



Discover Providence

BY CHERYL FENTON

Consider it old-world charm meets modern sophistication.

A destination that both thrills you with rings of fire on water and calms you with romantic gondola rides. It's a creative community fed by a love for art and eclectic menus from funky bistros. Rich history found in the shape of a Colonial home or a unique flower vase from an antique shop.

It's Rhode Island's capitol city of
Providence—a city of choices.



A City Stroll

Whether it's a stroll along the historic riverfront or through a quirky neighborhood, an intimate look at Providence begins on foot.

Three-and-a-half centuries of history are alive and well on the city streets and seen through the immaculately preserved Colonial, Federal, Greek Revival, and Victorian houses. Begin on historic Benefit Street, known as the "Mile of History." The expanse from Wickenden Street to Olney Street is an impressive representation of 18th- and 19th-century buildings.

Walk down Thayer Street, on the edge of the Brown University campus on the East Side, and you'll run into bookstores, chic boutiques, coffeehouses, and teahouses.

To escape the city's confines for a more natural approach to land before modern mayhem, travel the East Bay Bike Path—15 miles of paved path through country, shoreline, salt marshes, and woods.

The Art Scene

Whatever artist inclination your walk didn't provide can be discovered within the walls of the many galleries, theaters, and museums. Home to the famous Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), Providence is an eclectic haven for artists and entertainers, with the largest number of working artists in the country.

The RISD Museum itself traces the history of art from antiquity to the present through a collection of nearly 80,000 works of art, representing cultures from around the world.

On the third Thursday of each month (March through November), a bus loops throughout the city for Gallery Night, a free ride that stops at the more than 25 participating galleries, art shops, and museums for visitors to experience the emerging arts scene.

Led by the Tony Award-winning Trinity Repertory Company, performing arts also take center stage in Providence's artist community. Music lovers enjoy the Rhode Island Philharmonic and Opera Providence, while those who prefer prose enjoy performances from the Perishable Theater and

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the Providence Black Repertory Company. An impressive venue, the gilded Providence Performing Arts Center is not only a historic landmark but also features musicals, ballets, plays, and concerts.

Dining & Shopping Finds

Providence is home to the world's largest culinary educator, Johnson & Wales University, and many students remain in Providence after graduation, lending a freshness in culinary arts to the dining scene. The city boasts options for all tastes and budgets, with more degreed chefs per capita than in any other city in the United States.

Critical acclaim aside, Providence doesn't take itself too seriously. It was, after all, the birthplace of the diner in 1872. The most beloved of all local diners, Haven Brothers, is just a trailer on wheels that parks nightly next to City Hall for burgers into the wee hours.

The city is perhaps most well known for its Italian food, with the festive Federal Hill on the shores of Narragansett Bay named "One of the Five Best Little Italys in the U.S." by Food Network chef Mario Batali.

From the upscale Providence Place—a mall with more than 100 retail, dining, and entertainment options—to the funky urban chic of East Side boutiques, Providence also offers an intriguing mix of shopping.

The oldest indoor mall in America (circa 1828), the Arcade features massive granite columns and extensive interior ornamental wrought iron work. A National Historic Landmark, the Greek Revival building boasts a façade with six gigantic Ionic columns, intricate cast-iron railings, and three tiers of shops and dining.



For an overseas adventure minus the travel, discover the offerings of Pan Zhai, a direct importer of extraordinary furniture pieces from late 18th- and early 19th-century China. Located in East Providence, Pan Zhai inventories hundreds of pieces within its 8,000-square-foot Exotic Gallery and Warehouse Showroom. Within its museumlike atmosphere, the store showcases a stunning collection of original Chinese antique furniture, exquisitely crafted reproductions, and unique Asian artifacts.

Shopping for a new look that goes beyond an outfit or a new pair of shoes? Give yourself an updated look with Yoash Enzer, M.D., one of Rhode Island's most respected plastic surgeons. With offices in the Southside Medical Center, Enzer offers treatments for a new you, including fat transfer, collagen, Restylane, Botox, chemical peels, and laser hair removal. Enzer also performs his own revolutionary approach to reducing or removing scars permanently, FaSuLa.

Your Place in Providence

You can't say "Providence" without "WaterFire" flickering on your tongue shortly afterward. This award-winning fire sculpture installation centers on a series of 100 bonfires blazing just above the surface of the three rivers that pass through the middle of downtown. Stroll along the river while listening to an eclectic selection of classical and world music that serves as an accompaniment to the sounds of urban life. WaterFire is free and typically occurs every other Saturday evening, from April until October.

Home of WaterFire, WaterPlace Park winds through downtown along the river and features paths, stonework, Venetian-style footbridges, and an amphitheater for summer concerts.

Located in immediate proximity to WaterPlace Park, The Residences at the Westin, a 33-story tower of 100 residential condos above the Westin hotel, will be completed in early 2007, and will have panoramic views of Narragansett Bay,

the East Side, the Financial District, and points west. The Residences will be the most connected address in Providence with indoor access to The Providence Place Mall, The RI Convention Center, and Providence's premier venue for concerts and sporting events, The Dunkin Donuts Center. Homes will range in size from 764 square feet to more than 2,800 square feet, be fully appliance, and feature hardwood flooring, marble bathrooms, and European balconies. Private, enclosed parking will also be included. Residents will have access to all hotel services, including room service, housekeeping, and event planning. Not to mention the city at their feet.

Visitors can turn to the Rhode Island Tourism Division for the whens, whats, and wheres of Providence, with the division's annual Travel Guide magazine, outdoor guide, maps, and events guide. In conjunction with regional tourism councils, the tourism board also offers "Tour Rhode Island." This annual event (held this year on May 7) offers the chance to visit the small state on a grand scale. Among the 2006 itineraries are two Providence trips—Arts & Theater and New "Downcity."

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Rhode Island Tourism Board

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Tour Rhode Island

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All photos Courtesy of the Providence Warwick Convention & Visitor Bureau, with the exception of Pan Zhai, courtesy of Pan Zhai.