



# Welcome to NORTHCENTRAL PA!

by Linda Stager

photos by the author

**H**ome base to the only wild elk herd in the state and the Pennsylvania Grand Canyon, northcentral Pennsylvania's rugged region mixes an abundance of forest with small town life. It's home to 1.2 million acres of public land to explore, known as the PA Wilds, and thousands of wild and native trout streams. Rich in history, the ancient mountains give rise to the sacred headwaters of three of Pennsylvania's largest rivers—Allegheny River, Clarion River and Susquehanna River.

Visitors are treated to unspoiled natural beauty, vast tracts of forest and public land, dark skies and great watersport activities. Waterfalls and ravines, lush valleys, scenic rivers, diverse wildlife and outdoor recreation await.

## Treasured trail

**Pine Creek Rail Trail:** This award-winning 62-mile former railroad path runs between Wellsboro, Tioga County, and Jersey Shore, Lycoming County. It's flat, scenic and an easy way to access one of the best flowing waters in Pennsylvania.

The trail closely follows Pine Creek for most of its route. Pine Creek is superb for fishing and paddling. Even better, several sections of the river are stocked with trophy-size trout. Anglers love Pine Creek for its bass, occasional Walleyes, trophy-sized Fallfish and trout populations.

In the spring, Pine Creek can turn into a raging challenge for adventurous paddlers with whitewater sections approaching Class II rapids.

In winter, the rail trail is groomed for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing.

Walk the trail to your favorite fishing spot and look for wildlife along the way. If you want to travel farther





*The Pine Creek Rail Trail runs between Wellsboro, Tioga County, and Jersey Shore, Lycoming County, and has great views of Pine Creek.*



*Pine Creek Gorge at Leonard Harrison State Park, Tioga County.*

on the trail, hop on your bicycle and ride to that perfectly secluded spot to fish. Primitive campgrounds, bathrooms and picnic areas are spaced along the trail.

The trail is well groomed and perfect for all ages and abilities. Pedal assist e-bikes are allowed, but check regulations for limitations.

Wellsboro, near the northern trailhead, is a quaint Norman Rockwell type town and Victorian gaslights line its historic Main Street. It is a fun place to shop, experience a vibrant arts community, eat and stay. Events are scheduled throughout the year including the Victorian themed Dickens of a Christmas festival.

## Popular waterways

Besides Pine Creek, other stand-out places to explore include:

**Bald Eagle State Park and 1,730-acre Foster Joseph Sayers Reservoir:** The Centre County park offers camping, warmwater fishing, paddling, birding and powerboating. It's one of the few unlimited horsepower lakes in the state. Fish for bass and panfish. Enjoy the scenery and the nesting bald eagles.

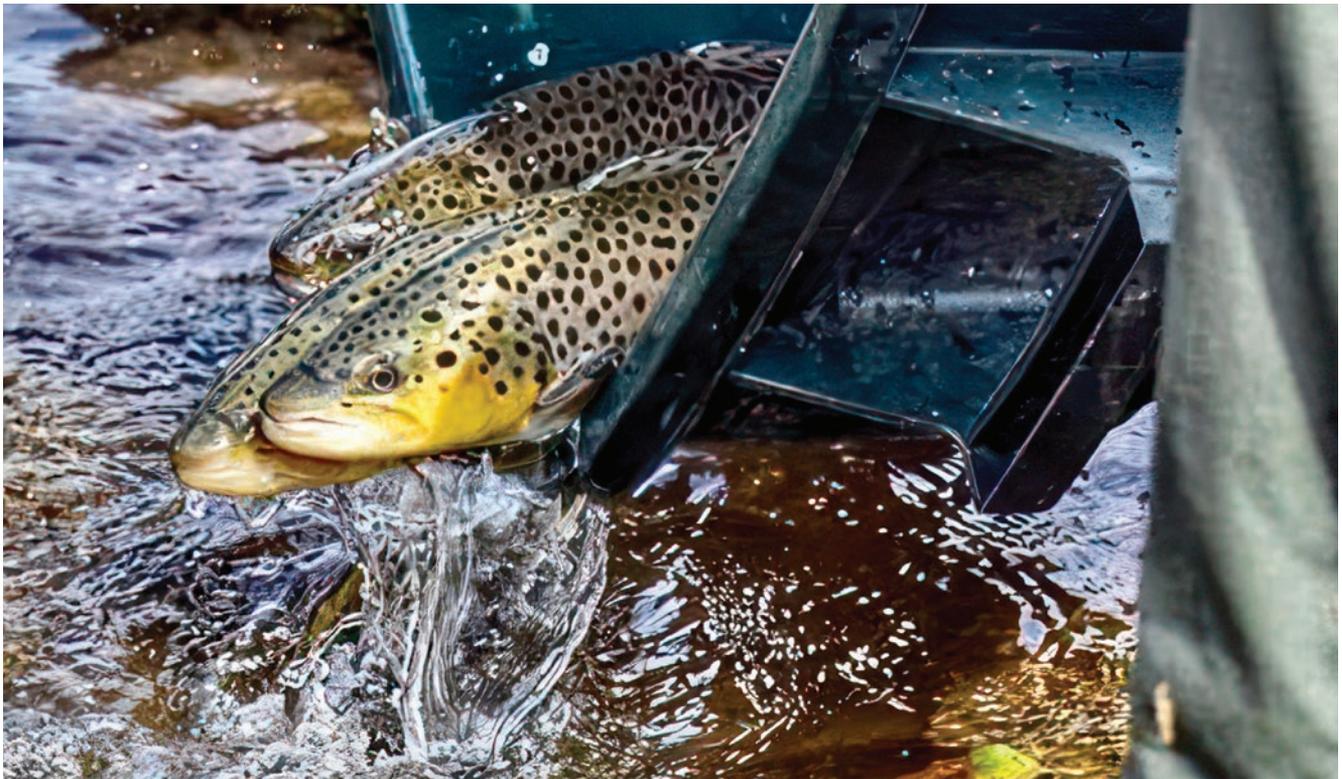
Consider a stay at The Nature Inn, the park's lakeside hotel, voted the #1 eco-lodge in the nation. The inn often hosts educational and nature-related programs with a focus on sustainability and conservation.



*To travel farther on the Pine Creek Rail Trail, hop on your bicycle and ride to that perfectly secluded fishing spot.*



*Wellsboro, near the northern trailhead of Pine Creek Rail Trail, is a quaint Norman Rockwell type town.*



*Stocking Brown Trout*

In October, a unique family-friendly Punkin' Chunkin' Fall Festival takes place at Bald Eagle State Park.

**West Branch Susquehanna River:** The Susquehanna River is Pennsylvania's longest river and is a testament to how conservation and partnerships bring an unhealthy river back to life. The 228-mile West Branch Susquehanna River travels through several counties before it joins the North Branch Susquehanna River, the 2023 River of the Year, in Northumberland County.

There are notable towns and small cities along the river route. Visitors have many opportunities to enjoy amenities such as lodging, restaurants and shopping. Hyner, Clinton County, hosts one of Pennsylvania's famed trail runs, the Hyner View Challenge, in which hundreds of runners traverse the unique and wild terrain along the river. Lock Haven hosts a powerboat racing regatta every Labor Day and another great trail run, the Megatransect, where hundreds of runners maneuver through wild areas just outside of town. Williamsport hosts the Little League World Series every August, and Renovo hosts the PA State Flaming Foliage Festival in October. Susquehanna State Park, Lycoming County, has a boat launch, and the water is deep enough for waterskiing.

### Susquehanna Greenway:



Fishing opportunities abound in this huge watershed with crappies, trout, Fallfish, Muskellunge, bronze-back Smallmouth Bass and White Suckers. The Clean Water Institute at Lycoming College has documented 42 different species of fish in the West Branch Susquehanna River.

The Susquehanna Greenway website supplies several paddling itineraries as well as maps and guides to boat launch access sites.

**Fishing Creek:** Fishing Creek, a tributary to Bald Eagle Creek, Clinton County, is popular for trout fishing. Much of the stream supports a robust population of wild Brown Trout. A small section of the stream meanders through the small town of Mill Hall. Through town, this section of stream is stocked with trout and is a popular destination on the first day of stocked trout season. Many



*Williamsport, Lycoming County, hosts the Little League World Series every August.*

anglers prefer the “Narrows”, a 5-mile section of water between Lamar and Tylersville supporting a population of beautiful wild Brown Trout. Fishing Creek has cold water that rarely gets warmer than 65 degrees F.

**Spring Creek:** Spring Creek, Centre County, is an infamous catch and release trout fishing destination. It’s great for fly fishing and easy creek access. Spring Creek Canyon is especially beautiful with its walking/biking path along the stream connecting two of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission’s state hatcheries. This is one of the most densely populated trout streams in Pennsylvania. It may have more trout per mile than anywhere in the state!

**Penns Creek:** Penns Creek, Centre County, is Pennsylvania’s longest limestone stream. It starts at Penn’s Cave & Wildlife Park, a great family attraction that visitors access by boat. The stream has been called by experts some of the best fly fishing on the East Coast. It has 35 miles of fishable waters.

Fishing Creek, Spring Creek and Penns Creek may be exciting for the avid fly angler, but these locations also hold a special attraction for families. They are just minutes from State College, Penn State, shopping, diversity and great restaurants. There are entertainment opportunities for the whole family. It’s known as “Happy Valley” for good reason. Be sure to stop at the Penn State Berkey Creamery when in town.

## Best-loved adventures

If your family enjoys camping, consider staying at a state park campground near a fishery.

Some favorites are:

- **Lyman Run State Park**, Potter County: A beautiful place for campers who want to combine fishing, paddling and ATV trail riding.
- **Hills Creek State Park**, Tioga County: The lake has a strong bass population, is easy to fish from shore, has a pretty lakeside hiking trail and has a wide range of camping options.
- **Little Pine State Park**, Lycoming County: This park is just a short drive from Pine Creek Rail Trail, has a

## Penn’s Cave & Wildlife Park:



## Points of interest

- Benezette, Elk County (Elk Capital of Pennsylvania)
- Cherry Springs State Park, Potter County (some of the best stargazing in PA)
- Kinzua Sky Walk, Kinzua Bridge State Park, McKean County
- Pine Creek Gorge, “The Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania”, Wellsboro, Tioga County (National Natural Landmark)
- Punxsutawney, Jefferson County (known for its famous Groundhog Day celebration)
- World of Little League Museum and Little League World Series, Williamsport, Lycoming County



45-acre lake and offers an off-the-grid experience with limited Wi-Fi and cell phone coverage.

- **Sinnemahoning State Park**, Cameron and Potter counties, and **Kettle Creek State Park**, Clinton County: Both offer a combination of fishing, camping and hiking as well as a chance to glimpse wild elk that live in the area.

## Winter fishing pursuits:

Ice fishing reigns in this region. Programs are held on these lakes.

- **Lake Nessmuk and Hills Creek Lake**, Tioga County: These lakes freeze over more quickly than most locations in the state and are found near small town amenities.
- **Black Moshannon State Park**, Centre County: You’ll find ice here longer than many places, and it’s close to State College and other larger communities.

The northcentral region of Pennsylvania is full of opportunities for family-friendly adventures that combine watersports with a sense of wilderness and opportunities for the whole family.

Pick your adventure and a time to visit. Encourage and support passion for the outdoors. ☐



Lyman Run State Park, Potter County is a beautiful place for campers who want to combine fishing, boating and ATV trail riding.



A view of the dam at Kettle Creek campgrounds, Kettle Creek State Park, Clinton County.



*Elk in the Bennett Branch of the Sinnamahoning, Clearfield and Elk counties*



*Fishing Little Pine Creek, Lycoming County*

## Capture your memories

Photos keep memories fresh, so here are some tips to make the most of your adventures.

If you don't have a "real" camera, no worries. That cell phone in your pocket is a great camera. We photographers say, "The best camera to use is the one you have with you."

Don't forget to take photos of the people you are with. We all love landscape scenery photos, so take that photo. Then, invite your friends and family to join the scene. If you are making memories, part of the fun is taking those cheesy photos. You will cherish them more in the long run.

Pay attention to the light. Move around, so the sun—or light source—is shining on your subject's face. Use a similar tactic for scenery photos. Keep the light behind you if you can.

Learn a little—or a lot—about composition. There are some simple rules about where you place your subject. The "rule of thirds" is a good place to start. On the other hand, most of these rules are fun to break, so do what looks good to you, first and foremost.

Last, put the phone or camera down once in a while. Sometimes, it's good to immerse yourself in the activity at hand. If that fish is jumping on the end of the hook, you can take that photo or you can smile, cheer wildly, and not take the photo. Don't forget to enjoy your trip, not just document it.

Most of all, have fun!



*Pine Creek Gorge, Tioga County*

## Popular waterways

### Northcentral Region:

- East Branch Clarion River
- Fishing Creek
- Foster Joseph Sayers Reservoir
- Hammond Lake
- Hills Creek Lake
- Lake Nessmuk
- Penns Creek
- Pine Creek
- Spring Creek
- West Branch Susquehanna River



## Pennsylvania state parks

### Northcentral Region:

- **Bald Eagle State Park**, Centre County (fishing and boating)
- **Bendigo State Park**, Elk County (fishing and paddling)
- **Black Moshannon State Park**, Centre County (fishing and boating)
- **Bucktail State Park Natural Area**, Cameron and Clinton counties (fishing and paddling)
- **Cherry Springs State Park**, Potter County
- **Clear Creek State Park**, Jefferson County (fishing and paddling)
- **Colton Point State Park**, Tioga County (fishing)
- **Cook Forest State Park**, Clarion, Forest and Jefferson counties (fishing and paddling)
- **Denton Hill State Park**, Potter County (fishing)
- **Elk State Park**, Elk and McKean counties (fishing and boating)
- **Hills Creek State Park**, Tioga County (fishing and boating)
- **Hyner Run State Park**, Clinton County (fishing)
- **Hyner View State Park**, Clinton County
- **Kettle Creek State Park**, Clinton County (fishing and boating)
- **Kinzua Bridge State Park**, McKean County
- **Leonard Harrison State Park**, Tioga County (fishing)
- **Little Pine State Park**, Lycoming County (fishing and boating)
- **Lyman Run State Park**, Potter County (fishing and boating)
- **McCalls Dam State Park**, Centre County (fishing)
- **Milton State Park**, Northumberland County (fishing and boating)
- **Ole Bull State Park**, Potter County (fishing)
- **Parker Dam State Park**, Clearfield County (fishing and boating)
- **Patterson State Park**, Potter County
- **Penn-Roosevelt State Park**, Centre County
- **Poe Paddy State Park**, Centre County (fishing)
- **Poe Valley State Park**, Centre County (fishing and boating)
- **Prouty Place State Park**, Potter County (fishing)
- **Ravensburg State Park**, Clinton County (fishing)
- **R. B. Winter State Park**, Union County (fishing)
- **Sand Bridge State Park**, Union County (fishing)
- **Shikellamy State Park**, Northumberland County (fishing and boating)
- **S. B. Elliott State Park**, Clearfield County (fishing)
- **Sinnemahoning State Park**, Cameron and Potter counties (fishing and boating)
- **Sizerville State Park**, Cameron and Potter counties (fishing)
- **Susquehanna State Park**, Lycoming County (fishing and boating)
- **Upper Pine Bottom State Park**, Lycoming County (fishing)

Regional designations are based on Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Law Enforcement regions.

artwork-Michael Kensinger

## Popular State Game Lands

- **State Game Lands 311**, Elk County: Referred to as the Elk Range, it is nearly 3,800 acres and home to the largest free-roaming elk herd in the northeastern United States. As many as 1,400 elk can be found roaming through Elk, Cameron, Clinton, Clearfield and Centre counties. The Elk Country Visitor Center, a premier elk watching and conservation education facility near the village of Benezette, is one of the most popular nearby destinations. The Quehanna Wild Area offers hiking, waterfalls and wildlife watching.
- **State Game Lands 313**, Tioga County: Known as “The Muck” by locals, this area consists of 414 acres of primarily wetland habitat. Designated as an Important Bird Area, it offers birders, anglers and hunters lots of opportunities. A highly productive wetland, The Muck provides food and critical habitat for over 230 species of wildlife.
- **State Game Lands 100**, Centre and Clearfield counties: coming in at just over 21,000 acres, extensive habitat management creates the early successional habitat favored by many wildlife species including the golden-winged warbler, a critically threatened migratory songbird whose populations have been facing severe declines. Creating early successional habitat is vitally important for many songbirds for breeding, post-fledging and providing migratory stopover habitat for mature forest birds.
- **State Game Lands 176**, Centre County: Consisting of 6,500 acres, it includes the Pennsylvania Game Commission’s Scotia Shooting Range and Barrens Grouse Habitat Management Study Area. The pine barrens are unique, because they are located on ridge tops, where soils are well drained, sandy and acidic. Despite their name, barrens are quite diverse, making them invaluable to wildlife. Deer, ruffed grouse, American woodcocks, black bears, golden-winged warblers, snowshoe hares and whip-poor-wills are wildlife species found here.



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American woodcock

### Key:

- fishing=fishing, no boating of any type
- fishing and boating=fishing and powered and unpowered boating
- paddling=unpowered boating
- whitewater=whitewater paddling