

New Bedford Historic Walking Tour

Introduction

Hi. Welcome to iziTRAVEL's Historic New Bedford Walking Tour, presented by ListenUp Audio. We're so glad you'll be joining us today! I'm _____ and I'll be your guide. A few notes before we get started. This tour takes approximately an hour and a half to complete. You can stop at any time and start again at the same spot later. If you'd like, you can put your phone in your pocket and just listen from here. I'll be giving you clear directions and the audio will automatically start playing when you get close to the next point of interest. If a site is closed or your path is blocked, don't worry. Just go around it. The tour will pick up at the next location. And this is important: PLEASE make sure you stay aware of your surroundings at *all* times and obey *all* traffic signals.

(pause)

Welcome to historic New Bedford, Massachusetts. As one of New England's most charming enclaves, the city of New Bedford has a rich history in the region, one deeply rooted in art, culture, and commercial industry. On our tour through its winding downtown, we'll visit some of its most veritable attractions, learning all about the city's history as America's premiere whaling port during the 19th century. **Whenever you're ready to begin, please do so by making your way to the corner of N 6th Street and Market. Our tour begins at the New Bedford Public Library.**

New Bedford Public Library

We begin our historic tour at the New Bedford Public Library. Established to provide materials and services to those seeking educational enlightenment, the library also serves as a repository for local history and art. Its collections span a wide array of subjects, and its historical holdings are easily some of the most impressive in the region. New Bedford has a long history with the whaling industry, and it goes without saying that many of its more popular attractions share this commonality. Boasting the world's third largest collection of American Whaling materials, the library offers some of the absolute best resources on the subject. Its comprehensive index lists an astounding number of whaling voyages, with many of these ranging from as far back as the early 1800s, to the mid-1920s. Available 24 hours a day, the index is popular among whaling enthusiasts, especially those interested in the rise and fall of this once legendary industry in the United States.

Yet while the Whaling Archives are the library's largest selling point, other collections hold their own appeal to locals and visitors alike. With its multiple branches, the New Bedford Public Library also offers a healthy collection of 19th century Quaker materials, along with materials related to the Portuguese and Spanish languages. If that weren't enough, visitors often take time to explore the library's Civil

War Scrapbook. Meticulously assembled, this specialty exhibit at the library contains articles and letters related to the men and women of New Bedford who did their part during that dark time in America's history. With so much history in one place, it's easy to see why the New Bedford Public Library marks the perfect beginning to any historic tour.

Whenever you're ready to continue, head north on along N 6th St and cross at the corner of N 6th and William. Turn left and continue west along William St. The gallery on your right titled Gallery X marks our next destination.

Gallery X

Promoting cultural outreach, programs, and organizations throughout New Bedford, Gallery X marks the next destination on our tour. Established in the late 1980s, the gallery was founded by a number of New Bedford's most creative minds, including local artists, and former students of the Swain School of Design. Fully artist-owned and operated, its name derives from its former location on Spring Street, where it once occupied a local storefront. Situated between the YMCA and the Zeiterion Theatre, both of which came to be known as the Y and Z respectively, the gallery quickly and affectionately came to be known as the X.

As the premiere destination for a number of New Bedford's playwrights, thespians, musicians, and poets, many of the events and exhibitions at Gallery X are one-of-a-kind. Beginning with its *Clothing Optional* exhibit, guests are treated to a celebration of the human figure. Examined as an instrument and subject of creative expression, the human body is viewed through a multitude of lenses, many of which are sure to thrill, excite, and even intimidate the staunchest of critics. Adding to this list of cultural expression, the gallery's *Journey to Atlantis* exhibit marks their second foray into their Raiders of the Lost Arts series. Celebrating the lost city "in all forms of media," the gallery channels the creative spirit of visual artists, sculptors, and other artists to fully express themselves using Atlantis as an inspiration. With exhibits like these and many others in store, Gallery X is easily one of New Bedford's brightest cultural treasures. Visitors are encouraged to attend multiple times over.

Whenever you're ready to continue, turn left onto 8th St. and venture south towards Union St. Turn left onto Union, then make a right onto 7th St. Crossing over Spring Street, you should see a large, yellow, colonial home. This marks our next destination.

Nathan and Polly Johnson House/New Bedford Historical Society

Not too far from the cultural happenings at Gallery X, we find ourselves at the Nathan and Polly Johnson House. Built in the late 1820s, this gorgeous home along 7th Street was one of the former residences of Nathan and Polly Johnson, two free blacks who grew up in New Bedford during the early 19th century. Active in the abolitionist movement, Johnson and his wife were instrumental to the cause, helping to usher hundreds of slaves throughout the Underground Railroad towards northern freedom.

Indeed, history shows that the Johnsons even helped famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass to safety, an event said to be chronicled in many of Douglass's narratives. Having continued their abolitionist work well into the early 1850s, the Johnsons became wealthy property owners themselves, using their many business and abolitionist connections to secure a future for many of the slaves they helped along the way. Named a National Historic Landmark in the year 2000, the home has since been lovingly restored by the New Bedford Historical Society, acting as the society's headquarters within the city. Offering tours by appointment on a weekly basis, it remains one of New England's best resources for research into the Underground Railroad.

Whenever you're ready to continue, continue south along 7th Street. Hang a right onto Walnut St, then make a left onto County St. Crossing over Madison St., you should see a large, colonial mansion on your left, marking our next destination.

Rotch-Jones-Duff House & Gardens

Adding another historic residence to our tour, we come now to the Rotch-Jones-Duff House on County Street. Built by shipwrights in the early 1830s, this Greek-Revival mansion was the former home of three of New Bedford's most prominent families, resting comfortably in what is now known as the County Street National Register District. Positioned very close to New Bedford's commercial waterfront district, County Street was well known throughout the 19th century as being one of New Bedford's most affluent neighborhoods. Whaling had made New Bedford America's wealthiest per capita city during this time, and a vast number of the city's elite were putting these fortunes to use.

To this end, The Rotch-Jones-Duff House, first occupied by whaling merchant William Rotch Jr., was built in grand fashion. Gifted the property by his late father, Rotch constructed the mansion to "epitomize the 'brave houses and flowery gardens' described by Herman Melville in *Moby-Dick*." To accomplish this task, he first positioned the house on the northern end of the property, using its southern end to construct the now famous estate gardens. In truth, these gardens served both a practical purpose, as well as an ornamental one. History shows that Rotch Jr. was fond of cultivating pears, and while these were later considered the "standard fruit" of New Bedford, further exploration shows that the gardens contained much, much more. Indeed, as time went on and the house took on new owners, it's been shown that the gardens grew along with it. Rose parterre beds with tall calla lilies were added to the mix, and hollyhocks, wisteria, and other flowering plants were later added as well. After the Dutch family took ownership in the mid-1930s, the gardens expanded yet again, becoming home to a number of ornamental beds, reflecting pools, and over 7000 tulip bulbs.

Added to the list of National Historic Landmarks a short time later, the house has quickly become one of New Bedford's most popular locations for weddings and gatherings. Likewise, seasonal exhibitions attract droves of new visitors each year. Its *Lost Gardens of New England* exhibit remains one of its more popular, offering visitors the chance to explore major themes within American landscape history. Featuring a collection of watercolors, historic photographs, prints, and more, the exhibition is divided into thematic elements, offering insight into how many of these landscapes were conceived by their creators. Further bolstered by house tours, lavish dinner

catering, and educational programs for many of New Bedford's students, the Rotch-Jones-Duff House is a must see for any visitor to the city.

Whenever you're ready to continue, make a left onto Cherry St. Make another left onto S 6th St., then continue north for several blocks. Make a right onto School St. Make a left onto Purchase St. Just a little ways up, the large, brick theatre on your right marks our next destination.

Zeiterion Performing Arts Center

Built for the "live performance of vaudeville," the Zeiterion Performing Arts Center marks one of New Bedford's most historical destinations. Constructed in the early 1920s, this grand entertainment palace on Purchase Street was the dream of the Zeitz family of Russia, immigrants to New Bedford and avid lovers of the arts. Both impressive in size and in scope, history shows that the Zeitz brothers constructed the theatre to the tune of \$800,000, intending it to become the "biggest and best theatre in all of New Bedford."

Sadly however, these plans of grandeur were not to be initially, and the theatre officially opened to less than stellar reviews. Closing and re-opening shortly thereafter, it was converted into a silent movie house, where it famously premiered the 1956 opening of the classic whale-hunting tale, Moby Dick. Modernized in the early 1970s, the Zeiterion received a number of significant upgrades, and by the early 1980s, a portion of its space had been dedicated to the Waterfront Historic Area League. Affectionately known for their acronym WHALE, the league has since breathed new life into the Zeiterion, helping to secure the theatre immense success in the following years.

To date, the Zeiterion has been home to thousands of world class performances, and it continues to retain some 120+ per year. With educational programs to excite and educate more than 30,000 of New Bedford's students, the theatre is also home to several artist workshops. Free programs and tickets to low income families are a common occurrence, and staff at the Zeiterion actively work to further engage the New Bedford community. Lavishly decorated and operated to perfection, the Zeiterion continues to be a cultural beacon to all of New Bedford, both residents and visitors alike.

Whenever you're ready to continue, make a right onto Spring St. Turn left onto Acushnet Ave., then turn right onto Union St. Make a left on Johnny Cake Hill. The large brick museum on your right marks our next destination.

New Bedford Whaling Museum

Retuning to New Bedford's long history with the whaling industry, we find ourselves at the New Bedford Whaling Museum. Built at the turn of the 20th century, the Museum was founded by members of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society, established in the hopes

that it would create and foster an interest in New Bedford's historical roots. Having grown steadily in its collection since then, the Museum is now home to a vast array of whaling artifacts and memorabilia. A library of whaling logbooks, prints, and journals can be found readily within, and the museum is also home to a collection of whalebone scrimshaw. Outside of these carvings, the Museum's exhibitions on 19th and 20th century whaling technology make it a popular destination for whaling scholars. Its literature pertaining to Japanese whaling techniques is world renowned, and its vast collection of Dutch Old Master paintings make it a favorite spot for local artists.

Yet while these collections offer visitors a unique look into New Bedford's rich whaling legacy, the whaling museum's crown jewels are most assuredly its ship model and whale skeletons. Beginning with the Lagoda, visitors are treated to the world's largest ship model, a half-scale replica built in the early 1900s by aging members of New Bedford's famous fleet. Following this, four complete whale skeletons are on prominent display, offering a detailed look at the Blue Whale, the world's largest mammal, as well as a mother and fetus of the highly endangered Northern Atlantic Right Whale. With competitive pricing and group tours readily available, the New Bedford Whaling Museum is truly one of the city's most educational experiences. Visitors rarely leave dissatisfied, and a further understanding of whaling and its influence is always right around the corner.

Whenever you're ready to continue, continue north along Johnny Cake Hill. The quaint art gallery at the corner of Johnny Cake and Bethel St. marks our next destination.

Arthur Moniz Gallery

Celebrating the beauty of New Bedford and other coastal communities like it for decades, the Arthur Moniz Gallery marks one of the most interesting destinations on our tour. Named for its signature artist, the gallery is a unique experience within the city; one deeply rooted into the artist's own experiences painting historic maritime communities throughout his career. With a style described as "a combination of graphite drawing with transparent watercolor washes," Moniz has successfully managed to capture the very essence of maritime history, seen most especially in his paintings of harbors, whaling ships, and rolling oceans. As a graduate of the nearby Massachusetts College of Art, with further education at the Museum School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Moniz is well known throughout the New Bedford area as a pillar of the artistic community.

To this end, the gallery excels in showcasing Moniz's extensive collection, one which has grown considerably throughout the years. His originals can be found on prominent display, with other prints, pen & ink portraits, and custom notecards available for purchase. Having successfully operated within the New Bedford area for well over 13 years, Moniz and his wife cherish their time within the community, giving back to it as often as they are able. Hours for the gallery accommodate any number of weekly visits, and custom framing options are available to those interested.

Whenever you're ready continue, cross over and turn left onto William St. The New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park on your right marks our next destination.

New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park

We began this tour with an exploration into New Bedford's whaling legacy, so it only makes sense that we dive that much deeper. Commemorating this legacy since the mid-1990s, the New Bedford Whaling National Historic Park opened to critical acclaim and fanfare. Spread across 34 acres of rich, New England countryside, it's been maintained by the National Park Service since that time, chronicling New Bedford's meteoric rise from a small coastal community, to the foremost whaling port during the 19th century. Comprised of a visitor's center, a National Historic Landmark District, the New Bedford Whaling Museum, and much more, the park is easily New Bedford's leading attraction, taking in thousands of visitors each year. Its list of "Things to Do," is just as expansive as the park itself, with every single item being family friendly.

First and foremost, the park offers a detailed exploration into the connection between New Bedford's whaling legacy, and its geographical location. Going all the way back to the early 1600s, guests are treated to a storied account of how British colonists established New Bedford along Buzzard's Bay, helping to secure its future as a whaling port following the American Revolution and the War of 1812. Next, guests can learn all about the different products made from whales, learning all about how these products helped to foster new technologies and advancements across the nation. Thirdly, curious visitors might even find themselves lost in the romance of a life at sea, to which the park firmly reminds them that whaling was anything but. Chronicling the nature of whaling voyages in graphic detail, the park's historians tell of how whaling often meant long separations from home and family. In this way, visitors learn all about the unique cultures formed aboard ship and off, cultures which would ultimately form New Bedford into what it is today. With guided and self-guided tours readily available for these explorations and more, it's no wonder that the New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park remains such a valuable part of this charming, coastal community.

Whenever you're ready to continue, make the next left onto N 2nd St. You'll soon see a large, open park on your right. Cross into the park, as it marks our next destination.

Custom House Square

Taking a moment to relax and enjoy the New Bedford air, we find ourselves at Custom House Square. Recently redesigned into an urban park, the Square has quickly become a favorite gathering place for residents, city workers, and visitors alike. It's rolling, green landscape is perfect for any number of picnics or events, and jazz performances at the park's Friday Lunchtime Jazz Series are said to be a one-of-a-kind experience.

Crowned by the Custom House at its northeastern corner, the Square is deeply rooted in New Bedford's history. Completed in the mid-1830s, the Custom House is predominantly known as the oldest Custom House still operating in the nation. Being the largest as well, it is often considered one of the finest buildings in all of New Bedford, with its Greek-Revival architecture serving as a testament to New England wealth and prosperity. Still serving New Bedford's commercial fishing and cargo industry today, the Custom House continues to log industry duties and tariffs, all the while continuing its service as New Bedford's first post office.

Whenever you're ready to continue, head north back onto William St. As you exit the park, you should see a small parking lot, with giant mural painted on one of the buildings to the left-hand side. This mural marks our next destination.

54th Regiment Mural

Celebrating New Bedford's famed 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, the large mural at 41 Williams Street marks a significant moment in New Bedford's history. Spanning three years of preparation, the mural was painted by local artist Jared Bader, depicting large droves of African-American men and their families as they surround the 54th Regiment recruiting office during the Civil War. Unique in size, scope, and subject matter, the mural is in fact a vast departure from similar murals of its kind. Whereas other depictions of African-American soldiers have often shown these brave men marching gallantly into battle, Bader's mural shows an entirely different scene. Battlefields are replaced by a quiet, city street, and fellow soldiers in full uniform are replaced by women and children waiting patiently for their fathers, husbands, and brothers to enlist.

Serving as a firm reminder of the North's role during this dark time in America's history, the 54th Regiment Mural deeply resonates with many of New Bedford's senior adults. Many have voiced their satisfaction that it reminds African-American youth where they came from, and other members of the community are likewise pleased with the stunning reception the mural has received since its inception. Within its overall message, the mural also serves to honor the particular accomplishments of the 54th Regiment, honoring its position as one of the first official African-American units to fight in the Civil War. Likewise, history shows that the 54th was home to some of the war's finest African-American soldiers, most notably the first to be awarded the prestigious Medal of Honor. Taking all this into account, it's no wonder that so many stop, stare, and admire the mural and its message. Indeed, there's truly nothing like it anywhere else in New England.

Whenever you're ready to continue, continue west along William St. The small gallery at the corner of Acushnet Ave. and William St. marks our next destination.

Gallery 65 on William

Furthering our appreciation of New Bedford's artistic contributions, we take time to explore Gallery 65 on William. So named for its location right along downtown William Street, Gallery 65 is a cooperative gallery filled with a diverse membership of talented artists from all across New England. Set in a historic, brick and cast-iron building dating back all the way back to the 1870s, the gallery offers exhibition space many of the region's local and visiting artists. Special workshops are offered on art, history, and culture respectively, while its retail gallery is home to a wide collection of paintings, ceramics, fine woodwork, and more.

Adding to the list of events, lucky visitors often find themselves just in time for one of the gallery's many jewelry exhibitions, with wallets, handbags, and necklaces offered by some of Gallery 65's most prominent artists. If that weren't enough, scarves, and other accessories are often sold at the Gallery as well, and specialty book signings happen on a regular basis. With a mission to "bring a vibrant art and shopping experience to the heart of New Bedford's historic district," Gallery 65 on William is truly one of the city's most charming experiences.

Whenever you're ready to continue, head west along William St. The large, stone museum at the corner of William St. and Pleasant marks our final destination.

New Bedford Art Museum

Rounding up our tour of historic New Bedford, we arrive at the New Bedford Art Museum. Built to celebrate the city's culture, history and diversity, the museum, often referred to as the NBAM Artworks Museum, lies at the heart of New Bedford's Seaport Cultural District. Here it offers engaging exhibitions and educational programs for all ages, furthering its mission to "make art accessible to everyone." To accomplish this goal, the museum has recently partnered with New Bedford's Artworks! Partners for the Arts & Community organization. With a commitment to serve New Bedford's community and beyond, this dynamic partnership has since transformed the museum into a cultural powerhouse.

Beginning with the Museum's *Skylight Gallery*, guests are treated to an exciting exploration of the Museum's roots. Here they learn all about the Museum's history as a former bank, with a number of equally engaging programs and lectures serving to provide context as to the ever-changing nature of the Museum's rotating exhibits. Moving right along, guests might find themselves lost in the beauty of the Museum's *City Gallery*, a unique look into the Museum's partnership with the nearby New Bedford Public Library. Further adding to the Museum's collection, its Region Gallery features a new artist each month, showcasing a number of New Bedford's most creative minds and contributors. With afterschool and vacation programs readily available, along with comfortably priced admission for all ages, the New Bedford Art Museum marks the perfect bookend to our tour.

This concludes our walking tour of historic New Bedford. We hope you've enjoyed yourself, and should you wish to make your way back to where we began, simply continue south towards Market Street, making a right towards the corner of N 6th Street and Market. You'll find yourself right back where we started, just south of the New Bedford Public Library.