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BY KIM-MARIE GALLOWAY

Hi, Philly! Nice to Meet You

THE CITY OF BROTHERLY LOVE IS MORE THAN JUST A CRACKED BELL

Philadelphia is a lot like an overlooked middle child. Not as cosmopolitan as New York and not the center of government like D.C., the birthplace of democracy is more closely associated with cheesesteaks and Rocky Balboa. But Philadelphians know that it's more than that. And with a new five-star Four Seasons and the *Michelin Guide* sniffing around, so will everyone else.

LOTS TO THINK ABOUT

Philadelphia has the most extensive collection of sculpture work outside of Paris. Around the corner from the Rocky statue (where the huddled masses queue for snapshots) sits the stately **Rodin Museum and Gardens**. The first bronze cast of **Auguste Rodin's The Gates of Hell** stands at the entrance. Admission is only \$12, but you could see this and a cast of *The Thinker* without even walking through the doors. Philly's *Thinker* is a cast of the 1902–1904 version. It was installed for the opening of the Rodin Museum in 1929 in front of a façade replicating his tomb at the Musée Rodin in Paris. Interesting fact: When his wife died, Rodin put a copy of *The Thinker* on her grave.



above: No trip to Philly is complete without a visit to the Rodin Museum and Gardens.

below and bottom right: The Barnes offers a unique way to view masterpieces.



above: The Common Threads mural by Meg Saligman features contemporary people imitating postures of historical figurines.

ALSO KNOWN AS

Philadelphia has a lot of nicknames: City of Brotherly Love, The Birthplace of America and now the **City of Murals**. There are more than 4,000 murals spread across the city. It's the largest public art program of its kind.

AT THE ART OF IT ALL

The Barnes Foundation is a boring name for one of the most exciting museums in the city, perhaps in the country. The Barnes, as it's known, **has the world's largest collections of paintings by Renoir (179) and Cézanne (69)**, as well as **significant works by Matisse, Picasso, Modigliani, Van Gogh**, and other renowned artists. Unlike most museums, no placards explain the art or identify the artist. The art is hung precisely as it was in Dr. Barnes' home before the city moved the collection to its current location ten years ago. Get a guide who will teach you the Barnes method of looking at art in a unique and approachable way. No need to be an art history major to enjoy this stunning collection. Entrance is \$25 for adults.



WHERE TO STAY— THERE'S ONE CHOICE

The hotel scene in Philly has been decidedly average until recently. The Ritz is in a lovely building, but it's tired. Kimpton markets itself as luxury. It's not. And although AKA University City Hotel is a surprise sleeper, offering apartment-sized guest rooms in the heart of town, until the new **Four Seasons** opened, nothing was true luxury.

The hotel didn't just blow away the competition, it decimated it. The doors opened in August of 2019, but thanks to Covid we still consider it new. The hotel occupies the top dozen floors of what is now the tallest building in the city. From the ground floor, a glass elevator ascends more than one floor per second to deliver you to the sixtieth-floor lobby. There's nothing to obstruct your view except the occasional cloud. It's the only *Forbes Travel Guide* five-star hotel and spa in Philadelphia and the flagship property for all Four Seasons urban hotels in the U.S. That's right, it's so good it beat other Four Seasons.

The **JG SkyHigh bar and restaurant** are open to the public. The bar offers views you'd normally have to board a helicopter to take in. Descend



the stairs between the flanking waterfall walls to the Jean-Georges restaurant, which is currently only serving a prix-fixe dinner three nights a week. Though *Michelin* has historically overlooked Philly, we hear from a good source they are sniffing around the restaurant perched on the fifty-ninth floor.

The spa on the fifty-seventh floor offers seven treatment rooms (each with their own crystals) and a spa menu with crystal-infused massages and amazing facials. If you feel calm just exiting the elevator, chalk it up to the 700 pounds of crystals embedded in the walls. Not sure if it was the QMS products, the crystals or aesthetician Jenny, but I looked fifteen years old when I left.

The real showstopper is the fever dream of a pool attached to the spa. The pool's infinity edge spills seamlessly into the atmosphere and is surrounded



by nothing but glass and sky. You don't need to be a spa guest, but you do need to be a hotel guest to take a float. Hot tip: Order a boxed lunch delivered to your chaise lounge and use the hotel's lightning-fast Wi-Fi to "work."

No guest room is lower than the forty-eighth floor, which is just shy of a mile in the air. A select number of rooms offer deep-soaking tubs, complete with neck rests. If unwinding in the tub and taking in the view through the floor-to-ceiling windows is on your wish list (which we think it should be), be sure to request one of these coveted accommodations.

above left: The Four Seasons' lobby on the sixtieth floor features floral designs by in-house celebrity florist Jeff Leatham. **above right:** Few spas boast these views. **bottom left:** JG SkyHigh restaurant



BASIC PHILLY



1. Rocky Statue
2. Reading Terminal Market
3. Pat's Cheesesteak (controversial, we know)
4. Standing in line to get into Liberty Bell Center

UPGRADED PHILLY



1. The Thinker
2. 9th Street Italian Mar
3. Zahav's Lamb Shoulder
4. Seeing the Liberty Bell through a window