

Pennsylvania

Total prohibition (+0, good carry privileges for permittees, but non-permittees need help) Total freedom

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- *Standard firearms & ammo: no permit required for possession or sale – see p.2
- *Semi-auto guns & high capacity magazines: no permit required for possession or sale
- *Machine guns & suppressors: ownership lawful per federal law compliance
- *Firearm law uniformity: preemption law, firearm laws uniform throughout state
- *Right of Self-Defense: NRA-model castle doctrine, *stand your ground* in public areas
- *Open carry: lawful in most public areas, some exceptions - see below
- *Licensed concealed carry: licenses issued to residents and nonresidents
- *Constitutional or “no permit required” concealed carry: no
- *Out-of-state permit recognition: automatic recognition for *vehicle carry* of handguns by nonresidents w/ out-of-state permits; conditional recognition for on-foot carry (see p.65)
- *Weapons allowed for *licensed carry*: limited to handguns and certain NFA registered weapons
- *Vehicle carry by non-permittees: handguns must be unloaded and securely locked in the vehicle trunk or rear storage area; rifles and shotguns must be unloaded and may be in the passenger compartment but should be cased
- *Vehicle gun possession at colleges: subject to college administrative policy
- *Vehicle gun possession at K-12 schools: gun possession prohibited; but legal defenses exist
- *Duty to notify LEO of permit status: upon demand of police officer
- *RV carry while “boondocking”: parking lot owners may restrict gun carry by visitors – see p.9
- *State Parks: concealed handgun carry by recognized licensees permitted
- *Restaurants serving alcohol: permittees may carry while eating in dining areas – see p.3
- *Hotels: subject to hotel policy enforcement – see p.7
- *Airports: carry allowed in non-sterile terminal areas and parking lots – see p.9
- *Highway Rest Areas: carry allowed in buildings and on grounds – see p. 7

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Travelers to Pennsylvania will find the state to have an even mix of urban and rural character. This contributes to a legal dichotomy where gun ownership is both respected and, in certain instances, heavily encumbered. A famous pundit once described Pennsylvania as a state where, “Philadelphia is on one side, Pittsburgh is on the other, and Alabama is in the middle.”

Recognized permittees: The state requires a license to carry a loaded handgun in a vehicle or concealed on or about one's person. The sheriff of a resident's home county issues such permits to persons 21 years or older for five year terms. Any sheriff's office may also issue a license to a nonresident who possesses a permit from his home state. But recent reports indicate only certain sheriffs are actually accepting applications from nonresidents. Any nonresident with a valid, out-of-state permit may carry a loaded handgun in his vehicle so long as he restricts his transport to the vehicle's interior. Concealed carry outside one's vehicle requires a license recognized by the Attorney General (see p. 65). Permittees may carry in most public areas except K-12 schools, courthouse (must be posted), the state capitol and mental hospitals.

Persons without recognized permits: Vehicle carry of any firearm by an unlicensed individual is strictly regulated. Handguns must be unloaded, cased and secured in the trunk or rear storage area. The weapons should also be separated from any ammunition. Travelers should be enroute to a vacation dwelling, gun range or residence unless they have a permit.

Open carry of a loaded handgun while on foot is allowed in most public areas except those prohibited to permittees (see above). The weapon should be in a visible holster and the carrier may not enter a vehicle with the gun. The courts have ruled that “absolute invisibility” is not required for a gun to be “concealed.” So beware. Preemption prevents most localities from regulating open carry. And police are aware of open carry's legal basis. But handgun carry within Philadelphia is limited to persons possessing valid, recognized licenses.

All Persons: Rifles and shotguns must be unloaded and should be secured in commercial cases or gun racks. Long guns may be transported in the passenger compartment but should remain unloaded regardless of whether a person possesses a carry permit. Licensed firearms carry only applies to handguns and certain short-barreled shotguns & rifles registered under the National Firearms Act.