

■ ■ creative calling

Exploring the State

By Kathleen Ganster

PITTSBURGH-BASED WRITER ANNA DUBROVSKY, THOUGHT SHE KNEW PENNSYLVANIA.

After all, she lives in Pittsburgh and had also lived in eastern and central Pennsylvania. But when she started writing the “Moon Pennsylvania” guidebook, she discovered a lot of things about the state that she calls home.

“For example, did you know that we have elk in Pennsylvania?” she asked.

“And the beach in Erie, it is a real beach,” she said, “I lived in Southern Calif. so I know my beaches and this is a real beach.”

Discovering the elk herd in north central Pennsylvania and the beaches in Erie were only a few of the many things Anna wrote about in the handbook, published by Moon Handbooks (Avalon Travel, \$21.99).

It took Anna nearly two years to do the research to complete the guidebook, longer than she had originally anticipated.

“I really underestimated Pennsylvania,” she joked.

Anna, who lives in Squirrel Hill, said she logged more than 10,000 miles on her car while exploring the state for the book.

The new handbook has more than 600 pages of information on places to visit, sites to see and interesting facts about Pennsylvania. “We have so many oddball attractions,” she said, “Those are the types of things that I loved to find.”

The book also contains 15 detailed maps, a “two-week best of Pennsylvania tour,”

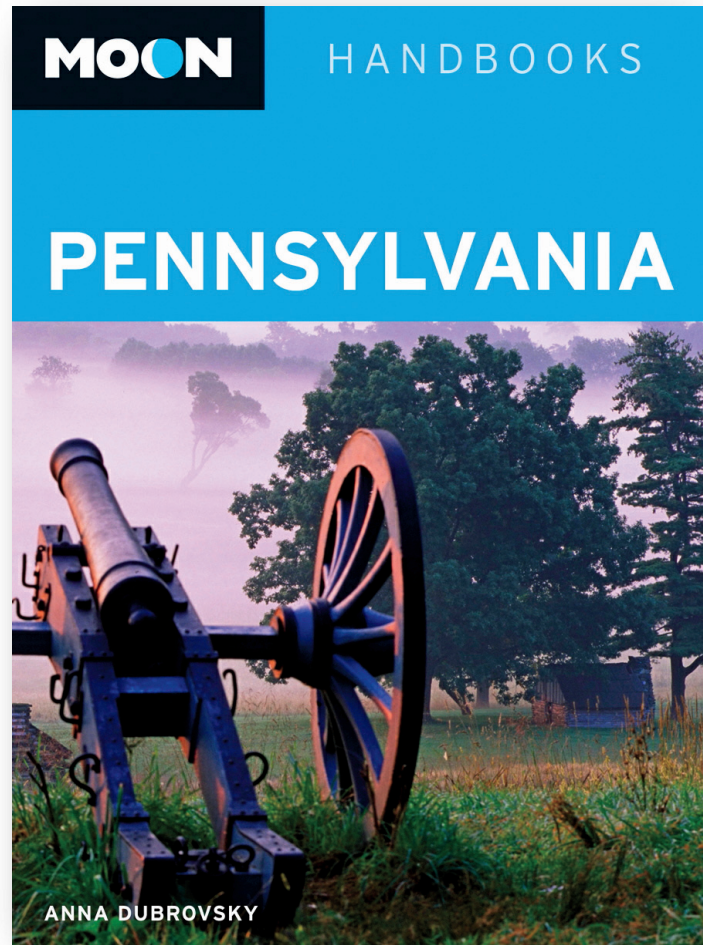
weekend getaway ideas and travel tips. There are also more than 800 photos, many taken by Anna.

And of course, now that she has explored the state, Anna has her own favorite “Girlfriend Getaway” spots.

“My girlfriends are partial to spa getaways, so the first place that springs to mind is Omni Bedford Springs Resort. It has a beautiful spa, and unlike a lot of spas, where you don’t see your friends unless you happen to be in the waiting room or shower/changing area at the same time, this one is set up to allow for interaction,” she said. Anna recommended the Bedford Bath Ritual.



Emily Davis Photography



“This very cool self-guided experience includes an exfoliating treatment, a eucalyptus steam, and hot and cold mineral pools,” she said, “It’s wonderful if you’re by yourself and even better if you’re with friends.”

Another spa spot Anna recommended is The Hotel Hershey. “Its spa specializes in chocolate treatments like the Whipped Cocoa Bath. Combining spa treatments and chocolate – two things most women love – was a stroke of genius,” she said.

Anna continued, “I’d also recommend the Brandywine Valley region, about 45 minutes west of Philadelphia. It’s often described as a romantic destination, but if your beloved isn’t into flowers, art, antiques, and boutiques, you’re better off going with friends.”

“My girlfriends enjoy wine tasting almost as much as spa treatments, and the Brandywine Valley Wine Trail is one of the better wine trails in Pa.,” she said. **V**

Info: www.moon.com or www.anywherebutacubicle.com

Kathleen is a freelance writer and journalism professor at Point Park University. She has had more than 1,300 articles published and has co-authored two books. Originally from Pittsburgh, Kathleen has traveled to 49 states and several foreign countries. Kathleen and her husband have five children and a variety of pets. When she isn’t writing or teaching, she enjoys traveling, hiking and knitting. Info: kganster@verizon.net



Photos contributed.