Rhode Island State House
One Capitol Hill, Providence | (401) 222-2880
It is one of the oldest state houses in the U.S., the second oldest in New England, and the oldest of the American architectural firm of McKim, Mead and White. It was a major project of the architect's firm, and the first state house to be designed by an architect rather than an engineer. After a fire destroyed the original buildings in 1829, the new wing of the century was designed by the firm of McKim, Mead and White. The Rhode Island State House is a fine example of Victorian Gothic Revival architecture.

2. Roger Williams National Memorial
22 North Main St, Providence | (401) 275-3910
A visionary and independent thinker, Roger Williams was banished by the Puritan authorities in Massachusetts Bay Colony for refusing to conform to the Church of England. In 1636, he founded the colony of Providence, which he named “Providence.” The site of the original meetinghouse is where Providence was founded, and it is where Roger Williams lived and worked.

3. The Changing City: View from the Roger Williams National Memorial
Approx. 125 North Main St. Providence
This building served as the Colony House until Independence, and it is now a museum that tells the story of the development of Providence.

4. Rhode Island School of Design (RISD)
1 Finley St, Providence | (401) 454-4800
Founded in 1877, RISD was the first school of art and design education. Established in 1877 by 14 members of the RI Women's Centennial Council, the school embodied on a radical experiment in education combining the study of art, craft, and design from sculpture and textiles to furniture making and glass production. The red brick Waterman Building (1893) is a Venetian Renaissance landmark that was built to house the art galleries, classrooms, and studios. As the base of the hill is the Metcalf Building (1875), created to look and function as a medieval factory to teach students how to design. RISD offers more than a traditional fine arts and design education, with an emphasis in creative thinking, industrial design and superior craftsmanship.

5. Commercial North Main Street:
From Colonial to Cast Iron
Approx. 125 North Main St.
This block of North Main Street encapsulates the area’s three centuries as a thriving commercial zone with new developments cropping up on older buildings to meet business needs.

6. Early Industry and Wood-Fired Pizza!
Approx. 4 Steeple St., Providence
These three buildings are testaments to Providence as an early powerhouse of American Industry. They preserve the scale and density of buildings in this commercial area before 20th century developments created the open spaces of the surrounding parking lots.

7. Providence Art Club
140 Water St., Providence
Providence’s highly cultural community of artists and collectors created this club to congregate, create, and display art. It is the second oldest art club in the country. The Providence Art Club was created in 1853 by a group of artists who sought to provide a space for the exchange of ideas and the promotion of art education.

8. First Baptist Church
75 North Main St., Providence | (401) 454-5419
The oldest Baptist church congregation in the United States was founded by Roger Williams in 1638. Providence’s First Baptist Church, located at 75 North Main Street, is the oldest Baptist church in the United States. The church’s history is rich with stories of resilience and innovation, from the founding of Providence in 1636 to the present day.

9. Rhode Island School of Design (RISD): Innovation and Design Excellence
220 Benefit St, Providence | (401) 454-4800
RISD offers more than a traditional fine arts and design education, with an emphasis in creative thinking, industrial design and superior craftsmanship.

10. Market Square and the Market House
Approx. 4 North Main St., Providence
Designed by Joseph Brown in a restrained Georgian manner, the Market House (1779) was intended as a magnificent landmark to the wealth of the Colonial city at the heart of the colonial capital. The building was originally the site of a Colonial tax protest against the British on March 2, 1773 when the people of Providence burned the British tax agent’s house. The Market House became known as the “Baptist Church,” named after the Baptist church that was located there.

11. RISD Museum
220 Benefit St, Providence | (401) 454-4800
Founded in the same year as the school, the RISD Museum has one of the country’s finest collections of art and design. It is located at 215 Benefit Street and houses an extensive collection of works, including ancient Egyptian artifacts and early American decorative arts.

12. Brown University Quadrangle
College St., Providence | (401) 863-1000
Renowned for “The Brown Curriculum,” an innovative liberal arts curriculum in 1804, Brown was founded by a group of Revolutionary War veterans and is renowned for its innovative approach to education. The area was also formerly home to Brown University, which moved to Providence in 1770 and became “Brown University.” In 1964 after a generous donation by Nicholas Brown, the prominent Providence businessmen and alums of the school.

13. First Unitarian Church (ca. 1818)
52 Benevolent St., Providence | (401) 421-7970
A masterpiece by Providence architect John Eidenhoven, the church is a prime example of the Greek Revival style and is known for its towering columns and arched windows.

14. John Brown House Museum (1762)
95 North Main St., Providence | (401) 454-5410
This early 18th-century house is one of the oldest surviving houses in Providence. The house was built for textile manufacturer Henry Lippitt, his wife and six children, and was once home to the great statesman, diplomat, and author Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

15. Stone House Museum
75 North Main St., Providence | (401) 454-5419
This house was built in 1762 for Capt. John Stone, a merchant who was a prominent citizen of Providence. The house is a fine example of New England colonial architecture.

16. Governor Henry Lippitt House
159 Hope St., Providence | (401) 454-5058
Textile manufacturer Henry Lippitt, his wife and six children lived in this opulent house, a testament to the prosperity of the family. Henry Lippitt was one of the most wealthy and influential businessmen of his time, and his house reflected his wealth and status.

17. Rhode Island State Park
630 Benefit St., Providence | (401) 787-1000
This park is a great place to enjoy the outdoors, with hiking trails, a swimming pool, and a playground. It is located in the heart of Providence and is a great place to relax and unwind.

18. Providence Public Library
55 Benefit St., Providence | (401) 272-6500
The Providence Public Library is one of the oldest public libraries in the United States, founded in 1812. It is located in a beautiful stone building and is a great place to find books and research materials.

19. Providence Park
100 Waterman St., Providence | (401) 454-5419
Providence Park is a beautiful park located in the heart of Providence. It is a great place to relax and enjoy the outdoors, with walking paths, a playground, and a pond.

20. Providence College
100 Waterman St., Providence | (401) 454-5419
Providence College is a private Catholic liberal arts college located in Providence. It is a great place to get a quality education and is known for its small class sizes and close-knit community.
Providence Walks: The East Side

A Story of Innovators, Industrialists, Intellectuals and the Irrepressible.

Providence is, and always was, a place for the fiercely independent. The visionary leader Roger Williams established the city in 1636 as a haven for freedom of conscience, where all people could practice their own religious beliefs, a place where they were not merely tolerated, but enjoyed the right of true religious equality. Freedom of thought reigned, which opened the way for freedom of action. The economy boomed as the city grew into a great seaport in the 18th century and an industrial powerhouse in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Leading schools, libraries, art clubs and literary societies were established and the arts flourished, but boom times were followed by economic and social busts.

The Great Depression, industrial decline, and the havoc wrought by demolitions and urban renewal in the 1960s left their mark. But the city survived and became noted for historic preservation of its treasures, its food renaissance, and a thriving artistic and cultural life. Innovation in every way has always marked the city. Today, the streets and waterfront are lined with elegant landmark buildings and quirky old houses and shops, all the legacy of a great past and a vibrant present. So walk the timeworn streets of this remarkably and defiantly preserved town with layers of history and continually evolving contemporary art, design and food scenes. You will meet plenty of characters along the way. This walk brings you along the historic commercial zone of North Main Street and the residential area of Benefit Street in the heart of the College Hill District, noted for its concentration of 18th and 19th century buildings.

Historic Timeline

1636: Roger Williams establishes Providence as a haven for freedom of conscience.
1772: The slave trade is abolished in Rhode Island.
1784: George Washington to trade with China.
1828: Rhode Island School of Design is established.
1877: The Blackstone Canal is completed as Rhode Island industry continues to expand.
1960s: The Great Depression, industrial decline, and the havoc wrought by demolitions and urban renewal.
1967: A hurricane floods downtown.
1978: Ground is broken on the Capital Center redevelopment project, resulting in the shifting of rivers, train tracks and highways, and the reshaping of downtown Providence.
1983: Interstate Highway 195 is relocated from downtown Providence to beyond the Fox Point Hurricane Barrier, allowing for future development.
2011: Providence Personalities

Providence Personalities

**ROGER WILLIAMS**
Visionary thinker on religious freedom, equal treatment of Native Americans, and founder of Providence. Williams' ideas of liberty and freedom of conscience made Rhode Island a haven for persecuted religious groups. He laid the groundwork for the ideas of liberty, equality and the separation of church and state in the U.S. Constitution.

"... that no civil magistrate, no King ... have any power over the souls or consciences of their subjects, in the matters of God ..."

**THE BROWN BROTHERS**
Among the original settlers of Providence in the 1800s, the Brown family emerged as powerful financial, industrial, and cultural leaders shaping many of the city's institutions through the centuries, from churches and schools to industry and historic preservation.

**WILLIAM J. BROWN**
The son of slaves owned by Moses Brown, William was a free African American born in Providence. A sailor, shoemaker and temperance movement supporter, Brown wrote in his autobiography entitled “Life” (1883):

"Mr. Brown, my grandfather's master, seemed well satisfied with his help and thought that although they were his property ... (it was) hence wrong to confine them any longer to servitude ... This was some time before the general emancipation in the State."

**MATILDA SISSIERETTA JONES**
Born in Virginia, but later making College Hill her home, this world-renowned soprano sang for four presidents at the White House and the British Royal Family. She was the first African-American to perform at the New York City Music Hall, later known as Carnegie Hall.

**THE IRREPRESSIBLE SOCIETY**
A charitable organization founded in the mid-19th century by prominent ladies who lived on or near Benefit Street, the Irrepressibles raised funds to pay poor families to make clothing for those in need, as well as provide new shoes, coal and other household goods.

**MARGARET BINGHAM STILLWELL**
A resident of Benefit Street and the accomplished librarian of the Annmary Brown Memorial, Margaret Stillwell wrote two books defending the street's reputation in the 1940s when the area was in serious decline, calling for residents to repair buildings "... to the spirit of youth which ... is still not too far gone to be recaptured." Her vision was realized ten years later when Antoinette Downing and John Nicholas Brown helped launch the Providence Preservation Society.

**H.P. LOVECRAFT**
A master of weird fiction, the East Side resident Lovecraft achieved fame after his death. Author Stephen King described him as "... the 20th century's greatest practitioner of the classic horror tale."

Influenced by Poe, who spent time at the Providence Athenaeum, Lovecraft created a unique world of fantasy and the macabre in stories such as the "Cthulhu Mythos." In his book “The Shunned House” (1924), inspired by a Colonial house on Benefit Street, his fascination for tombs is apparent.

"Cities are museums of buildings and the people are their curators; the citizens of old cities are responsible for finding ways to safeguard, renew, and bring historic architecture into living use in the contemporary world."

*College Hill Study, Providence 1959*

"The city planners are now saying nice things about little old ladies in tennis shoes."

*Dowling, New York Times, May 2, 1985*

"Why Providence's finest hour is yet to come."

*Providence Journal, Jan. 4, 1975*

"The East Side is the most romantic part of the city."

*New York Times, Feb. 20, 1911*