Historic Philadelphia Trail

1. Head to the Independence Visitor Center (IVCC) to pick up your free timed tickets to Independence Hall and get expert Philly tips. 6th & Market Streets

2. The President’s House: Freedom and Slavery in the Making of a New Nation tells the stories of Hercules, Oney Judge and the other enslaved people who served George and Martha Washington. The open-air site is open until 10 p.m. 6th & Market Streets

3. It doesn’t make a sound, but its message rings loud and clear: “Proclaim Liberty Throughout All the Land Unto All the Inhabitants thereof.” Discover how the cracked but mighty Liberty Bell became a symbol to abolitionists, suffragists and other freedom-seekers around the world. 6th & Market Streets

4. Independence Hall is where it all happened—where the upstart colonies declared independence and where representatives from a young nation framed its Constitution. Check out the original copy of the U.S. Constitution in the adjacent West Wing. 6th & Chestnut Streets

5. It’s all about science, art and history, so it’s no surprise that the American Philosophical Society (APS) was another of Ben Franklin’s ideas. Exhibitions come from APS’s collection of nearly 14 million early American manuscripts, maps, Native American languages, scientific instruments and more. 104 S. 5th Street

6. The National Museum of American Jewish History brings to life the 360-year history of Jews in America. Don’t miss the free first-floor gallery, where you can see Einstein’s pipe and Spielberg’s first camera. 101 S. Independence Mall East

7. Coming soon! In 2017, the Museum of the American Revolution opens. Come back to explore the immersive galleries, dynamic theaters and recreated environments that bring to life the events, people and ideals of the founding of the U.S. 3rd & Chestnut Streets

8. Inventor. Statesman. Postmaster. Printer. You name it, and Ben Franklin probably did it. Get up close with America’s favorite Founding Father at Franklin Court, where you’ll find a museum, printing office and post office that will mark your mail with a “B. Free Franklin” postmark. 322 Market Street
The birthplace of the nation is rich in history—lots and lots of history. But how do you decide what exactly to do? Consider this your essential 24-stop guide to Historic Philadelphia, an area that spans from the Delaware River to 7th Street and from Vine to Lombard Streets. This is the original city. It boasts serious historical cred, and it’s also home to buzzed-about restaurants and beer gardens, owner-operated boutiques and pushing-the-boundaries art galleries.

9. To get the picture of America’s roots, pop into the Second Bank of the United States. The walls are lined with portraits of the nation’s earliest movers and shakers. Just steps away is the First Bank, which, although closed to the public, boasts a photo-worthy exterior. 420 Chestnut Street

10. Spying. Upheaval. Revolution. Those feisty colonists fanned the flames of independence during the First Continental Congress at Carpenters’ Hall. 320 Chestnut Street

11. Ahoy, matey. If seafaring is your thing, the Independence Seaport Museum is your place. Be sure to tour the Cruiser Olympia and Submarine Becuna. Columbus Boulevard at Walnut Street

12. Whatever the season, there’s always something fun going on at Penn’s Landing—situated along the Delaware River, where founder William Penn first arrived in Philadelphia. Think festivals, concerts, free movies, beer gardens, yoga, roller skating and ice skating. Columbus Boulevard between Chestnut & Spruce Streets

13. Christ Church is nicknamed “America’s Church” for good reason. George Washington, Betsy Ross, Ben Franklin and John Adams worshipped here, and Reverend Absalom Jones was ordained here. Nearby is the who’s who Burial Ground of the Colonial era. Toss a penny on Franklin’s grave. Church, 20 N. American Street; Burial Ground, 5th & Arch Streets

14. It doesn’t get more charming than Elfreth’s Alley, America’s oldest continuously inhabited street. Tiptoe along the cobblestones and pop into the quaint museum too. 124-126 Elfreth’s Alley

15. What’s a Colonial widow to do when she has an upholstery shop to run, a family to raise, a (very tiny) household to run and a flag to sew for a new nation? Find out at the Betsy Ross House. 239 Arch Street

16. Delve into the four pages that changed the world at the National Constitution Center. You can take the presidential oath of office and sign the U.S. Constitution. 525 Arch Street

17. Wheee! A carousel ride is just part of the fun at Franklin Square. Philly-themed mini-golf, playgrounds, a burger stand and lots of family-friendly events make this one of the liveliest of William Penn’s five original squares. 6th & Race Streets

18. At The African American Museum in Philadelphia, see artwork and artifacts that showcase African history and culture of the Diaspora and listen to Octavius Catto, Richard Allen and other trailblazers tell their stories. 7th & Arch Streets

19. Such a tiny house (by 21st-century standards) to hold such big ideas. Known as the Declaration House, the home of Jacob Graff hosted Thomas Jefferson as he wrote the Declaration of Independence. Hours are limited, so check at the Visitor Center for tour times. 7th & Market Streets

20. Stroll on the world’s largest walkable Philadelphia map at the Philadelphia History Museum. Then check out the exhibits that show how Philly got to be, well, Philly. 15 S. 7th Street

21. Let history wash over you at Washington Square, a former animal pasture and burial ground. Today it’s a peaceful and popular place for picnicking and playing. 6th & Walnut Streets

22. Pay homage to A.M.E. Church founder and first bishop Richard Allen, who is buried at Mother Bethel. In the church museum, sacred artifacts trace the denomination’s roots from a small congregation to an international presence. 419 S. 6th Street

23. Think our forefathers were stodgy? Think again. Scandal erupted at the Physick House when the wife of Dr. Phillip Syng Physick, father of American surgery, left him. Head to the Powel House for the scoop on George and Martha’s big 20th wedding anniversary party. Physick, 321 S. 4th Street; Powel, 244 S. 3rd Street

24. At the National Liberty Museum, glass sculptures depict our fragile freedom. Explore stories of heroes who used their own liberty to expand freedom for all. 321 Chestnut Street
Practical Advice For Enjoying Historic Philadelphia

Where do I pick up my tickets for Independence Hall? What’s the best way to get around? Where can I have lunch or dinner? Find practical answers to your most burning questions here:

Planning Your Days

Independence Visitor Center (IVCC): Every trip to Philadelphia should begin with a stop at the IVCC, where you can make plans with expert concierges, buy tickets, grab a bite to eat and pick up your copy of the Historic Philadelphia Gazette, filled with the when-and-where details on daily programs, storytelling schedules and other fun activities.

visitphilly.com/historic: This mobile-friendly site is packed with all of the information you need to navigate Historic Philadelphia. See the “More To See, More To Do” panel for the scoop on exactly what you’ll find there.

Bell & Hall Access

Independence Hall: There’s no charge for this UNESCO World Heritage Site, but timed tickets are required (except January-February). Arrive early at the National Park Service desk at the Independence Visitor Center for the best selection, or pre-order for a small fee at nps.gov/inde. No tickets required for short mini-tours during the summer after 5 p.m.

Liberty Bell Center: Lines can be long midday, so get there early or later. Free, no tickets required. You can also see the Bell 24/7 from the corner of 6th and Chestnut Streets.

Money-Saving Tips

Free & Low-Cost Attractions: All attractions that are part of Independence National Historical Park are free, with the exception of the Benjamin Franklin Museum, which charges a small entrance fee. You can pay what you wish to tour the National Museum of American Jewish History on summer Wednesday evenings and to watch the final dress rehearsal of each production at Arden Theatre Company.

Historic Philadelphia Pass: How does four attractions for $18 sound? This pass—a $37 value—gives you one-time admission to the National Constitution Center, Betsy Ross House and Christ Church Burial Ground, along with two days of rides on the PHLASH tourist loop. It’s valid for two days and can be purchased at the Independence Visitor Center or at PHLvisitorcenter.com/historicphillyphpass.

Getting Around

Walking: Foot power is the best way to discover the side streets and quaint alleys of Historic Philadelphia. Fortunately, navigating the city is easy. Numbered streets run north/south, and named streets run east/west.

PHLASH: Tour all of Center City on the purple PHLASH bus, running every 15 minutes in season and making four stops in Historic Philadelphia. Get your tickets at the Independence Visitor Center or pay on board. ridephillyphlash.com

Indego: The pay-as-you-go bike-share program, with six locations in Historic Philadelphia, makes cycling a fun way to see the city. rideindego.com

SEPTA: The Market-Frankford public transit line stops at 2nd Street near the waterfront attractions and at 5th Street by the historic sites, and more than a dozen buses run through the area.

Dining & Shopping

Dining: There is no shortage of restaurants in Old City. Many are concentrated on 2nd Street between Market and Walnut Streets and on Market and Chestnut Streets between Front and 4th Streets.

Shopping: The retail heart of the area lines 2nd and 3rd Streets, from Market to Race Streets. Owner-operated boutiques in converted industrial buildings cater to a fashion- and design-forward clientele. (Bonus: Clothing and shoes are tax-free in Pennsylvania.) Art galleries abound north of Market Street, so keep your eyes peeled for the perfect piece to complement your growing or just-starting collection.

Staying Overnight

Visit Philly Overnight Hotel Package: You need at least a few nights to take in all this history, food, shops and entertainment. Available at dozens of Philly hotels, this one- or two-night deal comes with free hotel parking and other bonuses. visitphilly.com/overnight
Nighttime Fun For All

Don’t call it a night yet. In the evening, the neighborhood’s quaint 18th-century setting sets the stage for 21st-century fun.

Twilight Touring: Slip into Independence Hall and listen as Thomas, Ben and other Founding Fathers debate during Independence After Hours (May-October). Hoist a pint glass and learn about 18th-century tavern life during the Tippler’s Tour (May-December). Feeling brave? Rub shoulders with spectral beings on a ghost tour, offered by a number of companies.

Family Fun After Five: Want to tire the kids out before bedtime? The playground at Three Bears Park should do the trick. Or turn them loose in Franklin Square’s award-winning playground, open year-round. Then head over to The Franklin Fountain for turn-of-the-century-style homemade ice cream treats.

Wallet-Friendly: Enjoy First Friday evening strolls of Old City’s art galleries every month. Pay what you wish on select nights at the National Museum of American Jewish History and other attractions. Grab a partner for the free Friday night dance parties at Society Hill Dance Academy. And for kitschy fun, you can’t beat the $10 midnight cult flicks at the Ritz theaters.

Curtains Up: The kids will be mesmerized by the children’s productions at the award-winning Arden Theatre. If you need a good laugh, there are yuks aplenty at the Penn’s Landing Playhouse. For break-all-the-rules theater, FringeArts is your place. And since it shares space with La Peg brasserie, you can grab a post-show drink.

Eat, Drink & Be Merry: Take the casual route by grabbing a bite to eat at Revolution House, The Little Lion or Khyber Pass Pub, followed by a local beer at 2nd Story Brewing Co. Cue up for a game at Buffalo Billiards. Catch a set at the Tin Angel. Or get gussied up for dancing at Cuba Libre or cocktails under the stars at Stratus Lounge.

Seasonal Delights

Whether your visit calls for flip-flops or snow boots, you can find yourself knee-deep in fun any time of year.

Warm-Weather Pleasures

Beer Gardens: Drinking outdoors. Does it get any better? Hit up the Independence Beer Garden, Spruce Street Harbor Park, Morgan’s Pier, La Peg and many others.

Sidewalk Cafes: Watch the parade of people strolling the streets as you grab a bite to eat at the outdoor tables all along the area around 2nd and Market Streets.

Farmers’ Markets: From May through October, hit the weekly markets at Headhouse Square (Sunday) and N3RD Street (Wednesday) to load up on fresh produce and baked goods.

Once Upon A Nation Programming: Listen as storytellers regale you with little-known but true tales of the nation’s past at 13 benches situated around Historic Philadelphia from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Summer also means Colonial games and crafts, puppet shows, meet and greets and more.

Movies Under The Stars: Bring a blanket for movie nights on summer Wednesdays at La Peg, on Thursdays in July and August at Penn’s Landing, on First Fridays from June through October at the Betsy Ross House and on select Saturdays in July and August at Franklin Square.

Waterfront Wonders

Festival Fever: Nosh on ethnic cuisine while you dance to traditional tunes at the PECO Multicultural Series. Cultural festivals take place nearly every weekend from June through September at the Great Plaza at Penn’s Landing.

Spruce Street Harbor Park: Add scoring a hammock here to your summer bucket list. The floating beer garden, giant game pieces, food stands, twinkling lights and chill riverfront vibe make it a top spot. Open May through September.

Blue Cross RiverRink Summerfest: Catch cool river breezes as you roller skate your cares away at the warm-weather edition of Winterfest. More fun: mini-golf, arcade games, play areas and food and drinks. Open May through September.

Blue Cross RiverRink Winterfest: You don’t have to know a salchow from a slap shot to lace up and have a go around the Blue Cross RiverRink. After practicing your moves, get cozy over some hot cocoa and s’mores around the fire pits or in the warming cabins. Open Black Friday through February.
More To See, More To Do

Want more on what to see and do in Historic Philadelphia? Go to visitphilly.com/historic for just that. The mobile-friendly site is packed with info to help you plan your days and nights in the district, even when you’re already on the go. There, you’ll find:

- Trails galore, covering African-American, LGBT, New Americans, political interests and more
- Can’t-Miss Things To Do
- Must-See Historic Attractions
- Things To Do with Kids
- Photo Opps
- Great Hotels
- Things To Do Along the Waterfront
- Nighttime Offerings

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