

# Martha and Belinda's Excellent Adventure: Part 8

Staunton, VA to Harrisburg, PA

Belinda Darcy

This morning Martha greeted me wearing one of the new red flannel shirts we bought in Kansas for Vermont. Since we are officially entering East Coast territory today, she felt it was appropriate. I decided to join her, and we both walked out to the car grinning at each other, feeling VERY Vermont in our new duds. We were encouraged by a call from her sister last night, telling us to get our butts to Burlington A.S.A.P., because she had found a fantastic apartment for us.

We got lost looking for gas, but finally found ourselves tooling up the famous "Skyline Drive" through the Blue Ridge Mountains., a mediocre breakfast from Ho-Jo's settling in our stomachs. The views were amazing. Blue mountains in every direction, and you could see forever. I started singing Country Roads and Martha joined in, yelling, "West Virginia, Mountain Mama-ah...take me home...Country Roads!". Unfortunately, we were not the only ones interested in seeing nature's magnificence that day. When we were not crawling along behind Bud and Shirley's RV, we were dodging motorcyclists travelling as a group, weaving in and around us on the tiny two-lane

road. At about the 12th lookout point, Martha carefully suggested that perhaps, by now, we had enough photos of the panoramic vistas. We were also feeling quite nauseous from the twisting, winding road and were falling way behind schedule. We took the first exit and hit the highway.

We zipped through West Virginia, (passing many a gun shop I might add), and made it to Hershey, PA in time for the last tour of the day. I loved the street lamps disguised as Hershey Kisses along Chocolate Blvd. and the signs saying, "Welcome to Hershey, Pennsylvania! The Sweetest Place on Earth!" But the factory tour was a major letdown. Martha had been telling me all day about how the little carriages crank you along past gigantic vats of thick, smooth milk chocolate, and all the samples the give you.

Well. It seems that management had made some changes. No more real life demos with all those expensive workers in hairnets. Not even a live human as a host. Now everything is done on giant video screens, with a game show host's voice-over droning on about how the consistency of the mix is measured, etc. , as if THAT was why people took this

tour. You still get to ride in a cute little brown plastic capsule (almost everything here was brown) , and they've managed to find a way to pump the smell of freshly made chocolate throughout the ride, but other than that it's a real yawn. The sample (note the singular) that you get at the end is a mere mouthful, (Bar None indeed). It's just enough to get you in the mood, before you exit into - surprise, surprise, - the Hershey supermarket! Racks and racks of really ugly T-shirts, polyester children's sweat pants, and badly fitting baseball caps (Martha's pet peeve: "Look at that! The front is all pouchy. Christ, I look like an old geezer at a ball game."). The designs were so uninspiring and bland. I have never seen a business in such dire need of F.D.A. (Fag Design Assistance). We wanted to buy things. We'd even set aside money in our travel budget specifically for this excursion. It was really disappointing, considering all the possibilities they have, and the captive audience. I was hoping for a beach towel, or a lunch box, or maybe a pillowcase covered in Hershey Kisses. I think we ended up buying an eraser and some pencils for a nephew, but that was it. Did I mention we were disappointed? ▼

To be continued.

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