

the art of tourism

By Alan Greenberger and Meryl Levitz

Photo by B. Krist for GPTMC



The tree-lined path along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway stretches past the thoroughfare's newest neighbor, the Barnes Foundation, which opened in 2012. Blending art, nature, education and aesthetics, the 4.5-acre Barnes campus is a fitting addition to the culturally rich Parkway

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few American cities boast an arts and culture scene that compares to Philadelphia's vast and vibrant offerings. In 2012, the Barnes Foundation's Philadelphia campus – home to one of the world's greatest collections of Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, and early Modern paintings – debuted on the culturally rich Benjamin Franklin Parkway, and with it came a bundle of accolades from major national publications. *Travel + Leisure* called the Barnes' arrival "a moment of splendid cultural renaissance" for the city and remarked that "the Barnes ... is helping visitors see Philly's impressive art scene in a new light." The Travel Channel's *Traveling Type* blog named Philadel-

phia the "Next Great Art Destination," while *Lonely Planet* ranked the city fourth on its list of "Top 10 U.S. Destinations for 2013" based on the strong arts scene here.

With all of these rave reviews, along with consistent image building over the past two decades, come visitors – about 38 million per year – many of whom are here to explore the cultural assets that give Philadelphia a competitive advantage over many others. While visitors are busy perusing the Barnes Foundation, attending a Philadelphia Orchestra performance or exploring art galleries during one of the city's monthly "First Friday" exhibit opening night events, they're also generating revenue for our businesses (\$26 million per day in 2011), creating jobs for our residents (86,000 in 2011), and reducing budget deficits (\$600 million in state and municipal tax revenue in 2011).

Culture is a key tourism draw for Philadelphia and a major driver of tourism revenue. According to industry research experts Longwoods International, overnight visitors to Philadelphia who participate in arts and culture events during their stay spend an average of \$624 – 54 percent more than the average visitor. They also stay longer (three nights on average compared to 2.5) and are more likely to stay in a hotel (61 percent compared to 52 percent overall) than those who do not participate in an arts and culture event. So what has Philadelphia done to attract these visitors?

LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR TOURISM TO THRIVE

In the 1980s and early 90s, potential travelers thought of Philadelphia – if they thought of it at all – as a day-trip destination. Once they crossed the Liberty Bell, the Rocky steps, and a cheesesteak off their lists, they crossed off Philadelphia too, embracing a been-there-done-that mentality.

HOW ARTS & CULTURE FUELS THE TOURISM ECONOMY

Philadelphia has established strategic partnerships and made investments in the past two decades that have substantially increased tourism to the city and augmented its cultural amenities. These include multi-million dollar projects that created and expanded its downtown Convention Center, investments along cultural corridors, hotels, and in marketing the region. These investments have proven to be worthwhile as cultural sector jobs have increased in the region despite the national recession. Arts and Culture has demonstrated its importance within Philadelphia's economy as it supports one in 15 jobs, supports local businesses, catalyzes neighborhood revitalization, and supplements the city's revenue stream. Through these investments, Philadelphia has become a top national and international visitor destination.



Pennsylvania Convention Center and Philadelphia City Hall.

To become a destination that travelers would move to the top of their must-visit and must-revisit lists, Philadelphia needed more than history. It needed buzzed-about museums, performing arts aplenty, revitalized restaurants, noteworthy nightlife, national brand stores, and independent boutiques. It needed big-name hotels for visitors to stay in and meeting space to accommodate large groups. And it needed a new commitment to marketing the city and all its great assets.

A Downtown Convention Center

The growth of the city's tourism industry into the lively and robust one that it is today began in 1993 with the opening of the 624,000-square-foot Pennsylvania Convention Center, adjacent to the historic Reading Terminal Market, a bustling and expansive public market in the former Reading Railroad headhouse. Previously, Philadelphia's largest meeting space had been the Civic Center, a classic building from 1931 located west of the downtown. The new facility immediately integrated the group travel market into the heart of Philadelphia's tourism and business districts. And its size allowed Philadelphia to compete for business on a national scale, drawing big-ticket conventions and events.

In 1993, downtown Philadelphia featured just 5,600 hotel rooms – only 65 percent of which were occupied that year. A confluence of events led to rapid construction in the hotel market – the opening of the Convention Center, the increased appeal of Philadelphia as a leisure destination and the Republican National Convention, which the city hosted in 2000. Major chains such as Marriott, Hilton, and Starwood planted several flags in the Philadelphia market, and by the end of 2011, those brands accounted for 31 hotels, representing 57 percent of the city's room supply. In recent years, boutique brands such as Kimpton have joined them, opening hotels in historic downtown buildings and a uniquely Philadelphia feel.

By the end of 2012, there were more than 11,000 hotel rooms available in the downtown area and occupancy had grown to 74 percent. This means more than twice as many hotel guests stay downtown each night compared to two decades ago, helping to drive revenue

for retailers, restaurants, attractions and, of course, arts and cultural institutions.

In 2011, the Convention Center took another bold step forward, expanding to nearly twice its original size, and in 2012, the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau (PHLCVB) booked 225 meetings and conventions in the space, securing more than 565,000 total hotel room nights and an estimated economic impact of more than \$813 million. Not only do these visitors pump dollars into the city and state economy, but we have anecdotal proof that these same visitors fall in love with Philadelphia and return with family or friends to see and do more.

ARTS & CULTURE ENHANCEMENTS

Over the past two decades, significant investments have also been made to enhance key cultural corridors in Philadelphia, and neighborhood redevelopment has helped spawn creative hubs throughout the city. As Philadelphia continues to move away from a manufacturing-based economy, hospitality and creative sectors jobs have proven to be key drivers of growth.

The Avenue of the Arts Arrives

One of the first upgrades to the city's downtown came in 1993 with the creation of the Avenue of the Arts, Inc. to promote South Broad Street as the city's performing arts hub for theater, music, dance, and higher arts education. Over the years, the organization has welcomed new and renewed venues along the mile-long section of South Broad Street that runs between City Hall and Washington Avenue: the Clef Club of the Performing Arts (1995), The Wilma Theater (1996), Arts Bank (1996), Prince Music Theater (1999), Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts (2001), and the Suzanne Roberts Theatre (2007). A host of restaurants, bars, and hotels also fill the Avenue of the Arts and its environs. And in recent years, the activity along the Avenue has filtered onto North Broad Street, primed to be one of the city's next must-visit neighborhoods.



Photo by G. Widman for GPTMC

Modeled after Milan's La Scala opera house, Philadelphia's 1865 Academy of Music is a performing and architectural landmark on the Avenue of the Arts (Broad Street) and is home to the Opera Company of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania Ballet.

An Historic Transformation

Philadelphia's Independence Mall has long been the center of the city's prized historic attractions, and this area began its modern transformation in 2001, when the Independence Visitor Center opened at 6th and Market Streets, locating the city's visitor services for the first time in the heart of its Independence National Historical Park. The opening of the Visitor Center served as the starting point for major enhancements throughout the neighborhood that took place over more than a decade. The \$400-million-plus transformation project saw the monumental move of the Liberty Bell in 2003 to a brand new interpretive center next door, along with several new major attractions and programs on Independence Mall: the National Constitution Center (2003), Once Upon A Nation's interpretive programming (2005), Franklin Square (2006), the National Museum of American Jewish History (2010), The President's House: Freedom and Slavery in the Making of a New Nation (2010), the Philadelphia History Museum at the Atwater Kent (2012), and Benjamin Franklin Life and Legacy Museum (2013).

After a decade of transformation, the area and its first-rate facilities are better prepared to welcome and orient visitors. The new offerings also tell a much broader story of our nation's history, better incorporating different cultures and the evolving American story through time. And visitors have taken note: Independence National Historical Park now welcomes nearly four million visitors a year, an increase of one million from a decade ago.

The Parkway Gets Primed for Success

The city's latest tourism success story focuses on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, a mile-long stretch running from City Hall to the Philadelphia Museum of Art that's long been the nexus of the city's acclaimed art offerings. A major public investment when it opened in 1929, the Parkway still serves as a central public space and a home to key tourist attractions such as the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Rodin Museum (renovated in 2012), The Franklin Institute, the Academy of Natural Sciences at Drexel University, Swann Memorial Fountain, Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul, and various works of public art. In recent years, the Parkway has welcomed the Ruth and Raymond G. Perelman Building (2007), housing the Art Museum's costume and textile collections; Sister Cities Park (2012), complete with a children's garden, boat pond, fountain, and café; and most notably, the Barnes Foundation (2012), site of Albert Barnes' renowned art collection.

PHILADELPHIA'S CULTURAL VITALITY

Throughout Philadelphia, arts and culture continues to grow as a source of jobs, tax revenue, and economic activity. Arts and culture institutions are part of a larger creative economy ecosystem that also includes community arts organizations; for-profit creative businesses such as commercial art galleries, architecture, music

clubs; and individual artists. These businesses often share both a workforce and a customer base with non-profit art organizations, and it would be challenging for one to thrive without the other.

According to a study commissioned by Philadelphia's Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy and conducted by Econsult, the creative sector is a significant growth industry for the city and employs about 50,000 people, making it the fourth-largest industry sector employer in the city, behind only education, healthcare and retail. That means one in every 15 workers is employed in the creative sector, and that translates into \$5 billion in direct output by creative businesses and \$2.7 billion in employee earnings. According to the Cultural Vitality Index, another study commissioned by the Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy developed by the Western States Art Federation, when comparing Philadelphia to national benchmarks, the city's creative economy was 54 percent stronger than the nation as a whole in 2010.



Photo by A. Sinaoga for GPTMC

Located at 6th and Market Streets, the Independence Visitor Center is the gateway to Historic Philadelphia, the city and the region. Visitors can find attraction information, purchase tickets and take a snack break here. The Visitor Center is also the only place to pick up free, timed tickets for Independence Hall.

Philadelphia is also a hub for secondary education in creative fields, so the next generation of creative workers are learning and living right here. The region's higher education institutions granted 7,088 degrees in creative subject areas in 2010, a huge potential workforce for the creative sector that is increasingly being retained.

Arts and culture also has a powerful impact in fostering vibrancy and stability in Philadelphia's neighborhoods. The Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP) at the University of Pennsylvania has been a national leader in studying what they term "naturally occurring cultural districts" and the impact of arts and culture at the neighborhood level. Their research over the past 20 years has found that cultural activity draws new residents into communities, reducing poverty and increasing population. Philadelphia is partnering with SIAP and The Reinvestment Fund to create a free cultural map-

ping tool that will allow further analysis and research into the relationship between the culture and economic development. The tool, "CultureBlocks," will help with decision making and drive policy and investment decisions, furthering the role of the culture and creativity in neighborhood development and urban recovery.

Organizations like the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, FringeArts, and more than 400 smaller cultural organizations help improve the quality of life for residents and visitors, as well as contribute to the estimated \$580 million in revenue that the MSA's cultural organizations generated in 2010.

Philadelphia's cultural growth comes in spite of national trends in the other direction. According to the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, total attendance (paid and unpaid) increased at arts and cultural organizations by 5 percent from 2007 to 2009. Both the National Arts Index and the National Endowment for the Arts show a decline in national attendance over the same period.

IF YOU MARKET IT, THEY WILL COME

Philadelphia's investments and increasing cultural vitality has brought the city a long way as a tourism destination over the past two decades. But in the tourism business, it's not enough to build it and hope people come. It's necessary to spread the word too.

Marketing Mission

In the 1990s, city, regional, and state leaders worked on a dedicated tourism strategy for Philadelphia. One of the results was the creation of the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation (GPTMC), a non-profit organization charged with building the city's image and increasing overnight visitation by marketing directly to the leisure traveler. Since 1996, it has been GPTMC's mission to make people want to visit and revisit the city over and over again. That means running advertising; working with local and national media to feature Philadelphia on their programs, in their publications, and on their websites and blogs; developing hotel packages to help visitors stay longer and do more; and maintaining a strong and strategic presence on the web and in social media.

Visitphilly.com, GPTMC's primary visitor website, features rich content and links to all that visitors can see and do in the region. And in 2007, the City of Philadelphia funded uwishunu.com, a 'what's-happening-now' blog that brought Philadelphians closer to an array of diverse amenities by highlighting real-time experiences in the culture, culinary, and lifestyle markets. Executing all of these tactics successfully means a commitment to content that shows and tells the many new Philadelphia stories.

Philadelphia's tourism efforts have generated a clear return for the city. A recent report by the U.S. Travel Association shows that overnight visitation to Greater Philadelphia has grown six times faster than the na-



Photo by R. Kennedy for GPTMC

Opened in 2012 after relocating from suburban Philadelphia, the Barnes Foundation on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway maintains the distinct display style of Dr. Albert Barnes. However, sophisticated filtering of natural light throughout the building and galleries gives the artworks a stunning, almost new look, while also reducing the building's electrical usage.

tional average since 1997 and that every \$1 invested in tourism marketing generates \$100 in revenue for local businesses and \$5 in tax revenue for the city. Today, Greater Philadelphia welcomes 11 million more visitors a year than it did in 1997, when GPTMC began advertising. That momentum continues with new additions – museums, attractions, parks, and restaurants – to the city's tourism product every year. These additions are essential to tourism's growth and require the city to plan strategically and engage the collective will of both the public and private sectors to give storytellers even more to talk about.

Arts & Culture Marketing

In the recent past, individual cultural organizations have worked with GPTMC and the PHLCVB to create buzz, drive attendance, and increase overnight visitation around special exhibitions such as *Salvador Dalí* at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, *Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs* at The Franklin Institute, and the *Philadelphia International Festival of the Arts* at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts. And that's exactly what these partnerships have done. The *King Tut* exhibition, for example, drew more than 1.3 million visitors from all across the U.S. and at least 13 foreign countries, resulting in nearly 100,000 room nights and \$127 million in economic impact.

These small-but-significant collaborations proved to be extraordinarily worthwhile, leading the city's art leaders to believe that a major team effort centered around the opening of the Barnes Foundation would help generate sustained attention on the city's wide-ranging arts and culture scene and cement its reputation as one of the world's great art capitals.

With Art Philadelphia™

And so was born With Art Philadelphia™, a two-year, \$4 million marketing campaign supporting the area's

varied visual arts scene and the many art makers and keepers who contribute to its vibrancy. That includes everything from museum stalwarts to independent collectives to plentiful public art to popular annual events. And it includes everyone from classically trained art teachers to gallery owners to muralists to on-the-rise student artists.

The initial group – made up of leaders from the city of Philadelphia – including the mayor, the Office of Arts, Culture and Creative Economy and the City Representative's Office, the Barnes Foundation, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and GPTMC – recognized early on that they could do a much better job of getting the message out about Philadelphia as an arts powerhouse if they collaborated with a broad base of stakeholders to shine a significant spotlight on the region's exciting art offerings. That would mean pooling the talents and financial resources of some of the city's major institutions. Now in year two, the founding partners continue to work with a mega team of public and private partners to bring Philadelphia's visual arts scene into sharp focus for potential international, national, and regional travelers searching for their next inspired big-city experience.

Are the results paying off? In year one alone, the *With Art* collaborative generated 500 stories about the campaign and Philadelphia's art scene, and touted the message in advertising, on a newly launched website, through social media, and in a first-ever Philadelphia culture insert in *US Airways* magazine.

Another key indicator of the campaign's success is attraction visitation. The Barnes Foundation drew more than 200,000 visitors to the new facility in its first seven months on the Parkway, more than tripling a full year of operation in its previous home in Merion, Pennsylvania. Plus, in its first three months, the Barnes counted 25,000 members, ranking it among the top institutions of its kind in the country and representing an increase of 159 percent over the previous year's count of 9,434 households. Visitation figures at other Parkway attractions show that the Barnes isn't the only museum benefitting from increased attention. From June to August 2012, immediately following the launch of the campaign, attendance at The Franklin Institute, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Academy of Natural Sciences at Drexel University was up 15 percent from the previous year.

ARTS & YOUR INSPIRATION

Cities seeking to link arts and culture to real economic growth should glean this message from Philadelphia: potential takes time, cooperation, and sustained commitment to turn into reality. We have worked thoughtfully and methodically over the past two decades to fully capitalize on this sector of our economy, and we're not done yet. But key to what's been accomplished so far is a vision for how to build on our assets; committed leadership in the public, private, foundation, and nonprofit sectors; and a marketing infrastructure empowered to tell Philadelphia's story for generations to come. ☐



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