



# Visiting Philadelphia

HISTORIC, ROMANTIC, AND JUST PLAIN FUN,  
IT'S A CITY THAT WILL STEAL YOUR HEART

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FROM LEFT: Philadelphia City  
Hall. Penn's Landing on the  
Delaware River.





**It's hard to pinpoint the moment I fell in love with Philadelphia—there are so many wonderful surprises in this city.** A fine combination of early U.S. history, world-class architecture, culture, gourmet dining, magnificent public gardens, and city parks make it a destination that everyone should absolutely visit once. Here are just a few things—of past and present—not to miss when you go:

### Old City

William Penn and his fellow Quakers settled Old City in the late 1600s. Here you'll visit some of America's most important buildings, all within walking distance of one another. In Independence Hall, the very chair George Washington sat upon during the signing of the Declaration is on display. Just seeing it makes all the high school lectures you sat through on the American Revolution become real.

Many patriots and heroes worshipped at Christ Church during the past three centuries. You can still sit in pew No. 58, where Washington was found on Sunday mornings, as well as the pews of Benjamin Franklin (No. 70) and Betsy Ross (No. 12)—who, by the way, was not the old Quaker seamstress we see in paintings. She was an upholsterer in her early 20s when she sewed the first U.S. flag.

Standing arm's length from the Liberty Bell, in an open rotunda in Independence Hall National Park's Liberty Bell Center, is an emotional experience and puts the ideals these brave men and women stood up for in bold perspective.

An authentic look at life in the early 1700s can be found on Elfreth's Alley, America's oldest continuously occupied residential street. It is named after Jeremiah Elfreth, who built and rented some of the homes to trades people, artisans, and sea

captains. Amazingly, nearly everyone who has lived on the alley since its beginning has been carefully documented, and twice a year, many residents open their homes for tours.

### Reading Terminal Market and the Italian Market

If you've played Monopoly, you know Reading Railroad is a prime piece of real estate. The Reading (pronounced "Redding") Terminal Market was established in 1892, and it still houses one of the country's best farmers' markets. Mix with locals shopping at nearly 90 stalls for fresh fish, produce, and baked goods, and choose from a marvelous selection of lunch counters to taste Philly cheesesteak, Amish breads, Italian cannoli, or authentic soul food. The best fresh turkey sandwich you'll ever eat can be had at the Original Turkey. Owner Roger Bassett is a fifth-generation descendant of one of the market's first stallholders; he bakes more than 30 fresh turkeys a day and hand-carves them to order. His family also runs Bassett's Ice Cream at the Terminal on the same marble counter where his great-great-grandfather started in 1893. Vanilla addicts will never enjoy a richer—or bigger—ice cream cone anywhere, guaranteed.

A short cab ride from Old City takes you to Rocky Balboa's neighborhood—South Philly, where on Ninth Street from Catherine to Wharton Streets many Italian families still live above their shops in the historic Italian Market. Stop at Claudio's Wholesale Inc. for an old-world experience tasting handmade pasta, cheeses, imported seafood, unusual sausages, barrels of fresh olives, dried figs, and dozens of vinegars and olive oils. My favorite counter guy, Ben, will arrange to ship just about anything to your home—try the Aceto di Vino Rosso (red wine vinegar) that they import in huge barrels and decant into



liters—you'll be hooked. Fante's Kitchen Wares Shop has been a cooks' supplier since 1906, and there's not much you can't find here. For a fabulous meal, try Sabrina's Café for breakfast, lunch, or dinner. This quirky bistro serves everything homemade and in giant portions. Huge whisks fitted with light bulbs make a funky chandelier, paying homage to the historic bakery that occupied the space for more than 60 years.

### Neighborhoods to Explore

Three delightful neighborhoods to check out are Penn's Landing, Society Hill, and Rittenhouse Square, where you'll find a mixture of 18th-century homes, vibrant retail, and myriad dining and nightclub options. Penn's View Hotel is a small, romantic hotel in a restored brick warehouse overlooking the Delaware River and walking distance to the historic district. Its outstanding Ristorante Panorama serves authentic, trattoria-style cuisine, and Il Bar features the largest wine preservation system in the world, consistently awarded for excellence by *Wine Spectator* magazine—with 120 bottles always available by the glass.

Another lovely boutique accommodation is Rittenhouse 1715. This charming renovated carriage house just off Rittenhouse Square has only 16 rooms and the most deluxe

appointments. From Frette sheets to a nightly wine reception and a delicious European breakfast, it's a delightful way to spend a night or two.

Great antique hunts can be had on Society Hill's Antique Row, an eight-block area on Pine Street filled with shops offering wonderful finds. For sterling silver, it doesn't get any better than Jeffrey L. Biber Antiques. Biber is an expert historian, and during my visit to his shop I scored a set of silver butter knives he traced to early descendants of General Washington.

Philadelphia has so many terrific dining options, you'd have to stay a month to even make a dent. But a sure bet is any one of the dozen magnificent establishments operated by *Bon Appetit's* 2005 Chef of the Year, Stephen Starr. Alma de Cuba transports you to old Havana in the '50s (the chocolate cigar gives new meaning to the word "dessert"), while Tangerine, Budakan, and Striped Bass all present a contemporary take on classic cuisines of the world, in environments so beautiful they take your breath away.

Philadelphia's motto is "the city that loves you back." For sure, you won't find a place packed with more history and hospitality anywhere in the nation. I left my heart in the City of Brotherly Love, but I'll definitely be back to claim it. ■