

NSO PennTracks South Philly

Overview:

This tour will take you into the heart of South Philly and its largely Italian neighborhoods. You will travel through the famous Italian Market, home of cheesesteaks and Rocky Balboa, and up and down the eclectic and energetic South Street. Along the way, you will find some of the best cheesesteaks, water ice, seafood, pizza, and cookies in the city, so come hungry!

Why You Should Return:

You cannot claim to “know” Philly unless you know South Philly! This is a rich part of the city, diverse in ethnicity, architecture, food, and neighborhood flavor. The Italian Market is crowded on weekends, and South Street is buzzing virtually every night of the week.

Transportation:

To get to South Philly, take the Green Line trolley to 15th Street/City Hall then transfer to the Broad Street Line and get off at Ellsworth – Federal. To return to Penn, take the 40 Bus from 2nd and Lombard to 34th and Spruce or take the Market—Frankfort Line from 2nd and Market streets back to 34th Street or 40th Street.

Emergency:

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

1 Magic Gardens | 1020 South Street

Philadelphia's Magic Gardens is South Street's most distinctive landmark. In the 1960s, Isaiah Zagar started tiling the equivalent of three empty lots with “found” materials like glass, plates, bottles, bicycle wheels, and even whole toilets. The result is a mind-bending maze that can be described as anything from “folksy” to “trippy”—but everyone agrees that the Magic Gardens are a must-see.

2 Queen Village Neighborhood | South of South Street and east of 7th Street

This neighborhood south of South Street was originally called Southwark, after an area in London. It was renamed Queen Village in the 1970's, in memory of the Swedish settlers who were here before William Penn. The street names like Queen, Christian, and Catherine refer to those colonial Swedes who were here in the early 17th century.

3 Jim's Steaks | 400 South Street

Though the original Jim's Steaks is in West Philadelphia, it expanded to South Street in 1976 and since then, their famous hoagies and Philly cheesesteaks have drawn people from all over. Whether you're a new or experienced Philly cheesesteak eater, Jim's Steaks is a go-to destination.

4 Crash Bang Boom | 528 S. 4th Street

Formerly known as Zipperhead, Crash Bang Boom is a throwback to the street's grungier days. Although the name and location have changed, the store remains dedicated to the punk culture that once dominated South Street.

5 South Street | Between 7th and Front streets

South Street was originally called Cedar Street and was the southern border of Penn's original city. It has been a magnet for fringe culture from the bawdy theaters of George Washington's day through the tattoo parlors of today. You can get grab a cheesesteak at Jim's, catch a concert at the TLA, or explore the eclectic (and now more mainstream) shops. If you walk down to 2nd Street, look north and you'll see the 18th-century open-air market called Head House Square where craft fairs are often held.

6 Theater of Living Arts (TLA) | 334 South Street

Originally a single-screen movie theater, the Theater of Living Arts has become one of the most popular destinations in Philadelphia to see a concert or show. Known in the 80's for its grungy and art house films, the TLA has transformed into one of Philadelphia's premiere concert venues. With a capacity of 1000, it's a great place to go with friends and see your favorite bands perform after getting dinner around South Street.

7 3rd Street Gallery | 610 S. 3rd Street

3rd Street Gallery is one of the oldest cooperative art galleries run entirely by artists in Old City, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Since 1978, the gallery has brought together artists of all generations to create new work for the gallery's exhibitions.

8 Rita's Water Ice | 3rd and South

Founded in 1987 in Philadelphia, Rita's Water Ice (or, if you prefer the Philadelphia pronunciation, “wooder” ice) is a favorite among locals. Rita's is so popular that it opened its 500th location in 2007. Come back on the first day of spring, when every Rita's customer receives a free regular-sized Italian ice!

Of Additional Interest

A Pat's & Geno's | 9th Street, Passyunk Avenue

Who serves the best cheesesteak, Pat's or Geno's? Some even argue the best is found at Jim's on 4th and South streets. Pat's is where the cheesesteak was invented 70 years ago, but some believe that Geno's perfected it. Whether you order yours “Whiz wit” or “Whiz witout” (with or without Cheez Whiz) is up to you.

B Fabric Row Mural | 4th and Monroe streets

By the end of the 19th century, Philadelphia was the textile manufacturing center of the world. It drew thousands of immigrants from every nation. Thanks to its proximity to the Delaware River Immigration Station, this area became a convenient home, especially to Jews from eastern Europe, many of whom worked in the garment industry. According to the National Museum of American Jewish History, located at 55 N. 5th Street, roughly “400 mostly elderly adult children of the immigrant generation” still call this neighborhood home.

See southstreet.com for more information.

