



Groundhog Day Talking Points

At A Glance

Each year on Feb. 2, thousands of revelers climb atop Gobblers Knob in Punxsutawney, Pa., (northcentral part of the state) to witness the prediction of Punxsutawney Phil, a groundhog with the mythical ability of forecasting either an early spring or lengthier winter. With the help of his keepers and protectors, the tuxedo-clad members of the mysterious Inner Circle, Phil shares that prediction with the world from the region known as the Pennsylvania Wilds.

- If Phil sees his shadow, he predicts six more weeks of winter and returns to his burrow. If he does not see his shadow, spring is just around the corner.
- The first legendary trek to Gobbler's Knob occurred in 1887.
- Crowds numbering as high as 30,000 have visited Gobbler's Knob for a multi-day festival celebrating the town's most famous resident – Punxsutawney Phil.

Background

European Roots

- The custom dates back to the early days of Christianity in Europe and grew out of a winter festival called Candlemas Day, a day for clergy to bless and distribute candles. According to legend, clear skies on Candlemas Day meant an extended winter.
- The Roman legions, during the conquest of the northern country, brought this tradition to the Germans, who concluded that if the sun made an appearance on Candlemas Day, a hedgehog would cast a shadow, thus predicting six more weeks of bad weather or “Second Winter.”
- In Germany, the hedgehog became part of the legend. The German twist was that on a clear, sunny day, the hedgehog would cast a shadow.

How the legend continued in Pennsylvania

- Some of Pennsylvania's earliest settlers were German, and they noted a large population of groundhogs. Because of its resemblance to the European hedgehog, the groundhog carried on the tradition.
- In 1887, a group of groundhog hunters from Punxsutawney dubbed themselves “The Punxsutawney Groundhog Club.”

- The editor of Punxsutawney's newspaper was a member of the Club and he used his editorial clout to proclaim that Phil, the Punxsutawney groundhog, was the one and only official weather prognosticating groundhog.
- Phil's fame began to spread, and newspapers from around the globe began to report Punxsutawney Phil's predictions.

Fun Facts

- During Prohibition, Phil threatened to impose 60 weeks of winter if he didn't get a drink.
- In 1981, Phil wore a yellow ribbon in honor of American hostages in Iran.
- In 1986, he visited President Reagan in Washington, D.C.
- In 1993, Columbia Pictures released the movie *Groundhog Day* starring Bill Murray.
- In 1995, Phil was on the *Oprah Winfrey Show*.
- In 2001, Phil enjoyed a tour of New York City including appearances on *Regis Philbin Live*, the *CBS Early Show*, and CNN. His prediction was broadcast live on the Times Square jumbotron.
- In 2003, Governor Edward G. Rendell was the first Pennsylvania Governor to participate in the Annual Trek to Gobbler's Knob with the Inner Circle.
- Phil is a Pittsburgh Steelers fan; he sported a Terrible Towel in 2009 to celebrate the team's Sixth Super Bowl victory.

Local Attractions

Punxsutawney is among the quaint towns, untamed wilderness and a myriad of events that take place year round in the Pennsylvania Wilds.

- **Punxsutawney Weather Discovery Center** (www.weaterdiscovery.org)
 - Interactive education center devoted to weather science and folklore
 - Housed in Punxsutawney's former post office downtown, a beautiful 1914 structure listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- **Groundhog Zoo** (www.groundhog.org)
 - Phil's official home is a terrarium built in the Punxsutawney Memorial Library open to the public
- **The Phantastic Phils! public art project** (www.punxsutawney.com/phils)
 - 32 larger-than-life fiberglass groundhogs by local and national artists located throughout town

- **Pantall Hotel** (www.pantallhotel.com)
 - Restored 1888 hotel celebrates Groundhog Day every day of the year
- **Manhoning Shadow Trail** (www.punxsutawney.com/trail)
 - 15.5-mile long multi-use trail perfect for hiking, biking and skiing
- **Groundhog Wine Trail** (www.groundhogwinetrail.com)
 - Features nine wineries in the surrounding area