



Living and Practicing Law in Philadelphia

[by Dan Binstock]

The City of Brotherly Love is generally known for its historical significance. Less well known, however, is that Philadelphia offers a vibrant legal community and a quality of life that belies its status as one of the five largest cities in the country.

Although Philadelphia has traditionally conjured up Benjamin Franklin-like images of American history and landmarks (it is, after all, the place where the United States was conceived, declared, and ratified), Philadelphia has emerged as the fifth-largest city in the United States and the second-largest on the East Coast. This popularity is no surprise, given that Philadelphia offers all the advantages and resources of a vibrant, cosmopolitan city—a booming business district, monolithic skyscrapers and high-rise hotels, world-class cultural attractions and entertainment, the largest number of four-star rated restaurants in America, an Ivy-league university, national sports teams, the largest landscaped city park in the world, and scores of hip stores, funky art galleries, and lively night life, to name just a few. Fortunately, Philadelphia has managed to preserve the small-town charm, warmth, and down-to-earth attitude that has helped it earn a reputation as the “City of Brotherly Love.”

From a legal perspective, Philadelphia has a very established legal community, and offers opportunities in just about every practice area. Philadelphia has a very large corporate practice, which is due in part to the fact that Philadelphia is home to 20 Fortune 500 companies, and more than 75 Fortune 1000 companies maintain a significant presence in the region. Furthermore, there is somewhat of a lack of development of large law firms in the nearby corporate center of Wilmington, Delaware, which has fueled Philadelphia’s growth in this field. Along the same lines, many Philadelphia corporate practice groups have added bankruptcy practices, which seems to be a natural step because the federal court

system in neighboring Delaware is, along with the Southern District of New York, one of the two most important sites of bankruptcy filings (especially the “pre-packaged” filings). In light of the recent wave of corporate scandals, corporate governance is likewise a growing practice. Aside from corporate law, other current strong practice areas in Philadelphia are intellectual property, insurance and healthcare, labor and employment, antitrust, real-estate, and municipal and bond work. Litigators (in numerous different practice areas) are also in high demand, especially given that Philadelphia is home to the Third Circuit Court of Appeals, the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, and state appellate and trial courts.

Although salaries in the Philadelphia legal market are generally not quite as high as those in neighboring New York City, there are two important caveats: Philadelphia law firms have a reputation for providing attorneys with a better quality of life and lower billable hours, and Philadelphia is an unusually affordable place to live. For the price of an average one or two-bedroom apartment in New York City, one could purchase a posh and roomy condominium or row-house in Philadelphia, or a beautiful single-family home and yard within a hop, skip, and a jump of downtown. According to the www.bestplaces.net website, one would need to make \$190,000 in New York City in order to afford the same lifestyle that one could have making only \$100,000 in Philadelphia.

Once you’ve shut down your computer and left your office for the day (or, hopefully, the weekend), your recreation of choice will be at

your fingertips. If you enjoy the outdoors, Fairmount Park is the world’s largest landscaped city park, with 8,700 acres of creeks, meadows, trails, and 100 miles of jogging, biking, in-line skating, and hiking paths. Fairmount Park also features the Philadelphia Zoo (the oldest in America), over 20 of America’s most spectacular colonial mansions, hundreds of statues, a variety of lush gardens, a Japanese teahouse, as well as 105 tennis courts, 73 baseball fields, six pools, six golf courses, and several amphitheatres. Visitors can also rent sailboats and canoes, or hear symphony concerts in the summer while smelling freshly cut grass under a canopy of twilight stars. And Philadelphia has numerous surrounding state parks that offer refuge and opportunity to those who enjoy camping.

If you’re looking for culture, arts, and entertainment, you’re in the right place. For starters, Avenue of the Arts is Philadelphia’s premier entertainment and arts district. Stretching 3.5 miles and adorned by beautiful street lamps and walkways, the Avenue of the Arts is home to many of Philadelphia’s cultural attractions, and houses dozens of music, theatre, and dance venues; over half-a-dozen museums and art galleries; several sporting venues; world-class hotels; over 40 restaurants; swanky bars and chic clubs, and fine shopping. The centerpiece of the Avenue of the Arts is the new Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts. The Kimmel Center contains several state-of-the-art concert halls and theaters (set under a breathtaking 150-foot vaulted glass ceiling) and seats over 3,000 people. The Kimmel Center is home to The Philadelphia Orchestra, the Philly Pops®, the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia,

PHILADANCO, American Theater Arts for Youth, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, the Opera Company of Philadelphia, and The Pennsylvania Ballet. The Kimmel Center features jazz, pop, world, classical, dance, family and theatrical performances from around the world, including touring Broadway productions.

Philadelphia's vast array of culture, arts, and entertainment stretches far beyond the Avenue of the Arts. If you want to experience the birth of our nation (and learn a few things about the roots of our legal system), check out Philadelphia's Old City, which is known as America's "most historic square mile." This landmark is home to many of the country's most historic landmarks, including Independence Hall (where the U.S. Constitution and Declaration of Independence were created), and the most famous bell in the world, The Liberty Bell. Enjoy museums? Take your pick: The Benjamin Franklin Parkway, a stunning avenue modeled after the Champs d'Elysees in Paris, features the Philadelphia Museum of Art (the steps of which were made famous in the "Rocky I" movie), the Rodin Museum, the Museum of Natural History, and the Franklin Institute of Science and Technology, to name just a few. And as home to the Eagles, Flyers, 76ers, and Phillies, and numerous college sports teams, this city always welcomes new spectators and sports fans that are ready to scream and have a good time.

Philadelphia is nationally recognized for its outstanding restaurants. During the restaurant renaissance of the mid-1970s, new and exciting eateries offering first-class cuisine began popping up throughout the city, and this continues today. Food critic John Mariani of Esquire magazine commented, "as someone who eats out for a living in at least 25 U.S. cities each year, I can attest that Philadelphia has for a long time been one of the best dining-out towns in America." Whether it's seafood, French cuisine, Thai, Chinese, Japanese, Mexican, Japanese, Greek, Indian, or Ethiopian, all types of food can be found within

anyone's budget. Italian food deserves special mention. If you are looking for the best, go right to the source: South Philadelphia, which is home to a large Italian community and the Italian Market, a large outdoor market that features a large number of Italian specialties and restaurants. Philadelphia is also world-famous for its cheese steaks and hoagies. Pat's King of Steaks served up the very first cheese steak, but Geno's cheese steaks may be the greasiest and the best.

After hours, Philadelphia is hopping with a dizzying array of dance clubs, urban-chic lounges, jazz and blues clubs, brew pubs, comedy clubs, and everything in-between. Whether you're in the mood to dance until 2 AM, relax in a plush sofa while puffing on a Davidoff cigar, sip a martini and watch beautiful people, let loose at a rock concert, do an Irish jig, or simply enjoy a cup of cappuccino at the Philly waterfront while watching boats drift down the Delaware River, you'll have your pick.

Philadelphia's central location makes travel to hot vacation destinations a short trip. A stroll along the beaches of the Jersey shore, the slots and world-class performers in the casinos of Atlantic City, the horse-drawn buggies and shoefly pies of Pennsylvania Amish Country, or an exquisite bed-and-breakfast in charming and romantic New Hope, Pennsylvania are all an hour away. New York, Washington DC, and the Pocono mountains (and plenty of skiing) are just a two-hour drive out of Philadelphia. Moreover, Philadelphia International Airport is just a short 15-minute drive from the center of Philadelphia. Interestingly, however, those in Philadelphia are now, more than ever, often finding themselves playing host to out-of-towners that want to experience the City of Brotherly Love.