

NSO PennTracks

Avenue of the Arts

Overview:

Philadelphia has been a cultural mecca for over two hundred years. Great theatre, ballet, opera, and music abound in this city, and the Avenue of the Arts is Philadelphia's cultural artery. This tour takes you into and around the city's premiere theaters and arts venues.

Why You Should Return:

If you love the performing arts, you need to be acquainted with the Avenue of the Arts. Add the area's superb restaurants, and you have the makings for a great night on the town. The Reading Terminal is the best market of its kind in the country, offering cheesesteaks, pretzels, hoagies, ice cream, and more. City Hall is an architectural gem offering bird's eye views of Philly from its tower.

Transportation:

To get to the Avenue of the Arts, take the Green Line trolley to 15th Street/City Hall then transfer to the Broad Street Line and get off at Lombard – South. To return to Penn, take any Green Line trolley (except the 10) from 15th Street/City Hall to 37th and Spruce streets or take the Market-Frankford Line (also known as the Blue Line) to 34th Street.

Emergency:

In case of emergency, contact 911. Report emergency to NSO staff.

1 The Philadelphia Theater Company Suzanne Roberts Theater | 480 S. Broad Street

For over thirty years the Philadelphia Theatre Company has provided audiences with theatrically exciting and intellectually challenging productions. Devoted to the work of the contemporary American playwright, PTC has staged more than 140 world and regional premiers, both plays and musicals, by writers such as Terence McNally, Edward Albee, August Wilson, Wendy Wasserstein, and Susan-Lori Parks. Starting its fourth season in its new, state-of-the-art Suzanne Roberts Theater, Philadelphia Theatre Company is one of the city's premiere arts institutions, making a vital contribution to the bustling cultural and entertainment life on Broad Street's Avenue of the Arts.

2 University of the Arts | 320 S. Broad Street

This arts school is over 125 years old and is the largest such school in the nation. Students train in design, dance, music and all other forms of the arts. You can see their performances at the Arts Bank on 601 S. Broad St. and the Merriam Theatre on 250 S. Broad St.

3 Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts | 300 S. Broad Street

This architectural masterpiece is the home of the Philadelphia Orchestra, as well as Philadanco, the famous African American ballet company. There are two separate theatres inside, and the artistic range extends well beyond the orchestra. Watch hip hop dancing, learn to salsa dance, hear classical, world, and jazz music, or attend one of the many free concerts throughout the year.

4 Wilma Theatre | 265 S. Broad Street

This theatre always hosts award-winning plays and is also a favorite of the British playwright Tom Stoppard, who wrote the screenplay for Shakespeare in Love.

5 The Merriam Theatre | 250 S. Broad Street

The Merriam Theatre, built in 1918, hosts many performances by the University of the Arts and is the number one Broadway roadhouse in Philadelphia. Whether you like to see one man plays or ballet dancers sashaying across the floor, the Merriam Theater is sure to have something for you.

6 Academy of Music | 240 S. Broad Street

The Academy opened in 1857, and its gorgeous interior is modeled after La Scala in Milan. This was the home of the Philadelphia Orchestra for a century, and is now the home of the Opera Company of Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania Ballet.

7 Walk of Fame | Broad Street between Spruce and Walnut Streets

Note the many illustrious names which adorn the Walk of Fame on the sidewalk in front of the Park Hyatt Bellevue building: Billie Holiday, John Coltrane, Dizzy Gillespie. Many of them either played here or are Philadelphia natives.

8 Union League | 140 S. Broad Street

This building is a testament to Philly's strong pro-Union support during the Civil War. But at the time, a number of Philadelphians believed the South should secede. Why? Because trade moved from north to south and Philadelphia was the largest border city. Eventually the city decided to support the Union and gave more soldiers to the cause than any other Northern city.

9 Prince Theater | 1412 Chestnut Street

This theatre is one of the hosts of the Philadelphia Film Festival every spring, the largest film festival on the East Coast. Named after producer Harold Prince, this theater also showcases cutting edge musical theatre performances.

10 City Hall | Broad and Market streets

When construction began on City Hall in 1871, it was going to be the tallest building in the world. But 30 years later, when it was done, it was the third tallest behind the Eiffel Tower and the Washington Monument. Today you can take an elevator up the tower and stand at the feet of the giant William Penn statue. It offers an amazing view of the city.

11 The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts | Broad and Cherry streets

Thomas Eakins, painter of the The Gross Clinic and The Agnew Clinic, attended the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and later returned to teach; he revamped the certificate program to what it remains today. Founded in 1805, the Academy is America's oldest continually operating school of fine arts and museum. It is internationally known for its world-class collections of 19th and 20th century artwork. Be sure to come back and check out the exquisite exhibitions which are constantly changing throughout the year.

Of Additional Interest

A The Pennsylvania Convention Center | Arch Street between 11th and 13th Streets

The Pennsylvania Convention Center houses exhibitions, conferences, and conventions ranging from Wizard World 2009 to The 14th Congress of the International Headache Society. It is comprised of four main halls and the grand hall, which is part of the former Reading Railroad terminal elevated train shed.

B Reading Terminal Market | 12th and Arch streets

Though trains no longer rumble overhead, the old train shed underneath is the century-old Reading Terminal Market, an unrivaled testament to the rich flavors of the city's ethnic neighborhoods. Treasured by locals and tourists alike, the Market offers Amish pretzels, steaks, and hoagies—all Philly originals!

See www.avenueofthearts.org for more information.

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