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# Divine Providence

Helen McGurk continues her tour of Rhode Island with a visit to the hip and happening state capital



### Travel news

## B&B holidays a cheaper option this year

All Inclusive holidays look set to be this year's big winner in the overseas holiday market as summer bookings reveal an eight per cent year-on-year rise that is likely to smash the record 46.8 per cent of package holidaymakers who took one last year. However, Post Office Travel Money research has found that low prices in European resorts, boosted by sterling's strength, will make B&B holidays a cheaper bet for most people. This is because over four-in-five pay out for extras averaging over £407 that inflate the cost of their All Inclusive package. Half of All Inclusive holidaymakers surveyed by the Post Office for its annual All Inclusive Holiday Report rated them good value because they do not need to take holiday spending money. The research also revealed a 12 per cent increase to 56 per cent in the numbers of families

who think All Inclusive is a great option as it cuts the cost of kids' meals and drinks. However, despite some evidence of belt-tightening, the report found that over four-in-five families splashed extra cash to the tune of more than £407 (down from £431 last year) on their last All Inclusive holiday. Eighty-four per cent paid an average of £152.65 in their All Inclusive resort, while 81 per cent spent £254.78 on food and drink items in local shops, restaurants and bars. With prices down in many European resorts this year and sterling remaining stubbornly strong against the euro and other European currencies, the stark reality is that the price of a week's All Inclusive holiday for a family of four with the average levels of extra spending added could cost as much as 85 per cent more than a B&B holiday that includes the cost of lunch and evening meals with drinks in local restaurants.



# travel & days out

**From its chrome bar stools to the slide-in bright orange and yellow booths, Olyneyville N.Y. System is a perfect, all-American fast-food joint.**

Located in Providence's Olneyville neighbourhood, everything about it feels authentic and cinematic.

I want to sit there all day drinking coffee milk; a super-sweet concoction of coffee syrup and cold milk which Rhode Island kids have been guzzling since before the Great Depression, whilst my kids tuck into the best hot wieners (hot dogs with the works) in town, but there are places to go and lots to see.

Providence, Rhode Island, is the biggest city in America's smallest state and is easily accessible from T.F. Green International Airport, 10 miles away.

We flew from Dublin with low-cost carrier, Norwegian, a journey of some seven hours.

Providence was the last leg on our tour of Rhode Island, New England, a region famous for its foliage, food, colleges and universities.

A hub of higher learning, Providence is home to some 12 universities and colleges, including the prestigious Ivy League Brown University (Harry Potter actress Emma Watson is a notable alumnus) and the Rhode Island School of Design, perhaps the top art school in the USA.

The city's college affiliations and its bohemian leanings, give it a youthful, artsy feel, but it's a city which will appeal to visitors of all ages and tastes.

For families, like us, there is so much to see and do and we were truly besotted with the city.

Our base for three days was the Providence Marriott Hotel - the only hotel in the city with free parking and connecting indoor/outdoor pool. Breakfasts in its Bluefin Grille restaurant are fantastic and there's a well-stocked store in the lobby, where my 11-year-old bagged herself a cool hoodie.

The hotel is a little bit out of the main drag, but that doesn't matter,



**Cheery staff at Olyneyville N.Y. System in Providence**

for it offers a free shuttle taxi service, bringing guests into and out of the main city areas.

All our drivers were students at one of the city's universities, earning a few extra bucks as chauffeurs, and all were politeness personified.

In fact, everyone in Providence is so warm and friendly; everything is 'awesome' and it seems all are 'having a nice day'.

Everywhere you turn, members of the service industry are smiling at you, holding doors open, straining to help. I know most of the time they're angling for tips, but I don't care. In fact, I love it. It's so refreshing not to be served dinner by some sourpuss, or taken to your destination by a surly, uncommunicative taxi driver.

And it's not just those in the service industry who are lovely. We must have looked a bit lost one day ambling down a street near Brown University, for a lovely young student approached and asked us if we needed any assistance or if she could help us find where we were looking to go. A truly lovely gesture.

Providence offers some beautiful urban strolling; particularly around College Hill, which contains over 100 colonial, federal and revival houses dating from the 18th century.

We enjoyed walking along the river and in the downtown's handsome streets and lanes with their bustling cafes and cooler than cool

bars and shops. I spent about an hour browsing and buying in Craftland (Westminster Street) - a store of one-of-a-kind finds from local artists.

Providence Place Mall is great spot to seek out all those iconic American brands we don't have here.

The vast shopping complex is anchored by Macy's, and is home to a plethora of stores including Banana Republic, J Crew and a vast Apple store.

Providence's downtown has some of the best-preserved turn of the 19th century and early 20th century architecture in the United States.

The beaux arts City Hall makes an imposing centerpiece and the stately

white dome of the Rhode Island State House, modelled in part on St Peter's Basilica in Vatican City, is visible from many corners of the city.

In Federal Hill, otherwise known as Little Italy, trattorias and gelaterias are bizarrely mingled with not-so-Italian hookah bars.

We ate in Angelo's Civita Farnese, where generations-old recipes define this lively old-school, family-run, kid-friendly Italian spot - my children were particularly enamoured by the ceiling-mounted model train.

They also loved Trattoria Zooma, where the house made pastas and wood fired pizzas really are like mamma made and the cocktails are scrumptious.

Any time of the year would be good to visit Providence, but the summer must surely be amazing, for it is then that the city hosts its famous signature event, WaterFire, an award-winning fire sculpture installation on the three rivers in its downtown.

Created by local artist Barnaby Evans, WaterFire has become a must-see for visitors and locals.

Essentially Providence's landscaped riverfront promenade springs to life with street performers, vendors, food and throngs of people who come to view the 100 anchored, flaming braziers illuminating the water, marking the

convergence of the Providence, Moshassuck and Woonasquatucket Rivers.

Whilst we couldn't enjoy WaterFire (this time), we were able to enjoy Roger Williams Park Zoo, a short drive outside the city.

Most of us probably have a conflicted view of zoos, but conservation and environmental stewardship are at the core of the mission at the Roger Williams Park Zoo. It is the recipient of numerous awards for conservation work done both locally and around the globe.

When we were there it was running a new rainforest exhibition with indigenous monkeys, birds, amphibians, and reptiles of the Amazon Rainforest.

The zoo is really well laid out and there are plenty of places to eat and grab a drink on the route.

There's also a fantastic play park on the site, with hammocks, water activities, an impressive playhouse and much, much more.

Roger Williams Park was created in 1871 after Betsey Williams bequeathed 102 acres of farmland and woodland to the city of Providence to be used for public purpose. Comprised of more than 435 beautiful acres, with lakes and ponds, forest copses, lawns and picnic grounds, it still serves as "the people's pleasure ground".

On site, there's an operating Victorian carousel, featuring classic colonial horses, benches, and other real and mystical creatures to ride. My kids loved it; even our 'tweenager' couldn't be grumpy for long. In fact I defy anyone to be grumpy in Providence - go and see for yourself. It really is awesome.

## Factfile:

Norwegian fly a nonstop service between Dublin and T.F. Green Airport. Fares start from €210 one way / €400 return including all taxes and charges. To book visit [www.norwegian.com/ie](http://www.norwegian.com/ie) or call 0330 828 0854. For car hire visit [www.avisworld.com/norwegianreward](http://www.avisworld.com/norwegianreward). For more info on Rhode Island visit [www.visitrhodeisland.com](http://www.visitrhodeisland.com)



**The WaterFire event**

## Late deals

**Bargain breaks at home and abroad**

**CYPRUS:** From Belfast, May 22, Louisiana Apartments, Ayia Napa, 3 Star+, SC, 7 nights from £379pps. To book visit [www.tui.co.uk](http://www.tui.co.uk) or visit your nearest TUI Store

**ITALY:** From Belfast, May 24, Harry's Hotel, Veneto, 3 Star, HB, 7 nights from £549pps. To book visit [www.tui.co.uk](http://www.tui.co.uk) or visit your nearest TUI Store.

**CROATIA:** From Belfast, May 26, Villa Peric Studio, Dubrovnik, 2 Star+, SC, 7 nights from £459pps. To book visit [www.tui.co.uk](http://www.tui.co.uk) or visit your nearest TUI Store.

**MAJORCA:** From Belfast, July 24, Ola Apts Bouganvillia, Santa Posa, 3 Star+, SC, 7 nights from £2,189 (Family 2+3) (FREE CHILD PLACE INCLUDED). To book visit [www.tui.co.uk](http://www.tui.co.uk) or visit your nearest TUI Store.

**SPAIN:** Alicante City, Alicante City, 3 star



Hotel Albahia, 3 nights bed and breakfast departing from Belfast International on June 11. Price: £279 per person based on 2 sharing, includes a 22kg baggage allowance. For more information or to book, freephone 0800 408 5594,

visit your local travel agent or click on [www.jet2.com](http://www.jet2.com) or [www.jet2holidays.com](http://www.jet2holidays.com).

**TURKEY:** Dalaman Area, Icmeler, 3 star Efem Apartments, 7 nights self-catering departing from Belfast International on June 10. Price: £269 per person based on 2 sharing, includes a 22kg baggage allowance and return transfers. For more information or to book, freephone 0800 408 5594, visit your local travel agent or click on [www.jet2.com](http://www.jet2.com) or [www.jet2holidays.com](http://www.jet2holidays.com).

**BULGARIA:** Bourgas Area, Sunny Beach, 3 star Hotel Kalofer, 7 nights bed and breakfast departing from Belfast International on June 12. Price: £329 per person based on 2 sharing, includes a 22kg baggage allowance and return transfers. For more information or to book, free-

phone 0800 408 5594, visit your local travel agent or click on [www.jet2.com](http://www.jet2.com) or [www.jet2holidays.com](http://www.jet2holidays.com).

**BELFAST:** Titanic Experience, Wellington Park Hotel, Belfast from £150 per room. Offer includes overnight accommodation for two nights with a full Irish breakfast each morning, a complimentary drink on arrival and entry to the infamous Titanic experience, including the SS Nomadic. To book call 028 9038 1111. Offer available until December 31, 2019.

**CO TYRONE:** Three Night Seasonal Break, Glenavon House Hotel, from £120 per person sharing. Offer includes overnight accommodation for three nights with a full Irish breakfast each morning. To book call 028 8676 4949. Offer available until December 31, 2019.