Nashua

Big City Vibe with Hometown Hospitality

When I first discovered Nashua driving up the Daniel Webster Highway, I found it hard to drive past all the stores, shops, and the one-million-square-foot Pheasant Lane Mall that offered the tax-free shopping Massachusetts residents long for. Nashua is the Granite State’s second largest city at just over 86,000 residents, but even though it offers many of the amenities, cultural opportunities, outdoor recreational opportunities, and gourmet cuisine of big cities like Boston, it still maintains its small town feel.

As I continued past the strip malls, hotels, chain restaurants, and car dealerships on the Daniel Webster Highway, I discovered that Nashua has a quaint downtown with novelty shops, excellent restaurants, and a rich history in both sports and industry. It’s widely known for its convenient location with close proximity to Boston, the New Hampshire beaches, and the White Mountains, but Nashua has maintained its own unique identity and has been voted the Best Place to Live by Money magazine twice. Nashua’s wide array of stores, restaurants, historic landmarks, parks, sports, vibrant nightlife, and friendly locals make it a destination that visitors of all ages can enjoy. No matter where I go, I try to explore attractions off the beaten path, and Nashua has a number of hidden jewels to discover in addition to a diverse landscape and population.

I found that one of the best ways to spend a morning in Nashua is to kickstart your day with an aromatic, flavorful cup of gourmet coffee at Riverwalk Coffee Roasters in Railroad Square and head to one of three destinations, depending on which day you go, for the Nashua Fall Walking Program. I went on a Friday morning and met a group of 25 walkers at the entrance to the Nashua River Rail Trail at the corner of Countryside Drive and Gilson Road. Watching the morning mist hover above the surface of the trail’s ponds, and listening to the sound of cicadas and birds chirping raises your spirits and energy during the hour-long walk. Tom Duane of Nashua’s Parks and Recreation Department led the walk. He talked about how important the city’s 50 parks and open spaces are to residents and visitors alike, and how a local housing complex worked with the city to create an extension of the rail trail into Nashua. The trail in its entirety travels more than 12 miles from Ayer, Massachusetts to Nashua.

After the walk, I headed east on Route 111 and found a roadside diner and convenience store on Kinsley Street called Roland’s. Roland’s is a classic comfort food eatery with no frills fare. Breakfast consists of standards like eggs, French toast and pancakes, and all are perfectly cooked and served quickly. Nothing was more than $13 for breakfast, lunch, or dinner and portions are large and filling. They do get creative at dinner, offering dishes from an Italian combo of...
After breakfast, I made my way to one of Nashua’s historical landmarks, the Florence H. Speare Memorial Museum on Abbot Street. Beth McCarthy of the Nashua Historical Society and volunteer Bill Ross greeted me at the door to looking for local cuisine done right, MT’s Local Kitchen & Wine Bar is the place to go. MT’s works with local producers, farmers, and fishermen to select products at their freshest and create tasty comfort food dishes such as the BBQ chicken pizza with pickled onions, red peppers, cheddar cheese, and New Hampshire raw honey barbecue sauce. You can also order for each type of wine.

Another shop that offers local treasures is Beckonings on Main Street. I’m not exactly the most enthusiastic shopper on the planet, but I did find their unique greeting cards hilarious and their selection of New Hampshire-made products extensive. Eileen Beckhardt Freedman owns the store and will enthusiastically answer any questions you may have.

Continuing down Main Street towards City Hall, I found another way to work off the tasty comfort food I enjoyed at MT’s Local. The Nashua Heritage Rail Trail is a bike and walking path that runs 1.3 miles through an urban section of Nashua. This path is different from the Nashua River Rail Trail in that instead of riding alongside tranquil ponds, wooded wilderness, and quiet side streets, the trail runs through the Gate City’s first urban neighborhood which is still characterized by busy intersections, brick buildings with murals of Nashua’s history, and rugged residential areas. The trail was completed as part of the Downtown 2000 Project, and it follows the path of the old Worcester and Nashua Railroad. The railroad was the link between Nashua and New York City in the 19th century and a major New England transportation hub. The murals of Don Newcombe and Roy Campanella runs through the Gate City’s first urban neighborhood which is still characterized by busy intersections, brick buildings with murals of Nashua’s history, and rugged residential areas. The trail was completed as part of the Downtown 2000 Project, and it follows the path of the old Worcester and Nashua Railroad. The railroad was the link between Nashua and New York City in the 19th century and a major New England transportation hub. The murals of Don Newcombe and Roy Campanella and the Nashua River, or the beautiful river with the pebbled bottom, are the most visually appealing aspect of the path. They were created by graduates of nearby Rivier College. The path ends on Will Street, which is a short ride from Mine Falls Park and more bike paths. Goodale’s Bike Shop on Broad Street is the place to rent bikes for your trip. The shop has a

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discuss the history of the Gate City and its importance in American industry. The Speare Museum contains original 19th century maps, furniture, and drawings that are meticulously preserved. The Abbot-Spalding Museum next door is named after Daniel Abbot, the father of Nashua, and the prominent Spalding family who turned the house over to the Nashua Historical Society in the early 70s. Learn about Nashua’s heyday with the creation of the Nashua Manufacturing Company to its downturn with textile industry moving to the south, to its rebirth as a hub for the high-tech industry. There are also displays of various natural disasters that Nashua has endured. The Speare Museum and Abbot-Spalding is privately funded and run by four dedicated full-time employees, dozens of volunteers like Bill Ross, and 250 members. The Abbot-Spalding House is also a story of rebirth as volunteers and employees completely restored the tattered building over a four-year period in the early 90s. Donations of $5 for a tour of the Speare Museum and $20 for a tour of the Abbot-Spalding Museum are suggested.

After learning about Nashua’s history at the Speare Museum, I took a short stroll into the downtown area and visited some of these historic buildings that now house local businesses. If you’re bashed New England oysters wrapped in prosciutto with oven dried tomatoes and spinach hollandaise.

Tacos Colima on Factory Street is tucked away in a corner off of Main Street next to some old mills that have been restored as apartments. This restaurant has the freshest, tastiest guacamole, magnificent margaritas, and fresh flavorful Mexican dishes at reasonable prices. The chicken enchilada topped with green chili verde sauce was my favorite.

Main Street is a pleasant diversion from chain restaurants and shops on the Daniel Webster in South Nashua. There are a number of local shops that offer unique handmade crafts, local cuisine, photography, and art. The first shop I looked in on Main Street was the Wine Knot Boutique. Svetlana Yanushkevich opened the shop five years ago and brought her extensive knowledge of wine from the Ukraine. Her native homeland, the southern peninsula of Crimea, has a 2,000-year tradition of winemaking. The shop offers great values on gourmet food, cheeses, and wine from around the globe in addition to frequent wine education classes and tastings. The six-week “Be Your Own Sommelier” class helps students become experts at pairing food and wine, as well as distinguish the various flavors

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Parmesan to a salmon pie to fries with
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NHToDo  A Trip to Know Where

Nashua Eats

Cafe India
6 Elm Street; 882-8100
www.cafeindianh.com
Cafe India serves up modern, fresh Indian food in a casual atmosphere. They have a large selection of traditional Indian dishes ranging from dosa and momo to sizzling tandoori dishes, exotic lamb, chicken, and seafood entrees.

Fody's Great American Tavern
9 Clinton Street; 577-9015
www.fodystavern.com
Fody's is located in the oldest brick building in Nashua, the historic Greeley Building and it offers a classy, relaxed tavern atmosphere. In addition to great food, Fody's features live music, comedy and entertainment each week.

Giant of Siam
5 East Hollis Street; 595-2222
www.facebook.com/giantofsiam
They offer authentic Thai cuisine for lunch and dinner, including a variety of appetizers, soups, and noodle dishes.

Margaritas Mexican Restaurant
1 Nashua Drive; 883-0996
www.margs.com
Enjoy a taste fiesta with authentically delicious food and drinks at Margaritas Mexican Restaurant surrounded by art and furnishing handcrafted in Mexico.

Martha's Exchange
185 Main Street; 883-8781
www.marthas-exchange.com
This popular local brewpub serves up more than 25 homemade brews throughout the year with standard pub fare.

MT's Local Kitchen & Wine Bar
212 Main Street; 595-9334
www.mtslocal.com
Enjoy high-caliber dining in a relaxed atmosphere at MT’s Local, the new evolution of Michael Timothy’s Bistro—still bringing you the same quality food you have come to expect over the past 15 years in a more casual atmosphere. Excellent pizzas and an extensive wine list make this restaurant a local favorite.

Nashua Garden
121 Main Street; 886-7363
https://sites.google.com/site/thenashuagarden
This is a full service sandwich shop offering high-quality ingredients where you can watch the game and enjoy a frosty brew—and even play on the indoor shuffle board!

O'Brien's Sports Bar
118 Main Street; 718-8604
www.obrienssportsbar.com
This sports bar offers great pub food with live music, entertainment, trivia, sports specials, and more.

Old Amsterdam Bar & Lounge
8 Temple Street; 204-5534
www.oldamsterdambarandlounge.com
This hip hangout has a comfortable rustic atmosphere and lots of live entertainment.

Saffron Bistro
48 Main Street; 821-7535
www.thesaffronbistro.com
You’ll find hearty food, a great pint, and a warm atmosphere at this Irish pub and restaurant.

San Francisco Kitchen
133 Main Street; 886-8833
www.sfkitchen.com
San Francisco Kitchen combines eastern cooking with a western flair using fresh, natural ingredients. They have a great selection of creative dishes ranging from sushi, to Fisherman’s Pier Wonton Soup, and crispy filet mignon with black pepper sauce—all served in a cool, comfortable, unpretentious atmosphere.

Sausage King
53 Main Street; 204-5110
www.thesausagekingofnashua.com
This Fenway Park themed restaurant offers a variety of sausage a variety of ways, gourmet dogs, hand-cut fries, sub, salads, and desserts like deep-fried Twinkies!

Stella Blu
70 East Pearl Street; 578-5557
www.stellablu-nh.com
Serving award-winning tapas and martinis along with live entertainment, Stella Blu has an elegant late-night atmosphere.

Surf Seafood Restaurant
207 Main Street; 595 9293
www.surfseafood.com
You will find truly imaginative cooking using the very freshest fish and shellfish at Surf in Nashua (with another location in Portsmouth). They send their seafood buyers to the piers every day in search of the freshest seafood available.

Tacos Colima
101 Factory Street; 889-8226
www.tacoscolima.com
Enjoy this authentic Mexican food highlighted by fresh guacamole and magnificent margaritas.

Unums
47 East Pearl Street; 821-6500
www.unums.com
You’ll enjoy award-winning bistro food in this beautiful downtown restaurant. They pride themselves on using only premium, local ingredients for delicious eats from lobster Rangoon to filet mignon and cedar plank oven roasted salmon.

Villa Banca
194 Main Street; 598-0500
www.villabanca.com
Enjoy a fresh taste of Italy, where you’ll relish traditional Italian dishes and contemporary creations.

New Hampshire’s area code is 603.
huge inventory of bikes and accessories, and is a short ride from Mine Falls Park, the Nashua Heritage Rail Trail, and the Nashua River Rail Trail.

After experiencing Nashua’s urban areas downtown, I decided to enjoy the more the peaceful, tranquil side of the city. Mine Falls Park was just what I needed. The 325-acre park offers seven playing fields for baseball, soccer and lacrosse; miles of jogging, biking, and cross-country skiing trails; and boat ramps for canoeing and kayaking. The park also maintains a rich history as well with the Mine Falls Gatehouse, created in 1886 by the Nashua Manufacturing Company to regulate water flow from the mill yard, and harness power for its mill. Running through the park is the Nashua River Canal, which was created from good old-fashioned manual labor. Workers using shovels and mules, dug a 3-mile canal that provided a 36-foot drop of rushing water at the mills. Both landmarks are on the National Register of Historic Places. Today the park hosts various high school cross-country races and a 10k race in November.

Greeley Park off of Concord Street is another great place to enjoy Nashua’s natural beauty. The park has hiking trails, horseshoe pits, tennis courts, and a bandstand that is used during the summer months. It also hosts events such as the Fairytale Festival in the summer to promote literacy, the Halloween Fright Night, and an annual art show. The park also has beautiful gardens and clean restrooms. There were...
Nashua Activities

HOLIDAY STROLL
883-5700
Saturday, November 24
5 to 10 p.m.
www.downtownnashua.org

Each year, close to 30,000 people from across New England visit downtown Nashua to enjoy this free holiday event. It all kicks off with a candlelit procession from City Hall to Railroad Square, featuring Santa on an antique fire truck, where the city’s official Christmas tree is lit. Much of the downtown is closed to traffic for the evening, allowing strollers to enjoy the live entertainment at over 25 locations, sample offerings from street vendors, dine in downtown’s fine restaurants and do holiday shopping at many unique specialty shops and boutiques. There are ice sculptures at City Hall and an urban snowboarding rail jam, too.

The Great American Downtown organizes other fantastic community events as well. Hop online to get info about the Taste of Downtown, usually held in June; Restaurant Week, held at least twice a year, in the spring and the fall; and the Farmers’ Market, running June through October.

HOLMAN STADIUM
67 Amherst Street
www.gonashua.com

One of baseball’s most important landmarks is Holman Stadium on Amherst Street. Not only is the ballpark nestled in a bucolic, tree-lined section of the city, but it’s also the site of the first integrated baseball team in the country. Roy Campanella and Don Newcombe started their Hall of Fame careers with the minor league Nashua Dodgers in 1946, while Jackie Robinson played for the Montreal Royals before being called up to the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947. Newcombe is one of two pitchers in Major League history to win the Rookie of the Year, Cy Young, and Most Valuable Player awards in his career. Campanella was a three-time Most Valuable Player and an eight-time All-Star during his Major League career. Holman also played host to farm teams for the Pittsburgh Pirates and California Angels. I saw my first game at Holman when the Pride played there.

Today the Nashua Silver Knights of the Futures Collegiate Baseball League play at Holman. The season runs from June to August and the Silver Knights have won the last two championships in this nine-team league. There isn’t a bad seat in the house, and there is plenty of room to maneuver through the concourses and enjoy the family-friendly amenities, games, and play areas that this jewel of a ballpark offers. Even after the baseball season is over, it’s fun to visit this historic, beautifully maintained landmark.

VERTICAL DREAMS
25 East Otterson Street
943-7571
www.verticaldreams.com

Nashua has no shortage of outdoor recreational opportunities. There are, however, plenty of ways to enjoy indoor activities. One way is to visit the 14,000-square-foot Vertical Dreams Indoor Climbing facility on East Otterson Street.

Eight months ago, Vertical Dreams owner Corey Hebert opened a second location in Nashua to offer the same safe, fun, family friendly experiences that have made his Manchester facility such a success. The company motto is “Minutes to Learn, A Lifetime to Master.” For just $35 anybody can walk in and learn to climb in under an hour. This price includes all equipment rentals (shoes and harness) and a day pass. Corey and his staff also teach anyone 13 or older how to function as a belayer, the person who “catches” the climber should they fall or want to come down. The climber is tied to a rope, which passes through a secure anchor at the top of the wall and through the belay device. As the climber moves up the wall, the belayer takes up slack in the rope. Should the climber fall or want to come down, the belayer holds the rope in the brake position and slowly lowers the climber down. There is no appointment or rock climbing experience necessary.

Corey, a native of Colebrook, started the business at the age of 23, and the business is still going strong after 15 years. “Watching families enjoy themselves is the best part of the business,” he said.

PARKS AND LANDMARKS

Nashua Historical Society
5 Abbot Street
885-0015
www.nashuahistoricalsociety.org
$5 Donation suggested for the Speare Museum. $20 donation suggested for Abbot Spalding House

Mine Falls Park
Whipple Street
589-3400, ext. 5005
www.gonashua.com
This is Nashua’s largest park at 325 acres with bike paths, ball fields, and a boat ramp.

Greeley Park
100 Concord Street
589-3370
www.gonashua.com
A popular park with playing fields, bandstand, and a boat ramp.

New Hampshire’s area code is 603.
three things I enjoyed in particular about Greeley Park. First, there was ample space to set up my lawn chair and soak up some late summer sun while I read the newspaper. There is also a hot dog cart right on Concord Street that sells delicious hot dogs. Perhaps what I enjoyed most was the walk to the boat ramp off of Hills Ferry Road. The 1/2-mile walk through wooded wilderness opens up into a surprisingly scenic section of the Merrimack River. The boat ramp may be a little haggard, but a ride down this peaceful section of the river in a kayak or canoe is a great way to spend a warm day.

Nashua is a great place to visit with first-rate restaurants, fascinating history, lots of outdoor recreation, and all the shopping you could possibly want. They key to enjoying this diverse city is to explore beyond the strip malls and discover Nashua's hidden treasures off the beaten path. Nashua is big enough that it has something for everyone, but its small town feel remains unchanged.
Alec’s Shoes
201 Main Street; 882-6811
www.alec-shoes.com
This is a family-owned, contemporary shoe store that has been in Nashua since 1938. With over 5,000 styles in stock, they provide style, service, and great prices all the time.

Beckonings
221 Main Street; 882-9500
www.beckonings.com
Shop for home décor, handmade crafts, and personalized gifts. You’ll find beautiful and unique accents for your home. The selection continually changes and many items are made by American artisans, quite a few made here in New Hampshire.

Dick Avard’s Haberdashery
117 Main Street; 889-0305
Find them on Facebook!
This store has been a fixture in downtown Nashua, carrying all the latest styles for the progressive male. Friendly and helpful, the folks here will help men find the right clothes for them.

Goodale’s Bike Shop
14B Broad Street; 882-2111
www.goodalesbikeshop.com
A great resource for cyclists, this full-service bike shop has been operating since 1919. Look online for info about spin classes, rides, bike fitting, and events.

Ikebana Flowers
175 Main Street; 595-8877
www.ikebanaflower.com
They use flowers to connect you with nature in inspired ways. Ikebana offers designs that beautify your home, workspace and special events like weddings and celebrations. Ask them about their school and classes!

League of NH Craftsmen
98 Main Street; 595-8233
www.nhcrafts.org
The gallery features a wide array of distinctive jewelry, ceramics, art-to-wear, prints, baskets, wood pieces, and much more. Each item is handmade by a juried member of the League of NH Craftsmen, whose standards for fine hand craft represent the highest level of excellence and creativity. Mark your calendars to visit them during NH Open Doors on November 3 and 4; Downtown Nashua Ladies Night on November 15 from 5 to 8 p.m.;

Scontsas Fine Jewelry & Home Décor
169-173 Main Street; 882-3281
In business for almost a century, this family business has become a trusted resource for fine jewelry, with a diverse selection of jewelry, from engagement rings to Pandora charms. They also offer home décor—from luxurious bedding to Italian tableware and so much more.

Wine Not Boutique
170 Main Street; 204-5569
www.winenotboutique.com
This shop features wine, gourmet food, gift baskets, and wine classes. They specialize in small wineries whose products aren’t available at mass-production outlets.