

CRITICAL DATES IN GREATER PHILADELPHIA'S

TOURISM TIMELINE

Major Destination Milestones Since 1985



Updated annually, the Tourism Timeline highlights the major milestones that have made Greater Philadelphia the premier destination it is.

MID-1980s

- The **Mural Arts Program** begins in 1984 as a component of the Philadelphia Anti-Graffiti Network. Today, Philadelphia is the mural capital of the world, with more than 3,600 murals.
- **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 across 150 nations.
- In 1985, **The Foundation for Architecture** begins its guided architectural tour program.
- **The Book and the Cook** event kicks off its annual celebration of the city's gastronomic diversity in 1985.
- 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 in Center City, 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 **Philadelphia Liberty Medal** is awarded to Solidarity founder and President of Poland Lech Walesa.
- With the exception of a few years, Philadelphia continues the storied tradition of hosting the annual **Army/Navy Game** now scheduled through 2017).

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 year-long 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.
- An annual festival, **Welcome America!**, 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 Oscars.
- The **Philadelphia Flower Show** moves to the Pennsylvania Convention Center, increasing the tourism "ripple effect" in the city.

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 in Center City.
- The **Independence Seaport Museum**, focusing on the region's rich maritime history, opens on Penn's Landing.
- Stephen Starr opens his first of 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 also hosts the **Major League Baseball All-Star Game**, resulting in the busiest summer to date. **Hotel occupancy** increases overall this year, despite a 20% increase in room supply with the opening of the 1,200-room Philadelphia Marriott.
- The **Phlash Downtown Loop** begins service. The purple buses offer a comfortable and convenient way to ride 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 Walk! Philadelphia 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 patterned 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 **Susquehanna Bank Center**) 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 Philadelphia area and total expenditures approaching \$100 million; 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 in the downtown area.
- 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. Now an annual September event, it offers cutting-edge performances in theaters and alternative spaces throughout the city.
- The **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, Pennsylvania. The home shopping TV 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 reelected 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, the 76ers basketball team and the Wings lacrosse 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 convention centers in the entire 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.
- A **1% hotel tax increase** to permanently fund VISIT PHILADELPHIA's tourism marketing efforts is passed.
- The **Prince Music Theater** opens after a \$7.5 million renovation of an historic theater on Chestnut Street.
- On the **Avenue of the Arts**, seating capacity at venues increases 16%, from 6,227 before 1995 to 7,217 in 1999.
- **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 local 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**.
- Newly elected City of Philadelphia **Mayor John F. Street** takes office in January.
- Passed in 1997, Philadelphia's **10-year tax abatement** expands to include all new construction in addition to conversions.
- The **National Liberty Museum** opens in Historic Philadelphia.
- The **NCAA Women's Final Four** draws 40,000 fans to the city in March.
- The **Republican National Convention** brings 20,000 delegates and guests and 15,000 media representatives to the city.
- The **Philadelphia Orchestra** celebrates its centennial with year-long festivities.
- President 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.
- **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**; 200-room **Hampton Inn**; and 199-room **SpringHill Suites by Marriott Philadelphia Plymouth Meeting**.
- The **Philadelphia Museum of Art** celebrates its 125th anniversary with a series of special exhibitions, programs and events throughout the year.
- 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 completed in August 2002.
- In September, 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 on the U.S. 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**, a weekend-long event featuring the NBA All-Star game, Jam Session, All-Star Saturday and All-Star Shootout.
- The **Multicultural Affairs Congress** officially launches its travel website, designed specifically 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 tool kit 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 new 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.
- The **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.
- The **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.
- VISIT PHILADELPHIA hosts 150 members of the **Society of American Travel Writers**, the premier organization for travel professionals in North America.
- **Ride The Ducks**, a unique land-to-water touring vehicle, debuts.
- Made famous in London, **Big Bus Tours** begins service in Philly.
- 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 new 68,000-seat home to the Philadelphia Eagles, opens in August.
- The \$12.6 million **Liberty Bell Center** opens near Chestnut Street between 5th & 6th Streets, just across from Independence Hall.
- The **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 spring. In 2009, the prix-fixe menus expand to include lunch in addition to dinner.
- VISIT PHILADELPHIA's popular **Philly's More Fun When You Sleep Over®** ads, featuring the "pajama man," are posted on Times Square's video billboard and outside of Madison Square Garden on a 100-foot banner.

- With the support of the Philadelphia Gay Tourism Caucus, GPTMC launches the nation's largest gay tourism marketing campaign. Ads placed in the U.S. and Canada feature the tagline **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 26.5 miles to Phoenixville.

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 on April 12.
- 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®**.
- The first annual **West Oak Lane Jazz and Arts Festival** takes place.
- **Southwest Airlines** begins low-fare service to Philadelphia in May and later expands service, adding new routes and increasing the region's visibility through in-market advertising.
- **Frontier Airlines** begins 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 unique 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.
- The **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 of fine arts, 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. But alas, they are defeated by the New England Patriots, 23-21.
- The Philadelphia Museum of Art's **Salvador Dalí** retrospective is a success with more than 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*, serving as 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 reenactments.
- Center City District announces that a total of **6,436 new residential units** were added to Center City between 1998 and 2004. The increase translates to more than 9,300 new residents, a 12% increase over the 2000 Census.
- Center City District's **State of Center City 2005** report reveals that the downtown area is now home to 149 outdoor cafes, up 43% from 2002.
- The city's bring-your-own-bottle (**BYOB**) **restaurant boom** continues, with more than 120 such establishments in the region, according to the 2005 Zagat Survey.
- Even in a year without the National Hockey League in action, Philadelphia hockey still wins big, as the **Philadelphia Phantoms** score the American Hockey League's 2005 Calder Cup.
- 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 day-long 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**.
- On August 14, The New York Times prints a cover story in its Sunday Style section entitled "**Philadelphia Story: The Next Borough**." The 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 three-year marketing 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 year-long "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.
- 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.
- A record **35 cruises** set sail from Philadelphia.

2007

- 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 created a region-wide celebration centered on Tut with a \$1 million grant from the state.
- The archeological dig at **The President’s House** site in Historic Philadelphia 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 his 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, reenactments 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 new **Ruth and Raymond G. Perelman Building** opens in September, showcasing the museum’s vast costume and textile collections and offering new study centers and educational resources.
- 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 and building, **Longwood Gardens** debuts its dynamic new 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, along with French lighting firm Artlumiere, projects special lighting effects onto five buildings on the **Avenue of the Arts**. The Terra Building is the first of almost a dozen more 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.
- According to Center City District, **Center City** boasts major growth: 355 arts and culture organizations (up 43% since 1996), 217 fine dining restaurants (up 234% from 69 since 1992) and 215 outdoor cafes (up 212% from 69 in 2001).
- Newly elected 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, called The Comcast Experience, 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 11 cities.
- 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 Democratic 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 a highlight of the summer concert season.
- In August, the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology launches the **Penn Cultural Heritage Center**, dedicated to expanding scholarly and public awareness, discussion and debate about the world’s rich cultural heritage.
- **Please Touch Museum**[®] reopens in 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.
- 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 to raze the venue to make room for XFINITY Live!, a retail, restaurant and entertainment district.
- 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—6:00 p.m. and midnight.

2009

- New hotel opens: 235-room **Hotel Palomar Philadelphia**, the first Kimpton property in Philadelphia.
- 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**, an 80,000-square-foot, open-air live music and events 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 from former Mayor John Street, **The African American Museum in Philadelphia** opens its new core exhibition entitled Audacious Freedom: African Americans in Philadelphia, 1776-1876 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.
- US Airways debuts seasonal flights to Oslo, Norway and year-round service to Tel Aviv, Israel for a total of 37 international destinations from **Philadelphia International Airport**.
- The **Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania** debuts Tree Adventure, a \$3.1 million permanent and interactive installation, in July.

2010

- New hotels open: 202-room **Le Méridien Philadelphia** and 129-room **Hyatt Place Philadelphia/King of Prussia**.
- According to Center City District, Center City boasts **248 outdoor cafes**, a 209% increase since 2001.
- Leisure hotel room nights in Center City Philadelphia surpass **800,000**—triple the number in 1997, when VISIT PHILADELPHIA placed its first ad.
- In early 2010, **VISIT PHILADELPHIA** and the **Independence Visitor Center Corporation** embark on a tourism partnership to ensure consistent marketing messages before and during visitors' trips.
- In January, **visitphilly.com** (formerly gophila.com) debuts with a new look and new name.
- **Sesame Place** celebrates its 30th birthday with new shows and special events throughout the year.
- February brings the completion of the **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 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 **Flyers** make it to the Stanley Cup Finals for the first time since 1997. Unfortunately, the Chicago Blackhawks defeated 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.
- The inaugural **Art in the Open**, a festival celebrating artists, their inspirations and their relationships with the urban environment, takes place in June.
- 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, the **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 inside the center's PECO Theater, debuts in September.
- In October, the **Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania** unveils its \$13 million Horticulture Center Complex, designed to achieve 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.
- In December, Mayor Nutter announces **Green 2015**, a bold action plan to transform 500 acres of empty or underused land into publicly accessible green space in neighborhoods throughout Philadelphia over the next five years.

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 2011 **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 **Philadelphia International Festival of the Arts (PIFA)** debuts in April and May. It includes more than 100 events by the region's performing arts and cultural organizations and educational and visual arts groups.
- 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** debuts with a week of technology-focused events. It 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.
- The 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 600 to 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 second-busiest train station in the country in November. Seating, performances, fitness classes, lunchtime food trucks and special events such as mini-golf animate the open urban space.
- On Labor Day weekend, Jay Z hosts the first **Budweiser 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** reopens to the public in a renovated space with new galleries, new exhibits and a new name that clarifies the institution's mission (formerly Atwater Kent Museum of Philadelphia).
- Yannick Nézet-Séguin takes over as music director of **The Philadelphia Orchestra** in October.
- **Silver Linings Playbook**, filmed and set in Philadelphia, is released. Oscar-nominated Bradley Cooper raves about his hometown in interviews, casting a spotlight on his beloved 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 it 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 the **"Top 10 US Travel Destinations for 2013,"** released in December.

2012

- New hotels open: Kimpton's 271-room **Hotel Monaco Philadelphia**; 136-room **Homewood Suites by Hilton University City**; 486-room **Valley Forge Casino Resort**; and 180-room **Sheraton Valley Forge**.
- **Spirit** 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 and sustained visual arts marketing campaign.
- The **Barnes Foundation** opens on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in May after relocating from its original location in 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 storied Spectrum once stood.
- VISIT PHILADELPHIA convenes the region's travel and tourism community to produce a 75-page Philadelphia section in the June issue of **US Airways** magazine. The piece is so successful, that VISIT PHILADELPHIA and the hospitality community do it again four more times—three in *US Airways* and once in *Arrive magazine*.
- The **Phillies** celebrate their 257 home-game sellout streak, the longest ever in the National League and third longest in MLB history.

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 for the second and third rounds of the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament, also known as **March Madness**.
- **Visitphilly.com**—the most-visited destination website of the 10 most populated cities in the country according to Quantcast—begins featuring ads in April.
- With funding support from the William Penn Foundation, VISIT PHILADELPHIA launches its **Philadelphia Neighborhoods** campaign, spotlighting 14 visitor-ready 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 reimaged 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 a second round in summer/fall 2014, this time along South Street.
- Merion Golf Club in Ardmore hosts the **2013 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 relit in September. The architectural lighting was refurbished to replicate the original lighting done in 1999.
- The first permanent home of the organization that runs the annual Philadelphia 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 new holiday light show, with a 10-foot-tall lighted kite and festive music. **Franklin Square Holiday Festival featuring the Electrical Spectacle** enlivens the park and delights families.
- The Delaware River Waterfront Corporation brightens the holiday season with its pop-up holiday village called **Blue Cross RiverRink Winterfest** on Penn's Landing. The now-annual attraction features a lodge, food and drink, vendors, games and activities, garden-style landscaping, a light and video show 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. US Airways joins the Oneworld global alliance in March 2014.
- 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.
- In February, the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau launches **PHL: Here for the Making**, a campaign to attract convention and business travel to Philadelphia.
- By March, both **visitphilly.com** and **uwishunu.com** are fully responsive, meaning 100% of the websites' top-notch content can be accessed on mobile phones and tablets.
- **Qatar Airlines** begins nonstop service to and from Philadelphia International Airport in April.
- **Gay marriage** becomes legal in Pennsylvania when a U.S. federal district court judge ruled the ban on same-sex marriage unconstitutional.
- 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 Convention 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 innovative multi-species trail system and the first of its kind in the country.
- VISIT PHILADELPHIA launches **Towns of the Philadelphia Countryside**, a campaign encouraging people to explore the charming towns of the five-county region, in June.
- 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. Due to the overwhelming success of its winter pop-up, the Delaware River Waterfront Corporation unveils the summertime **Spruce Street Harbor Park**, complete with bar and restaurant, water gardens, 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 for optimal views, benches, an improved trail and greenery.

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's list includes U.S. destinations, and Budget Travel's article features international destinations.
- VISIT PHILADELPHIA launches an evolution of its popular With Love, Philadelphia XOXO campaign. Called **Phillyosophy**®, the new vision conveys Philadelphia's familiar voice, spirit and attitude while conveying the region's new confidence.

- 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.
- 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 of the New York region—in October. The nearly 100,000-square-foot department store is part of a wave of exciting Center City retail developments, including Uniqlo, Nordstrom Rack, Timberland and Michael Kors.

2015 and Beyond

- The City of Philadelphia to roll out **Bike Share Philadelphia** in April 2015. The first wave of the program will give cyclists access to hundreds of bikes at 60 Bike Share stations throughout Center City and parts of University City.
- After a \$1.7 million transformation, **Pier 68** in Philadelphia's Pennsport neighborhood to open as a waterfront destination ideal for fishing, lounging and embracing nature in mid-2015.
- **Pope Francis** to make his first visit to the United States to say a public mass during the World Meeting of Families in September 2015. The Catholic Church's eighth annual weeklong event will bring tens of thousands of people from around the globe to Philadelphia for a week of panel discussions, workshops and activities around the theme "Love is our Mission: The Family Fully Alive."
- **SugarHouse Casino** to complete its \$164 million expansion in 2015. The project will more than double its size and include a seven-story parking garage, a 30-table poker room, new restaurants and a 30,000-square-foot event space.
- An **observation deck** and restaurant to open on the 57th and 58th floors of One Liberty Place, both offering stunning views of the city.
- **New hotel** projected for completion in 2015: to-be-announced luxury hotel at 18th Street and the Benjamin Franklin Parkway.
- **King of Prussia Mall** to complete a \$150 million expansion and renovation in fall 2016. The project will bring the mall's current 2.65 million-square-foot layout to a whopping 2.8 million square feet, solidifying its place as the largest mall on the East Coast and the second largest shopping center in the United States.
- URBN Inc. (Urban Outfitters) to unveil a "lifestyle experience" in Devon, Chester County in 2016. The development—with a working title of **Devon Yard**—will feature a boutique hotel, two restaurants, a specialty foods market, a spa facility and/or a boutique fitness studio, a Terrain garden center and an Anthropologie store.
- **New hotels** projected for completion in 2016: SLS International Hotel and Residences at Broad & Spruce Streets; Hudson Hotel at 17th & Chancellor Streets; and The Study at University City, 33rd & Chestnut Streets.
- In Independence National Historical Park, the **Museum of the American Revolution** to open in early 2017 as the country's first museum dedicated to telling the entire story of the Revolution.
- **Comcast Innovation and Technology Center** to open 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.
- **New hotels** projected for completion in 2017: Kimpton Monaco at the old Family Court building, 18th & Vine Streets; Sleep Inn at 1020 Cherry Street; and W + Element by Westin Hotels at 1441 Chestnut Street.
- **Four Seasons Hotel Philadelphia** to reopen in the Comcast Innovation and Technology Center in 2018.
- **Live! Hotel & Casino**, the city's second casino, to open near the South Philadelphia stadiums. The \$425 million, 200,000-square-foot complex will house 2,000 slot machines, 125 table games and 220 hotel rooms.

Download the 2015 Tourism Timeline at
visitphilly.com/research.

VISIT PHILADELPHIA® increases the number of visitors to Greater Philadelphia, the number of nights they stay here and the number of things they do. Our work also improves quality of life and sense of hometown pride for residents.

