

## Pennsylvania's Lincoln Highway, the Western Section

"When my husband wouldn't run for governor, I decided to open a bed & breakfast," said Carol Neuhof, proprietor of Thee OLDE Stagecoach Inn (her spelling) in Jennerstown, adding a new dimension to political strategy while reinforcing the old Pennsylvania work ethic in one sentence. Traveling out from Pittsburgh along the Lincoln Highway towards the center of the state, you can see a lot more of her type, individualists who love their hometowns, and you'll encounter one of America's most charming countrysides, with quaint town squares and farm festivals to airshows and sophisticated repertory theater to keep you occupied.

The Lincoln Highway (US 30) is America's oldest cross-country route (from New York to San Francisco), having been created in the period 1913-1925 to link coast to coast. The name was given to honor our 16th president, since it passes through Gettysburg and near his burial place in Springfield, Illinois. Also, for much of the route out west of Omaha, the highway parallels the railroads that Honest Abe encouraged to be built across the continent during his administration.

### Highlights

Leaving Pittsburgh and heading east on US 30, the most interesting destinations are **Greensburg, Ligonier, Laughlintown, Jennerstown, and Bedford**, before you reach the notorious truckstop (halfway point on US 30 in the state) of Breezewood, famous only for its convenience stops and all-round vulgarity.

**Idlewild Park**, [www.idlewild.com](http://www.idlewild.com), just outside Pittsburgh, may seem like many other amusement parks in the country, but is the nation's third oldest (1878), with new and not-so-new amusement rides, a water park, and a Lincoln Highway kiddie car rides.

**Ligonier**, 50 miles east of downtown Pittsburgh, is a motion-picture-perfect small town, with a gazebo gracing its Diamond Square, antique shops, and cozy little restaurants. The town will soon be gentrified, if the presence of the ultra-bland Thomas Kinkade Galleries outlet is any indication.

The recently refurbished **Fort Ligonier**, phone **724/238-9701**, is an interesting place for the kids, as is the **Compass Inn Museum** at Laughlintown. The museum is open through October 28, phone **724/238-4983**.

Just inside Somerset County, antique auto lovers may want to note the site where Fred Duesenberg was killed testing one of his famous cars back in 1932.

Out west of Ligonier is **West Overton**, called "the only pre-Civil War village still intact"

in the state. Whiskey lovers may wish to visit the **Old Overholt Distillery** here. Contact the town museums at **724/887-7910**.

In **Jennerstown**, back on US 30, try to see a performance at the **Mountain Playhouse**, owned by the Stoughton family for over 70 years, and to eat at the neighboring **Green Gables Restaurant**. On entering Bedford County, you'll see the **S. S. Grand View Point Hotel** (1932), known as the Ship Hotel because of its shape. Unfortunately, it's closed today.

Finally, in **Bedford**, consider looking at **Fort Bedford Museum**, a recreation of the original 1758 redoubt. The oldest courthouse in Pennsylvania (1829) is here, too, as is the 1766 **Espy House**, which served as George Washington's headquarters during the whiskey rebellion (it's now a bakery).

## Events

Here are just a few interesting events (of the thousand or more such) in the area this summer:

From now through October 2 is the season for the Mountain Playhouse's expert productions of musicals and drama in Jennerstown. See the Web site, [www.mountainplayhouse.com](http://www.mountainplayhouse.com) or phone **814/629-9201**.

The **Ligonier Country Market** happens every Saturday through September 7, 7 AM to noon. Ask in town for directions to the Burke McConnaughey Farm, located just north of the West Main Street Bridge.

July 25 and August 25, **Antique Show**, Ligonier Town Square, phone **724/238-4200**.

July 28-29, **Westmoreland County Air Show**, Arnold Palmer Regional Airport, Latrobe, featuring the USAF Thunderbirds.

September 7-9, **Ligonier Highland Games**, see [www.ligoniergames.org](http://www.ligoniergames.org).

September 15 and 16, Lincoln Highway Road Rally 2001, [www.lhhc.org](http://www.lhhc.org).

## Lodgings

Among the cheaper, yet decidedly elegant, places to stay, is the **Mountain View Inn**, on the Lincoln Highway in Greensburg. Under the same (Boohler) family ownership and management since 1940, its ambiance is Early American. There's a swimming pool, a gazebo in the garden, and outdoor dining for all three meals in good weather. The rooms start at just \$69 per night and go up. All have private bath and are nicely furnished, some with antiques, others with reproduction pieces. Contact the Inn at **412/834-5300** or [www.mountainviewinn.com](http://www.mountainviewinn.com).

Though it looks older, the **White Star B&B Inn** has been in business just a year now, having been a nursing home earlier on, though it started out life as a hotel back in 1930. It's a huge place, with more than 2,200 square feet of common space on the first floor. It's one great room with a fireplace. Bedrooms, some of which have private bath attached, start at \$71 per night, and an extended hours buffet breakfast is a big hit. The inn sits on 3.5 acres, with a stream and waterfall, orchard walkway, flower garden, and outdoor lounging area. It's a non-smoking establishment, too. Pets stay free here, with a fenced-in dog run, by the way. The innkeepers are Larry E. Gindlesperger and his daughter, Tamera, "and the cats". Contact Larry at 1640 Lincoln Highway or PO Box 284, Jennerstown PA

15547, phone **814/629-5200**, fax 814/629-5100. The Web site is [www.bedandbreakfastinn.net](http://www.bedandbreakfastinn.net).

**Thee OLDE Stagecoach Bed & Breakfast** is one of the most charming such places I have ever visited, and costs just \$75 to \$85 per room, private bath attached. There are only four rooms, each decorated down home style with antiques, chintz curtains, etchings and books, the latter on a bedside table. The jolly yet amusingly observant Carol Neuhof is the proprietor, and she cooks up a storm for her breakfasts, which are included in the price, serving pancakes, biscuits and eggs, along with fruit and coffee. Housed in a Victorian style farmhouse that once served as a stagecoach stop back in the late 1700s and early 1800s, the house sits right on Route 30. Contact the B&B at 1760 Lincoln Highway or PO Box 337, Jennerstown PA 15547, phone **814/629-7440**.

I don't like recommending cookie-cutter chain hotels, but when you want a heated indoor pool with whirlpool, nightly live entertainment, room service, and that kind of thing, the **Ramada Inn** at Somerset looks pretty good, especially with prices as low as \$62 per room on weekdays, \$72 on Friday and Saturday nights. It's a full service hotel with all meals in the restaurant. Contact them at Exit 10, Pennsylvania Turnpike, phone **814/443-4646** or 800/272-6232.

Each room has a balcony at the **Howard Johnson Inn** at New Stanton, just off the Pennsylvania Turnpike a few miles. Their 85 rooms range in price from \$65 to \$80 and all have balconies, two king-size beds and coffeemakers. Facilities include an outdoor heated pool and playground, non-smoking rooms, free local calls, and more. No pets. Contact them at 112 West Byers Avenue, New Stanton PA 15672, phone **800/446-4656** or 724/925-3511 (the latter also fax), Web site [www.hojo.com](http://www.hojo.com).

## Restaurants

The area is brimming with small, family-style, and family-run places which are cozy and inexpensive. Among my favorites are the following:

**TJ's**, at Jones Mills, sits right behind the Tourist Information Office. It opens at 7, so you can have a hearty breakfast, with a big cheese omelet, for instance, costing just \$2.50 (breakfast is served all day, incidentally). A hamburger at lunch runs just \$2, a hot turkey dinner (all white meat) only \$6.25. (And they're known for their delicious hot gravy.) In business daily since 1987 (except for Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas), they also open early during fishing and hunting seasons. The owner is Thomas Kalp and TJ stands for the first letters of the names of his four children. When you leave, pick up a homemade pie for just \$5.95. Contact them at Route 31, east of Donegal Turnpike Exit 9, phone **724/593-6407**, e-mail [tjs@lhrc.net](mailto:tjs@lhrc.net).

The most famous eatery on our list is the **Oakhurst Tea Room**, down near Somerset (six miles west), doing business in the same family for over 67 years. They have a Smorgasbord and Dessert Table from just \$7.45 at lunch, but their a la carte items cost as little as \$1.95 (two eggs, toast and coffee; or two waffles) for breakfast; \$2.50 for a grilled cheese sandwich for lunch; and \$6.95 for fried chicken at dinner (with soup and salad bar, potato, and veggie). The best BLT I have ever eaten was here, with homebaked white bread (each slice an inch thick, not toasted,) and a pile of bacon and tomatoes, costing \$3.50. The Soup, Salad & Bread Bar with a large variety and daily fresh-baked breads and rolls, costs \$4.95. The dinner smorgasbord (\$10.95, kids under 12 half price) includes soups, salad, roast beef and turkey, baked ham and chicken, macaroni and cheese, scalloped potatoes and other items, plus the fixings to make your own sundae. The Tea Room is at 2409 Glades Pike (Route 31), Somerset PA 15501, phone **814/443-2897**.

Just a block off The Diamond, Ligonier's attractive town square, is the **Ligonier Tavern**, an historic old place, now full of quirky charm and surprises. You can have a big burger for just \$4.95 at lunchtime, or \$6.95 for a broiled whitefish hoagie (subway or hero) sandwich. For the same price, you could get a quiche with salad and fruit on the side. At dinner time, prices start at \$9.50 for spaghetti and meatballs, with salad, bread and butter, and meatloaf at \$10.95, served with garlic mashed potatoes and gravy. On Thursdays, they offer 15-cent chicken wings from 4 PM onwards. Located at 137 West Main Street, Ligonier PA, phone 724/238-4831, Web site is [www.ligonier.com/tavern](http://www.ligonier.com/tavern).

Far and away the cutest restaurant in the area is the **Green Gables**, a minute's drive north of US 30 on State 985, across the lawn from the marvelous Mountain Playhouse. For over 70 years, people have been eating in this enhanced Hansel & Gretel house, with a cozy greenroom and tables overlooking a little pond. A chicken salad sandwich costs \$5.50 at lunchtime, haddock fillets \$5.25. The latter is served with choice of rice or potatoes and vegetables. At dinnertime, Florentine Pasta costs just \$9.75, but most entrees are in the \$10.25 to \$16 range. Each entree comes with veggie, potato, and rolls. In summer, they are open from June 12 through October 13, closed Mondays. In the other seasons, they're open weekends only from Friday evenings to Sunday evenings. Found at PO Box 205, Jennerstown PA 15547, phone **814/629-9201**. The Web site, again, is [www.mountainplayhouse.com](http://www.mountainplayhouse.com).

Sunday brunch can be fun at the **Ligonier Country Inn** (also a B&B), on Route 30 in Laughlintown, on the road between Ligonier and Jennerstown. Served from 11 to 2, it offers all breakfast items and beef or ham, six different entrees, two homemade soups, salads, breads, and desserts, for \$9 per person. The breakfast buffet (from 8 to 10:45 AM) consists of omelets made to order, Belgian waffles, pancakes, French toast, bacon or sausage, home fries, fresh fruit, Danish, and assorted breads, all for \$5 per person. The inn is located at Route 309, Laughlintown PA 15655, phone **724/238-3651**.

If you must have steak, try the **Texas Road House** in Greensburg, also right on the Lincoln Highway. Their early bird special costs only \$13.99 for two persons and is served on Mondays through Thursdays from 4 to 5. You get two six-ounce sirloin dinners, with two side dishes each person. Open daily for dinner from 4 PM, but for lunch and dinner on weekends. The Texas Road House is at Hempfield Square, Route 30, Greensburg PA 15601, phone **724/850-2500**.

## Summing Up

For details on the history and sites along the road in Pennsylvania, ask for the *Lincoln Highway Driving Guide*, produced by the Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor at PO Box 386, Greensburg PA 15601, phone **724/837-9750**, fax 724/837-9751, e-mail [olga@lhhc.org](mailto:olga@lhhc.org), Web site [www.lhhc.org](http://www.lhhc.org).