. Take your section to the Visitor Center inside of the barn at the time specified by your group leader.

Ask Questions!

Please feel free to ask any of our staff members or tour guides a question!

Departure

Please keep track of your group after your tour has concluded! Your group leader will provide you with directions and information as to where to meet and when you are leaving.

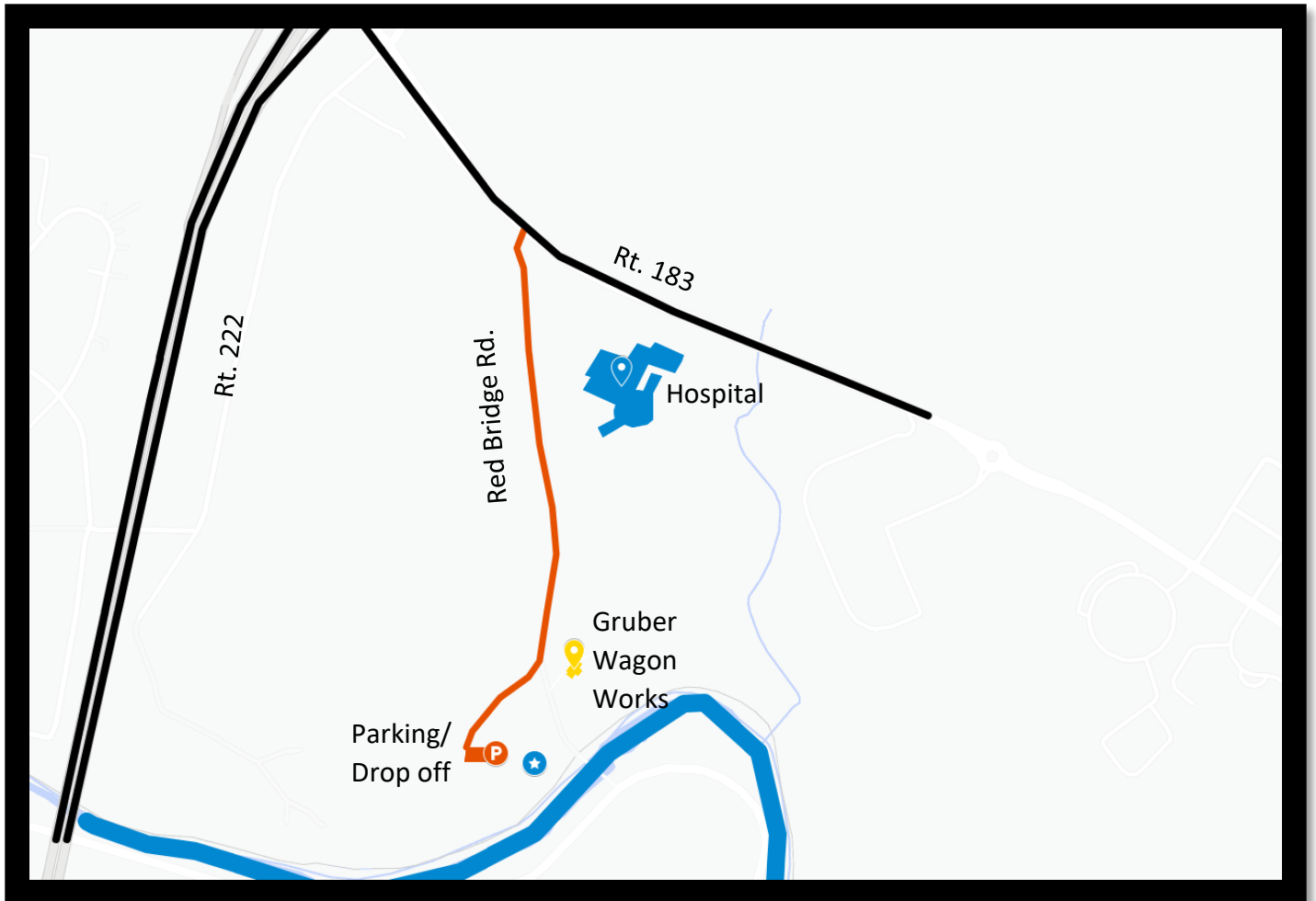
Student Requests

- Please be considerate of other guests visiting the Heritage Center. For your safety, please no running or jumping in the museum spaces.
- Stay within sight of your guide. Please do not wander ahead of or behind your group.
- No food or drinks are allowed in the museums (including gum)
- You may take pictures at the Heritage Center, however videos are not permitted.
- Please do not touch any of the objects! If there are objects you can touch, your guide will let you know what can be handled.



Map & Parking Information

The Heritage Center is located down the road from Penn State St. Joseph's Hospital on Red Bridge Road. The map below gives you an idea of where we are in relation to some easy to spot landmarks. If you get lost, please stop, and call the Heritage Center at (610) 374-8839. We can best help you if you can find a landmark to describe to us.



The physical address is:

Berks County Heritage Center

1102 Red Bridge Road

Wyomissing, PA 19605

Parking

When dropping off students, buses can pull into the parking lot and let students out in front of the Distelfink (bird) statue. Our guides will greet you and your students and show you where to put your lunches before getting started with your tour. Buses remaining on site are asked to move to one side of the parking lot.