

36 Hours in Philadelphia



Mark Makela for The New York Times

Clockwise from top left: Philadelphia History Museum, Frankford Hall, Verde, Farm and Fisherman, Philadelphia Museum of Art. Center: dish at Han Dynasty. [More Photos »](#)

By FRED A MOON

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A CITY with dozens of beguiling neighborhoods, a daunting number of world-class museums and a key role in the story of the nation's founding, Philadelphia has seen a parade of openings over the last decade: ambitious design-centric boutiques, an ever-expanding universe of Stephen Starr restaurants and stylish hotels in artfully remodeled historic high rises. Entire neighborhoods have been transformed, parks have been built, and a wave of newcomers — transplants priced out of places like New York and Washington — have brought new energy to the cultural and culinary landscape.

Friday

3 p.m.

1. START AT THE BEGINNING

Originally a Works Progress Administration renovation project named for the radio pioneer Atwater Kent, who donated the 1820s Greek Revival building to the city, the Philadelphia History Museum (15 South Seventh Street; 215-685-4830; philadelphiahistory.org) reopened in September after a three-year renovation. Since 1941, this modest museum (\$10) has celebrated the day-to-day life of the city; it spans 330 years of local history in select objects, including a belt given to William Penn by the Lenape people, Schmidt's beer cans and a collection dedicated to the African-American experience.

6 p.m.

2. SICHUAN STYLE

Across the Schuylkill in University City, the newest location of the locally beloved Han Dynasty (3711 Market Street; 215-222-3711; handynasty.net) has a wide-open dining room with modern lines, rough-hewn wood and a kitschy cocktail list. Bucket-size drinks like the Scorpion Bowl and Singapore Sling are \$5 during happy hour. But the food is the real attraction. Plates come one after the other in family-style portions — dan dan noodles (\$7.95), double-cooked fish (\$17.95) and spicy, crispy cucumbers (\$6.95), each rated 1 to 10 on Han's hot-or-not index.

8 p.m.

3. A MUSEUM'S NEW HOME

For most of its 90-year history, the Barnes Foundation Museum (2025 Benjamin Franklin Parkway; 215-278-7000; barnesfoundation.org) was seven miles away in suburban Merion. But after years of controversy and construction, it relocated in May, bringing one of the world's great collections of works by Picasso, Matisse and Modigliani (and many others) to Museum Row. On Friday nights, the otherwise somber space hosts concerts and pours wine until 10 p.m. Day or night, reserve museum tickets (\$18) well in advance.

10:30 p.m.

4. DOWN IN FISHTOWN

For live music, local beer and an eclectic, dive-bar décor, try Johnny Brenda's (1201 North Frankford Avenue; 215-739-9684; johnnybrendas.com), where the small stage attracts some

surprisingly big indie music acts, like Grizzly Bear and Vampire Weekend. Across the street, Frankford Hall (1210 Frankford Avenue; 215-634-3338; frankfordhall.com) is less aggressively stylish and more family-friendly, with Ping-Pong and picnic tables, an affinity for wood block games and an excellent beer list. Next door and just opened, the newest outpost of Brooklyn's smoked meat and American whiskey joint, Fette Sau (1208 Frankford Avenue; 215-391-4888; fettesauphilly.com) serves dry-rubbed barbecue until midnight.

Saturday

9 a.m.

5. SWEET AND SAVORY

For breakfast, go for the honey doughnuts at Federal Donuts (1219 South Second Street; 267-687-8258; federaldonuts.com). If you come after 11:45 a.m., you can pair them with the James Beard Award-winning chef Michael Solomonov's take on fried chicken, which comes with your choice of dry seasoning (recent options: buttermilk ranch, zaatar and coconut-curry) or wet glaze (honey-ginger and chile-garlic). For something more traditional, drop into Artisan Boulanger Pâtissier (1646 South 12th Street; 215-271-4688; artisanboulangerpatissier.com) in the South Philadelphia East Passyunk neighborhood, where André Chin, a French-trained Cambodian émigré, bakes exceptional croissants (\$1.75 to \$4) in flavors like pain au chocolat, aux almond or savory spinach, mushroom and ricotta.

10:30 a.m.


6. 18TH AMENDMENT BLUES

Curated by Daniel Okrent, author of a best-selling book on the Prohibition era and a former public editor for The New York Times, the "American Spirits: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition" (prohibition.constitutioncenter.org) exhibition at the National Constitution Center (Independence Mall, 525 Arch Street; 215-409-6600) has flapper dresses, temperance propaganda, a 1929 Buick Marquette and original copies of the 18th and 21st Amendments.

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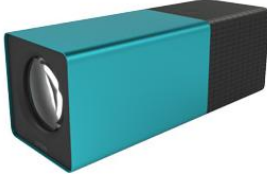
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A short walk from there is the National Constitution Center. Here, a display from the center's "American Spirits: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition" exhibition.

Credit: Mark Makela for The New York Times

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1 p.m.

7. MUSSELS, EVERY WAY

Try one of the eight varieties of mussels and frites (\$10 to \$20) — including the De Koninck (De Koninck Ale, apples, Gruyère, caramelized leeks and garlic) and the Red Light (Hoegaarden, fumé, chile de arbol peppers, chervil and garlic) — at Monk's Cafe (264 South 16th Street; 215-545-7005; monkscafe.com) in Rittenhouse Square, a dark hole-in-the-wall tavern with a great beer list.

3:30 p.m.

8. 13TH STREET CORRIDOR

Then, shop your way along 13th Street, visiting Verde (108 South 13th Street; 215-546-8700; verdephiladelphia.com), which sells an eclectic mix of charm bracelets, women's clothing by international designers, patent leather bags and handcrafted Marcie Blaine chocolates, and Kembrel (1219 Locust Street; 866-219-2196; kembrel.com), a pop-up shop that put down permanent roots with a flagship that hosts fashion photo shoots and serves free espresso. For a midafternoon sugar fix, try a scoop of Thai coconut, pistachio or decadent dark chocolate at Capogiro Gelato Artisans (119 South 13th Street; 215-351-0900; capogirogelato.com).

5 p.m.

9. DON'T BE SQUARE

Built during the booming 1850s, the Rittenhouse Square neighborhood was home to the city's Victorian aristocracy. The park has a reflecting pool, diagonal walkways crisscrossing beneath

oak, maple and locust trees, and bronze sculptures, like the 1832 allegory of the French Revolution, “Lion Crushing a Serpent,” by Antoine-Louis Barye. Stop in at Joseph Fox Bookshop (1724 Sansom Street; 215-563-4184; foxbookshop.com), a Philadelphia institution since 1951, with crowded bookshelves stocked with everything from art and architecture to fiction and poetry, bringing in big name writers like David Sedaris.

7 p.m.

10. FARM TO PHILLY

Opened in March 2011 on a narrow side street of unassuming brick facades, the Farm and Fisherman (1120 Pine Street; 267-687-1555; thefarmandfisherman.com) is a neighborhood B.Y.O.B. with a sophisticated farm-to-table menu that changes daily. On a recent visit the menu featured a delicate Kona kampachi (jack, with quince, turnip, apple and tapioca; \$14) and squab with Seckle pear, rosemary, kabocha squash and chestnuts (\$29).

9 p.m.

11. PROHIBITION REVISITED

There’s no secret handshake at Franklin Mortgage & Investment Co. (112 South 18th Street; 267-467-3277; thefranklinbar.com), a candlelit subterranean bar in the speakeasy style. Instead, there are cocktail waitresses as hospitable as they are stylish (cat-eye glasses and saddle shoes) and drinks poured over globes of hand-carved ice. The 28-cocktail list has poetic subheads (one reads: “I asked for water, she brought me gasoline”) and esoteric ingredients (Rollin’ in the Ruins is a mix of Tanqueray gin, Hayman’s Old Tom, green Chartreuse, pear brandy, lime juice, lemon grass tea syrup, Bitter Truth Thai Bitters and pink peppercorn tincture). Opened in a back alley behind Stephen Starr’s El Rey in 2010, the Ranstead Room (2013 Ranstead Street; 215-563-3330), which has its own entrance, has 1970s-era nudes on the wall, red vinyl booths and cocktails for \$12 each.

Sunday

10 a.m.

12. PARKS AND ART

Take a walk along the Schuylkill Banks (schuylkillbanks.org), the city’s new 1.2-mile-long waterfront trail. Then, detour to the Anne d’Harnoncourt Sculpture Garden at the grand hilltop Philadelphia Museum of Art (2600 Benjamin Franklin Parkway; 215-763-8100; philamuseum.org). Through Jan. 21, a new dance exhibition, “Dancing Around the Bride,” tells the story of the interwoven lives of Marcel Duchamp, John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg. On your way back downtown, walk through the Sister Cities Park (18th Street and Benjamin Franklin Parkway), another attractive new patch of urban green.

12 p.m.

13. BAR IN A BANK

Every weekend morning, National Mechanics (22 South Third Street; 215-701-4883; nationalmechanics.com) unrolls a Bloody Mary bar with dozens of hot sauces, condiments, house-infused bacon vodka or jalapeño tequila. Designed by William Strickland in 1837, the building's interior is neo-Gothic, with dangling collections of aged glass bottles, orchids on ledges, church pews and long communal tables. Afterward, window-shop along Third Street, where vintage boutiques vie for your attention. Don't miss the Center for Art in Wood (141 North Third Street; 215-923-8000; centerforartinwood.org), a gallery and store devoted to wood-centric creativity.

IF YOU GO

Opened in October, the **Hotel Monaco** (433 Chestnut Street; 215-925-2111; monaco-philadelphia.com) has a phenomenal location overlooking the Liberty Bell, a nightly wine hour, a fitness room and a hopping rooftop bar. Rooms from \$183.

For an affordable stay in the city center, the 48-room **Alexander Inn** (301 South 12th Street; 215-923-3535; alexanderinn.com) is a homey, unpretentious place to lay your head. Singles start at \$119, doubles at \$129.