

Green is the New Black: A Sustainably Stylish Getaway to the Berkshires, MA | Travel Guide

Although I've become pretty good at [traveling "greener" and more sustainably](#), I recently decided to step up my game a notch. I was challenged to plan an entire weekend in the Berkshires of western Massachusetts centered around the concept of eco-friendly and sustainable travel, including how I drove there, where I stayed, what I ate, and which activities I chose to experience.

The Berkshires has a deeply rooted dedication to supporting resident business, which can be seen in the cultural smorgasbord of local art and food offered throughout the region. It's a place where eco-conscious travelers can enjoy natural wonders, a thriving farm-to-table food scene, and support a region that has made an art form out of buying local.

Going full-on green in the Berkshires felt pretty satisfying and I challenge you to plan something similar. Here's how I spent my sustainably stylish weekend escape.

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GET THERE

In order to get to the Berkshires, I needed to drive there from New York City. What better way to reduce my impact than to take my 150-mile road trip in an eco-friendly car?

I drove around the Berkshires in the [2017 Ford Fusion Energi](#), a plug-in hybrid car with an estimated total driving range of 610 miles on a full tank of gas and battery charge—successfully curing any range anxiety I may have had prior. It comes with an EV button that allowed me to switch between three options: electric, gasoline or a combination of gas and electric.

Let's face it. Single-charge distance is a common concern amongst those thinking about going electric. I found the plug-in hybrid option to be a fine compromise for those who want to drive a car capable of using electricity while having the ability to drive farther. Plug-in hybrids are designed to travel extended distances with little or no assistance from the gasoline engine.

I was also surprised to learn that Ford cars are designed with a huge variety of sustainable materials including recycled tires, soybeans, castor oil, recycled plastic bottles, coconut, tomato skins and recycled denim. I can get down with that.



STAY HERE

There's a reason I always choose beautiful boutique hotels when I travel. The attention to detail given to even the smallest things makes a big difference in how valued one feels as a guest.

I chose to stay at [Hotel on North](#) because of its creative use of recycled and upcycled materials, and its patronage of sustainability in the Berkshires. The hotel also has charging stations for those who arrive in electric or hybrid cars.



EAT EVERYWHERE

One thing that really stood out to me about the Berkshires is their food. It just tasted different. Better. Fresher. That's because many restaurants in the area are farm-to-table, meaning what you eat is sourced from local farms, not some giant food factory 350 miles away.

I asked Josh Irwin, owner of [Cantina 229](#), what was up with the Berkshires being so intent on locally sourcing their food. His response was golden.

"If you're not farm-to-table, you're McDonald's."

Whoa. Should I start rethinking my food standards?

I can't deny the difference I experienced after eating at his restaurant where the menu changes daily based on whatever delicious ingredients the local farmers send his way that day. Each dish I tried was thoughtfully crafted and tasted distinctly different from the average restaurant meal I'm accustomed to scarfing down back home.

What makes his statement so relevant is the recent trend of fast food chains like McDonald's experiencing a decline in sales, as consumers are demanding higher quality food. Millennials are leading the way in opting for "fast casual" restaurants like Chipotle and Panera, which are perceived as healthier.

But as Josh pointed out, the average fast casual establishment might as well be on the same level as a fast food joint. Results of a study published in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* show that entrées at fast-casual restaurants are actually higher in calories than fast food entrées. This research challenges the perception that fast casual is better than fast food.

So there is truth in Josh's words. Unless you cook your own healthy meals or perhaps dine at restaurants that serve fresh, locally sourced food like Cantina 229, it's possible you aren't doing your body any favors.



EXPLORE HERE

There are plenty of activities you can enjoy in the Berkshires that fit in with the theme of green and sustainable travel. In addition to exploring culinary gems like Cantina 229 and [Mezze](#), I found other delightful ways to occupy my time as well.

First, I ventured off to the [Downtown Pittsfield Farmers Market](#). This local market provides a spot for farmers, food producers, and artisans to bring fresh, locally grown and produced food and products to the community.

Afterwards, I put on some boots and tackled the Monument Mountain Hiking Trail. When I reached its summit, I was able to take in the stellar landscapes of the Housatonic River Valley. It was an all-natural, eco-friendly adventure that allowed me to become “one” with nature for a few glorious (and sweaty) hours.



Need more ideas? On the [Berkshire Farm & Table Cheese Trail](#), you can tour organic farms and watch the cheese-making process. Beer enthusiasts should also check out [Barrington Brewery](#), the first brewery on the east coast to install a solar panel system that supplies solar-heated hot water for brewing. Art lovers can find locally owned art galleries all throughout the Berkshires. [Sohn Fine Art Gallery](#) is dedicated to promoting artworks by international and local artists. [Saint Francis Gallery](#) highlights both established and upcoming local artists, and profits help support humanitarian work in Kenya through a nonprofit foundation.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

For those of you out there who can appreciate a place that cares about the environment and sustainability, plan a visit to the Berkshires. Go all out as I did—drive there in an environmentally-friendly car like the Ford Fusion, select eco-friendly accommodations like Hotel on North, and treat your taste buds to organic, locally-grown food at, well, just about everywhere you go over there. Trust me—you'll feel and taste the difference when you choose to travel green. Thank me later when you do.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/renne-simpson/green-is-the-new-black-a_b_12787628.html?utm_hp_ref=travel-blogs