

design*sponge

November 9th, 2010

provincetown, massachusetts city guide

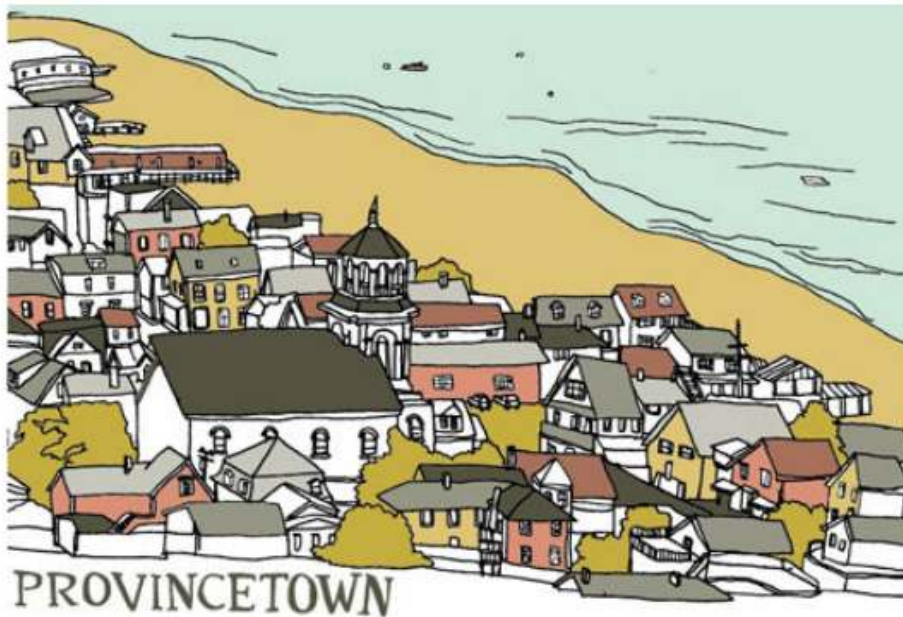


Illustration by *Julia Rothman*

Our Provincetown, Massachusetts City Guide comes from [Andrea E. McHugh](#) – a freelance writer and stylist specializing in lifestyle, travel, weddings and health – and our tour guide through this beautiful peninsula city. Andrea made sure to cover hotels, in case you're looking to visit this fall or next spring and summer. Thank you, Andrea, for an impeccable guide to this historic beach region! – *Stephanie*

Provincetown, perched on the northernmost tip of Cape Cod, is one of New England's most friendly destinations. "P-town," as it's affectionately dubbed, is known for its tolerance of all lifestyles, and as such, welcomes tens of thousands of visitors year-round. Like any coastal community, the population swells in the warmer months, but P-town has something to offer every season. Rich in history and home to America's oldest art colony, this community boasts miles of sandy beach (it's part of the Cape Cod National Seashore), and amazing biking and walking trails at Province Lands. A testament to its extraordinary vistas, famed naturalist and writer Henry David Thoreau visited the town for solace and inspiration. Restaurants, shopping and galleries all make your visit memorable while inns, bed and breakfasts and guest houses ensure a comfortable stay.

Dine

From sushi savored in a centuries-old church to a well-known seafood shanty to fine dining, P-town has something for every palate and many restaurants are open year-round.

Right on the water, [Bayside Betsy's](#) is a consummate favorite among locals and visitors alike. Serves breakfast, lunch and dinner.

[Bubala's by the Bay](#) is a charming bistro right on the harbor in Provincetown's West End, and serves up the daily catch morning, noon and night.

Centrally located on bustling Commercial Street, [Edwige at Night](#) is a perennial favorite best known for their fresh specials and creative cocktails (white-ginger cosmo, anyone?). Vegetarians have a nice selection, too.

[Ciro & Sal's](#) is known for its northern Italian cuisine and quaint settings that include a garden and cozy dining rooms. (Call to make reservations.)

Arguably the epicenter of P-town activity, the [Crown & Anchor](#), which boasts six bar venues including “the town's largest nightclub (Paramount), the town's only video bar (Wave), a cabaret venue, a poolside bar with heated pool, a piano bar and an ever-popular leather bar (The Vault). The Crown also features the Central House at the Crown — a year-round restaurant offering lunch and dinner.”

Set in a charming former boat shack and serving modern American cuisine for breakfast (nearly legendary), lunch and dinner, [Devon's](#) celebrates P-town's fresh seafood and Portuguese roots.

On the East End of P-town, laid-back eatery [Fanizzi's by the Sea](#) offers a casual feel, comfort food and 180-degree views.

“Hip cafeteria meets healthy eatery” would be one way to describe [Frappo 66](#). Their “eat in, chill out” slogan says it all.

One of few fine dining establishments, [Front Street](#) serves up creative Italian dishes in a historic Victorian, winning the chef-owned restaurant multiple awards.

Best known for Drag Queen Karaoke and cold beers on the patio, the Governor Bradford is a P-town landmark. The interior is reminiscent of an old whaling ship (the wood quite possibly was reclaimed from one) and downstairs, below street level, is a lounge area that usually hosts drinking and dancing.

Tucked away off Commercial Street, the appropriately-named [Jimmy's Hideaway](#) is warm, cozy and welcoming and boasts a menu that puts a twist on tavern favorites.

For P-town visitors on the go, John's Hot Dog, Hamburger & Seafood Stand serves up — beyond the obvious — fried clams, fried dough, stuffies and the like from the service window on Lopes Square.

An espresso, newspaper and sunny morning at [Joe Coffee & Cafe](#) guarantees a day started off right. It's also ideal for Commercial Street-people watching, indoors or out.

The only South African restaurant for miles, [Karoo Kafe](#) has a unique selection of dishes (antelope, ostrich) alongside a nice selection for vegans and vegetarians.

There's a reason you can almost always expect a wait at the iconic [Lobster Pot](#), as the seafood outpost is a familiar favorite with two floors serving lobster rolls, fried clams, clam chowder, lobster panini, scallops and their signature pumpkin muffins.

The decidedly unfussy [Mayflower Cafe](#) offers a diner-like menu with a little bit of everything for everyone.

Warm and welcoming in a cedar-shingle home with flowering gardens at the entry, the [Mews Restaurant & Cafe](#) dishes up year-round waterfront dining in the heart of the East End Art Gallery District. Things are a little more casual in the café area, and cocktail aficionados will appreciate the 286 vodkas available from 32 countries.

With seafood, meat and poultry, plus plenty for vegetarians, [Napi's](#) is a P-town favorite. Year-round service, friendly staff and unique ambiance (nautical meets house of worship, perhaps?) enhance the experience.

Overlooking the harbor with a casual vibe, [Pepe's on the Wharf](#) is a great spot for an afternoon cocktail (especially if you score a spot on the second-floor deck). The menu is seafood focused with an emphasis on freshly caught fare.

It's hard not to win over a crowd when your specialty is fresh ground coffee, chocolate and gelato, and [The Purple Feather](#) does it right (mojito, sorbetto, espresso). They also have a full lunch menu and stay open late most nights.

Cupcake aficionados love [Relish](#), a bakery and café right on Commercial Street, with a great take-out menu for beachgoers.

Quaint and cozy, [Ross's Grille](#) bills itself as a "wine bar bistro" and boasts killer views from its second-floor location on Whalers' Wharf.

No matter where you travel, it's always good to know where you can get a good slice of pizza (especially that late night, post-partying slice), and [Spiritus Pizza](#) fits the bill with fold-worthy, NYC-style thin crust pie.

Since arriving in 2009, [Saki Sushi](#) has won over diners with its hip vibe and ambiance as well as its invigorating menu, which includes sake from around the world.

For a more polished P-town experience, [Victor's](#) on Bradford Street has won rave reviews for its dinner – and its famed Drag Brunch!

Stay

Provincetown preserves its small-town charm by eschewing large hotel chains for a host of inns, guesthouses and bed and breakfasts. Accommodations range from posh B&Bs with onsite spas to budget-friendly rooming houses. Here are just a few:

The [Benchmark Inn](#) is known for its simple elegance and old-fashioned hospitality.

The [Carpe Diem Guesthouse & Spa](#) feels like a home away from home – if your home is always charming, provides wine and cheese daily and features a great little spa in the backyard (and fabulous innkeepers who whip up a crazy good hearty breakfast).

Just steps from Commercial Street, [The Carriage House](#) is an award-winning inn with myriad rooms, some with private decks to take in the P-town scene.

The [Land's End Inn](#) is set high atop a hill in P-town's charming West End and is known for its history and ocean views.

The [Bradford-Carver House](#) is an intimate, budget-friendly guest house with private baths located steps from Commercial Street.

In the quieter West End, the [Oxford Guesthouse](#) offers English charm and luxury accommodations.

[Christopher's by the Bay](#) is a guesthouse in a 19th-century Victorian with all 10 of its rooms named after prominent artists.

Historic inn, day spa and resort, [Crowne Pointe](#) is one of P-town's bigger inns with 40 rooms situated in six restored historic buildings.

On the farthest reaches of P-town's West End, the [Foxberry Inn](#) is a nature lover's dream with bucolic views and easy access to the Cape Cod National Seashore.

Dog-friendly and a little off the beaten path, [Four Gables Cottages](#) offers private accommodations for guests and their four-legged friends.

A luxury boutique hotel, the [White Porch Inn](#) provides modern amenities in historic environs, promising to please even the most discerning traveler.

The [White Wind Inn](#) sits right on Commercial Street and is steps from the bay.

A unique compound comprised of nine 18th- and 19th-century houses and cottages, the [Brass Key Guest House](#) has been recognized by the *New York Times* and consistently wins rave reviews.

A stone's throw from the bay (and some rooms with grand views of it), the [Somerset House](#) serves a hot breakfast and cocktails at happy hour – vacation at its best.

A Greek revival guesthouse, the quiet [West End Inn](#) offers four rooms and three apartments, all nestled behind a white picket fence and far enough from the fast pace of Commercial Street.

Shop, See & Do

Commemorating the first landing of the pilgrims in 1620 at Provincetown, where the Mayflower Compact was composed and signed, the [Pilgrim Monument and Provincetown Museum](#) stands tall in the center of town. It's an arduous climb to the top but well worth the 180-degree view of the Atlantic, and the collection at the museum celebrates the town's seafaring history.

The breathtaking sand dunes of the Cape Cod National Seashore protected lands in P-town peak high and wide, and are as close as you'll get to the ones you've imagined in the Sahara. Check them out by dune buggy via [Art's Dune Tours](#).

Because of its location, Provincetown is one of the best whale-watching capitals in the world, and the [Dolphin Fleet](#) sails the shores of Provincetown and on Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary to get the best views of the mammoth, magnificent creatures reveling in their natural habitat.

Guided tours aboard the [Provincetown Trolley](#) are the best way to make sure you don't miss an inch of P-town. The 40-minute tour includes drives through the art district, explores National Seashore Park and visits more than 20 points of interest.

From major label retailers to unique, locally-owned boutiques, shopping in P-town is fabulous and mostly contained by Commercial Street (but we encourage you to wander off the beaten path, as well). Favorites include Atlantic Cotton, Board Stiff, local designer Daniel Cleary, Diane Z, Karol Richardson, [French Kiss Fashions](#), the [Human Rights Campaign Store](#), [Silk and Feathers](#), [Marc Jacobs](#), the oddities at [Aunt Fanny's](#) and more.

Fishing, sailing, biking and kayaking are great ways to enjoy P-town, and there are a ton of charters and rentals available. Start at the [Chamber of Commerce](#) for a list.

Never a dull moment in P-town, there are a host of events that take place throughout the year. The annual [Provincetown International Film Festival](#), the [the Spring Restaurant Week & Gallery Stroll](#), the annual Provincetown Portuguese Festival & Blessing of the Fleet, concerts, fairs and [Family Pride Week](#) are just a few. [Click here](#) for the P-town Chamber's events calendar.