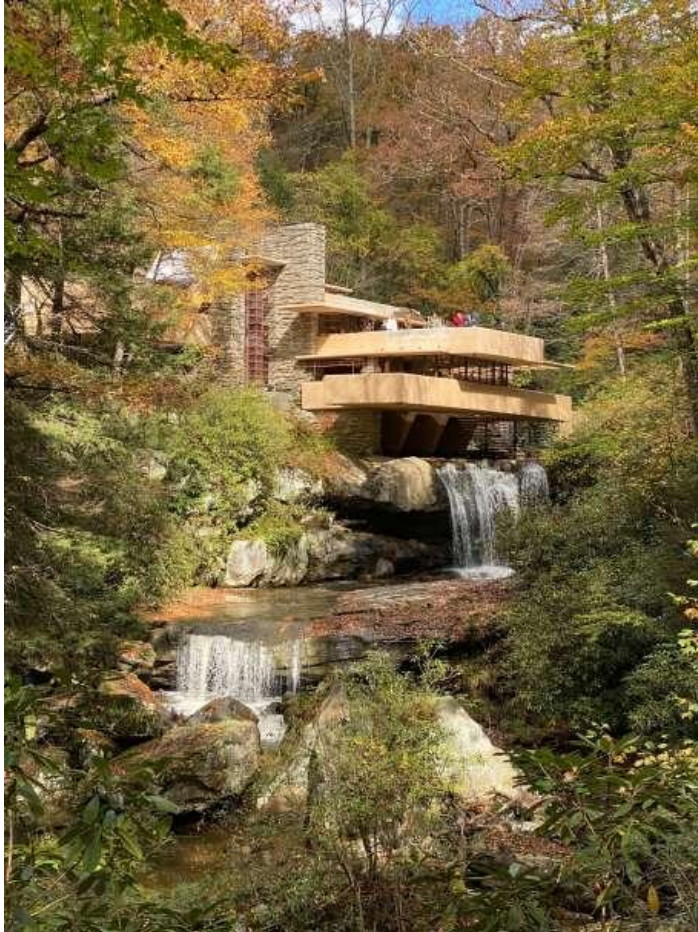




Fallingwater in Mill Run, Pennsylvania, is one of Frank Lloyd Wright's structures included in a UNESCO World Heritage designation. *Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier, used with permission of Western Pennsylvania Conservancy*

Falling in love with Frank Lloyd Wright Architecture

Posted July 16, 2026 3:06 pm

By Katherine Rodeghier

Road trip in southwest Pennsylvania a feast for the eyes

Fall foliage and Frank Lloyd Wright architecture, two of my favorite forms of eye candy, combined during previous autumn road trip to southwest Pennsylvania.

Finding Wright-designed buildings was easy. [The Laurel Highlands](#) southeast of Pittsburgh has four Wright homes open for tours, including Fallingwater, arguably his masterpiece, and Duncan House, built in Lisle, and moved here piece-by-piece. Two Wright houses can be booked for overnight stays as well as two more designed by his apprentice.

Seeing autumn hues brightening these rolling hills along the Allegheny Mountains was just a matter of good timing. In mid-October, forests ablaze in peak fall colors flanked the winding back roads linking the Wright homes to I-76, the Pennsylvania Turnpike.



Liquor bottles on a table in Fallingwater's open-plan living room were donated by the home's former owner along with most of the furniture. *Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier, used with permission of Western Pennsylvania Conservancy*

Fallingwater

The liquor bottles surprised me. Set on a table in the living room as if ready for guests — or evidence of a raucous night before — they reminded me [Fallingwater](#) once was a family home. The building, named the “best all-time work of American architecture” by the American Institute of Architects, started out as a rich man's weekend getaway.

Edgar Kaufmann Sr., owner of the trend-setting Kaufmann Department Store in Pittsburgh, commissioned Wright to design a home on his former summer camp 72 miles southeast of the city.

Wright would design more than 1,000 structures during his seven-decade career. This 1935 work, created when he was 68, stood out for its cantilevered construction. Terraces extend from the main house, an effect Wright likened to tree branches. Others see them as rock ledges. To me, they resembled arms outstretched in amazement at the fall finery in the surrounding forest.

Waterfalls tumble below, a nod to Wright's organic architecture incorporating the elements of nature. Kaufmann wanted his house built a distance away so he could see the falls, but Wright's aesthetics overruled his client's wishes. Fallingwater, the name Wright gave the house, extends over the main cascade. From an easy chair in the living room, Kaufmann could hear, but not see, the tumbling waters.

Along with reinforced concrete and steel, builders used Pottsville sandstone from a disused quarry nearby, reopened for this project. The result was no simple summer cottage. The four-bedroom main house totals 9,300 square feet, about 4,400 of it terraces. A four-bedroom guest house measures 4,990 square feet; terraces take up 1,950. The original price was estimated at \$35,000. The final cost reached about \$148,000 plus Wright's \$11,300 architect's fees, a fortune during the Depression. Millions were spent on renovations in the 1990s and early 2000s to correct leaks and sagging terraces.

My favorite room, the living room, has swaths of plate-glass windows blurring the line between indoors and out, a hallmark of organic architecture. Its open plan flows between the dining area and ample seating on long sofas. A Moroccan rug splays across a waxed stone floor. Wright told builders to look for stones with a ripple pattern to echo the eddies around the waterfall rushing just below.

Most of Fallingwater's furniture, about half built in, was designed by Wright. The Kaufmanns brought in art from their collection, including works by Pablo Picasso and Diego Rivera. On my tour, I passed several pieces of sculpture and spotted a Tiffany lamp in Mrs. Kaufmann's bedroom.

About 600 visitors a day tour the house, part of a UNESCO World Heritage designation that includes Unity Temple in Oak Park and the Frederick C. Robie House in Chicago.

The Kaufmann's only child, Edgar Kaufmann Jr., inherited Fallingwater. In 1963, he donated it to the nonprofit Western Pennsylvania Conservancy along with most of its furnishings — including those liquor bottles in the living room.



Hexagons, such as those above the terrace, can be found throughout Kentuck Knob, designed in 1953 by Frank Lloyd Wright in Pennsylvania's Laurel Highlands. *Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier*

Kentuck Knob

Navigating the seven miles from Fallingwater to Wright's [Kentuck Knob](#) can be a dizzying experience for motorists, like me, unused to mountain back roads. Thankfully, cards handed out at Fallingwater's visitor center gave turn-by-turn directions.

The house Wright designed in 1953 sits just below the crest of a hill, a knob, on land an 18th-century settler called "Little Kentuck." Ice cream magnates I.N. and Bernadine Hagan purchased the land and became friendly with their neighbors, the Kaufmanns, who advised them how to approach Wright to design their home. Kaufmann suggested they give the notoriously overbudget Wright a sum of about half of what they were willing to spend. The Hagans told Wright they wanted a three-bedroom home and had a budget of \$60,000. Final cost? \$96,000.

The one-story house — what we might call a ranch house today — measures about 2,300 square feet. Designed in Wright's Usonian style, it shares some characteristics with Fallingwater: Cantilevered eaves, built-in furniture and broad expanses of glass bringing the outdoors in. Hexagonal motifs can be seen throughout, most strikingly in cutouts in the overhang above the terrace.

Like Fallingwater, local sandstone covers the exterior along with tidewater cypress wood. The copper roof has weathered to a green patina. Until my guide pointed it out, I almost missed a small red tile at the entrance that's inscribed with Wright's initials. Kentuck Knob is one of the few works Wright signed in this way.

Inside, I spotted throwbacks to the 1960s. A tiny TV that looks like something from the space-age cartoon sitcom "The Jetsons" sits on a stainless-steel counter in the cramped kitchen. In the living room, a futuristic desk chair would not be out of place on the set of "Star Trek."

Cantilevered shelves extend over a 28-foot-long sofa facing a wall of windows. Cushions can be removed to access storage. A hallway to the bedroom wing is so narrow — 21 inches wide — most people must pass through sideways. When Bernadine Hagan complained, Wright scoffed that it was as wide as the passageway in the sleeper car of a train.

With 14 other projects underway, including the Guggenheim Museum in New York City, Wright visited the site for the house just once. He never saw the finished house before his death in 1959 at 91. British Lord Peter Palumbo, an architecture buff who owned Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House in Plano, purchased Kentuck Knob in 1986. He renovated it after a fire, expanded the grounds and in 1996 opened the house for public tours.

Polymath Park

When I think of reassembling a house beam by beam, Tinkertoys and Lego building sets come to mind. But the feat wasn't child's play when the Donald C. Duncan House was disassembled in Lisle in 2004, to save it from demolition, then moved to Pennsylvania and put back together in 2007 at [Polymath Park](#).



Built in Lisle, Duncan House was dismantled and reassembled at Polymath Park in Acme, Penn. Its Usonian design is the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. Guests booking overnight stays have partial use of the kitchen. *Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier*

The 130-acre park, 23 miles from Fallingwater, comprises four houses, two designed by Wright, two by an apprentice. Each can be rented for overnight stays — no TV or Wi-Fi — and are open for guided tours focusing on Wright's style of Usonian architecture. Proceeds go toward maintenance and architectural education. TreeTops fine-dining restaurant, originally the home of Polymath's owner, serves lunch and dinner in the dining room, on the patio and in treehouse-style dining pods.

I booked a morning tour of the two Wright houses. Exiting the turnpike, the drive north took me deep into a forest splashed with fall colors. The road narrowed, rose, twisted and turned. Just when I thought I was lost, I spotted the sign for the park entrance.

The house Wright designed for Donald and Elizabeth Duncan is one of his prefabricated structures, most built in the 1950s as affordable housing. The modest one-story, L-shaped structure with carport has three bedrooms, two baths.

Inside, I felt I was stepping back into the 1950s. "It bypasses Donna Reed and lands somewhere around the Brady Bunch," said Robert Hoffer, Polymath spokesman and my guide. The living room's vinyl floor gleams in Wright's signature red. In the kitchen, pots and pans in primary colors dangle from a rack over an island topped with a bright red counter.



Frank Lloyd Wright designed the Lindholm Residence, also called Mäntylä, for a family in Cloquet, Minn. It was moved to Polymath Park in Acme, Penn., where it can be booked for overnight stays. *Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier*

The second Wright home at Polymath, a Grand Usonian, was designed by Wright in 1952 for the Lindholm family in Cloquet, Minnesota. It took the family three years to find builders up to the task before hiring a Finnish crew along with their interpreters. The three-bedroom, two-bath R.W. Lindholm Residence, also called Mäntylä ("of the pines" in Finnish), was completed in 1957. After its in-floor radiant heating failed and retail development encroached on its once-secluded site, it lay vacant for two years before being dismantled and moved to Polymath. It opened to visitors in 2019.

Its dramatic cantilevered roof caught my eye as I approached. Inside, large glass walls, ribbon windows and built-in furnishings stood out in Wright's signature style.

Polymath Park continues its preservation of Usonian design with a fifth house. BirdWing, designed by Wright's son, Frank Lloyd Wright Jr., was built in Minnetonka, Minnesota. It now sits in storage containers at Polymath awaiting reassembly, said Hoffer. "We're the wayward home for homeless houses."

• • •

If you go

GO Laurel Highlands tourism: golaurelhighlands.com/

Fallingwater: fallingwater.org/

Kentuck Knob: kentuckknob.com/

Polymath Park: franklloydwrightovernight.net/

<https://www.dailyherald.com/20260716/travel/falling-in-love-with-frank-lloyd-wright-architecture/>