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Fly to Philly

Philadelphia, Pa.

By Valerie Schroth

Any visit to Philadelphia is a trip back in time, but this one was a bit of a sentimental journey, to boot: My husband and I had some wonderful times here back in our early days together, but that was well before the city's revitalization began in the early '90s. Culturally rich but embarked on a steady, seemingly irreversible decline, it was a different town in those days, yet lovable nevertheless. We've grown up a lot in the intervening years and it was a joy to discover how much Philadelphia, too, has grown up and prospered.

We stayed at The Rittenhouse Hotel, not least of whose charms is its location on the most beloved of Philadelphia's city squares. One of five laid out by William Penn at the country's beginnings, Rittenhouse Square is an intimate, surpassingly lovely European-style park with overarching trees, a central plaza, wading pool and some fine statuary.

The hotel suited our purposes in every way. It was an excellent place to renew an old acquaintance with the city and to revisit the happy time of our own beginnings. Indeed, with three restaurants, an art gallery, state-of-the-art spa and fitness center (with indoor pool), and 24-hour room service, we could have holed up here forever. (There's even a resident plastic surgeon on the third floor. "What a great place to recover!" a guest was heard to remark.) And we were in good company. Tom Hanks and Denzel Washington stayed here for weeks during the filming of *Philadelphia*, and Bruce Willis made the place home while filming *The Sixth Sense*.

Our attractive one-bedroom suite had all the amenities you'd expect of a Triple-A 5 Diamond winner—luxurious marble bath; pillowtop mattress and duvet-style bedding; watching—just about any time of the day or night. You can pick up a t-shirt at Urban Outfitters (in a 1898 Beaux Arts building once home to Drexel heiress Sarah Drexel Fell) or take in a free recital at the Curtis School of Music. Within a block or two, you can have mussels and Belgian ale at Monk's Café or sip mojitos at elegant tri-level Alma de Cuba, share a sweet with your sweet at the Belgian Chocolate House, browse the mysteries at Whodunit or catch up with your favorite superhero at Fat Jack's Comicrypt.

This sampling only begins to scratch the surface. In short, there's no end to the phur to be had in Philly. We're already making plans for our next trip. Sentimental journey: Nos. 2, 3 and 4 coming right up!

Contact the Rittenhouse Hotel at (215) 546 9000 or www.rittenhousehotel.com.