

Top 6 Neighborhoods in Philadelphia

By Marla Cimini



A city of diverse and lively neighborhoods, Philadelphia offers much more than meets the eye in terms of cool, interesting, and vibrant areas. From the popular historical district in Old City to the area's funky neighborhoods in the midst of revitalization, the city is filled with energy and growth. Best of all, it's exciting to explore. Although Philadelphia is a sprawling destination with many different neighborhoods, these are six dynamic areas that offer a wide variety of activities, experiences and things to see and do when you're visiting the city:

1. Center City



The heart of Philadelphia, Center City is definitely where the action is—and it's certainly the busiest part of town, with skyscrapers, businesses, tons of shopping options, plenty of pedestrian traffic, and a variety of residential apartment buildings. It's a great area to visit, even if you just want to stroll around and soak in the ambiance. Center City is also home to awe-inspiring architecture and a number of tourist attractions, such as the Barnes Foundation art museum, [the Franklin Institute](#), and City Hall. The middle of Center City is Rittenhouse Square, one of the prettiest parks in Philly with beautiful trees, statues, fountains, plenty of benches where visitors can relax, and an abundance of green space.

2. Old City



East of Center City, Old City is picturesque and home to many of the famous historical sites in the city. With its cobblestone streets, colonial architecture, and charming facades, this neighborhood offers visitors the most authentic Philadelphia. Although this area is compact and walkable, you can spend several days exploring the city's history. This is where you go to admire [the Liberty Bell](#), Independence Hall, the Constitution Center, the [Museum of the American Revolution](#), the Jewish History Museum, Betsy Ross's house, Benjamin Franklin's grave, and much more.

3. South Philadelphia (aka South Philly)



Located below South Street, South Philly is a colorful pocket of the city that's bordered by two rivers on the east and west: the Delaware and the Schuylkill. This area is primarily residential, but also features plenty of notable restaurants throughout the bustling neighborhood, including the famous cheesesteak spots directly across the street from each other: Geno's and Pat's King of Steaks. If you're exploring this area, it's best to take public transportation. Driving and parking here are not for the faint of heart as parallel parking is the norm, and it's common to see cars "double-parked" in the middle of the wider streets around this area. South Philly is also home to the city's sports arenas, The Wells Fargo Center, The Lincoln Financial Field, and Citizens Bank Park are clustered together (and close to the subway line, too). Depending on the season, visitors can join the rambunctious crowds and cheer for the home teams: [Phillies](#) (baseball), Flyers (hockey), 76-ers (basketball), and Eagles (football).

4. West Philly/ University City



On the opposite side of the city, West Philadelphia is a sprawling, bustling area that encompasses the neighborhood west of the Schuylkill River. As reflected in its name, several major colleges are based here, including Drexel University, the University of Pennsylvania, and Penn Medicine. The [Philadelphia Zoo](#), the oldest in the country, is also found in this part of the city. In addition, the beautiful Fairmont Park, the largest in the city, is also located in West Philly. The park is massive, with hiking trails that offer picturesque nature views. There's much to see and do in the park and it's impossible to experience everything in one day, so be sure to plan ahead if you wish to tour a few of these sites. It's home to the [Please Touch Museum](#), the Horticultural Center, Sofuso Japanese Garden House, a number of stunning sculptures, the famous Boathouse Row and more. This area has a multitude of eateries, bars, and other unexpected hidden gems, too.

5. Bella Vista



Adjacent to South Philadelphia is the city's residential Bella Vista neighborhood, whose literal translation means "beautiful sight" in Italian. Spanning several blocks, it's known for its popular and historic busy Italian market that features shops and stalls that stretch along 9th street, selling everything from meat and seafood to vegetables, spices and a wide array of home goods. Considered one of the most walkable neighborhoods in the city, this area is a melting pot of cultures, and offers a mix of homes and grit. In addition to Italian food and specialty sandwiches, it's easy to find a variety of casual restaurants here that serve up a variety of Mexican and Asian cuisines.

6. Fishtown



This recently-revitalized neighborhood is located north of Girard avenue (north of Center City) and has become the epicenter of “cool” in Philly within the last several years. It’s not considered a touristy section of town, so you won’t find historical monuments or a major business district, but this bustling area has a hip vibe, and a slew of notable restaurants, bars, beer gardens, and music venues. Some are new and others are long-time neighborhood haunts. It’s also a great shopping area – both independently-owned boutiques as well as major national stores. Resident hipsters and creative types flock to this area, which features a number of newly-constructed apartment buildings and condo complexes, as well as restored older homes. It’s also easy to reach Center City, so many of the local residents have an easy commute if they happen to work in other Philadelphia neighborhoods.