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Dive into these 7 great R.I. dive bars

After three days of meticulous research by Globe Rhode Island, here are a handful of the best the state has to offer.

By Brian Amaral Globe Staff, Updated August 8, 2022, 4:22 p.m.

The afternoon scene inside Danny's Bar, a dive on Railroad Avenue in Westerly. BARRY CHIN/GLOBE STAFF

Being a really cool Rhode Island dive bar is like being a really cool person. It has to be both genuine and effortless. Coolness, whether in human or bar form, is indifferent to perception, but it's also not actively repellent. Trying too hard is the antithesis of cool, but not trying at all — mere charmlessness or grossness — isn't cool, either. This quality is what differentiates a genuine person from a jerk, and a dive from a dump. I'm talking about places where everybody knows your name *and* your nickname, which might be Spaceman; where there's a middle-aged couple making out like teenagers under the taxidermied shark; and where there's a cold beer waiting just for you.

And here, after three days of meticulous research by Globe Rhode Island, are seven of the best the state has to offer.

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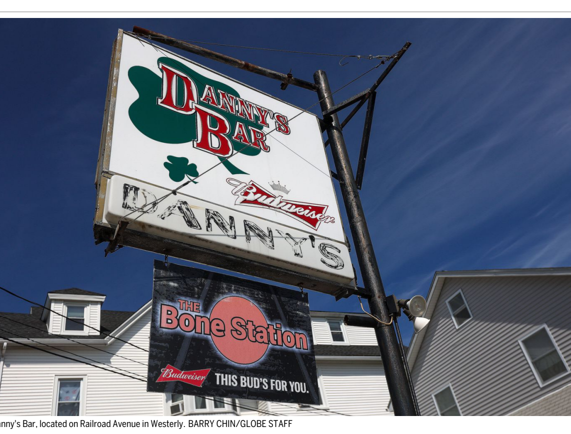

Danny's Bar, located on Railroad Avenue in Westerly. BARRY CHIN/GLOBE STAFF

Danny's Bar, 23 Railroad Ave., Westerly

Westerly. If you're not from there, you might think of hedgerows the size of skyscrapers, miles of beaches, and the song Taylor Swift wrote about her mansion. And Westerly is that. But Westerly is more than that, too. It's a place where real people live. A seemingly large number of them hang out at Danny's Bar, a wood-paneled marvel right across from the train station downtown. When I went recently, a car outside had a bumper sticker that said, "I am not on your vacation," and inside — I couldn't have made up the thematic resonance if I tried — people were complaining about out-of-towners being annoying. Tourists just see this town as a beach, one fellow patron said. Some surely do, but you wouldn't think that if you went to Danny's — which I highly recommend you do.

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A chicken sandwich at Nick-A-Nees, a dive bar in Providence, R.I. that takes its name from a childhood nickname of the owner, Stephanie Finizia. ALEXA GAGOSZ

Nick-a-Nee's, 75 South St., Providence

The first time I ever went to Nick-A-Nee's, a couple years ago, it was to meet up with a guy whose nickname was The Baastid. I fell in love on sight (with the bar, not with The Baastid). Live music, Halloween decorations on the ceiling in July, billiards trophies everywhere — all great dive bar stuff. But just because you're a dive bar doesn't mean you can't have great food. (If your definition of dive bar is a place that sucks and is bad, you're going to be disappointed by this article. These places are all good and cool and you should go to them if you'd like to be the same.) The fish and chips and buffalo chicken sandwich with brussels sprouts were absolutely on point. Nick-A-Nee's takes its name from a childhood nickname of the owner, Stephanie Finizia, who as a young girl couldn't pronounce Stephanie and would instead say, "Nick-A-Nee." It's an oasis of cash-only cool in the quickly evolving Jewelry District.

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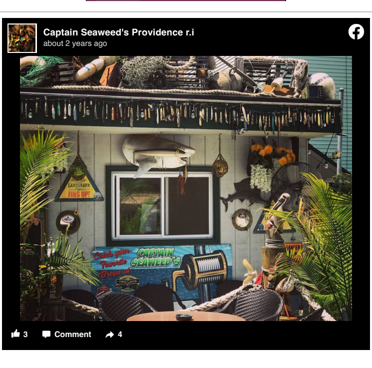
Captain Seaweed's Providence r.i
about 2 years ago



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Captain Seaweed's, 162 Ives St., Providence

Captain Seaweed's. What a place. Everyone who's ever gone there seems to have a fuzzily-recalled memory about winning a late-night lobster raffle, or a favorite nautical tchotchke on the walls inside. The outside patio is even swaggier. My one recommendation: When I've gone there midday, it's a quieter and older crowd. At night, it can get loud, young, and fun. I am only one of these things. Your mileage may vary, but I like it better when it's light out.

Jack's Bar, 187 Water St., Warren

To prepare for this article, I put out a call on social media for dive bar suggestions. Jack's Bar in Warren was at the top of the list for many people. It's easy to see why. The place is covered in a seemingly random assortment of photographs, novelty license plates, and sports pennants. It's also known as a dog-friendly establishment, and I was greeted by a very good girl named Achoo! Bless her. At the bar on a recent Saturday, the topic of discussion among regulars was what Muppet character each one was. This is apparently a common topic of discussion at Jack's, and dive bars in general; it was one of two places where people were talking about Muppets. Warren has become one of the best food towns in the state, and if you're waiting for a table at the hip and delightful Square Peg just down the street, you might wet your whistle first here at Jack's. It's delightful, too, in an entirely different but no less delightful way.

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The Scurvy Dog
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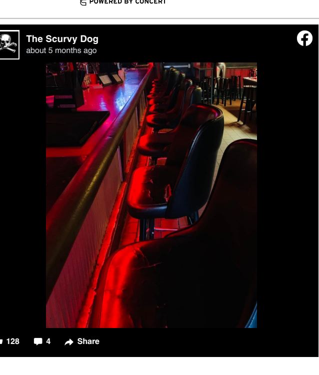

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Scurvy Dog, 1718 Westminster St., Providence

I hadn't been to the Scurvy Dog before I started doing research for this story, but I could tell from the name (!!) and the location (next to a highway) that it was going to be a winner. Owner Jami Wolloff described the place as your neighborhood punk bar. It was all of that and more. The soundtrack was heavy on the drums and guitar, the lighting heavy on the red and black. The bartender demurred when I asked if he thought this was a dive bar; they have working toilets, after all, plus a good beer list and several high-quality scotches. As the definition of dive bar has evolved, though, it has come to land squarely on just such a place: cool and unpretentious but welcoming and fun. Oh, and a pool table. A pool table helps your dive bar cred a lot.

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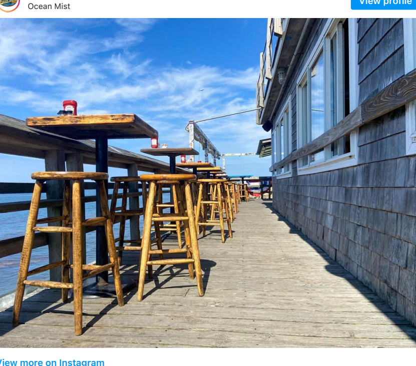

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Ocean Mist, 895 Matunuck Beach Road, South Kingstown

I was at the beach in South Kingstown recently interviewing a couple locals for a story about shore access when I mentioned my next assignment for the day: my dive bar tour. I asked for recommendations for South County. The Ocean Mist, they agreed. If I had any doubts, one of them told me, I should just check out the bathroom. Which, when I eventually got there, looked like it had been constructed out of leftover props from a low-budget movie about escaping from Alcatraz. It's the sort of bathroom that the plumber Richard Trethewey from This Old House takes one look at and goes: Ohh they don't make it like THAT anymore! But the bar itself: What a view of the water. What a lively crowd, some of them preposterously sunburned, all of them looking pleased to be standing in the cool breeze… the ocean mist, as it were. After my visit to examine the bathroom, I sidled up and got one of the last seats at the bar. It was 11:37 a.m. on a Sunday. I'm sure some people will say the Ocean Mist is now too popular, too well known, too recently spruced up to be a real dive bar. Which might be true. Or maybe you're overthinking it and just need another Bloody Mary — after all, it's 11:40 a.m. somewhere.

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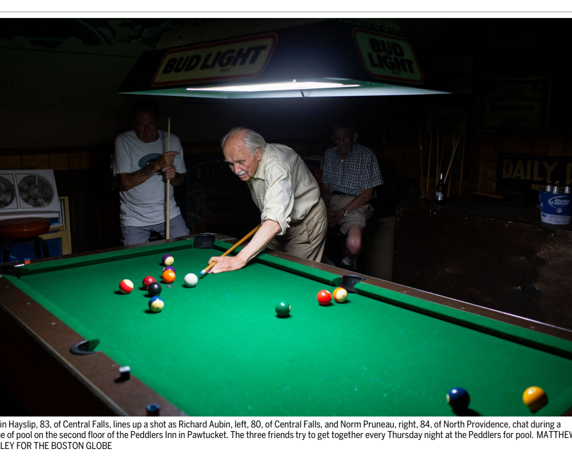

Edwin Hayslip, 83, of Central Falls, lines up a shot as Richard Aubin, left, 80, of Central Falls, and Norm Pruneau, right, 84, of North Providence, chat during a game of pool on the second floor of the Peddlers Inn in Pawtucket. The three friends try to get together every Thursday night at the Peddlers for pool. MATTHEW HEALEY FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Peddlers Inn Pub, 94 Middle St., Pawtucket

This article is not a ranking, because there's really no accounting for taste *or* tastelessness. But of the seven places on this list, Peddlers Inn Pub is the purest expression of the form of dive bar — and thus, my personal favorite. There is *carpeting* in the entrance, for crying out loud. The pool table upstairs is free, but beer on tap? They don't have it. This is a beer-bottles-in-a-bucket type place. The types of people who come here don't even drink Narragansett lager, owner Drew Brady told me. Some locals think that's for tourists, I was informed — after I tried to order a Narragansett. (I live all the way in East Providence, so, fair.) Nevertheless, despite my initial faux pas, I had an absolute hoot of a time having about three conversations at once, losing at Keno, and listening to Brady talk about how much this place meant to him — like he was a steward of a communal asset. Which, of course, he is. If you're looking for an authentic dive experience, cheap drinks, and some new friends, it is not to be missed.

Bartender Wendy Carr serves up a bucket of beers for guests inside the Peddlers Inn in Pawtucket. MATTHEW HEALEY FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

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