

A Day in Bristol

BY *Barbra Alan*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY *Paul Howe*

You may know Bristol as a quiet little New England town that borders Newfound Lake. But a century ago, it was a booming industrial town with mills and factories that manufactured paper, leather, wool products, furniture and more.

Prior to its incorporation in 1819, the town, along with neighboring towns Hill and Bridgewater, was known as New Chester. The name Bristol was derived from a deposit of fine sand similar to the sand used in Bristol, England, for the production of china, earthenware and pottery.

While the mills and factories that fueled Bristol's economy closed down decades ago, the town now benefits from tourism, particularly during the summer and fall, when visitors flock from near and far to enjoy Bristol's shops and businesses, small-town feel, and beautiful scenery.

If you'd like to get to know Bristol this summer, *Kearsarge Magazine's* "local guide" provides an insider's view to the town. And it doesn't have to be expensive. Here are several ways to enjoy Bristol, including what you can do for free, what you can do for \$25 or less, and what you can do for \$25 and up.

No Money Required *Two hikes*



Profile Falls

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Grab your sturdy walking shoes and a hiking stick for a brisk wooded walk that leads you to beautiful Profile Falls. The sight and sound of the 30-foot falls, which is part of Smith River, is entrancing. (If you look hard at the falls and use a little imagination, you may see what looks like the profile of a face cut in the rock toward the bottom of the drop.) Bring a picnic lunch, a good book and, if it's warm enough, your bathing suit.

Getting there: Take Route 3A toward Hill, and make a left onto Profile Falls Road. A small parking lot is conveniently located close to the trail.

Inspiration Point

If you're up for a short, steep hike where the payoff is a fabulous view, Inspiration Point is for you. A five-minute walk to the top of Round Top Mountain reveals a little outdoor chapel with a breathtaking view of Bristol, New Hampton, Hill and points beyond. At the bottom of this peak is Slim Baker Lodge, named after Everett "Slim" Baker, the conservation officer for the area from 1910-1953.

Getting there: From the center of Bristol, take 3A South toward Hill. At the Bristol Historical Society building, bear right and follow the road to the parking area.

\$25 or Less *Breakfast and a day outside*

Gilly's Restaurant

Start your day with a delicious breakfast at Gilly's Restaurant, where, according to their slogan, "the coffee's as fresh as the service." New faces and regulars alike are greeted with a smile and treated like old friends. Gilly's offers a wide selection of breakfast and lunch options throughout the week, and no one can touch their coffee. For breakfast, the blueberry pancakes (which are as big as the plate) and ham and cheese omelets are not to be missed.

Getting there: 322 Lake Street. Phone ahead for hours by calling 744-2321.

Wellington State Park

Bristol's Wellington State Park boasts 204 acres with hiking trails, picnic areas, a playground, a public boat launch and a half-mile sandy beach. The presence of lifeguards and amenities — including restrooms and changing rooms, a snack bar, and a spacious gazebo for private parties — make it the perfect family destination, especially on warm summer days when the clean, clear water of Newfound Lake is at its most irresistible. In late July and early August, enjoy the fruits of the wild blueberry bushes that line the pathway to the beach.

Cost: Adults, \$4; children 6-11, \$2; children under 5 and NH residents 65 and over, free

Getting there: Follow Route 3A North. Take a left onto West Shore Road and follow signs to Wellington State Park.

The Mill Fudge Factory and Ice Cream Café

Looking for something sweet? Take a trip to the family-friendly Mill Fudge Factory and Ice Cream Café (themillfudgefactory.com). This family business makes its home in Bristol's oldest building, a 1767 grist mill, tucked into the corner of Central Square.



The fudge, inspired by traditional Scottish fudge, is made on site in small batches, resulting in a rich and creamy treat that isn't too sweet. Flavors range from traditional favorites like chocolate and penuche to more exotic selections like Maple Whiskey and Strawberry Fields Forever, a penuche fudge with strawberries and white chocolate. The Mill's ice creams run the gamut from beloved traditional flavors to inspired blends, all made with natural ingredients.

Cost: \$3 to \$5 for ice cream; \$7 for a half pound of fudge

Getting there: 2 Central Street. Open April through December. Phone ahead for hours by calling 744-0405.

Walker Farm

For more than a century, this family-run dairy farm has provided Bristol with a wide assortment of fresh produce, delicious baked goods, maple syrup, fresh flowers, homemade crafts and more. There's a sandy play area — complete with miniature farm set and toy tractors — for the kids to enjoy while you browse.

Getting there: Take Exit 23 off of I-93, follow Route 104 toward Danbury. Make a left on Walker Road. Phone ahead for hours by calling 744-8459.



photo by Laura Jean Whitcomb



photo courtesy of Walker Farm

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\$25 and Up

Shopping and dinner

The Tin Shoppe Antiques and Collectibles

Just around the corner from the Sidewalk Café is a veritable treasure trove of antiques, memorabilia, estate jewelry, old books and more. A multidealer shop, the Tin Shoppe's jam-packed nooks and crannies will keep both browsers and buyers happy for hours.

Getting there: 13 Central Square. Phone ahead for hours by calling 744-5723.



Kathleen's Cottage Irish Pub and Restaurant

If you're craving traditional Irish fare, look no further than Kathleen's Cottage (kathleenscottagenh.com). This intimate setting offers an Irish pub feel and beloved Irish dishes as shepherd's pie, bangers and mash, and bread pudding, as well as American favorites, at a modest price. On Friday and Saturday nights, relax with a pint of Guinness or a shot of whiskey (Kathleen's Cottage boasts the largest whiskey selection in New Hampshire) and enjoy live Irish music.

Cost: Entrees range from \$7 to 18

Getting there: 90 Lake Street. Phone ahead for hours by calling 744-6336. 

In the interest of journalistic integrity and accuracy, Barbra Alan was willing to do the all the hiking, swimming, shopping, eating and performance attending required for this article — and she enjoyed every minute of it. She lives in Alexandria and frequents many of the aforementioned places with her family.