

# Guide to the John James Audubon Center

By Marla Cimini



Birdwatchers and nature lovers adore the [John James Audubon Center at Mill Grove](#), a sprawling, 200-acre oasis that was established to protect birds and their habitat. Just over 20 miles outside of [Philadelphia](#), the site also houses the first American home of renowned artist and naturalist John James Audubon. Today, the center is known across the world for its pioneering studies of North American avian species. Adults and children can come here to learn about all types of birds and what the organization is doing locally (as well as nationally) to save them.

In addition to the new visitor's center and several exhibits, guests can stroll along several beautiful surrounding nature trails, which attract many different species of birds and are open daily from morning until dusk.

## What to See and Do

Catering to both adults and kids, you can easily spend a few hours here—especially if you plan to visit the historic home, explore the interactive exhibits at the visitor's center, and take a walk along one or more of the surrounding nature trails. Several highlights include:

## **The Historic House**

The John James Audubon Center at Mill Grove features the Historic House, where Audubon lived in the early 1800s. While he lived here, Audubon discovered the beauty of birds in the northeastern part of the country, and developed the revolutionary system of "banding" birds in an effort to study and protect them.

After a two-year renovation, the center started welcoming guests to Audubon's home again in 2017. During its restoration, the house saw a number of refurbishments, including a new bathroom and rebuilt chimneys. Several new and updated exhibits were also added, providing a more in-depth experience for visitors.

## **Wow Birds! Gallery**

Visitors to this exhibit can experience several different activities. You can walk through a "sound forest" and listen to birds chirping, tweeting, and singing in an array of diverse habitats. Or, get "banded" as a bird and peek inside birds' nests. You can also check out the fascinating migrations of several species and, using a magnifying glass, see the details of the birds' feathers.

## **Drawn from Nature Gallery**

This exhibit showcases a number of interesting books, artifacts, and elements from Audubon's life and career—including an authentic copper plate he used for printmaking. Visitors are also invited to watch a brief movie about Audubon and learn how he painted all the birds of North America.

## **Nature trails**

Nature lovers will enjoy strolling along 5 miles of marked trails at this 200-acre destination. The meandering pathways run along the picturesque Perkiomen Creek, offering plenty of opportunities to spot birds as well as other wildlife. More than 175 bird species have been identified here over the years, so visitors are invited to bring their own binoculars and enjoy the natural surroundings. Most trails are dirt and not accessible, but the estate's main trail (the "Audubon Loop") is paved and encircles the park.

Maps of the trails are available at the front desk at the visitor's center (or you can [download via the website](#)).

## **Fledgling Trail**

An outdoor area for kids of all ages, the Fledgling Trail features a "sensory garden" and an abundance of lovely flowers and plants. Children have the opportunity to "build" an over-sized nest; take a turn on the zip line; or play on the "Discovery Tree," where they can slide and learn how birds find food.

## The “Resident Birds” Area

The “Resident Birds” area houses a number of birds that have suffered an injury (such as a broken wing) that prevents them from living safely in the wild. Considered “non-releasable” wild birds, these creatures are well-cared for and often used to educate adults and children about bird conservation and safety. They are sometimes brought to schools and businesses for a demonstration. Currently, several of the resident birds include a blue jay, a hawk, a hen, and several species of owls.



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## Hours and Admission

If you wish to visit the Historic House and the visitor's center, you can visit every Sunday through Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with the exception of major holidays). Tours of the Historic House are offered daily at 1 p.m., and are included in the admission ticket.

The Mill Grove trails (and the grounds surrounding the center) are open all year, from dawn to dusk. From March through October, the center offers free Saturday morning walks; advance registration is not required.

The center hosts plenty of events and activities throughout the year, so be sure to check out the website before visiting.

### **Admission prices are:**

- Adults: \$14
- Children: \$10
- Seniors (over 65): \$12
- Military and children under 5 years old are free

Annual passes are also available if you wish to visit frequently.

Please note that dogs are not allowed on the property, except for the paved outdoor pathway (the Audubon Loop).

### **How to Get There**

Located about 25 miles north of Philadelphia, the easiest way to reach the Audubon Center is by car. There is no direct transportation to the center, but depending on timing, you can potentially travel via [Philly's public transit system](#). To do so, take the SEPTA train from Philadelphia's Center City district to the King of Prussia train station; from there, you can call a taxi or ride-hailing service like Lyft or Uber to get to the center.