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Things To Do

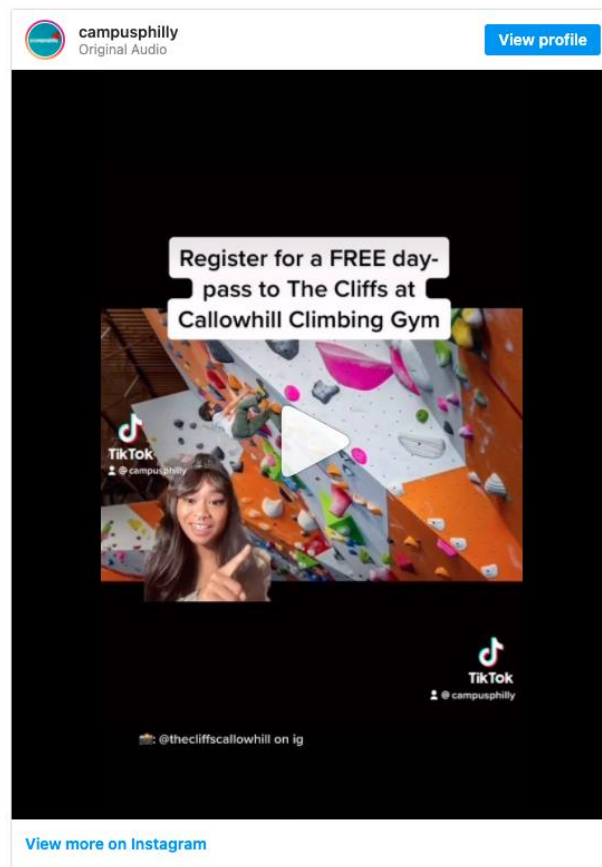
Outlaws and balloons anchor area festivals, a tribute to Nina Simone, and Hasan Minhaj in this week's 'Things to Do'

By [Tonya Pendleton](#) September 9, 2021

As COVID [cases continue to rise](#) in the Delaware Valley, fueled by the delta variant, most events are requesting proof of vaccination and returning to mask mandates. Since the situation remains fluid, scheduled events may be rescheduled or canceled as regulations change, so be sure to check with venues and be aware of ticket return/refund policies beforehand.

...

CollegeFest



This free annual festival for Philadelphia's college population is geared towards getting new students to explore the city's attractions while getting to know each other. **Free admission to several museums, free exercise classes, and even free SEPTA and Philly PHLASH rides are part of the deal.** Anything not totally free is discounted, which includes retail, food, and drinks at participating locations.

- **What:** In-person education festival
- **Where:** Various venues
- **When:** Saturday, Sept. 11 and Sunday, Sept. 12, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
- **How much:** [Free, with registration](#)

8 reasons to take your kids to Philadelphia

REGAN STEPHENS *Lonely Planet Writer* 10 SEPTEMBER 2021



Philadelphia's rich history makes it a fantastic destination for families © Bob Sacha / Getty Images

The City of Brotherly Love is steeped in American history, making it a popular destination for school-aged kids, history buffs and class trips.

But it's also home to the oldest zoo in the country, an interactive science museum, plenty of outdoor spaces, plus an endless supply of soft pretzels and water ice (or, as the locals say, "wooder ice"), making it an appealing destination for all ages. Here's our list of the most exciting attractions families shouldn't miss in [Philadelphia](#).

Get a history lesson at Independence Hall

Located in the Old City neighborhood, [the stately brick building](#) is home to the Assembly room, where Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and other founding fathers debated and signed the Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution. **Tours begin every 15 minutes, and kids ages five and up can pick up a Junior Ranger activity booklet at the Independence Visitor Center to complete activities and earn a badge.**

Feed a goat at the Philadelphia Zoo

The first zoo chartered in America (in 1859, but the opening was delayed until 1974 due to the outbreak of the Civil War), the [Philadelphia Zoo](#) is also one of the most innovative. The [Zoo360 program](#) allows animals like tigers, lemurs and gorillas roam around sections of the 42-acre campus via a series of see-through mesh trails. Spend a day visiting with the lions, giraffes and penguins, and don't miss exhibits like KidZooU, where tots can feed goats, brush the sheep, and get up close with chickens and ducks. (Note, while some Philly attractions are free – including tours of the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall – many, like the zoo, aren't. Services

like City Pass can be a good money-saving option to bundle tickets for pricier activities).

Get into the swing of things at Smith Memorial Playground

Inside the sprawling Fairmount Park, [Smith Memorial Playground](#) has been delighting kids for a century with swings, play structures, a massive wooden slide and a 16,000-sq-ft playhouse. The free playground is open for visitors on Tuesday to Friday from 10am to 4pm, and on the weekend from 10am to 6pm, and hosts annual events like the Kidchella Music Festival and Healthy Halloween, with costumes, live music and treats.

Roll up your sleeves and learn at the Please Touch Museum

For kids seven and under, the [Please Touch Museum](#) is a 157,000-sq-ft wonderland, located inside Fairmount Park. Highlights include a fairytale garden, river adventures, where kids can float a boat down a mini Schuylkill River, a rocket room for launching ships into space, and a working vintage carousel, set inside a 9000-sq-ft glass pavilion. On New Year's Eve day, the museum is the hottest ticket in town for the small set, with a countdown to noon to celebrate in (bedtime-friendly) style. If you don't spend all day at the museum, walk three minutes through Fairmount Park to visit the **Shofuso house and garden**. The traditional Japanese tea house was built in the 1950s in Japan and shipped to New York City to be displayed in the Museum of Modern Art before arriving in Philadelphia. Nowadays, it's a perfect place to spend a peaceful afternoon, and kids love the gardens and koi pond. Pro tip: buy fish food at the entrance.

Don't brush off the Philadelphia Museum of Art

[The world-renowned museum](#) just unveiled a \$233 million renovation led by star architect Frank Gehry, including a stunning floating staircase and luminous tiled walkway inside. With over 200 galleries filled with artwork in the collection, it's a good idea to plot out your visit a bit beforehand. Don't miss captivating pieces like horse armor from the 16th century, paintings by the French impressionist masters, and larger-than-life sculptures like the *Giant Three-Way Plug* by Claes Oldenburg in the outdoor sculpture garden. Check the [online calendar](#), too, to see the lineup of hands-on projects offered as part of the ongoing Art Kids Studio programming, like crafting sparkle knots inspired by the work of artist Lynda Benglis. Older kids might appreciate the famed "Rocky" steps, the 72 steps fictional boxer Rocky Balboa, played by Sylvester Stallone, ran up before raising his arms in triumph overlooking a sweeping view of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in the film's training sequence. Reenact the scene, and stop by the statue at the base of the steps for a photo.

Indulge in sweet treats at Franklin Fountain

[This beloved Old City staple](#) is conveniently located for a visit after exploring historic sites like the Liberty Bell and the Betsy Ross House. Choose from a range of homemade flavors, or go big with a specialty sundae like the stock market crunch, with rocky road ice cream, peanut butter sauce and pretzels. If you're in a rush and the line is long (it usually is) head next door to the brand's sister property for a scoop on a handmade maple waffle cone, or one of their signature Keystone bars, ice cream hand-dipped in bean-to-bar chocolate roasted at their other business, [Shane's Confectionery](#).

Sew much to learn at the Betsy Ross House

Tour the home where the patriotic seamstress created the first American flag. Kids will love the kitchen, set up with items that would have been on hand when she lived there back in the 18th century, and Betsy herself (a talented historical reenactor, that is) who tells the tale of how she convinced George Washington it was best to use a five-point star on Old Glory.



Free PHLASH shuttle at FDR

By Mark Zimmaro September 18, 2021

FREE Shuttle to FDR

**Service Operates
Saturday-Sunday
10am-6pm**

Free shuttle loop service from
NRG Station to FDR Park Hubs
approximately every 30 minutes.

**Text 333-111
for PHLASH service updates**

Shuttle Stops

A. NRG Station

B. Playground

C. Asian Market

D. Soccer Fields

Masks required on board.



PHLASH®

FAIRMOUNT PARK
CONSERVANCY

Launched on Sept. 18, a free weekend shuttle service will be offered throughout FDR Park. The shuttle will pick up at the NRG SEPTA station on Broad St. and Pattison Ave. and make stops at all three FDR Park Hubs in the park: Playground, Asian Market, and Soccer Fields. The service will run Saturdays and Sundays from 10am-6pm, approximately every 30 minutes.

Philadelphia

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WEDDING

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Our Liberty View Micro-Wedding Felt More Like a Mini Family Reunion Amid the Pandemic

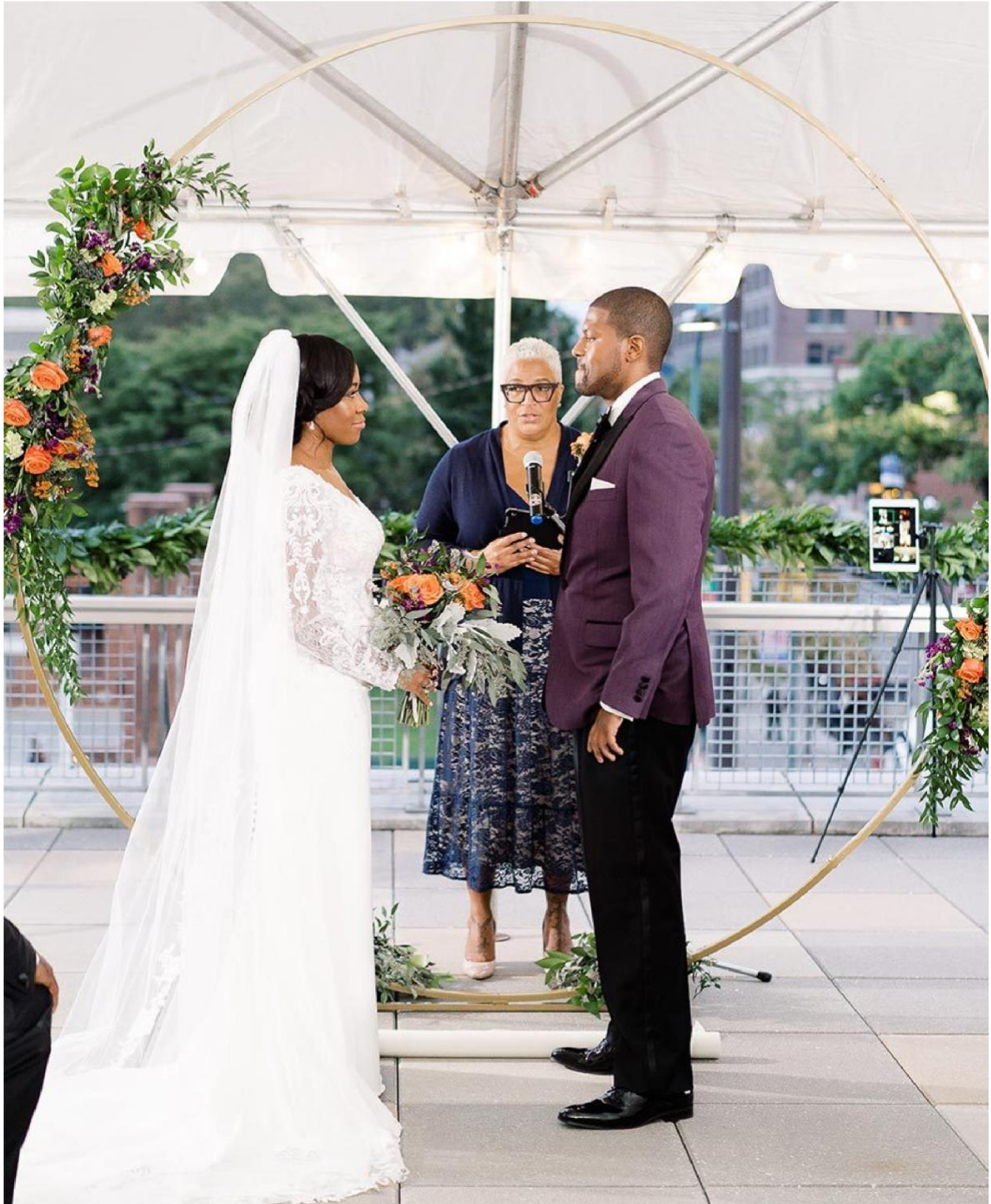
“Our guests kept saying, ‘This was much-needed.’”

by **KRISTEN SCHOTT** 10/7/2021, 9:44 a.m.



Brittney Kelsey and Dwayne Johnson's Liberty View micro-wedding doubled as a mini family reunion. Photography by Anthony Page Photography

Being able to celebrate in person with all of your friends and loved ones is one of the most important parts of your wedding day. And it is something many couples unfortunately had to forego in the wake of the pandemic, as guest lists were significantly truncated or cut entirely when duos eloped in living rooms and at home. Virtual viewing, however, helped ease some of the gap. For this particular Liberty View micro-wedding, the digital feed was so entertaining that remote guests stayed on for the duration of the celebration — described as a mini family reunion by the bride. Anthony Page Photography snapped all of the special moments below.



Not every couple can mark the exact minute when their love story began. **Brittney Kelsey**, a Boston-born senior manager of customer marketing, and **Dwayne Johnson**, a digital care supervisor from West Philly, can: December 23, 2016, at 10:38 p.m. That's when Brittney's cousin texted her to tell her about Dwayne, a guy who was perfect for her. Phone numbers were

exchanged; the two began chatting and soon met in person. They dated long-distance for about a year and a half before Brittney moved here to be with Dwayne.

His proposal came in November 2019, when Brittney's family was in town for an Eagles vs. Patriots game. He decorated their South Philly home with flowers and marquee letters reading "Marry Me."

The pair targeted April 2021 for their 200-person Big Day at Lakeview Pavilion in Massachusetts, but changed it to a 40-guest shindig at Liberty View at the Independence Visitor Center in October 2020. It was worth it.



"Everyone was in quarantine due to the lockdown, so the wedding was also like a mini reunion," says the bride. "Our guests kept saying, 'This was much-needed.'"

The leafy greens and colorful petals that filled the covered terrace's planter wall added a natural

aesthetic to the light, bright ceremony setting. The couple said “I do” in front of a circular metal arch outfitted in ‘Cherry Brandy’ roses, with purple and orange accents and Italian ruscus.



And it was important to the couple to pay homage to their lost loved ones: On her bouquet, the bride carried a charm with pictures of her grandparents. Brittney’s grandmother’s favorite colors were purple and orange, so the design team incorporated those hues into various elements, including the centerpieces. Portraits of late family members were set out at the reception, along with a sign that read, “In loving memory of those who are forever in our hearts, today + always.”



Zoom also came in handy. The ceremony streamed to about 100 attendees, who were having such a good virtual time that they stayed on for the reception, from the first dance (to “U Move, I Move” by John Legend and Jhené Aiko) to the cake-cutting. Says Brittney: “It felt like they were actually at the wedding, dancing along with us.”





THE DETAILS

Photographer: [Anthony Page Photography](#) | Venue: [The Liberty View](#) |
Planning/Design: Donielle Warren of [Elegant Events Planning & Design](#) | Florals: Sheila
Corbett of [Elegant Events Florist](#) | Catering: [Brûlée Catering](#) | Bride's Gown: [Essence of
Australia](#) from [Kleinfeld Bridal](#) | Hair: [Lavish A Jenée Chanel Salon](#) | Makeup: [Sheena Marie
Makeup Artistry](#) | Groom's Attire: [Jos. A. Bank](#) | Entertainment: [The R Productions](#) | Cake: [Isgro
Pastries](#) | Invitations: [Basic Invite](#) | Videography: [Lightyear Studio](#) |
Officiant: [Stacey Thomas of Say We Do! With Stacey](#)



Eisenhower Fellowships Annual Awards Dinner held

Hughe Dillon Oct 14, 2021



From left: Lauren Graham and Anita Brown Graham

Eisenhower Fellowships(EF) hosted their Annual Awards Dinner at The Liberty View at Independence Visitor Center.

EF honored 2021 Distinguished Fellow Award recipient Anita Brown-Graham (USA '05), with the IMPACT Initiative, she is the Director at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Secretary Robert Gates, EF Chairman, will present the Eisenhower Medal for Leadership and Service to Jamie Dimon, Chairman and CEO of JPMorgan Chase who pledge, the nation's biggest bank by assets, pledged \$30 billion over the next five years to solve the racial wealth gap made worse by the COVID-19 crisis, and make steps to redress decades of racial wealth inequality.



Franklin Institute expecting tourism



magic from Harry Potter exhibition

By Peter Crimmins November 4, 2021

Harry Potter fans can play a virtual game to win tickets to Harry Potter: The Exhibition, at the Franklin Institute in February 2022, by scanning a QR code on a photo-op that will appear around the region in the months leading up to the opening of the exhibition. (Kimberly Paynter/WHYY)

The Franklin Institute in Philadelphia is gearing up for what might be its biggest show ever, "Harry Potter: The Exhibition."

The highly technological and immersive exhibition based on the hit young adult novels and movies will open on Feb. 18. Pre-sale tickets for the world premiere of "Harry Potter: The Exhibition" went on sale two weeks ago for members and those who opted in to an email blast, and already more than 21,000 have been sold.

That number put Harry Potter on track to be one of the Franklin Institute's most popular shows, ever.

"We are so proud to deliver an exhibition of such high caliber, with widespread, global appeal, to support Philadelphia's robust tourism efforts already in place," said Franklin president and CEO Larry

Dubinski.

Visit Philly, the city's tourism marketing company, expects Harry Potter to be a significant factor in restoring Philadelphia's tourism and hospitality industry to pre-pandemic levels.

"The world premiere of 'Harry Potter: the Exhibition' at the Franklin Institute in 2022 is unquestionably one of those bright spots," said Rachel Ferguson, chief innovation and global diversity officer for Visit Philly. "We're going to make sure that we're touting all that it has to offer in its run in Philadelphia, on all of our marketing platforms."

The company developing Harry Potter: The Exhibition is not new to Philadelphia. Imagine Exhibitions' blockbuster shows about Titanic and Jurassic World have run at the Franklin in the past. President and CEO Tom Zaller said Harry Potter will feature all the significant characters and scenes from the entire Harry Potter universe, aka the Wizarding World.

The first book of the Harry Potter series, "Sorcerer's Stone," was published in 1997, and the first movie of the film franchise released 20 years ago. Since then its stories and spin-offs have been developed into many products, including a play, an amusement park, and an online digital platform.

Zaller hopes his exhibition will satisfy the high expectations that Harry Potter fans have built over the decades.

"It's great stuff. I mean, it's a little bit of pressure for me personally to live up to that level of excellence," he said. "The stories are incredible and the filmmaking is incredible. The physical things that have been brought to life over the years from different experiences all over the world are just really well-done."

Zaller would not divulge details of the forthcoming exhibition, but said it will have elements that will feel personal to individual fans. Visitors will be able to select, for example, what "house" of the Hogwarts school they identify with — Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, Gryffindor, or Slytherin — and parts of the exhibition will be tailored to that house.

"I want you to have your own moments. This brand is a lot of things to a lot of people," he said. "We can't make everything 100% personal. But we want to have those moments, those Easter eggs."

To tease the February launch, Imagine Exhibitions and the Franklin Institute will be putting large-scale, Harry Potter-themed sculptural works into public places around the region.

A QR Code attached to a model of Hogwarts, or a Golden Snitch on a pedestal, connects people to an augmented reality game via their phones, wherein an image of the Golden Snitch flutters across their phone camera screens. A Golden Snitch is a semi-sentient, mechanical ball used during Quidditch play. Those who "catch" the Snitch — tap on the AR image as it buzzes past the screen like an irritated mosquito — are eligible to win prizes.

Over the next few months, the Golden Snitch pedestal will appear at the Franklin Institute, the Independence Visitor Center, the Promenade at Sagemore in Marlton, New Jersey, and Peddler's Village in New Hope.

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Entertainment
Harry
at

Potter
the



A Golden Snitch on display during an announcement about the opening of "Harry Potter: The Exhibition" at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia.
MONICA HERNDON / Staff Photographer

Franklin Institute in 2022: How to get tickets and more

Muggles can win tickets by trying to catch Golden Snitches throughout the Philly region.
by [Stephanie Farr](#) Published Nov 4, 2021

The Franklin Institute cracked open a veritable chamber of secrets Wednesday when it revealed the first details about *Harry Potter: The Exhibition*, a traveling show organizers hope will stupefy even the most hardened of Slytherins when it premieres in Philadelphia in February.

From wizards and witches to giant traveling [Golden Snitches](#), the Franklin Institute is going all out to drum up excitement for the exhibition, which museum leaders and city officials hope will bring more money to Philly than exists in all of [Gringotts Bank](#).

"When we went out to get this exhibition, we really looked broader because we knew this city needed some things to help in its economic recovery as we come out of COVID," said Franklin president and CEO Larry Dubinski. "The impact an exhibition like this can have, not just on the Franklin Institute but hotels, restaurants, and other arts and culture venues, will be a boon for the entire region."

More than 21,000 tickets to the exhibit were sold in pre-sale before Dubinski announced ticket sales were open to the general public Wednesday during a media event at the museum's Great Hall.

As the Philly Pops played the theme music to the *Harry Potter* movies, flying Golden Snitches were projected overhead and Hogwarts house sigils were displayed on the walls. All guests in attendance — from city officials to [Daily Prophet](#) reporters — were asked to choose a house scarf before entering the

event (for those wondering, Mayor Jim Kenney is a [Ravenclaw](#)). No sorting hat was on hand to make the process easier, but there were boxes of [Bertie Botts Every Flavour Beans](#) to up the thrill factor (it was unclear if Kenney's aides warned him about the booger-flavored ones).

While some details are still being kept as closely guarded as [Azkaban Prison](#), here's what you should know about the exhibition (and if you forget, may your [Remembrall](#) remind you).

When it opens and where to buy tickets

Harry Potter: The Exhibition will open to the public on Friday, Feb. 18.

Daytime tickets, which include general admission to the museum, cost \$43 for adults and \$39 for kids. Evening tickets, which do not include general admission, are \$30 for adults and children. VIP tickets — which offer anytime access on the date chosen at purchase and include a photo op, an exhibition lanyard, and a discount on the audio tour — are \$59 for kids and adults.

Tickets can be purchased online at www.fi.edu or by calling 215-448-1200. No end date has been announced for the show, but organizers said it is a “limited engagement.”

Win tickets by seeking Golden Snitches

Through a series of interactive photo-op installations that will travel throughout the Northeast over the next few months, one lucky Muggle will have the chance to win four tickets and be the first to enter the exhibition when it opens.

A 13-foot-tall display featuring a [Hogwarts Castle](#) and a floating [Nimbus 2000](#) broomstick that fans can hop on for a photo-op will be displayed from Nov. 3 to 10 in the ticketing area of the Franklin before it travels to other, as of yet, unannounced locations. When fans scan a QR code on the display with their phones, it takes them to an augmented-reality game called “Seek the Golden Snitch,” where they must try to catch a Golden Snitch as it flies in and out of their screen (I got it in under 30 seconds, take that Cedric Diggory!). Once the QR code is scanned, Muggles can enter their email for a chance to win tickets.

Four giant, Hagrid-sized Golden Snitches on pedestals will also tour the Northeast and feature the same QR code and interactive game. The first four Golden Snitch locations will be at the Franklin; Independence Visitor Center in Center City; The Promenade at Sagemore in Marlton; and Peddler's Village in New Hope and will appear within the next seven to 10 days.

To find out upcoming dates and locations for the displays, fans are urged to follow *Harry Potter: The Exhibition* and the Franklin Institute on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The winning Muggle will also receive a two-night hotel stay in Philly, a \$500 cash prize, merchandise, and a family membership to the Franklin.



Stephanie Farr 
@FarFarrAway

Replying to @FarFarrAway

It was just announced that this giant sculpture and giant snitch will travel around the region. People can interact with it through a QR code and have a chance to win the first 4 tickets into the exhibit when it opens. These Hogwarts students demonstrate.

 Watch on Twitter

11:23 AM · Nov 3, 2021 

 9  Reply  Copy link to Tweet

[Read 1 reply](#)

The Philadelphia Inquirer

News



Gary Stachowicz, left, from the South Philly String Band, and Steve Morris, right, from the Aqua String Band, perform at a press conference at Arthaus Condominiums by Dranoff Properties, during which it was announced that the Mummers Parade is returning to Broad Street on New Year's Day.

Mummers Parade is returning to Philly on New Year's Day 2022

For the first time, the city has mandated sensitivity training for all Mummers.

by [Stephanie Farr](#) Updated Nov 16, 2021

When the words *Mummers Parade* are typed into Google, the first “people also ask” question the search engine returns is “What is the point of the Mummers Parade?”

If you ask 100 Philadelphians, you’re likely to get 100 different answers. [Recently on Twitter those answers](#) ranged from “joy,” “tradition,” and “it’s a Philly thing” to “getting drunk” and “Reminds you that your uncle is racist. And dresses up with his friends for some reason.”

For some, the Mummers Parade — with its outlandish costumes, live music, and performance skits — is a beloved and uniquely Philadelphia tradition in line with Mardi Gras that spans generations. Mummers, many of whom are artists and musicians, play at news conferences, weddings, and sports stadiums and have appeared in films, books, and even on [America’s Got Talent](#).

But for others, the Mummers Parade is an outmoded and, sometimes, offensive celebration.

Everyone from [City Council members](#) to [op-ed writers](#) have noted that Jan. 2 in Philly has become the day Mummers officials, city leaders, and Philadelphians talking to their confused relatives from out of town often have to apologize for something offensive that happened at the Mummers Parade on Jan. 1.

In a city that loves to come together to celebrate just about anything, the Mummers Parade has become one of the more polarizing traditions in Philadelphia. Marred as recently as 2020 by [two white Mummers who showed up in black face paint](#), the Mummers have [come under fire](#) by [critics and community leaders](#) for offensive skits that have included racist, transphobic, homophobic, and sexist stereotypes.

In 2020, Mayor Jim Kenney — a former Mummer himself — [threatened to end the tradition](#) if Mummers leaders didn’t “commit to meaningful changes.” And that was before the [civil rights protests of summer 2020 in Philadelphia](#), during which tens of thousands of people took to Philly’s streets to declare that “Black Lives Matter” and demand police and social reform.

Well, love ’em or loathe ’em, the Mummers will be strutting down Broad Street again on New Year’s Day after an official hiatus — and an [unofficial Mummers “protest” parade](#) to said hiatus — due to COVID-19.

On Tuesday, city officials and Mummers gathered on a rooftop patio at Arthaus Condominiums, a still-under-construction building on South Broad Street at the site that was once home to Philadelphia International Records, to officially announce the return of the Mummers on New Year’s Day.

“No other place in the world rings in New Year’s like Philadelphia, and the reason why is because of the Mummers,” said City Councilmember Mark Squilla, who is a Mummer with the Shooting Stars Fancy Brigade. “When you hear about music and design and character and dancing, that all encompasses the Mummers. And Mummers are the arts spectrum of Philadelphia.”

While that is the attitude of some, outcries about offensive incidents at the parade led to a new mandate this year that all Mummers undergo sensitivity training. The city began offering sensitivity training to Mummers in 2016, but this year Mummers leaders are required to provide proof that all participants received the training and acknowledged a code of conduct.

This year the parade will begin at 9 a.m. on New Year’s Day at 15th and Market Streets at City Hall and travel down South Broad Street, where it will conclude at Washington Avenue. Checkpoints and performance areas along the route will be at Broad and Sansom Streets, Broad and Pine Streets, and Broad and Carpenter Streets.

Performances will start with the Fancy Division, followed by Wenches, Comics, String Bands, and the Fancy Brigades.

The event is free to attend along Broad Street. Limited tickets for outdoor bleacher seating at the judging and performance station at City Hall are available for purchase through [Independence Visitor Center](#). Two Fancy Brigade shows, which also require tickets, will be held at the Convention Center at 11:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. The parade and performances will be broadcast live on PHL17.

Kathryn Ott Lovell, commissioner of Parks and Recreation, said that to meet Mayor Kenney’s demands for meaningful changes, the more than 10,000 Mummers participating in the parade had to undergo sensitivity trainings with the [Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission](#).

“The trainings the Human Relations Commission have designed specifically for the Mummers have included everything from cultural trainings and diversity trainings as well as implicit bias and racial bias trainings,” she said.

Ott Lovell said it was mandatory that all skits and themes must also be approved by the commission and her department in advance.

“Could there be a couple of knuckleheads? That obviously has surfaced in other years,” she said. “I can’t say there won’t be, but I can say that the Mummers leadership is very committed to dealing with those knuckleheads.”

Squilla said the Mummers have been “100%” receptive to the mandatory trainings.

“They’re taking it very seriously. They understand the ramifications, the negative impact of what is done, whether it’s one or two members, it represents 10,000 of them,” he said. “It’s easy to brush off and say ‘That was just one guy,’ but we have to make sure that they’re responsible for all members out there.”

When it comes to COVID-19 precautions, Ott Lovell said there is no limit on crowd size, but the city is encouraging masking for participants and spectators (which, if you’ve been to an event in Philly in the last six months, goes over [about as well as](#) encouraging Philadelphians to wear Dallas Cowboys hats).

As for just what the point of the Mummers Parade, which began in 1901, is, Squilla said that “it’s almost impossible” to describe.

“It’s just a celebration of ringing in the New Year with love and festivities and art and culture,” he said. “It’s a combination of all those things wrapped into one, with a little Mardi Gras wrapped in.”



Happy Mochila, the company bringing handmade Colombian designs to Philly

Happy Mochila was first inspired by an artisans event in Bogotá, Colombia. Today, the company operates in Philly. *AL DÍA* spoke with founder Luisa Alba to learn more.

Happy Mochila was created through a deep love for hand-crafted art and Colombian culture. Founded by Luisa Alba, an art curator and appreciator, Happy Mochila represents a sincere appreciation of Colombian culture and art.

The company grew from Alba’s fascination with hand-crafted designs from Colombian artisans. Through her travels between her native Colombia and Philadelphia, Alba picked up on Philly’s openness to the artwork of other cultures.

With a Philadelphia-based, multicultural audience in mind, [Happy Mochila](#) brought its products to Philly after being founded in 2019. Happy Mochila carries an assortment of products from Colombian artisans.

This includes pins, other accessories and jewelry such as bracelets and earrings. They also carry hammocks. Most importantly, the company offers their signature mochilas, various bags and purses that may double as wallets.

“The mochilas are, pretty much, the identity of Colombia, culturally, and [in] ancestry,” Alba told *AL DÍA*. “The indigenous people handmade these bags. They pretty much put their heart and soul into each of their items.”

Each bag is designed with nature in mind, from the creation process to the materials used. Each item is also unique, from how it looks to the story behind them. The pins are made by Bogotá-based company Bric Á Brac, while artisans like Olga Delgado design signature mochilas.

As explained by Alba herself, Mochilas are hand-crafted bags featuring patterns resembling “the flow of the dense [and] vast nature found in the rainforest of Colombia.”

Mochilas have become a symbol of sorts for Colombian identity, and are known as an accessory that carries the message of tradition and culture.

Inside Happy Mochila

Happy Mochila embraces designs that utilize Caña Flecha in their construction. Caña Flecha is a plant-based fabric commonly used to design purses, earrings, wallets, and Sombrero Vueltiao, making Happy Mochila a company with a conscious approach.

“[The artisans] really do an excellent job with how they treat the Caña Flecha,” said Alba. “From a plant... becomes a purse.”

One artisan who hand treats the Caña Flecha is Jose Ciprian, and works with his family to treat the material. Each artisan puts their heart into the creation process.

Happy Mochila was born from a shortcoming Alba observed among artisans operating in Colombia. Not too long ago, Alba and her sister were in attendance at a once-a-year event in Bogotá, Colombia.

Artisans from various cities were present to showcase their artwork and products. At the event, Alba would meet many of the artisans who she works with today. In conversation, Alba learned of artisans' obstacles they face in marketing their products.

These marketing obstacles often stem from limited resources, displacement, and illegal recruitment regarding ongoing armed conflicts. The obstacles created from the coronavirus pandemic have also posed difficulties.

After hearing of the hardships artisans face, Alba launched Happy Mochila, and soon after would bring the artisan's handmade designs and Colombian culture to Philly.

“We wanted to make that bridge of all the designs and all the artistic work in Bogotá,” said Alba. “I want to be the bridge from them to here.”

Through Alba's company, artisans from Colombia are given a chance to offer their handmade design and products in the city. Adopting Philadelphia as its home, Happy Mochila has also worked with members of the Philadelphia community.

Happy Mochila has collaborated with the Independence Visitor Center, producing two pins. One depicts Rocky Balboa while another showcases a rendition of the Love Park sign.

“We wanted to... show Bogotá, [and] some traditional symbols Philadelphia has, through a pin,” said Alba.

As Happy Mochila grows, the opportunities to work with Philly creators and businesses will only grow as well.

Happy Mochila going forward

Happy Mochila operates through bilingual, English-Spanish communication, opening the door further for Philly's multicultural residents. Going forward, Happy Mochila doesn't plan to stop here.

One idea Alba has is to open a coffee shop offering traditional Colombian coffee in addition to handmade designs from artisans.

"I had this amazing idea of opening a small coffee spot where you come in and you feel like you're in Colombia: hammocks hanging, mochilas displayed, and also offering Colombian coffee," said Alba.

"A mini Colombia where people can come, check out the products, have a taste of coffee... have a little trip to South America," she continued.

Wherever the brand ends up, Alba and Happy Mochila collaborators have no plans of slowing down. To Alba, there is no limit. To view Happy Mochila's selection of hand-crafted products, [visit here](#).



The Independence Visitor Center Corporation Kicks Off 20 Years

Friday, November 19, 2021 4:25PM



Independence Visitor Center is celebrating twenty years of operating as the official visitor center of greater Philadelphia.

To mark the occasion, representatives from the Visitor Center Corporation and City officials cut an over-the-top cake by local bakery, Nakupenda, Njeri.

The event kicks off a year of celebrations, public programming, and special events, including a big celebration that is planned for April of 2022.