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JOURNAL CONCIERGE

An Insider's Travel Guide to Philadelphia—Courtesy of an 'It's Always Sunny' Star and Other Notable Locals

This historic heavyweight of a city is a booming cultural and culinary destination, too. To help you devise your own first-class field trip, we enlisted expert guidance.

By Janet O'Grady / Photographs by Jillian Guyette for The Wall Street Journal

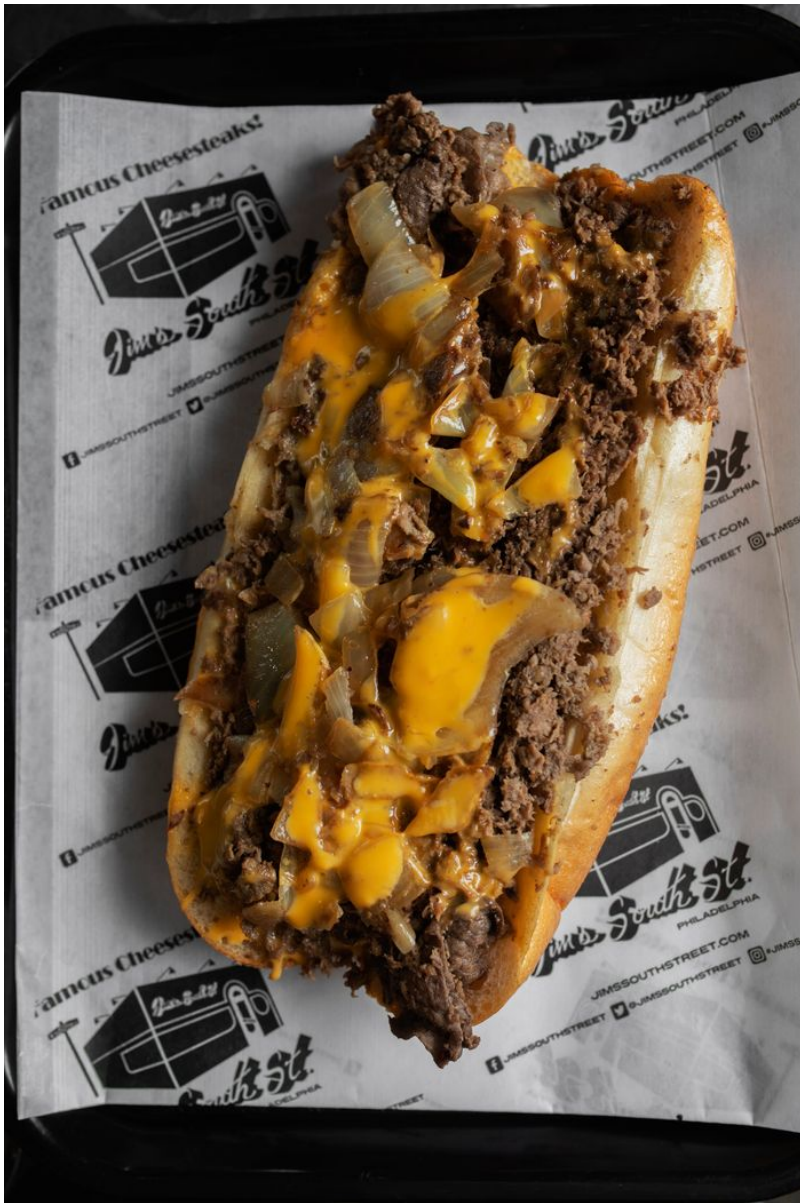
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THE OLD JOKE about his hometown—I came for the history but stayed for the cheesesteaks—amuses Rob McElhenney, co-creator and star of the TV sitcom “It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia.” As he puts it, “It always amazed me that the birthplace of America could be reduced to a sandwich.”

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

What are your favorite spots to visit in Philadelphia? Join the conversation below.

While many Philadelphians still pledge their allegiance to a particular cheesesteak purveyor (for Mr. McElhenney, it’s Jim’s South St.), the city’s food scene is infinitely richer these days, drawing inspiration from well beyond the Northeast. For good food as well as other diversions, visit neighborhoods like Fishtown and Northern Liberties where a young, hipster vibe is emerging. If it’s the Revolutionary era you’ve come for, head straight to the Old City, lined with landmarks including Independence Hall (timed-entry tickets required) and the Liberty Bell. Below, more of the city’s greatest hits and unsung standouts, according to four local authorities.



A cheesesteak with onions and Cheese Whiz from Jim's South St.



Rob McElhenney

The Actor: Rob McElhenney

Co-creator and star of 'It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia' and 'Mythic Quest'

Schuylkill River Trail: As a child, my world consisted of walking one square mile, past the row houses of my relatives on Moyamensing Ave., through South Philly to the Mummers Museum. Now my favorite walk is along the Schuylkill River Trail, winding from Boathouse Row to the Falls Bridge.

Philadelphia Museum of Art: It has a special place in my heart, especially its armor section, where my wife and I were astonished to see a full suit of armor made for a child.
2600 Benjamin Franklin Parkway

Parc: I've long loved the classic French dishes and everything about this brasserie on Rittenhouse Square. *227 S 18th St.*

The Mann Center for the Performing Arts: I spent so much time as a child there, listening to music in the open air. *5201 Parkside Ave.*



After walking through Independence Hall, stop by Franklin Fountain's turn-of-the-century building in the heart of the Old City neighborhood. Pictured here, store manager Nigel Johnson serves up a scoop of cotton-candy ice cream.



Adam Grant

The Academic: Adam Grant

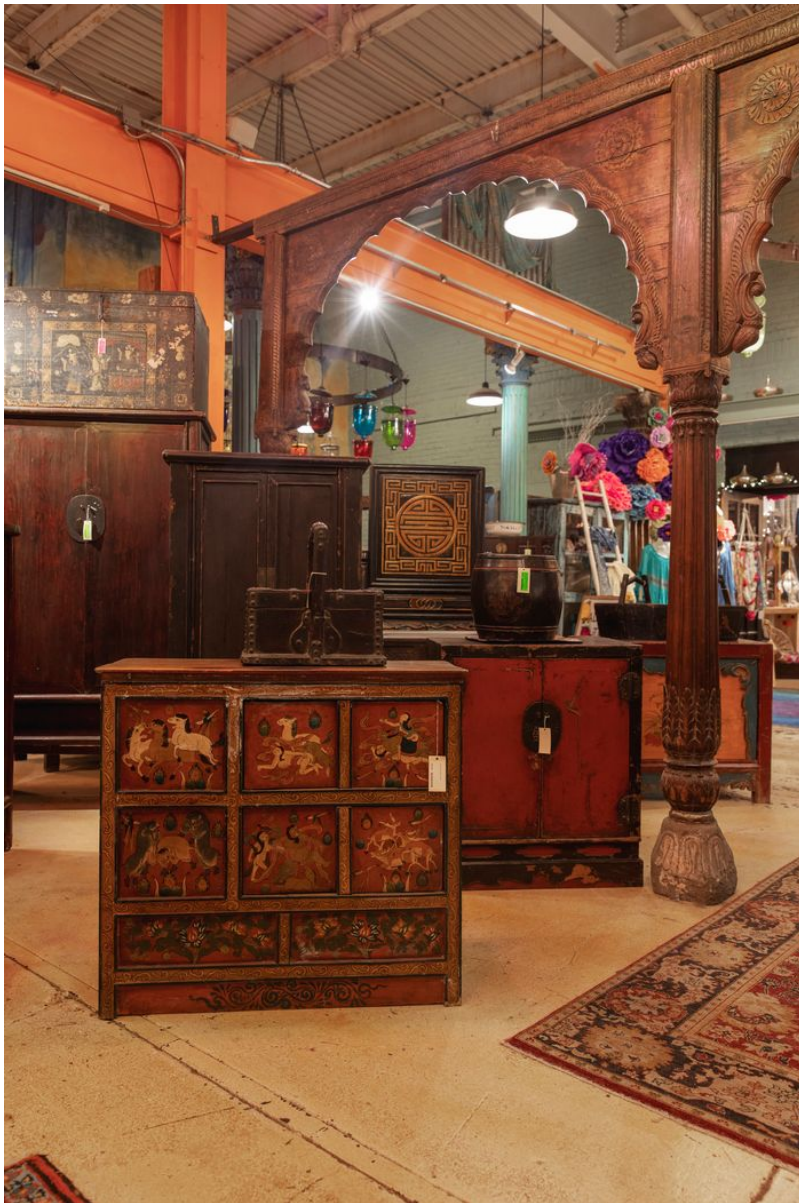
Professor at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania; author of 'Think Again'

Franklin Fountain: The cotton-candy ice cream is delicious, and it feels like taking a time machine back to the 1950s. *116 Market St.*

The Met Philadelphia: It's a historic opera house and concert hall. I go for the stand-up comedy. In the last few years, they've hosted comedians ranging from Ali Wong to Jim Gaffigan. *858 N. Broad St.*

Longwood Gardens: For a favorite walk, it's hard to argue with Longwood Gardens in the winter. The holiday lights are spectacular. *1001 Longwood Rd., Kennett Square*

Joseph Fox Bookshop: They've kept great literature and big ideas alive for 70 years. They're an independent, family-owned bookstore with a range of fiction and nonfiction titles, as well as a top-notch collection of children's books. *1724 Sansom St.*



Material Culture, an internationally curated bazaar in the East Falls neighborhood.



Quiara Alegría Hudes

The Playwright: Quiara Alegría Hudes

Pulitzer Prize winner; co-wrote the musical 'In the Heights'

David's Mai Lai Wah: At this Chinatown restaurant, you can actually taste the egg in their dumpling wrappers. The ginger dipping sauce is straight-up medicinal. *1001 Race St.*

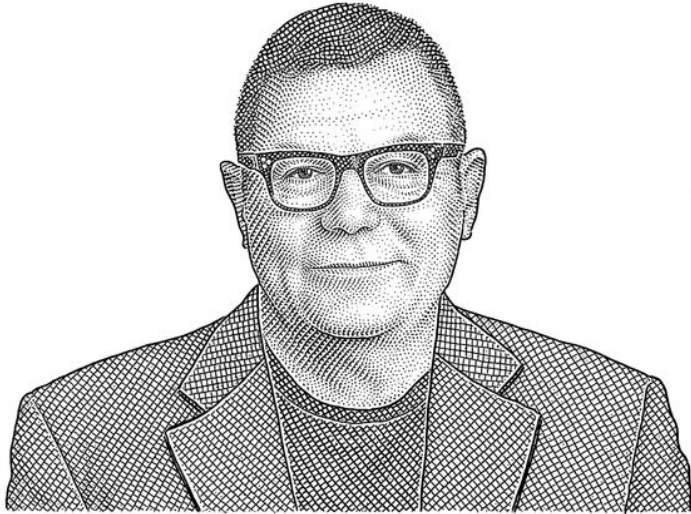
Garland of Letters Bookstore: I love the entrancing multi-incense aroma that gives you a lungful of tranquility the moment you step inside. *527 South St.*

Taller Puertorriqueño: This nonprofit sells art and one-of-a-kind crafts, including gorgeous, playful vejigante masks and books by Latinx authors from Philly and around the globe. *2600 N 5th St.*

Material Culture: I go here for antiques and treasures from around the world that walk to the beat of their own drum. I bought an old wooden altar there that became a bench for our dining table. It was a bargain, too. *4700 Wissahickon Ave.*



The Italian Market, a fixture in Philadelphia for more than a century, is one of the largest open-air markets in the U.S., and home to some 200 merchants. The market is also home to a number of restaurants, including a Villa di Roma, an old favorite of restaurateur Stephen Starr's.



Stephen Starr

The Restaurateur: Stephen Starr

Owner of 34 restaurants, including the new LMNO in Fishtown

The Franklin Institute: An interactive science museum, it's famous for its walk-through model of a heart. Over the years I have enjoyed taking all my children there. *222 N 20th St.*

Valley Green: With its many walking trails, Valley Green [also known as Wissahickon Valley Park] is one of my favorite places to escape for a slice of serenity in the city.

Villa di Roma: The Italian Market is one of the oldest, largest open-air markets in America. It also has restaurants including Villa di Roma, which serves the dish that most says "Philadelphia" to me: Chicken Neapolitan. *934 S. 9th St.*

Audi Festival: I co-chair this event held every October. It supports the performing arts collective FringeArts, bringing together the best of art and food in our city. *140 N. Columbus Blvd.*



At the Museum of the American Revolution, across from Hamilton's First Bank of the U.S., you can brush up on your early American history and delve into often overlooked perspectives.

Many Philadelphians pledge allegiance to their favorite cheesesteak purveyor. Rob McElhenney, creator of the TV series 'It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia,' is partial to Jim's South St in Society Hill, which opened in 1976. 'It's my go-to,' said Mr. McElhenney.

Towering above the Philadelphia skyline, the JG Skyhigh cocktail bar on the 60th floor of the Four Seasons hotel affords a sweeping view of the city skyline, and serves some of the finest cocktails in town.

An hour drive from the city, Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, Penn., hosts a pumpkin playground until Halloween and chrysanthemum festival through Nov. 14.

Material Culture, an antique shop, home furnishing store and auction house, is a favorite hunting ground for writer Quiara Alegría Hudes.

The Old City location of Lokal, a boutique hotel, houses six guest rooms in a stylishly converted historic building.

The Schuylkill River Trail stretches 30 miles, snaking across central Philadelphia to Parker Ford, Penn.

Plus, Don't Miss

Four Seasons Hotel Philadelphia at Comcast Center: The pool on the 57th floor is reserved for guests, but even if you aren't spending the night you can tuck into the bar on the 60th floor. *From \$725 a night*

Lokal: The Old City location of this small hotel group offers stylish lofted rooms and midcentury furniture. *From \$270 a night*

Zahav: Chef Michael Solomonov, winner of several James Beard awards, picked up another one in 2019 for this Israeli-inspired restaurant in Old City. *237 St. James Place*

Perla: A few nights a week this modern Filipino bistro in East Passyunk serves a traditional kamayan meal, a lively affair where you feast with your hands. *1535 S 11th St.*

The Museum of the American Revolution: Brush up on your early American history by taking your time poking around the 110,000-square-foot space. Across the street is Alexander Hamilton's First Bank of the U.S. *101 S. 3rd St.*

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Corrections & Amplifications

Material Culture is located at 4700 Wissahickon Ave. An earlier version of this article incorrectly said that the store was located at 700 Wissahickon Ave. (Corrected on Oct. 25)

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