



LATE-SUMMER JAZZ

Jazz greats Rick Chamberlain, Phil Woods and the late Ed Joubert helped found the annual **Delaware Water Gap Celebration of the Arts**, a weekend event that has become world-famous for its mixture of music and art amid the bucolic setting of Delaware Water Gap.

September 9 - 11, the festival celebrates its 28th year with live music on an outdoor stage across from the Deer Head Inn from noon to 9 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday (the inn will have live music Friday through Sunday nights). Other festival activities will take place at the town's Dutot Museum, as well as at the lovely Presbyterian Church of the Mountain.

Tickets and concert information (www.cotajazz.org, 570.424.2210).



Photo credit: Ron Berrishal

The Deer Head Inn, a rambling, white building with peeling paint and a crooked porch floor, is what everyone talks about here.

**“I have a dream,
that musicians will be
known in the
Delaware Water Gap,
like the trees are known.
Something that is forever.”**

**Phil Woods, co-founder,
Delaware Water Gap Celebration of the Arts**

Main Street runs for just a few short blocks, and the entire “business district” can be walked from end-to-end in less than 10 minutes, five if it’s raining. For urban dwellers, it seems really tiny, big enough for an overnight, but maybe too small to spend the weekend. For others, though, the town of Delaware Water Gap (named after the scenic geological formation along the Delaware River) is so welcoming, so comfortable, that visitors immediately feel at home, and some just settle here for good.

I start my Water Gap Weekend with a cup of coffee and a slice of warm, homemade apple pie at the Village Farmer and Bakery. When I ask owner Susan Cooper about the hours she stays open, she says “Eight to eight, every day except Christmas – and we’ve been doing it for 30 years.” Then she hands me a free doughnut and tells me not to miss the 8 p.m. show at the Deer Head.

At the Water Gap Gallery, Dorothy Hauser is nice enough to look up some phone numbers for local musicians I want to meet. Her shop on Main Street faces the Deer Head Inn, and cool jazz emanates from gallery speakers.

And at the Trails End Café, owner Betsy Kosmerl sticks her head out the kitchen door and persuades me to sit down for some iced herbal tea. All around me jazz aficionados discuss last night’s incredible three-hour set by the Manuel Valera Quartet at the Deer Head.

The Deer Head Inn, a rambling, white building with peeling paint and a crooked porch floor, is what

everyone talks about here. It was built as a hotel in the 1850s, and hasn’t changed much since. They’re still renting rooms upstairs, but now it’s to the musicians who come to play the popular weekend-only gigs. It’s been a family-owned jazz club since 1953, and the square bar with the glass brick, the old ceiling mural,

the plain wood tables and the cozy red glow of the room has attracted local jazz greats like Al Cohn, Phil Woods, Keith Jarrett and John Coates.

I arrive at the Deer Head at 7 and enjoy that quiet hour before the crowd fills the club and the music begins. I talk with some of the musicians from the Bill Goodwin Quintet who are filtering in, including Bill himself, a self-taught drummer who has played for, and produced, so many great jazz recordings. Pianist Jessie Green settles his pretty wife and infant daughter at a front table as I offer congratulations to Kelly and Reese, two customers who have just become engaged outside, at twilight. Turns out they met at the Deer Head 20 years ago.

After a delicious dinner (prepared by Dona Solliday, who owns the club with her husband, Chris) and two hours of soulful jazz, I take my drink to the porch and ruminate in a rocking chair overlooking Main Street. A wispy river fog creeps along the empty sidewalk. The last few notes of the band drift out from the club and into the late evening sky, and even the small, old houses across the street seem to sway to the sweet sounds of Adam Niewood’s sax.

IF YOU GO:

Delaware Water Gap is off I-80, at exit 310.

Accommodations nearby include:

Water Gap Country Club, Mountain Road (\$80-\$95, www.watergapcountryclub.com, 570.476.0300)

Shepard House B&B, 108 Shepard Ave. (\$109-\$120, 570.424.9779).

Stroudsmoor Country Inn, Stroudsmoor Road, Stroudsburg (\$114-\$295, www.stroudsmoor.com, 800.955.8663)

Area information: Pocono Mountains Vacation Bureau (www.800poconos.com, 800.POCANOS).

On March 17, 2005, the Delaware Water Gap was designated a National Geographic Discover Appalachia site.

