



 **Rupert Parker**  
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# Take a bite out of foodie Philly

We spend 48 hours in Philadelphia, eating our way around the city of Brotherly Love

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With more history than Washington DC, a similar buzz to New York and a compact walkable centre, the biggest surprise is that it's taken so long to rediscover Philadelphia.

But the city, America's first capital, now has more visitors from the UK than any other overseas country, tempted for a long weekend by direct flights and its unique attractions. As well as the extraordinary National Museum of American Jewish History, the birthplace of US independence is home to world-class art galleries, plus the only synagogue designed by Frank Lloyd Wright is a short trip out of town.

Now there's another temptation. In recent years Philadelphia's restaurant scene has blossomed, fuelled by the rich produce coming from Pennsylvania's farmers. A new generation of young chefs is dishing up inventive innovative food, often firmly vegetarian, which means you can easily avoid Philly steak and cheese, the city's previous claim to culinary notoriety.

Set close to the city's biggest attractions, here's how to eat your way around Philadelphia as you explore.

## DAY 1

### “Getting there”

Delta Airlines has daily lunchtime flights from Heathrow, from around £600 return. Rupert Parker stayed at the Sonesta Philadelphia Rittenhouse Square, where rooms cost from \$139 (£115) per night. The Philadelphia Pass costs from \$59 (£48.50) and gives free entry to over 40 attractions. For more information, visit [discoverphi.com](http://discoverphi.com)

Direct London flights arrive in the late afternoon so start with dinner at Abe Fisher ([abefisherphilly.com](http://abefisherphilly.com)). Yehuda Sichel is from Baltimore and grew up in a household with a kosher kitchen. Today his high-quality small plates are inspired by food from the Jewish diaspora, in a good value fixed price menu.

Although classic dishes such as chopped liver on toasted rye with a pastrami onion jam aren't strictly kosher, you'll also find matzah ball gnocchi alla romana with tomato, lovage and turnips. Other vegetarian standouts include roasted courgette with Boursin cheese, pickled long hot peppers and smoked walnuts, or charred green beans with hazelnut, and egg salad, sprinkled with paprika.

## DAY 2

Kick-start your city break at Reading Terminal Market. Established in 1892, this is the nation's oldest continuously operating farmers' market housing over 80 merchants. Along with Pennsylvania Dutch creations, there's Mexican, Thai, German, Cajun and Chinese food on offer plus five bakeries to keep you happy at breakfast. Don't miss the Amish specialities - buttery soft pretzels, freshly baked breads and sweet apple dumplings.

Then set out on the Constitutional walking tour ([theconstitutional.com](http://theconstitutional.com)) around the Independence National Historical Park area, the heart of historic Philadelphia. The star attraction is Independence Hall, built in 1753 and venue for the Declaration of Independence and adoption of the United States Constitution. Now a Unesco World Heritage Site, the cracked Liberty Bell, originally in its steeple, now sits over the street. At the opposite end is the modern interactive National Constitution Center.

You'll need lunch after this and nearby High Street on Market ([highstreetonmarket.com](http://highstreetonmarket.com)) serves seasonal menus using local produce. Before dawn their talented bakers create exceptional breads and pastries using grains sourced from a local mill. As well as excellent bagels, try the grilled broccoli salad with radicchio, spiced Marcona almonds, shaved red onion and blistered grapes. There's also delicious Sicilian cauliflower baked with capers and served with pickled vegetables. And do sample the blueberry and blackberry tart with pumpkin seeds.

Spend the afternoon at the National Museum of American Jewish History ([nmajh.org](http://nmajh.org)), the only US museum dedicated exclusively to exploring and interpreting the US Jewish experience.

Four floors tell the story from the first Jews escaping persecution by the Portuguese in Brazil in 1654, through the migration of millions of 19th-century immigrants from Europe, to post-Second World War stories of refugees from war-torn Europe, the Middle East, the Caribbean, and the Soviet Union.

The ground floor has a collection of artefacts including Steven Spielberg's first camera, Irving Berlin's piano and even Einstein's pipe, alongside first-hand accounts.

For dinner head to Vedge ([vedgerestaurant.com](http://vedgerestaurant.com)). Although no animal products are used in its kitchens, this "foodie" restaurant appeals to vegetarians, vegans and carnivores alike. It specialises in coaxing exotic flavours from even potentially unlovely vegetables like turnips, swede and cabbage. The seasonal menu features dishes such as wood-roasted carrot with pumpernickel, sauerkraut, carrot mustard and carrot kimchee, along with seared maitake mushroom with celery root fritter and smoked leek remoulade.

### **DAY 3**

After a breakfast fit for champions, follow in Rocky's footsteps at the city's Museum of Art ([philamuseum.org](http://philamuseum.org)), where Sylvester Stallone famously ran up the front steps in the 1976 movie - commemorated by a statue at the base.

Whether you run or walk, it's worth climbing up as the museum is the third largest in the country, known for the impressive quality of its collections ranging from Renaissance masterpieces to an excellent French Impressionist collection and works by Picasso, Duchamp and Matisse.

Refuel with a hearty lunch at the Gran Caffè L'Aquila ([grancaffelaquila.com](http://grancaffelaquila.com)) named after Italy's 2007 café of the year, destroyed in the Italian earthquake of 2009.



The original owners set up shop here in 2014 and the entire restaurant was designed and built in Italy before being shipped over to Philadelphia. The ground floor serves espresso and homemade gelato but the restaurant upstairs has a menu of authentic Italian regional dishes, with many of their ingredients imported.

Continue the art theme at the Barnes Foundation ([barnesfoundation.org](http://barnesfoundation.org)). Wealthy chemical engineer Albert Barnes built up this collection of Impressionist, post-Impressionist and early modern paintings between 1912 and 1951, with 181 Renoirs, 69 Cézannes, 59 Matisses, 46 Picassos, 16 Modiglianis, and seven Van Goghs among its 3,000 masterpieces. Moved to its present site in 2012, the rooms are laid out exactly as Barnes intended.

If you'd rather get out into the fresh air, there's still no escaping the art. This is the mural capital of the world and the city has more than 4,000 examples, painted over 30 years - a list that's still growing. You could pick up a map from the tourist office but it's more fun to take the two-hour Mural Mile Walking Tour ([muralarts.org](http://muralarts.org)) and learn the stories of the people, places and themes of each mural.

Choose dinner outside too at Talula's Garden ([talulasgarden.com](http://talulasgarden.com)), where you can eat in an actual garden - although there are also tables inside too - and where Aimee Olexy's New American cuisine puts vegetables to the fore.

Start with caramelized cauliflower and apple soup with a crispy filo Gorgonzola straw, roasted rainbow cauliflower and turmeric vinaigrette. Follow it with butternut squash risotto, bourbon squash butter, honey crisp apples, brown-butter vinaigrette, and vintage Gouda cheese.

Or indulge with a cheese flight, one of five different cheese menus including selections from local producers. Then, sadly, it's time to follow that cheese flight with your actual flight.