

CONTACTS: Stephanie Fanelli
(484) 213-5968, sfanelli@signature57.com

Binh Nguyen
(717) 389-2928, binh@visitphilly.com

26 Top Parks to Visit in Philadelphia

Explore Philly's incredible outdoor spaces.

PHILADELPHIA, April 21, 2023 – It's easy to find the respite of nature in Philadelphia. The city's rich green backdrop of incredible parks and open spaces began with its founding 300 years ago. William Penn was so inspired by the eastern hardwood forest that greeted him in the New World that he named his colony Penn's Woods, or Pennsylvania. Another Penn gem, Philadelphia's five main squares date back to the original city — all part of the founder's plan for a "greene countrie town."

Today, the city blooms with lively urban parks and re-imagined recreational landscapes giving it a city-in-a-park feel. Residents and visitors enjoy relaxing, picnicking and playing in these public spaces that honor Penn's vision, including the massive trail systems of Fairmount Park and Wissahickon Valley Park, as well as the delightful riverside enclaves of Race Street Pier and the seasonal Spruce Street Harbor Park.

Read on for our picks for the best parks and open spaces in Philly.

Public Squares:

Dilworth Park

City Hall's popular western-facing front yard is a modern and welcoming outdoor space, reestablishing William Penn's original Center Square as a gathering place for all Philadelphians. The multi-use space has tree groves, benches, two cafes and a large programmable fountain that transforms into an ice rink in the winter and a roller skating rink in the summer.

Where: Dilworth Park, 1 S. 15th Street

Franklin Square

Since 2006, the former North East Publick Square has been a family haven, with acres of green space, a carousel, playgrounds, a food stand and a Philly-themed mini-golf course. Another major plus for the square: a seasonal daytime and nighttime water and light show starring one of the country's oldest public fountains.

Where: Franklin Square, 200 N. 6th Street

Logan Square

This original public square is now four parks in one, centered around Swann Memorial Fountain in what's now called Logan Circle. The centerpiece fountain, designed by Philadelphia-born sculptor Alexander Calder, represents the region's major waterways: the Delaware, Schuylkill and Wissahickon. Beyond the circle, three parks encompass the larger square. The kid-friendly Sister Cities Park includes a Children's

VISIT PHILADELPHIA®

Discovery Garden, boat pond, cafe and another fountain; Shakespeare Park across from the Free Library of Philadelphia is home to the Shakespeare Memorial (another Calder creation); and Aviator Park along 20th Street is home to two pieces of public art: the Aero Memorial World War I and All Wars Memorial to Colored Soldiers statues.

Where: Logan Square, 18th Street & Benjamin Franklin Parkway

Rittenhouse Square

William Penn and his wife Hannah Callowhill Penn likely never imagined how popular this green space — with its walkways, sculptures, fountains and reflecting pool — would become among strollers, readers, children, artists, picnickers and dogs. Craft fairs, farmers markets and other events shine a spotlight on the picturesque location all year.

Where: Rittenhouse Square, 210 W. Rittenhouse Square

Washington Square

Named Southeast Square in 1682, Washington Square was a grazing pasture and a burial ground for African Americans, Revolutionary War soldiers and victims of the 1793 yellow fever epidemic. It was also a gathering spot for colonial-era African Americans, who dubbed the park “Congo Square.” Today, modern residences surround the green and lively park, now home to the Tomb of the Unknown Revolutionary War Soldier.

Where: Washington Square, 210 W. Washington Square

Day Trip-Worthy Parks:

Fairmount Park

Fairmount Park offers more than 2,000 acres of space, which includes miles of designated trails, dozens of sculptures, two performing arts centers, the Philadelphia Zoo, Shofuso Japanese Cultural Center, historic mansions, the Smith Memorial Playground and Playhouse and renowned museums. Tip: Head to Belmont Plateau for awesome skyline views.

Where: Various locations, including Belmont Plateau, 1800 Belmont Mansion Drive

FDR Park

FDR Park’s fields, trails, lagoon, creek and lakes are nestled among the industry and neighborhoods of South Philly. The area is a bird-watcher’s paradise and boasts spaces for tennis, rugby and baseball. The park’s gazebo is a great place to set up a picnic lunch. Of special note is the FDR Skate Park, a public spot designed and built by local volunteer skateboarding enthusiasts; two lakes open for guided kayak tours; and the Southeast Asian Market, a cultural hub of refugee and immigrant vendors selling traditional dishes, jewelry and clothing (early spring through early fall).

Where: FDR Park, 1500 Pattison Avenue

Independence National Historical Park

Before and during colonial times, city and kitchen gardens were planted alongside homes, while full-fledged farms thrived on the outskirts of the original city. Today, Philadelphia’s Historic District has pocket and large parks, including the green expanse that is Independence Mall. Independence National Historical Park invites visitors to its five gardens, each landscaped in the style of the day. Don’t miss these green spaces:

VISIT PHILADELPHIA®

- The geometric 18th-Century Garden, an example of formal, Revolutionary-era English landscaping features raised flowerbeds, rows of walkways and a pergola (339 Walnut Street)
- A Rose Garden with 96 floral varieties honoring the signers of the Declaration of Independence, donated by the Daughters of the Revolution on the site of a circa-1796 horse stable (422 Walnut Street)
- The Magnolia Garden, inspired by George Washington's fondness for the trees, originally had 13 different magnolias, each representing one of the 13 colonies (Locust Street between Fourth and Fifth streets)
- Rush Garden, where brick walls and wrought iron surround symmetric, four-bed, 18th-century-style boxwoods, which sit on a site that once included the Benjamin Rush House (Third and Walnut streets)
- The Benjamin Franklin-designed Franklin Court, which got an update from architect Robert Venturi in 1975, adding a pergola, formal raised flower and tree beds, and crabapple trees (322 Market Street)

Where: Independence Mall, Chestnut Street & South Independence Mall East

[John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum](#)

With nearly 1,000 acres and many species of native wildlife and plants, the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum protects the largest freshwater tidal marsh in Pennsylvania. The marsh, a key stop in the Atlantic flyway, is well-known among birdwatchers — 80-plus species nest here and 300 have been recorded. As for recreation, the network of low-lying trails (10 miles in all) attracts joggers and walkers. Plus, there's a boat ramp for canoe and kayak access.

Where: John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum, 8601 Lindbergh Boulevard

[The Navy Yard](#)

Featuring 20 acres of parks, The Navy Yard complex is both visually stunning and fun to explore. The Central Green is an oasis for recreation, featuring a social track, fitness station and sun lawn, while Crescent Park is designed for quiet strolls and picnics. And don't miss the Riverfront Greenway, a mile-long path along Admiral Peary Way with great views of the Delaware River.

Where: The Navy Yard, 4747 S. Broad Street

[Pennypack Park](#)

Named after the Lenni Lenape Indian word for slow-moving water, Pennypack Park follows Pennypack Creek southeast as it runs from Montgomery County to the Delaware River in Philadelphia. The landscape of this rambling city park — clocking in at a massive 1,600 acres — covers rolling hills, open meadows and many miles of paved and unpaved trails that are great for hiking, biking, running and horseback riding. Visitors also find numerous historic buildings, including Pennypack Bridge, one of the nation's oldest stone bridges.

Where: Pennypack Park, Rhawn Street & Holmehurst Avenue

[Wissahickon Valley Park](#)

With more than 50 miles of rugged trails, Wissahickon Valley Park's thousands of acres are great for hiking, cycling and exploring. Wissahickon schist bedrock, sliced through centuries ago, has created steep hills punctuated by a creek, with paths for both climbers and horseback riders. Also on site: Philadelphia's last

VISIT PHILADELPHIA®

covered bridge. Especially accessible is Forbidden Drive, a five-mile packed gravel trail with stunning views.

Where: Wissahickon Valley Park, Valley Green Road

Delaware River Waterfront Parks:

Blue Cross RiverRink Summerfest and Winterfest

In warm and cool weather, this seasonal space at the foot of the Benjamin Franklin Bridge draws crowds for outdoor roller-skating (summer) or ice-skating (winter), games (including an arcade), a lodge for lounging, and local eats and drinks galore. In winter, there are fire pits and cabins to rent. In summer, there's a midway-inspired carnival featuring boardwalk games, a carousel and a Ferris wheel.

Where: Blue Cross RiverRink, 101 S. Columbus Boulevard

Race Street Pier & Cherry Street Pier

In the shadow of the Benjamin Franklin Bridge, the two-level [Race Street Pier](#) has multi-tiered seating and waterfront views for miles. Just next door, [Cherry Street Pier](#) is a 100-year-old indoor-outdoor space that's home to artist and maker spaces made out of shipping containers, community programming, a food truck or two, and plenty of plant life.

Where: Race Street Pier, Race Street & North Columbus Boulevard

Penn Treaty Park

According to legend, Pennsylvania founder William Penn signed his peace treaty with the local Lenape tribe under an elm tree just off the Delaware River in 1683. Though the tree fell in a storm in 1810, the city officially opened Penn Treaty Park on the surrounding land in 1894. Today, a statue of William Penn greets local picnickers and dog walkers, and throughout the year, people from all over the city come for special events and festivals.

Where: Penn Treaty Park, 1301 N. Beach Street

Pleasant Hill Park

Riverside trails, a playground and a boat launch keep this 35-acre area of Philadelphia's northern Delaware River bustling, while an expansive lawn on the waterfront makes a serene picnic spot. But the must-see part of Pleasant Hill Park is the Fish Hatchery, a 20th-century water feature where local fish species were once cultivated. The hatchery's two ponds now serve as a space where young visitors can learn to fish.

Where: Pleasant Hill Park, Linden Avenue and Delaware Avenue

Spruce Street Harbor Park

This spring-into-fall destination attracts crowds with bocce and lawn games; tree-slung hammocks and colorful lights; floating barges with over-the-water seating; a boardwalk with a variety of food options; and a beer garden serving craft beers, draft cocktails and frozen beverages.

Where: Spruce Street Harbor Park, 301 S. Columbus Boulevard

Washington Avenue Green

Next to Washington Avenue Pier is a mile-long hidden gem offering panoramic views of the waterfront and city skyline. Herons, turtles, beavers and other fauna make their homes among the park's plant life and you can walk the rocky shores all the way to the river's edge. The most striking part? At the end of the elevated

VISIT PHILADELPHIA®

boardwalk and the gravel trails stands “Land Buoy,” a public art piece by Jody Pinto made up of a climbable spiral staircase circling a lit 55-foot spire. The sculpture memorializes the site’s history as the nation’s first navy yard and as the immigration station that welcomed over one million people to the United States.

Where: Washington Avenue Green, Pier 53, S. Christopher Columbus Boulevard

Schuylkill River Waterfront Parks:

Bartram's Garden

Located on 50 acres along the Schuylkill River in Southwest Philadelphia, Bartram’s Garden is a free public park and National Historic Landmark. Named for Quaker farmer and botanist John Bartram (1699–1777), Bartram’s features a botanic garden and 18th-century estate, along with a reclaimed meadow, riverfront recreation trail, urban farm, natural tidal wetlands, a public dock for fishing and boating, and significant historic trees, including the oldest ginkgo tree in North America.

Where: Bartram's Garden, 5400 Lindbergh Boulevard

Penn Park

A 24-acre urban recreational area on the banks of the Schuylkill River, Penn Park includes bike trails, walkways, places for formal and informal athletics, and plenty of green space.

Where: Penn Park, 3000 Walnut Street

Schuylkill Banks and the Schuylkill River Trail

Spanning eight miles of riverfront winding through the heart of Philadelphia, [Schuylkill Banks](#) is open year-round for walking, jogging, cycling, picnics and dog-walking. Part of the [Schuylkill River Trail](#), the park stretches along the Schuylkill River and links the western edge of Center City to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Fairmount Park and Kelly Drive. Schuylkill Banks offers outdoor movie screenings in the summer, while scenic cruises and kayak tours on the river take in various historic sites. Also available: fishing, kayaking and boating.

Where: Schuylkill Banks, 2501 Walnut Street

More Awesome Philly Parks:

Cira Green

This elevated park, which debuted in 2015, sits 95 feet above the street and wows guests with skyline views and cool breezes. Cira Green is open year-round and hosts seasonal events. Visitors can grab burgers, fries, desserts and more from onsite restaurant Sunset Social (open seasonally), and elevators across from the entrance to the AKA University City hotel make the park easily accessible.

Where: Cira Green, 80 S. 30th Street

Clark Park

Established in 1895, this nine-acre West Philly park has an active natural amphitheater and a Saturday farmers market. Also on site: tall trees, playgrounds, a basketball court and a center circle for games of chess and bocce.

Where: Clark Park, 4300-4398 Baltimore Avenue

LOVE Park

VISIT PHILADELPHIA®

Re-opened in May 2018 after a two-year, \$26 million renovation, JFK Plaza — better known as LOVE Park — features an updated fountain, benches and greenery in the popular space. Looking for the perfect Philly photo op? The iconic LOVE sculpture serves as the backdrop for hundreds of photos each day.

Where: LOVE Park, 15th & Arch streets

Pastorius Park

Benches shaded beneath broadleaf evergreens. The fresh scent of flowering shrubs. Ducks and turtles splashing around the fountain-aerated pond. Locals love this 16-acre park for its picturesque landscape and walking trails — perfect for pups and picnics. And each summer the amphitheater springs to life with outdoor concerts and community events.

Where: Pastorius Park, 8177 Roanoke Street

The Rail Park

A quarter-mile stretch of elevated tracks of the former Reading Railroad features plantings, artwork, seating areas and giant wooden swings. The Rail Park is the first phase of a plan to transform a three-mile section of abandoned elevated and below-street-level rail lines into green space where people can walk, bike, sit and admire the urban views. It's part of an international movement to transform unused infrastructure into functional, beautiful and accessible public spaces.

Where: The Rail Park, Broad and Noble streets to 11th and Callowhill streets

For even more parks, playgrounds and public spaces, check out these guides from the [City of Philadelphia Department of Parks & Recreation](#) and the [Fairmount Park Conservancy](#).

About Visit Philadelphia:

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, visitphilly.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 site an effective trip-planning tool. Visitors can also find loads of inspiration on Visit Philly's social media channels.

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