



2016 DESTINATION TIMELINE

Major Destination Milestones Since 1984



BUCKS | CHESTER
DELAWARE | MONTGOMERY
PHILADELPHIA COUNTIES

VISIT PHILADELPHIA®

Highlights from 20 Years of Destination Marketing Success, 1996-2016



1996

VISIT PHILADELPHIA (then the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation) begins as a three-year experiment by the City of Philadelphia, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and The Pew Charitable Trusts. As stated in The Philadelphia Inquirer, the group started the destination marketing organization to fulfill "**Philadelphia Tourism's Golden Promise.**"

1997

VISIT PHILADELPHIA launches gophila.com (now visitphilly.com), the region's first and only official visitor website.

VISIT PHILADELPHIA puts Philly on national TV in 1997 with the advertising campaign This Is My Philadelphia, and the region becomes **The Place That Loves You Back.**



1999

Lawmakers pass a 1% hotel tax increase—championed by Philadelphia hotels—to establish **permanent funding** for VISIT PHILADELPHIA's tourism marketing efforts.

2001

VISIT PHILADELPHIA launches **Philly's More Fun When You Sleep Over®** and the Philly Overnight® Hotel Package, contributing to "the most successful hospitality recovery in the country" after 9/11, according to Smith Travel Research.

2004

Philadelphia becomes the first destination in the world to launch an LGBT-themed television commercial, part of VISIT PHILADELPHIA's **Philadelphia – Get Your History Straight and Your Nightlife Gay®** campaign.



2007

Once again, VISIT PHILADELPHIA sees the beginnings of a trend, and in response launches an in-the-know, what's-happening blog for Philly, uwishunu.com. The emerging insider phrase "social media marketing" is already a main focus for the organization.

2008

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania enables the City of Philadelphia to institute a **1.2% increase** in the Philadelphia County **hotel room occupancy tax**, which is shared among VISIT PHILADELPHIA, the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority.

2009

The Philly Overnight Hotel Package sells its **100,000th package**.

VISIT PHILADELPHIA launches **With Love, Philadelphia XOXO®**, with inviting and playful love letters penned from Philadelphia.

2012

The City of Philadelphia, VISIT PHILADELPHIA and a group of civic and cultural partners launch **With Art Philadelphia®**, the city's first-ever coordinated and sustained visual arts marketing campaign.

2013

After years of planning—and years of people asking for it—**visitphilly.com** begins an **advertising** program to give partners more visibility on the valuable trip-planning site.

2015

The **#visitphilly Photo Spots** launch, giving locals and visitors even more reasons to snap and share photos of the city. Structures include giant XOXOs and With Love chairs.

2016

Started in 2007, VISIT PHILADELPHIA's award-winning social media program hits **one million fans and followers**.

VISIT PHILADELPHIA airs the **Philazillas TV commercial**, with the line, "There's more to a legendary city than its legends."

Continuing its history of forward-thinking, VISIT PHILADELPHIA launches its **Entrepreneur in Residence program**, a first-of-its-kind initiative for a destination marketing organization.





For a quick read of this timeline, check out the happenings featured in the sidebars throughout the piece.



MURAL ARTS PROGRAM BEGINS



LIBERTY PLACE OPENS



FIRST FRIDAY BEGINS

The Destination Timeline highlights the major milestones that have made Greater Philadelphia a premier destination.

1980s

- The City of Philadelphia **Mural Arts Program** begins in 1984 as the Philadelphia Anti-Graffiti Network. Today, Philadelphia is the mural capital of the world, with more than 3,800 murals created.
- **Live Aid** takes place in just two cities in 1985—Philadelphia and London. It's one of the largest television broadcasts of all time, with an estimated global audience of 1.9 billion.
- In 1985, **The Foundation for Architecture** begins its guided architectural tour program.
- The **Great Plaza at Penn's Landing** opens Memorial Day weekend in 1986 with the first annual Jambalaya Jam.
- In 1987, the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau forms the **Multicultural Affairs Congress** to promote African-American conventions and tourism.
- Founded in 1987, the **Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority** begins to develop a convention center in Philadelphia.
- That same year, **Marriott** commits to building a 1,200-room hotel adjacent to the Pennsylvania Convention Center.
- In 1987, the 61-story **Liberty Place** office and retail complex opens, breaking the 100-year-old agreement limiting buildings in Center City to the height of the William Penn statue atop City Hall.
- **We the People**, a celebration of the 200th birthday of the *U.S. Constitution*, culminates on September 17, 1987 (Constitution Day) with the permanent lighting of the Benjamin Franklin Bridge.
- In 1989, the first **Liberty Medal** is awarded to Solidarity founder and president of Poland Lech Walesa.
- Throughout most of the decade, Philadelphia continues its storied tradition of hosting the annual **Army-Navy Game**.

1991

- An annual **New Year's Eve** celebration begins with fireworks at Penn's Landing.
- Old City Arts starts **First Friday**, the art community's monthly open house.
- **Center City District** sidewalk sweepers and community service representatives are deployed on the streets of Center City.

1992

- **Edward G. Rendell** begins his first term as mayor of Philadelphia.
- Neighbors in the New World commemorate the **Columbus Quincentennial**—the 500th anniversary of the landing of Columbus in the Americas—with a yearlong event celebrating the people who found their own America in Philly.
- The New Jersey State Aquarium (now **Adventure Aquarium**) opens in Camden, New Jersey.

1993

- New hotel opens: 288-suite **Embassy Suites** on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway.
- The **Pennsylvania Convention Center** opens to great acclaim, spurring new development and increased visitation.
- The annual **Welcome America!** festival is created to celebrate America's birthday in its birthplace.
- Penn's Landing's **waterfront shuttle system** debuts.
- **Avenue of the Arts, Inc.** is commissioned to promote South Broad Street as the city's performing arts hub for theater, music, dance and higher education.

1994

- **Tom Ridge** is elected governor of Pennsylvania.
- The restored and redesigned **Reading Terminal Train Shed** opens as part of the Pennsylvania Convention Center. The restoration of the Reading Terminal Market is also completed.
- The **Blue Cross RiverRink** opens at Penn's Landing.
- After receiving five nominations, the film **Philadelphia** goes on to win two Academy Awards.
- The **PHS Philadelphia Flower Show** moves to the Pennsylvania Convention Center, increasing the city's tourism "ripple effect."

1995

- New hotels open: 1,200-room **Philadelphia Marriott** adjacent to the Pennsylvania Convention Center; 419-room **Philadelphia Airport Marriott Hotel**; and 330-room **Airport Hilton** (after a \$3 million renovation).
- Philadelphia's **Clef Club of the Performing Arts**, the oldest African-American musicians' organization and performance space, moves to a new location on the Avenue of the Arts.
- **Center City District** initiates a routine graffiti-removal program.
- The **Independence Seaport Museum**, focusing on the region's rich maritime history, opens on Penn's Landing.
- Stephen Starr opens the first of his many Philadelphia restaurants—**Continental Restaurant and Martini Bar** in Old City.
- The extraordinary impressionist collection of the **Barnes Foundation** tours the world for the first time.

1996

- **Edward G. Rendell** begins his second term as mayor of Philadelphia.
- **Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation (now VISIT PHILADELPHIA)** is founded by the City of Philadelphia, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and The Pew Charitable Trusts as a public-private partnership to market the five-county region (Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties).
- The blockbuster **Cézanne** exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum of Art attracts a record 548,741 visitors.
- Philadelphia hosts the **Major League Baseball All-Star Game**.
- **Hotel occupancy** increases overall this year, despite a 20% increase in room supply with the opening of the Marriott.



**WELCOME
AMERICA!**
BEGINS



**BLUE CROSS
RIVERRINK**
OPENS



PHLASH DOWNTOWN LOOP SERVICE BEGINS



KING OF PRUSSIA MALL EXPANDS



FRINGE FESTIVAL DEBUTS

- The **PHLASH Downtown Loop** begins service. The purple buses offer a comfortable and convenient way to get to attractions, restaurants, hotels and the Pennsylvania Convention Center.
- Center City District's **\$26 million streetscape improvement** program installs 1,000 pedestrian light fixtures, 400 new trees and directional signage.
- **King of Prussia Mall** completes a five-year, \$185 million redevelopment and expansion, making it the largest mall on the East Coast.
- **The Wilma Theater** opens its new 300-seat facility on the Avenue of the Arts.
- The **Avenue of the Arts** completes a \$15 million streetscape program with granite sidewalk slabs, old-fashioned street lamps, landscaping and granite curbs.
- **Freedom Theatre** finishes a \$10 million renovation, resulting in a new 300-seat theater, modern classrooms and offices, housing for visiting artists and a design studio.
- The 25,000-seat Blockbuster-Sony Music Entertainment Center (now the **BB&T Pavilion**) opens across the Delaware River in Camden, New Jersey.

1997

- VISIT PHILADELPHIA launches gophila.com (now **visitphilly.com**), the official visitor website for Greater Philadelphia.
- VISIT PHILADELPHIA launches the region's first advertising campaign, **This Is My Philadelphia**. Tourism increases 7%, with the campaign generating 1.13 million trips to the area; Philadelphia's five-county region becomes **The Place That Loves You Back**.
- The City of Philadelphia passes a **10-year tax abatement** for residential conversions, prompting the addition of 10,000 new housing units downtown.
- The 14,000-square-foot **Hard Rock Cafe** opens underneath the Pennsylvania Convention Center's Grand Hall in the historic Reading Terminal Headhouse.
- The **Pennsylvania Convention Center** is responsible for \$1 billion in economic impact.
- The Philadelphia Fringe Festival (now **Fringe Festival**) debuts. The annual September event offers cutting-edge performances in theaters and alternative spaces throughout the city.
- **Philadelphia International Airport** completes a \$1 billion capital improvement program, adding new and upgraded terminals, improved baggage delivery, moving sidewalks, an expanded ticket pavilion, a retail concession mall and improved security checkpoints.
- **QVC** opens its \$100 million headquarters, Studio Park, in West Chester. The home shopping network begins giving tours of the 80-acre site.

1998

- New hotels open: 294-suite **Hawthorn Suites Philadelphia at the Convention Center** and 152-room **Hampton Inn at Philadelphia**.
- **Governor Tom Ridge** is re-elected and continues to approve funding for the arts and tourism-related efforts.

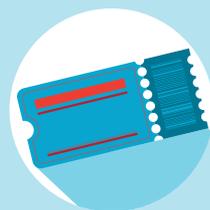
- The 21,000-seat, \$210 million Comcast-Spectacor First Union Center (now the **Wells Fargo Center**) opens as the new home of the Philadelphia Flyers hockey team and the Philadelphia 76ers basketball team.
- The \$7 million overhaul of the **Reading Terminal Headhouse** is completed, giving the Pennsylvania Convention Center a grand front entrance on Market Street.

1999

- New hotels open: 210-room Marriott expansion into the Headhouse, adjacent to the 1,200-room **Marriott Philadelphia Convention Center**; 318-suite **Windsor Hotel**; the renovated 569-room **Warwick Hotel**; 238-room **Inn at Penn**; 250-room **Twelve Caesars Hotel**; and 500-room **Courtyard by Marriott**.
- The **Pennsylvania Convention Center** completes a technology upgrade and becomes one of the most technologically advanced centers in the country.
- The new **Lights of Liberty** attraction, the world's first walkable sound-and-light show, opens in Independence National Historical Park.
- The new **Cruise Ship Terminal at Pier 1** opens at The Navy Yard.
- Lawmakers pass a **1% hotel tax increase** to permanently fund VISIT PHILADELPHIA's tourism marketing efforts.
- The **Prince Music Theater** opens after a \$7.5 million renovation of a historic theater on Chestnut Street.
- **Greater Philadelphia First** releases its annual report on regional economic benchmarks, calling the hospitality and tourism sector the region's third largest and one of its "most significant growth industries."
- Philadelphia hosts the world premiere of hometown director M. Night Shyamalan's locally filmed **The Sixth Sense** at the Prince Music Theater.
- On December 31, during **Millennium Philadelphia's** 24-hour celebration, several historic landmarks are permanently lighted—the William Penn statue atop City Hall and seven Schuylkill River bridges. Rittenhouse Square's annual holiday lighting tradition also begins and eventually expands to other city squares.

2000

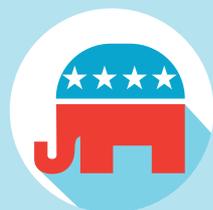
- New hotels open: 300-room **Sofitel Philadelphia**; 330-room **The Ritz-Carlton, Philadelphia**; 279-room **Hilton Garden Inn**; and 585-room **Loews Philadelphia Hotel**.
- New City of Philadelphia **Mayor John F. Street** takes office in January.
- Passed in 1997, Philadelphia's **10-year tax abatement** expands to include new construction and conversions.
- The **National Liberty Museum** opens in Old City.
- The **NCAA Women's Final Four** draws 40,000 fans in March.
- The **Republican National Convention** brings 20,000 delegates and guests and 15,000 media to the city.
- President Bill Clinton is on hand for the groundbreaking of the **National Constitution Center** on Constitution Day, September 17.
- Amtrak begins its high-speed **Acela Express** service, operating along the Northeast Corridor, in December.



WELLS FARGO CENTER OPENS



NATIONAL LIBERTY MUSEUM OPENS



PHILADELPHIA HOSTS REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION



INDEPENDENCE VISITOR CENTER OPENS



KIMMEL CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS OPENS

- **Millennium Philadelphia** continues with an 18-hour celebration on December 31, commemorating the centennial of City Hall and the Mummers.

2001

- New hotels open: 350-room Hyatt Regency Philadelphia at Penn's Landing (now **Hilton Philadelphia at Penn's Landing**); 200-room **Hampton Inn**; and 199-room **SpringHill Suites by Marriott Philadelphia Plymouth Meeting**.
- The best-preserved archeological find in an urban American area is discovered on the grounds of the under-construction **National Constitution Center**.
- Philadelphia hosts ESPN's **X Games**, the world's premier and original summer action sporting event, for the first year of a two-year contract.
- Mayor John F. Street challenges the hospitality industry to create a \$3.6 million marketing program to aid the region's short-term recovery after the September 11 attacks. The result is the **Philly's More Fun When You Sleep Over** marketing campaign, featuring the **Philly Overnight® Hotel Package**. The campaign generates 36,645 room nights and leads to what Smith Travel Research calls the country's most successful hospitality recovery.
- The regional \$38 million **Independence Visitor Center** opens in November on Independence Mall.
- The \$265 million **Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts** opens in December on the Avenue of the Arts.

2002

- New hotel opens: 285-room **Residence Inn by Marriott Center City Philadelphia**.
- Philadelphia hosts the **NBA All-Star 2002**, featuring the NBA All-Star Game, Jam Session, All-Star Saturday and All-Star Shootout.
- The **Multicultural Affairs Congress** launches its travel website, designed to attract diverse travelers to the Philadelphia region.
- The Delaware River Port Authority approves grants to VISIT PHILADELPHIA and the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau for **international marketing**.
- VISIT PHILADELPHIA kicks off the **Philly Friends and Family** campaign, providing residents with a tourism toolkit to encourage regional visitation and overnight hotel stays. The program, funded by the Delaware River Port Authority, devotes \$3 million to advertising and \$1 million to product development over three years.
- VISIT PHILADELPHIA's **Philadelphia Neighborhood Tourism Network** debuts a cultural immersion tour program in six neighborhoods.
- The **Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts** ushers in its first summer season with an all-night Summer Solstice celebration, now an annual event.
- The Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance begins the region's Campaign for Culture and launches a consumer website, **phillyfunguide.com**, offering up-to-the-minute information about leisure activities in the region.

- **CruisePhilly**, an initiative to market Philadelphia as a cruise port, sets sail in October.

2003

- Domestic visitation to the Philadelphia region reaches **30 million** for the first time.
- Former Mayor of Philadelphia **Edward G. Rendell** takes office as governor of Pennsylvania.
- **CultureFiles®**, an online inventory of 400 of the region's arts and cultural offerings funded by the William Penn Foundation, debuts on gophila.com to increase the marketing capacity of regional attractions.
- **Philadelphia International Airport** opens a new international terminal, which adds 13 gates to the seven already used for overseas flights.
- **Christ Church Burial Ground** reopens to the public after a 25-year hiatus.
- Two of the region's most popular websites—phila.gov and gophila.com—partner to give visitors and residents the region's most comprehensive tourism and civic online resource.
- **Ride The Ducks**, a land-to-water touring vehicle, debuts.
- Made famous in London, **Big Bus Tours** begins service.
- The \$185 million **National Constitution Center** opens on July 4 on Independence Mall.
- The Pennsylvania Convention Center signs a **Customer Satisfaction Agreement** to ensure competitive costs and customer-focused services.
- **Lincoln Financial Field**, the 68,000-seat home to the Philadelphia Eagles, opens in August.
- The \$12.6 million **Liberty Bell Center** opens just across from Independence Hall.
- The **Philadelphia Phillies** play their last season in Veterans Stadium.
- The **Fairmount Water Works Interpretive Center** opens in the fall.
- **Center City District Restaurant Week** starts in September. It is a huge success and eventually turns into a biannual event, with weeks in fall and winter.
- VISIT PHILADELPHIA's popular **Philly's More Fun When You Sleep Over** ads, featuring the "pajama guy," are posted on Times Square's video billboard and outside Madison Square Garden on a 100-foot banner.
- With the support of the Philadelphia Gay Tourism Caucus, VISIT PHILADELPHIA launches the nation's largest gay tourism marketing campaign: **Philadelphia – Get Your History Straight and Your Nightlife Gay**.
- The city-to-suburb **Schuylkill River Trail** opens, making it possible to bike 22 miles along the Schuylkill River from Center City to Valley Forge. Today it extends 30 miles to Parkerford.



NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER OPENS



LINCOLN FINANCIAL FIELD OPENS



LIBERTY BELL CENTER OPENS



CITIZENS BANK PARK OPENS



SOUTHWEST AND FRONTIER AIRLINES BEGIN SERVICE IN PHILADELPHIA

2004

- **Mayor John F. Street** begins his second term in office.
- The Phillies' ballpark, the 43,000-seat **Citizens Bank Park**, with a natural grass and dirt field, opens in April.
- In April, Mayor Street announces the **Wireless Philadelphia** initiative to provide citywide wireless Internet access. The plan receives international media attention, putting Philadelphia on the map as a forward-thinking city.
- The **PHLASH Downtown Loop** resumes service in Center City in May. The purple buses-turned-trolleys are privatized and return with a new look, a new route and a new fare structure.
- VISIT PHILADELPHIA makes Philadelphia the first destination in the world to broadcast a gay-themed television commercial as part of the city's gay tourism campaign, **Philadelphia – Get Your History Straight and Your Nightlife Gay**.
- **Southwest Airlines** and **Frontier Airlines** begin low-fare service from Philadelphia International Airport in May.
- **Center City District** completes a \$5.3 million project to improve lighting on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. Enhancements include new roadway fixtures and lighting of public art and architecturally significant buildings.
- The MTV reality show ***The Real World: Philadelphia*** debuts, exposing a potential 68 million viewers in 43 countries to the city.
- **World Cafe Live** opens as a dining and concert venue, in addition to housing the broadcast studios of the award-winning World Cafe radio program on WXPB-FM.
- The **Second Bank of the United States** reopens with a new exhibition that broadens the story of 18th-century Philadelphia.
- **Center City District** completes a \$750,000 lighting project to illuminate all four exterior façades of City Hall.
- The **Barnes Foundation** receives permission to move from Merion, Pennsylvania, to Center City Philadelphia. The Pew Charitable Trusts, Lenfest Foundation and others commit to raising \$150 million for the project.
- VISIT PHILADELPHIA and the Washington, DC Convention & Tourism Corporation team up to create a two-city tour promoting the attractions featured in the Nicholas Cage film ***National Treasure***.

2005

- The **Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts**, America's oldest art museum and school, celebrates its 200th anniversary with a gala marking the opening of the new fine arts campus, the Hamilton Building.
- Philadelphia's landmark **Boathouse Row** goes dark for several months as the 11 rowing clubs along the Schuylkill River are updated with a new computer-operated LED lighting system, unveiled in June.
- Philly goes "green" with excitement as the **Philadelphia Eagles** make their first Super Bowl appearance since 1981. Alas, they are defeated by the New England Patriots, 23-21.

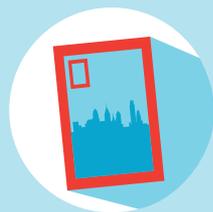
- The Philadelphia Museum of Art's **Salvador Dalí** retrospective is a success, with 370,000 visitors, 85% of whom come from outside Philadelphia. The Philadelphia Museum of Art, Advanta and VISIT PHILADELPHIA work to create an unprecedented marketing campaign, which comes to be nationally recognized as The Dalí Model, a template for future projects.
- The **Benstitute**, providing 100 hours of training to Once Upon A Nation storytellers, welcomes its first class in May.
- On Memorial Day weekend, Once Upon A Nation (now **Historic Philadelphia, Inc.**) kicks off with a summer-long celebration featuring storytelling, Adventure Tours and Colonial re-enactments.
- The first phase of a \$10 million restoration project is completed this summer at **Smith Memorial Playground and Playhouse**, a Fairmount Park institution most famous for its 100-year-old Giant Wooden Slide.
- On July 2, two decades after hosting the original Live Aid, Philadelphia serves as the North American host city for **Live 8**, a daylong global concert series featuring music's biggest stars. An estimated 400,000 people attend the show, giving Philadelphia higher attendance figures than any of the other host cities.
- In July, the National Park Service unveils a new lighting project so that the American flag can fly 24 hours a day over **Independence Hall**.
- In August, *The New York Times* prints a cover story in its Sunday Style section entitled "**Philadelphia Story: The Next Borough.**" An buzz-inducing headline serves as water-cooler talk for weeks.
- In the fall, the William Penn Foundation awards VISIT PHILADELPHIA a \$1.6 million grant to develop **Boundless Philadelphia®**, a campaign aimed at promoting the region's natural assets and recreational opportunities.
- **DesignPhiladelphia** debuts to celebrate design and to show its importance in the city's economic, social and educational growth.
- *National Geographic Traveler* declares Philadelphia the "**Next Great City**" in its October issue.
- The **Cira Centre** opens in Philadelphia, changing the face of the city's skyline. With direct access to 30th Street Station, the building features 28 floors of office space.
- Sixteen regional hospitality, business, cultural and civic organizations collaborate to create a common mark, **Forever Independent**, which represents the region and serves as a unifying theme for communications.
- **Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World** makes its world debut at the National Constitution Center in December. The exhibition is the key component of the city's yearlong "Ben Franklin 300 Philadelphia" celebration to commemorate Franklin's 300th birthday.

2006

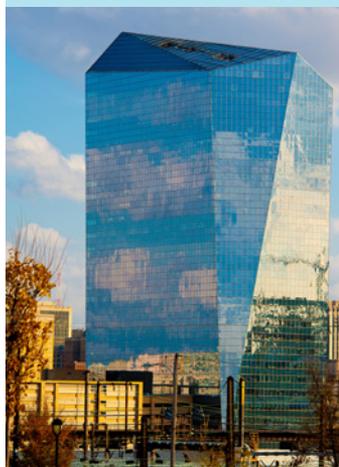
- Chester County's **Longwood Gardens** celebrates its 100th anniversary with a \$25 million renovation.
- VISIT PHILADELPHIA's free, completely customizable **SoundAboutPhilly®** podcast tours debut, telling Philadelphia's story through lesser-known city experiences, lively music and local voices.



PHILADELPHIA
HOSTS **LIVE 8**



NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC
TRAVELER CALLS
PHILADELPHIA
"**NEXT GREAT
CITY**"



CIRA CENTRE
OPENS



RESTORED
**FRANKLIN
SQUARE**
OPENS

- VISIT PHILADELPHIA celebrates its **10th anniversary** at its annual industry event. Since the company began advertising in 1997, leisure hotel stays in the region have risen 55%.
- In May, the United States Olympic Committee names Philadelphia as one of five U.S. cities to compete for the **2016 Olympic Games**. Although the city is eliminated from the competition in July, Philadelphia capitalizes on this momentum to increase the number of national and international sporting events taking place in the region.
- One of the city's original squares, Historic Philadelphia's **Franklin Square** opens mid-summer after a restoration that includes the addition of Philly Mini Golf, Philadelphia Park Liberty Carousel and two playgrounds.
- The region's first slot parlor opens at the **Philadelphia Park Casino and Racetrack** in Bucks County in December.

2007



**PHILADELPHIA
PARK CASINO
AND RACETRACK**
OPENS REGION'S
FIRST SLOT
PARLOR

- Hotel revenue in the five-county region reaches **\$1 billion** for the first time.
- The **uwishunu**[®] campaign debuts in January, giving in-the-know residents a chance to spread the word about the new Philly through a blog, uwishunu.com. Funded by the City of Philadelphia, the initiative is spearheaded by VISIT PHILADELPHIA.
- The region's second slot parlor opens at **Harrah's Chester Casino & Racetrack** in Delaware County in January.
- During its eight-month run at The Franklin Institute, the blockbuster **Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs** attracts nearly 1.3 million visitors, making it the most popular museum exhibition in Pennsylvania's history. To extend its success, VISIT PHILADELPHIA creates a regional celebration centered on Tut with a \$1 million grant from the state.
- The archeological dig at **The President's House** site in Old City uncovers some unexpected finds, including foundations of the bow window added by George Washington (a precursor to the Oval Office) and those of an underground passage used by servants and enslaved people. For several months, visitors are able to stand on a viewing platform and ask questions of park rangers.
- In June, Philadelphia joins in the statewide **Quest for Freedom** program, using tours, re-enactments and living history programs to highlight the people and places that played pivotal roles in the abolitionist movement.
- In June, VISIT PHILADELPHIA partners with more than 30 organizations for **Historic Philadelphia**, a campaign to connect the neighborhoods between Spruce and Race streets and Front and 7th streets and to highlight the variety of activities the area offers.
- The Westin Philadelphia turns over one of its guest rooms to uwishunu and 30 local designers and artists to create the hippest room in town—Room 414, or the **uwishunu Room**. After hosting its first guests in May, the room continues to be a hit with hotel guests until 2009, when The Westin refurbishes the room.
- The Philadelphia Museum of Art's **Ruth and Raymond G. Perelman Building** opens in September, showcasing the museum's costume and textile collections.

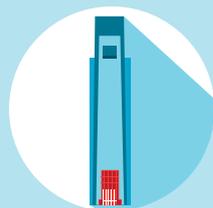


**RUTH AND
RAYMOND G.
PERELMAN
BUILDING**
OPENS

- The Philadelphia Phillies become **National League East Division Champions** in September and enter post-season play for the first time in 14 years.
- Philadelphia Theatre Company reopens at the **Suzanne Roberts Theatre** on the Avenue of the Arts in October.
- After five years of planning, **Longwood Gardens** debuts its dynamic Indoor Children's Garden in October.
- The 150 stores of the **Philadelphia Premium Outlets** open in November in Limerick, Montgomery County.
- In November, South Broad Street gets a dramatic new look when the Center City District, with French lighting firm Artlumière, projects special lighting effects onto five buildings on the **Avenue of the Arts**. The Terra Building is the first of almost a dozen buildings that will be permanently lighted.

2008

- New hotels open: 24-room **Independent Hotel Philadelphia**; 136-room **Aloft Philadelphia Airport**; and 92-room **Four Points by Sheraton Philadelphia City Center**.
- The city hosts a record-breaking **710,000 international visitors** (overseas) in 2008, bucking a national trend with an increase of more than 150,000 from 2007. The 29% increase is the largest of any city among the top 20 most visited in the U.S., according to the Commerce Department.
- New City of Philadelphia Mayor **Michael A. Nutter** takes office in January.
- The 58-story **Comcast Center** opens at 17th Street and John F. Kennedy Boulevard. It's the tallest building between New York and Chicago and the tallest "green" building in the country. The 2,000-square-foot LED screen in the building's lobby is an instant hit with visitors.
- **BoltBus** and **Megabus** begin low-cost service from New York to Philly. Megabus later extends Philadelphia service to include routes from 20 cities, while BoltBus adds a Boston route.
- The first **Philly Beer Week** celebrates the city's lively brewing history in March. The annual event now takes place in June.
- At the **National Constitution Center**, Barack Obama delivers his memorable speech on race in March, and Obama and Hillary Clinton debate here in April during the primary race.
- Philadelphia is one of only two U.S. cities to host two **U.S. Olympic Trials**—table tennis and gymnastics.
- The inaugural **Roots Picnic** goes down at the Festival Pier at Penn's Landing. Organized by hometown band The Roots, the daylong concert/festival is now a highlight of the summer concert season.
- **Please Touch Museum®** moves into Fairmount Park's Memorial Hall in October after an \$85 million renovation project.
- The Philadelphia Phillies win the **World Series** in October.
- In November, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania enables the City of Philadelphia to institute a **1.2% increase** in the Philadelphia County hotel room occupancy tax, which is divided among VISIT PHILADELPHIA, the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Pennsylvania Convention Center.
- The Comcast Center debuts **The Comcast Holiday Spectacular** on its LED screen.



COMCAST CENTER OPENS



PHILLY BEER WEEK BEGINS



ROOTS PICNIC DEBUTS



PHILLIES WIN WORLD SERIES



THE SCHMIDT'S COMMONS OPENS



THE AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM IN PHILADELPHIA OPENS NEW CORE EXHIBIT

2009

- New hotel opens: 235-room **Hotel Palomar Philadelphia**, the first Kimpton property in the city.
- In 2009, the region welcomes the film crews of **11 movies and television shows**, more than any other year to date. The film industry accounts for \$270 million in direct spending in the region, according to the Greater Philadelphia Film Office.
- The nation's first zoo, the **Philadelphia Zoo** celebrates its sesquicentennial—or 150th anniversary—with the debut of the new McNeil Avian Center.
- In February, the Johnson family from Hanover, Pennsylvania books the 100,000th **Philly Overnight Hotel Package**, representing 200,000 room nights and \$20 million in hotel revenue.
- VISIT PHILADELPHIA launches the **Philly 360[®]** campaign, designed to reach younger, tech-savvy travelers by highlighting music, design and culture.
- May brings the opening of The Piazza at Schmidts (now **The Schmidt's Commons**), an 80,000-square-foot, open-air plaza in Northern Liberties.
- VISIT PHILADELPHIA launches **With Love, Philadelphia XOXO** during National Tourism and Travel Week in May. The tourism marketing campaign features love letters penned by Philadelphia inviting different types of travelers to visit.
- Thanks to a \$3 million grant, **The African American Museum in Philadelphia** opens its new core exhibition, Audacious Freedom, on Juneteenth (June 19).
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano announces \$26 million in funding for two new inline baggage handling systems at **Philadelphia International Airport**, increasing security and easing check-in procedures.
- The **Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania** debuts Tree Adventure, a \$3.1 million permanent and interactive installation, in July.
- The one-acre **Philadelphia Museum of Art Anne d'Harnoncourt Sculpture Garden**, located on top of a new parking facility, debuts and extends the museum's art holdings to the outdoors.
- In October, the **Phillies** win their third consecutive National League East Division title, their second consecutive National League Division Series and their second consecutive National League pennant.
- Pearl Jam closes the **Wachovia Spectrum** with a concert on Halloween night. In 2011, demolition crews raze the venue to make room for XFINITY Live!, a retail, restaurant and entertainment complex.
- In December, the \$250 million **Parx Casino[®]** opens in Bensalem, Bucks County and replaces the temporary slot parlor that had been there since 2006. With 3,300 slot machines, 176 electronic table games, three restaurants, a sports bar, a lounge and an entertainment area, the casino completes the Philadelphia Park Racetrack and Parx Casino experience.
- The **National Liberty Museum** marks its 10th anniversary with the debut of its new permanent exhibition, Heroes of Character.
- For the first time, Philadelphia residents and visitors can see **two fireworks shows** over the Delaware River on New Year's Eve—at 6 p.m. and midnight.

2010

- New hotels open: 202-room **Le Méridien Philadelphia** and 129-room **Hyatt Place Philadelphia/King of Prussia**.
- Leisure hotel room nights in Center City Philadelphia surpass **800,000**—triple the number in 1997, when VISIT PHILADELPHIA placed its first ad.
- In January, **visitphilly.com** (formerly gophila.com) debuts with a new look and new name.
- February brings the completion of **Philadelphia International Airport's** \$45 million Terminal E expansion —with seven new aircraft gates, a mini-food court and artwork—and the new 9,000-square-foot baggage claim for Terminals D and E.
- In March, President Barack Obama signs the **Travel Promotion Act**, creating the country's first national travel promotion program. In September, travelers to the U.S. from 36 countries begin paying a \$14 fee, \$10 of which funds tourism initiatives.
- **Philadelphia Union**, the nation's 16th Major League Soccer team, kicks off its first season in March.
- After a two-year, \$29 million renovation, The Baptist Temple (now **Temple Performing Arts Center**) at Temple University reopens in April as the cultural anchor of the northern section of the Avenue of the Arts.
- In May, the **Philadelphia Flyers** make it to the Stanley Cup Finals for the first time since 1997. Unfortunately, the Chicago Blackhawks defeat the Fly Guys in Game 6.
- In the summer, VISIT PHILADELPHIA takes With Love, Philadelphia XOXO from campaign to experience by partnering with local organizations to create products and programs: **Phanatic Around Town** with the Phillies; **Summer Love Ale** with Victory Brewing Company; the **With Love, Philadelphia XOXO Philly Cheesecake** with Capogiro Gelato Artisans; and the **With Love Carrot Cupcake** with Frog Commissary.
- Philadelphia Union's stadium, the 18,500-seat **PPL Park**, hosts its first game in June.
- With partners the William Penn Foundation and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, VISIT PHILADELPHIA launches **Philly Homegrown®**, a consumer education and tourism marketing program promoting the people, places and flavors of the area's 100-mile foodshed.
- In July, Philadelphia celebrates the 40th anniversary of the **Gayborhood** with There's No Place Like Home, a two-week event featuring a block party and special offers at neighborhood businesses.
- **SugarHouse Casino** opens as the city's first casino in September and features slot machines, table games, a restaurant, snack bar, lounge and outdoor promenade.
- In September, **Kimpton's Hotel Palomar Philadelphia** and **Square 1682** restaurant receive LEED Gold certification, marking the first LEED-certified hotel and restaurant for Kimpton and for Philadelphia.
- The **Historic Philadelphia Center** opens, and **Liberty 360**, a 3-D, 360-degree show, debuts in September.



PPL PARK
OPENS



SUGARHOUSE
CASINO OPENS



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY OPENS



THE PRESIDENT'S HOUSE: FREEDOM AND SLAVERY IN THE MAKING OF A NEW NATION OPENS

- In October, the **Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania** unveils its \$13 million Horticulture Center Complex, which achieves LEED Platinum status.
- In October, the **Phillies** win their fourth consecutive National League East Division title and their third consecutive National League Division Series.
- The \$150 million **National Museum of American Jewish History** opens in November on Independence Mall.
- In November and December, **Parx Casino** debuts a poker room and additional table games, part of a multiphase expansion to be unveiled over the next couple of years.
- **Cliff Lee** makes national news when he signs with the Phillies instead of the New York Yankees, who offered him more money. Quoted in tons of stories, Lee says a major reason for the move was that he and his family loved living in Philadelphia.
- **The President's House: Freedom and Slavery in the Making of a New Nation**, just steps from the Liberty Bell Center and Independence Hall, opens on Independence Mall in December.

2011

- New hotels open: 110-room **SpringHill Suites in Valley Forge** and 147-room **Hotel Sierra – King of Prussia**.
- Newly elected **Governor Tom Corbett** takes office in January.
- The expanded **Pennsylvania Convention Center** opens in March with one million square feet of space, nearly 60% more than its size in 2007.
- Philadelphia hosts the **NCAA Wrestling Championships** in March.
- The completed \$3.8 million revitalization project of **El Centro de Oro** neighborhood includes new landscaping, new sidewalks with a golden band, metal palm trees along the streets and more.
- Featuring an upper level with a grand sky promenade and a lower level for recreation and social gatherings, the revitalized **Race Street Pier** opens in May along the Delaware River waterfront.
- The **Philadelphia Soul**, the 2008 league champions, return to the Arena Football League for the 2011 season in April.
- The Kimmel Center's first **Philadelphia International Festival of the Arts (PIFA)** debuts in April. It includes more than 100 events by the region's performing arts and cultural organizations.
- The first **Philadelphia Science Festival**, a community-wide science celebration featuring hundreds of mostly free events, takes place in April.
- Another festival first, **Philly Tech Week** shines a light on Philadelphia's burgeoning tech scene.
- The best college rugby teams converge at PPL Park for the inaugural **USA Sevens Collegiate Rugby Championship**.
- The **Mercer Museum** in Doylestown debuts its \$12.5 million, 13,000-square-foot expansion in June.
- Philadelphia Union hosts the **2012 Major League Soccer All-Star Game** in July at PPL Park.
- Philadelphia hosts the **National Association of Black Journalists'** annual convention in August; the last time the city hosted the group was in 1995.

- Philadelphia welcomes the **National Lesbian & Gay Journalists Association's** annual convention in August.
- The September completion of the \$46 million **Penn Park** brings 20% more green space—including open space, athletic fields, tennis courts, bike trails and an elevated walk—to the University of Pennsylvania campus and creates a gateway between University City and Center City.
- In September, the former Spaghetti Warehouse on Spring Garden Street transforms into **Union Transfer**, a live music venue with capacity for 1,000 people.
- The \$4 million **Independence Hall Tower** restoration project, rehabilitating the exterior and structural deterioration, is completed in September.
- In October, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA) unveils **Lenfest Plaza**, a pedestrian court that connects PAFA's two buildings and features a 53-foot-high sculpture by Claes Oldenburg and rotating works.
- University City District unveils **The Porch at 30th Street Station** next to the third-busiest train station in the country in November. Seating, performances, fitness classes, food trucks and special events animate the open urban space.

2012

- New hotels open: 271-room **Kimpton's Hotel Monaco Philadelphia**; 136-room **Homewood Suites by Hilton University City**; 486-room **Valley Forge Casino Resort**; and 180-room **Sheraton Valley Forge**.
- **Spirit Airlines** and **Alaska Airlines** begin service in Philadelphia.
- **Sister Cities Park**, located in front of the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, opens with a cafe and visitor center, children's discovery garden, boat pond and interactive fountain that pays tribute to Philadelphia's 10 sister cities around the world.
- The City of Philadelphia, VISIT PHILADELPHIA and a group of civic and cultural partners launch **With Art Philadelphia**, the city's first-ever coordinated visual arts marketing campaign.
- The **Barnes Foundation** opens on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in May after relocating from Merion, Pennsylvania.
- The fully renovated **Rodin Museum** on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway reopens in July.
- In March, the **XFINITY Live!** dining and entertainment center opens in South Philadelphia where the Spectrum once stood.
- The **Phillies** celebrate their 257 home-game sellout streak, the longest ever in the National League and third-longest in MLB history.
- On Labor Day weekend, Jay Z hosts the first **Made In America**, a two-day outdoor festival and concert along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. The extravaganza and two sold-out Bruce Springsteen shows at Citizens Bank Park result in the most successful Labor Day weekend for hotels in recent history.
- In September, the **Philadelphia History Museum at the Atwater Kent** (formerly Atwater Kent Museum of Philadelphia) reopens in a renovated space with new galleries, new exhibits and a new name that clarifies the institution's mission.



LENFEST PLAZA OPENS



BARNES FOUNDATION OPENS



MADE IN AMERICA DEBUTS



PHS POP UP GARDEN OPENS



MERION GOLF CLUB HOSTS U.S. OPEN

- Yannick Nézet-Séguin takes over as music director of [The Philadelphia Orchestra](#) in October.
- *Silver Linings Playbook*, filmed and set in Philadelphia, is released. Academy Award-nominated Bradley Cooper raves about his hometown in interviews, casting a spotlight on his city.
- In December, Philadelphia City Council passes a bill to secure the balance of the [Hospitality Promotion Tax](#), which was passed in 2008 by the state, but enacted at 0.3% less than called for. The remaining 0.3% is divided between VISIT PHILADELPHIA and the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau.
- Philadelphia takes the fourth spot on Lonely Planet's list of "[Top 10 US Travel Destinations for 2013](#)," out in December.

2013

- New hotel opens: 248-suite [Home2 Suites by Hilton](#).
- In 2013, many hotels rebrand (Holiday Inn Historic District becomes [Wyndham Philadelphia Historic District](#); Comfort Inn transforms into [Holiday Inn Express Philadelphia–Penn's Landing](#); Hampton Inn Philadelphia NE–Bensalem switches to [Holiday Inn Express Philadelphia NE–Bensalem](#); and Radisson Plaza Warwick turns into [Radisson Blu Warwick Hotel, Philadelphia](#)) and renovate ([Crowne Plaza Philadelphia West](#), [Sheraton Philadelphia Downtown](#), [Loews Philadelphia Hotel](#), [The Rittenhouse](#) and [DoubleTree by Hilton Philadelphia Center City](#)).
- Some of the best college basketball teams in the country converge in South Philadelphia at the Wells Fargo Center for the second and third rounds of the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament, also known as [March Madness](#).
- [Visitphilly.com](#)—the official visitor website for Greater Philadelphia—begins featuring ads in April.
- With funding support from the William Penn Foundation, VISIT PHILADELPHIA launches its [Philadelphia Neighborhoods](#) campaign, spotlighting 14 areas surrounding Center City.
- In April, the Philadelphia Zoo unveils [KidZooU: Hamilton Family Children's Zoo & Faris Family Education Center](#), a wildlife academy that unites an education center with a re-imagined children's zoo.
- Franklin's Paine Skatepark, or [Paine's Park](#), opens as a new public space for skateboarding between Logan Circle and the Schuylkill River Trail.
- Pennsylvania Horticultural Society debuts its [PHS Pop Up Garden](#) in an empty lot on Broad Street in May. The temporary beer garden is a huge success, prompting PHS to continue and expand its seasonal pop-up parks and beer gardens.
- Merion Golf Club hosts the [U.S. Open](#) in June.
- [The Oval](#) debuts for its first season in July. The pop-up park transforms Eakins Oval with a cool design, food trucks, live entertainment, movie nights, a beer garden and other activities.
- The \$23 million [Benjamin Franklin Museum](#) reopens in Franklin Court in August.
- The [Schuylkill River Bridges](#) (Walnut Street, Market Street, John F. Kennedy Boulevard and SEPTA) are re-lit in September.

- The first permanent home of the organization that runs the annual Fringe Festival, **FringeArts**, opens at Race Street and Columbus Boulevard in October.
- In November, Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation (GPTMC) changes its name to **VISIT PHILADELPHIA**, dropping 29 letters and 10 syllables. The new name is more in line with industry trends and the company mission.
- Historic Philadelphia, Inc. unveils a holiday light show, with a 10-foot-tall lighted kite, and festive programming. **Franklin Square Holiday Festival** and the **Electrical Spectacle** enliven the park and delight families.
- The Delaware River Waterfront Corporation brightens the holiday season with its pop-up holiday village called **Blue Cross RiverRink Winterfest** at Penn's Landing. The annual attraction features a lodge, food and drink, vendors, games and activities, garden-style landscaping and a retail shopping experience—all built around the open-air ice rink on the Delaware River.
- The **US Airways** and **American Airlines** merger becomes official, creating the world's largest airline, with a hub in Philadelphia.

2014

- New hotel opens: 172-room **Courtyard Philadelphia South at The Navy Yard**.
- **AARP** and **Budget Travel** both feature Philadelphia in roundups of the 10 cities to visit in 2014. **AARP** focuses on the U.S., and **Budget Travel** features international destinations.
- VISIT PHILADELPHIA launches an evolution of its popular With Love, Philadelphia XOXO campaign. **Phillyosophy®** employs Philadelphia's familiar voice, spirit and attitude while conveying the region's new confidence.
- In January, VISIT PHILADELPHIA rebrands and renames its popular hotel package. The two-night **Visit Philly Overnight Hotel Package** comes with free hotel parking and is available at about 25 hotels.
- **Qatar Airlines** begins nonstop service to and from Philadelphia International Airport in April.
- In May, the **PHLASH** marks 20 years with a new look (purple bus instead of a trolley) and extended service through December, thanks to permanent funding championed by the Independence Visitor Center and included in the state transportation bill.
- The Pennsylvania Convention Center signs a new **10-year Customer Satisfaction Agreement** with four unions in May, making the center more competitive and improving the customer experience. The agreement greatly enhances exhibitor rights by doubling the square footage in which exhibitors are able to work on their own booths and expanding the range of activities that customers are allowed to perform themselves.
- The **Philadelphia Zoo** unveils its aboveground Big Cat Crossing. It's the first major section of the multi-species trail system called Zoo360 and the first of its kind in the country.
- VISIT PHILADELPHIA launches **Towns of the Philadelphia Countryside**, a campaign encouraging people to explore the towns of the five-county region, in June.



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN MUSEUM REOPENS



BLUE CROSS RIVERRINK WINTERFEST DEBUTS



SPRUCE STREET HARBOR PARK OPENS



DILWORTH PARK OPENS



SCHUYLKILL BANKS BOARDWALK COMPLETED



PHILADELPHIA PLACES #3 ON THE NEW YORK TIMES' 52 PLACES TO GO IN 2015

- In June, **The Franklin Institute** unveils its 53,000-square-foot Nicholas and Athena Karabots Pavilion, housing the new permanent exhibition, *Your Brain*.
- **Longwood Gardens'** expanded Meadow Garden and historic Webb Farmhouse reopen in June.
- **Philly Tour Hub** opens as a ticket and information center, as well as a friendly gathering spot, for visitors.
- Thanks to the overwhelming success of its winter pop-up, the Delaware River Waterfront Corporation unveils the summer-time **Spruce Street Harbor Park**, complete with food and drink options, games, lounge chairs, a hammock park and more.
- Adding to the vitality of America's most historic square mile, **Independence Beer Garden** opens on Independence Mall in July.
- **Washington Avenue Green**, a one-acre waterfront park on the Delaware River, opens in August. Amenities include interpretive signs, lookouts, benches, a trail and greenery.
- The successful **Made In America** becomes a bi-coastal event, with Los Angeles hosting the Jay Z-created festival and concert on Labor Day weekend, the same time as Philadelphia.
- In September, **Dilworth Park** transforms the west side of City Hall into a multi-use public space, complete with trees and shaded green sitting areas, a cafe, a performance space and an ice-skating rink in season.
- *Forbes* magazine holds its first **Under 30 Summit** in Philadelphia in October, bringing together 1,000-plus influential people under the age of 30 for educational panels, TED-style presentations, music, networking and more. It's so successful that the event is held in Philadelphia again in 2015.
- The 15-foot-wide, over-the-water **Schuylkill Banks Boardwalk** is completed in October, providing runners, bikers and pedestrians with easy connections to the Schuylkill River Trail between Locust Street and the South Street Bridge.
- **Venice Island** brings a performing arts center, outdoor amphitheater and play areas to Manayunk in October.
- **Century 21** opens its first Philadelphia location—and its first location outside the New York region—in October. The 100,000-square-foot department store is part of a wave of Center City retail developments, including Uniqlo, Nordstrom Rack, Timberland and Michael Kors.

2015

- New hotels open: 42-room **Sleep Inn** and 391-room **The Logan**.
- **Governor Tom Wolf** takes office in January.
- Philadelphia ranks #3 on *The New York Times'* coveted **"52 Places to Go in 2015."** It is the top-ranked U.S. destination, and the story generates buzz about Philly all year long.
- Center City Philadelphia boasts the **second-largest downtown population** in the country, behind only Midtown Manhattan, according to Center City District's *State of Center City 2015*.
- Also revealed in the *State of Center City 2015* report, Center City Philadelphia is home to **403 cultural organizations**, a 62.5% increase from 1996, and **369 outdoor cafes**, a 435% increase since 2001.

- **Indego**, Philadelphia's bike-share program, rolls out in April. In less than nine months, it reaches 400,000 rides, with approximately 85% taken by locals, making the program a model for other cities, including Los Angeles and Chicago.
- The **Philadelphia Zoo's Zoo360**, the first campus-wide animal travel system of its kind in the world, expands with the debut of the Gorilla Treeway.
- The Delaware River Waterfront Corporation adds even more warm-weather fun to the waterfront in May with **Blue Cross RiverRink Summerfest**, a park with a roller-skating rink and boat-house-style lodge that complements Spruce Street Harbor Park.
- Philadelphia is one of just four cities around the world and the only U.S. city to host Saint-Gobain's **Future Sensations**, a high-concept, immersive experience featuring five "ephemeral pavilions" at The Oval.
- From June to September, **#visitphilly Photo Spots** give locals and visitors even more reasons to snap and share photos of the city. The seven large structures: big chairs at Spruce Street Harbor Park and Summerfest, XOXO at Independence Visitor Center and The Porch at 30th Street Station, three-person bikes at Love Park (and later The Oval) and Philadelphia International Airport and With Love-wrapped carousel horse at Franklin Square.
- Philadelphia's Gayborhood gets even more colorful with the addition of **rainbow crosswalks** at the intersection of 13th and Locust streets in June.
- On Fourth of July weekend, Philadelphia celebrates the **50th Anniversary of the Gay Rights Movement** with a re-enactment of the Reminder Day demonstrations in front of Independence Hall, a wreath-laying ceremony at the historic marker that honors the site of the demonstrations and exhibitions around the city.
- Philadelphia City Council unanimously passes a string of new regulations that legalize and tax short-term rentals, such as **Airbnb**, making Philadelphia the largest city in the United States to allow Airbnb to operate.
- Eight floors above the ground on South Philadelphia's Building Bok, the 8,000-square-foot Le Bok Fin (now **Bok Bar**) debuts as Philadelphia's first rooftop pop-up in August.
- A 2.5-mile stretch of North Broad Street, from Hamilton Street to Glenwood Avenue, glows more brightly thanks to **41 LED light masts**, each towering 55 feet in the air, installed in September.
- A 12-foot-tall, 1,800-pound **statue of Joe Frazier**, the local hero who was the first fighter to beat Muhammad Ali, is unveiled outside XFINITY Live!
- The Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Association for Public Art team up to feature Robert Indiana's **AMOR sculpture** atop the museum's steps. It is a huge hit and remains on display.
- **Pope Francis** makes his first visit to the United States during the eighth World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia in September. He delivers three historic public addresses: a speech on immigration at Independence Hall, a statement about the importance of families on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway and a homily at Sunday mass, also on the Parkway.



INDEGO BIKE SHARE ROLLS OUT



RAINBOW CROSSWALKS DEBUT



AMOR SCULPTURE DEBUTS



POPE FRANCIS VISITS



PHILADELPHIA BECOMES A WORLD HERITAGE CITY



ONE LIBERTY OBSERVATION DECK OPENS



PHILADELPHIA TOPS LONELY PLANET'S "BEST IN THE U.S." LIST

- Hall & Oates plays the opening night concert at **The Fillmore Philadelphia** in October. Three venues in one, the Fishtown spot houses a 2,500-capacity main room, the 450-person Foundry for DJs and touring acts and Ajax Hall bar and lounge.
- After a \$1.7 million transformation, **Pier 68** in Philadelphia's Pennsport neighborhood opens in October as a waterfront destination ideal for fishing, lounging and embracing nature.
- The **Temple Owls** football team breaks into the AP Top 25 for the first time since 1979. The season began with a win against Penn State—the first since 1941—and included a visit from ESPN's *College Game Day*, which filmed on Independence Mall.
- **The Roots** are inducted into the Philadelphia Music Alliance Walk of Fame in October. Jimmy Fallon ends his speech with, "What can I say, The Roots are my jaw'n."
- In October, the pedestrian- and bike-only **Manayunk Bridge** reopens after 30 years of disuse, creating a crossing between Lower Merion Township and Manayunk and establishing a link in the Circuit Trails, a 750-mile trail network in Greater Philadelphia.
- Philadelphia becomes the first **World Heritage City** in the United States in November.
- **Cira Green** claims the title of Philadelphia's first overhead public park in November. Situated 95 feet above street level, the 1.25-acre urban park sits atop a parking garage at Cira Centre South.
- **Creed** wins over critics and viewers when it opens in theaters Thanksgiving week. Much of the coverage focuses on the increased growth and vibrancy of the city since the original *Rocky*.
- Starting in November, the **One Liberty Observation Deck** offers sweeping views of the city from the 57th floor.
- **Fodor's** "Go List 2016" and **The Huffington Post's** "12 Destinations That Should Be on Your Radar in 2016" include Philadelphia.
- Total domestic visitation to Greater Philadelphia reaches a record **41 million**, 88% of whom are leisure visitors.

2016

- The **Mummers Parade** features the new Philadelphia Division, highlighting the city's numerous and diverse ethnic, LGBT and immigrant groups.
- New City of Philadelphia **Mayor Jim Kenney** takes office in January.
- Early in the year, Philadelphia takes the top spot on Lonely Planet's "**Best in the U.S.**" list, and *The New York Times* publishes "**36 Hours in Philadelphia**," highlighting the city's vegan restaurants, BYOB culture and bike share program.
- Franklin Square celebrates its 10th birthday and, as part of the festivities, hosts the first-ever **Chinese Lantern Festival** in the Northeast U.S. The event welcomes more than 90,000 visitors from all 50 states.
- In May, VISIT PHILADELPHIA launches its **Entrepreneur in Residence program**, a first-of-its-kind initiative for a destination marketing organization.
- VISIT PHILADELPHIA launches **Historic Philadelphia**, a two-year campaign to redefine and rename the city's prized historic district, in coordination with the **reopening of the Portrait Gallery at the Second Bank in Old City**.

- **SugarHouse Casino** completes its \$164 million expansion in May. The project more than doubles its size and includes 44 additional table games, 289 new slot machines, a 28-table poker room, new restaurants and a special event space.
- VISIT PHILADELPHIA expands its #visitphilly Photo Spots program with **mobile XOXO structures**, encouraging people to snap and share images at popular events.
- Top teams from North, Central and South America compete in the **Copa America Centenario** at Lincoln Financial Field in June. Philadelphia is one of 10 U.S. cities to host the games, marking the first time the 100-year-old tournament is played outside South America.
- On July 1, **Airbnb** begins collecting 6% of the listing price for reservations 29 nights and shorter as part of the Pennsylvania Hotel Occupancy Tax.
- The **African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church** celebrates its 200th anniversary, with the core festivities and the July general conference in Philadelphia, the city where the church was founded.
- Delegates, elected officials and citizens from around the nation gather in Philadelphia for the **Democratic National Convention** in July. Hillary Clinton—the first woman to be a major-party nominee—accepts the nomination for president.
- The **Philadelphia Temple**, Pennsylvania's first temple of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and an adjacent Mormon meetinghouse open in August across from the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul. An affiliated apartment building to open in 2018.
- **King of Prussia Mall** completes a \$150 million expansion and renovation in August, solidifying its place as the largest mall on the East Coast and the second-largest shopping center in the U.S. The project gives the mall nearly 2.9 million square feet of space and more than 450 stores, including new shops that will continue to open through spring 2017.
- Taller Puertorriqueño to unveil **El Corazón Cultural Center**, the largest Puerto Rican/Latino-based arts and cultural facility in the state, scheduled to open in October. The 25,000-square-foot center in El Centro de Oro neighborhood will house a 180-seat theater, exhibition and gallery spaces, and education facilities.
- **New hotels** projected for completion in 2016: 268-room AKA in FMC Tower at Cira Centre South, Schuylkill Avenue and Walnut Street; 212-room The Study at University City at 33rd and Chestnut Streets; and 107-room Best Western at 12th and Vine Streets.

2017 & Beyond

- In the heart of Historic Philadelphia, the **Museum of the American Revolution** to open in April 2017, bringing to life the story of the American Revolution.
- Philadelphia to host the **2017 NFL Draft** in spring.
- **LOVE Park** to reopen in spring 2017 after a \$16.5 million renovation. Among the upgrades: more trees and greenery, a re-interpreted fountain and a cafe in the Fairmount Park Welcome Center, which will double as a digital art installation at night. Of course, the *LOVE* sculpture will remain the centerpiece.



PHILADELPHIA
HOSTS
**DEMOCRATIC
NATIONAL
CONVENTION**



**MUSEUM OF
THE AMERICAN
REVOLUTION**
OPENS 2017



LOVE PARK
REOPENS 2017



**COMCAST
INNOVATION
AND
TECHNOLOGY
CENTER**
DEBUTS 2017



**FASHION
OUTLETS OF
PHILADELPHIA
AT MARKET
EAST** OPENS
2018

- The **Curtis** to complete major renovations in summer 2017 that will include a new restaurant, renovated atrium and apartments.
- Opera Philadelphia's inaugural festival, **O17**, to kick off the season in September 2017 with more than 25 performances at multiple venues.
- **Comcast Innovation and Technology Center** to debut in 2017, further solidifying the company's commitment to Philadelphia. The 59-story building will include Comcast offices, rentable office space, public space, restaurants and a hotel.
- The \$6 million **Bartram's Mile Trail**, a 1.1-mile addition to the region's Circuit Trails, to be completed in 2017, connecting Southwest Philadelphia with the Schuylkill River Trail and increasing access to Bartram's Garden, parks and green spaces.
- **New hotels** projected for completion in 2017: 179-room Aloft in the Liberty Title & Trust Building, Broad and Arch Streets; and a 121-room to-be-announced property at 261 S. 13th Street.
- In spring 2018, the **Fashion Outlets of Philadelphia at Market East** to open in the former Gallery at Market East space. The light-filled, 1.5-million-square-foot shopping and entertainment center will house outlets of high-end retailers and sidewalk cafes.
- The city's second casino, the 200,000-square-foot **Live! Hotel & Casino** to bring 2,000 slot machines, 125 table games and 220 hotel rooms to South Philadelphia in 2018-2019.
- **New hotels** projected for completion in 2018: 755-room W + Element by Westin Hotels at 1441 Chestnut Street; 222-suite Cambria Suites at Broad and Locust Streets; 150-room AC Hotel by Marriott at 13th and Florist Streets; 152-room SLS International Hotel and Residences at Broad and Spruce Streets; 222-room Four Seasons Hotel Philadelphia in the Comcast Innovation and Technology Center, 1800 Arch Street; and 199-room Kimpton Hotel at the Historic Family Court building, 18th and Vine Streets.

Download the 2016 Destination Timeline at
visitphilly.com/about

VISIT PHILADELPHIA is our name and our mission. As the region's official tourism marketing agency, we build Greater Philadelphia's image, drive visitation and boost the economy.

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