Smithsonian Associates

Philadelphia Up Close:
Must-See Museums, Historic Sites, and Local Eats

with Jennie Hirsh, PH.D.

Thursday, August 13, 2026 - 6:45 p.m. to 8:15 p.m. ET

RESOURCE LIST FOR PHILLY TRIP PLANNING

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TRAVEL SUGGESTIONS:

Airport: Fly into PHL; Taxi to Center City is c. $40; Uber/Lyft c. $30-$45; SEPTA regional Rail (Suburban Station would be the most central, leaving you at 16th and Market) for $6.75 pre-purchase and $8.00 on board.
https://www.septa.org/schedules/AIR?startStop=90403&endStop=90004&directionId=0&date=2026-08-12
Driving: arrive from North via I-95/Benjamin Franklin Bridge or South I-95.
Amtrak to 30th Street Station (station is between 29th and 30th Streets, between Market St. and JFK Blvd.)
New Jersey Transit will also take you, via Trenton, from New York City; if you take New Jersey Transit, you will transfer to SEPTA (Philly's regional rail). You can deboard at 30th Street or Suburban Station (mid-town Center City) or at Market East (close to Chinatown/Reading Terminal), depending on where you are staying

GETTING AROUND WHILE HERE:

SEPTA (local public transportation) includes **the subway** (orange line runs north/south underneath Broad Street; Blue line runs East West from Old City all the way through West Philly to 69th Street Terminal under Market Street; green line includes several trolleys that are so-called subway-surface, meaning that they run underground from just east of City Hall all the way to various spots in West Philly – check which line according to where you may be staying or visiting in West Philly)
Bus Lines that are useful include the 21 and 42 to move East to West, especially if going from Old City/Society Hill/Queen Village to downtown (Rittenhouse) and/or over to West Philly. Again, septa.org is the best place to work out your route.

HOTELS (there are so many, but these are some of my favorites):

Alexander Inn (Washington Square West), 301 So. 12th Street, top pick for a simple budget hotel)
Morris House (Washington Square West), 225 So. 8th Street, very cute boutique hotel.
Rittenhouse Hotel (on Rittenhouse Square), 210 W. Rittenhouse, this is a very chic and luxurious with three on-site restaurants and a cozy library bar in the lobby. Full-service with a gym, small pool, and sun deck.
Sofitel (Rittenhouse, just north on 17th St.), cute bar lobby.

Palomar (Rittenhouse, just north on 17th St.): this one is dog-friendly and in a pretty art deco building with a nice lobby bar.
Club Quarters (Rittenhouse, just north on Chestnut between 16th and 17th), this isn't my favorite but they do often have good specials.
Four Seasons (the new one, north of Rittenhouse), this is very luxurious and has several wonderful restaurants in it (see below).
1715 Rittenhouse, just East of Rittenhouse Square, under renovation now and very quaint and quiet.
The Ritz Carlton (former Four Seasons, this is on Broad Street, just south of City Hall).
The Westin Philadelphia (just north of Rittenhouse in Liberty Place).
Airbnb (there are so many, make sure you choose a neighborhood that is convenient for what you want to do).

MUSEUMS:
Philadelphia Museum of Art (encyclopedic collection in the Art Museum Area next to the Schuylkill River); includes an outdoor sculpture garden, newly inaugurated "Core project" by legendary architect Frank Gehry; and the Perlman Building for some of the temporary exhibitions. Public transit here is not the easiest, but check the SEPTA website for best information – it will depend on where you start out. That said, the No. 7 bus is your best bet. http://www4.septa.org/maps/bus/pdf/007.pdf.
Rodin Museum (Art Museum area, at 2151 Benjamin Franklin Parkway close to the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Barnes Foundation). This museum has close to 150 works (bronzes, marbles, and plasters that stretch across the various stages of Auguste Rodin's life and career.
Barnes Foundation (Art Museum/Logan Circle at 20th and the Parkway), premiere collection of impressionism, post-impressionism, and more that is famous for its "ensembles".
Calder Gardens (2100 Benjamin Franklin Parkway), wonderful new addition to the series of public sculptures and institutions dotting the Parkway, this is an unusual gallery space that houses works by all three generations of Calder sculptures with a focus on Alexander Calder, junior's three-dimensional as well as two-dimensional works.
Institute of Contemporary Art (West Philly at 36th St. between Chestnut and Walnut), part of UPENN's campus, this is a fantastic non-collecting institution for seeing the most up-to-date contemporary art exhibitions and not to be missed.
The Fabric Workshop and Museum (near City Hall/Chinatown), 1214 Arch Street, specialized museum and apprenticeship program focused on contemporary art and fabric, broadly defined.
Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (near City Hall/Chinatown), 118-128 North Broad Street. Museum focused on American Art and School offering BFA and MFA degrees.
Moore College of Art and Design (Logan Circle) has a lovely gallery.
National Museum of American Jewish History (Old City), 5th and Market (101 So. Independence Mall).
Museum of African American History in Philadelphia (Old City), 701 Arch.
Mutter Museum (just north of Rittenhouse at 19 So. 22nd and Chestnut Streets), home to a collection focused on medical oddities, this is a rare gem full of old medical equipment and specimens and is a totally interesting place to visit.

Philadelphia's Magic Gardens (between Society Hill and Bella Vista), 1020 South Street, this is a multi-media, immersive space focused on the work of Isaiah Zagar, who used handmade tiles, bottles, bicycle wheels, mirror, and international folk art to make up mosaic compositions. You can also find his work throughout the city.
The Franklin Institute (Logan Circle), this is a fun science museum very much geared towards children.
Wagner Free Institute of Science (North Philadelphia, close to Temple University), 1700 W. Montgomery Avenue, this is a rare example of a Victorian-era science institute.
Please Touch Museum and the **Philadelphia Zoo** are great options, especially with kids, and are just past Brewerytown.

RESTAURANTS:
Suraya (Fishtown), middle Eastern with a gorgeous veranda in the back. Lovely pastries and coffee as a morning stop as well. One of my very favorites in the city.
Wm. Mulherin and Sons (Fishtown), 1355 No. Front Street, this is excellent continental fare and also great pizzas. They also have **a few rooms** where you can stay (a sort of mini-inn).
Oyster House (Rittenhouse), 1516 Sansom Street. Classic fresh seafood. Hip and casual.
Pizzeria Bedia (Fishtown), fantastic pizza and gourmet side dishes.
Royal Izakaya (Queen Village), 780 So. 2nd Street, this is a totally gourmet Japanese, they have an Izakaya casual fare and then sushi right now is still take-out but will return to indoor soon. Jesse Ito the chef is superb.
Zahav (Society Hill), 237 St. James Place, this is creative and contemporary Israeli food. Superb hummus. Probably **Michael Solomonov's** trademark restaurant. If and when movies open up again, it's just next to the Ritz 5 theatre.
Laser Wolf (Fishtown), 1301 No. Howard Street, this is contemporary Middle Eastern mostly grilled items. Another Solomonov restaurant.
Fork (Old City), 306 Market Street, this is very high quality, mixed continental fare. Excellent creative nouvelle cuisine
Via Locusta (Rittenhouse), 1723 Locust Street, just next to Parc, this relatively new place is renowned for their creative pasta dishes.
(Passyunk/South Philly)
Parc (Rittenhouse), 227 So. 18th Street, Parisian-style brasserie with everyone from steak frites, moules frites, and salade niçoise to a gourmet burger/fries, trout almandine, and excellent tuna carpaccio. Easy restaurant with something for everyone. The French fries are notably delicious.
Dandelion (Rittenhouse), also a Starr restaurant, upscale English pub style with **great High Tea**
Cassatt (Rittenhouse), inside the Rittenhouse Hotel, lovely for High Tea
Library Room (Rittenhouse), also inside the Rittenhouse Hotel, cozy and quiet for a cocktail
Jean-Georges Philadelphia (North of Rittenhouse in business district in the Four Seasons Hotel), 1 No. 19th Street, this is all the way up at the top of the Four Seasons and has a view that is literally sky-high with a 60-storey view!
JG Sky High (North of Rittenhouse in business district in the Four Seasons Hotel), 1 No. 19th Street, this is the in-between restaurant of Jean-Georges that has cocktails and snacks; there is also a regular bar there as well if you just want a cocktail and to experience the incredible 60th floor view.

Vernick Fish (North of Rittenhouse in business district in the Four Seasons Hotel), 1 No. 19th Street, this is on the lower level and has wonderful seafood
Ralph's (South Philly), is known for their traditional, family style Italian-American Cuisine
Café La Maude (Northern Liberties), 816 No. 4th Street, this is a favorite of mine for French-Lebanese fare, and the brunch is fantastic
Dim Sum Garden (Chinatown), 1020 Race Street, this is a great Dim Sum spot
Jezebel's Argentine Café (West Philly), 206-208 So. 45th Street, this is a place that has great empanadas
Abyssinia (West Philly), 229 So. 45th Street, this is great Ethiopian food
Rangoon (Chinatown), 112 No. 9th Street, this is a beloved and casual spot for Burmese food.
Amma's South Indian (Rittenhouse), 1518 Chestnut Street, this is great for dosas
Vernick Food and Drink (Rittenhouse), 2031 Walnut Street, this is a wonderful sit-down upscale dinner spot
Friday Saturday Sunday (Rittenhouse), So. 21st Street, this is really one of my favorite small and intimate restaurants with a gorgeous bar (you may remember the famous Tank Bar from years back in the 1980s and 1990s – this has been completely redone and is gorgeous)
Little Fish (Queen Village), 746 So. 6th Street, this is lovely for seafood and is a very intimate spot.
***Kalaya Thai Kitchen** (South Philly)**,** 764 So. 9th Street, this is great Thai food. (James Beard winner)
Fiore Fine Foods (Fishtown), 2413 Frankford Avenue
Pho 75 (South Philly), 1122 Washington Avenue, this is great for pho.
South Philly Barbacoa (South Philly), 1149 So. 9th Street, this is a famous take-out taco joint.
Fond (East Passyunk/South Philly), 1537 So. 11th Street, this is creative gourmet cooking.
Noord (South Philly), 1046 Tasker Street, this is a lovely restaurant with Dutch and Scandinavian- inspired dishes.
***Pat's King of Steaks** (South Philly), 1237 E. Passyunk Avenue, this is the classic and arguably the best in the city if you need a cheesesteak fix!

VEGAN RESTAURANTS:
Vedge (Washington Sq. West), 1221 Locust Street, this is a real treat for everyone with a gourmet bar and very upscale and creative vegan cooking. Fantastic cocktails and a beautiful bar.
PS & Co. (Rittenhouse), Locust Street, this is a great place for vegan/kosher/gluten-free casual eating; they have salads and other main dishes as well as smoothies and especially enticing cakes and cookies as well as a terrific black-bean brownie.

COFFEE SHOPS/BAKERIES/PICNIC FARE:
Di Bruno Brothers (Rittenhouse, 18th and Chestnut; South Philly on 9th Street in the Italian Market), this is a great all-purpose place for charcuterie, smoked fish, etc. as well as other gourmet groceries in the form of prepped meals or ingredients for cooking. It isn't inexpensive but it is very well stocked, esp. in the Rittenhouse branch which also sells wine. They sell fruits and veggies too, though you can also check out **Sue's** on 18th around the corner if you want to grab fruit for a picnic as well.

Il Gran Café l'Aquila (Rittenhouse), 17 Chestnut Street, this is a lovely spot for ice cream as well as full meals and has some sidewalk seating (just not picturesque).
La Colombe (Rittenhouse area, original spot is on 19th St., just north of the square; check out locations in Fishtown and City Hall areas as well). Best coffee in the city!
Rival Brothers (Fitler square, 21st and Lombard; excellent coffee spot with some snacks.
K'far (Rittenhouse), 110 So. 19th Street, this is a lovely Israeli-style café. I highly recommend the bagel sandwich with zaatar! They have fantastic baked goods but also savory treats as well.
Musette (Rittenhouse), 238 So. 20th Street, this is a nice take-out coffee spot
Bake Shoppe (Rittenhouse), 269 So. 20th, Street. More of an "American" bakery than Metropolitan mentioned in my talk, this place is known for its babka muffins, scones, and ricotta as well as tahini chocolate chip cookies. They do have a few gluten-free options. Nice doggy biscuits too!
Rowhome Coffee (Fitler Square), 2536 Pine Street, this is a cute place for a coffee and/or snack whose specialty are little sandwiches on homemade pretzels.
Reading Terminal Market (Convention Center area, just south of Chinatown and just east of City Hall), entrance at 51 No. 12th between Market and Arch, full-service food hall and market.

FARMER'S MARKETS:
Rittenhouse Square (on the perimeter of the park, primarily on the North and West sides) on Saturdays and Tuesdays
Fitler Square (on the 23rd Street side) on Saturdays
Headhouse Square (Society Hill at 2nd and Lombard) on Sundays

EXCURSIONS AND RESTAURANTS OUTSIDE OF THE CITY:
Longwood Gardens (Kennett Square, PA), beautiful campus of flowers, inside and out. Transit to Longwood Gardens is easiest with a car. See the note below for arrival info.[1]
Brandywine River Museum of Art (Chadds Ford, PA), 1 Hoffmans Mill Road, this is a museum of American regional art with special holdings of Andrew and N.C. Wyeth. This is a gorgeous and quiet spot. There is no public transit here, but you can take the Amtrak to Wilmington and set up a taxi, uber, or car service ahead of time to get there.
Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library (Winterthur, DE), this is the former home and estate of Henry Francis du Pont. Amazing collection of Americana and also gardens
***Wharton Esherick Museum** (Malvern, PA), the former studio of the famous mid-century wood-worker is about an hour outside the city
***George Nakashima House, Studio and Workshop** (New Hope), in Bucks County, this is a gorgeous example of modernist architecture with a Japanese inflection. It is a whole little

[1] Longwood Gardens is located on US Route 1, about 3 miles northeast of Kennett Square, PA.
The distance to Longwood is: Philadelphia, PA – 30; Wilmington, DE – 12; Valley Forge, PA – 28. Public transportation, by train, the AMTRAK trains stop at the Wilmington, DE station where you can connect to Longwood via a reserved 24-hour advance shuttle service, for a fee. To reserve a shuttle, please contact: Delaware Express @ Phone 302.454.7800. For additional shuttle providers and train information, please visit the Greater Wilmington Convention and Visitors Bureau. By Bus, you can take the SCCOOT bus service, which connects Oxford to West Chester with stops in West Grove, Lincoln University, Kennett Square and Longwood Gardens.

campus with several residential and studio buildings. NB: New Hope is a lovely little town to visit and is famous for antiquing, etc. About an hour away from Philly to the north
Houses in the area by Louis Kahn (Margaret Esherick in Chestnut Hill) and Robert Venturi (Vanna Venturi House on Germantown Avenue outside of the city proper)
Terrain (Glen Mills), 914 Baltimore Pike #3335 café, this is the lovely nursery with café that I mentioned in my talk.
The Mann Center for the Performing Arts (Philadelphia but outside of the city proper in Fairmount Park), 5201 Parkside Avenue, this is a lovely venue for concerts
***Shofuso Japanese Cultural Center** (Fairmount Park), Horticultural and Lansdowne Drives, this is a gorgeous Japanese style house and garden just outside the city. Highly recommended. See my note below for more info.[2]
Woodmere Art Museum (Philadelphia but outside the city proper), 9201 Germantown Avenue, this collection focuses on the art and artists of Philadelphia and is housed in a lovely nineteenth-century stone home in Chestnut Hill.

WALKS AND SCENIC HIKES:
Schuylkill River Trail
Wissahickon, near Mt. Airy and Chestnut Hill, north of the city, this offers lovely and wooded trails for walks (on carriage roads) and also on dirt paths.

LANDMARKS IN THE CITY:
City Hall (Center City) at Broad and Market. Seasonally there are ice- and roller-skating rinks there as well.
PSFS Building (Loews Hotel): first International-style skyscraper in the U.S., 12th and Market Streets, don't forget to check out the Cartier Clocks, vault, and lovely views from the 33rd Floor. Worth staying here for that view. Also close to the Reading Terminal Market for snacks! ☺
Franklin Court (Old City), 322 Market Street (between 3rd and 4th Streets/Market and Chestnut Streets), Robert Venturi monument on site of Benjamin Franklin's former home
Independence Mall
Liberty Bell Center, (Old City), 101 So. Independence Mall
National Constitution Center (Old City), 525 Arch Street
Rocky Statue (just below the Art Museum)
*Eastern State Penitentiary
Kimmel Center (for orchestra and other performances)
Academy of Music (for various performances)

SHOPPING SPOTS:
Generally speaking, there are many shops between 16th and 19th Streets on both Walnut and Chestnut streets (Rittenhouse). See **Joan Shepp** and **Boyd's** for high fashion, and there are tons

[2] First established as a Japanese-style landscape for the 1876 Centennial Exposition, the current garden was designed by Sano Tansai in 1958 when the authentic shoin-style Japanese house was moved here from New York's Museum of Modern Art. For Philadelphia's 1976 Bicentennial celebration, the garden was extensively renovated by Nakajima Kenji in the authentic Momoyama style of early seventeenth-century Japan.

of more affordable options (Bloomingdale's has a discount outlet in Liberty Place), and there are Gap and Banana Republic outlets on Chestnut, as well as some independent shops like Benjamin Lovell (for walking shoes), J. Crew, etc. In Old City, you will find smaller boutiques and galleries, such as the Clay Center. Art galleries in the city worth checking out include Locks Gallery and Bridget Mayer in Washington Square as well as Fleisher/Ollman at 915 Spring Garden (a number of self-taught artists).
Also, there is an extensive design district with showrooms for design and furniture items in the northern part of Old City.

OTHER INFO:
Dog parks: there are two (big and little) over by the Schuylkill River Walk. You will find them if you follow Spruce Street to the end and walk toward the river.

DAY SPAS:
Please use my name at all three of them listed below! These are listed in case you need a mini-vacation while on vacation! ☺
Rescue Spa, 1811 Walnut Street — My top pick. Very much an extensive, full-service day spa, offering skin care, massage, nails, make-up application, and hair services. Very elegant.
Four Seasons Spa, Four Seasons Hotel Philadelphia at Comcast Center, 1 N. 19th Street — a luxurious full-service spa within the Four Seasons, with treatments, massage, and a beautiful wellness environment high above the city.
Nirvana Wellness Med Spa, 1516 N. 5th Street, Unit 116, Billy Penn Studios — entrance on Randolph Street. A full-service wellness and medical spa offering facials, massage, and other wellness treatments.