



ON THE ROCKS – A great blue heron looks out over Chesapeake Bay. Image: flownaksala. Adobe Stock.

Chesapeake grand-central spot

Sailing, seafood, waterfront towns leave lasting impression

Represented by a bridge, defined by its beauty and known for its proximity, Chesapeake Bay has a resume that deserves a second look.

It's intimate, diverse and lovely. Delectability is a given and adventure isn't hard to find. Spend a week, or a couple of days before heading to the ocean. Fish, swim, boat or bask in the sun. Park your camper and stay awhile. And appreciate an architectural wonder – better known as the Chesapeake Bay Bridge.

The massive structure juts more than four miles. It rises 200 feet above water and is unavoidable to many vacationers on their way to Maryland and Delaware beaches. It enhances the allure of the surroundings.

Chesapeake Bay is quite a destination.

It's the largest estuary in the U.S. and a place of serenity. Wafting sea air encompasses a location comprised of fresh seafood bounties and farms that line its shores. Visit its plethora of waterfront towns and chat with the locals. The options seem endless.

Nearby Annapolis, the state's capital, is considered America's Sailing Capital. Known for its sailboat races, the city's boat shows draw thousands of visitors every October. Ergo Alley, a narrow waterway in the heart of the city, is an ideal location to watch the vessels. Don't forget to tour the U.S. Naval Academy. And enjoy some of the best blue crabs on the east coast.

Oxford is one of the oldest towns in Maryland. Yachting Magazine voted it the "world's best waterfront town." The



SAIL AWAY – A boat moves across Chesapeake Bay with a silhouette of the famous Bay Bridge in the background. Image: Grand Brothers. Adobe Stock.

Oxford Museum preserves a diverse collection of artifacts and memorabilia that chronicles more than three centuries of colonial and American history.

Neighboring Saint Michaels will whet your palates. The Eastern Shore Brewing Company strives to provide the "perfect pint." The tasting room at Saint Michaels Winery offers premium boutique wines that reflect Chesapeake Bay, and Lyon Distillery prepares splendid rum and rye whiskey.

Follow in the footsteps of abolitionist Harriet Tubman in Cambridge, a waterfront town that played an important part in the Underground Railroad. A visitor center and other landmarks tell her story.

The Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge covers 25,000 acres and is an opportunity to witness the natural beauty of the bay. An "estuarine

marshland ecosystem," it's home to more than 250 species of birds. Walking and paddling trails allow visitors to explore the unique environment.

And don't forget about the beach. Nicknamed the "Jewel of the Chesapeake Bay," North Beach is teeming with activities. Free concerts and beachside movies are staples throughout the summer. Visit the Classic Car Cruise-In, Bayside History Museum or Wetlands Overlook Park. Rent a kayak or paddleboard, bike on the half-mile boardwalk or fish on the pier. Or just plant yourself in the sand, bathe in the sun and cool off in the water.

Chesapeake Bay is more than a bridge, letting travelers know they're fewer than 100 miles from the ocean. It's a destination comprised of towns, landmarks and adventures that should satisfy the appetites of travelers.

Bradford's French Azilum is worth a visit

The French Azilum Historic Site is an extraordinary destination blessed with beautiful landscapes and a story waiting to be told.

Nestled in Bradford County's Endless Mountains Region, the French Azilum Historic Site rests on a horseshoe bend in the Susquehanna River near Wysox, Pa. Nondescript land that appears no different than the miles of natural beauty that engulfs the state, Azilum once provided refuge for a group of French exiles in the autumn of 1793 and spring of 1794.

Loyalists to King Louis XVI escaped their homeland during the French Revolution and sought asylum in a country still growing through its stages of infancy. Those who didn't flee found their heads on a guillotine.

Robert Morris, John Nicholson, Stephen Girard and several other financiers and investors sympathized with the plight of these exiles. A large French population made Philadelphia an ideal place to put them, but investors found an opportunity to profit financially from the influx of refugees by forming a consortium and purchasing 1,600 acres from the English and German settlers to establish Azilum.

Several thousand acres were purchased during the next few years. A community was established that included a two-acre market square, a gridiron pattern of broad streets and 413 residential plots. Napoleon, however, allowed exiles to return to France in 1803, and many returned to their homeland.

Visitors can explore the French Azilum. Many buildings and artifacts remain intact and tours can be taken to thoroughly examine the properties.

Its museum is an authentic hand-hewn cabin that dates to the 1780s and houses many relics. A stone-walled wine/root cellar is from the original settlement. Excavated in 1956, several bottles, glassware and ironware were found and are on display in the museum.

A labyrinth was constructed in the 1980s meant to simulate the "follies" the original French, who settled at Azilum, likely had in their individual gardens. Guests can take walks along gravel paths that are comprised of fleur de lis – the symbol of French Royalty.

The LaPorte House, built in 1836 by John LaPorte, son of Bartholomew LaPorte, a founder and principal settler of Azilum, is displayed. The French Colonial architectural style is magnificent. Its Palladian windows are similar to those of Independence Hall's in Philadelphia.

The compound includes a blacksmith shop and farm tools from the 1830s, a smokehouse and a wagon house/barn.

The Marie Antoinette Overlook provides fantastic scenery. It's 500 feet above the North Branch of the Susquehanna River. Originally built in 1930, it was created to draw attention to the sights. Visitors can see the French Azilum Historic Site and the LaPorte house museum from the Overlook.

A trip to the Azilum shouldn't disappoint. A one-day jaunt is an ideal way to experience its beauty and small place in U.S. history.