

THE KNOCKTURNAL

Providence, RI is the Perfect Day Trip for Foodies



Providence may still be a somewhat under-the-radar city to explore, and perhaps that's part of its quirky charm. The so-called Renaissance City is having its own renaissance, with much to draw travelers — from visiting sites with historical significance to foodie finds throughout its diverse city, as well as shopping and visiting some of the top universities in the country.

What to Do?

See Providence From a Venetian Gondola



Seeing Providence, RI from the river with Viaggio dei Sogni. Photo courtesy of the author.

One of the best ways to see a city is on the water — even better when you're aboard an authentic Venetian gondola, in Venice or in this American Renaissance City. Step aboard the Viaggio dei Sogni, translation: Trip of Dreams, for 40 minutes round trip up and down the Providence and Woonasquatucket Rivers.

An experienced gondolier rows past historical landmarks, public bridges, and points out other areas of interest. And perhaps best of all, they'll sing to you in Italian, offering an out-of-the-ordinary way to see a city.



Seeing Providence, RI from the river with Viaggio dei Sogni. Photo courtesy of the author.

It's a romantic way to explore Providence — indeed, the day I went out, a bride and groom hopped aboard a gondola immediately after saying their “I do's” in front of friends and family. But it'll also help romanticize the city, even if you're traveling solo.

You can bring your own wine if you'd like and enjoy with complimentary goodies from a local bakery. On my ride, I got to taste biscotti from [Buono's Italian Bakery](#).

Walk Through History In Providence

As one of the original 13 colonies, Rhode Island is steeped in American History, and you'll literally stumble into (or onto) that history throughout this modern city.

Visit the [John Brown House Museum](#) and you can see more than the home of the Brown University founder... because the museum doesn't shy away from the darker sides of history, reflecting on the founder's participation in slavery and the slave trade while also reflecting on the future state's role in the Revolution.



George Washington is said to have written in this chariot while visiting Rhode Island. Photo credit courtesy of author.

Other notable exhibits include his excellently preserved carriage on display, also known as “Washington’s Chariot” because George Washington is said to have ridden in while visiting Rhode Island.



Benefit Street in Providence, RI. Photo courtesy of the author.

Nearby, on Benefit Street, check out some of the most impressive collections of original Colonial-era homes in the country. Restored houses, churches, and museums overlook the city's waterfront and sit on, you guessed it, cobblestoned streets.

In the shadow of Brown University, you can also pay your respects at the city's [World War I & World War II](#) and [Holocaust memorials](#), commemorating those that served and lost their lives, as well as Holocaust survivors who later emigrated to Rhode Island.

Where to Eat

Providence may be a small city in the nation's smallest state – but its eclectic and international food scene may make it seem much larger. The city's quite proud to be known as a “foodie town,” thanks in part to its culturally diverse neighborhoods.

Il Massimo



Chicken Piccata and a limoncello at Il Massimo in Providence, RI. Photo credit courtesy of the author.

No visit to Providence would be complete without a stop at Federal Hill, the city's own “Little Italy” since the 1800s. Located at the gateway to this iconic neighborhood, [Il Massimo](#) is the sort of ‘neighborhood joint’ you wish was in your own neighborhood. That's why it's a local fave, and why you'll enjoy sampling their dishes.

It also offers a large menu that's been inspired by regional Italian cuisines. In other words, come hungry. For pastas, salads, entrees, desserts, and more.



The cannoli filled with housemade cream and crushed pistachio at Il Massimo in Providence, RI. Photo courtesy of the author

Better yet, if you're here for a weekday lunch, they offer a great deal to try three courses. Their "Presto! Lunch" is only \$24, as of this writing – and you can select an appetizer, main entree, and sweet treat.



The Tuscan Soup at Il Massimo in Providence, RI. Photo courtesy of the author.

I chose the hearty tuscan soup with white beans, chicken piccata (accompanied by fingerling potatoes and haricot verts), and the cannoli filled with housemade cream and crushed pistachio. The atmosphere is warm and lively, with a spacious dining room that opens on to the sidewalk for a festive, al fresco feel.

They have another location in Massachusetts as well.

Hemenway'S



Stuffed Live Maine Lobster at Hemenway'S in Providence, RI. Photo courtesy of the author.

You're in New England, after all, so seafood is a must... and Hemenway'S is one of the capital city's hotspots for fresh, top-of-catch seafood.



Executive Chef Austin Hamilton at Hemenway's in Providence, RI. Photo courtesy of the author.

Click to read our [full review of Hemenway'Sor](#) for a quick preview: know that your Instagram account will thank us later if you order the Stuffed Live Maine Lobster with either the mac and cheese or the shrimp, scallop, and crab stuffing. Your stomach will thank us, as well, especially if you add shared plates and starters like the Hamachi Crudo and Tuna Tartare or desserts like the Mango Coconut Cake.

Where to Stay



Suite at Aloft in downtown Providence, RI. Photo courtesy of the author.

The Aloft in downtown Providence is a perfect jumping off point for your Providence adventures. Winner of the 2022 Opening Aloft Hotel of the Year, the dog-friendly hotel is just a short walk to Brown and RISD and other schools in the area. It is also, luckily, a short walk to Hemenway'S.



Mural detail at Aloft in downtown Providence, RI. Photo courtesy of the author.

The colorful suites are spacious, with Drybar toiletries in the bathroom to help you recharge and unwind after a day exploring. The front desk is helpful and easy to ask any questions on where to go and what to see. Some of your activities may even take place at the hotel itself, as they offer fun, daily-changing “Live at Aloft” events, such as morning yoga.