



AMERICAN
FOLKLORE
SOCIETY

Annual Meeting

Getting to Harrisburg

by **Yvonne J. Milspaw and Brant Ellsworth**
(2021 Annual Meeting Local Planning Committee)

Harrisburg, the capital of Pennsylvania sits alongside the Susquehanna River, the longest non-navigable river in the country. Possibly in the world. We say the river is a mile wide and an inch deep. Probably it is more like 12 inches deep, though in some places it is 40 feet deep. Sometimes we locals call ourselves River Rats. The presence of the River dominates much of our local culture; we learn to count time by the dates of major floods.

The River divides Harrisburg into the East Shore (where the actual city of Harrisburg is located) and the West Shore (much wealthier, far less diverse). Good coffee shops on both shores.

Happily, Harrisburg and the Susquehanna Valley are easily accessible by plane, train, bus or car. We are within a 2–4-hour drive of major East Coast cities including NYC, Philadelphia, Washington DC, Baltimore, and Pittsburgh. We really recommend you have a car, as some of the best things to see and do here are most easily done by car. And we will not have tours this year due to lingering fears of the COVID-19 virus.

There is ample parking in Harrisburg. Three parking garages are easily accessible, including one attached to our hotel.

By Air

Harrisburg International Airport. Though flying into HIA may be a bit more expensive than flying into Baltimore or DC, you will love the short lines and the easy-to-navigate layout. Rent a car here or take a cab or Uber. It is an easy 15-minute drive to the hotel.

The airport itself uses a repurposed runway and buildings from the former Olmstead Air Force Base, which was closed about 1965. Just across the railroad tracks, and the remains of the early 19th century Union Canal and Route 230, all of which parallel the runway, is the rest of the old Air Force Base. The base's administration building is now the main building for Penn State-Harrisburg.

Washington DC: Dulles International Airport. Rent a car, and drive north on Route 15 to Harrisburg. It is a beautiful, easy drive, only a few hours. You will drive along the Catoctin Mountains where Camp David is located. If you get hungry along the way, there are some interesting restaurants. You will pass through prime apple growing country, and through parts of the Gettysburg Battlefield site.

Washington DC: Reagan Airport. Rent a car, drive north on the Beltway, and go north to Harrisburg.

Baltimore, MD: Baltimore-Washington International Airport (BWI). Rent a car, drive east along the Baltimore-Washington Parkway to the Baltimore Beltway, then north to Route 83 North, directly to Harrisburg. Easy drive, only 2 hours or less. There is a great doughnut shop just north of the city of York.

Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia International Airport. You can take the train. A [SEPTA](#) commuter rail will take you from the airport to the 30th Street Station, where you can catch the Keystone line directly into Harrisburg. The Harrisburg train station is an easy three blocks from the hotel. Or rent a car and have the adventure of driving through some of Philly. Go north to the PA Turnpike (Route 76), then west on the Turnpike to the Harrisburg East exit. From the exit, go either to Route 83 south and exit at 2nd Street, or go to Route 230 west into Harrisburg. The latter way will take you through Steelton where you can see remains of the Union Canal and a large steel mill.

New York City, NY: JFK International Airport in Brooklyn, or Newark International Airport in Newark, NJ. Take the train ([Amtrak](#)) or rent a car. It is about 3-5 hours to drive depending on traffic, but it is not particularly difficult. Take a break around the Lehigh Valley for good food and gorgeous scenery.

By Rail

Take [Amtrak](#) from just about anywhere in the northeastern part of the country—Boston, Providence, New Haven, NYC, Newark, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington DC, Richmond. There are many trains daily. Disembark at the 30th Street Station in Philadelphia, then take the Keystone line directly into Harrisburg. From Pittsburg and points west, there is a daily train to Harrisburg. Easy to do, and if you do not often travel by train, it is a fabulous, relaxing way to see the countryside. There are dining cars, though no one will claim the food is fabulous. Go to www.amtrak.com for schedules. The Harrisburg train station is three easy blocks from the hotel.

By Car

We strongly recommend that you have one if you want to see the area. The Susquehanna Valley is best accessed and seen by car. There is plenty of accessible parking: one garage is attached to the hotel; two others are in easy walking distance.

By River

Sorry, the Susquehanna River is not navigable. Traditional flat bottomed wooden “Batty” boats (row boats) are a possibility, as are kayaks; however, there are many, many dams in the way. Probably best to forget boats. Though small boats are a good way to see the remains of old eel weirs (traps).