



## Discover Central Massachusetts Story Ideas

Since its beginning, Central Massachusetts has been home to innovation - progressive thinkers and doers that have led to unique experiences, and just as interesting stories. Use these ideas for inspiration.

### Invention & Innovation

Worcester has always been known for its innovative spirit. From its beginning, investors encouraged small-scale experimentation which led to the city serving as an incubator for many industries. This earned it the recognition that “everything was invented here” including the monkey wrench, birth control and the lunch wagon. Worcester saw the first rocket propelled by liquid fuel but that’s just the beginning to its connection with space. Suits for the first walk in space were made in Worcester in addition to the headset used during Neil Armstrong’s walk on the moon. The Worcester Historical Museum proudly puts these inventions (and more!) on display to shed light on the city’s wide industrial legacy.

### Central Mass is all Smiles

As the birthplace of the smiley face, you can’t help but grin when you see the bright yellow symbol across Worcester – from murals to buttons and everything in between. The familiar face has been bringing happiness since 1963 when Worcester resident Harvey Ball was asked to create a logo that would raise morale. The resulting smiley face comes with specific features: a perfect circle, always yellow, narrow oval eyes with one larger than the other and an off-centered smile. Before passing away in 2001, Ball declared the first Friday of October as “World Smile Day” to encourage people to make others smile by performing acts of kindness. Each year Worcester hosts The Harvey Ball celebration, awarding an individual with the Smile Award for making others smile.

### Will You Be Mine?

Hearts abound in Worcester, known as the heart of the commonwealth (since the 1820s) and birthplace of the American Valentine in 1847. While the city’s slogan relates more to its geographic location within the state, it became official one year after Esther Howland created the first Valentine made in the U.S. Worcester was also home to The Whitney Valentine Company – who eventually purchased Howland’s business – that was the largest and oldest manufacturer of Valentines in the world. Explore the history of the Valentine at the Worcester Historical Museum and in February take part in special Valentine events, including Worcester’s Free February series.

### Take Me Out to the Ball Game

There is plenty to cheer for with Worcester’s home teams. Slide into the stands for a Worcester Bravehearts’ game, the summer collegiate baseball team that was crowned 2019 Champions. The Worcester Red Sox

(nicknamed the WooSox), the triple-A affiliate of the Boston Red Sox, will be moving from Pawtucket, RI to the new Polar Park in Worcester's Canal District, set to open spring 2021. Watch the Worcester Railers Hockey Club take to the ice, root for the professional indoor football team, the Massachusetts Pirates or follow Worcester Roller Derby (WoRD), the city's only flat track women's roller derby league.

## Cutting Edge Cuisine

Sink your teeth into Central Massachusetts, a hub of culinary talent that believes no meal should be ordinary. Dine along Worcester's Restaurant Row on Shrewsbury Street, home to over 50 establishments that serve cuisine from a variety of ethnicities including authentic Chinese, Afghani, Cuban, Mexican and Italian flavors. Sample seasonal, fresh flavors at the region's farm-to-table restaurants that use the best of local harvests. Or try the latest concept from one of the area's cutting-edge chefs. With influences from around the world, one doesn't have to go far to find a good meal.

## The First "Lunch Wagon" and Today's Diners

The diner, a small roadside restaurant with long counter and booths, is believed to have evolved from lunch carts or "lunch wagons" that were manufactured in Worcester in the late 1800s. Today, mom-and-pop diners of yesteryear can still be found throughout the city serving delicious, comfort food. Open 24/7, Boulevard Diner (car #730) has been feeding patrons since 1936. Miss Worcester Diner (car #812) is known for its large menu of stuffed French toast, including favorites like smores and peanut butter & jelly.

## "WOW!" What an Art Scene!

From artisan-crafted pottery to painted murals, artistic beauty abounds in Central Massachusetts. POW! WOW! Worcester has curated over 130 works of public art that are tucked throughout the city, creating a scavenger hunt as you stroll. Arts Worcester, a free, public art gallery showcases contemporary and original works of art produced within the last ten years while the Worcester Art Museum houses thousands of unique collections from around the world, some dating back to 3,000 BC.

## Music to My Ears

Whether one is looking for an intimate, indoor performance or an outdoor concert drawing in a large crowd, Central Massachusetts is the place to be. With a variety of venues, the region is always moving and grooving. Mechanics Hall is an acoustical masterpiece that attracts recording artists of all genres, such as jazz, classical and opera, and every seat in its Great Hall has an unobstructed view of the stage making it a perfect spot for live music. The Palladium is a historic concert venue that presents general admission for rock and metal artists and in the summer, hosts concerts on their outdoor stage. The amphitheater at Indian Ranch has been hosting live outdoor entertainment since 1946, welcoming big names in country music and cover bands. As Worcester's entertainment hub, The DCU Center hosts many national touring concerts in its 14,400-seat arena.

## A History for the Ages

With a past that goes back to birth of the United States, Central Massachusetts is rich with history, telling its story and significance through events, exhibits and attractions. Witness what life was like in the early 1800s at Old Sturbridge Village, an outdoor history museum depicting a rural New England town, or walk down

memory lane at the Worcester Historical Museum as you learn about the people and inventions that shaped the area. The American Antiquarian Society holds many noteworthy artifacts including George Washington's teeth and tea from the Boston Tea Party, while the Museum of Russian Icons is home the largest collection of Russian icons outside of Russia. Historic and architectural tours of The Hanover Theatre are offered throughout the year, showcasing the theater's historic renovation that was recognized by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

## **"Mass" in a Glass**

On its way to becoming a hot spot of craft beverages, Central Massachusetts has a mixture of up-and-coming and major craft breweries, plus bars and beer gardens that serve up pints of the best pours around. Popular places include Rapsallion Brewery, stemming from the Old English word meaning "a playfully mischievous individual," Wormtown Brewery, Worcester's first micro-brewery that serves "a piece of Mass in every glass," and Tree House Brewing Company, a draft-only brewery constantly rotating the beers on tap. New to the craft beverage scene is Sail to Trail WineWorks, Worcester's first winery, offering a collection of quality vino curated from around the globe. Hardwick Vineyard and Winery is located in the Giles E. Warner mansion, a house over 200-years-old. Their wines are a true representation of Central Massachusetts with locally grown ingredients such as the cranberries in their Massetts Cranberry.

## **Up & Away: The Active Outdoors**

Head outdoors to pair breathtaking views with memorable fun. The adventurous four-season playground offers a range of activities – from hiking and biking trails for all skill levels to snow fun with skiing, snowboarding and snowtubing options. Boundless Adventures invites visitors to feel the rush of the aerial adventure park's nine courses with 90 rope bridges, 16 ziplines and three leaps of faith. And adrenaline seekers can take to the skies with Hang Glide New England for a bird's-eye view of the scenic region.

## **Family Outings & Friendly Fun**

From arts and animals to nature and noshing, there are plenty of ways to fill a family outing. The Hanover Theatre offers programming appropriate for all ages throughout the year including the National Geographic Speaker Series in partnership with the EcoTarium. Combining science and nature, the EcoTarium features three floors of interactive exhibits, a digital planetarium, outdoor trails that let your creative side run wild and animal habitats that are home to otters, mountain lions, a red fox and more. More animal fun is found at Southwick's Zoo, New England's largest zoological experience with over 850 animals. Step back in time at Old Sturbridge Village where you'll learn firsthand about life in the early 1800s from costumed historians. Tower Hill Botanic Garden has an expansive collection of native and exotic plants, flowers and trees across 132 acres of land to explore. And Worcester's Canal District is the perfect way to fill an afternoon, browsing boutique shops and dining at tasty establishments.

## **That Classic New England Charm**

Located in the heart of New England, Central Massachusetts comes with the peaceful scenery and storybook charm that one would expect. A scenic drive through the area's five regions unfolds panoramic views and breathtaking landscapes. Farm stands and fruit groves pepper the countryside while award-

winning restaurants and artisan shops bring life to quaint villages. Every change of the weather shows a new side to the picturesque destination, but fall foliage is when the colors shine the brightest.

## **Connected Communities: Small Town Finds**

Part of the charm of Central Massachusetts is its connected communities of small businesses. Visitors enjoy exploring the specialty shops found in The Sturbridge Townships and meeting the chefs behind famed restaurants along Worcester's Restaurant Row, all of which come with the friendly hospitality New England is known for. The annual Small Business Saturday event shines light on these business owners with special deals and activities to thank shoppers for keeping dollars in the region.

## **Central Mass: A Source of Pride**

Worcester has an active LGBTQIA+ community with a variety of events and activities taking place year-round, such as the Rainbow Lunch Club for LGBTQIA+ adults over 50, Safe Homes Drop-In Center for dinner and socializing among youth 14-23 and AIRSPRAY, Worcester's monthly queer dance party. The Mailbox, affectionately referred to as MB Lounge, is the oldest continuously gay-owned and -operated bar in Worcester and hosts Queeraoke every Wednesday. Pride Week in September is packed with celebrations such as the Pride Parade, Pride Festival, painting of rainbows in downtown Worcester and raising of the Pride flag.

## **Once A Year: Annual Events & Festivals**

There is always something to celebrate in Central Massachusetts with fun events and festivals happening all year long. Worcester Restaurant Week takes place twice a year as a way for diners to try one of 30 restaurants around the city for a special event price. The city's Caribbean Festival brings exuberance and celebration in support of preservation of Caribbean traditions, and the Black Heritage Juneteenth Festival celebrates African American history and culture through live music, dancing and vendors. One of the more unique events is the annual George Street Bike Challenge, which challenges bicyclists to ride uphill on George Street, the short-but-steep two blocks that feature an 18% incline.

## **Christmas & Winter Holidays**

Central Massachusetts comes alive in the winter with dazzling light displays and special holiday events. The annual Festival of Lights kicks off Worcester's Christmas season as Santa flips the switch to light the City's giant Christmas tree. Holiday music and hanging wreaths surround the Worcester Common Oval's 12,000-square-foot outdoor ice-skating rink. Annual performances include The Nutcracker at The Hanover Theatre and its adaptation of A Christmas Carol, New England's largest and most extravagant production, as well as The Worcester Chorus singing Handel's Messiah at Mechanics Hall - a tradition over 120 years old. Vaillancourt Folk Art is artfully decorated all year but during the holiday season, it transforms into a winter wonderland with breathtaking Christmas displays. Tower Hill's Night Lights illuminates over 15 acres of trees, shrubs and fountains with 200,000 lights and the lit spectacles of Southwick's Zoo are admired by train through Deer Forest.

## **Convenience Meets Convention**

Combining historic New England charm with the conveniences and lively attractions of a bustling metropolis, Central Massachusetts has made a name for itself as an event and conventions destination. Located in the heart of New England, the region is just an hour from major hubs like Providence, Boston and Hartford, and has access to multiple airports, including the Worcester Regional Airport offering direct travel to New York City (JFK), Detroit, Philadelphia and multiple locations in Florida. An excellent commuter destination, travel by rail is available via Amtrak and the commuter line. Hotel accommodations are plentiful and diverse, ranging from charming historical inns to trendy modern establishments. The region also boasts a venue for every occasion and celebration with eclectic meeting spots and historic event spaces that are both memorable and functional. One of its largest locations is the DCU Center with 100,000 square feet of exhibition and display space as well as a 14,400-seat arena. Discover Central Massachusetts works to promote the region as a premiere destination for events, conventions and weddings, contributing to a significant economic impact on the area.