

Outside Oxford: A day in the Village of Yellow Springs



BY EMILY WILLIAMS | FEB. 6, 2017 | TRAVEL

Many of us call Oxford home, whether it's where we've always lived, where we've settled down or the place we miss during the weeks of winter break or months of summer. While most Miami students can wax poetic about the small-town charms of Oxford, we all have those days when the confines of the Mile Square seem more constricting than comforting — when it's time to get outside Oxford, even if it's just for the afternoon. Every month, in Outside Oxford, we'll give you recommendations on where to go on those days when you need a change of scenery.

An unabashedly liberal haven nestled in middle of rural Ohio, the village of Yellow Springs advertises itself as “everyone’s favorite place.” Its permanent residents range from professors of Antioch College to stand-up comedian Dave Chappelle. Restaurants and stores are painted in orange, blue and purple. Even the trash cans that line the street are whimsical works of mosaic art. A musky scent of incense hangs in nearly every store, and it’s not uncommon to see “No DAPL” or “Bernie Forever” posters taped to shop windows. Although a love for Senator Sanders or organic co-ops is in no way a requirement to enjoy the village’s charms, the town is sure to bring out any latent hippie tendencies.

After the hour and 15-minute drive from Oxford, start your day in Yellow Springs with a cup of

coffee at The Spirited Goat, a coffee and espresso bar decorated in tie-dye hues and frequent host to open mic nights. While you sip your drink, take a seat on the mismatched cushions lining the colorfully painted benches and page through the newest issue of The Yellow Springs News. The local publication, which has been named Best Newspaper in its class size for the past six years, has been the village's source of news since 1880. Don't forget to turn to Page 4 where you can find "The Yellow Springs Almanack," complete with the exact times of sunrise and sunset, updates on the placement of the moon and, of course, a nature-themed poem.

Take some time to browse through the village's best shops. There is no shortage of unique jewelry, accessory or clothing stores, and several locations sell items made by local artisans. One shop, the House of Ravenwood, offers their shoppers psychic tarot card readings.

If you're in need of some home decor, stop by Atomic Fox, a mid-century modern antique store. The shop is named after the "Atomic Age," the period in history during which the first nuclear bomb was detonated — and when many of the shop's minimalist furnishings were made — and the shop owner's name, Terry Fox.

Audiophiles will find their niche at Toxic Records, a small record store crammed with boxes of new and used vinyl. The letters "WYSO" are scrawled across many of the album sleeves, marking which records were formerly part of the local National Public Radio station's collection.

Take some time to browse the shelves at Dark Star Books, an independent bookstore with select new books and thousands of used. Don't forget to say hello to Mister Eko, the shop's resident feline. As a special memento, you can even buy a mug printed with a photo of Mister Eko himself, lounging on his favorite green armchair.

For lunch — or on weekends, brunch — there is no match for The Winds Cafe. A self-described "sincere, funky little place," the Winds serves European-inspired food with an American twist using as many local ingredients as possible. And their commitment to locally-sourced food isn't just a marketing ploy; their seasonal menus will often include names in the descriptions of dishes so that diners know their welsh rarebit omelet was made with eggs raised by local farmer Dale Filbrun.

Just a short walk down the street is Little Art Theater, a landmark of the village and known to many locals as "the little theater that could." First built in 1929, the theater has persisted through many changes in ownership, but, since the theater's successful 2012 campaign to fully restore and renovate the theater, it has continued to draw in visitors and keep its faithful base of film-goers.

Finish the day with a hike through the Glen Helen Nature Preserve to the village's namesake — springs that are, surprisingly, orange and not yellow, which comes from the iron in the water. Dip your toes into the water or just listen to the springs trip over the rocks and wonder when the next time will be when you can come back to everyone's favorite place.