

Itinerary Rhode Island



The Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket relates the lives of mill workers.

The Blackstone River is the centerpiece of the 400,000-acre Blackstone River Valley. One of 14 American Heritage Rivers, the powerful Blackstone flows between Worcester, Mass., and Providence, R.I. As a special kind of place called a National Heritage Corridor, this land tells the story of the river's role in starting New England's textile industry and the American Industrial Revolution.

Morning

9 a.m. — *Homes of the 18th century's rich and famous*

Begin the tour at Benefit Street, a mile of history where groups will get a glimpse into the world of the wealthy 18th-century Providence merchants and businessmen who invested their money into building textile mills on the Blackstone River. These homes are an impressive collection of original Colonial and 18th-century architecture.

10 a.m. — *John Brown House Museum*

The palatial John Brown House was built in 1786 to reflect the owner's wealth and position. An entrepreneur, privateer, and China trade merchant, John Brown ordered the best furniture early Colonial cabinetmakers produced — including a desk considered to be the finest piece of the genre in existence — and imported the finest decorative objects from abroad.

11:30 a.m. — *The Great Road: Villages of the valley*

Begin the transition from the world of the mill owners to that of mill workers along the scenic Great Road District in Lincoln. Constructed on Native American trails in the 17th century, this historic road features the 1812 Moffett Mill, an example of an early wooden mill; the 1812 Butterfly Mill, one of the state's earliest stone textile mills; and the 1810 Hearthside House. Continue the

A miller's tale

journey through the valley, traveling through historic mill villages and looking at architectural examples of triple-decker design.

Afternoon

12:30 p.m. — *Traditional French-Canadian lunch*

Enjoy a relaxed French Canadian-style catered lunch at the Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket.

1:30 p.m. — *Mill bells and church bells*

Consider that industrial history has a human face during a tour of the Museum of Work and Culture as groups explore the lives of mill workers. The Industrial Revolution was truly a revolution in that it changed nearly every aspect of American daily life. For the million or so people who left French Canada to work in the textile mills of the Blackstone Valley, adjusting to the daily summons of the factory bell was just one of the challenges they faced.

3 p.m. — *First planned industrial community, Slatersville*

Continue with a driving tour of Slatersville. It looks like a classic New England village, but Slatersville was America's first planned industrial village, c. 1803–1807. Now the village is complete with a town common lined with lovely old homes, worker housing, a company store, and a dam that provided waterpower to the local mills.

4 p.m. — *Village Haven Restaurant*

Finish with a family-style dinner at Village Haven. The regional specialty includes roasted chicken, ziti, salad, and french fries along with a beverage and dessert. •

Blackstone Valley Tourism Council

175 Main St.
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Photo: Carol Smith

The Slater Mill is the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution.

Every building tells multiple stories. Within its walls, a building holds tales of the architects who designed it, the people who used it, the time in which it was built, and the community in which it stood. For 350 years, an array of structures have been built in the Blackstone Valley — including Rhode Island stone-ender houses of the 1600s, buildings that housed the burgeoning Industrial Revolution, and modern-day structures.

In the communities of Burrillville, Central Falls, Cumberland, Foster, Gloucester, Lincoln, North Smithfield, Pawtucket, Woonsocket, and Smithfield, visitors will find many styles of architecture. Whether groups add a windshield tour to the itinerary or choose to spend several days exploring, they will the Blackstone Valley's story told in its architecture.

The Great Road Historic District in

Told in stone

Listen to the stories preserved in the architecture of the Blackstone Valley

Lincoln affords a view of centuries of structures. The Colonial highway is still home to 17th-century stone-enders, a 1704 Quaker Meeting House, a Federal-style mansion, and several historic mills.

A tour aboard the *Blackstone Valley Explorer* is an excellent way to discover the region's architectural heritage. The 49-passenger riverboat tours an urban wildlife preserve in the spring and summer. In the fall, cruises depart near the Museum of Work & Culture in Woonsocket. Along this stretch of the river, groups experience historical, architectural, as well as scenic views between the Thundermist Dam and the state border. The narrator talks about the development of Woonsocket, from its origins as an enclave of mill villages and its strong French-Canadian ethnicity, to historic architecture spotlighting the city's role in the American Industrial Revolution in the 19th and 20th centuries. Architecture buffs can see a re-creation of a French-Canadian farmhouse and learn about the immigrants' structures in Woonsocket.

When groups visit a site with the name Slater, they're sure to learn the story of the Industrial Revolution. Shortly before the 19th century dawned, immigrant Samuel Slater built a water-powered mill on the banks of the Blackstone River. The Slater Mill, today a National Historic Landmark,

preserves the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution with three sites — Slater Mill, Wilkinson Mill, and the Sylvanus Brown House — as well as exhibits and interpretive tours.


A riverboat named after the industrialist plies the river that once powered his mill. The *Samuel Slater* is available for leisure tours, British Tea Tours, chartered cruises, and a bed and breakfast for overnight stays.

Groups also can experience the region's architectural heritage as they take a tour of Slaterville, the planned industrial village built between 1803 and 1807 by the Slater brothers. This concept of providing housing for workers was adopted by other manufacturers as industrialization became more common.

For a taste of 20th-century architecture, make a stop at the Modern Diner. This Pawtucket fixture, a custom-built Sterling Streamliner that was produced in the late 1930s and 1940s, is the first diner placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Hungry folks continue to come for diner fare. •

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Photos: Culinary Arts Museum at Johnson & Wales University

The diner has become an American icon.

Eat, drink, and learn

Take a bite out of food history at the Culinary Arts Museum

The Johnson & Wales University's College of Culinary Arts is a well-respected cooking institution. It's no surprise, then, that the college's Culinary Arts Museum is one of the finest museums dedicated to all things food.

The museum, which is on Johnson & Wales' campus, is devoted to the preservation of the history of the culinary and hospitality industries.

With more than a half-million artifacts in its collection today, the museum began with the donation of 7,500 rare cookbooks. The collection was further bolstered by the donation of about 64,000 items from the personal collection of an esteemed Chi-



The Culinary Arts Museum hosts a display of stoves.

cago chef, who gave the museum material from five centuries of culinary history, including books, menus, silver, antiques, and other artifacts.

Within the Culinary Arts Museum, group members will find a diner museum, a stove museum, collections of kitchen gadgets and appliances, and culinary showpieces that include dinnerware from presidential place settings.

Some of the museum's newly installed exhibits include "Dripping with Color: The Art of Fruit Crate Label," and "Country Fair to Culinary Olympics," which is a look at cooking competitions. The exhibit celebrates apple pie contests and the Culinary Olympics, including a 1940s canning kitchen and displays of winning culinary creations.

One interactive exhibit, which will run through June 2008 is called "Diners: Still Cookin' in the 21st Century." The display includes a life-size replica of a classic lunch counter and a selection of original artifacts detailing the history of the diner in American culture. The exhibition follows the progression of the diner from its inception to its place as a icon of nostalgia.

The museum's cookbook collection features volumes from the early history of printing, as well as the first American cookbook.

Permanent displays include "100 Chefs," which displays cooks' uniforms from the 1500s; "America the Bountiful," which explores American food from the past to the future; and "Everything but the Kitchen Sink," which chronicles the development of household kitchen gadgets. At these exhibits, and others like them, group members can view a 5,000-year-old Scythian knife, a Victorian grape-slicer, a Pompeii bread ring, and many more objects that interpret the history of food service.

"History of the First Stomach" is an exhibit that looks at presidential dining throughout American history and into the present. Artifacts include presidential china, an autograph collection featuring documents related to the gastronomic habits of those who've lived in the White House, such as an invitation to one of J.E.K.'s birthday dinners and a menu from President Lincoln's Second Inauguration.

Group tours are available by appointment. The Culinary Arts Museum is operated on an academic calendar and is closed during semester breaks and holidays. •

Culinary Arts Museum at Johnson & Wales University
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