

Destination: Manchester, New Hampshire

MANCHESTER, the largest city in northern New England, is mid-way between Nashua and Concord in the Merrimack Valley Region of New Hampshire. Manchester sits on the banks of the Merrimack River in south central New Hampshire. Once a depressed mill town, it has gained new strength from a recent facelift. The new Manchester is an attractive, upscale community.

Dining out here is an ethnic affair with a variety of choices from Chinese to Middle Eastern. There's a heap of culture, too. For live entertainment, the Palace Theater has been a favorite for decades. The **Currier Museum of Art** is a renowned institution featuring great American and European sculptures and artwork. And for fine-tuned musical appreciation, there's The New Hampshire Philharmonic.

The **Massabesic Audubon Center** is a museum offering educational hands-on experiences for children and adults. Hiking through its five miles of nature trails is a pleasurable trek through numerous environmental habitats.

On the Merrimack River, **The Amoskeag Fishways Learning and Visitors Center** thrills anglers with exhibits, workshops and field trips.

Sports are part of what makes Manchester special. Whether it's cheering for the Manchester Monarch's hockey team at the newly-constructed Verizon Wireless Arena or going out to the **ball game at the Fisher Cats Baseball Stadium**, spectator sports are alive and well in Manchester.

It's not only about watching sports ... the Manchester lifestyle is about participating in active sports, as well. Fishing in the Lake Messabesic Watershed for small mouth bass and yellow perch is a satisfying pastime. The watershed is also a haven for wildlife and a favorite spot among naturalists.

Hiking trails are available at Lake Messabesic. For a round of golf, the Derryfield Country Club is open to the public. And, downhill skiing can be found at McIntyre Ski Area in North Manchester. Many inns and motels in the area also offer snowmobile and snowshoeing trails, as well as sleigh rides.

The Currier Museum of Art – located in downtown Manchester at 201 Myrtle Way (phone 603-669-6144) -- covers a variety of mediums and eras with the more than 13,000 artworks that form the core of its permanent collection. Explore galleries that run from works by New Hampshire natives to the decorative arts, American pieces from the likes of Albert Bierstadt and Thomas Hart Benton to modern art contributions from Pablo Picasso, Arthur Dove and Georgia O'Keefe. There are also a number of contemporary works on show, and regularly changing exhibitions featuring a variety of mediums, from photography to sculpture. Those interested in visiting the Lucille Zimmerman House, a private residence designed by architect Frank Lloyd Wright, can make reservations for tours through the Currier Museum. (Hours: Su, M,W-F 11-5; Sa 10-5; First Thur 11-8. Price: \$10 for adults)

SEE Science Center – located in Central Manchester, 200 Bedford Street (Ph: 603-669-0400). In addition to two-floors of interactive science exhibits that educate children with hands-on fun about everything from color and music to electricity and moon-walking, the SEE Science Center in Manchester also boasts the largest permanent LEGO minifigure scale (about 55:1) installation on the planet. Hardworking "LEGO" builders

constructed a downsized replica of the city's Amoskeag Millyard (as it looked around 1900) that is sure to delight LEGO enthusiasts of all ages. Inquire at SEE Science Center for more information on their educational offerings and special LEGO program. (Hours: M-F 10-4; Sa, Su 10-5; Ages 1 and up: \$6)

New Hampshire Fisher Cats Baseball – stadium on South Commercial Street (Ph: 603-641-2005).

DESTINATIONS NEAR MANCHESTER

Concord (Population: 40687, the vibrant capital of New Hampshire, thrives on year-round tourism. Main Street has over 175 retail spaces selling everything from candy to antiques seasoned with a nice collection of restaurants. A love for live entertainment brings Broadway shows, the Ballet, and international programs to the Capitol Center for the Arts. Fishing in the Merrimack River and kayaking down the Contoocook River quenches the thirst for adventure.

Nashua (Population: 86605), second largest city in New Hampshire, is characterized by urbane amenities in a traditional New England setting. At its heart is Main Street and the Nashua River with stores and restaurants radiating out from its core. More than 100 shops and 35 restaurants meet every whim imaginable. Nashua is rich with culture. Old mills have been converted to gallery space, forming what is now Bilancia Gallery and Framing on Pearl Street, the artistic soul of the city. Nashua has its own ballet theater and symphony.

Portsmouth (Population: 20784), steeped in history and character, prospered as a seafaring community in the 1800s. Stately homes that once belonged to ship captains still stand proudly in town, phantoms of prowess and wealth. In Old Harbor, shops and restaurants have replaced a once thriving mercantile industry. And, throughout the town, Georgian and Federal-style homes pose in restored glory for public consumption. Hints of the water world are everywhere. Parks are outfitted with boat launches and fishing piers, and decorated with mastheads and model ships.

SCENIC DRIVES

American Independence Byway - 21 miles (33 km)

You could pass this route in 2 or 3 hours, but it's much better to plan for more so you can enjoy it fully.

Amoskeag Millyard Scenic and Cultural Byway - 1 mile (1 km) Even though this byway is just one mile long, there are so many things to see and do along this byway that you could really take a couple of days.

Apple Way, Londonderry - 10 miles (16 km) 1 hour