



Flavors of Philadelphia

From the classic cheesesteak to the Liberty Bell, Philly town is a feast of fun and U.S. history.



"There are three kinds of cuisine in America," says a top chef at the renowned Culinary Institute of America, New York. "There is French. There is Oriental. There is Philadelphian." Ask those who live in the City of Brotherly Love what's up with this and they'll have an opinion. Yeah, says Robert Strauss, a writer, "Savor a cheesesteak and you'll wonder why you were so hot to get to that musty Smithsonian in the first place." Walk around the country's most historic city – resplendent with parks and the first-ever planned (by designer William Penn) – and it won't necessarily be the beauty of Penn's "greene countrie towne" that wows. It won't always be the wonderful districts that delight, each with a unique identity. To wit: the Market, overseen by the 27-ton, cast-iron William Penn that crowns City Hall; the Historic, where wide, tree-lined drives and Delaware river views impress; or the Museum, where icons of American art like Thomas Eakins and Georgia O'Keeffe (at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts) await to show off the city's sophistication.



Chic alternatives to cheesesteak dining abound around town, like the al fresco bistro Cuba Libre (above); the 510-ft clock tower atop City Hall provides sure footing for a 37-ft, 26-ton statue of Philly founding father William Penn (right)



Which begs the question. Does one fly to Philly simply to savor what's often the butt of foodie jokes, like this quiz on zdnet.com: "'Buzz' is to 'new' as 'cholesterol' is to a. New Orleans; b. Lipitor; or c. Philadelphia cheesesteak?" Or does one fly to Philly simply to savor cheesesteak and get to know a city magnificently graced with architecture (Neoclassical, Romanesque, Beaux-Arts, Victorian Gothic), restaurants, museums, theatre and such eye-popping art as *The Dream Garden*, an iridescent, 100,000-piece glass mosaic mural by Louis Comfort Tiffany that is found in the Curtis Center (Walnut and 6th streets)?

If one is Pilot Michael, like me, the obvious answer is the latter.

I book a room in Center City, maybe at the Loew's Philadelphia hotel (800.235.6317), the first International Style skyscraper ever built in the USA. From here it's a hop-skip to national landmarks like the Liberty Bell, whose inscription, *Proclaim LIBERTY throughout all the Land unto all the inhabitants thereof*, amps my love of country, and Independence Hall, where the Declaration of Independence was signed. It might be the Betsy Ross House, where the mother of the Stars & Stripes stitched her way to infamy, or Declaration House, where Thomas Jefferson drafted our contract for enduring freedom, but if *proud to be an American* is the feeling a flyer yearns for, Philadelphia is the ticket.

Tradition, too. "Frequently, the line for a cheesesteak at traditional establishments rivals the Phillies box office," notes e-Philly.com. So, "When it's your turn at the window, do yourself the service of being prepared and order like you're from Philly or run the risk of being shipped to the back of the line."

O...kay. "Wit onions," I whisper to myself in rehearsal, careful to leave off the "h" that will mark me as a tourist. "Wit-out Whiz," I practice: I know I'd prefer Provolone over the classic cheese-ish addition. I get my "wit" and "wit-out" down in time to traipse to spots hot for the mythical sandwich. I hear a true connoisseur never will deign to dine on such spin-offs as a Philly cheesesteak crescent pizza or Philly

cheesesteak wrap. I'm going for the gusto: I roll up to **Pat's King of Steaks**, still run by the Olivieri family, move to the window like a pro and by the time it's all over at the picnic table outside I know: *a cheesesteak indeed will get a guy jiggy in Philly!*

Another day it's off to **Geno's Steaks** I go and let owner Joey Vento's life's work, made from ingredients that are "simple, exacting and never greasy" be savored slowly. Open 24/7, Geno's is cheesesteaks with round-the-clock appeal. At **Tony Luke's**, "old Philly style" cheesesteaks compete with other gustatory intrigues fattening the menu, like a Beef Buster (with pickles, bacon and horseradish) and, for the health-conscious, a Green Sandwich of spinach or broccoli rabe. I stick to the classic "wit Whiz" and gee whiz, it is delicious. Over at **Jimmy's** in Center City, the cheesesteak scene is this, according to one local in the know:

"You'll stand in line and eat over a counter, but like I say, this is great eatin', not dinin'." Fun however the cheesesteak goes down. Even at the **Reading Terminal Market**, the farmers' market and gastronomic bazaar held in a gorgeous and historic train shed said to exemplify "architectural braggadocio," Philadelphia's famous sandwich is served with all due enthusiasm.

Your intrepid Pilot Michael is full now – what folly! To fly to fabulous Philly and eat *only* cheesesteak seems a waste of its other wonderful cuisine. Never mind. Like they say on e-Philly.com: "Let others wallow in mediocre steak sandwiches. Here in the city of brotherly love handles, our award-winning creation – the cheesesteak – continues to evolve." It's good to be in on it.

For further Philadelphia information, contact www.pcvb.org or 215.636.3300.



NORTHEAST PHILADELPHIA AIRPORT (PNE)

AIRPORT DATA

Elevation: 121'
Runways: 6/24 7,000' 15/33 5,000'
Approaches: GPS, RNAV, ILS, LOC BC, VOR
ATIS / ASOS: 215.677.0146

FIXED BASE OPERATIONS / FUEL / SERVICES

1. Atlantic Aviation 215.698.3100
2. Hortman Aviation Services 215.969.0311
3. North Philadelphia Jet Center 215.673.9000

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Budget 800.527.0700
Enterprise 800.736.8222
Hertz 215.698.3100
Jet Center Auto Rental 215.856.9010

AIRPORT RESTAURANTS

Flatspin American Grill 215.969.7746

AIRPORT LODGING

Best Western (2 mi) 215.464.9500
Doubletree Club (2 mi) 215.671.9600
Holiday Inn (3 mi) 800.465.4329
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