

Arts & Life SPONSORED Travel

Do You Know HoCo?

May 11, 2021 Caryn R. Sagal



There's no shortage of "hidden gems" to discover in Howard County. (Provided Photo)

This article was sponsored by Visit Howard County, the Tourism Council of Howard County.

Like most Baltimore City or County residents, you've probably shopped at [The Mall in Columbia](#) or rocked out at [Merriweather Post Pavilion](#). But have you ever taken the time to explore all that Howard County has to offer?

Howard County has great options for day trips or weekend getaways, since it's located half an hour from Baltimore. With COVID-19 capacity restrictions easing up and summer vacation around the corner, now is a great time to visit. Here are just five reasons why.

1. The Great Outdoors

After sheltering in place during the COVID-19 pandemic, it's especially beneficial for our mental and physical health to get out and experience nature. Howard County features breathtaking landscapes with scenic waterfalls, wildflowers and wildlife.



Enjoy the great outdoors on two wheels. (Provided Photo)

The vistas include [40 lakes](#) and ponds, natural open space areas, award-winning [parks](#), and two state-of-the-art nature centers all interlaced by more than 100 miles of pathways for walking, biking and jogging. What's more, thrill seekers will love the climbing and zipline course at [Terrapin Adventures!](#)



Try something new at Terrapin Adventures. (Provided Photo)

2. Family Fun

Howard County is the perfect place for outings with the kids or grandkids! Its [300-plus farms](#) invite you to create family memories, while picking fruit and veggies, petting animals, spinning alpaca fiber, enjoying hay or pony rides and partaking in other fun activities.



You might even make a new friend. (Provided Photo)

Located in Long Reach Village Center, [DoodleHATCH](#) is a one-of-a kind destination for kids of all ages and visitors seeking something new and different to do. A pretend store for the mythical creatures of fairy tales, ghost tales and other worlds, it is an interactive trip through fantasy realms. Enter the fairy village, visit the hobbit house and check into the “Dead and Breakfast.”

3. Food & Drink

Calling all foodies! Check out the many [brunch spots](#) throughout Howard County, nosh on cakes and pies in [Maple Lawn’s Decadent Dessert Bar](#) or venture to [Historic Savage Mill](#) for [Ma’s Kettle](#) for classic diner food.



Don’t forget to bring your appetite. (Provided Photo)

Dining companions with diverse taste preferences should visit [The Common Kitchen @ Clarksville Commons](#) – a food hall and marketplace serving international cuisines and universal favorites.

For elegant New American dining served in a beautiful colonial backdrop, head to [The Elkridge Furnace Inn and Garden House](#) in [Historic Elkridge](#) – the oldest settlement in Howard County.



And don't skip dessert at The Elkridge Furnace Inn. (Provided Photo)

With taverns, sushi bars, cafes, specialty gourmet shops and ice creameries, [Ellicott City](#) will please any palette! For breakfast, lunch or dinner, check out [The Trolley Stop](#) – named after the Trolley #14 car that stopped outside the dining room from 1889-1927.

Or head to [Manor Hill Tavern](#) for eclectic pub and tavern fare, brick oven pizza and farm-brewed beer from [Manor Hill Brewing](#). For additional craft beer options, follow the HowardOnTap [Brew Trail](#) of established brewpubs and up-and-coming farm breweries.

4. Shopping

Looking for the perfect gift or piece of art? You'll find it in Howard County! Regarded as "Maryland's finest antique center," [Historic Savage Mill](#) features over 100 select dealers of quality antiques and collectibles. Perfect for *schmying around*, [Historic Ellicott City](#)'s historic streets and architecture are home to more than 70 eclectic boutiques, shops and art galleries.



Historic Savage Mill features over 100 select dealers of quality antiques and collectibles. (Provided Photo)

Of course, [The Mall](#) is Maryland's premier shopping, dining and entertainment destination along the Baltimore/Washington Corridor. It sits alongside the [Merriweather District](#), a new mixed-used development with chic shopping venues, trendy restaurants, urban art, sleek residences and open grassy areas.

5. History

History buffs will be in all their glory in Howard County! Visit the Network to Freedom Underground Railroad sites or retrace the footsteps of blue and gray soldiers along [Maryland Civil War Trails](#).

Continue the journey in Historic Ellicott City's [Baltimore & Ohio Ellicott City Station Museum](#), [Museum of Howard County History](#), [Ellicott City Fire House Museum](#), [Benjamin Banneker Historic Park & Museum](#) and [Patapsco Female Institute](#). And complete the experience with [walking history tours](#) and [ghost tours](#) in both Ellicott City and Savage Mill.

Overall, there's no shortage of "hidden gems" to discover in Howard County. For more information and itinerary suggestions, go to visithowardcounty.com.



Caryn R. Sagal is a Baltimore-based public relations consultant and freelance writer.