

AAA Reading-Berks Member Publication

on the go

**Travel Guide to
NYC Part 2**

**Keep an Eye on
Your CARbs**



**November
December
2023**

PERIODICAL

Tips for Traveling with Kids

What To Do This Winter

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Cover

They may not offer amazing sights like this photo of a Swiss mountain range, but Berks, Lehigh and Lancaster Counties have much to offer visitors this winter. More on page 16.

NOTICE - SPECIAL OFFICE HOURS:

Our office will be closed for the following observances - *Thursday, November 23 Thanksgiving Day; Monday, December 25 Christmas Day*

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President's Note

Peter J. Armstrong
President/CEO

“...EV charging stations
have been popping up in
Berks...”

A Little from Column “A”, a Little from Column “B”

To EV or not to EV, that remains the question. You may be solidly for or against, but there are still a lot of folks straddling the EV fence.

Drivers of fossil fuel-powered vehicles often keep an eye on their MPG (miles-per-gallon) fuel economy. NHTSA is looking even closer. This past July the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration proposed new fuel economy standards. Their CAFE (Corporate Average Fuel Economy) proposal calls for an industry fleet-wide average of approximately 58 mpg for passenger cars and light trucks by model year 2032. It would also increase fuel economy standards for heavy-duty pickup trucks and work vans by 10% annually for model years 2030 to 2035.

For electric vehicles, it is the MPGe (miles-per-gallon equivalent) that is the carrot dangling from the EV marketers' stick. Variables that affect MPGe are similar to those that affect MPG, such as driving style, speed, etc. While drivers of the former vehicle type can keep a can of fuel handy for those “oops” moments, EV owners don't have the luxury of such a quick solution should they run out of charge on the road.

In fact, one of the top reasons car shoppers give for not purchasing an electric vehicle is termed “range anxiety” or the fear of running out of battery charge before reaching the driver's destination.

Many consumers see EVs as a great option for short distance trips, but are still nervous about long distance travel. To alleviate range anxiety, some feel that the addition of more charging systems to the existing grid would help. Whether or not the grid can support them all is a topic for another day.

The federal government is working to oblige. The Biden administration has opened applications for the Electric Vehicle (EV) Reliability and Accessibility Accelerator program, which will provide up to \$100 million in federal funding to repair and replace non-operational EV charging infrastructure. The National

Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Formula Program stipulates a 10% set-aside for grants to states and localities that require additional assistance to strategically deploy electric vehicle charging infrastructure. The first round of funding focuses on improving the reliability of the current network by repairing or replacing existing EV charging infrastructure.

Local government is also getting on the “let's ramp up EV charging station installations” band wagon.

This past summer, Reading officials announced an aggressive plan to add dozens of EV chargers around the city. It was reported that their hope is to make Reading more attractive to visitors, locals and workers who drive electric vehicles.

Even without the government programs mentioned above, more and more EV charging stations have been popping up in Berks. They can be found at convenience stores such as Wawa, at grocery stores such as Giant, and elsewhere. The website www.libertyplugins.com lists twenty-seven public EV charging locations available in Berks. (I would be remiss if I didn't mention that you can also see EV charging station information on our online TripTik Travel Planner and the AAA Mobile app.)

Some EV owners have installed charging stations at their residence. Convenient but can be costly. For those without that option, at issue is the increasing incidence of not being able to find a charging station in good working order. EV operators are reporting instances of charging station damage due to vandalism and exposure to the weather. Connectivity issues have also been reported as well as communication errors involving certain vehicle brands and payment systems.

When it's you along the side of the road, car problems are all inconvenient, exasperating and sometimes a little scary. For now, there is no perfect solution, only imperfect options.

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Club Update



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keep an eye on your carbs

1st Time EV Drivers' Point of View

The first time driving an electric vehicle (EV) might be surprising and overwhelming, but AAA is here to help. We have an easy way to remember what you need to know when driving an EV for the first time. Knowing how to manage your CARbs (and we don't mean a carburetor or the California Air Resources Board) when it comes to the EV you are driving will help you avoid a "sugar" overload on the new technology but will also keep you craving more.

AAA First Time EV Driver Point of View (POV)

AAA conducted a focus group to better understand first-time drivers' experience in an EV. Respondents reported "driving years" from 13 to 45 years, with an average of 32.2 years behind the wheel. AAA researchers rented two popular EV models.

Through their POV, study participants identified that you have to consider these CARBs before/while driving an EV.

CHARGE:

EVs rely on batteries to power their electric motors and propel the wheels into motion. The battery's charge is essential for the vehicle's operation, and maintaining a full charge is crucial. To charge an EV, it must be connected to a charging station, which provides the necessary power source. Once connected, the EV's charging port and onboard charger work together to convert the external power into battery charge.

CHARGING LEVELS

Electric vehicles have the capability to charge at varying power output levels, which will affect both where you can charge the vehicle (at home or in public areas) and how long it will take to fully charge. When using a home charger, Level 1 or Level 2 charging equipment is typically utilized.

Level 1 (120V) - Charge your electric vehicle with Level 1 charging using a standard household outlet and the 120V charging cord that comes with the vehicle.

Level 2 (240V) - Level 2 charging uses 240 volts, like your oven, for faster charging of your electric vehicle.

DC Fast Charging - You can find DC fast chargers at public charging stations for a quicker charge time compared to Level 1 and 2 stations. These chargers are per-

fect if you need a boost of power in a shorter amount of time.

1st Time EV POV

"What was your experience charging the EV?"

AT HOME:

😊 "Piece of cake. It took a moment to push the release button to disengage the charging chord."

😞 "No way to charge at home, but I did locate an office building nearby that offered public charging."

😞 "The only challenge at home was the limited amount of charge garnered after having it plugged in overnight."

IN PUBLIC:

😊 "Charged twice at a Tesla Super Charging station. Very easy to use as long as you can combine the charge with a stop for food or light shopping. If I were to own a Tesla, I would have to install a charger at home."

😞 "Public charging is fine, but you need to have the time! I didn't realize there was an adaptor in the trunk for charging. Looked around and figured it out. Also was not aware of where the charging port was or how to gain access to it. Figured that out too."

😞 "Traumatized to try for the first time. Found only 2 units with 4 types of chargers, no instructions anywhere for a newbie and the screens were very difficult to see, approx. 1hr 15 min. later to charge up 8% more from 50% to 58%."

⚡ AAA TIPS 🛠️

AT HOME:

- Locate the charging cable for charging and know how to charge the vehicle (how to open the charging connection door, where to release the charging cable when finished charging).

- To help alleviate range anxiety, plan to use only 60-70% of the driving range before charging.

- Sustained highway driving or extreme temperatures will erode the driving range quickly.

- Make a habit of recharging the vehicle before it gets below the 20% state of charge.

IN PUBLIC:

- Develop a recharge routine and plan for the necessary access to charging networks before attempting any

trip (this sometimes includes joining a charging network and registering a credit card).

- If you plan to use public DC Fast charging, know what type of charger works with the car you are driving.

Use AAA's TripTik Travel Planner to map out an upcoming road trip and identify EV charging stations along the way. Use the AAA Find a Charger tool to find the nearest charging station wherever you are in the country!

ACCELERATION:

EVs are generally faster than their gas-powered counterparts. In vehicles, torque is the rotational force created by an engine or motor that turns the wheels to make it move down the road. EVs need less time for energy to make it to the wheels compared to gasoline cars, which need time for fuel and air to burn and expand in the engine.

1st Time EV POV

"How was the acceleration of the EV?"

😊 "I felt way more torque compared to a gas-powered vehicle, a positive feature of powerful pickup and agility. I was comfortable behind the wheel; the acceleration was impressive!"

😐 "Smooth and fast acceleration. However, it did seem like I had to push the accelerator harder to get it to 'go'."

😊 "No engine sound, which caused confusion to know if the vehicle was ready to be driven. No movement at all when the brake is released, which was a different driving style than what I was used to."

⚡ **AAA TIPS** 🛠️ Acceleration can launch the vehicle quickly and at a fast distance and speed – increasing the possibility of a crash.

- Use a smooth accelerator pressure to help drive at a moderate speed and to maintain a safe distance behind other vehicles.

- Keep an eye on the speedometer until you adjust to what it feels like to drive an EV. Most EVs are developed and marketed as performance cars, SUVs, and trucks. The ability for rapid acceleration from a stand-still or at highway speed is exhilarating – but can be dangerous if either unexpected by a novice EV driver, or if used irresponsibly.

RIDE:

EVs don't emit any engine or exhaust noise, which makes them much quieter than their gas counterparts. A slight sound from their tires and mild wind noise make these EVs quiet to drive. Handling of the vehicle can be appreciated more because of the low center of gravity, making the EV easier to turn at reasonable speeds. Inside the EV, the vehicle user interface dashboard incorporates modern technology and influences how users interact with EVs.

1st Time EV POV

"How was your experience with the drive/ride of the EV?"

😊 "Driving the vehicle was smooth and comfortable. I quickly learned how to sync my phone for music via Bluetooth and was able to adjust the AC settings."

😐 "Learning the software to the various information was overwhelming initially, leading me to the Hertz EV Blog, which was much more helpful. Definitely had to watch a video."

😐 "Learning to use the features on the touchpad was confusing. Climate control and radio, for example. Scrolling through the different screens took a bit of time. Not as straightforward as I am used to."

⚡ **AAA TIPS** 🛠️ Give yourself the gift of time!

- Get familiar with all driver controls. Making mental logs of how to use the lights, wipers, stereo, heat, and air conditioning by understanding the use of and where the touchscreen interface is located is a must before starting to drive.

BRAKE:

In a gas-powered vehicle, the brake pads create friction to slow the wheels' movement. The friction turns some of the kinetic energy of wheel rotation into heat and slows the vehicle.

In an EV, instead of coasting, the system automatically uses the electric drivetrain and (depending on settings) can cause the car to slow down without the brake pedal engaged. This is called Regenerative Braking. The EV captures the energy released during the braking process and uses it to recharge its battery. This makes EVs more efficient and helps to extend their overall range. A "jarring" feeling often kicks in the moment the driver takes their foot off the acceleration pedal.

1st Time EV POV

"In what ways was the EV different than driving other vehicles?"

😊 "Regenerative braking started as a distraction but over time became an enjoyable driving feature."

😐 "It was a bit awkward getting used to controls especially braking at first but operated the same as any vehicle."

😐 "The braking was off-putting. When coming to a stop, I'm used to taking my foot off the accelerator to coast to light, but the EV instead actively brakes."

⚡ **AAA TIPS** 🛠️

- Most EVs allow the adjustment to the sensitivity of regenerative braking. Setting this to a minimum for the first driver will help avoid the harsh sensation.

- Turning the setting up to increase levels of regenerative braking will save more energy that ultimately increases the EVs driving range.

Read more about EVs at newsroom.aaa.com.

Quick & Dirty Tips - Traveling with Kids

By: Samantha Brown

If you have kids, you do not have a lot of time to read. You just need the tips. So here they are, quick and dirty.

1. Bring balloons to inflate. You can work off a lot of kid's-been-in-a-car-all-day energy at the hotel. Yet an inflated balloon doesn't travel far and won't break anything.

2. And while we're at it...bubbles. Blowing bubbles helps with the same thing especially at airports, and it's totally worth taking precious ounces for what the TSA allows you to bring in liquids.



3. How to fly with young children.

Parent one uses pre-board to load in gear and sets up shop. Parent two waits with children and boards absolutely last. This way you wear them out, don't expose them

to the most stressful part of the trip - the boarding process - and they are not constrained an extra 45 minutes (or longer) for the flight to leave.

4. Never feel bad about going to McDonalds. Or any fast food restaurant, for that matter. Being a quick and stress-free meal is EXACTLY what these restaurants were made for.

5. For Mom's sake, no buffets. Moms are required to do all the getting up and down, assembling, pouring, cutting, spreading and STILL leave a tip.



6. Use the ironing board in your room.

No, not to iron,

but use it for more counter space or a TV dinner table. Lower it to make an activity table.

7. Two words - duct tape. Use it to childproof outlets, tape drawers and toilet lids shut and wrangle dangling cords.

8. Safety first. When you walk into any new space (like a hotel room or cruise cabin), drop everything and check windows are locked, balcony doors shut and anything else that could be potentially dangerous for a wan-

dering child.

9. Seek out restaurants with booths. Children relax more in them and even fall asleep. This old-fashioned seating can be found at Denny's and Perkins. Yep, the food may not be fancy, but at least I get to eat that food.

10. Long day sightseeing? Throw a pair of thin flip-flops into your handbag and some baby powder. At lunch or on a break, take off your comfy shoes (they won't be after 6 to 10 hours on your feet), slip on the flip-flops and sprinkle your feet with BP. Instant feel-good.

11. Never leave a location without using its bathroom. Your children will say they don't have to go. They lie.

12. Dress for battle. For those of us still helping children onto the potty, let's be honest. You are going to be spending more time than you want crouched on a bathroom floor. A PUBLIC. BATHROOM. FLOOR. I like wearing a nylon hiking pant from Columbia, which I can easily wash off with a paper towel drenched in Purell. They have articulated knees for easy bending AND a high waistline, so I'm not flashing everybody every time I bend down to help my kids.



13. Pack your real life, not your imaginary one.

Just leave the book, fashion magazine or a crossword puzzle at home. You won't get a chance. Trust me.

14. Ditch the wheels, ASAP. I once asked a father of two sets of twins (TWO!) for his best advice. He told me to get them out of the stroller and used to walking. It was a painful process, but I stopped pushing a stroller when they were three and now at five they can go anywhere and keep up with me.

15. Build in a siesta. No matter your age, we all get tired and cranky from around 2 to 4 p.m. Build in a

break, nap or low-key time for kids to color...okay, maybe you can bring that fashion magazine after all.



Let's Get This Right

Dear Ask Ed,

There was an incident many years ago that still irks me and I wanted to verify it with an expert. [A dealership] had a special car inspection deal...They did the inspection and they said that the inspection failed due to the low tire treads...I mentioned that I would go and get the tires elsewhere...Here's what I am still unsure of. They said that I cannot drive the car off their lot because the car has failed the inspection. Driving off the lot with a failed inspection would be against the law. I even asked the manager there to validate the mechanic's statement. Were they right?

Thanks, T. P.

Dear T.,

It appears that the information given to you by the dealership is incorrect. First, I will tell you what the inspection manual (PennDOT Publication 45 Vehicle Equipment and Inspection Regulations) says about inspecting the tires on a vehicle.

Subchapter "E" Paragraph (e), (1) lists seventeen conditions that would require a safety inspector to fail a vehicle's tires including insufficient tread (two adjacent grooves that measure less than 2/32" on a Category 1 passenger type vehicle or light truck).

It is *not* against the law to drive a vehicle away from a shop after it fails inspection. It may be unsafe depending on why it failed, but it is not illegal. The dealership (or any officially recognized inspection station) can make a recommendation, but they cannot keep you from driving your vehicle away providing you have a current and valid drivers license and your vehicle has current registration, current inspection sticker (not expired), and current insurance. You can take your vehicle off of their lot even under those conditions if you want to take that chance - the dealership/inspection station is not a law enforcement agency. They cannot "hold" your vehicle.

You have the right to decide who does your repairs and who sells/installs your tires. You have the right to take your vehicle home and repair it yourself or take it to another repair shop and have them complete the necessary repairs. Then you can (you



don't have to) return to the shop that originally inspected and failed your vehicle. They will verify that the necessary repairs were completed and install your new inspection sticker.

This is stated in the aforementioned Publication 45, Subchapter "B" Paragraph (f), Customer Relations. You can review the document in its entirety at www.dot.state.pa.us/BMV/PUB-45.

In fact, the dealership/inspection station can have their inspection license suspended for what they did to you, per Subchapter "D" of the same inspection manual.

Public relations is important to PennDOT. Customers who have questions or want assistance can call the PennDOT Customer Hotline at 1-717-412-5300.

I know a little more about this than the average person, as my wife and I are both instructors certified by PennDOT to teach both Safety and Emissions classes to get mechanics certified to do inspections.

Thanks for your question. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions, comments or concerns.

Happy motoring!

Ed

Contact Ask Ed with your automotive questions:

AskEd@aaardgberks.com or write to Ask Ed, AAA, 920 Van Reed Road, Wyomissing, PA 19610.



Travel Tips for Active Seniors

Did you know that the risk of falling increases when senior adults travel? Travel involves navigating unfamiliar places that may be poorly lit, have uneven flooring or other risk factors that increase the chance.

Follow these few steps to prevent falls and enjoy a fun adventure away from home.

Pack light. Traveling with lighter or less luggage will make getting around much easier and will decrease the chance of becoming off balance.

Choose comfort over fashion. Wear shoes that are comfortable and broken in. Low heels and non-skid soles help improve stability and balance.

Drink more water. Keep hydrated. Being dehydrated can lead to fatigue, lightheadedness, and increase jet lag which can lead to tripping or a fall.

Slow down. Set a realistic road trip schedule that



includes time for bathroom breaks and time to get out and stretch your legs. By including extra time in your travel plans, you can decrease the risk of falling while getting to your destination.

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part 2: travel guide to nyc



In the Sep/Oct issue of *On The Go* we began to help you plan an unforgettable trip to New York City by covering NYC travel “at a glance”. Read on to learn where to stay, what to do, where to eat and more.

Top 5 Best Places To Stay in NYC

There’s no shortage of hotels in New York City — everything from budget to luxury and vintage to contemporary. Here are a few of our favorites.

1. Arthouse Hotel New York City

Address: 2178 Broadway, New York, NY 10024

AAA Rating: Three Diamond, AAA Inspected Clean

Rates: From \$359/Pet-friendly: Yes/Wi-Fi: \$39 per day

Great for: Families with kids

The Arthouse Hotel New York City is a boutique hotel in Manhattan near Central Park, the Beacon Theatre, Lincoln Center and the American Museum of Natural History. It has a neighborhood feel and easy access to the subway, plus several restaurant options on-site.

2. New York Hilton Midtown

Address: 1335 Ave of the Americas, New York, NY 10019

AAA Rating: Three Diamond, AAA Inspected Clean

Rates: From \$355/Pet-friendly: Yes

Wi-Fi: Free for Hilton Honors members only

Great for: Relaxed travelers

The New York Hilton Midtown is one of New York City’s largest hotels. It’s located in the heart of Manhattan, close to all the best tourist spots, including the Museum of Modern Art, Grand Central Station and Rockefeller Center. Use your AAA membership to save 10 percent and earn Honors points

3. M Social New York

Address: 226 W 52nd, New York, NY 10019

AAA Rating: Three Diamond, AAA Inspected Clean

Rates: From \$356/Pet-friendly: Yes/Wi-Fi: Free

Great for: Travelers who want to be in the heart of NY

A contemporary hotel in Manhattan, the M Social New York is both family-friendly and centrally located, making it a top place to stay for tourists. Located around the corner

from Broadway and Times Square, the hotel also has views of the Hudson River.

4. The Bowery Hotel

Address: 335 Bowery, New York, NY 10003

AAA Rating: Four Diamond, AAA Inspected Clean

Rates: From \$705/Pet-friendly: Yes/Wi-Fi: Free

Great for: Travelers looking for an upscale hotel with a creative vibe

The Bowery Hotel, a boutique hotel in Manhattan, is a mix of 19th-century Gothic and downtown loft, making it a popular place to stay for musicians, artists and writers. Be sure to have dinner at the in-house restaurant, Gemma, after exploring the nearby New Museum or Tenement Museum.

5. The Dominick Hotel

Address: 246 Spring St., New York, NY 10013

AAA Rating: Five Diamond, AAA Inspected Clean

Rates: From \$1915/Pet-friendly: Yes/Wi-Fi: Free, with

upgrades available for a fee

Great for: Luxury travelers

The Dominick Hotel is a contemporary luxury hotel in Manhattan near Times Square, Central Park, SoHo and excellent shopping. Before you leave, spend some time on the pool deck, a great place to hang out for a drink and chat with friends. It also boasts one of the best hotel views in New York City.

Top 5 Things To Do in NYC

New York has no shortage of things to do, so you’ll find something for everyone to enjoy.

1. Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island Tour

Cost: \$64 Duration: 3 hours

The Statue of Liberty should be at the top of any traveler’s list due to its powerful historical impact. For many immigrants, the statue was their first glimpse of New York, representing hope for the future.

On this tour, take the ferry from One Battery Park Plaza in Manhattan to Ellis Island. Then explore the Statue of Liberty and the Immigration Museum at Ellis Island with a

professional guide who shares the history of the site and the best photo spots.

2. National 9/11 Memorial & Ground Zero Tour

Cost: Starting at \$39 Duration: 2-4 hours

Tour the 9/11 Memorial and Ground Zero with a guide who has a personal connection to the event. Once the tour has completed and you've paid your respects at the memorial, enter the 9/11 Museum to view more than 10,000 artifacts and learn more. Note: This tour may not be appropriate for children under 10.

3. Empire State Building

Cost: Tickets start at \$44; Children 5 and under and veterans with valid ID are free Duration: 1-2 hours

If you want a picture-perfect video of Manhattan, make your way to the Empire State Building's two observation decks. Lines are often long, so purchase an Express Pass to skip all the way to the observation deck. For the fewest crowds, visit first thing in the morning or late at night on a weekday. For the cheapest ticket, get the New York CityPASS.

4. Madame Tussauds NYC Famous Wax Museum

Cost: Tickets start at \$47 Duration: 1 hour

Rub elbows with the rich and famous – or at least wax copies of them – at Madame Tussauds New York. See historical figures, superheroes and your worst nightmares from horror movies all in one place. Perfect for a rainy day or when you need a break from the summer humidity.

5. Museum of Natural History - Exclusive Guided Tour

Cost: Tickets start at \$126 Duration: 2.5 hours

Founded in 1869, the Museum of Natural History features exhibits on everything from outer space to the bottom of the ocean. The dinosaur exhibits and the Blue Whale Model are must-sees. This guided tour takes you through all 28 buildings and points out the highlights as you skip the lines and hear from a professional tour guide.

Top 5 Best Places To Eat in New York

Whether you grab a hot dog at Coney Island or sit down to a steak dinner at the swankiest restaurant in Manhattan, your taste buds are in for a treat. Check out these New York restaurants on your next trip.

1. Marea

Address: 240 Central Park S, New York, NY 10019/Phone Number: (212) 582-5100/Chef: Lauren DeSteno/Reservations: Suggested/Type: Italian seafood/Dress Code: Semi-formal/AAA Rating: Five Diamond/Price: \$42 to \$135

Considered one of the top Italian restaurants in New York, Marea is located in Midtown and is famous for its fusilli with bone marrow and octopus. The restaurant serves lunch and dinner with an outdoor patio for seating during nice weather. There's also a full bar.

2. Chef's Table at Brooklyn Fare

Address: 431 W 37th St, New York, NY 10018/Phone Number: (718) 243-0050/Chef: Cesar Ramirez/Reservations: Required/Type: Fusion small plates/Dress Code: Semi-formal/AAA Rating: Five Diamond/Price: \$430 per person

Watch Chef Ramirez blend Asian ingredients with French techniques during your three-hour meal at Chef's Table at Brooklyn Fare. There are relatively few tables, so you need to make your reservations well in advance. The restaurant only serves a 15-course tasting and wine with no menu.

3. Daniel

Address: 60 E 65th St, New York, NY 10021/Phone Number: (212) 288-0033/Chef: Eddy Leroux/Reservations: Required/Type: French/Dress Code: Semi-formal/AAA Rating: Five Diamond/Price: Starts at \$275

Daniel is a French restaurant in the Upper East Side that's been around for 30 years – for good reason. The restaurant's world-class French food and award-winning hospitality make it a great place to celebrate grand occasions.

4. Craft

Address: 43 E 19th St, New York, NY 10003/Phone Number: (212) 780-0880/Chef: Tom Colicchio/Reservations: Suggested/Type: New American/Dress Code: Business casual/AAA Rating: Four Diamond/Price: \$29 to \$275

Craft offers farmer's market fresh dinner options and a full bar. The decor is cozy and the food features seasonal ingredients that are prepared simply. Braised beef short ribs are one of the most popular dishes, and be sure to try one of their many side dishes, all of which focus more on craft than fancy theatrics to make them delicious.

5. Bowery Meat Company

Address: 9 E 1st St, New York, NY 10003/Phone Number: (212) 460-5255/Chef: David DiSalvo/Reservations: Suggested/Type: American steak and seafood/Dress Code: Casual dress/AAA Rating: Three Diamond/Price: \$35 to \$195

Located in the East Village, Bowery Meat Company is a hotspot for celebrities, but is still approachable for "normal" people celebrating a special event. Specialties are meat-centered, but they also offer pasta and salads to appeal to everyone, making it more than your typical steakhouse.

Best Time To Visit NYC

The best time to visit New York depends on your travel priorities. If you want the best weather, aim to visit between May and June or September through November. January through February is the best time to visit New York to save money or avoid crowds. After the holidays and during the winter months, fewer tourists venture to New York City, so hotels, restaurants and attractions like Broadway are more likely to run deals.

When traveling with kids or as a family, the summer is the best time to visit. The kids won't miss school, and there are plenty of outdoor activities to keep them entertained. But be prepared – June through August is peak tourist season in New York, so you will likely be fighting crowds.

Use AAA's Trip Canvas app for How to Save Money in NYC and NYC Safety Tips.



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Our Apologies...

In the September-October 2023 issue of *On The Go* we published an article entitled Don't Give Thieves the Keys. In the article we included information on how to request personal VIN etching kits from the Pennsylvania Auto Theft Prevention Authority.

Since the printing of that article it has come to our attention that the PATPA no longer provides these kits. Their website, www.watchyourcar.org, is still a great source of information.

We apologize for any inconvenience this error caused.



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Beefing Up Seat Belt Safety

"Wearing a seat belt is one of the most effective ways to prevent injury and death in a crash," said NHTSA Acting Administrator Ann Carlson during an announcement in August 2023.

"In 2021, almost 43,000 people lost their lives on America's roads, and half of those in vehicles were unbelted."

NHTSA has issued a proposed rule that would require auto manufacturers to install seat belt use warnings for the right front passenger and rear seating positions to increase seat belts use for everyone. The proposal would apply to passenger cars, trucks, most buses, and multipurpose passenger vehicles with a GVWR under 10,001 pounds.

Carlson went on to say that NHTSA's aim is to reduce the number of motorist injuries and American lives lost due to being unbelted in a crash by encouraging increased seat belt use.

The proposed rule would affect Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 208, Occupant Crash Protection.

FMVSS 208 currently requires a seat belt use alert only in the driver's seating position (many auto makers already voluntarily install the alert in other seating positions). It would also update current driver seat belt warning system requirements.

For rear seats in vehicles, the rule would require visual and audio alerts after the vehicle is started. The visual alert must last at least 60 seconds and an additional audio/visual change-of-status warning must last at least 30 seconds if a rear seat belt is unbuckled while the vehicle is in operation.

New requirements for front seats include an audio-visual seat belt use warning for the right front passenger seat, an audio-visual seat belt use warning for the driver and right front passenger that remains active until both driver and right front passengers buckle up, and an audio-visual change-of-status warning for both driver and right front passenger seats if the seat belt is unfastened.

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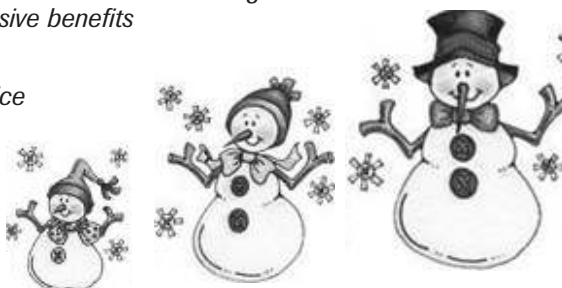
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Destinations & Diversions

Nearby and Around-the-Corner: What To Do This Winter

Don't let the chilly weather make you hide out at home. There is so much to do in Berks County and beyond year 'round! Here are just a couple of suggestions.

Reading Blue Mountain & Northern Railroad. Hop aboard a heated coach with clean restrooms and comfortable padded seats with backs that flip to face the direction the train is traveling. This is the perfect way to enjoy Pennsylvania's scenery, no matter the season. All day rail excursions run roundtrip to Jim Thorpe, boarding at Reading Outer Station, Port Clinton and Tamaqua. More information at www.rbmnrr.com.

Lehigh Gorge Scenic Railway. Take in the natural wonder of beautiful Lehigh Gorge while riding in a passenger coach built as early as 1917. The one-hour, 16-mile trek starts out at the historic Jim Thorpe Station, running along the Lehigh River and over bridges to views of the Glen Onoko Falls. Excursions are available May through December. Learn more at www.lgsry.com.

Reading Museum. When the weather isn't the best for being out-of-doors, why not visit the Reading Museum for some fascinating and fun activities? Check out the Neag Planetarium, with programs such as Floyd Final Fridays - a unique sensory experience featuring the music of Pink Floyd coupled with state-of-the-art technology. Learn more about additional planetarium programs and art exhibits and activities at the Museum by visiting readingpublicmuseum.org.

According to the Experience Lititz website, the "annual **Lititz Fire & Ice Festival** is winter's coolest event." The ten-day event (February 16-25, 2024)

features amazing ice sculptures, food truck fare, and shopping opportunities. The kids will love the Winter FUNderland event with bouncy attractions and more. More fun includes a scavenger hunt, photography exhibit and a Fire & Ice-themed pub crawl. Learn more about this event by visiting lititzpa.com/event/fire-ice-festival/.

Ice of a different flavor can be had at the **Turkey Hill Experience**. Although this unique attraction is closed January-March, there's plenty of time in November and December to check it out. Everyone will love the interactive exhibits teaching about dairy culture. Create your own virtual ice cream flavor. Milk a mechanical cow. Star in your own Turkey Hill commercial. And, of course, enjoy plenty of unlimited samples of iced tea and ice cream! Located in Columbia, Lancaster County, the Turkey Hill Experience provides a special way to discover the history and culture of Lancaster County and the Susquehanna River Valley. Details at turkeyhillexperience.com.

Crystal Cave. Even when it's freezing outside, Crystal Cave enjoys a constant 54° F. When planning your winter getaways, you'll want to see Crystal Cave this month, as this favorite local attraction is closed from December to March. Visitors enjoy a one-hour tour that includes a movie in the Crystal Cave Theater about the history of our commonwealth's first show cave and a 125' descent amidst nature's amazing creations. Check out the Totem Pole, Ear of Corn, Ice Cream Cone, Bacon, and other natural formations. Located at 963 Crystal Cave Road, Kutztown, Crystal Cave invites you to let your imagination run wild! Learn more at crystalcavepa.com.

Open September through May, visitors to **Lost River Caverns** in Hellertown, Lehigh County, will love Nature's Underground Wonderland during 30-45 minute guided walking tours and is appropriate for folks of all ages. Once an active limestone quarry, the cavern entrance was first opened to the surface by a controlled black powder explosion in 1883. Local residents used the revealed cavern for activities such as dances, fraternity initiation ceremonies, a chapel and more. Learn more at www.lostcave.com.

Wolf Sanctuary of PA. If you're looking for something different and have a heart for wildlife preservation, you may find visiting this amazing sanctuary an eye-opening and heart-warming experience. The nonprofit organization is dedicated to "providing the best habitat and care for our wolves." Reservations are required for a guided tour or event. Tours are led by knowledgeable volunteer guides, offering glimpses into the lives of the resident rescued wolves. Learn more about this amazing sanctuary and its mission at www.wolfssanctuarypa.org.



Jake, a resident rescue wolf at the Wolf Sanctuary of PA, 465 Speedwell Forge Road, Lititz.



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For you!

Real Heroes of the Road

A Tow Provider's Instinct is Always to Help Others First

Chad of Skyler Towing & Recovery in Orangeburg, SC was sitting in his tow truck finishing up paperwork on a AAA member call when a passing van struck the back of his tow truck.

Chad exited his truck and saw the driver of the van was badly injured and needed medical attention. He ran to the vehicle and pulled the driver out so he could begin CPR,



which he had been trained on since he worked for the police force part time.

Chad, a AAA Real Hero of the Road, called 911 for help but because of the location of the crash, it took responders close to 45 minutes to arrive. Chad continued CPR and when the driver regained consciousness began comforting him and let him know help was on the way.

At the time, his instinct was so strong to help the other driver that he didn't even notice that he was hurt as well. Chad had sustained internal injuries and ended up needing to be hospitalized as well. Both Chad and the driver of the van have thankfully recovered but without Chad's selfless act, the driver may

not have survived his injuries.

Chad was a Real Hero of the Road to that injured driver that fateful day.

Heroes Run Toward Danger when Everyone Else Runs Away

It was like any other Tuesday – Zack Corey of Corey's Big Dog Towing in Beulah, MI was out on a call when his truck was hit head on by another vehicle. In the minutes following the crash, Zack was trying to get his bearings when he realized the vehicle that hit him was on fire. He was unable to get his driver's side door open so he crawled out the passenger side window and rushed to the other vehicle.

When he got to the burning vehicle, he saw a little girl inside and tried to open the door but it wouldn't budge. He grasped the window frame and pulled as hard as he could, forcing it open and pulled the girl from the vehicle.

As he carried her to safety, he heard a baby crying in the back

seat. At this point, the sheriff's department had arrived and together they went back to the vehicle and pulled the baby to safety.

Luckily, both children only sustained minor injuries and are doing well today. Zack and the officer that assisted him were later recognized by their local community for their heroic efforts.

Zack was a Real Hero of the Road that day to those young children, putting his own safety aside to rescue them from a life-threatening situation. He didn't think twice before running toward their burning car.

When you're driving along the highway and see Chad or Zack or someone else working at the roadside, think of this story and what their selflessness meant to that driver. And when you do, please slow down and move over so they can do their job safely. We need service providers like Chad and Zack and so do our members; but most of all, so do their families. Help us keep them safe.



Travel Scam Warning

Recently, a AAA travel advisor came across a scam targeting air travelers. The scam specifically targets people who search for an airline's phone number online because their flight has been canceled or delayed. Those fake phone numbers lead callers to an unrelated, third party that will ask for your reservation information and credit card number to pay for a "service fee" or price difference between flights. In some cases, those "fees" are hundreds of dollars. AAA wants members to be aware of these types of scams to avoid falling victim.

AAA Recommendations

- If your flight is delayed or canceled and you're at the airport, speak with a gate agent in person or use the airline's app.
- If you prefer to call the airline, use the toll-free number that appears on their website.
- An airline will not charge you for a canceled or delayed flight.

- Prior to a trip, download the airline's app and save their toll-free number on your phone.
- To avoid these situations, work with a travel agent ahead of time and purchase travel insurance to cover incidental expenses like meals and lodging in the event of a cancellation.



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Annual New Car Ownership Costs Boil Over \$12K

AAA's Your Driving Costs (YDC) has been a reliable data source for the expenses associated with owning and operating a brand-new vehicle for more than seven decades. Based on the latest figures, the average cost of owning and operating a new vehicle in 2023 has increased significantly, with an annual expense of \$12,182 or a monthly cost of \$1,015. This is a sharp increase from 2022 when the average yearly cost was only \$10,728, or \$894 monthly.

"It's important for car buyers to clearly understand the costs associated with owning a new vehicle," said Greg Brannon, AAA's director of automotive research. "Due to global supply chain issues and constrained inventory of new vehicles, car prices rose dramatically in 2022. And while the situation continues to improve, the spillover effects are keeping prices high."

The overall average manufacturer's suggested retail price (MSRP) of the new vehicles in the 2023 YDC study is \$34,876. This is \$1,575 (4.7%) higher than last year. It is important to note that MSRP does not always correspond to a consumer's actual purchase price and may vary depending on demand. Furthermore, a higher sticker price directly impacts finance costs, with this year's vehicles boasting an average annual finance charge of \$1,253, a staggering 90% increase from the previous year.

The change in the annual cost of owning a new vehicle is also likely driven by:

- Depreciation, which is the difference between the car's value upon

purchase and the value of the car when sold. According to this year's YDC projections, new vehicles are expected to depreciate by an average of \$4,538 per year over five years of ownership, up 24% over 2022.

- The jump in new vehicle prices (up almost \$1,600) compared to used vehicle values that have experienced a decline in the past year.

- Automakers across the board have focused on producing more oversized, luxurious, and expensive vehicles, loaded with extra features that bump up prices even more.

Compared to last year, one of the higher annual cost categories was fuel, but this year's average cost per mile has decreased by roughly 2 cents per mile. It's worth noting that the cost of charging EVs has actually increased, by almost 2 cents per kWh over last year, from 13.9 cents per kWh to 15.8 cents per kWh. The increase is likely accounted for by higher-than-expected inflation, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA).

Given their size, fuel economy, and prices, it should come as no surprise that ½-ton pickups have the highest average driving cost among all vehicle categories covered in the YDC study. Interestingly, the pickup truck market has slowed over the last 12 months as gas prices trend high and financial costs climb. Pickup trucks excel at hauling and towing, although many buyers do not use them for these purposes. Potential buyers should remember that the unique capabilities of pickups come at a high cost of over \$1 per mile.

"The once popular pickup truck is now seeing a slight decline in

demand as these vehicles have become increasingly expensive, rivaling the price of many luxury cars," said Brannon. "As interest rates continue to climb, this adds a layer of expense per month that consumers should consider when shopping for their next vehicle."

AAA CAR BUYING ADVICE

With the purchase price being so high and impacting other cost categories, it's important to remember these car-buying tips:

- Know all the expenses associated with ownership to negotiate the best deal.

- Start early! Due to limited inventory, consumers may have fewer choices regarding a specific vehicle model. They may have to wait for delivery or even pre-order the vehicle of their choice.

- Before discussing finance rates with the car dealer, obtain pre-approval from their financial institution (e.g., Bank, Credit Union, AAA, etc.). By getting pre-approval, they will have a threshold of the best lending rate they'll pay. Buyers can use their pre-approval to negotiate if the dealer offers a higher rate.

- Create a budget and factor in the different elements of ownership before purchase – not just monthly payments. Other factors to consider when making the budget include insurance, gas, routine maintenance, etc.

The Your Driving Costs online calculator provides an interactive and personalized breakdown for car shoppers that uses the same methodology as AAA's annual analysis of new car ownership. Check it out at www.aaa.com/autorepair/drivingcosts.

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