

# THE CREATIVE CAPITAL

Providence enjoys an enviable reputation as a hip hotspot with more than a dozen area golf courses.

By ANDREA E. MCHUGH

Providence earned its “Renaissance City” reputation in the 1970s after reinvesting, reinventing and ultimately, redefining itself. That initiative was strengthened in the 1990s through numerous major development projects, including Waterplace Park, the Riverwalk and the Providence Place Mall.

The effort paid off. The downtown residential rate has doubled over the past decade, attracting academics, artists and eccentrics.

And there is no shortage of golf courses for visitors to enjoy. Triggs Memorial Golf Course, located within the city limits, is a classic Donald Ross design that opened in 1932. Nestled in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood, the par-72 layout has been recognized by *Golf Magazine* as one of the best municipal courses in New England. It features long, difficult par 4’s, reachable par 5’s and demanding par 3’s. As is customary with Ross’ designs, the course celebrates the native topography of the landscape, following its natural contours with relatively small but strategically bunkered greens.



Just five miles from downtown Providence is Cranston Country Club. Designed by New England-based golf course architect and historian Geoffrey Cornish, it is known for its playability at just 6,915 yards from the tips.

Swansea Country Club's lush 300 acres were built on a former private fishing and hunting preserve. With a freshwater pond and saltwater marshes winding throughout the property, this is one of the most serene courses in the area. Located less than 10 miles from downtown, the course has six sets of tees ranging from 5,200 to nearly 7,000 yards.

A renovated driving range and a 10,000-square-foot short game practice area offer an updated feel, as does the new al fresco dining patio.

Golfers looking to squeeze in a quick nine should head to Harbor Lights Golf & Country Club in nearby Warwick, which is another Cornish-designed course. The course maximizes rolling green fairways, bentgrass greens and expansive views of Narragansett Bay.

After golf, you should have little problem finding acceptable dining options. Providence is a food connoisseur's delight, thanks in part to the presence of Johnson & Wales University, the world's largest culinary school. The city has more college-educated chefs per capita than any in the country, and the result is a diverse and ever-changing dining scene.

Avenue N American Kitchen, top left, and the Dorrance Bar, top right, are favorite stops after golf. Asian meets American at North, above.



Harbor Lights Golf & Country Club, Warwick.

A popular spot to begin the evening is at The Avery, a speakeasy-style establishment with just over a dozen seats at the bar, plus a few cozy nooks and couches. It's the unofficial go-to spot for diners waiting for a table at nearby North, an equally tiny eatery famous for a savory American-meets-Asian menu.

The Dorrance Kitchen + Cocktails, housed in a bank dating to 1901, offers more room and seamlessly juxtaposes ornate surroundings, upscale dishes and drinks with an unpretentious attitude. Located in the heart of downtown, it's conveniently situated near Providence's many attractions, especially the captivating Waterfire exhibit, which draws thousands of spectators on select Saturdays from spring through fall. They come to marvel as the three rivers that dissect downtown crackle and glow at dusk with nearly 100 cauldrons that are lit by boat. Visitors looking to get closer to the action can reserve a leisurely ride on an authentic Venetian gondola.

Photo: Nicholas Millard



WaterFire draws thousands of spectators on select Saturdays from spring through fall.



The Biltmore Hotel has been a local landmark since 1922.



Grilled scallops are an Avenue N American Kitchen favorite.

Avenue N American Kitchen in nearby Rumford is bordered by two private golf courses. Though a far cry from a sports den, the bar's TVs are usually tuned into the Golf Channel and the clientele have often worked up an appetite on the nearby links.

German fare is the featured cuisine at the Faust Hofbrauhaus, located in the Dean Hotel. Lodging options are plentiful in Providence with a handful of familiar-named hotels, but none possess the intriguing history of this newly opened hotel. Known colloquially as simply "The Dean," the property is a former strip club turned into a 52-room boutique hotel. In a nod to Providence's moniker as the "Creative Capital," local artisans crafted many of the guest room furnishings in addition to the artwork and décor.

For late-night entertainment head to The Boombox, a basement-level, Tokyo-style karaoke lounge also at the Dean Hotel. (In a tongue-in-cheek homage to the building's past, you can rent a room by the hour for a private singing party). Should you need a pick-me-up in the morning, Bolt Coffee Company in the hotel lounge offers a selection of specialty coffees.

On the opposite end of the spectrum is the Providence Biltmore, a landmark hotel since 1922 that was designed by the architects behind New York City's Grand Central Station. An icon among the Renaissance City's skyline, the hotel continues its full-service legacy with 294 guestrooms and suites (all with city views), a spa, a McCormick & Schmick's restaurant and a Starbucks.

So choose your own adventure in and around Providence during your next golf excursion for a getaway to remember. Remember, The Creative Capital awaits. ©