

A Roll in the Hay

by Andy Nemann
and Lilly
Longshore

Farmers tending to their fields is usually one of the first things visitors see when traveling to Ohio's Amish country.

A field of cornstalks, a sure sign of the Amish fall harvest.

For travelers like Lilly Longshore who appreciate cultural diversity and relish time spent in the scenic, peaceful countryside, Ohio's Amish country has much to offer.

Longshore grew up in this Midwestern state but now lives in the Pacific Northwest. Over the years she has traveled many places, including 49 of the 50 states, and Central and South America.

But she still finds Ohio's Amish country one of the most picturesque areas she has visited. The fact that she now needs a wheelchair for mobility doesn't slow her down; not in this surprisingly wheelchair-friendly retreat.

Invigorating Smell

Longshore's recent visit was to the Amish communities of Holmes County.

It's located about 45 miles southwest of the Akron/Canton airport. This is the largest Amish population in the nation. It's a place where the American modern way of life meets the traditions of 200 years ago.

Following State Route 39 west of Canton, Longshore and three of her sisters headed to Berlin, Ohio, the oldest town in Holmes County. It didn't take long to notice an Amish farmer behind his draft horse team working the fall harvest.



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Ohio Amish country provides a wonderful, beautiful and accessible look at a different way of life.



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Shocks, or bundles of cornstalks, mean fall harvest. Wheelchair traveler Lilly Longshore calls the smell of fresh-cut hay in Amish country "invigorating."



Wheelchair access in some Ohio Amish communities is easier than some people might think.

Horse and buggies are a common sight along the roads and in the towns of Holmes County, Ohio.



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They watched the slow progress of the team, as the Amish driver gently rocked back and forth on the seat of his horse-drawn mower.

“The air was filled with sounds of migrating birds,” Longshore says. “The smell of freshly cut hay was invigorating.”

Small white Amish schoolhouses cropped up frequently along the route, with children playing outside in their customary navy, black and white clothing.

Travelers carefully made their way around at least a half dozen Amish buggies plodding

Recommendations

If you're interested in planning a trip to Amish country in Ohio, wheelchair visitor Lilly Longshore offers these suggestions on places to stay and eat:

Amish Communities

Berlin, Walnut Creek, Trail, Charm, Millersburg, Sugar Creek

Hotels

Amish Door, Wilmot (amishdoor.com)
Comfort Suites, Berlin (choicehotels.com/hotel/oh243)
Carlisle Inn, Sugar Creek (dhgroup.com/en/sc/sc-carlisle-inn.php)

Carlisle Inn, Walnut Creek (dhgroup.com/en/wc/wc-carlisle-inn.php)

Restaurants

The Farmstead Restaurant, Berlin (farmsteadrestaurant.com)
The Amish Door, Wilmot (amishdoor.com)
Der Dutchman, Walnut Creek (derdutchman.com)

along the roads, one of which was pulling a cart with a goat, on its way to the local auction.

Handmade Shopping

Berlin is welcoming to tourists, and Longshore says wheelchair access is good.

The sidewalks are abundantly wide, and ramps are conveniently placed. The Amish residents are accustomed to interacting with the “English,” as they refer to the modern world, and are quite friendly.

The fact that she now needs a wheelchair for mobility doesn't slow her down; not in this surprisingly wheelchair-friendly retreat.

“An older Amish gentleman on Main Street parked in his horse and buggy offered rides to visitors for a donation,” Longshore says.

The layouts of most Berlin businesses are wheelchair friendly with a few exceptions. Berlin Bulk Foods and Sommers General Store have one step up into the stores. With help from her companions and store attendants, Longshore was able to enter both stores. She had no problem wheeling once inside.



An Amish buggy takes a goat to auction in Berlin, Ohio.

Berlin's shops offer handmade quilts, artisan gifts, Amish furniture, cheeses and bulk foods. Berlin Bulk Foods and the German Village Market smelled of fresh apples and spices. Many Amish families were in these stores gathering their supplies.

Sol's Exchange, a multi-building, multi-level store, has many choices in handmade gifts and quilts. There is sufficient room



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Popular handmade Amish quilts can sometimes take several ladies nine months to make and include more than 50,000 stitches.



HEMERA



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Traveling through Amish country provides beautiful and countless scenes of horse-drawn buggies and covered bridges that look like they're right out of a painting.

between rows to wheel. As one might expect in an Amish community, there is no elevator.

However, Longshore was able to access all levels in her wheelchair by going outside and around the corner to the second-floor entrance.

"I found a great selection of framed Amish photos that captured the spirit of the region," Longshore says.

Let's Eat

At Walnut Creek Cheese store, Longshore picked up bulk food spices, nuts and locally

made apple butter at a steal. The sharp smell of cheese and garlic from "Trail bologna" filled the air as her group entered the store. This shop, a favorite

of Amish townsfolk, has great prices on cheeses and bulk items.

The ladies sat outside in front of the store at the picnic table snacking on "cheese ends" (end pieces cut from large locally made cheese wheels). Their conversation was often interrupted by the clip clop of hooves as horse and buggy drove by in this busy community.

The area has several wonderful Amish restaurants, all of which offer home-style Amish cooking at great prices.

The ladies chose Boyd and Wurthmann Café for lunch.

"The access was smooth through the wheelchair entrance on the west side of the building," Longshore says. "The waitress, donning her traditional 'kapp,' provided polite, quick service."

The menu was typical Amish fare, including pot roast, meatloaf, chicken, and pork chops. The meal came with three generous sides selected from more than ten dishes.

"It was deliciously homemade, and the price was hard to beat," Longshore says.



Lilly Longshore calls the Brown Bag Apple Pie (top) at Boyd and Wurthmann's "heavenly." A traditional Amish favorite is a molasses pie called shoofly (right).



Flavorful homemade pies and bread pudding are the traditional desserts available at nearly all area restaurants. Longshore says the Brown Bag Apple Pie at Boyd and Wurthmann's is "heavenly."

Craftsmen at Work

A mile southwest of downtown Berlin, the four sisters headed to Wendell August Forge.

This forge, believed to be the oldest in the nation, is known for its elegant hand-crafted metal giftware. Each piece is truly one of a kind. The spacious showroom provides easy wheeling between displays of the skillfully crafted trays, plates and bowls. Each original piece has the artist's initials hidden in the design.

The lively "Maple Leaf Rag" was plinking away on the player piano in the back of the store. In the workroom, guests gathered by the fire-



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Lehman's General Store in Kidron, Ohio, is a little bit like the Amish country version of Walmart.

place and watched craftsmen pounding detailed depictions of Amish life into metal plates.

Visitors were invited to try their hand at forging their own art piece for a small fee. Beside the world's largest Amish buggy inside the showroom, a huge display of aluminum and bronze plates and ornaments with dozens of original designs were offered.

Scenes of covered bridges, grist mills, Amish buggies and barn raisings were just a few among many. Longshore selected this year's Collector's Christmas Ornament, a tradition in her family since 1993.

Amish Superstore

The final stop was Lehman's General Store in Kidron, whose slogan is, "If we don't have it; you don't need it." At almost the size of a football field, it's easy to believe that.

"This general store is one level and excellent for wheelchairs," Longshore says. "It has anything from rakes and wheelbarrows to handmade pottery and soaps to homemade candy and collectible wooden toys."

Lehman's is especially known for its stock of non-electric appliances, such as oil lamps and other merchandise that is useful for the self-sufficient lifestyle the Amish are famous for.

An avid shopper could easily spend a full day here. Longshore selected a John Deere lunch box and a wooden marble track for her nephew. In the clearance room, she also found an authentic ostrich-feather duster and an Ohio Amish country cookbook.

The weary and happy group concluded their trip with a beautiful drive home through Ohio's Amish country.

For more information, visit visitamishcountry.com. ■

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— Lilly Longshore