

Philadelphia's South Street: The Complete Guide

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Known far and wide for being edgy and funky, Philadelphia's South Street has lived up to its reputation as the coolest hangout in the city. Lined with more than 400 shops, bars, restaurants, theaters, galleries, and antique shops, this east-west street is considered the demarcation line between Center City and South Philly. The bustling, commercial section of South Street runs from (approximately) Broad Street to Front Street, getting livelier at the lower-numbered streets. For residents as well as visitors, it's a good idea to give yourself ample time to browse the shops, taste delicious local specialties, and experience some of the colorful local culture.

History

This section of Philadelphia has evolved considerably over the years. Originally called Cedar Street, it was the southernmost boundary in William Penn's original city plan in the late 1600s. Around the 1950s, the area morphed into the city's garment district (to this day, some shops are run by third-generation owners). In the early 1960s, local band

the Ortons called South Street the "hippest street in town" in their song named after the area, as rents were low and had attracted a bohemian community.

In later years, South Street became known for its alternative and punk rock scene, with several popular clubs hosting famous bands during their early days, including the Stray Cats, Nirvana, and Pearl Jam. Today, the area is a mix of bohemian and traditional, and the street is always buzzing, day and night.

Art & Culture

For art and culture buffs, a visit to the famed [Magic Gardens](#) is a must. The museum was created by artist Isaiah Zagar, who designed the sprawling property with brightly colored tiles and other random artifacts over the course of many years. It's an iconic spot in the city, steeped in history and filled with some of the most unusual photo opps in the city.

Music fans also flock to South Street, where they can catch every type of musician from local singer-songwriters to touring national artists. The famed [Theater of Living Arts](#), a historical venue that hosts many shows throughout the year, can hold approximately 1,000 concert-goers. Other places to catch live music include the [Twisted Tale](#); [L'Etage](#), Creperie Beau Monde's very own night club; [MilkBoy](#); and [Bistro Romano](#), which usually features a pianist.

Shopping

The intersection of 4th and South Streets has been known as Fabric Row for over 100 years. Today, this area features a variety of shops that sell custom clothing, fabrics, beads, accessories, and more. A few of the many unique stores include [Platinum](#), a designer shop; [Retrospect](#), which has a massive selection of vintage clothing; [Noise Pollution](#) and its collection of classic and new vinyl records; and [Wooden Shoe Books](#), a nonprofit book shop with a robust selection of unconventional offerings.

But you don't need to be a fashionista to shop South Street. If you're a skater and want to check out the latest gear, head to [Nocturnal](#), one of the best skateboard shops in the city. Inclined to get inked? There are ten tattoo and body piercing shops in the area as well.

Where to Eat & Drink

A food lover's utopia, this area boasts a wide array of restaurants serving up a selection of ethnically diverse culinary offerings, ranging from casual and cozy to upscale and trendy. Several notable eateries include [Serpico](#), a swanky American bistro; [Brauhaus Schmitz](#), a German beer hall; [La Nonna](#), a classic Italian trattoria, and [Ishkabibbles's](#), a beloved cheesesteak, sandwich and pizza joint. This area also has an excellent nightlife

scene with many happening bars, including [Tattooed Mom](#), [O'Neals](#) pub, and [Copabanana](#).

How to Visit

For those planning to visit the Magic Gardens, it's best to purchase tickets in advance as it is a popular attraction. This colorful neighborhood also offers walking tours as well, which can be booked ahead of your visit (a favorite is [Isango](#)).

There is metered street parking and parking lots in the area, but [public transportation](#) is highly encouraged. South Street gets very busy, especially at night. It's well known as a place to "cruise" and drivers should avoid it on weekend evenings. There is a lot of pedestrian traffic here as well.