48 Hours in Philadelphia: The Ultimate Itinerary

BY
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Andrea Evangelo-Giamou / EyeEm / Getty Images

Ideal for a quick getaway, Philadelphia offers culture, history, and an abundance of fantastic food options throughout the city. With world-class museums, lively neighborhoods, and historical pubs, there is an abundance of fun and intriguing things to see, do, and taste in the City of Brotherly Love. If you are lucky enough to have 48 hours in the city, check out some of these great restaurants and fascinating destinations.

Day 1: Morning

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10 a.m.: Enjoy breakfast or brunch at Parc, a popular French brasserie that's open all day long. Located across the street from Rittenhouse Square, this light-filled, sprawling restaurant is a favorite for locals and tourists alike. The breakfast menu is filled with specialties such as eggs Benedict, quiche Lorraine, buttermilk pancakes, and several styles of omelets. In warmer months, Parc brings out an abundance of outdoor tables that stretch around the corner. If you score a seat facing the park, you may want to linger for a while after your meal—but be sure to stroll around Rittenhouse Square afterward, and peruse some of the stores and boutiques along Walnut street, the city's best shopping district.

Day 1: Afternoon

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1 p.m.: As the first capital of the United States, Philadelphia is a city with a great deal of historical significance. In the Old City district, visitors can walk in the steps of the Founding Fathers while experiencing life during colonial times. Gaze at the Liberty Bell, tour Independence Hall, and experience the National Constitution Center; they are all located within steps of each other. Also nearby are the Museum of the American Revolution and Betsy Ross's house. It's fun to wander the cobblestoned streets and admire the tiny, colorful homes in the narrow Elfreth's Alley, too. If you're hungry after all that sightseeing, go for a classic Philadelphia cheesesteak at Jim's Steaks on South Street.

Day 1: Evening

Courtesy of Sampan Restaurant Philadelphia

6 p.m.: For a memorable evening, head to Midtown Village for a pre-dinner cocktail at El Vez, a bustling upscale Mexican restaurant with a robust drink menu. Choose from their fresh margarita options, or sip another house specialty like the guava mojito. Afterward, stroll across the street to Sampan, a lively Asian-inspired eatery created by innovative chef Michael Schulson. It's always fun just to eat at the bar—if you can get a seat—but it's best to make a reservation. Featuring modern Asian cuisine, Sampan serves up sharable and delicious plates, such as shrimp egg rolls, Hamachi ceviche, and beef short rib. If you prefer food off the grill, the satay menu features Korean barbecue beef, Vietnamese chicken, and swordfish.

9 p.m.: After dinner, be sure to check out a few bars in this extremely walkable neighborhood, including the hip outdoor Graffiti bar. Fergie's Pub is an old-school hangout that attracts a mix of locals and visitors soaking in the fun ambiance while munching on pub bites. For a true taste of history, stop by the oldest bar in the city, McGillin's Olde Ale house. It features a lot of character and an extensive beer selection.

Day 2: Morning

Adam Crowley / Getty Images

9 a.m.: Start your day like Rocky and go for a mid-morning walk down the city's picturesque Benjamin Franklin Parkway. Along the way, marvel at how the area resembles Paris's Champs-Élysées, as urban planner Jacques Gréber designed the street after the famed Parisian boulevard in the early 1900s. This area of the city is home to a number of sites, including the Franklin Institute and the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul.

Run up the stairs that lead to the Philadelphia Art Museum's majestic front entrance (also affectionately known as the "Rocky steps," made famous by actor Sylvester Stallone in the Rocky movies), and be sure to take a few selfies against the backdrop of the city skyline. If you wish to admire some beautiful and priceless artwork, go ahead and tour the expansive museum (one adult ticket costs $25) before heading back down.

Afterwards, enjoy a delicious brunch nearby at Sabrina's café, where you can get dishes such as the ultimate Mexi scramble and stuffed challah French toast, as well as tasty vegan offerings.

Day 2: Afternoon

Corbis via Getty Images / Getty Images

VIEW MAP

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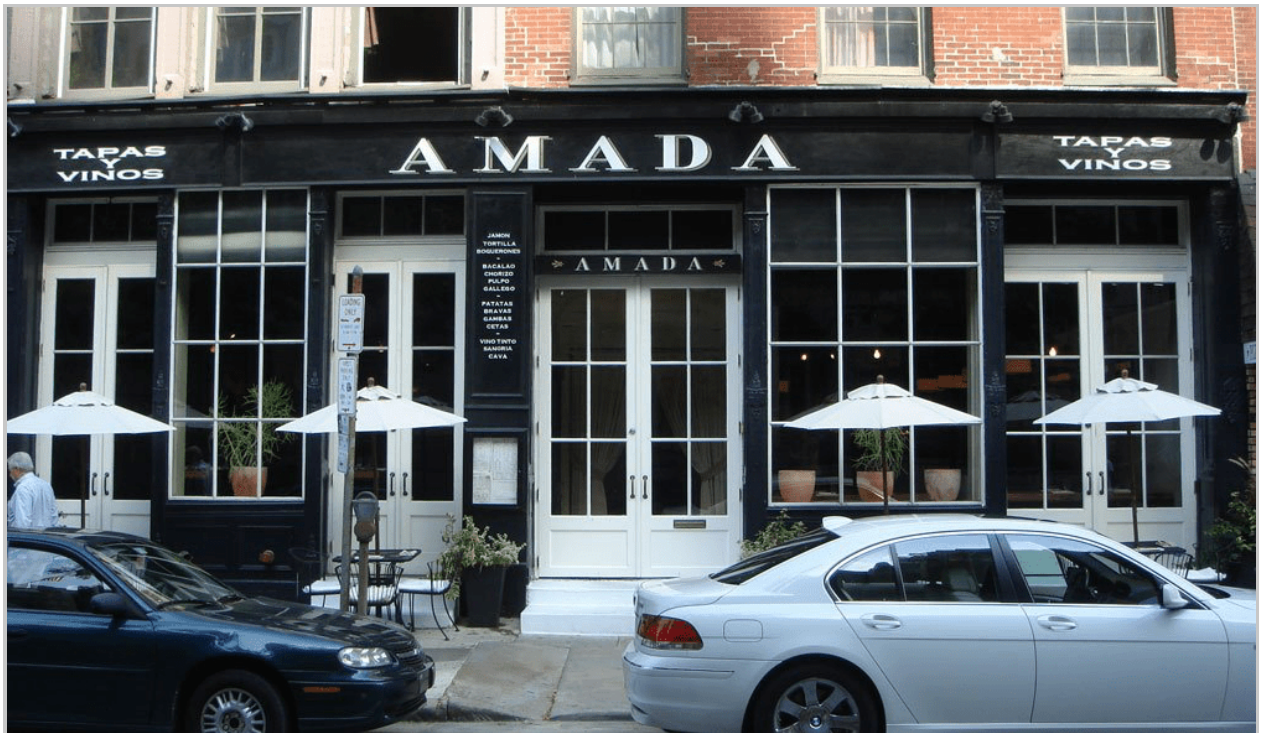
1 p.m.: Whether you're an art aficionado or have never been to a museum before, the Barnes Foundation is not to be missed (Note: Advance reservations are highly encouraged). Showcasing the world's largest private collection of impressionist paintings—including those from the likes of Monet, Picasso, and van Gogh—this three-year-old museum has been attracting visitors from across the globe. Although the exterior is modern, the inside is a replica of the original historical museum, located a few miles away in the Philadelphia suburbs.

If possible, schedule a tour with a Barnes Foundation docent, as they will share fascinating stories behind these incredible pieces of art. Later, grab a coffee or snack at one of the art institute's cafes, or have lunch at the on-site restaurant.

Day 3: Evening



Courtesy of Amada - Philly

7 p.m.: For dinner, enjoy a meal at Royal Boucherie in Philadelphia's Old City district. An American bistro with a French accent, this restaurant features a stunning bar and plenty of cozy seating. Royal Boucherie serves up a little bit of everything: small plates, snacks, raw seafood, sandwiches, and larger entrées. The pièce de résistance, though, is renowned Chef Nicholas Elmi's exceptional charcuterie selection, which includes duck terrine, chicken liver mousse, veal sausage, and other house-cured meats. If you're visiting during the warmer months, check out the plant-filled outdoor terrace on the second floor. It's ideal for dining under the stars.

9 p.m.: Old City is a fantastic neighborhood to stroll around, especially in the evening when things get really lively. For a nightcap, stop in for a drink at Rotten Ralphs, a legendary corner bar; or, order a pitcher of fresh sangria at Amada, a Spanish restaurant owned by chef Jose Garces. Beer lovers can enjoy a few pints at The Khyber Pass Pub, which is known for its extensive selection of brews. This Philly favorite sometimes features live music, so if you're lucky, you might catch a performance or two.