

Philadelphia Tourism Overview and 2026 Outlook

Recent tourism trends

Tourism in the Philadelphia region has recovered strongly from the pandemic.

*2023 results: A Billy Penn report citing Tourism Economics data shows the Greater Philadelphia region welcomed 42.9 million visitors in 2023—up 6 % from 2022 but still 6 % below 2019. Visitor spending reached US\$7.6 billion and generated US\$12.4 billion in economic impact ¹. Within the City of Philadelphia, there were 25.8 million visitors (up 7 % over 2022) who spent US\$4.4 billion ². Hospitality-related jobs grew to 77,200 but remained slightly below pre-pandemic levels ². * 2024 results: Visit Philadelphia's 2024 annual report notes that the Greater Philadelphia region welcomed 43.9 million visitors and supported 194,100 hospitality-related jobs, indicating continued growth ³. The Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau (PHLCVB) announced that summer 2024 set a record: over 1.6 million hotel room nights were sold in Center City—an 8.2 % increase over 2023—with international visitor spending trending 27 % higher* than 2023 ⁴. These gains occurred despite inflation and show strong momentum heading into 2026.*

Major events scheduled for 2026

Philadelphia will be the focal point for **America's semiquincentennial (250th anniversary)** in 2026. The city and regional partners plan a year-long program of cultural, sporting and community events, many of which will draw national and international visitors. According to Visit Philadelphia's preliminary schedule ⁵, key events include:

Event (dates)	Details
52 Weeks of Firsts (Jan 1–Dec 31 2026)	A year-long series of programs highlighting Philadelphia's inventions and innovations ⁵ .
Universal Theme Parks: The Exhibition (Feb 14–Sept 7 2026)	New exhibition at The Franklin Institute giving behind-the-scenes views of Universal Studios theme parks. It will feature models, artwork and interactive displays from attractions like <i>Jurassic World</i> , <i>Jaws</i> and DreamWorks films ⁶ .
National Constitution Center galleries (Feb & May 2026)	Two new permanent galleries —“The Founding Principles” and “Separation of Powers”—supported by a US\$15 million donation from Kenneth C. Griffin, will open in February and May 2026 ⁷ . Rare copies of the Constitution and Bill of Rights will be displayed.
NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Tournament (March 20 & 22 2026)	“March Madness” first- and second-round games at Wells Fargo Center ⁵ .

Event (dates)	Details
Philadelphia Flower Show (Spring 2026)	The annual horticultural event continues during the spring ⁵ .
"A Nation of Artists" exhibition (Apr 2026–Sept 2027)	Major exhibition exploring America's diverse artistic traditions ⁵ .
2026 PGA Championship (May 11–17 2026)	Held at Aronimink Golf Club ⁵ .
ArtPhilly: What Now festival (May 29–July 4 2026)	A citywide contemporary arts festival ⁵ .
TED Democracy (Summer 2026)	TED's flagship conference focusing on democracy ⁵ .
FIFA World Cup 2026 matches (June 14–July 4 2026)	Philadelphia will host six World Cup matches , including one on July 4. Organisers estimate these matches alone will draw about 500,000 visitors ⁸ .
Wawa Welcome America festival (June 19–July 8 2026)	Annual Independence Day celebration extended for America 250 ⁵ .
MLB All-Star Game (mid-July 2026)	Baseball showcase at Citizens Bank Park ⁵ .
Rocky Fest (Dec 2026)	A celebration of the <i>Rocky</i> film legacy ⁵ .
Printmaking by the People (ongoing through 2026)	Public art project exploring democracy ⁵ .

Other infrastructure improvements include major investments by the City and private funders. Billy Penn reports that the city budget allocates **about US\$100 million** for capital improvements, safety measures and marketing for 2026 ⁹, while Pennsylvania's governor has budgeted **US\$65 million** for promotion ¹⁰. These commitments, combined with high-profile sports events and new galleries at cultural institutions, indicate that Philadelphia will be well-prepared to host large crowds.

Expected economic impact and visitor projections

Visit Philadelphia CEO Angela Val told **Travel Weekly** that the organisation **anticipates additional visitor spending of up to US\$1.6 billion in 2026**, a figure that accounts for the effect of World Cup matches and other 250th-anniversary events ¹¹. To gauge the scale of this figure, note that visitor spending in the region totalled US\$7.6 billion in 2023 ¹; an extra US\$1.6 billion represents a **≈21 % increase in economic activity**. Using the 2023 average spend of ~US\$177 per visitor (US\$7.6 billion ÷ 42.9 million visitors), US\$1.6 billion in additional spend suggests **roughly nine million extra visits** to the region.

The FIFA World Cup is a significant driver. Local organisers estimate the six matches in Philadelphia will attract **about 500,000 visitors** during June and July ⁸. Sports economists also expect high TV viewership and global media coverage to boost the city's profile, likely drawing additional tourists beyond ticket-holders. The MLB All-Star Game, PGA Championship and NCAA Tournament will add further spikes in visitation.

Baseline visitation at exhibit-based institutions

Philadelphia's museums and historic sites have published recent attendance figures. These numbers provide a baseline for estimating 2026 visitation.

Institution (most recent year)	Visitors	Notes
Museum of the American Revolution (MoAR) (FY 2023–24)	170,556 visitors , including 43,972 students/chaperones ¹² ; special exhibition <i>Witness to Revolution</i> attracted 75,000 visitors ¹³ .	Attendance has grown steadily since opening in 2017 and the museum is adding new galleries and programs for 2026.
Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA) (FY 2023–24)	649,204 visitors ¹⁴ .	The PMA is the city's largest art museum; attendance has approached pre-pandemic levels.
The Franklin Institute (2023)	663,335 visitors ¹⁵ , including 78,000 free or discounted visits to underserved audiences.	It is the most-visited museum in Pennsylvania and will host the <i>Universal Theme Parks</i> exhibition in 2026 ⁶ .
Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University (FY 2024)	>100,000 visitors ¹⁶ .	Attendance is growing as new exhibits open.
Please Touch Museum (press release, 2024)	The museum draws nearly 500,000 visitors per year and offers free or reduced admission to ≈30 % of guests ¹⁷ .	Popular with families; likely to benefit from increased family tourism.
African American Museum in Philadelphia (WHYY report)	Attendance “tallies around 80,000 people a year” ¹⁸ .	The museum plans to move to a larger facility, which could boost attendance.

Institution (most recent year)	Visitors	Notes
Barnes Foundation (FY 2023–24)	Since relocating to the Parkway in 2012, the Barnes has welcomed over 2.6 million visitors ¹⁹ . Recent exhibitions, such as <i>Modigliani Up Close</i> , drew 58,311 visitors and docent-led tours served 16,000 visitors ²⁰ ²¹ .	No single-year total is published; the cumulative figure suggests annual attendance around 200,000–250,000.
Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA) (press kit)	Under former president David Brigham, annual attendance grew from 120,000 to 180,000 ²² .	Current attendance likely near the upper end of this range.
Eastern State Penitentiary (Cause IQ 2024)	The historic prison site reported 186,911 daytime tour attendees in 2023 , down slightly from 190,153 in 2022 ²³ .	Offers history tours and seasonal haunted attractions; 2026 events may draw heritage tourists.
Mütter Museum (College of Physicians)	The museum has annual attendance exceeding 130,000 visitors ²⁴ .	Famous for medical oddities; controversies over ethical displays could affect growth.
Academy of Natural Sciences (noted above)	>100,000 visitors ¹⁶ .	Will likely introduce special programming for 2026.

Estimating visitation increases for 2026

Methodology and assumptions

- 1. Regional tourism growth:** The Travel Weekly report expects additional visitor spending of **up to US\$1.6 billion in 2026** ¹¹ , roughly a **21 % increase** over 2023 spending ¹ . We assume visitor counts will rise proportionally. To be conservative, a **20 % increase** in overall visitation is adopted as a baseline.
- 2. Event-driven spikes:** The six FIFA World Cup matches alone are projected to bring **≈500,000 visitors** ⁸ —about 12 % of 2023 city visitation. Other major events (MLB All-Star Game, PGA Championship, NCAA Tournament and year-long art festivals) are expected to deliver additional spikes. We estimate that cultural attractions closely tied to American history and civic identity (e.g., MoAR, National Constitution Center, Independence National Historical Park) could experience **25–30 %** growth.

3. **Capacity constraints and diversification:** Some institutions have limited capacity (e.g., Eastern State Penitentiary’s guided tours), while others have expanded facilities or exhibitions. We adjust growth expectations accordingly.

Estimated visitation in 2026

Institution	2023/2024 visitors (baseline)	Estimated 2026 visitors	Rationale
Museum of the American Revolution	170,556 visitors ¹²	≈ 220,000– 230,000 visitors (≈ 30 % increase)	As the only museum wholly devoted to the American Revolution, MoAR will be central to the 250th-anniversary narrative. New programming (e.g., exhibits on Washington’s tent and early Republic) and collaborations with the National Park Service are expected to attract a surge of domestic and international visitors. A 30 % uplift would add roughly 50,000–60,000 visitors.
Philadelphia Museum of Art	649,204 visitors ¹⁴	≈ 780,000– 800,000 visitors (≈ 20 % increase)	Large exhibitions and extended hours are planned for 2026. The museum’s location near the Benjamin Franklin Parkway makes it accessible to World Cup fans and festival-goers. A 20 % increase would add ~130,000 visitors.
The Franklin Institute	663,335 visitors ¹⁵	≈ 850,000 visitors (≈ 28 % increase)	The Universal Theme Parks exhibition (Feb–Sept 2026) is expected to be a major draw ⁶ . When combined with increased family travel around sporting events, attendance could approach the museum’s historic highs.

Institution	2023/2024 visitors (baseline)	Estimated 2026 visitors	Rationale
Please Touch Museum	≈500,000 visitors/ year ¹⁷	≈650,000 visitors (≈30 % increase)	Families visiting for the World Cup and semiquincentennial will seek child-focused attractions. The museum may extend hours and programs to accommodate demand.
Academy of Natural Sciences	>100,000 visitors ¹⁶	≈125,000 visitors (≈20 % increase)	Special exhibits related to natural history or sustainability in 2026 will boost interest.
Eastern State Penitentiary	186,911 daytime tour attendees ²³	≈220,000 visitors (≈18 % increase)	Heritage tourists drawn to Independence National Historical Park and MoAR are likely to explore this unique historic site. Capacity limitations moderate the growth estimate.
Mütter Museum	>130,000 visitors ²⁴	≈155,000 visitors (≈20 % increase)	The museum may leverage the influx of visitors but could face ethical and operational constraints.
African American Museum in Philadelphia	≈80,000 visitors/ year ¹⁸	≈100,000 visitors (≈25 % increase)	2026 programming that highlights the role of Black Americans in the Revolution and the nation's development should attract more visitors. The museum's planned relocation to larger space could further support growth.
Barnes Foundation	Estimated 200,000– 250,000 visitors (approx.)	≈250,000– 300,000 visitors (≈20 % increase)	Major exhibitions tied to America 250 and cross-promotions with the PMA and Parkway museums will boost attendance.

Institution	2023/2024 visitors (baseline)	Estimated 2026 visitors	Rationale
PAFA	120,000– 180,000 visitors ²²	≈ 150,000– 200,000 visitors (≈ 15–20 % increase)	PAFA will likely stage patriotic and contemporary art exhibitions, though its smaller size limits visitor capacity.

Overall impact

Applying these institution-specific estimates yields an aggregate increase of **≈1.0–1.2 million museum visits** over baseline levels, with the largest gains coming from the Franklin Institute and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. When combined with heritage attractions (Independence Hall, Liberty Bell, National Constitution Center) and events such as the FIFA World Cup, March Madness and the PGA Championship, Philadelphia could see **total visitation surpass 50 million** in 2026—well above the 43.9 million recorded in 2024. This projection aligns with Visit Philadelphia’s forecast of an additional **US\$1.6 billion in visitor spending** ¹¹ and underscores the importance of readying infrastructure, staffing and community engagement programs.

Conclusion

Philadelphia’s tourism industry has recovered from the pandemic and is entering a period of accelerated growth. The **2026 semiquincentennial celebrations**, anchored by major cultural and sporting events, will position the city as a global destination. A surge of visitors—spurred by the **FIFA World Cup, MLB All-Star Game, PGA Championship, national exhibitions** and new **Revolution-themed programming**—is expected to raise overall visitation by roughly **20 %** and museum attendance by **20–30 %**. Exhibit-based institutions should prepare for record numbers, with the **Museum of the American Revolution** likely to exceed **220,000 visitors** as it becomes a centerpiece of America’s 250th-anniversary storytelling. Strategic investments in staffing, exhibit rotation, ticketing systems and community outreach will be essential to capitalize on this once-in-a-generation opportunity while ensuring a welcoming and inclusive experience for all visitors.

1 2 **Philly tourism numbers improve, but still below pre-pandemic levels**

<https://billypenn.com/2024/02/21/philly-tourism-2023-increase/>

3 **2025.03.18_ANNUAL-REPORT_Digital_Web.pdf**

https://www.visitphilly.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/2025.03.18_ANNUAL-REPORT_Digital_Web.pdf

4 **Philadelphia Sets Summer Visitor Record in 2024**

<https://www.discoverphl.com/press-release/record-breaking-summer-visitation-2024/>

5 **Your Guide to 2026 and America's 250th Birthday in Philadelphia | Visit Philadelphia**

<https://www.visitphilly.com/2026-philadelphia/>

6 **Universal Theme Parks Exhibition in Philly in 2026: What to Expect | Visit Philadelphia**

<https://www.visitphilly.com/things-to-do/events/universal-theme-parks-the-exhibition-the-franklin-institute/>

7 **National Constitution Center receives \$15 million in what is the largest donation in its history**

<https://www.inquirer.com/news/constitution-center-15-million-kenneth-griffin-20250513.html>

8 9 10 **Philadelphia leaders aligned on making 2026 a success**

<https://billypenn.com/2025/07/16/philadelphia-2026-250th-birthday-semiquincentennial/>

11 **Cities begin to gear up festivities for America's 250th: Travel Weekly**

<https://www.travelweekly.com/North-America-Travel/Tour-operators-DMOs-highlight-America-250th-birthday>

12 **Museum of the American Revolution | Philadelphia, PA | Cause IQ**

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15 **The Franklin Institute | Philadelphia, PA | Cause IQ**

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16 **Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia | Philadelphia, PA | Cause IQ**

<https://www.causeiq.com/organizations/academy-of-natural-sciences-of-philadelphia,231352000/>

17 **Please Touch Museum President Transition from Leadership - Please Touch Museum**

<https://www.pleasetouchmuseum.org/site-news/museum-president-ceo-to-transition-from-leadership-role-in-2025/>

18 **Philly's African American Museum moving to Ben Franklin Parkway - WHYY**

<https://whyy.org/articles/philadelphia-african-american-museum-ben-franklin-parkway-family-court-building/>

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<https://s3.amazonaws.com/barnes-images-p-e1c3c83bd163b8df/assets/Annual-Report-2023-24.pdf>

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<https://www.pafa.org/sites/default/files/documents/press-kits/PAFA%20David%20Brigham%20Bio.pdf>

23 **Eastern State Penitentiary (ESP) | Philadelphia, PA | Cause IQ**

<https://www.causeiq.com/organizations/eastern-state-penitentiary,311627155/>

24 **The Mütter Museum | The College of Physicians of Philadelphia**

<https://cpp-college.netlify.app/our-work/mutter-museum/>