

# THE JERUSALEM POST

NU YORK NEW YORK

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Nu York, New York: A Visit to Phillie

My family and I took a nearly four day vacation in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It's just a two hour drive (with hardly any traffic, fortunately) for us from Brooklyn, New York. I had not originally planned on this trip: we were supposed to go to another part of Pennsylvania, the Pocono Mountain region, for skiing. But the weather has been very mild in north eastern US, and I knew that snow sports would be pathetic. So I suggested "Philly" to my husband and he agreed to it.

I had been to Philly twice but many years earlier, when I was 11 for one day (5th grade school trip) and when I was 16 or 17, with my family for a few days. Our daughters had been to the city more recently, each for their 7th grade trips. So we figured that it would be worth our while to travel to this city, full of history.

And we got our fill of history. Philadelphia is one of the most important cities as far the development of American history and government. The Declaration of Independence was written and proclaimed here in July 1776. The Constitutional Convention which redid the weak Articles of Confederation was held here, in 1787. Philly was an early capital of the US, before the big move (and creation of) Washington, DC. Philly was the largest American city for many years during the Early Republic period of the US.

It is still an important city, and we enjoyed touring and seeing the Liberty Bell, Independence Hall, the Franklin Institute (a hands-on science and technology museum),

the Rodin Museum, the US Mint (and we saw coins being coined). and much more. But there are also sites of interest to Jews, and especially to me, the Lost Synagogues lady.

We did visit the National Museum of American Jewish History ([www.nmajh.org](http://www.nmajh.org)) on Market Street. It had a fascinating collection and well-crafted display that covered many aspects of American Jewish history and culture. A block away we saw the modern home of Congregation Mikveh Israel, one of the oldest congregations in the US as well as the Northern Hemisphere. And I did want to visit a few lost synagogues in the southern section of the city. I had addresses and glimpsed at their images on Google. Alas we were pressed for time and didn't get to these, but I plan to go there this upcoming summer.

We did see three other synagogues, all active, near the city center. One was gorgeous and the other two had very nice decorative aspects. Of course I compared them visually to shuls I see throughout New York City, and there are similarities. Philly has an active Jewish community but just as in NYC, and many other American cities, Jews have moved from various neighborhoods and left many shul buildings behind. Some of these have been turned into houses of worship for other religions, some were torn down, and at least one is now an apartment building.

The City of Brotherly Love was an inspiring visit for us, in many ways.