

By Necee Regis
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Finding the perfect vacation can pose a dilemma for couples or friends with differing interests. If one person itches to get out on hiking trails and the other prefers a dose of fine arts, perhaps the perfect compromise can be found in the Berkshires. Lovely in every season, the summer and fall are arguably the prime time to visit this pastoral swath of Western Massachusetts. On a recent visit, I toured four cultural venues that offer something for the art lover, in galleries, and the nature lover, on extensive hiking trails through the verdant rolling hills. Some trails even offer art to see along the way — a win-win for those of us who appreciate both activities.

The Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in Williamstown (or, simply, the Clark) provides separate maps to its indoor exhibition spaces and the hiking trails on its 140-acre campus. Enter through the Clark Center, designed by Japanese, Pritzker prize-winning architect Tadeo Ando, to find the admissions desk (with those maps), museum store, lower-level special exhibitions gallery and café, and access to the Fernandez Terrace with its soothing reflecting pool. From there, arts lovers will make a beeline to the Museum Building, home to a vast collection of European and American paintings, sculpture, prints, drawings, photographs, and decorative arts, including a number of dreamy landscape paintings by 19th-century master George Inness that — although inspired by the countryside in New Jersey — perfectly capture the bucolic atmosphere outside its doors.

The campus and trails are open to walkers at all times. Trails are color-coded and easy to follow. A specific walking tour along the Nan and Pasture Trails, beginning at the southwest corner of the Manton Research Center, passes 75-foot high, 100-year-old towering oaks, groves of Eastern hemlock, meadows and pastures (hello, cows!), rocky remnants of glacial activity and offers a scenic overview of the undulating landscape. In addition, some site-specific art can be found along the way, including a detour to Thomas Schutte's sculpture of a crystal scaled to architectural proportions, and a cedar fence by Analia Saban titled, "Teaching a Cow How to Draw."

As someone equally interested in art and nature, I hiked up the slightly steep, winding, and wooded Howard Path to the Lunder Center at Stone Hill. Also designed by Ando, the center houses two small galleries that host annual summer exhibitions. From there, I could have easily accessed, but didn't, additional miles of town trails that extend beyond the Clark's campus.

Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 225 South St., Williamstown. Adults \$20; ages 21 and under free. 413-458-2303, www.clarkart.edu

"Edith who?" asked a hiking-loving pal as I mentioned my itinerary would include visiting Edith Wharton's home in Lenox.

The Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist designed and built her country house, The Mount, in 1902. It is reported she wrote some of her best works here, including "The House of Mirth" and "Ethan Frome," before selling the house and moving to France in 1911.

Visitors today can tour the impressive mansion, now a National Historic Landmark and cultural center, from the ground floor kitchen and scullery (prompting thoughts of Mrs. Patmore



NECEE REGIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

It's a walk in the park to find both nature and culture in the Berkshires



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BEN GARVER/ASSOCIATED PRESS/FILE

and Daisy in "Downton Abbey") to the elegant main floor with drawing room, dining room, European-inspired gallery, den, and library filled with Wharton's actual books, to bedroom level suites. Although Wharton took her furnishings when she moved to France, the rooms have been restored and decorated based on photographs from the era.

Wharton also designed the opulent gardens — including a sunken Italian garden with fountain, French flower garden, and a rock garden — which she envisioned as a series of outdoor rooms. You most likely won't work up a sweat on the footpaths and wooded walking paths that meander through sections of the 49-acre property, though as you stroll beneath an idyllic canopy of trees, you might feel as if you've stepped back to the time when Wharton lived here. The grounds and gardens are free to visit, from dawn to dusk.

A bonus for art lovers along the

Clockwise from top: Families hiked past a sculpture at TurnPark Art Space; visitors walked in the forest surrounding The Mount; Analia Saban's "Teaching a Cow How to Draw" cedar fence at Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.

paths: SculptureNow at the Mount, on view through Oct. 19, is a juried show of large-scale contemporary work by 30 artists. Guided tours are available on select dates, or an audio tour can be downloaded to your phone. It's also worth checking the website for an active series of concerts, lecture series, and more.

The Mount, 2 Plunkett St., Lenox. Adults \$20; ages 18 and under free. 413-551-5111, www.edithwharton.org

It was not my first visit to Chesterwood, the former summer home and studio of sculptor Daniel Chester

French, but it was the first time I learned of the 20th-century sculptor's devotion to the grounds of his 122-acre estate in Stockbridge, now a site of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

French purchased the property in the late 1890s and designed a formal perennial garden, complete with marble fountain designed by his friend, the architect Henry Bacon. French considered the garden an extension of his studio, which one enters after stepping through the doorway of the walled garden and its lilac hedge.

French also curated a series of "Woodland Walks" throughout the property, which led to a series of outdoor "rooms" within the forest linked by footpaths. The recently restored Ledges Trail is a slightly challenging uphill climb, 1,200 feet above sea level, that leads to a scenic overlook of the surrounding Berkshire Hills. Hills so vi-

brant and green, I might add, that I had to take off my polarized sunglasses to check if they were really such a Technicolor hue. (They were.) Since my visit, an exhibition of Jonathan Prince's 12 large-scale sculptures — sited throughout the landscape — has debuted, and can be seen through Oct. 24.

Culture lovers, of course, will want to visit French's home and studio. The former is currently closed for extensive renovations, but the latter is worth the trip to see the artist's marble and plaster models and creations, especially the final model for French's seated Lincoln that is now the centerpiece of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., designed by French's pal, Bacon. (Coincidentally, 2023 marks the 100th anniversary of the dedication of the Lincoln Memorial.) The studio, also designed by Bacon, is a work of art on its own, with 26-foot-high walls and floor with tracks to slide the artist's work outside to be viewed in natural light.

Chesterwood, 4 Williamsville Road, Stockbridge. General admission \$20; under age 13 free. 413-298-2023, www.chesterwood.org

When in the Berkshires, I make a point of stopping for a "Happy Pancake," a crepe filled with pork, shrimp, and other deliciousness at the family-owned Truc Orient Express Restaurant in West Stockbridge. It was there I learned about the nearby TurnPark Art Space, an open-air sculpture park of contemporary art, located on the grounds of a former marble quarry, founded by Russian and Ukrainian immigrants Igor Gomberg and Katya Brezgunova. How had I missed this place for the past six years?

A sleek contemporary structure, mimicking the slope of the land, marks the entrance to the park, with a small indoor exhibition space on one side, and admissions desk and gift shop on the other. Beyond this threshold, a wonderland awaits. There's no marked route through the park and so the sculptures and installations, enormous and tiny, seemed to be waiting for me to discover them along the property's hills, wooded paths, open meadows, and even tucked along the cliffs above Quarry Lake where a mysterious golden figure floated, a creation of New York City-based Georgian artist Uta Bekaia.

TurnPark aims to be a cultural center in the region, so in addition to its permanent collection, it offers changing exhibitions, live music, contemporary theater, and performances. It also bills itself as family friendly, and on my visit, two sets of parents with small children traversed the meadow to check out a towering painted steel sculpture with mirrors of the surrounding landscape and sky before scampering to another area in the park. I lingered more than I usually do at outdoor exhibits, scanning the area to see what I might have missed: a diminutive bronze figure on a boulder here, a room-size "Eyeball" made of sticks there. Political works addressing the war in Ukraine were subtle and not-so-subtle reminders of life outside this idyllic oasis, including photos of families fleeing their homes, and a series of fish appearing to swim in the air, titled "Make Fish Not War."

TurnPark Art Space, 2 Moscow Road, West Stockbridge. General admission \$10; under age 12 free. 413-232-0275. www.turnpark.com

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Hustling, bustling for the holidays

► HOLIDAY FLIGHTS

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mas and New Year's travel popping up in June or July," he said. "That's still not an excuse to continue to procrastinate because tickets are going to be almost certainly cheaper today for Christmas and New Year's flights today than they will be next month."

Higher airfares for the upcoming holidays can be blamed on the same factors that turned summer travel into a real-life Hieronymus Bosch painting. Air travel is back to pre-pandemic levels, but airlines are still lagging in capacity. Keyes said airlines are flying 10 percent to 15 percent fewer flights than they were in 2019.

While most airfare prognosticators agree that ticket prices will be higher this year, what's unknown is whether airports are up to the challenge of handling Thanksgiving and Christmas crowds. Staffing shortages were to blame for many travelers' problems over the summer, including long lines, lost luggage, and canceled flights. According to a spokeswoman for the trade association and lobbying group Airlines for America, carriers have been trimming capacity and hiring at record levels to catch up with demand.

"Airlines set their schedules



CHARLES KRUPA/AP FILE

Travelers trekked through Terminal E at Logan Airport on Dec. 21, 2021.

months in advance and are constantly evaluating to optimize performance and prioritize smooth operations," she said.

Airline delays and disruptions have been slowly dropping since peaking in June. According to the Department of Transportation, 30 percent of flights in Boston were disrupted (25 percent were delayed and 5 percent were canceled) in June. Over the past two weeks, that number fell to 19 percent (18 percent delayed and one percent canceled).

Not everyone is convinced.

"I wish I could say I'm optimistic about travel this holiday

season, but I'm not. I don't see that this industry has owned up to its problems fully," said William McGee, senior fellow for aviation and travel at the American Economic Liberties Project. "When we're talking about a shortage of commercial airline pilots, that's a very long pipeline. Obviously, we don't want to rush anyone through to be certified, so this is not a problem that will fix itself overnight."

Airline pilot, author, and blogger Patrick Smith is sounding optimistic that holiday travel won't resemble what many travelers experienced throughout the summer.

"Now that the summer is over, we're entering a transition period as demand drops off between now and the winter holi-

days," Smith said in an e-mail. "This *should* give the industry the time and slack it needs to restore staffing in time for the Thanksgiving rush. At least in theory. Keep in mind this is no small task, and the crisis extends across the entire industry: At the airlines and their various contractors, air traffic control, the TSA, airport retail, and so on."

But Keyes said delays would likely persist even if the airlines and airports continue to restore staffing. New employees need time to get up to speed. A slow airport, reduced flight capacity, and a population eager to spend time with loved ones after two years of shutdowns and surges could turn holiday travel into the nightmare before Christmas and perhaps after Christmas, too.

Maybe this isn't a good time to think about winter weather as a holiday travel wild card.

For now, the smartest thing you can do is purchase your ticket for holiday travel before prices rise. Or you can follow McGee's lead.

"If I can't drive to it, I'm not doing it," he said. "I'm not going near an airport that week."

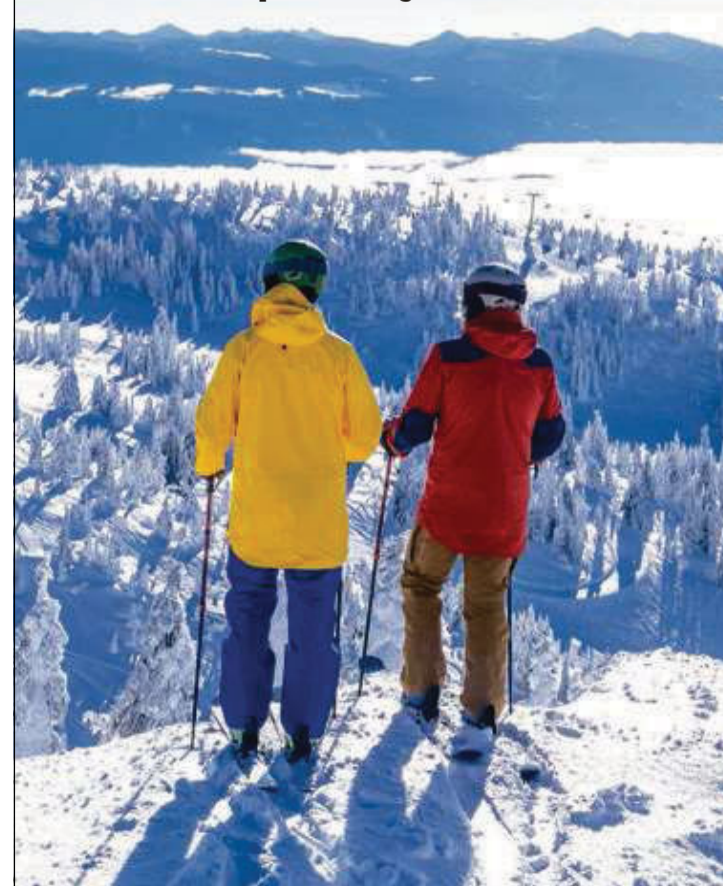
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