

# CRITICAL DATES IN GREATER PHILADELPHIA'S TOURISM TIMELINE

Major Tourism Milestones Grabbing Media Headlines Since 1985

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DEAR MOVER AND SHAKER,  
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EVENTS AND MILESTONES MAKE ME,  
PHILADELPHIA, A GREAT DESTINATION  
FOR ALL TYPES OF TRAVELERS -  
AND RESIDENTS.

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TO CHECK OUT WHAT  
I'VE BEEN DOING  
SINCE THE '80s.

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The Greater Philadelphia region has received much praise over the years. These accolades are the result of years of dedication and hard work by everyone in the region. Updated annually, the Tourism Timeline highlights the milestones that have grabbed the media's attention since 1985:

## Mid-1980s

- 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 **Multicultural Affairs Congress** is instituted by the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau (PCVB) to promote African-American conventions and tourism.
- The **Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority** is founded in 1987 and begins to develop a convention center in Philadelphia. That same year, Marriott commits to building a 1,200-room convention 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 200<sup>th</sup> 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 open house taking place each month.
- **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 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the landing of Christopher Columbus in the Americas—with a year-long event that celebrates the people of the world who found their own America in Philadelphia.
- The **New Jersey State Aquarium** (known today as **Adventure Aquarium**) opens in Camden.

## 1993

- 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 an important 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 on the Philadelphia side of the Delaware River.
- After receiving five nominations, the film **Philadelphia** goes on to win two Oscars.
- The **Philadelphia Flower Show** (known today as the **Philadelphia International 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 (GPTMC)** 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 bright purple buses offer a comfortable, safe 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

- **GPTMC** launches the region’s first advertising campaign, **This Is My Philadelphia**. Tourism increases 7%, with the campaign generating 1.133 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 over the next 10 years.
- 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** 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**; 152-room **Hampton Inn at Philadelphia**; and 288-suite **Embassy Suites** on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway.
- **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 **Wachovia 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 country.
- The new **Lights of Liberty** attraction, the world’s first walkable sound-and-light show, opens at 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 GPTMC’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.
- Philadelphia becomes the mural capital of the country, with **1,874 murals**.

- **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 ***The Sixth Sense*** at the Prince Music Theater. The unexpected blockbuster was filmed in Philadelphia.
- 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** and 200-room **Hampton Inn**.
- The **Philadelphia Museum of Art** celebrates its 125<sup>th</sup> 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 to be 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 is the country’s most successful hotel recovery plan.
- 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: 269-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 Web site, designed specifically to attract people of color to the Philadelphia region.
- The Delaware River Port Authority approves grants to the PCVB and GPTMC for **international marketing**.
- GPTMC 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.
- The **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. The annual event gives performing arts enthusiasts the opportunity to appreciate music and dance performances while welcoming the start of the summer season.
- The Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance begins the region's **Campaign for Culture** and launches a new consumer Web site, phillyfunguide.com, offering up-to-the-minute information about leisure activities in the region.
- On October 22, Carnival Cruise Line's "Legend" sails into Philadelphia to pick up passengers for a six-day cruise to Bermuda. This sailing launches **CruisePhilly**, an initiative to market Philadelphia as a cruise port.

## 2003

- 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 Web sites—**phila.gov** and **gophila.com**—partner to give visitors and residents the region's most comprehensive tourism and civic online resource.
- GPTMC 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 in Historic Philadelphia.
- 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 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> 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 bi-annual event, with weeks in fall and spring. In 2009, the prix-fixe menus expand to include lunch in addition to dinner.
- GPTMC'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**®.
- **Schuylkill River Park Trail**, a path extending from Kelly Drive to the urban heart of Philadelphia, opens, making it possible to bike 22 miles along the Schuylkill River from Center City to Valley Forge.

## 2004

- The annual **Mummers Parade** returns to Broad Street on New Year's Day.
- **Mayor John F. Street** begins his second term in office.
- The Phillies' ballpark, **Citizens Bank Park**, a 43,000-seat 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 bright purple buses-turned-trolleys are privatized and return with a new look, a new route and a new fare structure.
- GPTMC 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 expands service in July, 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 of 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 18<sup>th</sup>-century Philadelphia.
- The **Center City District** completes a \$750,000 lighting project to illuminate all four exterior facades of City Hall.
- *The Giant Heart* at **The Franklin Institute** beats again after six months of intensive care.
- 2004-2005 marks the 20-year anniversary of the **Mural Arts Program**, which has completed more than 2,300 murals throughout Philadelphia (more than 3,000 in 2009).
- **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.
- GPTMC and the Washington, D.C., Convention and 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 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a gala marking the opening of the new fine arts campus.
- 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.
- The **Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International** honors GPTMC with two prestigious Platinum Adrian Awards, plus a "Best of Show" recognition for the city's gay tourism marketing campaign, which picks up five awards total. GPTMC's PR department receives two more Gold awards and one Silver for other work.
- 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 GPTMC work to create an unprecedented marketing campaign, which came to be nationally recognized as *The Dalí Model*, serving as a template for future projects.
- **The BenStitute**, providing 100 hours of training to Historic Philadelphia, Inc. storytellers, welcomes its first class in May.

- On Memorial Day weekend, **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.
- On July 3, 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 GPTMC a \$1.6 million grant to develop **Boundless Philadelphia**®, a comprehensive and collaborative marketing campaign aimed at promoting the region's natural assets and recreational opportunities. The three-year campaign kicks off in spring 2006.
- *National Geographic Traveler* declares Philadelphia the "**Next Great City**" in October.
- The **Cira Centre** opens in Philadelphia, changing the face of the city's skyline. With direct access to 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station, the building features 28 floors of office space.
- Governor Edward G. Rendell presents the Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority with a \$16 million check for the expansion of the **Pennsylvania Convention Center**.
- 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 on December 15. The exhibition is the key component of the city's year-long *Ben Franklin 300 Philadelphia* celebration to commemorate Franklin's 300<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## 2006

- Chester County's **Longwood Gardens** celebrates its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a \$25 million renovation.
- GPTMC's **SoundAboutPhilly**® free, completely customizable podcast tours debut, telling Philadelphia's story through lesser-known city experiences, lively music and local voices.
- GPTMC celebrates its **10<sup>th</sup> 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 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 new 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

- 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 GPTMC, working closely with the PCVB on the international side of the program.
- 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*** exhibition attracts nearly 1.3 million visitors, making it the most popular museum exhibition in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's history. To extend the exhibition's success, GPTMC creates a region-wide celebration centered around 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 slaves. For several months, visitors are able to stand on a viewing platform and ask questions to 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, GPTMC partners with more than 30 organizations for **Historic Philadelphia**, a campaign to connect the neighborhoods between Spruce and Race Streets and Front and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets and to highlight the variety of activities the area offers.
- The groundbreaking at the **Pennsylvania Convention Center** in August signals the start of extensive renovations that will increase the center's space by more than 50%.
- 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 as 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 official visitor site for the region, gophila.com celebrates its **10<sup>th</sup> anniversary** in October.
- **Michael A. Nutter** is elected Mayor of Philadelphia in November.
- 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.
- Hotel revenue in the five-county region reaches **\$1 billion** for the first time.

## 2008

- New hotels open: 24-room **Independent Hotel Philadelphia**; 136-room **Aloft Philadelphia Airport**; and 92-room **Four Points by Sheraton Philadelphia City Center**.
- Newly elected City of Philadelphia **Mayor Michael A. Nutter** takes office in January.
- The 57-story **Comcast Center** opens at 17<sup>th</sup> Street and John F. Kennedy Boulevard. It's the tallest building between New York and Chicago. The 2,000-square-foot LED screen, called The Comcast Experience, in the building's lobby is an instant hit with visitors.

- Because more travelers are choosing Philadelphia than ever before, **BoltBus** and **Megabus** begin low-cost service from New York to Philly.
- The first annual **Philly Beer Week** celebrates the city's lively brewing history in March.
- 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** events—table tennis and gymnastics.
- 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 **Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania** begins construction on the new Horticulture Center Complex in October. The center will serve as Penn's first newly constructed "green" building, with plans to achieve Platinum Level LEED™ Certification.
- 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 GPTMC, PCVB and the Pennsylvania Convention Center.
- The Comcast Center debuts the **Comcast Holiday Spectacular** on its LED screen.
- 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 cafés (up 212% from 69 in 2001).
- Visitation to the Philadelphia region reaches **30 million** for the first time, with leisure hotel room nights in Center City nearly tripling since GPTMC began advertising in 1997—rising from 254,000 to 705,000 in 2008.

## 2009

- New hotel opens: 235-room **Hotel Palomar Philadelphia**, the first Kimpton property in Philadelphia.
- The nation's first zoo, the **Philadelphia Zoo** celebrates its sesquicentennial—or 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary—with the debut of the new McNeil Avian Center.
- In February 2009, the Johnson family from Hanover, Pennsylvania, books the 100,000<sup>th</sup> **Philly Overnight® Hotel Package**, representing 200,000 room nights and \$20 million in hotel revenue.
- GPTMC launches the **Philly 360<sup>oo</sup>** African-American campaign, designed to reach out to younger tech-savvy travelers.
- Both **Cézanne and Beyond** and **Galileo, the Medici and the Age of Astronomy** make their exclusive world appearances at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and The Franklin Institute, respectively, attracting more than 337,415 visitors combined.
- May brings the opening of **The Piazza at Schmidts**, an 80,000-square-foot open-air live music and events plaza in Northern Liberties.
- GPTMC 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 F. 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 36 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.

- For the first time, GPTMC sells campaign-related gear to the public. Starting in July, visitors can purchase their own **With Love, Philadelphia XOXO™ merchandise** on gophila.com.
- The Four Seasons Hotel Philadelphia adds a **rooftop garden** to its green initiatives. The herbs and vegetables grown there are used in the hotel's restaurants.
- 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.
- Construction begins in October on the \$322 million **SugarHouse Casino**, which will occupy 22 acres in the city's Fishtown neighborhood.
- Pearl Jam closes the **Wachovia Spectrum** with a concert on Halloween night. In spring 2010, demolition crews to raze the venue to make room for Philly 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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.
- 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.
- For the sixth year running, **Saturday night** is the strongest night of the week for Center City hotels, primarily due to continuously increasing leisure demand.
- Thanks to strategic integration and cross-promotion, **gophila.com** and **uwishunu.com** attract a record number of visits in 2009.

## 2010

- In January, the new **visitphilly.com** (formerly gophila.com) debuts with a new look and new name.
- After five years of planning, the inaugural **Philagrafika 2010: The Graphic Unconscious** contemporary art festival takes place January through April in 80 venues throughout the region, making it one of the largest art events in the country.
- **Sesame Place** celebrates its 30<sup>th</sup> birthday with new shows and special events throughout the year.
- **Philadelphia Union**, the nation's 16<sup>th</sup> Major League Soccer team, to kick off its first season in March.
- Philadelphia Union's stadium, the 18,500-seat **Chester Stadium**, to open in spring.
- The upscale 202-room **Le Méridien Philadelphia** to open in a 10-story Georgian Revival building.
- **Lights of Liberty** to re-launch in July after a complete overhaul of the historically themed nighttime ambulatory light-and-sound show. A new indoor show at Historic Philadelphia's remodeled building will round out the experience.
- The **President's House Commemorative Site** to debut in Independence National Historical Park, just steps from the Liberty Bell Center and Independence Hall, in the fall.
- After a \$150 million renovation, the **National Museum of American Jewish History** to open in fall on Independence Mall at the site of the longtime home of the KYW television and radio stations.
- In late 2010, the **Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania** to debut its new Horticulture Center Complex, Penn's first newly constructed "green" building.
- **Sister Cities Park**—complete with a children's discovery garden, a pond for toy boats and a café and meeting space—to open in late 2010 in front of the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul, creating an even more engaging Benjamin Franklin Parkway.
- **SugarHouse Casino's** 100,000-square-foot interim casino to open and feature 1,700 slot machines, one restaurant, one snack bar and two bar lounges.
- **The Philadelphia History Museum at the Atwater Kent** to reopen to the public with new galleries, a new layout and a new name (formerly Atwater Kent Museum of Philadelphia).

# 2011 and Beyond

- The expanded **Pennsylvania Convention Center** to open in 2011 with one million square feet of space, 60% more than its size in 2007.
- The **Mercer Museum** in Doylestown to debut its 13,000-square-foot expansion in 2011.
- Philadelphia to host the **National Association of Black Journalists'** annual convention in 2011; the last time the city hosted the group was in 1995.
- **Penn Park** to be completed in 2011, bringing 20% more green space to the University of Pennsylvania campus and creating a new gateway between University City and Center City. The \$46 million project at the eastern edge of campus will feature open space, athletic fields, tennis courts, bike trails and an elevated walk.
- A \$3 million **public plaza** to be completed in March 2011 between the Pennsylvania Convention Center and the museums along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. It will include a public park, a restaurant, a sculpture garden and a gateway to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.
- The Kimmel Center's **Philadelphia International Festival of the Arts (PIFA)** to take place April 7 to May 1, 2011. Funded by a \$10 million grant from the Annenberg Foundation, the event will feature more than 100 performances and activities by the region's performing arts and cultural organizations and educational and visual arts groups.
- Starting in 2011, PATCO to add **Franklin Square** to its stops.
- **The Barnes Foundation** to open on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in 2012 after relocating from its original site in Merion, Pennsylvania.
- The **Franklin Court Museum** to reopen in 2012 after an \$18 million renovation.
- A \$420 million 670-foot **Waldorf-Astoria Hotel & Residences** to open as the sixth-largest building in the city in the summer of 2012.
- The University of Pennsylvania and Brandywine Realty Trust's new **Cira Centre South** to be completed in 2012. The \$800 million project will include office and residential towers, a new post office and a 2,400-space parking garage.
- In the coming years, Philadelphia will continue to host the finest in professional and amateur sports, including the **2011 NCAA Wrestling Championships** and the **2013 U.S. Open** (golf) at Merion.
- The \$322 million **SugarHouse Casino** to open in Fishtown.
- The **American Revolution Center** to open inside Independence National Historical Park.
- Near the stadiums in South Philadelphia, open-air **Philly Live!** to debut with restaurants, shops and entertainment venues.

Download the 2010 Tourism Timeline at [visitphilly.com/research](http://visitphilly.com/research).

The Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation (GPTMC) makes Philadelphia and The Countryside® a premier destination through marketing and image building that increases business and promotes the region's vitality.

