

## History, Entertainment & Adventure In The Mid-Ohio Valley

As measured by the river that runs through them, downtown Marietta and downtown Parkersburg lie just a little over 13 miles apart. But make the distance between them the circumference of a small circle, and you'll find an entire bountiful world of unique memorable experiences, rich in history and natural beauty. Visitors discover interesting shops for the whole family, quiet wooded byways in which to relax, wonderful new dining opportunities, and a wealth of well-preserved antiques, proudly displayed by area residents who cherish their roots and these towns that they call home.

Regardless of where visitors to the Mid-Ohio Valley region choose to spend the afternoon, they'll undoubtedly find places filled with historic significance - not to mention, residents who have a knack for imparting that history in an educational and entertaining manner. As the oldest established town in Ohio, Marietta was the gateway to the Northwest Territory, and thus became well known as a stopping place for migrants throughout the centuries - most dramatically, slaves escaping to freedom via the Underground Railroad. Today, history buffs revel in the countless noteworthy sites sprinkled across Marietta/Washington County's landscape, including



**Fenton Art Glass**



### **Blennerhassett Island Historical State Park**

**The Jonathan Stone House and The Sawyer-Curtis House**, two major Underground Railroad stations more than 150 years ago that remain beautifully preserved and listed on the National Register of Historic Places today. Parkersburg, too, continues to bear noteworthy reminders of visitors drawn to its landscape over the centuries. In 1798, Harman Blennerhassett, a rich Irish aristocrat, constructed an opulent mansion on a wilderness island here, complete with such exquisite details as alabaster lamps and porcelain from Paris. The magnificent residence—once considered one of the most luxurious estates in the United States—burned down in 1811. However, the estate was recreated, and it is now a popular feature at [Blennerhassett Island Historical State Park](#), along with such fun activities as horse-drawn wagon rides and a variety of special events throughout the year.

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The Mid-Ohio Valley's past continues to blend its appealing present at a number of must-see shops that allow visitors both an informative factory tour and a great chance for a one-of-a-kind shopping experience. For example, [Fenton Art Glass](#) in Williamstown is celebrating its 100th year-having grown from a modest glass-decorating business into one of the world's foremost manufacturers of handmade art glass-and guests can stroll through the company's museum to learn about its storied past; traverse the factory floor to watch experts manipulate glass into breathtaking creations; and purchase some of the beautiful wares at the gift shop and outlet. Meanwhile, more than 25 years and a manufacturing move haven't slowed the thousands of arts and craft lovers who continue to pilgrimage to Belpre to visit [Lee Middleton Original Dolls, Inc.](#) The small company has grown into a worldwide leader in fine doll making, with artists creating



**Trolley Tours Inc.**

more than 100 styles of amazingly lifelike baby dolls a year, and the company's Belpre home store remains ground zero for serious doll collectors from across the country. Meanwhile,

outside the area's quaint historic towns and small cities lay an abundance of opportunities for nature enthusiasts to commune with the great outdoors. Marietta sits between two branches of the [Wayne National Forest](#), which may account for its honor of being named "Tree City, U.S.A." Parkersburg, meanwhile, is only a short drive from the family-oriented North Bend State Park, with its celebrated 29-room lodge. The city also contains the

headquarters of the Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge: 22 islands that offer prime fishing and bird watching for those who can get there by boat. The area offers recreation with aquatic centers (Indian Acres, in Marietta) and nearly a dozen top-notch golfing facilities.



**Rubles Sternwheeler**

As if the outdoor fun weren't enough, simply sightseeing many of the area's treasures can prove adventurous. Marietta and Parkersburg offer a variety of sternwheeler boat tours, trolley tours and carriage rides, and, through out the year, the towns of the Mid-Ohio Valley come alive with festivals and fairs, of which the Ohio River Sternwheeler Festival, Belpre Homecoming and Parkersburg Homecoming Festival are prime attractions.

From historical hotspots to arts and crafts havens to beautiful scenery and community celebrations, it's no wonder that residents love life in the Mid-Ohio Valley, and that visitors keep coming back for more. To thoroughly enjoy all that the area has to offer, begin by visiting the Marietta/Washington County Convention & Visitors Bureau at [www.mariettaohio.org](http://www.mariettaohio.org), or the Greater Parkersburg Convention & Visitors Bureau at [www.greaterparkersburg.com](http://www.greaterparkersburg.com). Both web sites offer brochures, maps and schedules to explore this welcoming world of history, river activities, recreation and adventure.

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