

Philadelphia Launches Multiyear Slate of Activities in Lead Up to America's Semiquincentennial

Pennsylvania Governor and City and State leaders convene at The Benjamin Franklin National Memorial during National Travel and Tourism Week to introduce 2024 through 2026 public events, activations and more, including the Launch of the TED Democracy Series in Philadelphia

Governor Josh Shapiro calls Philadelphia the natural home for the 250th anniversary

PHILADELPHIA, May 21, 2024 – Standing beneath the Benjamin Franklin National Memorial, a coalition of city and state leaders, including Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro, Lieutenant Governor Austin Davis, City Representative and Director of Special Events Jazelle Jones, Philadelphia City Council President Kenyatta Johnson, Visit Philadelphia President and CEO Angela Val, City of Philadelphia 2026 Director Michael Newmuis, and CEO of TED Jay Herratti officially kicked off the nation's 250th anniversary of independence by announcing its first wave of a robust multi-year schedule of programming, events, and activities through 2026.

"Philadelphia is the birthplace of American democracy and has been the leading destination for advocates, innovators, and leaders since the first Continental Congress — and that long tradition continues through to today," said Governor Josh Shapiro. "As our nation prepares to celebrate its 250th anniversary in 2026, Philadelphia and the entire Commonwealth of Pennsylvania will be the place to be. From the TED Democracy Series starting this summer to the FIFA World Cup and the MLB All Star Game, the Commonwealth is ready to host millions of visitors and show off our incredible towns and cities, like Philadelphia, to the world."

The announcement was led by the official launch of TED Democracy in Philadelphia, a series focused on the future of democracy, hosted in the city of brotherly love in partnership with Visit Philadelphia and sponsored by the Bank of America, Comcast, and Highmark Blue Shield. The program is also supported by the Philadelphia hotel community and the Philadelphia Funder Collaborative for the Semiquincentennial.

"Philadelphia has a long history of being a gathering place for new ideas—and in 1776, thought leaders came together to sign the Declaration of Independence, creating the foundation for the United States and modern democracy," said TED CEO Jay Herratti. "Now, Philadelphia is

teaming up with TED—another convener of ideas—to create a platform that could shape the next 250 years of democracy globally. This partnership is a testament to the impact we can create when we come together to focus on solutions and encourage action. The entire TED organization is looking forward to kicking off this impressive slate of events and digital launches alongside Visit Philadelphia."

The first TED Fireside Chat in the series will feature Emmy-nominated host, producer, writer, and public speaker, Baratunde Thurston. Governor Shapiro will headline a TED Fireside Chat later this year. The TED Democracy series aligns perfectly with more than a dozen other exciting activations and events Philadelphia will be hosting over the next two years.

"Philadelphia is truly the center of American history and now we will be the center of this historic 250th anniversary celebration," said Philadelphia Mayor Chelle L. Parker. "We've built a collaborative plan that explores different aspects of our historic place in the founding of American democracy, while also supporting a number of exciting celebrations to bring people from around the country together here in Philadelphia and join us over the next two years and beyond."

Starting as soon as July 2, 2024 and continuing through 2026, Philadelphia's semiquincentennial line-up includes:

- **Red, White, & Blue To-Do:** John Adams famously declared that July 2nd should be a day of "pomp and parade." So, starting July 2, 2024, and occurring annually, the Philadelphia Historic District partners will host this patriotic celebration taking place throughout America's most historic square mile with parades, concerts and more.
- **The Young People's Continental Congress:** In July of 2024 and 2025 Carpenters' Hall will host this youth-focused event bringing together delegates from across the country to explore the themes of democracy and to engage in civic dialogue.
- **250th Birthdays of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps:** In October of 2025, Philadelphia will be partnering with the US Navy and Marine Corps as well as Homecoming 250 in hosting their 250th birthday celebration. More details on that event will be coming in the months ahead.
- **The Declaration's Journey:** The Museum of the American Revolution will host this major special exhibition exploring the history and global impact of the Declaration of Independence from 1776 to today. The exhibition will run from Oct. 18, 2025 through Jan. 3, 2027.
- **52 Weeks of Firsts:** The Philadelphia Historic District will commemorate the Philadelphia-born creativity and ingenuity that has been shared globally over the past 250 years with weekly acknowledgments starting January 2026.

- **NCAA Division I Men’s Basketball Tournament:** March Madness comes to Philadelphia in 2026 when the city will host first and second round tournament play at the Wells Fargo Center.
- **ArtPhilly What Now:** This city-wide arts festival will launch in May 2026 and will highlight Philadelphia’s iconic arts institutions, neighborhood arts initiatives and talented artists.
- **FIFA World Cup 26™:** June - July 2026 Philadelphia will host matches at Lincoln Financial Field culminating in a knockout stage match on July 4, 2026. The World Cup FanFest will also run through July 17th giving soccer fans a great place to meet up, watch matches and celebrate victories.
- **Wawa Welcome America:** And, with the world watching, the city will host the biggest and best July 4th celebration Philadelphia’s ever seen.
- **2026 Major League Baseball All-Star Game:** Citizens Bank Park will host this multi-day event honoring baseball’s best and celebrating America’s favorite past-time in the city where America was born.
- **Printmaking by the People - Citywide Voices of 2026:** Mural Arts Philadelphia team will begin concepting in 2024, and in 2026 will present this crowd-sourced mural that will create a lasting visual legacy that honors the semiquincentennial, our shared values and desired changes.

“Philadelphia has a bold vision for 2026 as a historic opportunity to help define the next 250 years in America,” said 2026 Director for the City of Philadelphia, Michael Newmuis. “Our milestone events will not only further position Philadelphia on the national stage — they will establish Philadelphia as America’s new front door where folks from across the world will arrive and experience the best of our great nation and its future.”

“This is a celebration that is more than a decade in the making and it really demonstrates why Philadelphia should serve as the epicenter of the marking of this moment in history,” said Visit Philadelphia President and CEO Angela Val. “We are deeply proud of our role in building this great nation and we will continue to work with this amazing coalition to deliver a multi-year program of events, activities and activations that celebrate that history while also optimistically looking ahead to how our nation will continue to grow and evolve over the next 250 years.”

To learn more about Philadelphia’s Semiquincentennial activities go to visitphilly.com/2026 for more information on major events.

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.

ABOUT TED

TED is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to discovering, debating and spreading ideas that spark conversation, deepen understanding and drive meaningful change. Our organization is devoted to curiosity, reason, wonder and the pursuit of knowledge — without an agenda. We welcome people from every discipline and culture who seek a deeper understanding of the world and connection with others, and we invite everyone to engage with ideas and activate them in your community.

TED began in 1984 as a conference where Technology, Entertainment and Design converged, but today it spans a multitude of worldwide communities and initiatives exploring everything from science and business to education, arts and global issues. In addition to the TED Talks curated from our annual conferences and published on TED.com, we produce [original podcasts](#), [short video series](#), [animated educational lessons \(TED-Ed\)](#) and TV programs that are translated into more than 100 languages and distributed via partnerships around the world. Each year, thousands of independently run [TEDx events](#) bring people together to share ideas and bridge divides in communities on every continent. Through the [Audacious Project](#), TED has helped catalyze more than \$3 billion in funding for projects that seek to make the world more beautiful, sustainable and just. In 2020, TED launched [Countdown](#), an initiative to accelerate solutions to the climate crisis and mobilize a movement for a net-zero future, and in 2023 TED launched [TED Democracy](#) to spark a new kind of conversation focused on realistic pathways towards a more vibrant and equitable future. View a full list of [TED's many programs and initiatives](#).

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GENERAL STATEMENT

Visit Philadelphia is a nonpartisan 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the rich cultural and historical heritage of our city, including its role as the birthplace of modern American democracy. We are committed to making Philadelphia the most welcoming and inclusive city in the U.S. for visitors and residents.

The TED Democracy Initiative, a series of events focusing on the future of democracy from 2024 to 2026, was created to align with the cultural conversations that will take place as we approach America's 250th anniversary.

Our goal is to offer attendees a thought-provoking and educational experience that respects individual views and beliefs, all while honoring the spirit of dialogue our founding fathers practiced nearly 250 years ago here in Philadelphia.

Visit Philadelphia does not participate in political campaigns, nor support or oppose candidates for public office. We expressly disclaim any statement, or inference, of endorsement or opposition of any political candidate at any TED Democracy event, whether made by its speakers, participants or otherwise.