



Land of 1,000 Delights, Castle Noel

Photo: Castle Noel

TAKE A TRIP ON OHIO'S I-76: HOLIDAY EDITION

By Diane Rock

Did you know that hidden just a few miles in each direction off Interstate 76 are road trip-worthy treasures? Wonderful places to visit, take a step back in history, explore, be one with nature, enjoy a unique dining experience and shop “like nowhere else?”

Here are four holiday road trips that you can enjoy along this special 82 miles of highway – a wonderful way to count down to the holidays.

Holiday Road Trip #1 – Youngstown

Beautifully decorated themed trees, twinkling lights and a delicious Italian meal are what waits for you on this one-day road trip.

Stop 1: Mill Creek Winter Celebration – Youngstown

Website: tinyurl.com/FRGardens

Celebrate the season by viewing more than 50 lovingly decorated trees by local non-profit groups. On Dec 3, 10 and 17, from 5 to 7 p.m., visit the gardens during Winter Lights. There is no admission fee. Allow time to visit the Shops in the Gardens and/or the Garden Café.

Stop 2: Arms Family Museum – Youngstown

For the past 15 years, the Mahoning County Historical Society has been inviting visitors to come and experience “Memories of Christmas Past” at Greystone, a 1905 Arts & Crafts style mansion. Each room of the home is decorated just as beautiful as the next. Just the “iconic crystal tree” that includes over 2,000 prisms is worth the road trip.

Stop 3: Cassese’s MVR

Location: 410 N. Walnut St., Youngstown

Website: www.youngstownmvr.com/

We cannot let you leave the Youngstown area without making a dinner stop at Cassese’s MVR. Since 1927, it has been serving locals and guests its famous Italian dishes. Dishes that have created a following through the Great Depression, prohibition and two world wars.

If your travel time allows, head a short distance south to Firestone Park in Columbiana to enjoy the magical lights in the Joy of Christmas Lights Display (298 E. Park Ave., Columbiana). Travel a mile-long path of twinkling lights and more than 80 light displays.

Holiday Road Trip #2 – Portage County

Calling all elves! We hear Santa needs help creating all that holiday magic. From the holiday tree to the dinner table, this road trip will help Santa cross items off his list.

Stop 1: Duma Meats – Mogadore

Website: www.dumameats.com

What was once a small meat market has now become a go-to stop for dinner tables. Duma is known for no preservatives and grass-fed beef. It also makes its own jerky and casing sausage. Its bacon jerky makes for a great addition to any charcuterie board.

Stop 2: Brimfield Bread Oven – Kent

Website: www.brimfieldbreadoven.com/menu/

Using only organic grains and local ingredients, this

European-style bakery bakes all its breads in its wood-fired oven. Check its website for its daily bread list. The sea salt focaccia and its cranberry walnut sourdough are two of my favorites, along with its pastry options. Saturday evenings it keeps the ovens glowing to make its wood-fired pizzas.

Stop 3: Mike's Place – Kent

Website: www.mikesplacere.com

Considered one of the quirkiest restaurants in Ohio, Mike's Place is a fun place to stop to enjoy lunch or a late breakfast. You cannot miss it. Just look for the X-Wing Star Fighter sitting out front. The inside décor is just as crazy as the outside. Allow plenty of time to read the menu and descriptions. Take home a slice of Mama Houk's Original Peanut Butter Pie for dessert.

Stop 4: Explore Acorn Alley and East Main Street

Love coffee? Enjoy a crafted cup or pick up a bag of coffee from any one of the locally owned coffee shops.

Popped! is the local go-to place for all things popcorn. Not only does it make delicious varieties of popcorn, but it also has specialty popcorn topped with chocolate and mixed with other sweet treats. May we suggest the Black Squirrel Crunch? It also sells a variety of chocolates. Perfect stop to pick up a few holiday gifts.

Being an "elf" means you know where to find those unique gift ideas – those hidden treasures.

McKay Bricker Framing always has a nice selection of crafted gifts. Off the Wagon is filled with toys and novelties for the young at heart. At Hippie Fox Rocks you will find rocks, crystals and hippie gear. Beautiful wrapping sheets, cards and unusual gifts are what you will find at Red Letter Days. And for the plant lover on your list, head to the Flourish Plant Mkt.

Stop 5: Pick a tree.

The only thing left is to select your holiday tree at the Flower Tree Farm (1236 Hudson Road).

Holiday Road Trip #3 – Akron

Delight in holiday home tour traditions, light displays and warm-from-the-oven gingerbread cookies.

Stop 1: Hower House Museum

Location: 60 Fir Hill, Akron

Website: www.uakron.edu/howerhousemuseum/

"Holiday on Bloom" is this year's decorating theme. All 28 rooms of this historic Victorian mansion will be on the tour. Built in 1871 by John Henry Hower, a leading Akron industrialist, this Second Empire Italianate-style mansion will amaze you with its attention to detail and unique floor plan design.

Stop 2: Don Drumm Studios & Gallery

Location: 437 Crouse St., Akron

Website: www.dondrummstudios.com

If you are looking for that perfect gift, you just may find it here. The gallery features artists from around the continent. Glass, sculpture pieces, ceramic, metal and

more. Do not walk away without selecting your very own sunpiece, designed by the renowned American sculptor himself, Don Drumm. This hidden gem can be found just blocks from downtown Akron.

Time for lunch. Located just minutes between destinations are two iconic Akron restaurants. No matter which one you choose, you cannot go wrong.

Lunch option 1: Luigi's

Location: 105 N. Main St., Akron

Website: luigisrestaurant.com

Reservations are not accepted at this award-winning Italian restaurant. Since 1949, Luigi's has been dishing up its famous pizza, pasta dishes and salads with a big helping of mozzarella cheese on top. Come hungry and do not forget your cash, as Luigi's does not accept credit cards.

Lunch option 2: Swensons Drive-in

Location: 40 S. Hawkins Ave., Akron

Website: swensonsdriveins.com

No need to leave your car. Pull up, park your car in a spot and turn on your lights. The staff will be by to take your order. Make sure you treat yourself to its famous The Galley Boy, a double cheeseburger with two special sauces, garnished with a green olive. Don't forget to add an order of its homemade onion rings and a California grape drink.

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TAKE A FAMILY TRIP TO AN ALPACA FARM

Stop 3: Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens

Location: 714 N. Portage Path, Akron

Website: www.stanhywet.org

The magic of the holidays can be found at the former home of F.A. Seiberling, co-founder of the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company. Every year staff and volunteers "Deck the Halls" of the historic 65-room Tudor Revival Manor and light the country estate's grounds with more than a million lights. You are going to want to allow time to enjoy the Courtyard area where hot chocolate, beverages and those delightful warm gingerbread cookies are available to purchase from the Gingerbread Hut. Make sure you stop and pick a special gift for yourself at Molly's gift shop. May I suggest a Christmas ornament to remember your road trip?

Holiday Road Trip #4 – Medina

It just would not be the holidays without a visit to northeast Ohio's magical holiday movie town.

Stop 1: Castle Noel – Medina

Website: castlenoel.com

What do you get when you take an old church and stuff it with the world's largest collection of famous Hollywood Christmas movie props and costumes, New York City Christmas window displays, a big red Christmas Story slide and Cousin Eddie's trailer from National Lampoon's "Christmas Vacation?" A magical holiday experience like no other.

Through the creative and artistic mind of Mark Klaus and with the support of his wife, Dana, this powerful

duo has created a year-round holiday attraction beloved by countless visitors. A place where childhood memories come flooding back. Where magical holiday moments come to life. A road trip must-stop.

Stop 2: The Square of Medina

Website: www.mainstreetmedina.com/

No holiday movie magic is needed. The charming square of Medina, with its fairy tale gazebo and historic storefronts just beckons you to take time to stroll the sidewalks, enjoy a cup of coffee at the local coffee shop and watch shoppers stroll by, select a few holiday gifts and treats, and find your next great novel. All around the square, you will find unique boutique shops, local restaurants and fun foodie stops. The Medina Candlelight Walk (Nov 18-20) around the Square is always a magical time.

Stop 3: Root Candles – Medina

Website: rootcandles.com/

Brighten up the season with beautiful candles selected from the Root Candle Co. A must-stop on this road trip. Founded in 1869, this fifth-generation American family-owned company still takes pride in its handcrafted candles made of an all-natural beeswax blend. The factory has come a long way since its days of selling beekeeping equipment.

Stop 4: Sérénité Restaurant & Culinary Institute

Location: 538 W. Liberty St., Medina

A meal with a mission. Is there any better way to celebrate the holidays? Launched in 2018, the Sérénité Restaurant & Culinary Institute, in conjunction with the Recovery Center of Medina County, have teamed up to create a place for those in recovery to learn about the food service industry. Standards are kept high as the Institute trains students in classic French cuisine and restaurant operations. No matter what you order off its menu your tastebuds will thank you. Don't forget to try a bowl of its delicious French onion soup.

Diane Rock is an Ohio-based travel writer.

GO AHEAD AND TAKE A TRIP ON I-76

This year head out and explore all that Ohio's Interstate 76 has to offer. Have additional questions or want more I-76 road trip ideas, visit MyOhioFun.com or scan the QR Code.



WELCOME
The Holidays

MEMORIES OF CHRISTMAS PAST
AT ARMS FAMILY MUSEUM
November 18 - December 31
Photo: Leanne Lee

Our calendar is packed with special holiday events!
Visit youngstownlive.com for a complete list.

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