

CONTACTS: Cara Schneider
(215) 599-0789, cara@visitphilly.com
Daniel Davis
(267) 546-0758, daniel@visitphilly.com

Tweet It: Sensory-friendly attractions and performances in @visitphilly: <https://vstphl.ly/2LBx3qG>

PHILADELPHIA'S SENSORY-FRIENDLY ATTRACTIONS & PERFORMANCES *Philly Venues & Groups Offer Programming For People On The Autism Spectrum*

PHILADELPHIA, February 3, 2020 – Inclusivity is embedded in the original promise of Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love and Sisterly Affection. Today, the region keeps that promise to residents and visitors with sensory sensitivities. Some of Philly's most popular attractions, including **The Franklin Institute** and **Please Touch Museum®** have sensory-friendly policies and programming. So, too, do eminent arts organizations such as **Pennsylvania Ballet** and **The Philadelphia Orchestra**.

Much credit for the region's expanding sensory-friendly offerings goes to professor **Roger Ideishi** and **Art-Reach**, who, together, facilitate arts and cultural environments that respect both the needs of people with cognitive disabilities and the expression of the artists and attractions themselves.

Here's a look at Philadelphia venues and groups that have recently expanded their sensory-friendly programming:

Sensory-Friendly Attractions:

- **Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University** – Philadelphia's dinosaur museum offers children with autism and their families exclusive Access to Science on six Saturday or Sunday mornings (9-11 a.m.) per year. For these occasions and any day, visual, easy-to-follow pre-visit Museum Stories help prepare visitors of all developmental abilities for exploring the museum, including the exhibition *Survival of the Slowest* (February 15 – September 20, 2020). **January 26, February 23, May 2, June 7, July 11, August 23, September 26, October 24, November 18 and December 29, 2020.** 1900 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, (215) 299-1060, ansp.org
- **Adventure Aquarium** – This Delaware River Waterfront attraction, home to blue penguins, a hammerhead shark and approximately 8,500 more aquatic species, instituted its first sensory-friendly event in 2018. The aquarium partnered with South Jersey-based Samulance to produce F.I.S.H. Night: Family Inclusive Special Hours, when the already largely dimly lit venue further adjusts lighting and sound levels to create a relaxed setting for all visitors. **May 3, 2020.** 1 Riverside Drive, Camden, NJ, (844) 474-FISH, adventureaquarium.com

-more-

- **Brandywine River Museum of Art** – A bucolic campus surrounds galleries known for three generations of Wyeths, which open select mornings for free Sensory-Friendly Saturdays. Registered families receive pre-visit social stories and enjoy hands-on activities, along with support from experienced volunteers, fidgets, noise-cancelling headphones and sensory break areas. Any day, visitors may borrow a sensory-friendly museum pack containing social stories, fidgets, noise-cancelling headphones and activities suggestions. **March 28, 2020.** 1 Hoffman’s Mill Road, Chadds Ford, (610) 388-8120, brandywine.org
- **The Franklin Institute** – On five Sensory-Friendly Sundays per year, the tri-state area’s most-visited museum opens its doors early (8 a.m.), modifies exhibits and employs trained staff and volunteers to create a comfortable environment for visitors on the autism spectrum. Guests who pre-register are admitted free of charge, as are visitors who arrive before 9:30 a.m. The event ends at noon. Every day, sensory alert maps are available for permanent and temporary exhibits. **March 15, June 14 and October 4, 2020.** 222 N. 20th Street, (215) 448-1200, fi.edu
- **LEGOLand Discovery Center® Philadelphia** – At Special Sensory Days (really, early evenings, 5-7 p.m.) at this indoor Montgomery County attraction, staff trained with The Ruttenberg® Autism Center help create a calm, quiet, gentle environment for children to play with the world’s most popular toys. Break rooms, reduced light, music therapy from Keep Music Alive and pre- and during-visit social stories are available to families, along with a reduced ticket price. **February 4, May 5, July 7 and November 3, 2020.** Plymouth Meeting Mall, 500 W. Germantown Pike, Plymouth Meeting, (267) 245-9696, philadelphia.legolanddiscoverycenter.com
- **National Constitution Center** – The museum dedicated to the four most powerful pages in U.S. history holds Sensory Friendly Days several times a year. Each all-day event comes with pre-visit guides, emotionally safe spaces, modified programming and staff trained to assist all guests. **February 3, 23 and 24, March 9, June 7, September 6 and December 6, 2020.** 525 Arch Street, (215) 409-6700, constitutioncenter.org
- **Philadelphia Museum of Art** – Sensory-Friendly Mornings take place quarterly before select Sunday Family Programs within the galleries of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and on select summer Wednesdays and Saturdays. With lowered lights and volume and fewer crowds, the 1.5-hour session offers sensory break areas, on-hand occupational therapists and hands-on art activities geared toward many developmental levels. Registered participants receive a pre-visit social guide. **February 23, 2020.** 2600 Benjamin Franklin Parkway, (215) 763-8100, philamuseum.org
- **Philadelphia Zoo** – America’s first zoo worked with the Center for Autism Research at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia to create KidZooU, a hands-on, child-centric exhibit that uses the Universal Design concept to offer an inclusive, enriching experience for children. Pre-visit materials, including a picture-exchange system, are available on the zoo’s website. 3400 W. Girard Avenue, (215) 243-1100, philadelphiazoo.org

-more-

- **Please Touch Museum®** – The founding premise of this boundless little kid destination: Children learn through play. The West Fairmount Park museum has dedicated quiet space, and staff is trained to help all kinds of kids, including those who'd like to borrow sound-reducing headphones. Several Sunday mornings per year, Play Without Boundaries serves children with learning and developmental disabilities and on the autism spectrum by offering a modified, sensory-friendly, all-access museum experience augmented with Floreo virtual reality, therapy animals and visits from community health experts. **March 1, April 5, May 3, June 7, July 5, August 2 and September 6, 2020.** 4231 Avenue of the Republic, (215) 581-3181, pleasetouchmuseum.org, pleasetouchmuseum.org/pageblocks/accessibility-play-without-boundaries
- **Sesame Place** – About 25 miles northeast of Center City, this vibrant amusement and water park, home to Elmo, Big Bird, Abby Cadabby and Julia, has trained its staff in sensory awareness, motor and social skills, emotional awareness and communication. Sesame Place offers designated quiet rooms and low-sensory areas, and a sensory guide for its attractions. 100 Sesame Road, Langhorne, (215) 702-3566, sesameplace.com

Sensory-friendly Performances:

- **The Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts** – The centerpiece of the Avenue of the Arts offers select productions with relaxed house rules, designated quiet areas, trained staff and Art-Reach volunteers, and sensory-friendly kits with noise-cancelling headphones, weighted bean bags and fidget toys. Audience members are welcome to bring their own sensory-friendly stress relief devices and move about. 300 S. Broad Street, (215) 893-1999, kimmelcenter.org
- **LiveConnections** – This music nonprofit prioritizes accessibility across its educational and concert programming, especially **Bridge Sessions**, at its partner venue, World Cafe Live. Skilled teaching artists lead 75-minute educational performances that mix in interactive activities and provide multiple ways for all-age participants to engage in music-making through call-and-response, movement, playing percussion instruments, creating rhythm poems and more. Lighting and sound adjustments, cool-down space, sensory toys and know-before-you-go guides are available as well. Dates TBA. 3025 Walnut Street, (267) 295-2946, liveconnections.org
- **Montgomery Theater** – This intimate venue puts on one relaxed performance per family musical, play or comedy, offering pre-visit materials, partially up house lights, loosened rules, quiet space, sound mitigation and a modified refund policy. The next such performances: *The Marvelous Wonderettes*, **April 11, 2020**; *Frozen Jr.*, **May 16, 2020**; *The Witches*, **October 17, 2020**; *The Carols*, **November 28, 2020**. 124 N. Main Street, Souderton, (215) 723-9984, montgomerytheater.org
- **Pennsylvania Ballet** – Philadelphia's eminent ballet company proudly offers sensory-friendly performances throughout the season and during the wintertime run of *George Balanchine's The Nutcracker®*. This spring, the PA Ballet 2 company will perform *Snow White* in a sensory-friendly setting at the Upper Darby Performing Arts Center. Pre-show materials guide patrons on going to the theater and tell the stories behind the choreography, music and characters. The theater adjusts sound and lighting and relaxes its rules — free movement and expression are welcome — and adds a quiet space and gluten-free concessions. *Snow White*, **April 18, 2020**, Upper Darby Performing Arts Center, 601 N. Lansdowne Avenue, Drexel Hill, (610) 622-1189, udpac.org; *Nutcracker*, **December 30, 2020**, Academy of Music, 240 S. Broad Street, (215) 551-7000, paballet.org, paballet.org/season-tickets/sensory-friendly-performances

-more-

- **People's Light** – The mission of this large, nonprofit, professional suburban theater is education through performance. During Relaxed Performances, the house becomes a shush-free zone, so patrons with autism, ADD, ADHA, dementia and sensory sensitivities can freely express themselves during musicals and more. House lights remain low; startling lighting is reduced; sounds levels are lowered; crowds are limited; the lobby opens a quiet area; and fidget, stress-sensory toys and disposable ear plugs are available. Upcoming performances include: *Shakespeare in Love*, **March 15, 2020** and *Songs for Nobodies*, **August 28, 2020**. 39 Conestoga Road, Malvern, (610) 644-3500, peopleslight.org, peopleslight.org/visit/accessibility/relaxed-performances
- **The Philadelphia Orchestra** – The orchestra has long shared its talents with children and families during their *Sound All Around* concerts, held on the comfortable carpet of the Academy of Music ballroom. The group also designates the Saturday edition of these popular, intimate performances as sensory-friendly (Brass, **February 8, 2020**; Ensemble, **March 21, 2020**). The full orchestra's sensory-friendly performances — and most family concerts — have featured a no-shush policy, cool-down spaces, lighting adjustments, trained helpers and both planned and impromptu interactions between musicians and audience members, in Verizon Hall at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts. *Carnival of the Animals*, **March 7, 2020**; *The Life and Times of Beethoven*, **May 2, 2020**. Academy, 240 S. Broad Street; Kimmel, 300 S. Broad Street, (215) 893-1900, philorch.org
- **Theatre Horizon** – This Montgomery County theater began offering an Autism Drama Program a decade ago and has served 680 children and adults in six-week, spring-through-fall sessions. Each season brings relaxed performances of major productions, dates TBA. 401 DeKalb Street, Norristown, (610) 283-2230, theatrehorizon.org

VISIT PHILADELPHIA® is our name and our mission. As the region's official tourism marketing agency, we build Greater Philadelphia's image, drive visitation and boost the economy.

On Greater Philadelphia's official visitor website and blog, visitphilly.com and uwishunu.com, visitors can explore things to do, upcoming events, themed itineraries and hotel packages. Compelling photography and videos, interactive maps and detailed visitor information make the sites effective trip-planning tools. Along with Visit Philly social media channels, the online platforms communicate directly with consumers. Travelers can also call and stop into the Independence Visitor Center for additional information and tickets.

Note to Editors: For high-resolution photos and high-definition B-roll of Greater Philadelphia, visit the Photos & Video section of visitphilly.com/mediacenter.