



Rhode Island's Cultural Charm

Rhode Island features a host of highly acclaimed attractions that are sure to delight even the most astute observer of historic architecture and the arts.

Dance

Provocative, exciting and classy all at the same time, Festival Ballet Providence performs several enormously popular productions a year, including *Don Quixote*, *the Nutcracker*, and its increasingly popular intimate dance sessions, Up CLOSE on HOPE. Its bigger productions are held at the historic VMA Arts and Cultural Center in downtown Providence and its newer, smaller productions are held at the Festival Ballet studio in Providence's East Side.

Providence isn't the only place to go for world-class ballet performances. Newport's Island Moving Company produces several shows, including popular outdoor shows like the *Flight of Steps*, performed at Fort Adams State Park. In addition to its performances, the company works extensively in Rhode Island's schools.

Galleries

As the country's second oldest art club, the Providence Art Club (founded in 1880) features a clubhouse and galleries in two Colonial buildings and monthly-changing exhibits. Located in the historic East Side of Providence and flanked by equally historic houses, the art club is a must-see on any art lover's itinerary.

Tucked in the quaint North Kingstown village of Wickford lies the Wickford Art Association, where local artists meet to showcase works in a wide variety of media. The highlight of the art association's season is the annual Wickford Art Festival, held in July. More than 250 artists from across the country display and sell their work during this festival, ranked the twelfth-best fine arts festival in the country by Sunshine Artist and the number-one arts festival in New England.

Music

Founded in 1959, the Chorus of Westerly continues to offer award-winning classical and seasonal performances to southern Rhode Island. Rhode Islanders are delighted by the Chorus of Westerly's enormous Summer Pops concert and its Christmas Pops show, classical concert series and the annual *Celebration of Twelfth Night*.

The Rhode Island Philharmonic offers music lovers diverse and exciting music programs, including a Classical and Pops series and one of the most popular programs, the Rush Hour series. For the classical music devotee with limited time, this hour-long production is the perfect fit.

Theater

Rhode Island takes much pride in the Tony Award-winning Trinity Repertory Company. The company stages performances year round in the elegantly restored Lederer Theater. As one of the top five repertory companies in the country, Trinity Rep offers productions ranging from classic Shakespeare to more contemporary works.

The Providence Performing Arts Center, built in 1928 as Loew's State Theater, immediately became one of the showplaces of New England and today is an integral part of Rhode Island's cultural history. Sammy Kaye and his Orchestra were among the big bands that sold out the hall during its early days. A number of years later, another "big" band in its own right performed at the theater, the Rolling Stones. In 1977, just prior to its golden anniversary, the theater's beauty and historical significance was recognized when it earned a position in the National Register of Historic Places. Today, the PPAC is the setting for productions ranging from Broadway musicals to the Rhode Island Philharmonic Orchestra.

Historical Sites and Museums

Providence's Rhode Island School of Design Museum of Art is characterized as one of the nation's finest small museums. Among its collections are nineteenth-century French art, classical Greek, Roman and Etruscan art, Medieval and Renaissance art, and European decorative and Oriental art. RISD Museum also features nineteenth- and twentieth-century American paintings, modern Latin American art, contemporary art and major holdings in graphics, costumes and textiles.

The Museum of Work and Culture, located in Woonsocket, presents the compelling and poignant story of the French Canadians who left the farms of Quebec for the factories of New England. This interactive museum illustrates the remarkable cultural preservation of faith, language and customs. It also recreates the unique Woonsocket origins of the rise of the Independent Textile Union, which grew to dominate every aspect of city life.

Rhode Island is home to approximately 20 percent of the nation's registered landmarks, most of which are located in Providence and Newport. The historic East Side of Providence features the most impressive concentration of original Colonial homes in America, with entire neighborhoods standing as they did more than 300 years ago.

Newport, the City-by-the-Sea, is renowned for its many palatial mansions, six of which are owned by the Preservation Society of Newport County. These "summer cottages" of America's Gilded Age, portray the opulence of a bygone era. Many of the mansions are now open to the public.

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