

Do It in Philadelphia!

Plan to Come Early and Stay Late to Experience the Sights, Sounds, and Tastes of this Historic, Yet Thoroughly Modern, City

by Charlene Marietti (with special thanks to the [Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau](#))

Founded in 1682 by William Penn, Philadelphia is located between the Delaware and Schuylkill rivers and laid out on a grid pattern with wide streets and several green public spaces. The public squares that anchored the city's original design still exist--Washington, Franklin, Rittenhouse, and Logan squares; City Hall stands on the site of Center Square at Broad and Market streets just one block from Loews Hotel, the site of the 2011 Gesneriad Convention.

Philadelphia's history is tightly linked to the American Revolution and the colonies' quest for freedom. The First Continental Congress met at Carpenters' Hall in 1774 to air their grievances against King George III. At the State House, later renamed Independence Hall, the Second Continental Congress met in 1775, later drafted the Declaration of Independence, and where the colonies declared their independence in 1776. Philadelphia served as the fledgling nation's capital from 1790 to 1800.

A short walk just a few blocks south of Loews begins the most historic square mile in the U.S.A.--Independence National Park. It was here that the colonists met to plan their independence from the King of England. The resulting Revolutionary War marked the birth of the U.S.A. as a separate nation. Sites in the park include the Liberty Bell, Independence Hall, Carpenters' Hall, and many more notable landmarks. Franklin Court, the site of Benjamin Franklin's home now houses a steel "ghost structure" of Franklin's house, the U.S.A.'s first post office, archeological displays and an 18th-century printing shop.

Thanks to the [Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau](#) for their suggestions of city highlights and itineraries.

Take a Walk or Take a Tour

The sense of history is intoxicating as you walk along the cobblestone streets of Old City. But if you want to learn why you can't shake that feeling of patriotism, explore the neighborhood on a walking tour.

No matter the hour, [Historic Philadelphia, Inc.](#) lets tourists delve into 18th century Philadelphia. By day, there are *Once Upon a Nation* Adventure Tours, where historical figures and colonial characters come to life, guiding you through the birthplace of our nation. By night, you can experience *Independence After Hours* - Independence Hall, that is, as well as a dinner at City Tavern and the *Lights of Liberty Show* - the first ambulatory sound and light show of its kind in the world. As you learn the story of America while walking through Independence National Historical Park, you will not only see the actual buildings where our history unfolded, you will marvel at the hand painted images projected up to 50 feet high on those buildings. The tour is kid-friendly and available in four other languages besides English via headsets. There is also *Tippler's Tour* - where everyone can share a pint of traditional drinks at Colonial taverns.

To learn about the history of African Americans in Philadelphia, meet at the Independence Visitor Center and retrace this rich story with [Philadelphia Historic African American Tours, LLC](#) From the 17th century through present day, you will learn how African Americans were connected to and influenced some of Philadelphia's most significant sites and landmarks.

[The Constitutional Walking Tour of Philadelphia](#) provides a great way to experience the historic neighborhood, taking you to 20 sites along a walk just over a mile. Stops include: Independence Hall, The Liberty Bell Center, the Betsy Ross House, The Second Bank of the U.S., and the National Constitution Center. Tours walk rain or shine throughout the spring, summer, and fall.

If you prefer touring at your own pace, try the [AudioWalk & Tour of Historic Philadelphia](#). Follow the 72-minute recording and you will discover 20 stops and 64 narrated stories of significant people and places, all with historical music carrying you along your way. You can rent the CD and lightweight CD player and earphones, or buy them before you arrive to save time and get prepared.

You can also design your own walking tour through [Your Philadelphia Tour](#), or let the experts plan your adventure for you. You can create a thematic tour - from architecture to museums to, of course, history - and build food into the package, too.

BOO! Walk If You Dare...

For a freaky Philly tour, wait for the sun to set and the moon to rise over Society Hill and Independence National Historical Park, then join the [Ghost Tour of Philadelphia](#) or the [Spirits of '76 Ghost Tour](#). Not only is Philadelphia the most historic city in America - it is also the most haunted. Explore the neighborhood by candlelight and encounter the spirits of America's past on these walking tours.

For Convenience and Cost Savings

Visit The Franklin Institute, Adventure Aquarium, Philadelphia Zoo, Philadelphia Trolley Works/Big Bus Tour, the National Constitution Center *or* The Academy of Natural Sciences, and the Please Touch Museum *or* Eastern State Penitentiary - all with just one [purchase of the CityPass ticket booklet](#).

Eat Like a Local

With a broad-range of cultures in this metropolitan city, you can find foods from almost every country imaginable. And with hundreds of restaurants throughout the City, you're sure to find something to whet your appetite. But, if you're looking for something truly authentic, nothing says Philadelphia quite like these local favorites:

Cheesesteaks

Fresh, soft, and squishy Italian rolls, typically 12 inches long, filled with melted cheese and tender pieces of beef are the main components of this truly Philadelphia sandwich. Most establishments offer a choice of Cheez Whiz (or "whiz" if you want to sound like a local), American, or Provolone cheese and the option of adding fried or raw onions to the steak. Depending on where you go, the beef is served in slices or chopped up, but almost every place in Philadelphia cooks the beef on top of a griddle with a little bit of oil.

Eat it Like a Local Tip: Stand back! The juices of these succulent sandwiches tend to run out the back of the roll, so watch out while you're eating because you could end up wearing it! Many locals have adopted a similar way of eating a cheesesteak. To do it like them, stand and lean over your sandwich as you eat.

Soft Pretzels

These soft and chewy, hand-twisted baked goods are the ultimate comfort food for Philadelphians. Baked fresh everyday and available at street vendors, local stores, or directly from the factory, these salty satisfiers are delicious with a little spicy mustard.

Eat it Like a Local Tip: Enjoy 'em while you got 'em. While pretzels are still good a day or so later - even as they dry out - the best time to eat them is when they're fresh!

Water Ice

Nothing says summer in Philadelphia better than water ice (also known as Italian ice). This cool and refreshing frozen treat is a smooth mixture of ice, fruit juice, and fresh fruit. It's available at street vendors and establishments throughout the City and comes in traditional flavors such as cherry and lemon, as well as more exotic flavors like chocolate, mango, passion fruit, and coconut.

Eat it Like a Local Tip: It may sound funny - but locals pronounce this treat "wooder ice."

Hoagies

The "Official Sandwich of Philadelphia," hoagies are a regional concoction and overwhelming favorite. These mouth-watering sandwiches are more than a mouthful, packed with lettuce, tomato, onions, peppers, oregano, oil dressing, cheese (Provolone or American, usually), and of course, delicious Italian lunch meats like dry salami, mortadella, and capicola - hence the nickname, "Italian Hoagie."

Eat it Like a Local Tip: Ask any Philadelphian what the X-factor ingredient is in making a great hoagie and the answer is universal - the bread. Make sure you find an establishment where the bread is fresh and warm!

Scrapple

Hailed as the first pork food invented in America, this local invention is a fried treat at any meal. A mishmash of pork, cornmeal, flour, onions, herbs, spices, and other seasonings, scrapple is packed into a loaf before being fried to perfection for your taste buds.

Eat it Like a Local Tip: For a little extra kick in flavor, add some butter or maple syrup, and serve with ketchup and eggs.

[Free Philadelphia](#)

As Ben Franklin said, "A penny saved is a penny earned," and Philadelphia has a wealth of free attractions and events.

Here are some sight-seeing suggestions for half, full-day and weekend trips [[link to page with half, full and weekend trips](#)]

Some suggestions for half, full and weekend trips

Half-Day

- Start the day off at [Independence Visitor Center](#), located in the heart of Philadelphia's historic district, featuring information on more than 4,000 attractions, events, and venues throughout the region. Don't forget to pick up tickets for a tour of Independence Hall.

- Next make your way to [Independence National Historical Park](#), the nation's most historic square mile, from the issuing of the Declaration of Independence to the signing of the Constitution, and be sure to take your photo with the Liberty Bell.
- Pack a picnic to enjoy on the grounds of Independence National Historic Park.

Make It a Full Day

- Walk over to [Fireman's Hall](#), a unique museum of firefighting and fire-safety tips, and be sure to stop at Elfreth's Alley, America's oldest continuously inhabited street, along the way.
- Stroll through Philadelphia's authentic farmers market, [Reading Terminal Market](#), where more than 80 merchants sell every imaginable variety of fresh-farm produce and prepared foods, including Pennsylvania Dutch fare, original Philadelphia cheesesteaks, and fabulous soul food.
- Visit picturesque [Rittenhouse Square](#), Philadelphia's center for glamour in a neighborhood filled with shops and outdoor cafes – the perfect spot for a picnic.

Make It a Weekend: Day 2

- Follow in the steps of Rocky Balboa with a morning jog to the [Philadelphia Museum of Art](#), saving some energy for a sprint up the famous stairs. The museum even has a “pay what you wish” offer on Sundays.
- Make your way down Ben Franklin Parkway to the [Rodin Museum](#), home to the largest collection of works by Rodin outside of Paris – the museum suggests a \$5 contribution.
- Continue along the Ben Franklin Parkway (Philadelphia's version of the Champs d'Elyées) to [City Hall](#), the nation's largest municipal building – tour your way up to the tower, and get your sky photos.
- Experience [The Galleries at Moore College](#), a diverse range of innovative exhibitions, educational programs, and publications. Be sure to check the Web site for special events and exhibitions.
- Spend your evening strolling along [South Street](#), between 10th and Front streets, a district of eclectic and bohemian culture, with nearly 150 stores, boutiques and galleries, as well as numerous bars and restaurants.