

# Route 6 Rhode Island Summer Travel Guide

Welcome to a westbound summer road trip across **Rhode Island via U.S. Route 6!** This guide highlights charming walkable towns, cultural stops, and scenic parks from the Massachusetts border in the east to the Connecticut state line in the west. Enjoy Rhode Island's local character, museums, and natural beauty – all perfect for summer exploration. Below is an overview of key stops in order (east to west), followed by detailed descriptions:

Stop	Highlights (Summer)
<b>Providence (Downtown)</b>	Riverwalk & WaterFire, art museum, historic Benefit St. tours <a href="http://goprovidence.com">goprovidence.com</a> <a href="http://risd.edu">risd.edu</a>
<b>Snake Den State Park (Johnston)</b>	Wooded trails, working farm (Dame Farm), nature overlooks <a href="http://riparks.ri.gov">riparks.ri.gov</a> <a href="http://riparks.ri.gov">riparks.ri.gov</a>
<b>North Scituate Village (Scituate)</b>	Quaint historic downtown, summer farmers market & concerts <a href="http://providence.kidsoutandabout.com">providence.kidsoutandabout.com</a> , RI State Police Museum
<b>Foster &amp; CT Border</b>	Rural scenery, Swamp Meadow Covered Bridge <a href="http://visitrhodeisland.com">visitrhodeisland.com</a> , Jerimoth Hill (RI's highest point) <a href="http://en.wikipedia.org">en.wikipedia.org</a>

## Providence – Downtown Arts & Riverwalk



*A gondola on the Providence River passes braziers for WaterFire, the famed summer fires that light up the water.*

Rhode Island's capital city is a vibrant, walkable first stop as Route 6 enters from the east. Downtown **Providence** features **Waterplace Park** and cobblestone-lined riverwalks where the city's signature summer event, **WaterFire**, takes place. On select Saturday evenings from May through November, nearly 100 bonfires blaze atop the rivers, illuminating **¾ mile of downtown waterways** while music plays and crowds stroll along the banks. This free open-air art installation "**lights up downtown Providence**" multiple times each summer [visitrhodeisland.com](http://visitrhodeisland.com), creating a magical nighttime atmosphere. Day or night, the downtown area is easy to explore on foot – and guided **walking tours** are available, from historic Benefit Street "Mile of History" walks to nightly **Providence Ghost Tours** that delve into local lore [goprovidence.com](http://goprovidence.com).

- **RISD Museum of Art** – Adjacent to downtown in College Hill, the Rhode Island School of Design's museum is the state's premier art collection. The RISD Museum houses around *100,000 works* spanning ancient Egyptian artifacts to contemporary design [risd.edu](http://risd.edu). It's a must-stop for art lovers, offering immersive galleries of paintings, sculpture, decorative arts, and textiles in a cool indoor setting (ideal on a hot summer afternoon).
- **Benefit Street & College Hill** – Just east of the river downtown, this historic district invites a leisurely summer walk. Often called the "Mile of History," Benefit Street is lined with **18th–19th century architecture**, including Colonial-era homes and institutions like the Providence Athenaeum library. The shady streets around Brown University and RISD are perfect for a self-guided stroll or a guided history tour [tripadvisor.com](http://tripadvisor.com), showcasing Providence's rich heritage.
- **WaterFire Evenings** – If your timing permits, plan to spend a summer evening downtown during **WaterFire Providence**. As dusk falls, torch-lit gondolas glide by and black-clad tenders feed the crackling cedar bonfires in the river [goprovidence.com](http://goprovidence.com). The scene engages all the senses – the aroma of wood smoke, flickering firelight on arched bridges, and ambient world music echoing off downtown buildings [goprovidence.com](http://goprovidence.com). Check the schedule for full lightings (usually two Saturdays per month in summer [goprovidence.com](http://goprovidence.com)). On WaterFire nights, you can also enjoy art vendors and occasional open-air performances along the riverbank. *(Tip: Arrive early to find parking, or consider exploring daytime attractions like the RISD Museum, then stay for the evening spectacle.)*

## Snake Den State Park (Johnston) – Nature Walks & Farm

Leaving the city westward, Route 6 transitions to a suburban stretch in **Johnston**. Here a worthwhile nature stop is **Snake Den State Park**, a 1,000-acre green oasis located right along Route 6 [riparks.ri.gov](http://riparks.ri.gov). This undeveloped state park offers **wooded hiking trails** and a glimpse of rural Rhode Island's summer beauty just minutes from the highway. Trails are self-guided and wind through tranquil forests filled with wildflowers and old stone walls [riparks.ri.gov](http://riparks.ri.gov). Keep an eye out for scenic viewpoints – the park's high spots offer lovely vistas through the trees (especially when foliage is full).

A centerpiece of Snake Den is **Dame Farm**, a historic working farm within the park. In summertime, you might see fields of produce growing and maybe even buy seasonal vegetables or flowers at the farm stand. The mix of farm and forest makes this stop refreshing for a leg-stretch: you can picnic at a rustic table by the farm or simply enjoy the quiet of nature. There are no large facilities, but a small parking area on Brown Avenue leads into the park [riparks.ri.gov](http://riparks.ri.gov). For those interested in local agriculture or photography, the barn and farm landscapes provide a picturesque backdrop. *(Note: The park is carry-in/carry-out, so remember to take any trash with you.)* Snake Den is a low-key stop ideal for hikers, birdwatchers, and anyone looking to break up the drive with some outdoor time.

## North Scituate Village – Small-Town Charm & Local Culture

Continuing west, Route 6 narrows to two lanes and passes through the **town of Scituate**, home to the **Scituate Reservoir** (Rhode Island's largest inland body of water). Just north of the reservoir lies **North Scituate Village**, a delightful **walkable small town** center along Route 6's old alignment (Danielson Pike). North Scituate offers a taste of classic New England village charm: historic buildings cluster around a tree-shaded village green, and everything is easily explored on foot in a few blocks. In summer, the town common is lively with community events. **Saturday mornings** feature the **Scituate Farmers Market** (mid-May through late September), where local farmers and artisans sell fresh produce, baked goods, and crafts [providence.kidsoutandabout.com](http://providence.kidsoutandabout.com). You'll often find **live music** or family activities at the market, creating a friendly small-town atmosphere. On some summer evenings, the gazebo on the green hosts free **outdoor concerts** ranging from local folk bands to big-band swing – visitors are welcome to bring lawn chairs and enjoy the tunes under the stars.

- **Village Green & Historic District** – Take a short stroll around North Scituate's **historic Congregational Church**, old tavern buildings, and antique shops. Many structures date to the 1800s, and the village has changed little in appearance, giving an authentic glimpse of Rhode Island's rural past. Even without a formal tour, it's pleasant to wander the **sidewalk-lined main street** to see the white clapboard town library, vintage storefronts, and public buildings that anchor this tight-knit community. If you're a history buff, pop into the *Scituate Historical Society* (when open) or look for informational signs—Scituate's heritage is tied to the reservoir (nearby, you may notice the dam and coves of the lake created in the 1920s).
- **Rhode Island State Police Museum** – An unusual specialty museum is located right in North Scituate, at the State Police headquarters on Route 6. The **RI State Police Museum** showcases the history of the state police force with vintage uniforms, equipment, photographs, and even antique patrol cars. It's a small but fascinating collection for those interested in law enforcement history. *Hours are limited* (open to the public on the third Wednesday of each month, 10 AM–1 PM, or by appointment [rispmuseum.org](http://rispmuseum.org)), so plan accordingly if you want to visit. Even if closed, the headquarters building itself is historic – it was one of the early state police barracks. This stop is a neat piece of Rhode Island culture you won't find elsewhere, reflecting the 100-year legacy of the State Police (celebrated in 2025 with special events [rispmuseum.org](http://rispmuseum.org)).
- **Scenic Reservoir Drive** – As you depart Scituate, enjoy the scenery of **Scituate Reservoir**. Route 6 skirts the northern edge of this serene lake, and there are a few pull-offs where you can pause to admire the water views through the trees. While the reservoir shoreline isn't publicly accessible for recreation (it's a protected water supply), the glimpses of blue water and surrounding woodlands are especially beautiful in late-day summer sunlight. The **Gainer Dam**, visible from Route 12 just south of

Route 6, is an impressive earthen dam holding back the reservoir – a quick detour if you'd like a better look. Back on Route 6, you'll pass **Chopmist Hill Road** (Route 102) – note that this area, Chopmist Hill, was the site of a *secret WWII radio listening post* that once intercepted German transmissions! [en.wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org) (There's no public exhibit, but history enthusiasts might appreciate this trivia as they drive by one of Scituate's highest hills.)

## Foster & Connecticut Border – Rural Retreats and Unique Landmarks

As Route 6 enters **Foster**, the last town in western Rhode Island, the landscape remains **rural and wooded**. You'll notice why this area is nicknamed the state's "last frontier" – it's all country roads, farms, and forest here, offering a peaceful drive especially in summer when the fields are green. Before crossing into Connecticut, consider two distinctive side stops in Foster that capture the rural character:



*Swamp Meadow Covered Bridge in Foster – Rhode Island's only public-road covered bridge, rebuilt by local volunteers in the 1990s.*

- **Swamp Meadow Covered Bridge (Central Pike)** – Just a few miles south of Route 6 (via Cucumber Hill Road/RI-94), you can visit **Rhode Island's only covered bridge on a public road** [visitrhodeisland.com](https://visitrhodeisland.com). The Swamp Meadow Covered Bridge is a 40-foot wooden bridge spanning Hemlock Brook, originally built in 1993–94 by townsfolk using locally cut timber [visitrhodeisland.com](https://visitrhodeisland.com). It's a picture-perfect structure that looks plucked from the 19th century (in fact it's a replica – the original was lost to fire and rebuilt in 1994). In summer, the bridge is surrounded by greenery and makes for a great photo op or quick walk-through (there is a pull-off for parking). This little-known gem is a testament to Foster's community spirit and love of local history. It's especially charming in the morning light or late afternoon sun filtering through the trees.
- **Jerimoth Hill – Highest Point in RI** – For bragging rights or a fun nature detour, stop at **Jerimoth Hill**, the highest elevation in Rhode Island at **812 feet above sea level** [en.wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org). Don't worry – no mountain climbing is required! The high point lies just off Route 6's path: take Route 101 (Hartford Pike) for a half-mile south at Foster's western border. You'll find a small sign and pull-off. A very gentle **0.3-mile trail**

leads to the summit marker, with only a 10-foot rise – essentially a short walk in the woods [en.wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org). At the wooded “summit,” you’ll see a cairn or sign noting the spot. It’s a quirky stop beloved by “highpointers,” and a fun way to stretch your legs and check off a state high point. On summer days, you might catch other curious travelers making the pilgrimage. *(Note: The trail is on private land but open to the public during daylight, thanks to cooperative landowners. Please respect the property by staying on the path.)* Even if the elevation gain is trivial, you can now say you stood on the roof of Rhode Island!

As you leave Foster, Route 6 crosses **into Connecticut**, where a green “Welcome to Connecticut” sign greets you. Take a moment to appreciate the journey across Rhode Island – though only about 27 miles wide via Route 6, you’ve experienced an array of attractions: an arts-filled capital city, quiet country parks, historic villages, and natural landmarks. This summer drive along Route 6 packs a lot of **local character and scenery** into a short distance [stayonroute6.blogspot.com](https://stayonroute6.blogspot.com). Whether you lit a candle at WaterFire in Providence or snapped a photo at the covered bridge in Foster, you’ve seen the Ocean State’s small-town charm and cultural richness beyond the beaches. Enjoy your onward travels, and come back soon to Rhode Island!

**Sources:** Rhode Island tourism and local heritage sites, Route 6 travel accounts, and state park information [goprovidence.com](https://goprovidence.com) [riparks.ri.gov](https://riparks.ri.gov) [providence.kidsoutandabout.com](https://providence.kidsoutandabout.com) [visitrhodeisland.com](https://visitrhodeisland.com) [en.wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org). Each stop’s details were verified with official sources and recent guides to ensure up-to-date summer offerings. Safe travels on Route 6!