

# PROVIDENCE

*Providence shines as one of the most uninhibited party towns in the US — and visitors are welcome to join in the fun.*

## from staff reports

**S**ure, Providence is not a huge metropolis, but size isn't everything. By virtue of variety and energy, Rhode Island's capital is closer to the sexy and laissez-faire atmosphere of a European city.

From stripper-bars to first-rate drag shows, raucous bathhouses to pounding disco clubs, an array of flamboyant fetish clubs and friendly gay-neighborhood taverns, Providence has more than most. There's even a sex mall tucked away near the riverfront with a vast parking lot to accommodate shoppers busy looking for those hard-to-find gifts.

Most nightspots are situated within safe walking distance of one another in a downtown club district. Others are close-by, among post-industrial hulks and monumental power plants.

Providence has thumbed its nose at Puritan sensibilities since the 17th century. Roger Williams walked out of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1636, one step ahead of the stocks and perhaps the gallows. With today's neo-Puritan coalitions of religious fundies and PC tyrants, Providence remains a contrarian enclave, bucking the mean-spirited tide.

The city has long nursed a reputation as New England's recreational sex-get-away, with pleasures otherwise unavailable back home. Since neither Boston nor anywhere else in parts north has a single bathhouse, this still rings true!

These differences in attitude, plus a relative lag in real-estate values combined with an appreciation for the

vitality that downtown businesses brought to a city that until recent years flirted with dereliction. The entertainment zones resemble Boston prior to the "urban renewal" of the '60s and '70s, which wiped so much of that city's urban life off the map. In Providence, by contrast, streets full of people and cash flowing every night was music to the ears of local officials.

And, boy, do they like to party! Even on cool, drizzly nights one may see throngs of revelers on Richmond Street — the heart of the club zone. There's milling and queuing for a variety of clubs — straight, gay, and um, pansexual. The atmosphere can seem to be that of New Year's Eve or Fat Tuesday, with a charge in the air. Few American cities have that feel anymore. It may be in part that Providence is a college town, with Brown University, Providence College, Rhode Island School of Design and Johnson & Wales all clustered nearby. For a city of only 160,000 people, this student population contributes a sizable youthful demographic and surge of hormones.

Beyond the nightlife glitter, Providence is a great walking town. Many architectural gems have been carefully restored. Dramatic offerings from the Trinity Repertory Theater are always a good choice. Summer-season "Firewater" spectaculars along the Providence River are another treat. Buried waterways have been uncovered in recent years thanks to the near-legendary rogue (and former-mayor) Buddy Cianci prosecuted (some say persecuted) on charges of small-time cor-

ruption by the Feds. Cianci turned hidden streams into scenic canals only recently appreciated as an important urban asset. Also the historic districts of Benefit Street and Federal Hill remain unperturbed. The Hill, especially, offers many options for fine dining.

For those traveling the Northeast Corridor on Amtrak, a stop-off in Providence is easy as the station is within walking distance of the center of gay nightlife. You may find yourself tempted to stay longer than planned.

## Clubs, bars and restaurants

There's about a six-block area with more than a half-dozen bars, clubs and bathhouses, making a hop around this lively city fun and easy.

**Alley Cat** (17 Snow Street) is a classic gay bar with both daytime and evening patrons who feel as much at home with the staff as with one another. Their age- and ethnically-diverse crowd brings a charged atmosphere to the place Fridays through Sundays, but a cozier one on weekdays. Overstuffed leather chairs add to the comfort. Locals call it a gay "Cheers," but Alley Cat morphs into a far more exuberantly packed house on busy nights than that of the TV tavern. The pours are generous at the Alley Cat, and invention is the byword behind the bar. Ask mix-master Michael for a "Sex with Michael" supercharged Brandy Alexander cocktail.

Alley Cat forms an axis with sister club **Dark Lady** (124 Snow Street), where the tempo is raucous and the



Junior  
at Trixx



Mary, Manny, Dante & Alesio of Mediterraneo



Adin & Keenen  
at Trixx



Jenna St James  
at Dark Lady



Liz of Dolce Villa



BB, La Diva, & Kitty Litter  
at Gallery

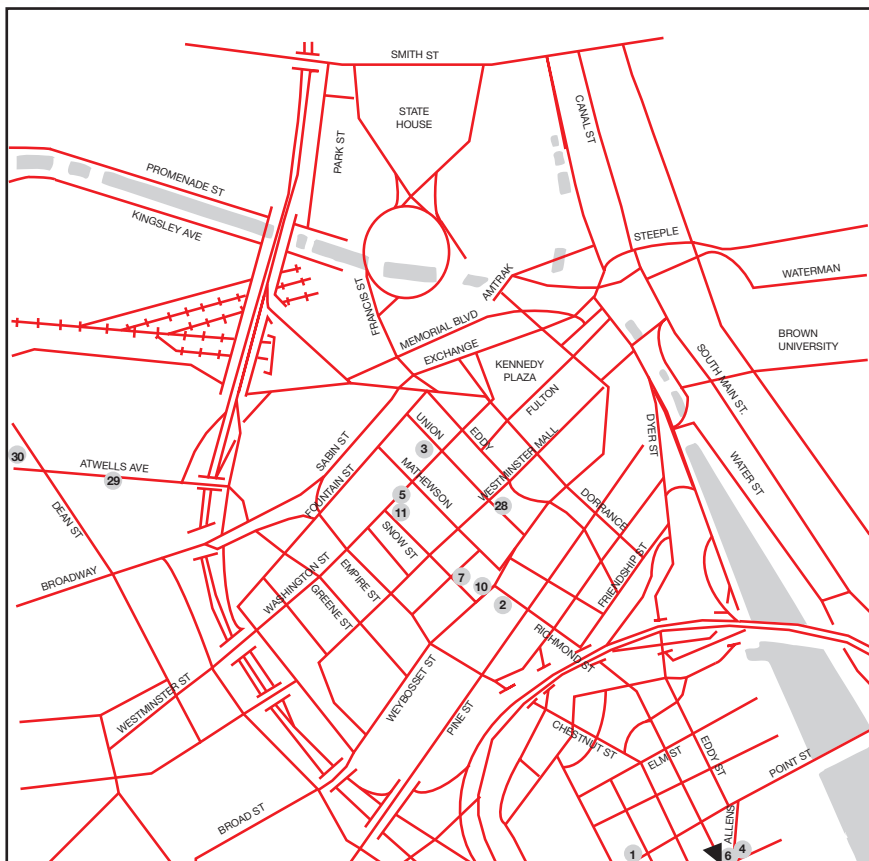


Andre at Wheels



# PROVIDENCE

- 11) **Alley Cat**  
17 Snow St  
(401) 272-6369
- 29) **Cafe Mediterraneo**  
134 Atwells Avenue  
(401) 331-7760
- 10) **Club Body Center**  
257 Weybosset  
(401) 274-0298
- 3) **Club Energy**  
69 Union Street  
(401) 621-4141
- 1) **Club Gallery**  
150 Point Street  
(401) 751-7166
- 7) **Dark Lady**  
124 Snow St  
(401) 831-GAYS
- 30) **Hotel Dolce Villa**  
63 De Pasquale Ave  
(401) 383-7031
- 4) **Megaplex**  
257 Allens Ave  
(401) 780-8769
- 2) **Mirabar**  
35 Richmond St  
401-331-6761
- 28) **Providence Eagle**  
198 Union St  
(401) 831-5366
- 28) **Union**  
200 Union St  
(401) 331-2291
- 5) **Wheels**  
125 Washington Street  
(401) 272-6950
- 6) **Trixx@XL**  
257 Allens Ave  
(401) 461-XL22



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[www.wheelsprovidence.com](http://www.wheelsprovidence.com)

## Derrick & Richie at Mirabar



**Ryan at  
The Eagle**



**Natalie Gay at Union**

elegance is kitch. Maybe it's the drag shows Miss Kitty Litter presents with her retinue of queer queens around midnight on Saturdays. Her show segues to a passel of go-go boys making all the right moves. A youngish crowd mills around the small stage while the girls lip-synch torch songs and Kitty pipes in with caustic stand-up narration. On the sidelines there's comfy furniture where guests kick back to enjoy fishbowl-sized cocktails poured with a fine hand by manager Rob and his confederates beneath restored tin ceilings and baby chandeliers.

In a charming old building, **Down City** (151 Weybossett Street) is a lively downtown restaurant and bar attracting a mixed stylish, animated crowd. The delicious food is dished out in large portions. There's a distinct gay feel here: La Diva hosts the lively Friday nights, and first Mondays here showcase the talents of drag diva and AIDS Care Rhode Island director Ms Kitty Litter, who hosts the benefit party High Tini. Weekend brunch is popular here.

**3 Steeple Street** (125 Canal Street) attracts a gay and lesbian crowd, too, for interesting and eclectic cuisine served at very reasonable prices, especially at lunchtime. Seafood, vegetarian dishes, and meatier treats such as their Moroccan lamb stew are among the offerings. Their lounge area is available for private parties.

**Mediterraneo Caffe** (134 Atwells Avenue) is a Federal Hill Italian restaurant for lunch and dinner. On weekends and some evenings their upstairs terrace turns into a busy (not especially gay) Euro style club. The restaurant however, with both indoor and outdoor seating, is special not only for the excellent Italian food prepared by real Italian chefs but thanks also to their fun and decidedly sympatico staff.

For a change of pace, the **Providence Eagle** (198 Union Street), is right in the thick of the gay club cluster. This is the place for leather and denim-clad bears, their cubs and friends. Don't miss Josh's Jockstrap night every other Friday, or the Hot Body contest on Sat-

Gary of Eagle  
with Mr RI



Jerzee & Corey at Gallery

**The ALleycat**  
The Friendliest Most purrfect bar in town  
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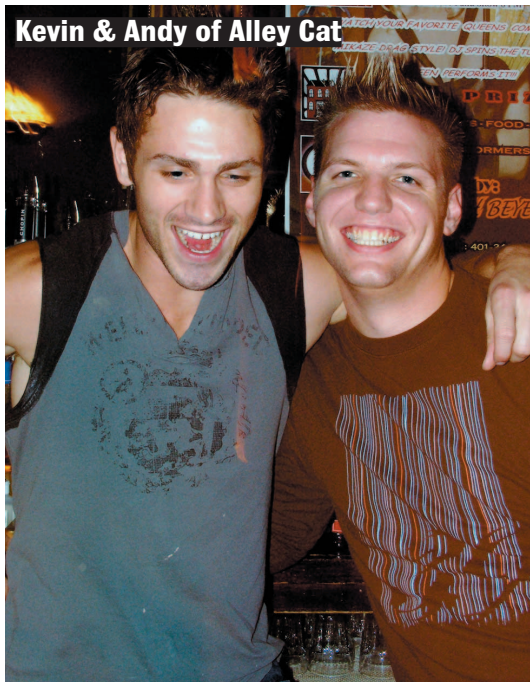
**The Dark Lady**  
good times are in your future...  
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Pants Down!

What Happens on Snow Street Stays on Snow Street!



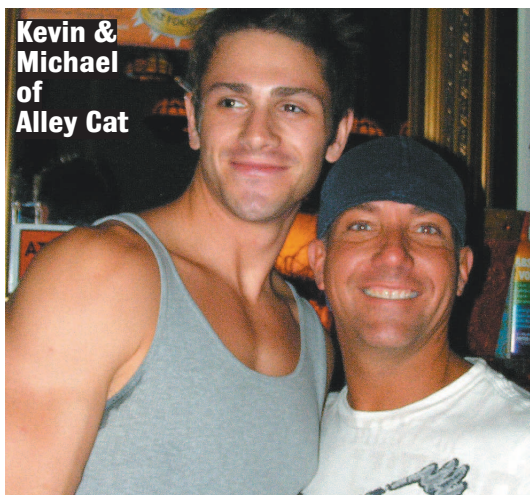
Kevin & Andy of Alley Cat



Corey & Kevin at Mirabar



Kevin & Michael of Alley Cat



Gary at Eagle



Mirabar's John & Ritchie



John & Paulie at Mirabar



Kevin & Matt at Alley Cat



urdays. **Union** (200 Union Street), part of this same complex, connects from within, catering to transvestites and their fans. Jackie Collins, a local diva of distinction who can really sing, hosts a wild Friday night drag show that's uniquely Providence. Danny Arico, on the piano, draws a good crowd to Union on Sundays.

Meanwhile things keep rolling as they have for 15 years at **Wheels** (125 Washington Street), where eponymous motifs abound. This gay sports-bar hangout for guys has Keno games and pool tournaments (Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays). An atmosphere of general merriment prevails among the twenty-something-and-up crowd, daily from noon until 1 am; weekends until 2 am.

Nearby **Club Energy** (69 Union Street) is a small lively club with a mainly young gay crowd (ages 18 up) that welcomes many types, genders and orientations for a happy mix. They're open seven nights a week, but

busiest on weekends.

If your pulse is still racing, a few blocks away is **Mirabar** (35 Richmond Street), one of the oldest gay clubs in the country. Mirabar attracts an upbeat college crowd of guys who catch their reflections from the reflecting-glass dance floor while friends and admirers look on from the balcony above.

From the downtown club cluster, stroll down Richmond Street for 10 minutes and turn right to find the newest addition to the Providence party scene, **Club Gallery** (150 Point Street). Owner Bob Thibeault, in the business for many years, engages several promoters who bring out distinct constituencies on different nights. Mondays and Wednesdays offer karaoke in one room, while the outdoor areas attract smokers and socializers. On Fridays a variety of gay men come to dance at Decadence and an afternoon Tea Dance and Karaoke Idols attracts a crowd on Sunday. G Spot on Saturdays has three rooms of frolic, and

a patio packed full with hundreds of lesbians and their friends, enthralled by the talents of superstar DJ Dena.

A little farther away in the industrial zone, near the Providence River, is the aforementioned erotic mall. Nestled among the sex-toy stores, porn video shops, and girl strip clubs is **Trixx** (257 Allens Avenue) which showcases the male form with appealing intimacy. Whether tastes run to young Adonis types or the Apollonian jock variety, Trixx delivers eye-candy that's exotic hereabouts with New England's only totally nude male strip shows. They also offer private dances in more secluded surroundings. Their regular crew of guys is joined sometimes by top-rank porn stars. They offer man-to-man shows on stage, and sometimes under-the-shower! Check their website for upcoming special dates and dancers' photos.

Providence has frequent lively circuit parties whose venues constantly change. For party news around town,

## CLUB GALLERY

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TUESDAYS: OPEN POOL TABLE

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THURSDAY: PROMOTERS PARTY NIGHT  
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keep an eye on the website of a veteran producer at **Chris Harris Presents**. More about the scene can be gleaned from local gay and alternative press. Useful online sites include **RI Pride** (Prideri.com) and **Edge Providence** (Edgeprovidence.com). Also check out **Get Rhode Island** magazine (Get-ri.com) for their events calendar and **Options** (Optionsri.org), another local gay and lesbian publication.

## Bathhouses

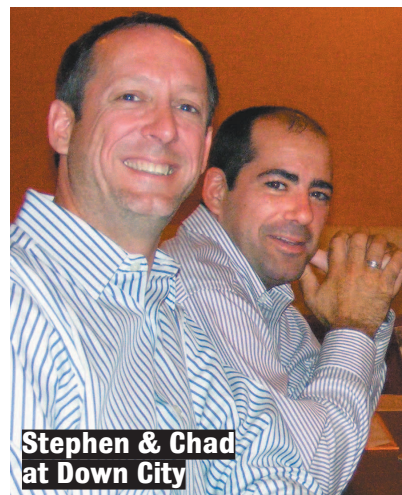
For those who enjoy the pleasures of a good old-fashioned bathhouse, **Mega-plex** (257 Allens Avenue) is located in the same erotic mall as Trixx. Among the saunas and showers are clubhouse amenities as well as private rooms available for overnight stays. Dry sauna, steam room, video rooms and 75 single rooms are some of the attractions here. Events here include blackout nights on Wednesdays and Fridays from 7 pm, and special nights for bears on first and third Sundays.

**Club Body Center** (257 Weybossett

Street) is located in a second floor recently remodeled walk-up. There's an exercise room next to the big new playroom equipped with games and pool tables, and a new porn video lounge too. A well-appointed area is home to fetish shows, offered on a regular basis. There's a steam room, tanning booth, and showers. Day passes are only \$5, and CBC is open 24 hours, every day of the year.

## Lodgings

For good accommodations you'll find a pleasant gay-friendly boutique hotel in Federal Hill, the Italian neighborhood beyond the interstate from downtown. **Hotel Dolce Villa**, (65 DePasquale Square; Dolcevallari.com) is at the corner of a pedestrian square distinguished by its pineapple fountain. This full-service boutique hotel is a perfect weekend base from which to check out Providence's varied cultural, culinary and club scenes. Their restaurant and cafe has lots of outdoor seating — perfect for scouting passers-by.



For those seeking bargains, fine rooms at the **Radisson** (220 India Street) can be snagged for \$75, except during graduation season and other big university events. **Hotel Providence** (311 Westminster Street) is elegant, almost swanky, and far pricier, but has the advantage of being directly adjacent to the club district. **Holiday Inn Providence** (21 Atwells Avenue) has a bit of a reputation as a gay hangout, too. ▼



**HOTEL  
DOLCE  
VILLA**

The only boutique hotel on the Providence Rhode Island skyline at the heart of historic Federal Hill. A three-story building with Old World Mediterranean-style exterior, reminiscent of hillside hotels of Positano Italy but with ultra-modern interiors suggesting South Beach Florida.

An all-suite hotel with nine one-bedroom units, and five with two bedrooms, all with memory-foam beds, and sleep sofas with same. All 14 suites have a fully-equipped kitchen,

and bathrooms with Jacuzzi tub, plus DVD, VCR, and CD players, flat-screen TV and internet access. Larger units have gas-fired fireplaces.

63 DePasquale Plaza, Providence RI 02903

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Located on beautiful Federal Hill in Providence, Rhode Island, Mediterraneo offers an eclectic blend of cutting-edge atmosphere and creative, traditional and contemporary cuisine with a Mediterranean flair. On the weekends, Mediterraneo's second level transforms into an upscale Latin and International caffè-discoteca.

134 Atwell's Avenue, Providence, RI  
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