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## SHOPPING SHARON

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For a last-minute shopping getaway, little Sharon, Pennsylvania, is worth exploring

ADVERTISE

*By Mary Mihaly*

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ABOUT US

There's luxury, and then there's luxury.

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WCLV GUIDE

We had expected elegance at the Buhl Mansion, but this was a touch we'd never seen: As we ate our lavish breakfast in the cheery sunroom, we noticed someone working across the room and did a double take. A lady was using a rake to comb the fringe of the rug. When she finished, every piece of fringe was perfectly aligned.

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My sister Marge and I decided there would be no fringe-combing in our future, but we shouldn't have been surprised at such attention to detail – at least, not in this place. The Buhl Mansion, built by steel tycoon Frank H. Buhl and rescued from ruin by James Winner (inventor of the Club steering wheel lock), is one of the most opulent homes in these parts. A member of the Distinguished Inns of North America, the mansion is on the National Register of Historic Places and, if you want to treat yourself to a holiday shopping getaway, it's the place to splurge.

EVENTS

LINKS

HOME

You'll pass hand-painted murals and other valuable art on the way to your room. While you settle in beside your own fireplace, someone will bring champagne and a fruit and cheese tray. There's a full-service spa on the lower level, so you can schedule a facial or pedicure before you shop. The opulence doesn't come cheap; in season, rooms run \$350 to \$850 per night, depending on the package.

Be there in time to enjoy your surroundings before dinner; you don't want to rush through your champagne. To simplify our evening, we had dinner at Tara – A Country Inn, the Buhl Mansion's sister property. A car service shuttled us to the inn, which also is a class operation – in fact, the staff was voted 2007 Innkeepers of the Year by Pennsylvania's state tourism association. (Yes, the *Gone With the Wind* theme is corny, but not excessive, and our prime rib was scrumptious.)

In the morning, we shopped. Our first two stops were quick: The Winner department store, owned – you guessed it – by the Winners, bills itself as the world's largest off-price fashion store. In northeast Ohio, it's best known as the destination for affordable prom and bridal dresses. What we didn't know was that the store sells swimwear and resortwear year round – handy information for those taking winter vacations or swim classes.

Our other fast stop was Reyers, the world's largest shoe store. We're not sure if it's really the biggest worldwide, but it is big. It's been mentioned in national media (and on the Letterman show), and it's a great option for hard-to-fit feet.


By afternoon, we were ready for our main shopping spot – the Grove City outlet mall. If you've been there, and chances are you have, you probably went back a second time, or plan to. It's one of the better outlet malls, especially in its diversity. I found most everything on my shopping list: A soup pot for a nephew. A jacket for myself at White House/Black Market. Great prices on Coach bags. A comfy pair of knocking-around shoes at the new Rockport store. A marked-down watch at Fossil.

The Grove City outlets are easily a day's shopping. But do leave in time for one more memorable stop: Slovak Folk Crafts, just down the road from the outlet mall. Part shop and part museum, it sells handcrafted jewelry, pottery, dishware, stationery and beautiful fabric pieces, along with the more predictable eggs and wood carvings. The



Photograph Courtesy of Buhl Mansion

*On the fringes of real life: The Buhl Mansion offers a degree of luxury that warrants a little splurge on your surroundings.*



centerpiece of the place is a 17-foot-wide animated carving of a typical Slovak village, and profits are donated to cultural and educational projects in Slovakia.

One of the best parts of this nearby getaway: We barely had an hour's drive before we were home. That left plenty of time to check out the antique shops we'd passed along the way.

For more information, go to [www.mercercountypa.org](http://www.mercercountypa.org).

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