

ALL IN A DAY: Purgatory—and Beyond

Shimmying through “Fat Man’s Misery,” a cleft in towering granite bedrock, is among the pure, kid-like joys of scrambling in **Purgatory Chasm State Reservation**. The entire site is a geological funhouse—of uncertain origins. “It’s a fault,” posits Nichols College geology professor and glaciologist Mauri S. Pelto, who has studied the area south of Worcester and updated previous theories, “and the fault was exploited by a glacier that plucked out the rocks” that now litter the adjacent Purgatory Brook Valley. It was also likely a sacred place for the regional Nipmuc peoples—and given its pejorative name, conventional wisdom holds, by colonists intent on Christianizing them.

Whatever the history, the very essence of the 70-foot gorge and its cavernous, perhaps ominous, terrain still captures the imagination. Check out the precipitous outcroppings—“Lovers’ Leap” and “Devil’s Pulpit”—or take the half-mile loop that winds through the boulder-strewn bottom and then circles back on a rough path along the cliffs. For those less eager to test their agility by clambering, the 1,800-acre park—celebrating its centennial this year—has tamer trails following brooks or through the woods, along with a playground, grilling zones, and a visitors’ center.

After everyone’s exercised, drive through pastoral scenery, stopping for snacks or lunch at the **Sutton Center Store**, en route to exploring art, culture, and food in **Worcester**.

The **Worcester Art Museum’s** exhibit “**Knights!?**” offers medieval arms and combat—with live demonstrations—using objects from the Higgins Armory Collection (through November 6). “**With Child: Otto Dix/Carmen Winant,**” opening September 21, looks at women’s social, political, and medical conditions, notably during the Weimar Republic, and includes “The Trouble with Pregnancy: A Forum on Art and Reproduction,”

on October 18, as well as a community arts showcase on the subject.

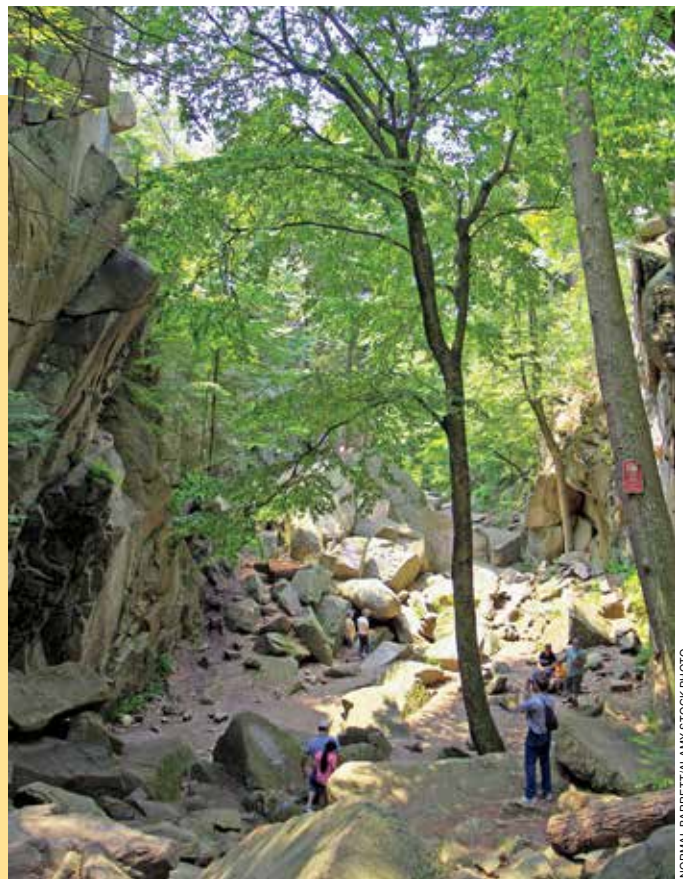
Check out the city’s emerging artsy **Canal District**, with its giant murals, Saturday farmers’ market, shops, bars, and restau-

rants. A self-guided walking tour explains the 1820s Blackstone Canal, which linked to Providence’s seaport, and the ensuing industrial boom. **Lock 50** serves super-fresh salads, burgers, and crêpes, or go to **El Patrón Mexican Restaurant** for enchiladas and tortas. **Binh An Market** offers Asian teas and take-out fare, such as Vietnamese spring rolls and honey-soaked pastries; walk a few blocks and eat them in the courtyard of a converted factory that now holds the **Crompton Collective**—stalls of vintage clothing, antiques, and local artwork. Upstairs, don’t miss the “lifestyle and plant boutique” **Seed to Stem**, packed with ingenious botanical creations and home goods.

Get back into nature at the nearby **Ecotarium**, a kid-oriented science center. It has hands-on experiment stations, a planetarium, walking trails, and a new **Wild Cat Station** featuring sibling mountain lion kittens found orphaned in California.

Worcester’s food evolution makes dinner easy. For inventive grilled fish, meat, and vegetarian dishes, go to **deadhorse hill**, or dig into the artisanal pies at **Volturino Pizza Napoletana**. **Sole Proprietor** is a traditional favorite for seafood cooked every which way, while the newer **Fatima’s** offers Africa-centric cuisine, like Ethiopian *injera* (spongy flatbread) and Kenyan *ugali* (cornmeal porridge). Eat before or after a show at the historic **Hanover Theatre**, where groundbreaking comic actress **Carol Burnett** appears for *An Evening of Laughter and Reflection* on October 17.

A day in purgatory, it turns out, is not that bad. ~N.P.B.



NORMAN BARRETT/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



TRACY LEVIN



COURTESY OF THE ECOTARIUM



PAINTING AT LEFT: BPK/BLDGENTUR/KUNSTSAMMLUNG ENCHEMUTZ/BERTRAM KÖBERER/PUNCTUM PEIPZIG/ART RESOURCE, NY ©2019 ARTIST'S RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK, VG BILD-KUNST, BONN.