



## Relocation Guide to Philadelphia, PA

[www.iorworld.com](http://www.iorworld.com)

*IOR makes every effort to ensure the information contained in this guide is as current as possible. If you notice errors, or information which is no longer accurate, please contact us immediately so we may correct the issue.*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

WELCOME AND OVERVIEW .....	1
EMERGENCY .....	4
HOUSING .....	6
U.S. EDUCATION SYSTEM .....	13
SCHOOLS IN YOUR AREA .....	21
BANKING .....	23
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION/DRIVING .....	25
LOCAL REGISTRATION .....	29
LIVING AND SHOPPING .....	31
RECREATION .....	33
EXPAT RESOURCES .....	37
U.S. IDIOMS .....	39
PUBLIC HOLIDAYS .....	41



Source: [Wikimediacommons.org](https://commons.wikimedia.org/)

Philadelphia, also known as “Philly,” is the largest city in Pennsylvania, the second largest city on the East Coast of the United States, and the fifth-most-populous city in the United States. The city is located in the northeastern United States along the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers, and is the only consolidated city-county in Pennsylvania.

Philadelphia’s history traces back to 1682, when the city was founded by William Penn. Before Penn founded Philadelphia, the area was inhabited by the Lenape (Delaware) Indians. With the increased arrival of English colonists and the development of the port on the Delaware River, Philadelphia quickly grew into an important colonial city. During the American Revolution, it was the site of the First and Second Continental Congresses. After the Revolution, the city was chosen to be the temporary capital of the United States from 1790-1800.

Currently, Philly is the epicenter of economic activity in Pennsylvania, and is home to the Philadelphia Stock Exchange and several Fortune 500 companies. Philadelphia is known for its arts and culture. The city has more outdoor sculptures and murals than any other American city, and Philadelphia's Fairmount Park is the largest landscaped urban park in the world.

There are several universities in the Philadelphia area, including the University of Pennsylvania and Villanova University. The famous Philly cheesesteak and soft pretzel are emblematic of Philadelphia cuisine, which is shaped by the city's ethnic mix. There is a lot to explore for everyone in this city whether you are looking for art, history, or a delicious bite to eat. Go ahead and begin your journey, and welcome once again to Philadelphia!

## City of Philadelphia Overview

- [Official Website of the City of Philadelphia](#)
- [City of Philadelphia Parks and Recreation](#)
- [Maps of Philadelphia](#)
- [Free Library of Philadelphia](#)
- [Current Weather in Philadelphia](#)
- Population: 1.4 million

## History of Philadelphia

- [Philadelphia's History](#)
- [Philadelphia Timeline](#)
- [Historical Society of Pennsylvania](#)

## Recommended Reading (available on [amazon.com](#) and in print)

- *Lonely Planet Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania Dutch County*
- *Day Trips from Philadelphia: Getaway Ideas for the Local Traveler*
- *Philadelphia and the State of Pennsylvania: Cool Stuff Every Kid Should Know*
- *Still Philadelphia: A Photographic History 1890-1940*

## What to See, Sightseeing Tours, Value Packages and Passes, Tourist Information

- Best of Philadelphia- [TripAdvisor](#)
- [Philadelphia Travel Guide](#)
- [New York Times Philadelphia Travel Guide](#)
- [Philadelphia Official Visitors Page](#)

## Where to Find Arts & Entertainment

- [City Paper Philadelphia](#)
- [Philadelphia calendar of general events](#)

## Where to Eat

- [Yelp](#)
- [Zagat Guide to Philadelphia](#)
- [The 50 Best Restaurants in Philadelphia](#)
- Food Blogs: [Eater Philly](#); [Philadelphia Foobooz](#)

## Tipping

When you eat in a restaurant in America, you are expected to leave your server a tip, as it is not included. In a bar, café, or modest restaurant, 15% of the total bill is acceptable. However, in an upscale restaurant (fine dining), a tip calculated on 20% of the total bill is now the norm in Philadelphia.

## Daylight Saving Time

Philadelphia is in the Eastern Time Zone and participates in Daylight Saving Time. Daylight Saving Time begins at 2:00 a.m. local time on the second Sunday in March. On the first Sunday in November areas on Daylight Saving Time return to Standard Time at 2:00 a.m. The names of each time zone change along with Daylight Saving Time. Eastern Standard Time (EST) becomes Eastern Daylight Time (EDT), and so forth. Some areas of the United States not using Daylight Saving Time include, Arizona, parts of Indiana, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, U.S. Virgin Islands and American Samoa.

## Map of Philadelphia



Source: [OpenStreetMap](https://www.openstreetmap.org/)

**IN CASE OF EMERGENCY  
DIAL 911  
FOR FIRE, POLICE & AMBULANCE**

Language line: If the person calling 911 is unable to speak English, they can tell the operator what language they speak. The 911 Operator will have an interpreter on the line within one minute to assist with the translation.

They will ask for the following information so keep this page close to your phone:

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

**If you accidentally call 911, please do not hang up.** The police will automatically be dispatched to your home to make sure there are no problems. Explain to the Operator the call was an accident.

[POISON CONTROL](#) (800) 222-1222  
[ANIMAL POISON CONTROL](#) (888) 426-4435

Other Important Numbers:

[CLOSEST CONSULATE OFFICE](#) \_\_\_\_\_  
PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN \_\_\_\_\_  
WORK PHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

**Urgent Care Centers**

An Urgent Care Center is different than a Hospital Emergency Room. An Emergency room would be in an absolute emergency. You may visit an Urgent Care Center if, for example, you have a terrible ear ache and need medicine immediately but your Primary Care Physician's office is closed. Many Urgent Care Centers have extended hours and are open early morning until late evening during the week and also some weekend hours. Be sure to refer back to your health insurance company to clarify which urgent care centers and primary care physicians you are allowed to visit using your health insurance. Your insurance card should have a toll-free 1-800 number on the back for you to call and ask questions and clarify which urgent care center would be closest for you. Please always carry your insurance card with you!

## **Safety and Security**

While Philadelphia is relatively safe, it is still a major city. Like every major metropolitan area in the USA, there is some crime.

Take basic precautions: lock your car, lock your doors and windows in your home, be aware of strangers and things that just don't seem right. It is always better to be cautious.

Check [here for a list of crime rates per neighborhood in Philadelphia](#)

## **Hospital & Clinics**

- [Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania](#)
- [Thomas Jefferson University Hospitals](#)
- [Penn Presbyterian Medical Center](#)
- [Pennsylvania Hospital](#)
- [List of best hospitals in the area](#)
- Local Clinics can be found [here](#)

## **Veterinary Clinics Philadelphia**

- [VCA Animal Hospitals](#)
- [Pennsylvania SPCA](#)
- [Veterinarians in Philadelphia](#)

## **Pharmacies**

There are several major pharmacy chains in Philadelphia, found on nearly every block on commercial streets. Click on "Store Locator" and enter your zip (postal) code to find the pharmacy near you. Several pharmacies are open 24 hours. Check for hours of operation. Also the main grocery stores like Giants, Target, and Wal-Mart have full service pharmacies.

- [Walgreens](#)
- [CVS](#)
- [Rite-Aid](#)
- [Pharmacies in Philadelphia](#)

A lease is an agreement that outlines the obligations of the owner and the tenants of a house or apartment. It is a legally binding document, so it is important for you to know the exact terms of the lease agreement before you sign it. Please do not sign a lease without reviewing it with your IOR DS Consultant.

### **Types of rental properties**

- **Apartment**

An apartment is rented from a company or individual that owns the property. Apartment buildings are usually multistory with people over, under and beside each other with common hallways or walk ways. Apartments are often rented from a company or individual in the form of an individual lease with no bearing on the other tenants of the building (besides noise complaints, property damage, etc.)

- **Studio Apartments**

A studio apartment is basically a one room apartment with sleeping, dining and kitchen all in one room plus a full bathroom. A “convertible” or “alcove” studio may have a nook or area which can be sectioned off separately for sleeping.

- **Condominium**

A condo is a communally owned estate and the owners share the ownership of the common areas such as grounds and hallways. Condominiums may be apartment style buildings or town house type buildings, but condo owners do not usually own the land. Condo owners are required to pay monthly common maintenance charges; although these might be reflected in your rental rate (it is important to clarify this with your landlord).

- **Townhouse**

A Townhouse is a kind of structure where the individual properties are flush against each other with tiny front and back "yards" and shared walls between them. Almost always they are multistory single family. Usually townhouse owners own the property under their townhouse.

- **Single Family Houses**

Single-family houses are free-standing rental properties that are habited by one person or a family. As you do not share this rental space with any other tenants, single-family homes offer the most amount of privacy. Homes also often come with a parking spot and/or garage space, but may require that you handle certain maintenance items (i.e. your lawn, minor repairs, etc.)



## Rental Agents

In most situations, your IOR consultant will partner with a local realtor to have access to the most current and extensive property listings as well as the realtor's expertise in preparing and negotiating leases. This agent receives a commission for their assistance, in most US locations this commission is paid by the Landlord, not the tenant. Your IOR DS Consultant will discuss this with you.

## Renter's Rights

Tenants who lease or rent property are protected against discrimination by [The Fair Housing Act](#). If you think your rights have been violated, you may write a letter or telephone the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) office nearest you. You have one year after the alleged violation to file a complaint with HUD, but you should file as soon as possible.

While you can generally expect the same service from landlords, it's important to know your state's laws. Each state and most major cities have their own tenant rights, laws and protections. Here are [Philadelphia's](#).

You can also visit the [HUD website here for a full guide to renters' rights by states](#).

If your rental property ever suffers any defects that make your place uninhabitable, your landlord has a duty to fix it. While some apartments let you make online requests for repairs, as well as provide a phone number for "emergencies," always make sure you document your request in writing. The landlord will then have a certain amount of time to make those repairs.

## Privacy

You have the right to privacy. While the landlord owns the property, they can't access it anytime they want. All states have laws stating renters have a right to privacy while renting. Pretty much the only time the landlord can come into your rental without permission or notice is when they're responding to an emergency that threatens injury or property damage.

Any other time the landlord wants to enter your apartment, they need to have your permission and in most cases give you 24-hours' notice before entering.

## What to expect from the landlord:

In most states, you are legally entitled to:

- Safe structural elements including floors, walls, roofs, and secure doors and windows.
- Privacy as described above.
- All electrical, plumbing, heating and air conditioning systems function.
- Working hot and cold water.
- Exterminating infestations of rodents and other insects.
- Access to trash receptacles.
- Landlords cannot discriminate based on race, gender, sexual orientation, or disabilities.
- Water, electricity, and gas bills are up to you to pay. **Your IOR consultant will assist you with this process.**
- Apartment buildings sometimes come with laundry and dryer machines in the basement.

## Utilities and Appliances

Your IOR DS Consultant will assist you or provide information on connecting your utilities. It is possible some will be included in your rent, but typically most are not.

If you are moving from Europe to North America, you might be surprised at the relatively large size of the kitchen appliances in your accommodation, especially the refrigerator! It may also surprise some expats that properties are rented **with** appliances. In the US it is standard for properties to include a refrigerator, stove, and oven. Properties may also include a dishwasher, microwave, washer and dryer depending on the location, size, and price point.

**\*\*Note that you will need a social security number in order to register and pay for utilities\*\***

## Recycling

In the past few years Philadelphia has made tremendous strides in [curbside recycling](#), and the residential curbside recycling rates are at an all time high.



## The Lease Process

### Review your housing budget with your IOR DS Consultant

Your IOR DS Consultant can help you understand what kind of property you can afford. You also need to take into account that you may be responsible for some of the utility costs of your rental.

### Know what you want

What are you looking for in a property? Do you want a studio or a single bedroom? Maybe you want to rent a single family home? Do you need the property to come with appliances, including washer and dryer? Do want it to be close to school or your work? Do you want it to be within walking distance of retail, like groceries or coffee shops? Are you looking for a child friendly area?

Keep in mind that outside of the city center in major cities, there is not much public transportation and most locals drive everywhere.

### Identify potential apartments

IOR offers home finding services to aid you with this process. Your consultant may work with a local broker who will help to organize appointments and visit properties. They will also assist in the rental application and the leasing process.

## Common Abbreviations and Acronyms used in rental housing listings

<u>Acronym</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
24-hr mtn	24-hour emergency maintenance
AC or A/C	Air conditioning

<u>Acronym</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
LA	Living area
LR	Living room

<b>Appls</b>	Appliances	<b>MBR</b>	Master bedroom
<b>Apt</b>	Apartment	<b>MBTH</b>	Master bathroom
<b>BA</b>	Bathroom	<b>Neg</b>	Negotiable
<b>BR</b>	Bedroom	<b>Ofc</b>	Office
<b>Bsmt</b>	Basement	<b>OSP</b>	Off-street parking
<b>CAC</b>	Central air conditioning	<b>Pkg</b>	Parking
<b>DA</b>	Dining area	<b>PM</b>	Property manager (management)
<b>Det</b>	Detached	<b>Pvt</b>	Private
<b>Dk</b>	Deck	<b>Pwdr rm</b>	Powder room (1/2 bath)
<b>DR</b>	Dining room	<b>RE</b>	Real estate
<b>Dw (D/w)</b>	Dishwasher	<b>Renov</b>	Renovated
<b>Eff</b>	Efficiency	<b>Rf</b>	Roof
<b>EiK</b>	Eat-in kitchen	<b>Rm</b>	Room
<b>Fin bsmt</b>	Finished basement	<b>SF</b>	Single-family
<b>FDR</b>	Formal dining room	<b>SFA</b>	Single-family attached
<b>FHA</b>	Fair Housing Act	<b>SFD</b>	Single-family detached
<b>FMR</b>	Fair market rent	<b>Sp, Pl (S/p)</b>	Swimming pool
<b>FP</b>	Floorplan	<b>Sq. ft</b>	Square feet
<b>Gar</b>	Garage	<b>Th (T/H)</b>	Townhouse
<b>H/A</b>	Handicapped accessible	<b>Vw (vu)</b>	View
<b>H/W</b>	Hardwood floors	<b>W/A</b>	Wheelchair accessible
<b>Hi ceil</b>	High ceilings	<b>W/W</b>	Wall-to-wall carpeting
<b>HVAC</b>	Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning		

### Visit

Make this process as efficient as possible by visiting as many potential properties as you can in one or two days. Try to go sometime during the week if possible. Your IOR DS consultant will work with you to set an appropriate schedule and to ensure that the properties you visit meet your needs as closely as possible.

### **What to do once you're there**

As you look at the rental unit, be sure to ask a lot of questions. While you should keep small concerns to yourself about the unit while looking at it, feel free to ask the landlord or apartment manager any questions you might have that will help in your decision. Here are some possible questions you may consider asking:

- What's the monthly rent?
- Are any utilities included with the rent?
- How much is the security deposit?
- When is rent due? Do you have auto-pay?
- What's the make-up of the other tenants? Are they mainly younger students? Married couples with families? Older folks?
- What's the parking situation like? Do you pay for a parking spot?
- Do you take care of small maintenance issues or am I responsible for some of the repairs in the property?
- Am I able to re-paint the walls or make other modifications?

Again, be friendly and polite when you ask these questions.

### **The Application**

The next step in the leasing process for an apartment is to submit a rental application for the location you want. The manager or landlord will be able to give you the application as well as anything else that they may need to have filled out. Your IOR DS Consultant will assist with this process. For a single family home there will likely be a rental application.

You will need your passport, Social Security number, Visa, and proof of employment. Some landlords may charge you an application fee which could be between \$20 to \$400 dollars, depending on the landlord. This could be a combination of an application fee and move-in fee.

Once you've done this, it can take up to a few days to hear back from the property manager. Once your application has been approved the lease approval process will begin with IOR and likely your employer.

### **Signing the lease**

DO NOT SIGN THE LEASE until your IOR DS Consultant has reviewed it in full and given their approval.

The lease is a binding contract, so it is very important to pay attention as a leasing agent goes over it with you. It is perfectly normal for you to take your time and read all the fine print for yourself. If you are working with an IOR consultant, make sure to talk with them and receive approval before signing. You will also be given a copy of the lease to take with you and keep for your records, but it is very important to know everything included in your lease from the start.

Some things to look for in a lease:

- Term of the lease and any important dates such as when the rent is due.
- Extra fees for parking spaces or storage, garbage collection, and pets.
- Information regarding utility providers and whether you or the landlord is responsible for those bills.
- Notification requirements in case of renewal.
- Requirements/responsibilities of the tenants to do routine repairs such as lawn maintenance, cleaning or notification of repairs.
- Clauses that allow the landlord to change the terms of the lease after it is signed.
- Restrictions that would prevent you from living normally or comfortably in the home.

Sometimes landlords will ask for a security deposit before you sign the lease. This is normal, but you shouldn't pay in cash. Make sure all payments are made out as a check or money order just in case.

### **What to expect from the lease**

Most leases in the United States include the following or a variation thereof:

- Your employer requires that all leases include a Break Clause in the case that you are transferred for work or personal needs.
- Contracts will often be for periods of a year or more.
- Minimum stay. Typically three fourths of your lease contract time. If you choose to move out before this date, you will lose your security deposit. If you move out afterwards, you are still required to give a specified number of days notice.
- Security Deposit. Landlords will expect you to leave them with a deposit (usually about one to two month's rent) that they will hold for the duration of your lease. You will receive your security deposit back at the end of the lease provided you don't break any specific clauses in your lease, such as moving out without proper notice, not paying rent, causing damages to the property, etc.
- Landlords should not be given unchecked access to your apartment. If there isn't anything in your lease about landlord's rights to enter the leased premises, suggest the following clause:

*Entry by the Landlord. Landlord or his agent will not enter Tenant's home except to deal with an emergency; to make necessary or agreed repairs; to supply necessary or agreed services; or to show the unit to potential purchasers, tenants, or repair persons. Unless there is an emergency, Landlord will give Tenant at least 24 hours' written notice of the date, time, and purpose of the intended entry and will schedule entries during normal business hours, Monday–Friday.*

Most landlords will be hard-pressed to say no to such a reasonable clause. If the landlord refuses, it's a sure sign that he won't be reasonable in other respects, too. Continue on in your housing search.

### **Moving In**

On your selected move-in date, after the lease has been signed, and deposits have been paid...you should be given your keys and more than likely a move-in form to fill out. Your IOR DS Consultant will assist you with an initial walk through of your apartment. Look for dings in the walls, cracked windows, or other irregularities and report them on this form. This will indicate that these things were there before you moved in and you will not be held responsible for them at the end of the lease term.

### **Get Renter's Insurance**

Renter's insurance covers any loss to your personal property due to robbery or accidents. It also covers any damage you might cause to other tenant's property. For example, let's say your washing machine springs a leak and water seeps through the floor and ruins your neighbor's antique dresser. Renter's insurance would cover that.

Renter's insurance will cost approximately about \$15-125 a month, less if you tack it onto another policy (like auto) you have with an insurance company. A few popular options are [Allstate](#) and [StateFarm](#).

When relocating internationally, your children's education is of great concern. IOR eases this concern by exposing you to the various school options available for your child and helping you to work within the framework of options to find the best solution for your family.

### I. **Overview and Philosophy of the United States Educational System**

In most U.S. locations you will have the choice of sending your children to either a public or private school. A public school must accept your child for enrollment if you live within its designated district. A private school may have a general curriculum similar to that of public schools, but may or may not accept your child depending on availability of space, your child's prior academic history, language ability in English, or the result of entrance exams. Private schools charge a fee, which can be quite high. If you are considering private school, be sure you have a clear understanding of your employer's policy regarding reimbursement. In the U.S. approximately 85% of the children attend public schools for ages 5 to 13, and approximately 93% of the children attend public school at the high school level. Many, though not all, private schools are parochial, or religiously affiliated schools.

A third option called 'charter school' is sometimes available. Charter Schools are similar to public schools in that they are free, non-religious, publicly funded, and are held to state and federal academic standards. Each charter school is governed by its own local school community, which often includes parents and teachers - rather than a district. This freedom allows teachers to be more innovative, and communities to shape their local school. Charter schools can set their own hours and adjust their curriculum to fit their student needs, and give teachers the opportunity to experiment with next-generation teaching models including technology and the virtual classroom. Charter schools typically admit students by random lottery and do not restrict enrollment based on location, academic achievement, or other factors private schools may consider.

Most Americans, regardless of their level of education and income, send their children to public schools. Because each town or community typically has its own school system funded by local municipal taxes and state revenues, residents in an area with a higher tax base can usually be assured of quality public education. IOR is very conscientious about placing assignees and their families in areas with good public school systems.

Private schools do not receive state revenue, although they may be entitled to assistance with transporting students and providing for special needs such as speech therapy and assistance of the learning disabled. Private schools are funded through tuition paid by the student's parents. Typically, there are additional fees for books, uniforms, and school supplies, and the parents are usually solicited for additional charitable donations. There may also be book or activity fees at public schools.

The public education system in the U.S. is administered by local and state government, rather than by the federal government. Each state has a board of education which sets policy for all school districts and standards which all students must achieve. In addition, each local district has a board of education which sets local policy and curriculum within the parameters set forth by the state.

School districts can provide specialized programs and services for children with special needs. The general philosophy of education in the United States is to educate the entire diverse, ethnically mixed population with equal educational opportunity for all, while serving the educational needs of the individual student.

If you choose public education for your child, the particular school your child attends is determined by the school district boundaries containing your residential address. The school may or may not be within walking distance to your home. Generally, if the distance to the school is greater than one mile, the school district provides bus transportation to and from school. For those children who do not live far enough away from the school for bus service but are too far to walk comfortably, parents may have the option of paying for bus transportation, or they may choose to drive their children to and from school. Very often parents form 'car pools', sharing the responsibility of driving groups of children.

Generally private schools do not have residential boundaries for their students' families. In most cases, parents rely on car pools to ease the burden of transporting their students to and from school. In selecting your home, consider the driving distance and time to and from the private school.

Ultimately, the school your children attend is determined by your residential address, so it is a good idea to include visits to potential schools and properties in your pre-trip visit. Your pre-trip visit will consist of selected sample houses in a variety of communities, along with information, or perhaps visits, to the appropriate schools. However, there may be a limited selection of homes available within each community. It is possible you may find a school you like, but there may not be any available housing options within that school's enrollment radius. We will show you housing in school districts with proven academic standards, but be aware there are cases when certain schools are unavailable due to housing concerns.

If you are considering a private school, you may wish to visit it as well as a public school to compare. It would be advisable, however, to first determine if the private school has space available for your child. Additionally, you will want to know the amount of tuition and fees for the school, as that may be a factor in your decision.



## II. Academic Standards

### A. Curriculum:

The overriding objective of elementary and secondary education, public or private, is to prepare students for higher learning and future employment. Each school district or private school will have a unique curriculum which meets the above overriding goals.

#### Elementary School:

The elementary years (kindergarten through fifth grade) focus on fundamental academic skills, language arts, social studies, science, and mathematics in addition to introduction to technology, art, music, physical education, and sometimes foreign languages. Students' personal development is energized through emphasizing strong work habits which provide a positive feeling toward learning.

#### Middle School:

Middle School helps children in early adolescence (sixth through eighth grade) transition from elementary to high school and from childhood into young adulthood. The structure of the school day includes contact with several teachers who specialize in their subject matter; students usually move from one classroom to another. Curricular content focuses on expansion of skills in math, science, reading, writing and social studies. Further exploration of foreign languages, practical and fine arts, music, health, physical education and computer literacy are also provided. Middle school students are able to enhance their formal education by participation in school sponsored adult supervised competitive athletics and a variety of clubs and special interest groups.

#### High School:

The premise of elementary and middle schools is to prepare students for the academic, social, and physical challenges of high school. All high schools maintain defined academic requirements for graduation, however great flexibility of classes is usually available within this framework. Most schools provide more challenging academic courses entitled honors or advanced placement which award college credit to successful students. High school extracurricular and athletic activities are more competitive than those found at lower levels and often provide talented students with opportunities continue this activity in college or university.

### B. Grading Systems/Assessment of Child Progress

Schools typically report students' progress to parents with written report cards, which may be either mailed or carried home by the student. Many schools also set one or two days aside each semester for parent/teacher conferences. These conferences are an opportunity for parents to meet with their children's teachers and hear the teacher's evaluations of their student's performance in school. At the elementary school level, where children usually have one primary teacher, a teacher conference may last from fifteen minutes to an hour in length. At the middle school and high school levels, you may meet with your child's teachers for a period of five or ten minutes. If you need additional time with the teacher, you may schedule a follow-up visit

allowing time for a more complete discussion. It is a good idea to participate fully in teacher conferences. Your children's teachers may be able to provide valuable insight regarding your children's academic and social adjustments. Should there be concerns, they may be able to assist you with helpful suggestions of additional resources to contact.

### **C. Standardized Testing**

Challenged to prepare students for higher learning and future employment, all school districts and private schools utilize standardized testing to measure student progress over time and compare themselves to national standards. Such tests are prepared by national groups of parents and educators as well as business and academic leaders. Tests vary from state to state, but typically students in prescribed grade levels (for example, grades 3, 6, 8 and 10) are tested in the areas of reading, mathematics, writing science and social science. Colleges and universities use the ACT and SAT tests to measure incoming student abilities; the results of these tests are nearly as important as high school grades when students apply for entrance into US colleges and universities.

## **III. Definition of School Groupings**

### **A. Pre-School or Nursery School**

In the U.S., 3, 4 and some 5 year olds have the opportunity to attend a pre-school under a private system. These schools can be located in a local school, a church, or an independent free standing building. Pre-school is not publicly funded and is fee-based. Typically children are grouped by age. Most of the schools are play-based, although different philosophies of formal education can be found. Typically, 3 year olds attend 2 half days a week and 4 year olds may attend 3 half days a week. Some preschools also serve as day care centers for families in which both parents work. Typically reading is not taught in pre-school, although a few programs can be found which include reading fundamentals. Concentration of learning is on small and gross motor skills, and basic academic readiness skills. Some pre-schools offer a full-day Kindergarten option for those parents who work. The public school kindergarten programs are typically only half day programs with no before or after school care. If a Kindergarten program is offered it follows the state curriculum guidelines, and teaches pre-reading and math skills.

### **B. Elementary School**

Elementary school provides education for children ages 5 to 11, Kindergarten and Grades 1,2,3,4 &5. While kindergarten at age 5 is not required, most families send their children to kindergarten. Elementary school is the beginning of publicly funded school. In the U.S. children are grouped by age and advanced in school by age. There are usually opportunities within the grade for different levels of learning, with opportunities for advanced learners and remedial learners. The public elementary school is usually neighborhood based and the source of playmates for your child. In the U.S., pre-reading skills are introduced in kindergarten (age 5) along with early math skills. Formal reading begins in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade (age 6). Studies have shown that while children learn to read at different ages, the difference between early and late readers is not a predictor of reading skills by about the age of 8 or 9 years old. In addition to reading

and math, elementary school also has a broad base of writing, science, social studies, art, music, computer, personal development and physical education. Only in a few schools will a 2<sup>nd</sup> language be introduced at the elementary level. English as a Second Language (ESL) is offered starting at the elementary level in the public school. Parents are allowed to visit the schools, and there are many opportunities for parents to volunteer their skills, particularly at the elementary school. Parents may approach teachers and administrators with suggestions and concerns with their child. Usually the personnel are willing to consider changes if they feel it would be in the best interests of the child. With a child coming to a new country and sometimes starting a new language, feel free to talk to the school if you think something could be done to ease your child's adjustment. The school day is from approximately 8:30a.m. to 3:00p.m. with recess (playtime break) and a lunch break at the school.

### **C. Middle School**

Middle school provides education for children ages 11 to 14, grades 6, 7 & 8. The children attend school in a different location and in the public school system several elementary schools will combine into the same middle school. A middle school is usually 2-4 times the size of the elementary school. Middle school is considered the transition between elementary school and high school and from childhood to young adulthood. Because of this philosophy, U.S. students at this age level are all introduced to the same academic curriculum. The school day is structured differently with the children changing class rooms and teacher with each subject. There are 6-8 different class periods daily. Within the grades children may be separated by academic ability in classes, particularly math and English. Often an introduction to foreign languages is offered. For those who choose, the student may have the option to complete one year of high school foreign language during middle school. If your home country requires more advanced language development at this age, you may want to consider outside supplemental language instruction. Middle school is a time when extracurricular activities such as theatre, music, sports and clubs become important activities in adolescent life.

### **D. High School**

High school provides education for children ages 14 to 18, grades 9, 10, 11 & 12. It is the final level of education before the university, community college, or trade school. The terms Freshman (9<sup>th</sup>), Sophomore (10<sup>th</sup>), Junior (11<sup>th</sup>) and Senior (12<sup>th</sup>) are also used to identify grade level. At the high school level the student has more specific choices of course work. Each district has a set of minimum graduation requirements, which will include courses in English, math, science, social studies, physical education and a combination of foreign language, fine arts and practical arts. Within this framework the student has various choices from more remedial levels, average levels, and more advanced levels. If a student is prepared for the material, by the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade a student may have the opportunity to take a college level course for advanced credit in the U.S. university system. In high school competitive sports are offered along with theatre, orchestra, instrumental and vocal music and clubs. Your child will have an opportunity to meet more U.S. children by participating in a school extracurricular activity. Each school district has 1 or more high schools with 800-2500 students. A student's high school

performance may determine the type of university or higher education program they pursue upon graduation. During high school national tests are given to determine the student's potential to advance to various higher education levels.

If your child anticipates returning to your home country to continue higher education within your university system, you might want to consider the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. This program is recognized internationally for entrance to universities. In contrast to the typical high school college preparatory curriculum, the IB semester consists of fewer subjects, studied in greater depth and with a bilingual proficiency. Developed in Switzerland, the curriculum was intended as a secondary education program which could be utilized and accepted worldwide. Not all US schools will offer an IB curriculum.

#### **E. Post-Secondary Education**

While most families on international assignment do not bring their older children (19 years+) for education in the U.S. we include a brief description of the US university system. Some form of post-secondary education is available to those U.S. students who seek it. Each state offers a public university system which the tuition is partly subsidized by the state for state residents. Residency of at least 1 year is necessary. Some are medium to large institutions (with undergraduate and graduate level programs). Some can be quite competitive for admission while others may not be competitive at all. Student's admission to the university is in part determined by their high school academic performance and course selection and as well as the results of a national standardized test (SAT or ACT). Post-Secondary is the educational level that students in the U.S. study subjects in great depth and select their majors and career choices. Graduate level programs on the master level, professional level, and PhD level are pursued after completing the 4 years of undergraduate studies.

### **IV. Life in Schools**

#### **A. Atmosphere**

It is valuable to visit your child's school to understand the academic and non-academic atmosphere that prevails. Administrators or counselors are happy to serve as tour guides and should always be contacted in advance. Do not be alarmed if your visit takes place during the lunch hour if the children seem a bit rambunctious. Students in American public schools generally enjoy a great deal of personal freedom in the cafeteria, on the playground, and in the halls before and after class. They are supervised by teachers or members of the school staff, but they generally are more relaxed in the lunch room and in the halls. If you are visiting on a rainy day, you may observe "indoor recess" in the gymnasium which could be noisy. Rest assured that when they are in the classroom, students do settle down and work quietly and diligently. Some classrooms are more informally arranged than others. For instance, some teachers prefer to have the children's desks in a circle rather than in rows. Teachers will sometimes assign group projects, where several students work together and are thus not seated at their desks during a part of the classroom period. Teachers are expected, however, to have good control of their classrooms. Private school policy regarding these issues of personal freedom varies. Some

private schools function as the public schools do, while others may have a more closely supervised approach. Again, it is always a good idea to visit the school so that you are comfortable with that particular school's management style.

### **B. Parental Involvement**

In addition to participating in parent/teacher conferences, most American schools encourage parents to become involved in the volunteer activities of the school. Most schools have a "PTA" (Parent Teacher Association) or "PTO" (Parent Teacher Organization). These organizations usually work with the school administration, dealing with issues such as student safety, communication to parents, academic concerns, etc., as well as fundraising and planning special programs to enhance the school experience for the student population.

Getting involved with the PTA or PTO is a great way to become well informed about your child's school. It also provides you with an opportunity to meet and really get to know other parents. There will probably be a choice of committees on which you could work; you do not have to commit to a leadership role. Some volunteer opportunities may involve actually working in the school, volunteering in the school library on day a week or one day a month for example. Be sure to alert the school administration that you would like to get involved, and ask for the name and phone number of the head of the parent volunteer organization at the school. Parent volunteers are usually welcomed and encouraged at all levels at all schools, both public and private.

### **C. Extracurricular Activities**

A well-rounded education requires that students learn their academic subjects as well as develop socialization skills and learn nonacademic skills. Belonging to a group can be a rewarding connection with peers and a good way to develop self-confidence. These are the reasons that schools, public and private, provide numerous extracurricular activities from which their students can choose to participate. At each level of education, the opportunities and choices increase. For example, at the elementary school level, all students are introduced to art, music, drama and a variety of athletic experiences. At the middle school level, students have required courses in some of the above areas but are provided opportunity to participate in after school activities of their choice. For example, competitive football, soccer, swimming, track, lacrosse, basketball etc. In addition, many clubs allow students to pursue other interests, for example, computers, drama, fine arts, forensics, jazz band, photography, yearbook and student council. Almost universally, each activity or club is sponsored by adults, using specialized instruction, who demonstrate a working knowledge of the activity and a desire to teach children. An even greater variety of extracurricular experiences are available at the high school level, many of which help students identify strengths, talents and interests which may direct them to future colleges, vocations or avocations.

#### **D. Facilities**

All schools maintain facilities other than classrooms which enhance or support their educational mission.

##### **Libraries and Media Centers**

Libraries are universally available and are accessible to students throughout the day and often after hours. Libraries often contain a “media center” which maintains and makes available other types of educational materials including computers and software, audio and video tapes, slides, sound sequences, projectors and recorders of various types for use individually or in groups. The wide availability of computers and access to the internet has provided almost unlimited opportunities for students and teachers to obtain information that can enhance and facilitate learning.

##### **Fitness Facilities/Gymnasium**

Fitness facilities, or ‘gyms’ as they are typically referred to, are supplied by almost all schools in the United States. Gyms often consist of a large indoor court with various sports equipment. They are open during lunch hours and for specific hours before and after school for athletes or students who wish to exercise. Many gyms will be accompanied by a weight room and a locker room with a shower. Students are sometimes expected to use these communal showers following Physical Education classes or general use of the gym’s facilities.

## SCHOOLS IN YOUR AREA

Generally, to register your child for school you will need to have a passport and/or birth certificate, proof of immunizations, any applicable past school records and proof of residency. Most public schools have boundary areas, and you must show proof (i.e. copy of lease or home purchase agreement) to be allowed to register in that particular school. Please always confirm requirements with the school you are interested in before assuming that your child will be able to attend that school.

Grade level in the public school system is determined by the age of the child. Typically, the child must be 5 years old by September 1st to enter kindergarten. School districts may be very strict about the age requirement, but inquire with the school district you are interested in to determine if there are any exemptions for foreign students who are ahead in grade level. You may also want to ask about any gifted or advanced programs as well as their English as a Second Language (ESL) Programs. Some elementary schools also offer a pre-Kindergarten program for children who miss the September 1st requirement. You may inquire at the school districts for availability.

Contact your IOR Destination Services Consultant for more assistance with schooling questions.

### **Public Schools in Philadelphia**

Philadelphia has over 230 public schools. Even though all public schools teach the curriculum mandated by the School Reform Commission, the standard of each institution may vary immensely.

Some districts are consistently associated with high standards, while others are not. As students attend schools in Philadelphia based on attendance zones (their physical address), it is important that parents consider the educational landscape of an area before securing accommodation. To evaluate the standard of educational facilities in a district, parents can use [greatschools.org](http://greatschools.org) – where they can look at a school's rating and evaluation.

### **Quick Links**

- [The School District of Philadelphia](#)
- The Unofficial [Ranking of Public and Private Schools](#)
- [U.S News Rankings](#) of Philadelphia Public High-schools

### **Private Schools in Philadelphia**

Many of Philadelphia's private schools require that students complete an entrance exam, which must also be financed by parents. Your DS Consultant can answer any questions you may have regarding private schools.

[Private School Review](#) also has excellent information about the private schools in the area, from Early Childhood to grade 12. It includes schools with religious affiliations, international schools, and schools with special programs.

## Preschools

- A directory of preschools in the Philadelphia area can be viewed [here](#).

## Additional resources to compare Public and Private schools, view ratings, reviews and test scores

- [www.greatschools.org](http://www.greatschools.org)
- [www.eschoolprofile.com](http://www.eschoolprofile.com)
- [www.schooltree.org](http://www.schooltree.org)

## College and Universities

- [Arcadia University](#)
- [Bryn Mawr College](#)
- [Community College of Philadelphia](#)
- [Drexel University](#)
- [Haverford College](#)
- [Holy Family University](#)
- [LaSalle University](#)
- [Penn State University](#)
- [Philadelphia University](#)
- [Princeton University](#)
- [St. Joseph's University](#)
- [Swarthmore College](#)
- [Temple University](#)
- [Thomas Jefferson University](#)
- [University of Pennsylvania](#)
- [University of Sciences in Philadelphia](#)
- [Villanova University](#)



*U Penn*



*Penn State*



Banks and other financial institutions, such as credit unions, offer a variety of services. These services include:

- checking and saving accounts
- credit and debit cards
- online bill pay
- loans
- insurance
- financial planning

Banks in the United States are insured by the Federal Government for deposits up to \$250,000 per depositor per bank. The bank or credit union will display the letters FDIC (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation) as proof.

### Checking and Savings Accounts

To open a checking or savings account you will need the following information:

- Two forms of picture identification including but not limited to your passport, driver's license, or work ID.
- Social security number. If you have not yet received your social security number, the bank can open an account with a W8 Temporary Tax ID form (available at the bank). You will need to call the bank with your social security number once it arrives in the mail.
- Local mailing address. You may use your office address as your mailing address, but be prepared to call your bank branch as soon as you have your permanent address.
- Letter of Employment
- Cash for the initial deposit can range from ~\$25-\$150 dollars.

### Checks

More businesses and banks are offering online or automatic bill paying options. However, you may still need to pay some bills by mail. **NEVER SEND CASH!** You will want to order at least the minimum quantity of checks. This will cost a set fee that the bank will charge you. The checks will be pre-printed with your name, address, telephone number and account number and will be mailed to your home.

### ATM or Debit Card

The most popular way of obtaining cash is by using an ATM (Automated Teller Machine) card, also referred to as a debit card. ATM's are located in most banks, malls, airports, grocery stores, and in many other public places. You will be given a PIN (Personal Identification Number) for using your card. It is important that you memorize this number and not keep written record of it with your card in order to protect your account. Most ATM's will take all cards, but many banks will charge a service fee for using another bank's ATM. Through the ATM you may deposit, transfer, and withdraw funds. There will usually be a limit to the amount of money you can withdraw in any 24-hour period.

## **Credit Cards**

For many international transferees, the lack of a US credit history can be a challenge. In most cases, you will not be approved for a US credit card initially. One suggestion to assist in building your US credit history is to open a **secured credit card**. With approval from the bank, you can put a certain amount of money in a savings account that will remain in the account. The secured credit card would have a credit limit equal to the amount deposited in the savings account. You will need to use your secured credit card and make the minimum monthly payments; you may also pay in full the amount due. After 9 months or so, if the bank sees that you have a good payment record, they may approve you for a regular credit card.

## **Security**

Always pay attention to the other people around you at an ATM. Do not use the machine if you are suspicious of someone's behavior. It is safer to find another ATM or to come back later. Do not put your PIN number in with anyone close enough to see it.

Credit card theft is another increasing problem. In order to protect your card from being abused, never give your credit card or credit card number to a service provider you have not called. Another precaution is to destroy or shred copies of receipts and bills. Criminals will not hesitate to dig through the trash to find a copy of your credit card number.

## **Major US Banks**

Below is a list of links to some of the larger US banks. All of these large banks have multiple locations in Philadelphia and the surrounding area, although in some cases you may find that the local bank is a better option for you than some of the larger banks. Your IOR DS Consultant can help you in selecting a bank by sharing the various options available locally as well as the products they offer to support expatriates.

- [Bank of America](#)
- [JP Morgan Chase](#)
- [Citibank](#)
- [HSBC](#)
- [TD Bank](#)
- [US Bank](#)
- [Wells Fargo](#)
- [List of banks in Philadelphia](#)

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION/DRIVING

Philadelphia's public transportation network includes buses, subways, trolleys, and regional rail lines. They are all operated by [SEPTA](#) (Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority). The public transit system will get you to most places you need to go in the city and in some suburbs. Within Center City, Philly's central area for business and neighborhoods, public transit is generally quick and easy. In addition, Philadelphia is one of America's most walkable cities, making the trip after using public transportation equally pleasant. However, the farther away from Center City you travel, the fewer direct routes you will find.

### By Bus

[SEPTA Bus](#) runs an extensive bus network in Philadelphia. Buses are a convenient (if slow) method of transportation within the city. On-time performance is relatively lacking especially in the suburbs. If you decide to use the system in the suburban area of Philadelphia please plan ahead.

### By Train

- [SEPTA Regional Rail](#): Regional commuter rail trains stop in Center City at underground commuter rail tunnels. The three major Center City stops: 30th Street Station, Suburban Station and Market East Station, serve most of the city's major attractions. Suburban Station is near City Hall, the shopping district, the financial district, and many cultural attractions; Market East Station connects to the Pennsylvania Convention Center, shopping at The Gallery, and the Reading Terminal Market (a famous local marketplace).
- [New Jersey Transit Rive LINE](#): This light rail line serves 20 stations between Trenton and Camden, New Jersey. The line connects with DRPA's PATCO Hi-Speed Line at Camden's Walter Rand Transportation Center. River LINE travels North-South along the Delaware River entirely in New Jersey.
- [New Jersey Transit Atlantic City Line](#): Provides service to multiple suburbs in New Jersey and to Atlantic City. Service patterns are somewhat uneven; be sure to check the schedule online in advance. These trains pick up passengers from the Amtrak concourse at 30th Street Station.
- [SEPTA Subway](#): SEPTA operates two elevated/subway lines and a Subway-Surface line that serve Center City Philadelphia as well as the smaller neighborhoods on the city's fringe. Seniors ride free with ID. More information can be found [here](#).





Source: [septa.org](http://septa.org)

## By Taxi

Taxis are regulated by the Philadelphia Parking Authority and display a medallion license on their hood. As a result, Go2Go does not serve Philadelphia and the surrounding area. All taxis are metered. Tipping for good service is common.

## By Car

Driving around the city is not for inexperienced drivers. Bumper-to-bumper traffic, endless road work and limited (plus expensive) parking are all a part of the equation of city driving. But, there are several cost-cutting and stress-reducing methods to try the next time you want to visit our beloved city center. Here is a mental list for any novices while navigating the bustling Philly streets:

- **Know the Area:** This might seem obvious, but it pays to have an idea of how the city is setup before venturing downtown. While not perfect, Philadelphia is made up of many parallel and same-name streets. For example, 21st Street is going to stay 21st Street, and it is separated by "South" and "North" on either side of Market Street. Other tidbits include a sequence of streets named after trees and knowing that Broad St. doubles as 14th Street.
- **Be Street Smart:** The roads surrounding the city center are compiled of many tight "two-lane" and "one-way" streets. If you miss a turn, do not worry. The way Philadelphia is laid out, you should be fine going a couple of streets ahead, making the turn and meeting up with your street of choice.
- **Shop for Parking:** If you have the time, look for any available meter and side street parking in safe-looking areas first. If that doesn't look promising, look at a few different pay-and-park lots. A few things to keep in mind:
  - Outdoor lots generally run cheaper than indoor facilities
  - Some lots charge per hour and/or per day with varying rates; decide which option is best for your day's activities
  - Certain lots offer "early bird specials" if you park before 9:30 a.m.
  - Don't chance permit-only or "no parking" areas - you will be fined and/or towed
- **Decide Your Best Route:** Consult Google Maps before your trip downtown. In addition to finding the route that suits you best, there is a "public transit" tab that tells you which SEPTA mode(s) of transportation will get you where you need to go.

## Airport

[PHL Airport](#) is just seven miles (11 kilometers) from the center of Philadelphia and it is easy to drive to with major interstate highways minutes away. ... The city's SEPTA service runs between the airport and Center City Philadelphia, via the R1 commuter rail line.

## Amtrak

[Amtrak trains](#) arrive at historic Philadelphia 30th Street Station with easy connections to SEPTA (Philadelphia's bus, light rail, regional rail and subway system), New York City's Penn Station, and New Jersey Transit, connecting to southern New Jersey destinations including Atlantic City.

### **Map Websites**

- [Google Maps](#)
- [Expedia](#)
- [MapQuest](#)
- [Bing Maps](#)

### **Transportation “App” Options**

Several web based phone applications to secure a driver are available throughout the Philadelphia area. The driver knows your approximate location based on your phone GPS. Payment is automatic through the app and fares may be cheaper than a taxi.

- [Uber](#)
- [Lyft](#)

### **AAA Travel Protection**

AAA is a membership organization that offers benefits such as roadside service and towing, discounts on car products and services, reference materials and travel discounts.

Call 1-800-352-5382 for additional information and cost. <http://www.aaa.com>

## LOCAL REGISTRATION

### Social Security Procedures

[United States Social Security Administration](#)

1-800-772-1213

Upon arrival in the United States, employees holding work visas will be required to apply, in person, for a Social Security number. The Application for a Social Security Card (SS-5) can be used by anyone who has never been issued a card, needs a replacement card or has changed his or her name. Your IOR Destination Services Consultant will assist you with this process and can answer any questions you might have.

### **THIS SERVICE IS FREE.**

To get an original number and card, you'll need to complete an Application for a Social Security Card ([Form SS-5](#)), and show the following documents IN PERSON at the local social security office.

- Passport
- [I-94](#)
- Work Visa
- Any other documents received by US Immigration

If all of your information is confirmed, your Social Security card will arrive in the mail in approximately 2-4 weeks. Several days after you have successfully completed the application process, you may be able to take your identification with your receipt back to the Social Security office to inquire about your Social Security number before you receive your card. Your IOR Destination Services Consultant will assist you with this process.

### **L-2 Visa Employment Opportunity Law Changes**

The L-2 visa allows the dependent spouse and minor, unmarried children of qualified L-1 visa holders to enter into the U.S.

Changes took place on July 27, 2006 that apply to spouses of L-1 Visa holders in the US on an L2 Visa. Prior to that date, spouses on L-2 Visas were not permitted to obtain a social security card and were denied the right to be employed in the US. The law change now permits L-2 Visa holders (spouses only, not dependent children) to work on a full-time basis in the U.S. with proper employment authorization from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

The L-2 Visa holder must apply for a social security card in addition to applying for an Employment Authorization Document before they can begin employment.

## **Social Security Numbers**

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has issued guidelines, which permit E-1, E-2, and L-2 spouses to obtain Social Security Numbers without having to first obtain employment.

Authorization Documents (EADs) from the CIS. They must show proof that their spouse is in E-1, E-2 or L-1 status, and present an original marriage certificate, in the native language. However, before they are authorized to work, they must obtain an EAD. [The new SSA guidelines are online here.](#)

Employment Authorization Document (EAD): L-2 Visa holders can apply for this document utilizing USCIS Form 1-765, Application for Employment Authorization. They must provide the following forms of identification: valid passport, 1-94 Arrival-Departure Document, Marriage Certificate from home country, two identical, and color photographs taken within 30 days of application. Currently, the process from application to EAD issue takes 3 to 4 months. The L2 Visa holder may also engage in full-time study in the US. A dependent child still may not apply for an EAD card except in cases of severe hardship. Local offices are open Monday thru Friday 9am to 4pm.

**\*\*Notice\*\*** Social Security offices are closed on all US Federal holidays.

## **Obtaining a Driver's License/State ID Card**

In the US, a driver's license or ID card is issued by each individual state and not by the federal government. Since there is no national identity card in the USA, and many Americans don't have a passport or carry around a birth certificate, a driver's license issued by your state is often the only official piece of identification for many citizens. Since 9/11, you will need to show a valid driver's license or State ID card to enter many big office buildings.

All new residents with out-of-state non-commercial driver's licenses must obtain a PA Driver's License within 60 days of establishing Pennsylvania residency. To apply, you must appear in person at one of our Driver License Centers. You will be required to surrender your out-of-state driver's license (valid or expired six months or less) before PennDOT can issue you a PA Driver's License. You will need to take a vision-screening test and complete [Form DL-180R](#) "Application for Pennsylvania Non-Commercial Driver's License By Out-of-State Non-CDL Driver." In addition, you will need to show [proof of identification and residency](#) and your Social Security card. Please visit our [fees](#) for more information.

Although a knowledge test is not required for new residents with out-of-state driver's licenses which are valid or expired six months or less, The [Pennsylvania Driver's Manual](#) is designed to help you become a safe driver and enjoy your driving privilege in our beautiful state.

- For information on how to obtain a driver's license, see the website of [Pennsylvania's DMV](#).

**\*\*\*Your Destination Services Consultant will also assist you with the proper procedure.\*\*\***



### TV, Cable, Telephone, and Internet

The main service providers for TV cable, landline telephone and internet all offer combination packages. They are in stiff competition with each other, so special offers change monthly, sometimes even weekly.

- [AT&T](#)
- [Comcast](#)
- [DirectTV](#)
- [Dish](#)

### Mobile Phones

There are four major wireless carriers in the US.

- [AT&T Wireless](#)
- [Verizon Wireless](#)
- [Sprint](#)
- [T-Mobile](#)

### Computers, Electronics, Cameras

- [Best Buy](#) is a national chain: Apart from sales, their [Geek Squad](#) repairs PC computers.
- [Apple Stores](#)

### Housewares and Furniture

- [Bed Bath & Beyond](#) is a national chain whereas the name explains, you can buy necessities for the bedroom and bathroom. From bath towels to comforters.
- [Ikea](#): Swedish-owned furniture shop for all home and home office furniture, soft furnishings, home accessories, flooring, crockery and children's toys.
- [Home Depot](#) is a national chain where anything for renovation or home appliances can be bought. There's paint, tape, hammers and doors.
- [Crate and Barrel](#) is a national chain that sells more modern style furniture compared to Ikea. It is slightly more expensive but has more design.
- [Furniture Envy](#) is a national chain that sells furniture.
- [Pottery Barn](#) is a national chain that sells kitchen supplies, furniture and household items.
- [Williams-Sonoma](#) is a national chain that sells kitchen supplies.
- [Rooms to Go](#) is a national chain that sells furniture.
- [The Container Store](#) is a national chain that sells storage boxes, organizers and the sort.
- [Z-Gallery](#) is a national chain that sells affordable furniture.

## Food Shopping

Philadelphia's biggest grocery chain is [Shoprite](#), and you'll find them in almost all the neighborhoods. Another similar big grocery chain is [ACME](#) and [Giant](#). They sell groceries, daily necessities and also have a pharmacy section in stores. Philadelphia also has 13 [Wawa](#) stores. Wawa is a convenience store with fresh products and subs loved by people all over the state. Finally, those looking for a high-end experience, there is [Whole Foods Market](#) with imported Italian cheese and organic foods.

Philadelphia also has a great Farmer's Market scene where you can connect with the producers and get fresh products of the season. There are different markets in various locations throughout the week.

Below are a few of the most popular markets in Philly:

- [Clark Park Saturday Market](#)
- [Headhouse Farmer's Market](#)
- [Wrightstown Farmer's Market](#)

Find out when a Farmer's Market is close by your area [here](#).

## Dining

Philadelphia has an extremely vibrant culinary scene, with many young and enterprising new chefs coming to the City of Brotherly Love for its food-obsessed culture. Those looking for a high-end dining experience will without doubt find a restaurant of choice in Philadelphia. In addition, Philadelphia is home to the Philly Cheesesteak, Philly's most famous homegrown food. It is a sandwich made of a fresh roll filled with grilled shaved beef and cheese (as well as onions, mushrooms, and other optional sides). Philadelphia also boasts a great street food scene that provides hungry bellies with mouth-watering snacks, including the hoagie, a local classic. Check out some of Philly's most popular local restaurants below:

- [Talula's Garden](#): A warm and elegant Washington Square eatery featuring a modern European menu that changes with the seasons. The artful cuisine, hospitable staff, sustainable spirits, and a focus on gourmet cheese make the dining experience here incredibly memorable.
- [Dalessandros](#): A local favorite, this casual restaurant is the place to go for cheesesteaks, hoagies, and the quintessential Philly dining experience.
- [Reading Terminal Market](#): This famous indoor farmer's market offers diverse fare, housewares & area specialties since 1892. The market features locally grown and exotic produce, Amish specialties, fresh meats and seafood, and handmade confections and baked goods. Reading Terminal Market also has one of the widest varieties of restaurants under one roof.
- [Parc Brasserie](#): Parc recalls the chic brasseries of Paris, serving traditional bistro fare in a charming and comfortable space. This stylish addition to famous Rittenhouse Square pays tribute to French café culture, serving breakfast, lunch and dinner seven days a week.

For more information on dining in Philadelphia, check the following links.

- [Philly Mag](#)
- [Philadelphia Restaurants](#)

### Sight Seeing

There is something for everyone in this city that has both the new and old world charm. History lovers will find magnificent historical artifacts, while the pop culture aficionado will find large collections of public art in the streets. The following are great places to begin exploring Philadelphia.

- [Philadelphia's Magic Gardens](#): A folk art environment, gallery space, and nonprofit organization that showcases the work of mosaics Isaiah Zagar. Located at the site of Zagar's largest public mosaic installation, the Magic Gardens includes a fully mosaic indoor gallery and a massive outdoor labyrinthine mosaic sculpture. The installation, primarily consisting of found objects and contributions from the community, covers half a city block with myriads of tile, texture, and color.
- **Public Art:** Much of Philadelphia's art is free for viewing, and is not found within the confines of a museum. Philadelphia has the largest collection of public art in the nation, courtesy of the city's innovative Mural Arts Program designed to stop graffiti and enliven the city's buildings. The Mural Arts Program even provides a free [tour](#) for visitors. Other public art of note includes the many glass mosaics found throughout the city; a sampling of this great public art can be seen on South St. east of Broad.
- [Eastern State Penitentiary](#): Known as "America's Most Historic Prison", it is also the site of an annual Bastille Day recreation. In October, the notoriously haunted penitentiary is home to one of the city's most popular Halloween attraction: the "Terror behind the Walls" haunted house. This site is accessible by subway (Fairmount stop) as well as the 33 or 48 buses from Center City.
- [Edgar Allan Poe National Historic Site](#): The former home of the famous American author of mystery and the macabre.
- [Independence National Historic Park](#): Philadelphia's signature historic site in Old City features the Liberty Bell, Independence Hall, and Constitution Hall (the original home of the Declaration of Independence and Constitution). It also features historic buildings from the city's revolutionary past, approximately 20 of which are open to the public.
- [The Philadelphia Zoo](#): The Philadelphia Zoo was the first zoo in the United States and is located just across the Schuylkill River. Due to open on March 1859, the zoo's opening was delayed fifteen years because of the Civil War, finally opening for business July 1, 1874. The Zoo welcomed nearly 1.2 million visitors in 2010, and remains a popular and prosperous tourist and local attraction.



## Performing Arts& Music

Philadelphia prides itself on its wide variety of live music performances throughout the city. Venues can be found throughout Center City East and West, Old City, South Philly and the Northern Liberties/Fishtown districts of North Philly. R5 Productions promotes smaller bands and affordable shows at several local venues. There are also a number of movie theaters in the area for a movie night. Movie venues can be [found here](#).

## Museums

- [The Palestra](#): Philadelphia is known for its rich college basketball history, and the Palestra, located on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania, is a museum of the Philadelphia Big 5 University programs (La Salle, Penn, Saint Joseph's, Temple, and Villanova). The arena serves as the home court for the Penn Quakers basketball team and is the court for many basketball games between the city's colleges.
- [Rare Book Department of the Free Library of Philadelphia](#): Those with literary interests will enjoy the free tour of the Philadelphia Free Library's amazing rare book collection. Besides the Gutenberg Bible, highlights include medieval manuscripts, children's book illustrations, and the stuffed body of Charles Dickens's pet raven Grip, the raven who indirectly inspired Poe's "The Raven."
- [University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology](#): This museum houses an impressive collection of Egyptian and Greco-Roman artifacts.
- Other Museums include:
  - [Philadelphia Museum of Art](#)
  - [Academy of Natural Sciences](#)
  - [The Franklin Institute Science Museum](#)
  - [The Barnes Foundation](#)
  - [The Mutter Museum](#)
  - [Rosenbach Museum and Library](#)
  - [The African American Museum in Philadelphia](#)
  - [Philadelphia History Museum](#)
  - [National Museum of American Jewish History](#)
  - [Independence Seaport Museum](#)
  - [Please Touch Museum](#)

## Sports

- [Philadelphia Phillies](#): The city's hometown baseball team. Founded in 1883, they are the oldest one name, one city franchise in all of professional sports. Since 2004 the team has played at Citizens Bank Park, a new \$350 million baseball-only facility in South Philadelphia that is among the best in the big leagues. The park is easily accessible from the subway, and the food at the park was named as Best Ballpark Food in a survey of Food Network viewers in 2007.
- [Philadelphia Eagles](#): Philadelphia's NFL team has played at Lincoln Financial Field, next door to Citizens Bank Park, since 2003. Games routinely sell out.

- [Philadelphia 76ers](#): The city's NBA team plays at Wells Fargo Center.
- [Philadelphia Flyers](#): Hockey fans can also enjoy the city's NHL team, which shares Wells Fargo Center with the Sixers.
- [Philadelphia Union](#). The 16th team in Major League Soccer, the Union is one of the newest MLS franchises. Unlike Philly's other teams major league sports teams, The Union is not located in South Philly; home games are played at PPL Park, their soccer-specific stadium on the waterfront in the nearby suburb of Chester.
- **College sports** – The Philadelphia area is also a mecca for college sports, especially men's basketball. One term you will often see in the sports pages, talk shows, and general sports conversation is "Big 5". This refers to the heated men's basketball rivalry between five of the major universities in the area— Temple, Villanova, Saint Joseph's, Penn, and La Salle.



### Sports for the Participant

There are number of great parks in Philadelphia leaving no excuse to ignore the scenic outdoors of the city. The following are few of the great parks in Philadelphia.

- [Fairmount Park](#): Technically, Fairmount Park covers all of the city parks in Philadelphia such as Pennypack Park in the northeast and Wissahickon Valley Park in the northwest, but the name also refers more specifically to the large park on both sides of the Schuylkill River northwest of Center City. East Fairmount Park is home to the Smith Memorial Playground, Dell East Concerts, and a driving range. West Fairmount Park, much of which has been renamed The Centennial District, includes the Mann Music Center (where The Philadelphia Orchestra plays in summer), the Japanese Teahouse, and the Please Touch Museum. Wisshickon Valley features many hiking trails, the Valley Green Inn (a picturesque place to eat), and a walking/biking/horseback riding trail known as the "Forbidden Drive."
- [Clark Park](#): Clark Park is an outdoor music and arts festival area in West Philadelphia, and also boasts a large farmer's market on Saturdays.
- [LOVE Park](#): A square near City Hall, this park is known for its Robert Indiana "LOVE" sculpture and for attracting skateboarders from around the world (despite a ban on skating in the park). Since 2002, this ban has been rigorously enforced. Free wireless access is now available in the park.
- [Rittenhouse Square](#): One of William Penn's original "five squares" of public, open space in the city, Rittenhouse Square sits among classic Rittenhouse hotels and residences and attracts people from around the world. It is named after David Rittenhouse, a clockmaker and astronomer.

- [Smith Memorial Playground & Playhouse](#): Smith Memorial Playground & Playhouse opened its doors in East Fairmount Park in 1899. Smith's beautiful, 16,000 square foot Playhouse was designed solely as a play space for children by one of Philadelphia's most prominent late 19th century architects, James H. Windrim. The Playground is situated on its original historic landscape – 6 1/2 acres of open fields, wooded terrain, and sloped hills. Smith strives to be Philadelphia's foremost resource for play by providing opportunities for unstructured creative play for children 10 and younger.

## Events

- [The Philadelphia Marathon](#): This marathon race is held every 3rd Sunday in November. There are three races: the full marathon, half marathon and the "Rothman Institute 8k".
- [All-You-Can-Eat Ice Cream Festival](#): This event is held every year in the beginning of July down at Penns Landing.
- [AIDS Walk Philly](#) : This event occurs every October. It is an 8.2-mi (13 km) walk that begins and ends at Eakins Oval (in front of the stairs of the Philadelphia Art Museum). The first walk started in 1987 and raised \$33,000 that year. Since then, the event has been held annually.
- [The Mummers Parade](#): This parade is held each New Year's Day. The first official parade took place on January 1, 1901. Local clubs compete in one of four categories (Comics, Fancies, String Bands, and Fancy Brigades), and prepare elaborate costumes and moveable scenery, which take months to complete. The parade of over 10,000 marchers travels approximately 3 miles northward on Broad Street, beginning in South Philadelphia and concluding near City Hall in Center City.

### Expat Resource Guide

- [www.expatechange.com](http://www.expatechange.com)

### Google Translator

- [Translate](#) 90 languages to and from language of choice using iTunes.

### Volunteer Opportunities

- [Philadelphia Animal Welfare Society \(PAWS\)](#)
- [United Way](#)
- [Volunteer Match](#)

### Parent & Children Resources

- [Mom's Clubs](#) - social groups offering events and outings with mothers and their young children.

### Smart Phone Apps for Travel:

- [Uber](#) : Similar to a taxi service but all web based. Payment also handled online, do not pay or tip driver directly. Uber driver knows your approximate location based on your phone GPS.
- [Lyft](#) : Wherever you're headed, count on Lyft for rides in minutes. The Lyft app matches you with local drivers at the tap of a button. Just request and go.
- [Google Maps](#) : Map by direction
- [Apple Maps](#) : Map by direction
- [Map Quest](#) : Map by direction
- [Waze](#) : Community based traffic & navigation with alternate route suggestions
- [CityMaps2Go](#) : The #1 travel app lets you discover exciting new places. Beautiful photos and insider tips at the touch of a button. You will receive stories about places you like and can instantly save and find them on your maps and in your lists.

### Smart Phone Apps for Communication:

- [WhatsApp](#) : Free local & international Real Time messaging
- [Line](#) : Exchange free instant messages with friends whenever and wherever with one-on-one and group chats. LINE is available on all smartphone devices (iPhone, Android, Windows Phone, Blackberry, Nokia) and even on your PC.
- [Viber](#) : Free text, calling, photo messages and location-sharing with Viber users. No registration, alias or invitations required. Instantly integrates with your own contact list. Best-quality mobile calls using 3G or Wi-Fi.
- [Skype](#) : Stay in touch with your family and friends for free on Skype. Download Skype today to chat and call on desktop and mobile.

**Smart Phone Apps for Local Information/Reviews:**

- [Angie's List](#) : Referrals for doctor, dentist, child care, maid, mechanic, painter, plumber, etc.
- [Yelp!](#) : Find local businesses, restaurants, bars, clubs, events, etc. with map, lists, and reviews
- [Next Door](#) : Neighbors share community events, items for sale, recommendations for babysitters, doctors and handymen, crime reports, ideas about how to improve their neighborhood and more.
- [Meet Ups](#) : Meetups are neighbors getting together to learn something, do something or share something. Cultural groups advertise gatherings here as well.

**Smart Phone Apps for Weather:**

- [WTHR13](#) : Local weather and closings; includes radar and forecast
- [Weather Channel](#) : National and international time, temperature & weather
- [Tornado](#) : Set up tornado alerts & siren



## U.S. IDIOMS

Idioms are words, phrases, or expressions that are not taken literally- they have meaning beyond a literal translation of the words. Idioms are generally used in casual, familiar conversation but can also come up in certain business settings. Here are some examples of commonly used American English idioms

**better off** - in a more fortunate position

**Big deal!** - So what? That doesn't really matter.

**(to) blow things out of proportion** - to exaggerate; to make more of something than one should

**(to) call it a night** - to stop an activity for the rest of the night

**dime a dozen** - so plentiful as to be nothing special; common

**(to) do the trick** - to achieve the desired results

**(to) give someone the cold shoulder** - to ignore someone on purpose; to snub someone

**(to) get the ball rolling** - to get started

**(to) go back to the drawing board** - to start a task over because the last try failed; to start again from the beginning

**happy camper [slang]** - a happy person; a satisfied participant

**(to) have a heart of gold** - to be very kind and giving

**(to be) head over heels in love** - very much in love

**(to) hit the nail on the head** - to be right

**(to) learn the ropes** - to learn the basics

**(to) lose one's touch** - to no longer be able to do something well

**made of money** - very rich

**needless to say** - obviously

**piece of cake** - very easy

**(to) pitch in** - to help

**(to) pull an all-nighter** - to stay up all night to do work

**rule of thumb** - a useful principle

**(as) sharp as a tack** - very intelligent

**(to) sit tight** - to wait patiently

**(to) stab someone in the back** - to betray someone

**(to) tell someone off** - to scold; to tell someone in strong words what one really thinks

**When pigs fly! [slang]** - never

**(to) twist someone's arm** - to persuade someone; to convince someone

**(to be) up in the air** - not yet determined; uncertain

Many common American idioms come from sports, here are some examples:

**strike out-** to fail or to do poorly at something (*baseball*)

**(to) call the shots-** to make the decisions; to be in charge (*basketball*)

**ballpark-** a guess or an estimate (*baseball*)

**down and out-** lacking money or prospects; penniless or destitute (*boxing*)

**down to the wire-** to the very end or last minute (*horse racing*)

**drop the ball-** to make an error, to miss an opportunity (*football, baseball, rugby*)

**hands down-** with great ease; unconditionally; often (and originally) in the phrase “to win hands down” (*horse racing*)

**(to) have someone in your corner-** to have the support or help of someone (*boxing*)

**(to) hit it out of the park; home run-** to be wildly successful, to do a great job (*baseball*)



To learn even more idioms, visit the following links:

- [Everyday American English Idioms](#) - with example sentences.
- [Useful Idioms for Lower-Intermediate to Advanced Students \(Teacher's Resource\)](#)
- [Idiom Site A-Z](#)
- [Sports Idioms](#)
- [English Language Learning: American English Idioms](#)

## PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Holidays can be confusing as there are national (federal) holidays, bank holidays, state holidays. Verify those in your area with Human Resources at your place of business, especially before planning vacations or weekend get-aways!

[Federal Holidays](#)

[State Holidays](#)

The following are federal holidays in the United States and need to be treated as such by employers:

- New Year's Day January 1\*
- Martin Luther King Day Third Monday in January
- Memorial Day Last Monday in May
- Independence Day July 4\*
- Labor Day First Monday in September
- Columbus Day Second Monday in October
- Veterans' Day November 11\*
- Thanksgiving Day Fourth Thursday in November
- Christmas Day December 25\*

\*If a holiday falls on a Sunday, the day following is observed as the legal holiday.



*Philadelphia Skyline*