

Outdoor Fun You Can Bank On

By Jami Tryer

The Schuylkill Banks Heads Into the Spring/Summer with a Running Start

If you haven't experienced the Schuylkill Banks yet, what the heck are you waiting for? Warmer weather is finally here and the chance of snow is gone. If you're into biking, boating, fishing, rowing, running, blading, walking, jogging, people-watching or volunteering, read on. It's time to get out there and have some fun! And, here's a tip: expecting out-of-town guests? There's simply no better way to show them the City of Brotherly Love. Bare trees have given way to lush greenery and pockets of gorgeous wild flowers. Get a little closer to nature with your guests and enjoy an unforgettable outing.



No matter what your reason for being an outdoor enthusiast, Schuylkill Banks is the best place to hit the trail when the weather breaks and every ounce of you is aching for fresh air! With the urban setting of scenic

Philadelphia on one side and the "Hidden River" on the other, you can't beat a 1.2 mile run along the banks and the safe, off-road connections to Fairmount Park's East and West River Drives. What was once an unusable urban waterfront is now a thriving outdoor venue. Just ask any of the 16,000 people who enjoy Schuylkill Banks every week. Historically, premiere metropolises have had great rivers- London has the Thames, Paris the Seine, Prague the Vltava. Philadelphia now has Schuylkill Banks, and it's way more than just a river.

What are the two big improvements slated for spring and fall 2007?

The Schuylkill River Development Corporation (SRDC) will be continuing their tour boat and kayak tours this year with a new kayak storage facility going in at Walnut Street dock near the Schuylkill Banks Center. They are also constructing a new lower trail segment at the north end of Schuylkill Banks that will allow walkers and joggers to enjoy a new path right on the water's edge.

Schuylkill Banks Kayak Tours feature professionally guided kayak tours of the Schuylkill River between Walnut Street Dock and Fairmount Water Works, including thirty minutes of instruction. It's not recommended for ages under eight and parental consent is required for eighteen and under. Tours are provided by Hidden River Outfitters and depart from the Walnut Street Dock. Check the website for times and dates on weekends. Tickets are \$30 for a single kayak, \$50 (per couple) for a tandem kayak.

Advanced Kayak Tours to Bartram's Garden are new this season. Start your kayak tour at Walnut Street Dock, travel downriver to Bartram's Garden. Once there, enjoy a boxed lunch from Walnut Bridge Coffee House and a tour of the historic Bartram's Garden and House, before paddling back to the Walnut Street Dock. Tours start at 11am and will most likely take 3-4 hours and are of moderate to heavy exertion level. They run Sundays: July 22 thru August 19 at 11:00 am. Tickets are \$60 for a single kayak, \$95 (per couple) for a tandem kayak. Prices include instructional lesson, guided tour, equipment rental, lunch and Bartram's Garden House tour. To purchase tickets, please call 215-222-6060 x 100 and also ask about the special Moonlight Tour (super sexy).

SRDC is also currently gearing up for its second year of "Meet Me on the Banks." With this innovative marketing project, SRDC's goal is not only to increase awareness of the economic and social benefits of riverfront revitalization, but also to build participation and promote public stewardship of Schuylkill Banks.

How do you find the Schuylkill Banks?

From: Schuylkill Expressway (I-76)

Take I-76 to South Street Exit. At the top of ramp turn east towards Center City. Cross over the bridge and continue straight for two blocks to 25th Street. Turn left on 25th Street and go about 5 short blocks to the dead end, which is Locust Street. * You'll see the Locust Point Apartments awning. After parking your car in this location, walk left and cross over the railroad tracks onto the Schuylkill Trail. Turn Right on the trail and proceed one block north to Walnut Street and the Schuylkill Banks Center.

From: Center City, Broad and Spruce

Take Spruce Street west to 25th Street. Turn right on 25th Street and go one block to the dead end, which is Locust Street. See * above.

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All of the exciting planned initiatives are intended to make Philadelphia a better place to live, work and play. They will continue to provide recreational opportunities and property values will no doubt increase as more and more people call this part of the city "home." Ultimately, the important strides that SRDC has made to improve the quality of life on the lower banks of the river will help further the city's efforts to continue to make Philadelphia "the next great city."

"If you headed west to the Schuylkill River back in 2000, Schuylkill Banks, the new recreational path from Locust to Martin Luther King Drive was still a figment of our imagination. There were no tour boats or kayaking on the river, no docks, and no concerts, festivals, or Regatta. What a difference our partnership with the Schuylkill River Development Corporation, has made." - Mayor John Street at his final Annual Address to the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce.

Get involved!

The Schuylkill River Development Corporation is the lead agency charged with creating and implementing long-term sustainable strategy for the revitalization of the lower Schuylkill River. We're committed to working together to achieve positive change along the riverfront for the benefit of the city, region and Commonwealth. Here's how you can help make it happen:

Volunteer

There are multiple opportunities to get involved and join the efforts to revitalize Schuylkill Banks. If you have two hours or ten, are looking for a weekly or seasonal opportunity, they'll be glad to welcome you to the team. It's a great way to make new friends. Call 215-222-6030.

Donate

Your monetary and gifts-in-kind are vital to the overall success. For more information, please call 215-222-6030.

Learn more: The Schuylkill River Development Corporation's web site is informative and easy to navigate. It even features a calendar so you'll never miss a seasonal signature event. Check out www.schuylkillbanks.org.



Jami Tryer is a freelance writer, who grew up in Margate, NJ., but has been a Center City Philly resident since 1991. She is a partner with Munroe Creative Partners, a well-known graphic design firm, where she is a Senior Project Manager and helps to develop new business. She has been freelancing in her spare time for five years for magazines such as Philadelphia Style where she has reported on trends in beauty, fashion, food and culture. For PhillyFIT, Jami has countered the myth that dining out can be frighteningly fattening in her column. Contact JamiTryer@phillyfitmagazine.com.

