



A Weekend in Philadelphia

by Monica Frim

“Duck! Duck! Duck!” shouted the guide. “I’m serious, you folks on the upper level. You’re about to get your necks caught in the trolley wires. Duck! I mean it!”

As the double-decker bus approached the overhead trolley wires, the guide on the hop-on hop-off Big Bus Tours dramatically descended a few steps in exaggerated guise of saving his own skin.

We bowed our heads dutifully at the tourist gibe. The only thing better than a knowledgeable tour guide is a knowledgeable guide with a sense of humor and a touch of drama. But a few seconds later, when the coast was presumably clear, I actually did feel my hair stand on end as something tugged out a strand of my up-do. My best guess is I had ridden the open-air bus straight into a sagging twig.

Welcome to Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love (the tagline is a literal translation of “Philadelphia” from Greek), where the trees hang low, the buses run high and the history of the United States of America started.

Conveniently located between the internationally flavored cities of New York and Washington, Philadelphia

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL DESTINATIONS

Join Monica Frim on her weekend jaunt to Philadelphia — where cheesesteaks, soft pretzels and more outdoor sculptures and murals than any other city in America draw the crowds as much as historical buildings and museums. Founder William Penn left a legacy of easy to navigate streets, and Benjamin Franklin set the tone for innovation and initiative that continues to this day. You can step back in time and leap into the future in a whirlwind weekend tour, or savor more attractions by extending your stay.

Photography by John Frim PhD and Monica Frim

The Philadelphia skyline viewed from the New Jersey side of the Delaware River.

Travel with us.



provides a great weekend get-away for diplomats from either city and anyone interested in American history, culture and art. The city even comes with its own historical dose of diplomacy. It is rooted in the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the document that, in 1776, declared the original Thirteen Colonies a new nation in secession from Great Britain. It was a rebellious act for the times, punishable by death, were it not for the diplomatic skills of the Fathers of Confederation. John Hancock, first to sign the Declaration of Independence, did not sign it in the presence of all others as is popularly believed and depicted in Trumbull's famous painting, but in front of only one other person. The other 56 signatures were added over a period of several months with Congress keeping their identities secret to reduce the risk of their being caught and punished for treason. Indeed, Benjamin Franklin's famous quote, "We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately," emphasized the risks all signatories were undertaking.

While the danger is gone, the thrill of the era survives in museums, re-enactments, historical buildings and artifacts

that appeal to both international and national visitors. A tour of the Independence National Historic Park becomes a priority. In the West Wing you can see and photograph (no flash) the Declaration of Independence along with its accompanying Constitution (the outline of the country's basic laws) and Articles of Confederation (the rules for separate and joint powers among the three branches of government).

But the real pièce de résistance is the actual birth room of the United States of America, the Assembly Room, in which the Declaration of Independence was approved on July 4, 1776. Both the Assembly Room and Supreme Court Room can be seen in a free tour of Independence Hall, but you need to obtain a ticket at a scheduled time in advance from the nearby Independence Visitor Center. Then also wander at leisure through the other historical buildings in Independence Square: the Supreme Court Chamber in Old City Hall; the American Philosophical Society Museum, which now houses a collection of hands-on optical instruments invented by Cornelius Varley; Congress Hall, with 20-minute tours (no ticket required) that include both the House downstairs and

Independence Hall's Assembly Room in which both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were debated and adopted.



The Swann Fountain with City Hall in the background.



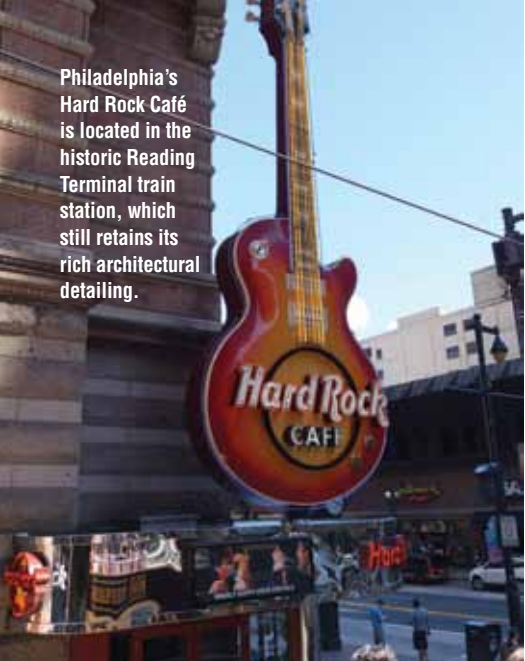
A Franklin impersonator at the newly opened Benjamin Franklin Museum demonstrates how rubbing a glass rod with a piece of rabbit fur generates static electricity.

the Senate upstairs; and the cross-shaped Carpenters' Hall farther east within Independence National Historical Park.

For a hands-on history experience, the National Constitution Center north of Independence Hall offers a high-tech approach. On your way there, stop in at the Liberty Bell Center to view the original cracked bell that served as a symbol of freedom for abolitionists who gave it its name in the 1830s. It was later also adopted by suffragists, Civil Rights advocates, Native Americans, immigrants, war protestors and others as their symbol. It is now known as an international symbol of freedom.

Philadelphia oozes history in every district, but it's good to break up the day with chunks of art and science, especially if you're traveling with children. The good news is that almost all the main attractions are within walking distance and various walking tours touch upon a number of specialty ones, too. But if you only have a weekend, one of the best ways to sample a bit of everything is from the top (or bottom if low bridges, trees and wires feel a bit too close for comfort) of one of the hop-on hop-off buses or open-air trolley tours

Philadelphia's Hard Rock Café is located in the historic Reading Terminal train station, which still retains its rich architectural detailing.



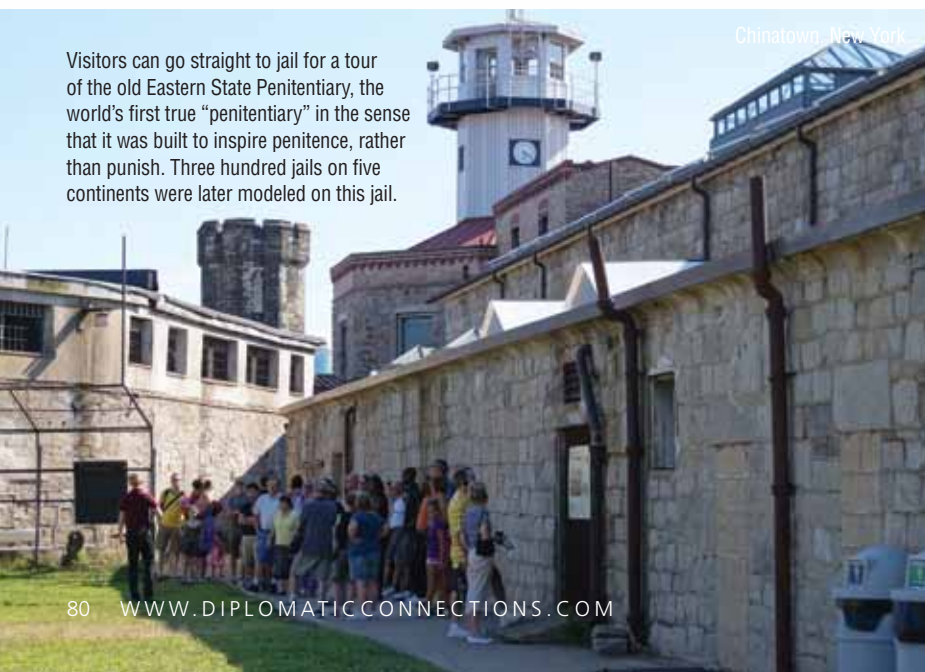
An exterior wall mural on Fairmount Ave.

that travel among the city's premier sights.

"Premier" is the operative word here, for the guides love to point out the city's vast number of superlatives. The City of Philadelphia itself served as the first capital of the United States between 1790 and 1800. It boasts the largest city hall in the United States. Until the mid-1800s no building could be taller than the hat crowning the bronze sculpture of William Penn in its clock tower. Other unparalleled accomplishments include the first authentic Chinese arch built in America by Chinese artisans (not the largest as some mistakenly believe; that honor belongs to Washington, D.C., which has the largest single-span Chinese arch in the world); the first public hospital in America (Pennsylvania Hospital); the most murals (more than 3,500) of any city; the first American flag (sewn by Betsy Ross in her modest house, now a museum); the oldest single-span arched-roof train shed in the world and the only one left in the U.S. (now converted into

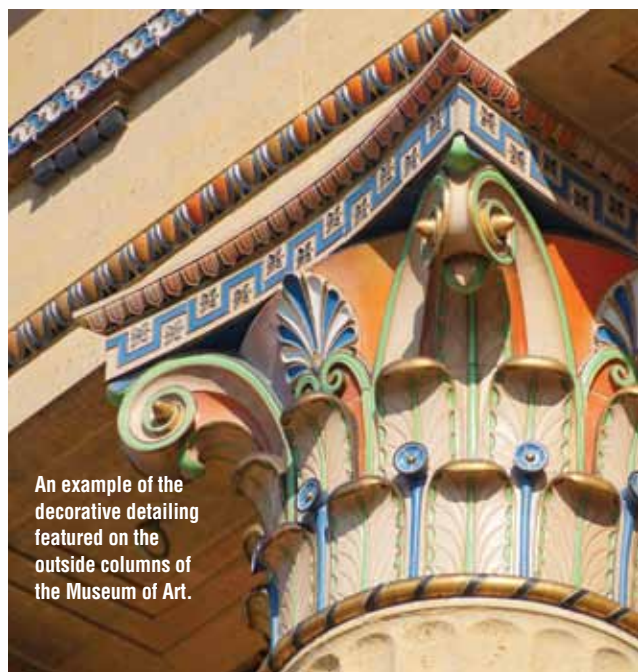
a ballroom by the Convention Center at Reading Station — itself one of the four Monopoly™ train stations); the oldest residential street in the United States (Elfreth's Alley) and the largest public collection of Auguste Rodin's sculptures outside of Paris. In fact, the list is so long that the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation (GPTMC) has produced a fact sheet of more than 50 historical firsts that took place in Philadelphia between the years 1654, when the first Lutheran Church opened on Tinicum Island, until 1971, when Progress Plaza opened as the first shopping center owned and operated by African-American businessmen.

The GPTMC has also initiated another first: a two-year visual marketing campaign called With Art Philadelphia™ that began in 2012 to raise the city's profile even further. The project involves numerous organizations that, together, have formed an artistic umbrella to position Philadelphia among the world's great art destinations.



Visitors can go straight to jail for a tour of the old Eastern State Penitentiary, the world's first true "penitentiary" in the sense that it was built to inspire penitence, rather than punish. Three hundred jails on five continents were later modeled on this jail.

Chinatown, New York



An example of the decorative detailing featured on the outside columns of the Museum of Art.



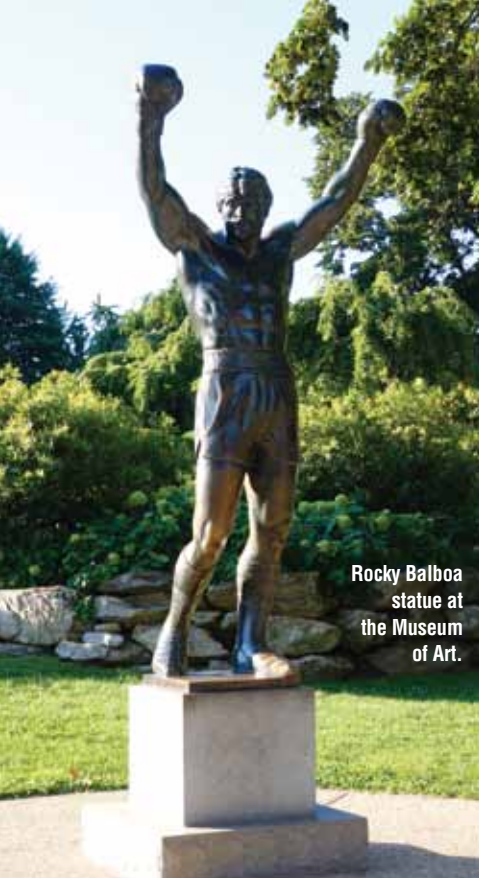
A luxurious landmark with a prestigious Central Park South address.

Having first opened its doors in 1931, the JW Marriott Essex House New York, located on prestigious Central Park South, continues to deliver an exceptional experience. Situated in the cultural part of the city nearby world-class museums, shopping and dining, our hotel boasts various suites and a breathtaking Beaux Arts style Grand Salon. A combination of impeccable service, iconic luxury and Art Deco inspired design will make for a stay that is nothing less than remarkable.

To reserve, please call 212.247.0300 or visit jwmarriottessexhousenewyork.com.

JW MARRIOTT.
ESSEX HOUSE NEW YORK





Rocky Balboa statue at the Museum of Art.



The Museum of Art's Hall of Armor.

Their goal should be a breeze. The moniker “Museum Mile,” borrowed from a stretch of New York’s Fifth Avenue near the Metropolitan Museum of Art, seems to have unofficially attached itself to Philadelphia’s Benjamin Franklin Parkway, pinpointing it as one of the most art-themed passageways in the country. The Parkway, as the locals simply call it, is Philadelphia’s version of Paris’ Champs-Élysées. It shoots straight from City Hall to the hill point that William Penn named “Fairmont” back in the 17th century, and which is now the site of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Flags from around the world flutter along the road’s green edges, as beautiful statues and fountains dot pedestrian courts, traffic squares and circles. Traditional statues of historical heroes vie with abstract sculptures as their own outdoor museums and pay homage to various plights and causes or challenge convention with their bold new forms.

Indoor galleries are, nevertheless, the mainstay of the area. Some, such as the recently renovated Rodin Museum or its neighboring Barnes Foundation, extend their exhibits into surrounding gardens and reflecting pools. The tiny, but very pretty, Rodin Museum claims to have the most extensive public collection of Auguste Rodin’s sculptures outside of Paris.

In contrast, the Barnes Collection is housed in a distinctly modern 93,000 square-foot building, earmarked by a soaring 40-foot high abstract sculpture and a textured limestone façade. The building was designed specifically as an

educational institution and to showcase Dr. Albert C. Barnes’ expansive collection of Impressionist, Post-Impressionist and early Modern paintings. The collection also includes 125 African sculptures, masks and tools; Pennsylvania German furniture and decorative arts; Native American items; and amazing displays of wrought iron objects, mostly hinges, that are grouped creatively among the paintings.

Dr. Barnes made his fortune as the co-inventor of the silver-based antiseptic Argyrol. Believing art improved critical thinking and the ability to learn and succeed in general, he incorporated daily two-hour art seminars for his employees at his company, A.C. Barnes. He established the Barnes Foundation in 1925 to promote the appreciation of fine art and horticulture among factory workers, poor and disenfranchised people, African-Americans and young people. Since its inception, the Barnes Foundation has offered a three-year certificate program with an emphasis on visual literacy and creativity. The new campus on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway opened to the public in May 2012 and collaborates with many schools and universities in Pennsylvania.

At the top of the Parkway, the Museum of Art prides itself on being the third largest art museum in the United States. Its 300,000 American and international artistic pieces include an impressive arms and armor display, a gallery of Baroque tapestries depicting the history of Constantine the Great, and more than 200 galleries of Asian, European,



Every voyage unique,
every moment cherished,
every worry left behind.

When it comes to your dream vacation, the ease of a private crewed yacht is just the beginning...

In 1969, Charlie Cary and his beloved wife Ginny followed their dream by establishing The Moorings, allowing their passion for the water to be experienced by all.



UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS
on the water

The Moorings®
CREWED

Call 888.537.4753 or visit www.moorings.com/DC

Renaissance, American, Impressionist and Modern exhibits. But the museum's most photographed feature is its massive outdoor staircase known as the "Rocky Steps." The 72 steps at the eastern entrance were immortalized by Sylvester Stallone in his role as Rocky Balboa and provide a splendid view that stretches from Eakins Oval and its bronze monument of George Washington all along the length of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway to City Hall.

As Philadelphia's roots stretch wide and far along founder William Penn's perfectly gridded streets, its central core soars futuristically upward. From the New Jersey side, Philadelphia's skyline looks somewhat like Manhattan's iconic Financial District. But once you've crossed the Delaware River and entered the city proper, the New York microcosm narrows into skinny ravines where the sun hits the predominantly two-laned streets for only brief moments when it hangs directly above them. At those times, the steel and glass

structures wave in each other's reflections and cast warm glows that soften the cityscape into something quite lovely and inviting. The skyscrapers seem as comfortable in the City of Brotherly Love (and, unofficially, Sisterly Affection) as the multitudinous places of worship that have sprung from founder William's Penn desire to create a place that not only tolerated, but promoted, religious freedom.

It seems a perfect environment for furthering architectural harmony among unlikely pairings. Philadelphia's tallest building, the 975-foot high Comcast building, is a suitable poster child. Built in the image of a giant gleaming memory stick, the Comcast building is also America's tallest green building, proving that modern does not have to be stark and soulless. This one, at least, has a social conscience. Waterless urinals, passive solar heat and light, and innovative salvaging and recycling systems put it at the forefront of sustainable design. But it's the 2,100 square-foot video wall with five times



The iconic Philly cheesesteak, now a staple of food trucks and restaurants, made its debut in the 1930s when a hot dog vendor experimented with beef on a grill and later added the cheese.



The Please Touch Museum is one of Philadelphia's favored attractions by children.

the resolution of high-definition TV that pushes the "Comcast Experience" to the pinnacle of science, technology and art. It's the largest four-millimeter LED screen in the world. With 6,772 tiles, each embedded with 1,152 small square LEDs, a total of 30 million lights replicate with amazing 3-D effect even the grid work of the raised wood paneling on the two sidewalls of the entry hall when the screen is at rest.

Comcast CEO Brian Roberts, son of the late Ralph Roberts who founded the company, said in a press release to Reuters, "Philadelphia is known for its public art and the Comcast Experience is a tribute to the spirit of creativity and technology that is part of the fabric of this city." One can almost sense Benjamin Franklin, Philadelphia's most famous paragon of scientific progress and civic improvement, nodding his approval from the grave.

Or from the two museums that bear his name — the Franklin Institute and the Benjamin Franklin Museum. The

museum is on the site of Franklin's elegant, old three-story home, which was razed in 1812 to make way for rental houses on both sides of the street. Only a few pieces of the original foundation can be seen through a glass cover below ground in the courtyard. The original museum, built for the 1976 Bicentennial, was closed for renovations for two years, then revamped and reopened in September 2013.

Inside, plaques reveal biographical data about a man who, with only two years of formal schooling, received three honorary doctorates and became one of the country's Founding Fathers and greatest inventors. Visitors can check out computer animations, interactive displays, personal artifacts and practical inventions such as the battery (Franklin coined the word from the military), Franklin stove and glass "Armonica." Franklin's satirical essays, inventions and civic improvements reveal a Renaissance man of great social conscience — one of the greatest "wired" men in the sense of his era.



The Chinatown Friendship Gate, built by artisans from China in the 1980s, features decorative elements typical of the Ming and Qing Dynasties.



The flag-lined Benjamin Franklin Parkway leads straight to the Museum of Art and the famous "Rocky Steps."



Visitors enter the Rodin Museum through the Gates of Hell.

Franklin's name lives on in educational and other institutions all over the world, but in his hometown of Philadelphia it's given special distinction. There are Franklin Tours, Franklin Schools, a Franklin Square, Franklin Bank, Franklin sculptures and, most venerated, the Franklin Institute. The latter was founded in 1824 "for the promotion of the Mechanic Arts" as a training institute for young engineers. It moved to its present location on Logan Square on January 1, 1934, where it developed into an interactive showcase, of not only Franklin's creations, but those of other great inventors as well. Foucault, Sir Isaac Newton and the aviation pioneers have special areas devoted to their scientific contributions. Visitors can participate on a grand scale: step into a giant heart and follow the path of a drop of blood via a series of stairs and vascular channels, ride a Sky Bike on a cable or get "buzzed" trying out various electricity displays. It's not just about education but fun.

That's the thing about Philadelphia. Everything seems to mesh — history, art, architecture, science, public art and education, but you'll need to pick and choose if all you have is a weekend. You just might want to ride the double-decker for its full 90-minute circuit first, and then visit only the sites you think you'll have time for. Hang on to your hats and hairdos ... and plan for another trip back. ■

Historic Boat House Row on the east bank of the Schuylkill River.



The Comcast Building is Philadelphia's tallest and greenest building. Built to resemble a giant USB stick, its glassy surface reflects neighboring buildings.



Adventure Aquarium, across the Delaware River in New Jersey, features a tunnel that takes visitors through a shark tank.



With 14 acres of floor space, Philadelphia City Hall is the largest city hall in the United States.

DIPLOMATIC CONNECTIONS WISHES TO THANK THE FOLLOWING SPONSORS:

The Latham Hotel

A member of Preferred Boutique, the historic Latham has recently been redesigned and renovated with a new wine bar and restaurant, Urban Enoteca. Hotel amenities include complimentary wireless Internet, a fitness center, valet parking and a complimentary luxury limo service to and from center city locations. Located in the Rittenhouse Square District, the hotel is close to museums, art galleries, restaurants and some of Philadelphia's finest shops and boutiques. Address: 135 South 17th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103; Phone: 215-563-7474 www.LathamHotel.com



Philadelphia CityPASS

This is the best deal for city admission prices to five of seven of Philadelphia's most popular attractions. A CityPASS saves both money and time by eliminating the need to wait in ticket lines. It is valid up to nine days from first day of use at the following attractions: The Franklin Institute, Philadelphia Trolley Works and Big Bus Company, Adventure Aquarium, Philadelphia Zoo OR National Constitution Center, Eastern State Penitentiary OR Please Touch Museum. Passes can be purchased at www.citypass.com or in person at any member attraction.

The Barnes Foundation

The Barnes Foundation promotes the advancement of education and appreciation of the fine arts through classes, programs, special exhibitions and by making their legendary collection accessible to the community and the world. To see the collection, go to 2025 Benjamin Franklin Parkway. To become a member and receive special access and benefits, contact the Foundation at www.barnesfoundation.org or by phone at 215-278-7100.



Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation (GPTMC)

The GPTMC is a private, non-profit organization that promotes leisure travel to Philadelphia and the counties of Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia. For information on Greater Philadelphia's restaurants, attractions, history, arts and current campaigns, go to www.visitphilly.com or call the Independence Visitor Center at 1-800-537-7676.

Travel with us

