

# Explore town and nature in Brattleboro, Vt.

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**B**RATTLEBORO, Vt. — A thriving, artsy town along the banks of the Connecticut River, Brattleboro is bucolic enough for city-weary visitors while offering plenty of activities for energetic travelers. Three- and four-story historic buildings offer interesting and independently owned places to shop and dine, including at least five bookstores and almost as many coffee shops. In fact, there seems to be more than one of everything here: CD and used record stores, clothing boutiques, sporting goods emporiums, kitchen shops, home goods and gifts stores, restaurants, and arts and crafts galleries galore. Nearby, nature enthusiasts can hike, bike, kayak, and canoe. Though you could easily bring the kids, Brattleboro is ideal for a couple's weekend getaway.

## Stay

Plan in advance and you might snag a reservation at the **Artist's Loft Bed & Breakfast and Gallery** (103 Main St., 802-257-5181, [www.theartistsloft.com](http://www.theartistsloft.com), suite \$138; add \$20 with breakfast; add \$20 during foliage season). This spacious 2-room aerie with river and mountain views is the inn's only accommodation. Sharing the third floor with an adjacent art gallery, the suite — overflowing with books and art — feels like staying at the home of an old friend. For something a bit more hotel-ish, say, with an elevator and more than one room, head to the **Latchis Hotel** (50 Main St., 802-254-6300, [www.latchis.com](http://www.latchis.com), doubles: \$105-\$170). A restored 3-story Art Deco marvel, the hotel and its theater (see below) are operated by the Brattleboro Arts Initiative, a nonprofit community organization.

## Dine

**The Riverview Café** (36 Bridge St., 802-254-9841, [www.riverviewcafe.com](http://www.riverviewcafe.com), lunch \$8-\$14; dinner \$9-\$20) has a prime downtown location, a panoramic water view, and 10 beers on tap, but the biggest surprise is the food that's served without fuss or pretense. Chef and owner Tristan Toleno's menu features the basics — salads, burgers, grilled steak, and seafood — but relies on locally sourced products that tip the



CALEB KENNA FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE/FILE 2007

Bookstores, coffee shops, and restaurants are situated among the historic buildings of downtown Brattleboro, Vt.

scales from ordinary to excellent. Tasty picnic fixings for your outdoor excursions can be found at **Amy's Bakery Arts Café** (113 Main St., 802-251-1071, \$6-\$10). For a romantic end to a perfect day, saunter over to **Alici's Bistro** (51 Harris Place, 802-254-5600, [www.alicisbistro.com](http://www.alicisbistro.com), tapas and entrees \$6-\$30) where Turkish born chef-owner Musa Alici whips up culinary treats. Upstairs dining has a cozy, French bistro feel, with red walls, gold tablecloths, and wood chairs. Downstairs, the intimate Martini Lounge's red couches and colorful pillows offer spots to lounge and dine. Outside decks on both levels

hover in the treetops above the river.

## During the day

Brattleboro offers two diverse venues: town and nature. In the former, Brattleboro is known for its first-Friday **Gallery Walk** ([www.gallerywalk.org](http://www.gallerywalk.org)) though any day is fine for shopping and gallery hopping. Start at the **Brattleboro Museum and Art Center** (10 Vernon St., 802-257-0124, [www.brattleboromuseum.org](http://www.brattleboromuseum.org); admission \$6; seniors \$4; students ages 6 to adult \$3) then meander up Main Street for arts and crafts galleries, including **Vermont Artisan Designs and Gallery 2** (106 Main St., 802-257-

7044, [www.vtartists.com](http://www.vtartists.com)). To enjoy the great outdoors, the **Vermont Canoe Touring Center** (451 Putney Road, 802-257-5008, \$25-\$45) rents canoes, kayaks, and tubes. The center's dock sits near the confluence of the West and Connecticut rivers. For hikers and bikers, the 400 acres of **Retreat Trails** ([www.the-retreatfarm.com/trails.html](http://www.the-retreatfarm.com/trails.html)) are open year round. Forget your gear? No problem. **Sam's Outdoor Outfitters** (74 Main St., 802-254-2933, [www.samsoutfitters.com](http://www.samsoutfitters.com)) will supply you with any camping, hiking, hunting, or fishing gear you might have left at home.

## After dark

The **Latchis Theater** (see above) offers first-run, independent and art films in three theaters, including a full-size screen in a restored Art Deco hall. After the movie, hang out with the young, hip locals at **The Weather-vane Music Hall**. (19 Elliot St., 802-258-6529, [www.theweathervanemusicall.com](http://www.theweathervanemusicall.com)) The changing entertainment schedule includes an open mike night, live music, or DJs. The bar offers over two dozen beers, and munchies include homemade soups, paninis, and burritos.

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