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Provincetown Carnival

A free field guide from the people who actually live here.



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Every August, Provincetown does something remarkable: it fills to capacity, turns Commercial Street into a stage, and reminds anyone who shows up that joy is not a limited resource. Provincetown Carnival is the largest LGBTQ+ event in New England — a week of parades, tea dances, drag performances, art openings, themed parties, and something rarer than all of it: a genuine sense of belonging, extended to everyone willing to show up in the right spirit.

What Provincetown Carnival Actually Is

Provincetown has been an LGBTQ+ destination for over a century. Carnival, held during the third week of August each year, is the formal culmination of that history: a week-long celebration that draws visitors from across the country and beyond.

The event is organized by the Provincetown Business Guild, the nation's oldest LGBTQ+ chamber of commerce. Each year carries a specific theme — announced months in advance — that shapes costumes, float designs, parties, and decorations across the entire town.

The numbers are staggering by Provincetown's standards. The town's year-round population is around 3,000. During Carnival week, that swells to over 50,000.

The Parade

The Carnival parade is the centerpiece of the entire week — typically held on Wednesday or Thursday afternoon, running the length of Commercial Street.

- **Day:** Wednesday or Thursday of Carnival week
 - **Start time:** Typically 4:00 pm
 - **Route:** Commercial Street, full length
 - **Best viewing:** Town Hall steps or mid-block between Ryder Street and Town Hall
 - **Arrive early by:** 90 minutes minimum
 - **Duration:** Roughly 2 hours
 - **Admission:** Free
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Getting There

Ferry from Boston — Best Option

Two operators run high-speed ferry service from Boston directly to Provincetown Harbor: - **Bay State Cruises** — baystatecruises.net - **Boston Harbor Cruises** — bostonharborcruises.com

Both sell out for Carnival week. Book as early as possible.

Driving + Shuttle

Drive Route 6 to North Truro and park there, then take the Provincetown Shuttle into town.

Where to Stay: Book Early

Carnival week accommodations must be booked 6 to 12 months in advance. Many properties fill before January for the following August.

- Nightly rates: \$350–\$600+ in-town; \$200–\$350 in Truro/Wellfleet
- Many properties require a 3–5 night minimum
- Best directories: provincetown.com, ptown.org

First-Timer Tips

1. The theme is your homework — once announced, decide how you'll participate
2. Book everything before you arrive
3. Pace yourself across the week
4. Wear shoes you can stand in for hours
5. Eat lunch before the parade, not after
6. Arrive at your parade spot 90 minutes early
7. Carry cash
8. Leave the car somewhere else
9. Make at least one restaurant reservation
10. Plan at least one quiet morning at the beach

Quick Reference

- **Dates:** Third week of August — exact dates at ptown.org
- **Parade:** Wednesday or Thursday, typically 4:00 pm, Commercial Street, free
- **Organizer:** Provincetown Business Guild — ptown.org
- **Accommodations:** Book 6–12 months in advance



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