

Best **New England Vacations**



New England
GUIDES

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Things to Do in Boston

Some of Our Favorite Classic Boston Attractions... Plus a Few New Favorites



FENWAY PARK

The oldest active Major League field, Fenway recently turned 100 and has earned the right to be quirky. The 37-foot wall in left field (“the Green Monster”) is an artifact of the design constraints of the 1912 lot—likewise, the short right-field foul line that ends at Pesky’s Pole. A park tour is offered daily in season.

Lansdowne St. 888-733-7696 (tickets), 617-226-6666 (tours); boston.redsox.mlb.com

JOHN F. KENNEDY MUSEUM

2015 saw the arrival of 500 hours of restored historical footage to the museum, and the adjacent Edward M. Kennedy Institute. There’s also a new exhibit devoted to Jacqueline Kennedy’s years in the White House, highlighted by her own narration and never-before-seen artifacts.

Columbia Point. 617-514-1600; jfklibrary.org

THE BRATTLE THEATRE

In a changing Harvard Square, the age-old Brattle endures, showing a blend of obscure, indie, and foreign films. Quirky authors and filmmakers such as David Lynch often appear for readings and screenings. You can almost smell the pipe smoke of bygone intellectuals.

40 Brattle St., Cambridge. 617-876-6837; brattlefilm.org

THE MUSEUM OF SCIENCE

A rite of passage for generations of children, the museum recently introduced an immersive 4-D movie hall that simulates sensory effects like rain, snow, and earthquakes. There are films for adventurers, like Planet Earth: Shallow Seas, plus kid-friendly flicks.

1 Science Park. 617-723-2500; mos.org

NEW ENGLAND AQUARIUM

After a recent reconstruction of the aquarium’s centerpiece four-story Giant Ocean Tank, the scene is better lit and more dramatic than ever. Another 50 to 70 species (almost 200 all together) swim the swirling waters, and the live coral has been reconfigured for better views of the deep-water habitats.

1 Central Wharf. 617-973-5200; neaq.org

THE OLD NORTH CHURCH

Founded in 1722, the Old North Church, officially known as Christ Church in the City of Boston, is Boston's oldest surviving church building and one of its most popular historic sites. Browse the main part of the church for free, or sign up for a behind-the-scenes tour that offers a look at the bell-ringing room and underground crypt. 193 Salem Street. 617-523-6676; oldnorth.com

TEA PARTY SHIPS & MUSEUM

The image of rabble-rousing patriots dressing up in Indian garb and tossing British tea into the harbor to protest the king's tax policies continues to resonate nearly 240 years later. A lightning bolt in 2001 and a fire in 2007 destroyed the old ship and museum devoted to this singular event in U.S. history, but a new museum and three replica ships put the Tea Party literally on the map again.

Congress Street Bridge. 617-737-3317; bostontepartyship.com

SOWA OPEN MARKET

It's one-stop shopping: Artisans making everything from jewelry to leather accessories to glassware pitch their tents in the parking lot between Harrison Avenue and Albany Street. Even the Fashion Truck shows up, with walk-in couture. Some half-dozen food trucks also serve the market, and a separate farmers' market sells seasonal produce. Antiques and collectibles also available.

460 Harrison Ave. 800-403-8305; sowaopenmarket.com

ROSE F. KENNEDY GREENWAY

There are many things to love about this 15-acre public park: rotating public-art installations, an old-fashioned carousel, seasonal outdoor markets, and plenty of food trucks, to name a few. In 2011, the Boston Public Market arrived to anchor this lush landmark, offering fresh produce from local farmers, grab-and-go meals, and cooking demonstrations by noted chefs.

rosekennedygreenway.org



Acorn Street on Beacon Hill
Photo by Amy Traverso

Explore Beacon Hill

On any given day, Beacon Hill's brick sidewalks are dotted with camera-toting tourists. It is one of the oldest and most historic neighborhoods in the city, home to the gold-domed State Capital, and it's a must-see on any travel itinerary. For some Bostonians, the Hill is almost too perfect, a life-size model of a historic city, guarded by a zealously preservation-minded civic association.

Between the gas lamps, the cobblestone streets, and the slate-roofed Federal style townhouses, the neighborhood does appear to have been built by a team of set designers. In these streets, the world's perception of Boston as a patrician, bookish, history-minded place is distilled into something like proof. But there's no denying its beauty and romance. I've lived in Boston for just about 15 years and a walk through these streets always makes me fall in love with my home all over again.

If you're driving in from out of town, drive down Charles Street to see if you can park at a metered

space (I usually have good luck). Alternately, you can park at the underground Boston Common Garage. If you're traveling by T, get off at the Charles/MGH stop.

There's lots to see on Charles Street, the main commercial drag, but I like to start on the side streets. It's a compact-enough area that you can't get lost or wander too far, and you'll come across all kinds of unexpected treasures. For example: The homeowners of Beacon Hill don't have large yards to maintain, so they focus all their effort on window boxes, urns, and small pocket gardens. A whole cottage industry of floral designers is kept afloat by this one zip code. This makes for abundant eye candy on every side street. Even the doorways are beautiful.

As you stroll, notice the purple glass in some of the windows. In the early 1800s, glass windowpanes containing excess manganese were installed all over the neighborhood. Over time, the element began to turn purple as it reacted with sunlight. The faulty panes are now something of a status symbol.

Some of the grandest homes can be found on Mount Vernon Street, while Louisburg Square, a private square bordered by early 19th Century Georgian houses, is currently home to John Kerry and Teresa Heinz. It was also the former address of William Dean Howells and the Alcott family (including daughter Louisa May).

Back on Charles Street, you'll find a charming collection of shops, cafes, and restaurants. For a glass of wine and delicious tapas, I love to stop at Bin 26 Enoteca. For lunch, Beacon Hill Bistro at the far end of Charles near the Public Garden, has the look and feel of a Parisian eatery.

For shopping, you can peruse toys and clothes at The Red Wagon, buy the perfect hostess gift and cute jewelry at Flat of the Hill. Other favorites include Wish for women's clothing, Devonia for browsing antique china, and Savor's for delicious meat, produce, and gourmet foods.

There's so much more to see here—the Nichols House Museum, the State House, the African Meeting House—but these are just a few of the places that make my heart sing.

Explore Swan Boats



Swan Boats
Photo by Bethany Bourgault

In Boston's big-building, busy-city culture, it sometimes seems hard to find anything with longevity or sentimental value. Generations of the Paget family have been proving that wrong, though, for 138 years. That's how long they've watched over one of Boston's most charming traditions– the swan boats. These beautiful birds have nested themselves right in the heart of the public garden (and the hearts of New Englanders.)

Robert Paget took inspiration from just about everything around him when formulating the idea for the boats back in the 1870s. It was a popular pastime for 19th century Bostonians to float around the man-made pond in the public garden on paddleboats. Paget loved this idea, and since he had just been granted a boating license, he decided to build a boat that could carry passengers around the lagoon.

It was the heyday of the bicycle, thus Paget was inspired to power his boats with foot-pedals. He then built ornamental swans to cover the pedals. Why swans? Paget was a big fan of the German opera Lohengrin, in which the hero rides a swan-drawn boat across a river to save the princess.

The first swan boat, with its heavy copper swan and two wooden benches for passengers took to the water in 1877, fulfilling the dream of Mr. Paget. Unfortunately, he did not get to see his dream blossom more than a year. He met his untimely death in 1878 at the age of 42. His wife took over the budding business, and it has never left the family since.

Nowadays, the boats take passengers on more than just a 15 minute ride around the lagoon. They transport them through time and across generations. The Boston Swan Boats are one of few experiences that have changed so little over time, residents can almost totally replicate the beloved rides they took in their own childhoods. Sharing those memories with the young ones makes for an even more special voyage.

A quick ride on a swan boat is 15 minutes in a different time – a time that's quiet, calm and peaceful, even while the rest of the city is not.

Maine Vacation

The 5 Best Photo Ops in Acadia National Park

Maine's Acadia National Park is a favorite of photographers for its combination of accessible mountain views and quintessential coastal scenery. For Jerry Monkman, author of *The Photographer's Guide to Acadia National Park* (Countryman Press, 2010), the park has been a go-to location for photography and family vacations for more than 20 years. Here's his list of the 5 best photo ops in Acadia National Park. Maps and info about the park are available at [nps.gov/acad/index.htm](https://www.nps.gov/acad/index.htm) or by calling 207-288-3338.



Rocky Coastline Acadia National Park

OCEAN DRIVE

Every trip I've ever made to Acadia has included a photo stop along the two-mile section of Park Loop Road known as Ocean Drive. Stretching from the beauty of Sand Beach to the dramatic cliffs at Otter Point, Ocean Drive sports pink and tan granite ledges perched above the crashing surf of the Gulf of Maine. A pair of secluded cobblestone coves provide some compositional variety. Best of all, this entire stretch of coastline faces the rising sun, making it a great place to start your day with a camera.

CADILLAC MOUNTAIN

Watching sunrise from the 1,528-foot-high summit of Cadillac Mountain (the high point in Acadia) is a popular rite of passage for park visitors for good reason. The view from the summit is one of the best in all of New England: 360 degrees, taking in Frenchman Bay, the Porcupine Islands, and the surrounding peaks of Mount Desert Island. Best to arrive at least 30 minutes early to secure a photo spot, as you'll most likely be sharing the sunrise with a couple of hundred other folks who have made the drive up the auto road to the summit.

JORDAN POND

The clearing at the south end of this two-mile-long pond affords perhaps the most iconic view in all of Acadia: Adirondack chairs set above the water, which in clear weather reflects "The Bubbles," a pair of perfectly matched bald peaks at the northern edge of the pond. My favorite spots are among the boulders at the southern end of the pond.

ISLE AU HAUT

When I want to experience a quieter Acadia, I take the six-mile ferry ride from Stonington to Isle au Haut. The

southern half of “High Island” is part of the national park and features alternating coves and headlands accessible only by kayak or on foot (via the Goat, Cliff, and Western Head trails.) Few places on the Maine coast feel or look as wild and untrammeled. It’s possible to visit Isle au Haut as a daytrip, but I get the most out of a visit there by camping in a lean-to at the park’s Duck Harbor campground.

GREAT HEAD

Great Head is a rocky cliff rising 145 feet above the cold waters of Frenchman Bay. Among the ruins of an early-20th-century teahouse (Great Head was once owned by J. P. Morgan and his heirs) I shoot summer wildflowers clinging to the rocks, as well as the dramatic cliff views to the east and south. Accessible via the Great Head Trail, which wends its way up the rocks for about a mile from Sand Beach, the cliffs are a popular hiking and rock-climbing destination. My preference is to hike in before dawn and photograph sunrise or the early-morning light on the cliffs.

10 Prettiest Coastal Towns In Maine

The Maine coast may have more beautiful towns than any other coast in America. We name the 10 prettiest coastal towns in Maine, from Down East to Mid Coast.

CASTINE

Leave Route 1’s hurly-burly behind to discover this historic little town at the mouth of the Penobscot River estuary. No wonder Castine has been drawing artists for 150 years—there’s even a 3-day plein air art festival in July.



Kennebunkport, Maine
Photo by Robert A. Dennis

KENNEBUNKPORT

The Kennebunk River adds even more waterline charm to the small shops, elegant ship captains' homes, and fishing ports of this vibrant Southern Maine town of 3,474.

BAR HARBOR

Perched on Mount Desert Island at the gateway to Acadia National Park, this historic resort town still resonates with the Victorian splendor of bygone days, not to mention the backdrop of Cadillac Mountain.

BOOTHBAY HARBOR

Surrounded by islands and lighthouses, Boothbay Harbor is a Mid Coast magnet for fishing, sailing and cruising. So much so, the town seems half-boats, half-buildings.

DAMARISCOTTA

An all-American small town with shipbuilding roots, Damariscotta sits colorfully on the tidal Damariscotta River and hums with shops, restaurants, a community theatre and the state's first Reny's Department Store.

STONINGTON

One of Maine's proudest and highest-producing lobstering harbors with more than 300 boats, this Down East town perched on spectacular, granite Deer Isle, shares its beauty with tourists but retains a solid, hometown feel.

CAMDEN

The self-dubbed "Jewel of the Coast" is a well-deserved moniker, and this Mid-Coast harbor town of 4,823 on Penobscot Bay is tucked where mountains reach down to the sea.

BLUE HILL

A warm and cozy Down East community that retains the splendid historical architecture of its 18th-century shipbuilding roots, Blue Hill's harbor is a watery gateway to Acadia National Park.

ROCKPORT

The harbor of this tiny town is considered the most picturesque one in Maine... and that is high praise indeed. Further, it's bounded by a lovely verdant park, complete with a resident seal (in marble).

CUTLER

Pure, Down East, and unspoiled. No gift shops, no tourist traps. Here, there's a daily view of lobster boats in the small harbor, with Canada's Grand Manan Island in the distance. A nearby colony of puffins and a working lighthouse (where you can spend the night) make this tiny, far-flung town a true beauty.

Where to Spot Moose in Maine

Moose in Maine - do you know where to find them? Here's a list courtesy of the Moosehead Lake Region Chamber of Commerce in Greenville. Learn more by calling 888-876-2778, 207-695-2702; or visiting www.mooseheadlake.org.

Take a scenic drive to Kokadjo, a small community north of Greenville. Stay on Lily Bay Road for approximately 20 miles and keep your eyes open for moose along the way.

If you've gotten to Kokadjo and still haven't had your fill of moose sightings, head to Lazy Tom Bog, just past Kokadjo. This bog is very popular with local moose.

Make a day of your moose watching by driving to Rockwood, a town north of Greenville on Route 15, where you can head over to Mt. Kineo by boat shuttle for some hiking or exploring.

Turn left on Depot Street from Greenville Junction to Shirley Mills. Go right in Shirley, through town onto the dirt road toward The Forks. This road may not be passable during winter and spring.

Take Route 15 South and look for moose between the upper and lower Shirley turn-offs in the bog area.

Best of Mount Desert Island

Heading to Maine's Mount Desert Island? As the home of Acadia National Park and the tourist town of Bar Harbor, Mount Desert Island is one of Maine's most popular summer destinations. We've got the perfect roundup of what to see, do, and eat while you're there, plus where to stay when it's time for bed.

LULU LOBSTER BOAT RIDE, BAR HARBOR

Why are shrimps a little sweeter? What's the biggest lobster ever caught in Maine's cold waters? Captain John Nicolai answers these questions plus a whole lot more. Climb aboard the Lulu, a traditional Down East-style lobster boat, for a humor-filled two hour cruise covering everything you wanted to know about Maine's tasty crustacean. The seal sightings and breathtaking coastal beauty aren't bad, either.

55 West St. 207-963-2341; lululobsterboat.com

SHIP HARBOR NATURE TRAIL, ACADIA NATIONAL PARK, SOUTHWEST HARBOR

Pick up a trail guide at the park visitors' center and pack a picnic. This gentle 1.2-mile figure-eight hike passes through varied ecosystems, from moss-laden woods to pink granite ledges.

Route 102A. 207-288-3338; nps.gov/acad

CARRIAGE ROADS, ACADIA NATIONAL PARK

Pedal into the heart of Acadia National Park on 45 mapped and signposted miles of car-free, crushed-stone carriage roads, punctuated by 17 handsome granite-faced bridges and two gatehouses.

207-288-3338; nps.gov/acad

THE BIRCHES, SOUTHWEST HARBOR

Built as a summer cottage in 1916, the stately Birches combines gentle summer ease with a location that puts the Flying Mountain, Acadia, and St. Sauveur trailheads and Valley Cove fire road within easy walking distance.

46 Fernald Point Road. 207-244-5182; thebirchesbnb.com

SEAWALL MOTEL, SOUTHWEST HARBOR

It's possible to see shore-, freshwater, marsh, and woodland birds, and maybe even an eagle, from guestrooms in this family-owned, budget-friendly motel overlooking the rare freshwater pond/saltwater shore combo.

566 Seawall Road (Route 102A). 207-244-3020; seawallmotel.com

WONDER VIEW INN, BAR HARBOR

Furry guests are welcomed to these motel-style accommodations on estate-like grounds with a bowl, a treat, and recommendations for places to go, things to do, and dog-friendly al fresco restaurants.

50 Eden St. 888-439-8439, 207-288-3358; wonderviewinn.com

XANTHUS, CLAREMONT HOTEL, SOUTHWEST HARBOR

Linen-draped tables, candles, and fresh flowers set the tone in the dining room, where big windows frame views over the manicured lawn, croquet courts, and Somes Sound. In the background: Acadia's peaks and Frenchman

Bay's outer islands.

22 Claremont Road. 207-244-5036; theclaremonthotel.com

MACHE BISTRO, BAR HARBOR

Come hungry. Hanger steak to duck confit, Atlantic scallops to lamb shanks, might be on Chef Kyle Yarborough's daily-changing menu, featuring traditional French cuisine with Mediterranean accents.

321 Main St. 207-288-0447; machebistro.com

SWEET PEA FARM, BAR HARBOR

Twofer! Enjoy breakfast, lunch, or dinner from the wood-fired oven at Sweet Pea Café and purchase Maine-made wine, beer, and chocolates at Bar Harbor Cellars Winery, both located on Sweet Pea Farm.

854 Route 3. 207-801-9078 (café), 207-288-3907 (winery); barharborcellars.com

Explore York Beach, Maine

Tucked between Kittery and Ogunquit on the southern Maine coast, York Beach is a popular summer seaside destination thanks to its family-friendly vibe, beautiful beaches, fun downtown, and memorable attractions.

We kicked off our visit by heading straight to the feather in York's cap, the Cape Neddick Light Station, better known as the Nubble Light for the "nub" of island it's located on. Look familiar?

Dating back to 1879, the Nubble is arguably the most photographed lighthouse in Maine, if not New England. In fact, the image of Nubble Light is so iconic that when NASA sent Voyager II into space in 1977 armed with artifacts that might teach extraterrestrials about planet Earth, one of those was a picture of the Nubble.

The romantic allure of Nubble Light is two-fold. Not only is the structure and setting almost painfully idyllic (the rocky coast, sturdy light, and button-cute adjoining keeper's house -- which, for the record, is unoccupied and has been since 1987), but the island setting just a hundred yards across the water from Sohier Park on the main-



The Nubble Light

land means the Nubble is always tantalizingly just out of reach. No matter the season or the weather, as long as the Nubble stands, so will the tourists -- to photograph it.

We next made the mile-long trip to the hub of York Beach along Route 1A. A large lot with metered parking is just steps from the action, which includes a beach, arcade, restaurants, shops, and even a zoo animal or two (or more). If you can't wait to swim or soak up some rays, the small but sufficient quarter-mile of Short Sands Beach (one of York's two main beaches) is your first stop.

A literal stone's throw from Short Sands are two of York's most enduring tourist spots -- a compact candlepin bowling alley (there's miniature golf in there, too) and the Fun-O-Rama arcade.

The Fun-O-Rama building was allegedly once a 1940s bathhouse before converting to an arcade and sometimes roller rink a few decades later. Today it packs more than 250 rides and arcade games (including my favorite, Skee-Ball) into its 10,000 square-feet, and there's something endearingly boardwalk-retro about it that makes you want to stroll through even if video games and old-fashioned photo booths aren't your thing.

A few steps away, the Goldenrod in downtown York Beach has been luring in hungry folks for more than a century, and the old school neon-style signage out front speaks right to the heart of memory-seeking visitors. Inside, a three-part operation offers up something for everyone, from the bustling candy counter to the soda fountain and adjacent traditional dining room.

Saltwater taffy is the signature sweet at the Goldenrod (they call them "kisses"), and visitors are treated to a sneak peek at the taffy-making process from the outside sidewalk, where children and iPhone-toting adults peer through the glass windows to watch the candy being made in separate stages -- from boiling to pulling to cutting and wrapping.

Inside, the candy counter is expertly staffed to serve up all the fudge, bark, brittle, and caramel corn you could ever ask for, but if you want ice cream, a root beer float, stack of pancakes, or even a club sandwich or burger, they've got that, too.

Continuing down Railroad Avenue, you'll pass the usual clutch of gift and souvenir shops, food joints, and even a spot to have your palm read before ending up at York's Wild Kingdom, which is billed as New England's only zoo and amusement park. It might look small from the entrance, but, as the saying goes, looks can be deceiving. Inside you'll find traditional amusement park rides, classic fair food (like fried dough), a number of landscaped animal exhibits (lions, monkeys, llamas, and more!), a "butterfly kingdom," and other offerings like batting cages and mini golf. We opted to save our visit for another day, but I suspect a stop at York's Wild Kingdom packs in enough fun and adventure to fill a whole day.

Full of sugar and feeling tired from the late-summer sun, we got back in the car and headed down Route 1A toward Long Sands Beach, which, as you might guess, is larger and longer than Short Sands, for a final look at the ocean. Stretching 1.5-miles, Long Sands has a more traditional "day-at-the-beach" feel with plenty of room for the whole family to spread out for a day of fun, from strolling the shoreline to boogie boarding to wave jumping. You can even see the Nubble Light in the distance from the sand, and there are restaurants across the road should you need sustenance.

So what did we miss on our visit to York Beach? Had we ventured further north up Route 1 we could have stopped at the famous Flo's Hot Dogs, but the beauty in forgetting a thing or two on vacation is that you've got the perfect reason to plan a trip back.

Things to Do in New Hampshire

Best Classic Attractions in NH

CANOBIE LAKE PARK, SALEM

From its early days as a “pleasure resort” in 1902, with canoeing and a botanical garden, Canobie Lake has evolved into a classic amusement park with 85 rides, games and attractions, and actual fear-factor ratings. 85 North Policy St. 603-893-3506; canobie.com

THE FLUME, LINCOLN

The setting is certainly dramatic: 90-foot cliffs, cascading falls, and the cool dampness of a primordial forest. But there’s also something appealingly Swiss Family Robinson– like about the network of cliff-hugging boardwalks clinging to the walls of this deep granite beauty at the base of Mount Liberty. 852 Daniel Webster Highway. 603-823-8800; cannonmt.com/flumegorge.html

MOUNT WASHINGTON AUTO ROAD, GORHAM

New England’s highest peak—6,288 feet — Mount Washington claims some of the world’s worst weather and the second-highest wind speed ever recorded. The eight-mile drive to the top is a hair-raiser; drop-away vistas on fair-weather days are stupendous, with visibility up to 130 miles and views of New York and the Atlantic. Road open May to October, depending on weather. 603-466-3988; mountwashingtonautoroad.com; mountwashington.org/education/extreme

POLLY’S PANCAKE PARLOUR, SUGAR HILL

Pancakes, views, and most especially views of pancakes: You’ll be in blueberry buckwheat heaven at this family-owned institution, which has been flipping delectable discs for 75 years. 672 Sugar Hill Road (Route 117). 603-823-8849; pollyspancakeparlor.com

CASTLE IN THE CLOUDS, MOULTONBOROUGH

This former country estate has views of Lake Winnepesaukee and the Ossipee Mountains, not to mention 28 miles of hiking trails and its own art gallery. 455 Old Mountain Road. 603-476-5900; castleinthecLOUDS.org



View of Lake Winnepesaukee from Castle in the Clouds
Photo by Amy O’Brien

CURRIER MUSEUM OF ART, MANCHESTER

Here you'll find works by Picasso, Monet, O'Keeffe, Wyeth, and more, plus decorative arts and fine examples of New Hampshire's historic craft tradition, as well as tours of nearby Zimmerman House (reservations required), designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

150 Ash St. 603-669-6144; currier.org

HAMPTON BEACH, HAMPTON

Take a beautiful stretch of sandy coastline and add a splash of kitsch and you have yourself a memorable New Hampshire beach. Document your visit by stepping into a photo booth at Playland Arcade, and then try your hand at some classic boardwalk games while you're there, such as Skee-Ball and pinball. Skee-Ball and pinball.

115 Ocean Blvd. 603-926-8717; hamptonbeach.org

SAINT-GAUDENS NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE, CORNISH

Visitors may stroll through the home, studios, and gardens of Augustus Saint-Gaudens—one of the most notable American sculptors, responsible for iconic statues and monuments such as the Shaw Memorial and the Standing Lincoln. Extend your stay and bring a picnic to enjoy on the park's grounds.

603-675-2175 x100; nps.gov/saga/index.htm

MOUNT MONADNOCK, JAFFREY

It's a National Natural Landmark and one of the most-climbed mountains in the world for a reason. Take your pick from any one of its beautiful trails, and from the summit look out nearly 100 miles toward Boston.

Monadnock State Park, 116 Poole Road. 603-532-8862; nhstateparks.org

STRAWBERRY BANKE MUSEUM, PORTSMOUTH

This cluster of 42 historic homes and buildings in hip, bustling Portsmouth gives visitors a glimpse of New Hampshire's coastal life stretching back more than three centuries.

14 Hancock St. 603-433-1100; strawberrybanke.org

Best of the White Mountains

FRANCONIA NOTCH STATE PARK, FRANCONIA/LINCOLN

This park is home to state treasures such as the Flume Gorge, the Cannon Mountain Aerial Tramway, and the Old Man of the Mountain Profile Plaza and Historic Site.

Route 93. 603-745-8391; nhstateparks.org/explore/state-parks/franconia-notch-state-park.aspx

LEAGUE OF NH CRAFTSMEN LITTLETON RETAIL GALLERY, LITTLETON

Everything here (jewelry, baskets, pottery, fiber arts, glass, and more) is made by hand by New Hampshire artists. Inspired? Sign up for a class taught by league members at the nearby Littleton Studio School.

81 Main St. (at The Village Book Store). 603-444-1099; nhcrafts.org/localsites/littleton

MOUNT WASHINGTON COG RAILWAY, BRETTON WOODS

When it comes to memorable, you can't beat traveling by steam engine up the steepest railroad track in North America to the 6,288-foot summit of Mount Washington.

3168 Base Station Road. 603-278-5404; thecog.com

CHRISTMAS FARM INN & SPA, JACKSON

Near Storyland and Santa's Village, this inn offers a playground, swimming pool, and nightly movies for the kids, plus Jacuzzis, fireplaces, and a spa for you.

3 Blitzen Way. 603-383-4313; christmasfarminn.com

1785 INN, NORTH CONWAY

With a footprint spanning six prime mountain acres, it's no wonder this inn has some of the best views of the Presidential Range. Soak in the vista from poolside, surrounded by a garden of tall, spikey pink-and-white cleomes, or from the dining room's bay window while sampling cuisine that has garnered a host of culinary awards.

3582 White Mountain Highway. 603-356-9025; the1785inn.com

CAFE LAFAYETTE DINNER TRAIN, NORTH WOODSTOCK

It takes only 20 miles to travel back to a more gracious era aboard the three vintage Pullman cars of the Café Lafayette Dinner Train. Diners enjoy a five-course meal with a side of stunning river, mountain, and forest views. Blazing fall foliage is a seasonal bonus.

Route 112. 603-745-3500; nhdinnertrain.com

MOAT MOUNTAIN SMOKE HOUSE & BREWING CO., NORTH CONWAY

This venue's two essential products—beer and barbecue—are made on the premises, and both are among the best of their kind. Beers lean toward light and crisp (wheat, pale ale, pilsner, even blueberry ale) while the barbecue is big on smoke and sugar (the salmon is almost candied!).

3378 White Mountain Highway (Route 16). 603-356-6381; moatmountain.com

MOUNTAIN VIEW GRAND RESORT & SPA, WHITEFIELD

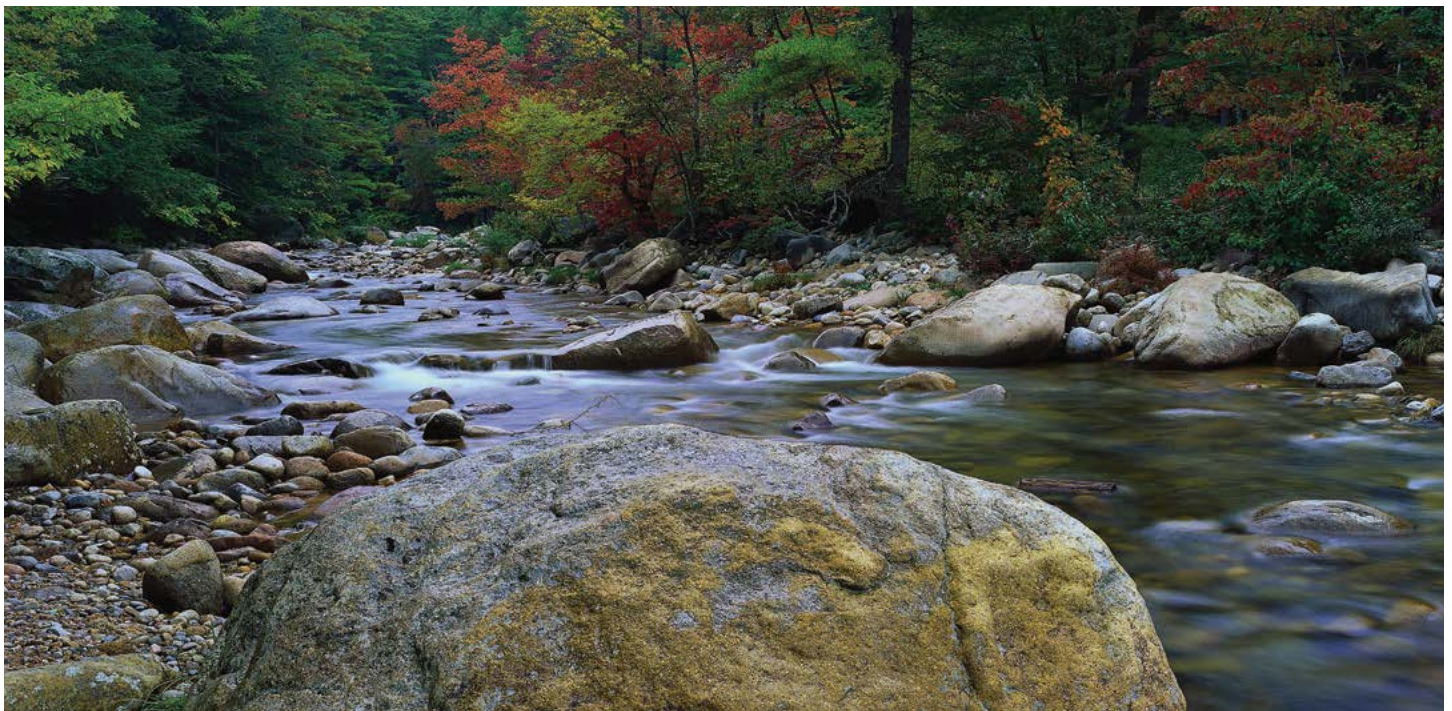
The candlelit tables surrounded by bins holding 6,500 bottles are undeniably romantic. Food such as lobster-scallop stew and roasted locally farmed venison fit the elegant setting. Gentlemen will want a jacket and ladies will like a wrap, as the wine cellar stays cool all year round.

101 Mountain View Road. 855-837-2100; mountainviewgrand.com

SNOWVILLAGE INN, EATON CENTER

The inn's new chef, Brian Anderson, pulls from local farms for his flavorful cuisine. Fan favorites include lobster corn chowder with pea shoots and cedar-plank salmon with blueberry port glacé.

136 Stewart Road. 603-447-2818; snowvillageinn-whitemountains.com



Swift River in White Mountains National Forest

Best of the NH Seacoast

PRESCOTT PARK, PORTSMOUTH

Music meets water at Portsmouth's waterfront on the Piscataqua River, and outdoor concerts fill the night air with the sweet sounds of Taj Mahal, Mary Chapin Carpenter, and an impressive roster of summer headliners. 105 Marcy St. 603-436-2848; prescottpark.org

ODIORNE POINT STATE PARK & SEACOAST SCIENCE CENTER, RYE

Rocky coasts, remnants of old World War II bunkers, and a kid-centric science center with a dangling humpback whale skeleton populate this gem of a park, with 330 trail-crossed acres on the ocean. Picnics are practically mandatory, and tidepool explorations a must. 570 Ocean Blvd. 603-227-8722; nhstateparks.org

PORTSMOUTH HARBOR CRUISES, PORTSMOUTH

Small, intimate cruises aboard M/V Heritage condense 400 years of harbor history into an hour and a quarter. Leaving from the downtown, cruising past lighthouses, historic forts, and mansions, to the edge of the Atlantic and back, here's history the way we all want to learn it, flavored with humor and scenery. Sunset cruises and monthly wine tastings, plus longer cruises to the Isles of Shoals, nine lore-ridden islands six miles off the coast, are also on tap.

64 Ceres St. 603-436-8084; portsmouthharbor.com

FULLER GARDENS, NORTH HAMPTON

If variety is the spice of life, it also makes for an eye-catching botanical garden at this turnof-turnof- the-last-century summer estate in a neighborhood of mansions just off scenic Route 1A, which hugs the Atlantic. Former Massachusetts governor Alvan T. Fuller liked his formal English perennials and masses of roses, but he was fond of Japanese gardens, too. There's also plenty of inspiration for sculpted hedges, and a gift shop that sells take-away summer memories. May to October.

10 Willow Ave. 603-964-5414; fullergardens.org

THE HOTEL PORTSMOUTH, PORTSMOUTH

Formerly the Sise Inn, this 32-room 1881 mansion was rehabbed by the former owners of Portsmouth's Ale House Inn and newly reopened in April 2014. Dulcet tones of taupe and gray, the clean lines of modern furniture, and a luxuriously stress-free B&B vibe, all just a few blocks from Market Square and the breezy waterfront, would surely have caught the eye of its original owner, ship merchant John Sise.

40 Court St. 603-433-1200; thehotelportsmouth.com

THREE CHIMNEYS INN, DURHAM

A profusion of armoires, oriental rugs, carved fireplaces, and ornate canopy beds ... This 1649 homestead is the oldest in Durham, and just a five-minute walk to the University of New Hampshire campus. With 23 ornately pretty rooms divvied up between the main inn and the 1795 carriage house, expect massive beams, wide-board pine floors, and an onsite tavern that occupies two floors, with a massive chimney running through. On a cold night, ask for the intimate nook downstairs in front of the ancient fireplace.

17 Newmarket Road. 603-868-7800; threechimneysinn.com

MARTIN HILL INN, PORTSMOUTH

A 19th-century antiques-draped B&B with hidden gardens tucked in the back, this warm retreat will test your knowledge of perennials and provide inspiration for your own backyard. The mixed neighborhood of historic residences and convenience stores is a short walk from town—and the inn's creative breakfast, from banana-nut waffles to gluten-free options (request in advance), will stoke you up for the easy stroll.

404 Islington St. 603-436-2287; martinhillinn.com

BLACK TRUMPET BISTRO, PORTSMOUTH

Brick-warm ambience, artful cuisine, and a Wine Spectator Award of Excellence make this cozy Mediterranean bistro/wine bar on pretty Ceres Street an inviting nook where you can nibble on foraged mushrooms, local seafood, and assorted paellas that flirt with Moroccan, Turkish, and Spanish influences.

29 Ceres St. 603-431-0887; blacktrumpetbistro.com

SALT KITCHEN & BAR, NEW CASTLE

Glittering like an ocean liner, the legendary Wentworth by the Sea resort has dominated this bluff overlooking the water since 1874. Far more modern is its take on cuisine at SALT, an elegant study in deep-sea and powdery blues that's surprisingly affordable. Dine under the rotunda or out on the deck, or cluster at the sleek bar, but do indulge in "hand-spun" pasta, or a rustica pizza that oozes mozzarella, pesto, and grilled chicken.

588 Wentworth Road. 603-422-7322; wentworth.com

MARKEY'S LOBSTER POOL, SEABROOK

Owner Tom Markey presides over the deep-fryers and steamers, cooking up fresh lobsters, clams, scallops, shrimp, and haddock since 1971. Bring your fiercest appetite and dine on a deck over the tidal Blackwater River, where you'll spot locals digging for clams. You don't have to abstain in winter: open Friday to Sunday in the off-season.

420 Route 286. 603-474-2851; markeyslobsterpool.com

Best Scenic Hikes in the White Mountains

MOUNT EISENHOWER

There's nothing easy about a New Hampshire 4,000-footer, but the taxing trek up 4,760-foot Eisenhower in Chandlers Purchase generally offers fine footing before the steep push to its flat, bald crown; the awe-inspiring view takes in fellow outlying Presidential Range jewels. J. Rayner Edmands' careful trail design has withstood countless steps since 1909, helping hikers to reach the sweeping panorama. Edmands Path & Mount Eisenhower Loop, 6.6 miles round trip. Trailhead on Mount Clinton Road, Crawford's Purchase, NH.

WELCH & DICKEY MOUNTAINS

A splendid loop connects these two low-lying mountains near Waterville Valley, featuring Mad River Valley vistas, mostly forgiving hiking, and incredible ledges. There's some rock scrambling, but the eye candy is worth it. Welch-Dickey Loop Trail, 4.4 miles. Trailhead 6 miles east on Route 49 from I-93 Exit 28; turn left on Upper Mad River Road and right on Orris Road, Waterville Valley, NH.

MOUNT WILLARD

The hike to the ledges of this small Willey Range peak in Crawford Notch serves up an eagle's-eye view of a U-shaped valley. The trek leaves a lofty neighborhood—including the source of the Saco River, a train depot, and the Appalachian Mountain Club's Highland Center—and ends at an open perch showcasing the towering Webster Cliffs, historic Willey Slide, and more. Mount Willard Trail, 3.2 miles round trip. Trailhead on Route 302, about 8 miles south of junction Routes 302/3, Crawford Notch State Park, Harts Location, NH.

FRANCONIA RIDGE

Arduous and wonderful, the traverse over Little Haystack, Mount Lincoln, and Mount Lafayette is a classic high-wire circuit, with a healthy share of the trip above treeline. Simply, it showcases the glory of the White Mountains. Be cognizant of exposure to weather. Old Bridle Path, Falling Waters, Franconia Ridge, and Greenleaf Trails, 9 miles. Trailhead at Lafayette Place Campground exit off Franconia Notch Parkway (I-93), Franconia/Lincoln, NH.

MOUNT CHOCORUA

With a multitude of exacting trail choices, paths lead to the bare 3,500-foot summit in Albany and its superb stage showcasing the vastness of the Whites and beyond. A wonderful vantage point to see Mount Washington and the unspoiled Sandwich Range Wilderness. Champney Falls Trail, 7.6 miles round trip. Trailhead about 10 miles west on Kancamagus Highway from junction Routes 112/16, Albany, NH.

Explore the Mount Washington Cog Railroad

Before my destination is even in sight, I can smell it. The sulfuric smell like the world's biggest cap gun has gone off, followed by the telltale curls of smoke and steam.

I've just arrived at the base of the Mount Washington Cog Railway — one of New England's most historic and scenic mountain experiences. As the world's first mountain-climbing cog railway, "the Cog" has been carrying passengers to the 6,288-foot summit of Mount Washington (the Northeast's highest peak) since 1869, and shows no signs of slowing down.



Cog Railroad steam locomotive on Jacob's Ladder
Photo courtesy of the Mount Washington Cog Railway

What I'm seeing and smelling is one of the Cog's coal-fired steam locomotives, and it's an old-fashioned red, black, and yellow beauty, like something out of a drawing in a children's book. I am instantly enchanted.

The Marshfield Base Station, just a few miles from the Omni Mount Washington Resort at Bretton Woods, is a lovely destination in its own right, located 2,700-feet above sea level and with an on-site restaurant, gift shop, small museum and (free) views of the trains heading up and coming back down.

The Cog has several trains in its fleet. Some of them, the oldest, are old-fashioned coal-fired steam locomotives. Since 2008, the Cog has also added five biodiesel locomotives, which offer a smoother, cleaner, and faster trip to the summit. The diesel trains are designed and built on-site just for the Cog. They don't come cheap, but keeping the Cog running and thriving is worth it.

The steam locomotives use a ton of coal, and 1,000 gallons of water to get to the top, and the journey takes an hour (the diesel only about 45 minutes). They have limited runs, usually first thing in the morning, so if you've always wanted to experience the sights and smells (and bumps!) of steam, plan your visit accordingly!

For our adventure, we'd be going about halfway up the mountain in one of the steam trains, then unloading and hopping aboard a diesel train for the remainder of the trip.

It's hard not to feel like a kid again at the sight of a colorful steam train blowing its whistle under a plume of steam and smoke as it chugs along a winding track, especially when the surrounding landscape is as green and rolling and beautiful as the White Mountains of New Hampshire.

Those who love the Cog are indebted to its founder, Sylvester Marsh. Marsh had grown up in Campton, NH but made his fortune in Chicago's meat-packing industry. After retiring, he returned home and came up with the idea for the railway, which was always intended for tourists, while climbing (and nearly perishing on) the mountain in 1852. Everyone thought he was crazy (you "might as well build a railway to the moon" he was told), but Marsh was undaunted. He obtained a charter to build the railway in 1858, but thanks to the Civil War, work didn't begin until 1866. Three years later, the Cog was complete.

We pulled away from the station, pushed by the chugging steam locomotive (the locomotive and the coach aren't technically "connected," making the experience even more exciting) and the adventure began!

Inside the locomotive, an engineer steers the locomotive while another shovels the coal into the flames to keep things moving. It's a very difficult job, and the staff are the total package — hardworking, passionate, and clearly in love with their jobs. Their enthusiasm is infectious.

The steepest section of the Cog's trestle, with a 37.41% grade, Jacob's Ladder is the section of track that thrills folks the most. It makes the Cog the second steepest rack railway in the world after the Pilatus railway in Switzerland, which clocks in at 48%. From inside the coach, however, the view doesn't seem so nail-biting — just beautiful as far as the eye can see, even on a cloudy day.

Before long, amidst a swirl of clouds, we arrived at the almost-top. The true summit is another 20 or so rocky steps up (meaning even train riders can tell friends they "hiked to the top" of Mount Washington without technically lying). The temperature had dropped a good 30 degrees from the base, so we weren't just walking among the clouds, but through them.

After climbing to the summit for a photo, head inside to take a quick tour of the Mount Washington Observatory. There's also a gift shop, but the largest crowds are gathered in the wood-paneled cafeteria, where tourists and hikers from all over the world mingle and recharge over coffee, hot chocolate, and hot bowls of soup.

For the return trip, the chairs had helpfully been flipped around so we rode down "backwards." This is crucial for the Jacob's Ladder portion of the trip! It also afforded a lovely view of the ribbon of track winding behind us as we made our way back to the Base. Before long we had come down out of the clouds and were nearly back to the station, if not entirely upright.

The Cog Railway was named a National Historic Engineering Landmark on June 26, 1976, and it really is a treasure. By climbing aboard, riders are treated to the same breathtaking thrill-ride today as the railway's first passengers were nearly 150 years ago, and for those that keep the Cog running, that's exactly how it's going to stay.

So, whether you're a fan of travel, adventure, nature, science, weather, transportation, history, trains, photography (must I go on?) — a ride on the Cog is a New England experience that's not to be missed, since it simply cannot be replicated.

Trips on the Cog run about 3 hours (including an hour at the top) and run from late April to early December, but be sure to call or check online before making your plans. Learn more at thecog.com or by calling 603-278-5404.

Things to Do in Rhode Island

Best Classic Attractions in RI

SPRING LAKE ARCADE, GLENDALE

Bring all of your spare change. America's oldest penny arcade really has penny, nickel, and dime machines—mechanical precursors to today's electronic video games, which you can pump with quarters. You'll keep gravitating back to the low-tech yet super clever challenges devised by the nerds of the 1900s. There's also a lakeside beach right outside.

52 Old Hillside Drive. 401-568-8288; springlakearcade.com

THE CLIFF WALK, NEWPORT

New England's most celebrated seaside pathway, a 3.5-mile trail that threads between Gilded Age mansions and the tumbling Atlantic, received a \$5.5 million upgrade in 2014. While most of the investment repaired stretches of the Cliff Walk damaged by Superstorm Sandy, funds also allowed for enhancements, including one that can make or break a romantic stroll or outing with kids: restrooms. Adopting the Parisian tradition, couples have adorned new fencing with "love locks."

Memorial Blvd. & Eustis Ave. visitrhodeisland.com

SOUTHEAST LIGHTHOUSE, BLOCK ISLAND

Built in 1874 to thwart shipwrecks, today the iconic red-brick Southeast Light is a beacon attracting visitors from near and far. Moved back from its precarious perch on the edge of the Mohegan Bluffs in 1993, this National Historic Landmark promises one of the best island vantages; if the guided tour to the top is on offer, it's a must.

Mohegan Trail. 401-466-5009

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY WALKING TOUR OF BENEFIT STREET, PROVIDENCE

This 90-minute tour delves into the fascinating past and vibrant present of one of Providence's most storied streets. Dubbed the "mile of history," Benefit showcases some of the capital city's most picturesque homes, churches, and museums. From June to October, tours depart from the John Brown House Museum.

52 Power St. 401-273-7507 x362; rihs.org/walking-tours

FLYING HORSE MERRY-GO-ROUND, WESTERLY

Imaginations soar at the Flying Horse Merry-Go-Round. And it's no wonder: These 20 meticulously carved and embellished horses are suspended from the center, which gives the feeling that riders are flying. A must visit, it's the oldest (dating back to 1876) and only one of its kind left in the country.

151 Bay St. 401-348-6007

DELECKTA'S PHARMACY, WARREN

Impassioned arguments may be waged over which clam shack serves the best chowder and clam cakes, but nary a soul will disagree that old-school Deleakta's is the king of "cabinets" (Rhode Island frappes). Hands-down favorite: coffee (the syrup is a closely guarded family recipe).

496 Main St. 401-245-6767

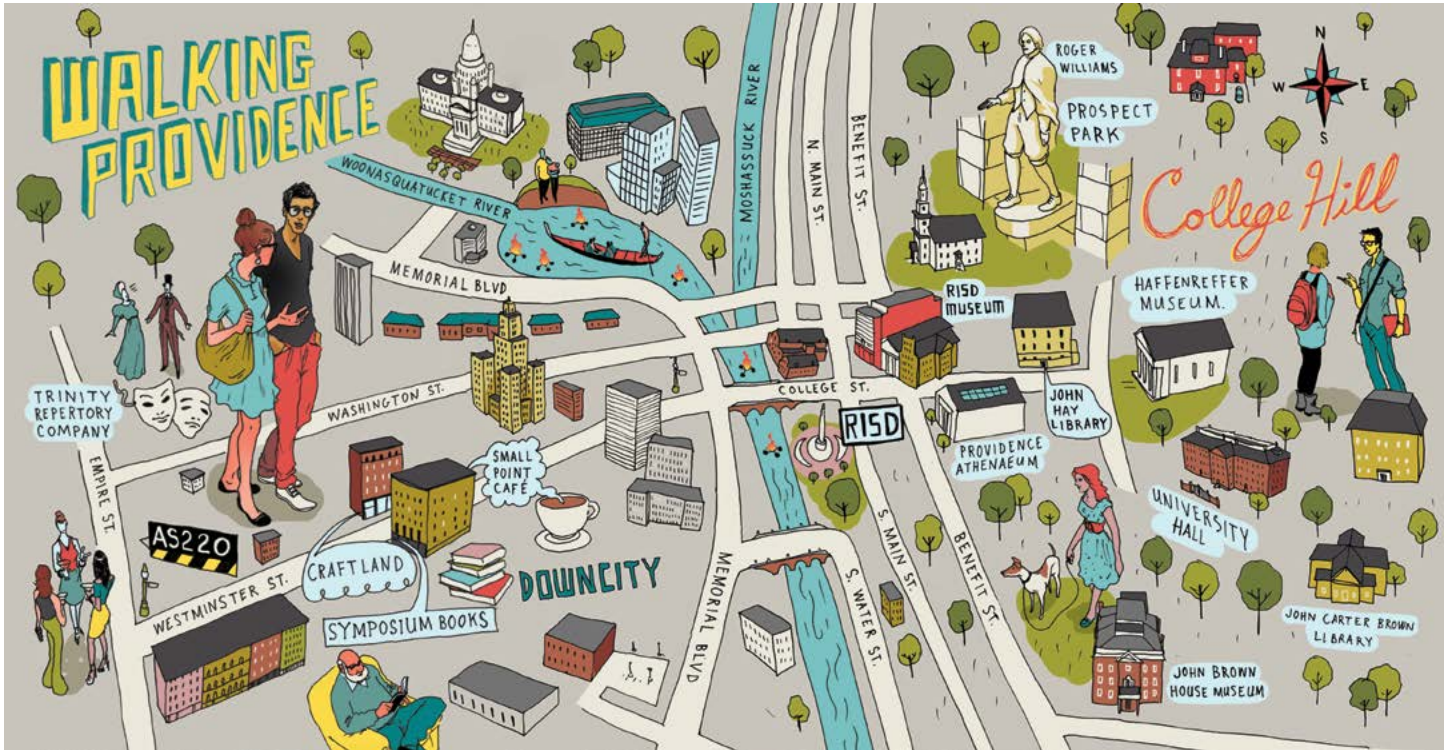
RUSTIC TRI-VUE DRIVE-IN, NORTH SMITHFIELD

The state's only drive-in, the Rustic has been entertaining carloads of families and friends with first-run films since the '50s. It's no-frills, but with three screens showing double features plus a snack bar that doles out dough-boys and clam cakes, it's a guaranteed good time.

Route 146. 401-769-7601

Providence Walking Tour

The statue of Roger Williams in Providence's Prospect Terrace Park strikes an impossibly awkward pose: knees bent, back arched, right arm extended. It looks as though he's trying to catch himself after being punched in the base of his spine. I doubt the real Williams would have complained, however; he had a rough life and learned to take the good with the bad.



Map of Providence Walking Tour
Artwork by Michael Byers

The good in this situation is the view. Statue aside, the panorama is breathtaking. Prospect Terrace Park sits high on College Hill, and the heart of Rhode Island's capital city spreads out below it like a banquet. You can see the steeples of the old town, the towers of DOWncity, and the regal dome of the state house. On clear evenings, the most beautiful sunsets in New England play out here, setting the glass and granite facades ablaze. That would have pleased Williams, its founder. In a region known for its sunrises, his city should be most beautiful at dusk: Providence was established as a critique of and an alternative to the rest of New England, a tradition it has happily fulfilled to this day.

Residents of Providence, when comparing their city with Boston, always talk about its size. It's home to about 178,000 people—big enough to foster robust arts and food scenes but too few to require a subway system. Residents often refer to their city as “comfortable,” “doable,” or “just the right size to bump into people you know all the time.”

Providence has reinvented itself to capitalize on its small-town/big-city feel. At its heart, a compact and surprisingly diverse walking district is taking shape, highlighting some of the reasons why New England's second city is first in the hearts of many.

Providence was founded at the place where the Woonasquattuck and Mashassuck rivers join to flow into Narragansett Bay. This junction is still at the core of the city, and it splits Providence's walking district in two. On the east bank is College Hill, a primarily residential smorgasbord of 18th- and 19th-century architecture and the place where Providence was born.

When Roger Williams arrived here in 1636, he'd been chased out of Massachusetts the previous year for arguing that religion and politics should remain separate. He founded Providence on that principle. So while you'll find almost everything you'd expect from a self-respecting New England historic district here—steeped churches, Georgian mansions, an Ivy League university—the one thing you won't find is a meetinghouse. Williams would have nothing to do with them.

The original settlement was laid out in long strips that ran from the riverside up the hill. Those early homes are long gone now, but the steep grade of the hill remains. Today, however, instead of colonial Baptists laboring up and down it, you're more likely to spot a gaggle of coeds regretting the poor arch supports in their canvas shoes. As its name suggests, College Hill is anchored by its institutions of higher learning, Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design, and both bring a lot to the neighborhood.

The RISD Museum on Benefit Street features an aggressively diverse collection dedicated to exposing its students to as many artistic styles as possible. Traveling from one gallery to the next, you'll first see ancient Egyptian carvings, then possibly a modern multimedia installation, or a nine-foot-tall wooden Buddha. A new wing, opened in 2009, gives the museum more space to display works created by its students, though you could argue that the gift shop accomplishes that better. RISD Works offers an eclectic range of unique items—from fine jewelry to robotic bugs—all designed by current and former students.

Farther up the hill, the Brown University quad serves as the heart of the College Hill neighborhood. Here you'll find the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, a worthy distraction, but book lovers could skip it and head right to the libraries. The John Hay and John Carter Brown libraries hold astonishing collections of rare and ancient texts, and they frequently display curated exhibits of their finest holdings. And visitors with a taste for the bizarre should know that if you ask the librarians at the Hay nicely enough, they may show you their collection of three anthropodermic books: books bound in human skin.

College Hill is a magnet for this type of thing. It's filled with the macabre and the mysterious, as the ghost tours that ply its streets will attest. For instance, at the John Brown House Museum you can see a root that grew through the remains of Roger Williams and supposedly took on his shape. There's also the Annmary Brown Memorial, a small art museum built within the tomb of its founders.

It's unclear why the neighborhood's spirit is so Gothic, but even Edgar Allan Poe felt it. He found inspiration here in the form of Sarah Helen Whitman, a fellow poet of similarly dark taste who enjoyed seances and wore a casket-shaped pendant around her neck. The two had a suitably literary courtship, stealing quiet moments together in the stacks of the Providence Athenaeum. They were betrothed, but the engagement fell apart the day before the wedding. Whitman continued to carry a torch for Poe and was convinced that she was the inspiration for the beloved corpse in "Annabel Lee." (She took it as a compliment, which might mean they were right for each other after all.)

Traveling down the hill from Benefit Street you'll quickly run into both the river and a time warp. The bookish, colonial ambience of College Hill vanishes at the water's edge, replaced by the urban glass-and-steel grandeur of Downcity.

The river divides Providence into two eras. The east bank was built when tall ships were king, and cargoes from China, Africa, and beyond cluttered the wharves. In the mid-1800s the city began to shift westward, riding a manufacturing boom that established its urban core. With railroads taking the place of ships, the river was almost entirely paved over, replaced by Crawford Street Bridge, a thoroughfare known to history as the widest span ever built and to residents as the most congested.

To the relief of the city's residents and visitors, that's no longer the case. Like most New England cities, Providence saw its manufacturing base crumble after World War II and watched as urban decay set in. Starting in the

1970s, urban planners and nonprofits began imagining ways to turn the city around (a process they now refer to as “the Renaissance”). Resurrecting the rivers was high on their list, though it wouldn’t be until 1995 that Providence’s Riverwalk took full shape.

Explore the Newport Mansions

In the late 19th century, America’s wealthiest residents flocked to the Newport, Rhode Island coastline to build their summer “cottages” as an escape from the hustle and bustle of New York City life. These “cottages” however, are anything but quaint. The enormous facades and even more lavish interiors housed a unique and selective class of business moguls and heirs.

As the Gilded Age drew to a close, however, many fortunes were lost and some mansions faced unclear futures. Some even faced futures as parking lots. But thanks to the Preservation Society of Newport County, many of Newport’s most fascinating mansions have been preserved, protected, and opened to the public. Guests can mosey around the different rooms, learn about what life was like in that era, and wistfully imagine days gone by. Mark Twain coined the term “Gilded Age” back in 1873, but he wasn’t praising the glitz and gold trim we think of today. He was instead satirizing the divide between the lavish spending of a few and the harsh, bitter reality of the rest.

I first toured The Elms, which still captures the elegance it was renowned for, with its intricate ceiling and wall detailing and vast collection of cultural art.



Front facade of Rosecliff mansion
Photo by Bethany Bourgault

Next I ventured to Rosecliff, a sweeping capital-H-shaped French pavilion designed specifically for entertaining. Heiress Tessie Oelrichs and her husband Hermann Oelrichs, a steamship/shipping tycoon, commissioned the home to be built in 1902. It changed hands a few times, but was always used for lavish parties. (It still is today. Rosecliff is one of Newport's most popular venues for weddings and events.)

Just five minutes down the street at Marblehouse, Cornelius Vanderbilt's brother, William, and his wife Alva, built the image of extravagance — complete with 500,000 cubic feet of marble. Glittering stained glass, gold and crystal welcome visitors in the main entrance, just like it would have when hundreds of ladies showed up to the estate for Alva Vanderbilt's "Votes For Women" parties. That's not where Marblehouse's story starts though — it was first given to Alva by her then-husband William as a gift for her 39th birthday.

One of the lesser-frequented mansions, Kingscote, is not without its grandeur. It's tucked into a woodsy yard on Bellevue Ave. and can sometimes be hard to see from the street. What awaits the persistent venturer, though, is a gothic style cottage, reminiscent of an enormous storybook setting. Visitors should especially note the famous dining room, with its Tiffany glass bricks and detailing.

Last but certainly not least, is Newport's fan-favorite — the sprawling, 70-room, 13-acre Renaissance-inspired estate of railroad tycoon Cornelius Vanderbilt II — The Breakers. Named after the waves that crash onto the rocks below the massive back lawn, The Breakers is commonly regarded as the grandest of all the preserved mansions. Gold and platinum-covered walls, unmatched detailing, and a 2 ½-story Great Hall overlook an uninhibited view of the Atlantic Ocean. Though countless fabulous parties were held there, visitors are assured that The Breakers, under the Vanderbilt's care, was always a family house. Children founded and kept up the tradition of sliding down the grand staircase on serving trays, and a smaller (yet still massive) play-cottage sits in the yard.

Ready to experience a piece of the past? Visiting the lavish Newport Mansions of Newport, Rhode Island offers an opulent peek into the "Gilded Age" of American history.

The Newport Mansions and The Preservation Society of Newport County. 401-847-1000; newportmansions.org

...and More

Best of Hartford, CT

BEST HISTORIC CAPITOL

CONNECTICUT'S OLD STATE HOUSE, HARTFORD

The legislative chamber within this elegant red-brick edifice looks as though 1776 was just yesterday. Up-to-date exhibits include Joseph Steward's Museum of Curiosities. Hands-on opportunities for history buffs of all ages. 800 Main St. 860-522-6766; ctoldstatehouse.org

BEST LITERARY HOME

MARK TWAIN HOUSE & MUSEUM, HARTFORD

Sense the humor, happiness, and hard times that reflect Twain's family life in the home where he wrote his famed novels, stories, essays, and travel commentary. Tours and related exhibits deepen the experience. 351 Farmington Ave. 860-247-0998; marktwainhouse.org

BEST DESIGNER BOUTIQUE

JAPANALIA EIKO, HARTFORD

Men's and women's fashions flow with exceptional fabrics, colors, and lines recalling the shop's Tokyo roots. Design inspiration is gathered from far and near. Intimate musical performances flow at the boutique, too. 11 Whitney St. 860-232-4677; japanalia.com

BEST ART EVENTS

REAL ART WAYS, HARTFORD

An ever-evolving center for contemporary art exhibits, live music, performance art, independent film screenings, and poetry readings. Every third Thursday, join the "Creative Cocktail Hour." 56 Arbor St. 860-232-1006; realartways.org

BEST BEER & SNACKS

CITY STEAM BREWERY CAFE, HARTFORD

Meet the bar's "Naughty Nurse," "Uncle Dunkel," and other in-house beers—all perfectly matched with globetrotting appetizers: flavors from Thai to Mexican. 942 Main St., 860-525-1600; citysteambrewerycafe.com

BEST RIVERVIEW RESTAURANT

ON20, HARTFORD

Only the restaurant's breathtaking views can distract from the impressive plates, where standards are reimaged. Rare pairings astonish, and desserts delight. Add excellent service and an elegant bar for premier dining. 400 Columbus Blvd. 860-722-5161; ontwenty.com

BEST MUSIC & SOUTHERN MENU

BLACK EYED SALLY'S BBQ & BLUES, HARTFORD

Monday jazz and Wednesday blues jams are just two of the noteworthy sessions drawing audiences. Cajun-influenced catfish, ribs, pulled pork, fried chicken, and jambalaya entice everyone else. 350 Asylum St. 860-278-7427; blackeyedsallys.com

BEST CHIC & COMFORT MENU

GRANT'S RESTAURANT & BAR & BAR, WEST HARTFORD

Choose an innovative plate arranged with “Jerk Duck & Egg” or go with an old favorite: “Mom’s Meatloaf.” Either way, loyal fans praise Grant’s alluringly crafted midday and evening meals.

977 Farmington Ave. 860-236-1930; billygrant.com

BEST ITALIAN DESSERT

MOZZICATO DEPASQUALE BAKERY & PASTRY SHOP, HARTFORD

What to eat with your latte? Come and share cannoli, gelato, and pastries—then take home a selection.

329 Franklin Ave. 860-296-0426; mozzicatobakery.com

BEST ALL-ACCESS

MARRIOTT DOWNTOWN, HARTFORD

Flanked by the Connecticut Science Center and the Connecticut Convention Center, this 409-room hotel offers award-winning dining at Vivo, plus spa and indoor pool.

200 Columbus Blvd. 860-249-8000; marriott.com

BEST HISTORIC DISTRICT B&B

CHESTER BULKLEY HOUSE, WETHERSFIELD

The city’s colonial past and today’s excellent eateries reside nearby. Five bright bedrooms and an antiques-furnished sitting room encourage restful days.

184 Main St. 860-563-4236; chesterbulkleyhouse.com

Summer in Hartford, CT | Gardens, Parks, and History

Centrally located in Connecticut, the capital city of Hartford might not draw in as many visitors as some other New England capital cities, but Hartford’s smaller size makes it a manageable day trip for many. And in the summer, Hartford’s lovely parks and rich history offer plenty for visitors to discover while enjoying the outdoors.

It being June when I visited, I started my day at Elizabeth Park in the city’s west end. Of the park’s 102 acres, it is arguably most celebrated for its 1904 rose garden, the oldest municipally-operated garden of its kind in the country, with varieties including ramblers, climbers, and shrubs in a host of colors. Named “Best Rose Garden” by “Yankee” 2014, it was described as “a heady 2.1-acre paradise of wall-to-wall roses, with arches muffled in climbers and Technicolor beds of unfurling buds in every shade of white, red, pink, yellow, and orange—more than 800 varieties in all.”

The fragrance as you stroll is heavenly. The perfume is especially nice as a feature of the park’s annual free summer concert series, taking place in the garden on select Wednesday evenings throughout the warmer months.

Benches encourage sitting, and many do. After all, how often in life can you truly “stop and smell the roses” in the nation’s oldest public rose garden and its 3rd largest?

If you’re hungry, a short stroll from the rose garden is the Pond House Cafe, where local, fresh and organic ingredients are served up for lunch, dinner, and weekend brunch, with outdoor seating during nice weather. If it’s just a quick bite you’re after, the Dog House take-out window is also open later in the day and offers hot dogs, ice cream, and cold drinks.

The park is nearly as popular with wildlife as it is with humans. Just remember to keep your crumbs to yourself! And by all means, enjoy the view from any of the park’s many scenic spots.



The famous rose garden at Elizabeth Park.
Photo by Aimee Seavey

Leaving the natural beauty of Elizabeth Park behind, I headed downtown (just a 10 minute drive) in search of something to eat and some history. Since it was lunchtime on a weekday, downtown Hartford was bustling with office workers enjoying the sunshine and growing number of food trucks.

After lunch, it was time for a history lesson.

Named “Best Historic Capital” by Yankee in our “Best of Hartford, CT | 2013 Editors’ Choice Awards,” the Connecticut Old State House is an ideal spot to sample Hartford’s rich past. The 1796 building is believed to have been designed by famed architect Charles Bulfinch as his first public building, and it was one of Connecticut’s two official state houses. The other was in New Haven. Government business would alternate between the two from year to year until 1873, when all of the action moved to Hartford permanently. When a new Hartford Capitol building opened in 1878, the old one served as City Hall until 1915. Since then, it has avoided demolition more than once (sometimes quite closely) to become one of Hartford’s most engaging and enduring historic landmarks.

After admiring the outside, I headed inside for a quick look. The friendly staff offer guided tours, but if you prefer to go it alone or are pressed for time (like I was) they’ll hand you a laminated guide to refer to as you visit the rooms.

A lot of history has happened in the Old State House, most notably the 1839 start of the Amistad trial made famous in the 1997 Steven Spielberg film. Heading upstairs, the Statue of Justice offers a silent and imposing greeting. A gilt-covered wooden statue, she was first placed atop the State House cupola in 1827, where she remained for nearly 150 years, until it was decided to bring her inside in 1976 for preservation’s sake. Today, a fiberglass replica is on the top of the building.

To the right is the yellow Federal-style Senate Chamber, with its original Gilbert Stuart Washington portrait. The portrait was commissioned by the Connecticut General Assembly following Washington's death in 1799, and it's been in the same spot ever since. The Governor's Council met privately in this room until the 1818 Connecticut Constitution dissolved the Council and formed the elected Senate. At that time, the railing and benches were added so the public could view the proceedings.

Across the hall is the Victorian-style House Chamber. A few of the notable legislators who served here include showman P.T. Barnum and American Dictionary author Noah Webster.

Across from the Statue of Justice (leaving the politics behind for a moment) is a horse (or boar, or alligator, or 2-headed calf) of an entirely different color — the "Museum of Curiosities."

Confused? I was! But also more than a little intrigued. It turns out that in 1796, the state General Assembly granted Rev. Joseph Steward permission to use space in the Old State House as a portrait studio. A year later, he established a "Curiosity Room" on the third floor featuring wonders and treasures from around the world. Reproduced today a floor below, Steward's collection, which includes a two-headed calf, enormous lobster claw, butterfly specimens, an upside-down alligator suspended overhead, and more (much more), is as interesting as ever.

In the building's lowest level lies its most colorful and interactive exhibits. In the Mortensen Gallery, "History is All Around Us" explores over 300 years of Hartford's and Connecticut's history through photographs and objects in an engaging, fun, and informative way that's both kid-friendly and interesting for adults.

A few minutes walk away from the Old State House was my final slice of summer in Hartford — Bushnell Park. The park is named after Reverend Horace Bushnell, who first presented the idea of a public park financed by public funds. Now the oldest publicly funded park in the United States, Bushnell Park (built in 1868) attracts both locals and visitors with summer concerts, guided historic tours, and even an art gallery. Unfortunately, I only had time for a quick visit and didn't get to see some of the park's key features like the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Arch and Corning Fountain, but it's hard to miss the rising golden dome of the 1876 Capitol.

The park calls itself "an oasis in the heart of the city where people from all walks of life come to renew their spirit and energy," and sure enough, I saw many of the city's residents strolling the park's paths or enjoying a book on one of its benches.

My favorite Bushnell Park attraction is the park's 1914 Stein and Goldstein carousel, a fixture in Hartford since 1974. For just \$1 a ride, visitors are treated to an old-fashioned ride right back to childhood. Celebrating its 100th birthday in 2014, the Bushnell Park carousel is a treasure.

And finally, since it just wouldn't be a visit to historic Hartford without it, before heading home I made a quick stop at the Mark Twain House and Museum nearby on Farmington Avenue, decked out for the upcoming holiday with patriotic bunting. You don't have to pay the admission fee to take a look and enjoy a quick lap around the house, so I took advantage of the museum's kindness and did just that. The perfect ending to my day in Hartford.

Weekend in Burlington, Vermont

Like much of Vermont, Burlington is both a place and a lifestyle. Urban and outdoors, earthy and upscale, local and international. Located on the widest portion of Lake Champlain, with views of the neighboring Adirondack Mountains, this metropolis on the water packs big city perks with big country access. Its downtown, and Church

Street, especially, is a visitor's paradise of small shops and fine cuisine. Just beyond sits Champlain and its islands, farmland, ski trails, and bike paths. It's the full Vermont experience, rolled into one unforgettable destination.

WHERE TO EAT

THE FARM HOUSE TAP & GRILL

An upscale, cheerful (and sometimes boisterous) spot, this downtown restaurant showcases local food, home-made charcuterie, and an abundance of beers and cheeses. Burgers are a standout.

160 Bank St. 802-859-0888; farmhousetg.com

AL'S FRENCH FRYS, SOUTH BURLINGTON

It's really all about the spuds at Al's—freshly cut, quickly blanched, and double-fried. A local institution since the late 1940s, Al's was named one of "America's Classics" by the James Beard Foundation.

1251 Williston Road. 802-862-9203; alsfrenchfrys.com

Skinny Pancake, South Burlington

With savory crêpes featuring local apples and Cabot cheese, or sweet ones such as the "Choco-Monkey" (Nutella and banana slices), Skinny Pancake suits most tastes. Elaborate dinner crêpes (such as Thai veggies and noodles) are available Thursday through Saturday evenings; brunch crêpes on weekends.

60 Lake St. 802-540-0188; skinnypancake.com

SPLASH AT THE BOATHOUSE

To end the day or start the evening, order a drink and an appetizer and watch the sun set over Lake Champlain and the Adirondacks at the Queen City's only floating waterfront restaurant. Order a couple of the house-special "Rock the Docks" cocktails and you might even see the Caribbean-green flash.

College St. 802-658-2244; splashattheboathouse.com

WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL VERMONT

This downtown destination offers bright, modern accommodations without boutique minimalism. Vermont wood and stonework are everywhere, and locally sourced ingredients are the rule at Juniper restaurant. A satellite location of the award-winning Hen of the Wood is also a dining option.

41 Cherry St. 802-651-0080; hotelvt.com

MADE INN VERMONT

Luxe B&B or micro-hotel? Burlington's newest inn blends 19th- and 20th-century styles—including for-sale Vermont artworks—in a classic, cupola-topped Victorian mansion. Enjoy gel-topped mattresses, in-room fridges stocked with local delicacies, a sauna, and an outdoor hot tub. Beer and wine are available.

204 South Willard St. 802-399-2788; madeinnvermont.com

WHAT TO DO

THE FLYING PIG BOOKSTORE

While not in Burlington city limits, this award-winning shop in nearby Shelburne, owned by former teachers, is a worth a visit. Featuring more than 40,000 titles and knowledgeable staffers who have seemingly read every single one, the shop makes its home in the former Shelburne Inn.

5247 Shelburne Road. 802-985-3999; flyingpigbooks.com

QUEEN CITY GHOST WALK

Get a jump on the spooky season by joining actor/author Thea Lewis, who offers several different nighttime tours that highlight the area's haunted past, including a visit to UVM ("one of the most haunted campuses in the country"), a spine-tingling stroll through Lakeview Cemetery, and "Darkness Falls," a ghostly tour of downtown Burlington.

802- 351-1313; queencityghostwalk.com

ECHO LAKE AQUARIUM & SCIENCE CENTER

America's "Sixth Great Lake" and environs are the focus of this waterfront resource, where visitors come face to face with Champlain's denizens. Learn about the area's ecological history, shipwrecks, and of course the legendary monster, "Champ." (Echo stands for Ecology, Culture, History, and Opportunity.)

1 College St. 802-864-1848; echovermont.org

BTV FLEA, BURLINGTON

The city's burgeoning South End Arts District hosts a bustling flea market on the third Sunday of each month from May through October, featuring antiques, handicrafts, artwork, brewery tours and tastings, and lots of food.

180 Flynn Ave. 802-488-5766; vintageinspired.net

BURLINGTON & COLCHESTER BIKE PATHS

Cyclists skirt the city shoreline, cross the Winooski River, and connect with suburban Colchester's own bike trail. The fun really begins as the route heads out onto Lake Champlain along a 3½-mile former railroad causeway.

A seasonal bike ferry links with scenic roads threading the Champlain Islands. 802-864-0123; enjoyburlington.com/parks/bikepath1.cfm (Burlington Dept. of Parks & Recreation). 802-861-2700; localmotion.org (ferry information and bike rentals)

Visit The Yankee Candle Village Store in South Deerfield, Massachusetts

This fall, feed all of your senses by stepping into a world of expertly-crafted aromas and scented delights. The Yankee Candle Village store in South Deerfield, Massachusetts is the perfect place to celebrate the fall season (and gear up for the holiday season too!). Wander through the world-famous Bavarian Village, see how candles were made throughout history, take a break and listen to the singing Candle Mountain Boys, and even try your hand at making your own candle. All that and more awaits visitors to this family-friendly destination, aptly nicknamed, the "Scenter of the Universe."

It all started back in 1969 when a 16-year-old schoolboy in South Hadley realized he didn't have the money to buy his mother a Christmas present. In an impressive display of Yankee ingenuity, he melted common household wax and a red crayon into an empty milk carton before adding some string for a wick. That was the first ever Yankee Candle.

A neighbor saw his project before he gave it to his mother, and proposed an offer that young Mike Kittredge couldn't refuse. He sold his neighbor the candle and used the profits to buy supplies to make two more candles (another for his mother, and an extra to sell). After what was probably a lovely holiday, Kittredge opened up a shop out of his father's garage. His products gained local popularity, his company blossomed, and the rest was history.

South Deerfield's Yankee Candle Village is exactly what its name suggests it is – a village. Inside, the New England Market houses eating areas for Chandler's Café and any other type confection you may be craving. Guests can browse the collections of local artisans and relax by indoor fountains while the kids (both young and old) enjoy performances by the animatronic singing Candle Mountain Boys. In the sprawling candle room lies Wax Works, where visitors can dip, design, and create their own unique candles. Don't forget to stop by the Candle



Yankee Candle Village
Photo by Bethany Bourgault

Making Museum and learn how these famous candles were made in the past and today.

Further inside this sprawling complex of candles, a 14th century German village celebrates Christmas year-round. The charming buildings and twinkling lights of the Bavarian Village are enough to put anyone in the Christmas spirit, no matter the season. The shops in the village offer a collection of over 100,000 ornaments as well as just about any other Christmas gift or decoration a shopper could want. Don't miss the Nutcracker Castle, where commoners suddenly feel like knights and queens. Charming goldfish swim under the drawbridge and regal thrones await the unsuspecting royal (or tourist with a camera), giving the rooms an extra hint of a fairy-tale aura. If all this still isn't Christmas-y enough, visit Mr. Christmas himself at Santa's Workshop, where Santa stops by to chat with young visitors. When it's time to meander away from the village, double check that you brought your sweater – the Black Forest has a forecast of snow every four minutes!

Now, no New England destination would be complete without some good New England grub, and Chandler's Restaurant has this stop's visitors covered. Family-friendly with a rustic setting, it's perfect for functions, weddings, or simply a relaxing lunch. Its name comes from the old English word "chandler," meaning "candle-maker."

If you're still not convinced you should check out the village, perhaps the unmatched selection of home goods, baking supplies, jewelry and gifts will be the deciding factor. The South Deerfield Yankee Candle Village offers over 400,000 candle options, available in 200+ scents specially crafted by scent engineers. It's the perfect place to celebrate New England, get a head start on Christmas shopping, and even do some shopping for yourself.

Yankee Candle Village Store. 25 Greenfield Rd., South Deerfield, MA. yankeecandle.com



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