

# Martha and Belinda's Excellent Adventure: Part 9

Harrisburg, Pa to Waterbury, CT

We head south to Lancaster County to ogle the Amish. After scanning the AAA Tour-guide Book, I insist we stop for breakfast at a quaint sounding restaurant, "The Bird in Hand." The food is overrated and overpriced, as predicted by Martha, and she is convinced that the old man in Amish beard and his bored daughter in drab dress at the counter are paid by the restaurant management to sit there for pathetic Amish seekers. like us. Martha rewrites the restaurant's ad in the AAA guidebook: "See the Amish bus girl clearing tables! Sit next to a group of local Amish women and listen in on their day-to-day conversation! Crafts and homemade pies made from authentic Amish recipes!..."

Ignoring her cynicism, I announce that I absolutely must have an Amish hat, so we drive to a rather vile gift shop, where I find a "genuine replica" of the real thing. I am thrilled. We spend a good hour cruising outlet stores. Martha declares that she must have a T-shirt and a pair of Nike socks, which she promptly purchases, muttering that she feels sorry for the poor folk from Lancaster if they're ever forced by circumstances to pay full price.

Then, anxious as ever about time, (and no doubt, the spending spree we just indulged in) she decides to take the wheel

and "get us back on schedule", nut an hour down the road, spies a sign for a J. Crew outlet. While I doze on blissfully, she carefully guides the car into the mall parking lot, and wakes me with a sheepish grin. We emerge 20 minutes later, both agreeing that, "it pretty much sucks", with its high prices and small selection. It's a lot harder to justify the prices of those faded T-shirts when they're hanging on a rack inside a cramped store, instead of on a couple of beefy, faux farmer-type models in front of a rusty old Ford.

We are finally back on the road to Waterbury at about 12 noon. We make up for lost time by playing a little Speeding Ticket Roulette, and don't stop for lunch until around 4:30. Realizing that this will be our last roadside picnic lunch, we decide to record the experience on film. Martha is fascinated by a guy (who bears a striking resemblance to Rob Lowe) who is hard at work inspecting trucks. His job appears to consist of staring at the underbellies of 18-wheelers before waving them on their way.

We reach Waterbury, Ct at about 7 pm. The hotel is huge, and, thanks to my last stint as a travel agent, we get to stay in a plush Sheraton for a fraction of the normal cost. The catch is, I am supposed to endure a "Site Inspection" of the prop-

erty with a manager. So far this trip I have managed to escape the ordeal. No one has ever even mentioned it. I would be willing to bet big money that this idea was dreamed up by someone at corporate headquarters, and that when the local managers heard about it, they rolled their eyes and decided to go with the old "don't ask, don't tell" policy. This hotel appears to be no different, and we breathe a sigh of relief as the receptionist hands us the room key. We snag the nearest brass luggage cart, load up and head up to the third floor. Martha cannot resist the temptation to ride on it, and I push her for the first 10 feet, before jumping aboard myself. Our combined weight results in greater acceleration, and we careen down the hallway, leaping off at the last minute and grabbing it just before the entire thing hits the wall.

Martha finds the pool and lures me down to it, and we take turns practicing the old One-Arm-Rescue carry. Both of fail miserably. I swallow lots of chlorine. Martha hops in the jacuzzi and is joined almost immediately by a portly man from the Waterbury area, who tells her much more than she'll ever need to know regarding the Sheraton and its various occupancy levels. Back in the room, we watch a 2 hour PBS special on the Kennedys and eat "Nachos Grande" from room service ▼ *to be continued*

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