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8-31-2018

New to the Area? Here are Some Things to Do in Bristol

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Recommended Citation

Siliezar, Juan, "New to the Area? Here are Some Things to Do in Bristol" (2018). *Featured News Story*. 189.
https://docs.rwu.edu/weekatroger_featured_news/189

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New to the Area? Here are Some Things to Do in Bristol

A quick guide to eating, hanging out and adventuring around the Bristol Campus



Hope Street in downtown Bristol.

August 31, 2018 | By Juan Siliezar

Bristol, R.I. – A big part of what makes Roger Williams University a great place to study is the state it's in. Rhode Island is home to amazing restaurants, shops, and adventures both relaxing and exciting. Bristol is no different. With so much to do, you need the inside scoop. Here's a quick guide on to what to do in the area:

Shopping & Sight Seeing

Downtown Bristol

Bristol is a historic, quaint New England town with its own personality. Take a stroll down Hope Street or Thames Street and you'll find it's filled with shops, restaurants and waterfront views. Whether you're there to shop or just take in the vibe, you'll find it's worth the short trip from campus.



Independence Park

This is a great place to study or look out on the water. This scenic four-acre park is located at the Bristol Harbor and is at the head of the East Bay Bike Path. There's a boardwalk and plenty of benches to sit and enjoy the sunset.

Eating & Hanging Out

Bristol Bagel Works

Bagels baked daily whether you need it on a lazy Sunday morning or before class on a Thursday. Bristol Bagel Works uses fresh ingredients and has a menu that goes beyond bagels with soups and coffee. This has been a campus favorite since October of 1994 when it first opened its doors.



Judge Roy Bean Saloon

Call it The Bean. It's on the corner where Thames and State Street intersect in downtown Bristol and is set up as an old-fashioned saloon, which routinely hosts live music. Serving everything from french fries to burgers and salads, The Bean has a menu that's sure to leave people happy. On campus, they are best known for their half-off wing deal on Wednesdays.

The Beehive Cafe

The Beehive Cafe is the perfect place to get a sandwich, take a coffee break or study off campus. The cozy two-story cafe and restaurant in downtown Bristol overlooks Independence Park and the Bristol Harbor. Anything on the menu here is sure to satisfy you and make a great addition to your Instagram feed.

History & Nature

The Audubon Nature and Aquarium Center

This nature center and aquarium has interactive exhibits that explore local habitats and wildlife found in the Ocean State. The center sits on 28 acres has walking trails and a boardwalk for those looking to stretch their legs.

Blithewold Mansion, Gardens & Arboretum

A perfect place for history buffs who love the outdoors. Blithewold Mansion, Gardens & Arboretum is a 33-acre estate filled with local and exotic plants, shrubs and trees. It features grand views of Narragansett Bay and a 45-room English-style summer manor that was once owned by the Van Wickles family. It's one of the key landmarks that make Bristol such a hidden New England treasure.

Mount Hope Farm

Mount Hope Farm is another landmark that sets Bristol apart. The farm, a classic New England landscape, covers 127-acres and has a number of ways you can enjoy it. You can take a stroll down forested trails and gardens, seeing wildlife and views of Mount Hope Bay. In the winter you can even see seals on the bay. You can visit the Governor Bradford House, where George Washington once spent the night or get to one of the farmer's markets held year-round on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Outdoor Adventures



Colt State Park

The park has a little of everything: Walking trails – both paved and wooded – picnic areas, bike trails, large open spaces, and an outdoor, open-air chapel-by-the-sea. Colt State Park covers 464 acres of lawn, stone walls and curving drives along the Bristol shoreline. If you’re looking to do some outdoor exercise, have a picnic or toss a frisbee you’ll have plenty of space to do it here in what’s often referred to as the “gem” of the state parks system.

East Bay Bike Path

If you’re looking for an adventure, you’ve found it with the East Bay Bike Path. The path is one of the best paved bike paths in Rhode Island and it’s a quick way for an avid biker to get from Bristol to Providence. The path is just little over 14 miles and follows a winding asphalt road that provides a safe place for unobstructed biking.

Got other great locations in or around Bristol? Let us know. Contact Juan Siliezar at jsiliezar@rwu.edu. Also, be on the lookout for our guide on places to check out in and around Providence, where our downtown campus is located.

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