When the du Pont family emigrated to America in 1800, they brought with them a fierce entrepreneurial spirit and a passion for horticulture. Their botanical influence can be felt throughout the Brandywine Valley, but at Hagley Museum and Library and Nemours Mansion and Estate, you can truly experience how the family lived, loved, and gardened. Start the day at Hagley, where the du Pont story begins, then travel to nearby Nemours to be dazzled by the largest formal French gardens in North America.

Stop No. 1

Hagley Museum and Library
200 Hagley Creek Road
Wilmington, Delaware 19807
Plan your visit and confirm hours of operation at www.hagley.org

→ Arrive at 10am when Hagley Museum opens to allow yourself two hours to explore and discover what lies nestled among the historic 235 acres located along the majestic Brandywine River. This was the original home of the du Pont family in America built by E.I. du Pont (1771-1834) in 1802 and site of the original powder mills that started the DuPont Company we know today. Hagley Museum and Library is now a public garden like no other in the region.

→ On arrival at our Visitor Center, please take the shuttle to the upper property. There you will find the restored formal French kitchen garden and orchard which boast historic and heirloom plant varieties that E.I. du Pont and his family would have grown from 1802-1890. It is a garden of formality mixed with experimentation. Rows of historic vegetable, annual, perennial, herb and fruit varieties all mingle together in one of the country’s first and most significant potager type gardens. This garden has had a history of plant exchange, collection and distribution since the early 1800s. du Pont correspondence, traded and purchased plants from some of America’s most renowned historical Botany figures including Thomas Jefferson, Bernard McMahon, and John Bartram and is credited with the introduction of the Oriental Poppy, Papaver orientale, to America.

→ While on the upper part of the property, be sure to see the Co-National Champion Maclura pomifera just above the Historic Barn. This Osage Orange is believed to have been here 100 years before E.I. du Pont arrived and is a sight to behold.
Return on the shuttle to the lower property and walk the site of the original powder mills that started the DuPont Company. Here you will find some of Delaware’s largest and most beautiful trees, including several state champions, planted along the amazing Brandywine River. Stroll up the hill from the Millwright Shop and take in the Historic Workers Garden, as it would have been planted by the immigrant families who worked in the booming powder mills years ago, on your way to the Belin House Café for lunch before heading off to Nemours Mansion and Garden (about a 7-minute drive).

Stop No. 2

Nemours Mansion and Garden
850 Alapocas Road
Wilmington, Delaware 19803
Please visit www.nemoursmansion.org to confirm hours and plan your visit.

Owned and developed by our founder, Alfred I. du Pont (1864-1935), Nemours Estate comprises an exquisite 77-room mansion, the largest formal French gardens in North America, a Chauffeur’s Garage housing a collection of vintage automobiles used on the Estate, and nearly 200 acres of scenic woodlands, meadows and lawns. Guests can either tour the gardens and grounds by foot or take a narrated tour by bus around the property.

Begin your day at our grand mansion, where tours are self-guided, and highly knowledgeable interpreters are stationed throughout to answer any questions and provide fantastic history and information about the DuPont family over the years they lived at the property. Don’t miss the lower floors, housing Alfred’s office, the pool room, and their own indoor bowling alley.

After your mansion experience, immerse yourself in the splendor and precision of our formal gardens, starting with the Four Borders garden, a riot of colors and textures planted and maintained in the classic English Cottage style. The Long Walk garden provides a regal transition from the main house to the newly restored and renovated Reflecting Pool and Maze Garden area, complete with “Achievement” a 23-karat gold leafed statue of Alfred with his third wife, Jesse Ball DuPont. The formal gardens continue with the magnificent Colonnade and Sunken Gardens, leading into our natural pond systems eventually ending in the Temple of Love gardens.

Please note there are no food facilities available at Nemours Estate.

Continued...
Additional recommendations for what to visit nearby

➔ After visiting the du Pont Family Gardens, head to Greenville to enjoy tax-free shopping and dining along Delaware Route 52 (Kennett Pike).

➔ Powder Mill Square, Greenville Center, and One & Two Greenville Crossing have a variety of upscale specialty shops and restaurants. Visit the Broad Table Tavern at the Inn at Swarthmore for dinner. Their menu is inspired by the seasons, showcasing locally sourced ingredients and regional artisan products.

➔ Try a gourmet pizza at Pizza by Elizabeth’s (3801 Kennett Pike, Greenville, DE) or raise a glass at the Brandywine Brewing Company (4019 Kennett Pike Greenville, DE 19807).

➔ If you are looking for fine dining in a quirky environment, try Krazy Kat’s (528 Montchanin Road, Wilmington, DE 19710), providing fresh, local and seasonal dishes to their patrons. It’s the perfect spot for a date night or special occasion.

Enjoy this self-driving itinerary that will help you discover new places to get outside, enjoy nature and learn about horticulture! The Philadelphia region has a rich tradition of public gardens, arboreta and historic landscapes. There are more than 30 gardens within 30 miles of Philadelphia. The gardens mentioned in this itinerary are just a sampling of the rich diversity in the Philadelphia region where there is so much to discover and explore. Learn more at www.americasgardencapital.org.