



Find & Go Seek

Road trip to Pennsylvania

by Karen Duncan

Very little gets me up and out of the house at 5:30 a.m. This did: A day-long shopping event to the Renningers Antiques & Collectors Extravaganza.

Located in Berks County, Pennsylvania, Renningers has been in Kutztown since 1955. For nearly 20 years it was exclusively a farmer's market. But in 1974 a new structure was added to house many of the dealers, adding to the rows and rows of tents, making room to include 300 vendors and their wares to browse. This show has become a must-attend event for anyone in the business, whether buying or selling. And for patient shoppers looking for a treasure.

The amazingly organized Michele Bessey, owner of Perch Home in Maplewood, hosted the trip and greeted 30 of us with much needed coffee, a delicious breakfast box from Crane's Deli and a fabulous (now string all of these descriptives together to get the idea) kitschy vintage New Jersey dishtowel tote bag. Inside she tucked a *New York Times*, bottled water and wet wipes, and we all boarded a chartered luxury bus for the nearly two-hour drive. While we enjoyed our breakfasts Michele described what we'd find, how to bargain, and the schedule for loading our purchases onto the bus.

"If anyone is looking for

Lunch break for tired but happy shoppers (left to right) Robin Bernstein, Andrea Erickson, Melissa de la Fuente and Meg Botteon included delicious local Pennsylvania specialties.



Michele Bessey with her assistant Sandra Kosik (far left) jumping on some great finds.

something particular let me know," she advised, offering her cell phone for instant communication. This proved useful for those who wanted her assessment on a particular item. She passed out coffee table books from her personal collection authored by veteran antiques authors and true flea market aficionados, with detailed coverage of 19th to 20th century antiques and unique flea market finds – all inspiration to us novices. The ride passed quickly.

We arrived just as the gates opened to begin the hunt. China, glassware, jewelry, linens, and architectural salvage poured from vendors' booths. I had a long wish list and was successful in finding a lovely cut-glass bedside tray, a crystal spoon holder, some pretty antique perfume bottles to add to my collection, and my favorite find: a wooden urn, intricately carved, and only \$20 after a round of bargaining with the vendor.

We'd bump into each other oohing and aahing at each other's choices – lamps, chairs, and stained glass windows from an English country church. There was a fresh farmer's market

where we loaded up on summer produce and an Amish bakery for handmade dark pretzels. I eyed rows of annual flowers and was thrilled when the shop girl shoved a large box at me, telling me to "fill it," for \$5! The underbelly of the bus was stuffed with our new-found treasures.

Exhausted but exhilarated our ride home was a sweet one, laden with purchases, yummy cookies and drinks, courtesy of Michele.

If you love the hunt and scouring rummage sales, flea markets and estate sales for the best deals, you'll love this kind of day. Perch Home – a retail store bringing unique, timeless appeal to decorating, incorporating carefully collected vintage fabrics, elegant accessories, one-of-a-kind accents and detailed service into everything they touch – will host their next trip on Friday, September 28th. Stop by the shop at 9 Highland Place in Maplewood Village for more details. 📍

Gathering at Perch home for the trip. Top: Tote bags for each participant.



The bus loaded with shoppers treasures.

