

Day Tripping

by [Scott Kearnan](#) | June 29, 2009

TWO SUMMERTIME GETAWAYS FOR UNREPENTANT URBANITES



SALEM

No, this isn't an early Halloween prank: we're actually suggesting Salem as a summertime day trip. Yeah, yeah, we know the Witch City has become synonymous with October outings and All Hallows' Eve revelry that makes Bourbon Street look like Sunday school. But even if it's not the season to indulge in witch museums, psychic parlors, and things that go kitsch in the night, there's still year-round shopping, dining, and entertainment here that combines Salem's old New England charm with just enough modern, urban chic to keep mental images of ill-fitting knickers and tri-corner hats at bay. And don't forget that Salem, like Boston, is one of America's oldest seaport cities — so there's plenty of fresh sea breeze to give you a cool reprieve from the concrete jungle. Try some of this hocus focus on for size.

BURN THE BROOMSTICK

You won't need it to get to Salem. Sure, you can drive, but then how will you day drink? From North Station, it's only a 30-minute ride on the commuter rail to Salem's station, where everything is a few cobblestone steps away (and you thought Boston was a walkable city). On a perfect summer day though, you can't beat the **Salem Ferry** (978.741.0220, www.salemferry.com), which offers inexpensive service — \$13 for a one-way ticket and \$24 for a round trip — from Long Wharf to Salem's Blaney Street Wharf through most of the year. Rides clock in at just under an hour, which is still enough time to grab a drink from the bar on board.

DRINKS AND DISHES

If culinary phrases like “Yankee fare” and “Colonial cooking” put goose bumps on your taste buds, have no fear. This North Shore gem actually has a number of upscale restaurant/lounges that wouldn't look out of place in the Back Bay — well, maybe the prices would. **Sixty2 on Wharf** (62 Wharf Street, 978.744.0062, www.62onwharf.com), located on the harborside cul-de-sac of shops that is Pickering Wharf, offers an extensive list of signature cocktails; we recommend the Sixty2 Tea, a green tea and Stoli peach concoction that is pure summertime serenity. The dinner entrees are modern Italian creations prepared by the tall, dark, and handsome 34-year-old owner and chef Antonio Bettencourt, who trained under Amanda Lydon at Cambridge's UpStairs on the Square. **Strega** (94 Lafayette Street, 978.741.0004, www.stregasalem.com) is another fabulous spot to lounge with martini in hand, a romantically lit restaurant where the bar's dramatic dark woods are accented by flourishing red draperies. Though the name “Strega” means “witch” in Italian, the menu of small plates is pure white magic — the molten kasseri cheese crostinis and Maine crab cakes with red pepper aioli are particular standouts. And by night, Strega conjures up a great singles scene.

RAISING SPIRITS

No, we're not suggesting a séance. A haunted pub crawl, though, is a fun way to experience both sides of Salem — its spooky past and its, ahem, spirited present. Sign up for this trolley excursion around town with **Salem Trolley** (8 Central Street, 978.744.5469, www.salemtrolley.com), and for just \$20, you'll pop through four fearsome watering holes and toss back a few while your tour guide regales you with tales of each location's creepy history. Drinks are purchased separately, but guides can typically cut the line at each bar. The stops include **Rockafellas** (231 Essex Street, 978.745.2411, www.rockafellasofsalem.com), a casual grill and live-music venue housed in an old bank; the **Lyceum** (43 Church Street, 978.745.7665, www.lyceumsalem.com), seen on the television show *Ghost Hunters* and built over the apple orchard of a hanged witch; **Nathaniel's in the Hawthorne Hotel** (18 Washington Square, 978.825.4311, www.hawthornehotel.com), where several floors and rooms are supposedly haunted; and **CAPT.'s Waterfront Grill & Club** (94 Wharf Street, 978.741.0555, www.capt.com), where ... well, you'll have to wait to shiver your timbers. Book your boozy boo fest ASAP, because this weekends-only tour tends to fill up weeks in advance.

PRETTY AND PEACEFUL

If you're not looking to live it up, Salem is also a great day-trip destination for winding down. Many of the downtown brick and cobblestone streets are pedestrian-only, making it a perfect place for quiet meandering and poking your head inside small shops, dusty bookstores, and incense-filled occult boutiques — many of which are legit havens for the city's practicing Wicca community. To take your own spell of contemplation, wander the **Peabody Essex Museum** (161 Essex Street, 978.745.9500, www.pem.org), America's oldest continuously operating museum and one of the nation's premier museums for Asian art. Its crown jewel is the Yin Yu Tang house, an actual Qing Dynasty merchant's house that was moved from its original location in southeastern China and completely reassembled at the museum so that guests can step inside and wander its rooms for a temporary time machine trip abroad. If you're in the mood for something a little more modern, check out its newest exhibit, “Trash Menagerie,” where 24 artists transform used cigarette filters, plastic bags, broken umbrellas, and other unwanted stuff into things of beauty. The museum also owns more than 20 historic buildings, including several around town with direct ties to the witch trials — and yes, tours are available, even with the spooky season still months away.

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

If your day trip is designed to keep you outdoors, pitch a tent at **Winter Island Park** (50 Winter Island Road,

978.745.9430, www.salemweb.com/winterisland), a seaside campground with a boat launch for those arriving by yacht, yawl, or dinghy. This picturesque spot, home to a lighthouse and a centuries-old fort, makes a perfect setting for a picnic. If you left your picnic basket at home, take a short walk to the **Salem Willows** (167 Fort Avenue, www.salemwillowspark.com), home to a public pier for fishing, an arcade to make you feel like a kid again, a bandstand for outdoor summer concerts, and a small old-school midway filled with pizza, popcorn, and ice cream vendors (they claim to have served the country's first ice cream cone here in 1906, so you know they'll serve up your sugar fix just right). The Willows is also where you can jump on board with **Mahi Mahi Cruises** (200 Fort Avenue, 800.992.6244, www.mahicruises.com), which offers sightseeing cruises around Salem Harbor and the North Shore. You can ride the waves while learning about local lighthouses and other landmarks, indulging in some estate gazing, and enjoying a day of beer and kabobs on the water, all for under \$20.

Want more stuff to do in Salem? Check out what Charlie of WFNX has to say about his hometown [here](#).

PROVINCETOWN



Day tripping to Cape Cod can be a tricky enterprise: depending on your choice of locale, you might get caught in a hellish snare of tacky souvenir shops (what happened, Hyannis?) or be forced to fork over a mortgage payment for a game of doubles with Buffy, Chip, and the rest of the pearls-and-polo-shirt set on the Islands. Luckily, Provincetown remains a reliable land's end gem at the outermost tip of the Cape. Combining the sea and sunshine of a beach resort town with the culture and entertainment of America's oldest artists' colony, P-town continues to be a summer day's divine destination not only for the expected slew of gay tourists, but yes, plenty of hetero

visitors, too. It may have only 3400 year-round residents, but this end-of-the-road town has all the city set could ask for — a three-mile main drag that makes a car totally unnecessary, foodie-approved dining options galore, high-powered arts and nightlife scenes that belie its size, and more colorful characters per square foot than just about anywhere on the planet.

TWO IF BY SEA

If we may suggest, avoid choking on the car exhaust of a bridge-bound traffic jam and instead cruise on the big blue: **Bay State Cruise Company** (200 Seaport Boulevard, Boston, 877.783.3779, www.baystatecruisecompany.com) offers daily service on its Provincetown Fast Ferry through October 13. The 90-minute voyage is \$58 for a one-way ticket, \$86 for a round trip. (Not listening to your day-trip date's abysmal collection of "wicked awesome summer jams" en route? Priceless.) The last ferry leaves at 7:30 p.m., so you can still sneak in a sunset cocktail before heading back to the Bean. From June 27 through September 5, there's also a more leisurely three-hour ferry option, a bargain at \$22 for a one-way ticket, \$44 for a round trip.

BEACH BUMS

After a trek to the Cape, it's practically mandatory that you return to the real world with a covetable tan to turn your pasty coworkers temporarily green with envy. So if you're looking to flip off your flops and score some choice real estate in the sand, **Herring Cove** is by far the most popular option. The beach runs parallel to Route 6A (locals will be happy to show you the best paths to jaunt down), and the shoreline is roughly segmented, west to east, in unofficial factions of straight, lesbian, gay male, and nude sunbathers. Note that the last activity is technically illegal, so no crying to us if you're caught with your pants (or anything else) down. A bath house by the straight section provides a place to tidy up before hitting the turf again.

GOOD EATS

You'll find no shortage of dining options on Provincetown's main thoroughfare of Commercial Street, a narrow, meandering seaside road crammed with boutique shops, waterfront restaurants, and a colorful crowd packed tighter than

screaming teens in the front row of a Jonas Brothers concert. (Beep beep! Drag queen on a scooter, coming through!) Tourist traps abound for chowdah-heads, but we suggest **The Mews Restaurant & Café** (429 Commercial Street, 508.487.1500, www.mews.com). The harborside spot has two floors — fine dining downstairs, a casual café on top — and lays a claim to offering New England's most extensive vodka collection: with 256 varieties from 29 countries behind the bar, it's a martini maven's promise land, a perfect place for getting an afternoon buzz on. Despite its showy name, **Front Street** (230 Commercial Street, 508.487.9715, www.frontstreetrestaurant.com) is a tucked-away fine-dining favorite among locals. The vibe is Cape romance — brick walls, low ceilings, dim lights — and the menu offers upscale Italian fare like lamb, duck, and gorgonzola-stuffed filet mignon. **Devon's** (401 1/2 Commercial Street, 508.487.4773, www.devons.org) and **The Red Inn** (15 Commercial Street, 508.487.7334, www.theredinn.com) are likewise sure bets for a fine meal, but if you're looking for cheaper eats, stop by **Spiritus Pizza** (190 Commercial Street, 508.487.2808, www.spirituspizza.com) for a slice and a shake. By day, the benches out front offer a prime spot for people watching, and there's a pleasant garden with a bocce ball court in the back if you're looking for a brief retreat from the bustle of Commercial Street; during the wee hours, the funky joint fills up with the contingent of the post-clubbing crowd that isn't quite ready to stop cruising. And for snacks to tote to the beach, swing by **Far Land Provisions** (150 Bradford Street, 508.487.0045, www.farlandprovisions.com) and load up with deli sandwiches and something sweet from the on-site bakery. Don't worry — you can always suck in your gut when that oiled-up hottie struts by your beach blanket.

PARTY PEOPLE

Summer entertainment in Provincetown is a curious mix of old school (cabaret acts, one-man/woman shows, and offerings from several local theater companies) and new (thumping nightlife). If you are planning an overnight, do one-stop shopping at **The Crown & Anchor** (247 Commercial Street, 508.487.1430, www.onlyatthecrown.com). A hub for all forms of comedy, drag, and celebrity acts, the entertainment complex includes the Central House restaurant, where live music is standard; the bumping Paramount Nightclub; the poolside Wave Video Bar; and even The Vault, a tawdry little leather bar. But even if you don't plan to party 'til the sun comes up, you can get the late-night experience — while the sun is still out! — at Provincetown's trademark tea dances, shindigs so named because they get underway at tea time, around 4 p.m. The **Boatslip Resort** (161 Commercial Street, 508.487.1669, www.boatslipresort.com) hosts one of the most popular parties with resident DJ Maryalice, who has been spinning in P-town for almost three decades, ever since its disco heyday. The tea dance circuit is often dominated by dudes, but if you're looking to mingle with the ladies, check out **Pied Bar** (193A Commercial Street, 508.487.1527, www.piedbar.com), a favorite on the lesbian scene that boasts a huge deck overlooking the water. And if you're up for braving the crowds, consider timing your visit to one of the town's many festivals; the party season's climax comes in August with **Carnival** (www.ptown.org/Carnival), a week-long bacchanal that culminates in a parade where you'll see some of the most outrageous costumes this side of Rio.

CAPE CULTURE

Cape art shouldn't be defined by elementary school memories of puff-paint starfish on sweatshirts or tacky souvenir snow globes showing a whale swimming amid glitter plankton. (Have I said too much?) In fact, Provincetown is widely considered America's first true artists' colony, a place that attracted such notable names as Charles Hawthorne, Hans Hofmann, Willem de Kooning, and Jackson Pollock. For a full day's primer on the history of Provincetown and an extensive collection of works from Cape artists from those early days through today, visit the **Provincetown Art Association and Museum** (460 Commercial Street, 508.487.1750, www.paam.org). The facility also hosts regular workshops and special events like film screenings and live music. What's refreshing about P-town, though, is the large number of artists who continue to live, work, and exhibit in town. Traditional Friday night gallery strolls through the East End are a great way to sample a slew of resident artists, but in the height of the summer season, most galleries are open all days of the week. Must-sees include the long-established **Hilda Neily Gallery** (398 Commercial Street, 508.487.6300, www.hildaneilygallery.com), run by Neily, a seascape and landscape artist and Provincetown resident since 1968, and new kid on the block **Alden Gallery** (423 Commercial Street, 508.487.4230, www.aldengallery.com), a home for contemporary work that just celebrated its one-year anniversary in November.

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NATURAL SELECTIONS

Half the fun of a day trip is taking the time to relax and unwind outside the urban everyday, and in P-town, not all the gorgeous scenery comes clad in a Speedo: there are miles of walking paths to wander and bike trails to explore (along with rental sites to loan you some wheels for the day). These beachside trails are designated as portions of the Cape Cod National Seashore, so its **Province Lands Visitor Center** (1131 Race Point Road, 508.487.1256, www.nps.gov/caco) at the outermost tip of P-town is a great place to stop for directions — or, you know, a map. While you're out there, consider the ultimate experience in solitude by visiting the **Race Point Lighthouse** (508.487.9930, www.racepointlighthouse.net). Few realize that this lighthouse nestled amid the sand dunes even offers overnight accommodations — with self-generated green power from solar panels and a wind turbine, for us city slickers not looking to rough it sans electricity — in the original lighthouse keeper's house. You can't get further beyond the rainbow than this. But if you'd rather see nature from the comfort of four wheels, consider **Art's Dune Tours** (4 Standish Street, 508.487.1950, www.artsdunetours.com). Daily truck tours roll up and down P-town's vast stretches of sandy mountains, home to the famed dune shacks, where scribes such as Eugene O'Neil, Norman Mailer, and Jack Kerouac would hole up to let their creative juices flow without pesky distractions like electricity, telephone service, or indoor plumbing.

SHOP TALK

Don't let the town's absolute glut of T-shirt stores and souvenir schlock deter you: P-town is still a shopper's paradise. Furnish your chic loft back home at **WA** (220 Commercial Street, 508.487.6355, www.waharmony.com), a Zen oasis of upscale East Asian-inspired décor. One must-see is the store's totally buzz-worthy collection of framed and shadow-boxed insects — butterflies, bugs, and other creepy crawlies — preserved in vibrant Technicolor and arranged in ornate patterns. Bring back a gift for the folks at home from **Forbidden Fruit** (173 Commercial Street, 508.487.9888, www.eatmyapple.com), an eclectic shop of one-of-a-kind craft items, objets d'art, and other treasures, arranged hodgepodge on every available square inch of space. Fashion-wise, ladies should check out **Moda Fina** (349 Commercial Street, 508.487.6632, www.shopmodafina.com), which culls its collection of Boho-chic fashion from small independent designers. And boys can bring sexy back at **Body Body** (296 Commercial Street, 508.487.9400), which has a lockdown on the town's largest collection of trendy, sexy underwear for men. Hipster fashion fiends can also get their fix here: **Marc by Marc Jacobs** (184 Commercial Street, 508.487.0723, www.marcjacobs.com) has a mini outpost in P-town, where you'll find the fashion master's brilliant mix of luxury leather hand bags and footwear, vintage-inspired clothing, and a quirky, colorful collection of knickknacks and gift items.

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