

Misconceptions of the South Coast Area



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For many residents of Massachusetts, spending the summer in Cape Cod would be the perfect scenario. When you think of Cape Cod, you think of beautiful, clean beaches. You can picture the quaint, historical homes that line the narrow streets of many downtown areas, like Harwich or Chatham. You can close your eyes and remember eating a meal outside at any number of top restaurants. And you can definitely remember the amazing ice cream you bought from a local ice cream stand afterwards.

Speaking as someone who grew up on Cape Cod, I know how thoughts of poverty, crime, and abrasive scenery stay far out of sight and out of mind. Tourists who travel from near and far to enjoy this great vacation haven in our state don't consider the the negative aspects of life in the southeast corner of Massachusetts.

Yet not far from our famous vacation destination there are towns and small cities that are quite different. Towns just off of Cape Cod, the landlocked ones, are mostly rural farmland and cranberry bogs. The ones with coastline are very small, their beaches lacking the appeal of those found on the Cape. The cities in this area exhibit the usual problems faced when a small piece of Earth is inhabited by many people-crime, poverty, over-crowding. The cities I am talking about specifically are New Bedford and Fall River, or as the locals

refer to them: New Beige and The Rivah.

Recently I graduated from Umass Dartmouth, which is located one town over from New Beige. I have since moved to The Rivah, and when I tell people this news, their facial expressions resemble those you might find on someone witnessing a murder. You would think I was recently put into jail!

When a person hears the names of these towns, they immediately think of filth, poverty, old rotting buildings, crime, murder, and disease. I had always taken these generalizations as truth, but as the old saying goes, "It takes one to know one." Since I now call Fall River home, my aim is to disprove some common misconceptions about The Rivah by telling you first-hand what it is like to live here.

In reality, once you have actually lived in these cities you will be happy to find the good that lies between the cracks of these old buildings. Many wonderful aspects of each city reveal themselves when you spend a little time exploring.



For instance, lets take a walk on Union Street in downtown New Beige. This one street is home to some of the most important whaling history on the East Coast. Cobblestone roads and courtyards lie to the north of Union, and are home to some really great restaurants, like No Problemo

and Freestone's City Grill. No Problemo easily has the best burritos in town, and they have a new bar so its a great place to hang out. Freestone's is a bit fancier, but the prices are reasonable, and the place has a great atmosphere.

If you head south from Union Street, eventually you will

arrive at the ocean. You'll be greeted with multiple viewing areas, as well as several beaches. If you enjoy history or simply want to take a stroll with your dog, take a drive out to Fort Tabor (originally built as a lighthouse during the thriving whaling days of the 1800's.) Here you can find panoramic views of the water and surrounding peninsulas.

Now lets travel northwest to The Rivah. The topography of The Rivah has always been a point of discussion among its visitors, due to the prominence of the rolling hills that the city was built on. Also of note is the Taunton River, which bisects this vast land of clustered homes. If you're feeling hungry, head over to Bedford Street and you will find two of the cheapest, most delicious sub shops: Marzillis and Marcuccis. Want an 18 inch sub for \$6? Done.

The Rivah also holds the very popular Fall River Celebrates America. This festival displays a diverse array of Portuguese food and culture, plus there are plenty of activities for children and adults.

Fall River is full of many beautiful and historic buildings. Saint Anne Parish and Shrine is just one of the towering cathedrals built in middle 1800s and more are scattered along the crisscrossed roads in this town.

Looking for a bottle of wine for your dinner party? Take a trip to Douglas Wine and Spirits, where you will not only be recommended the best choice of wine for your needs, but you'll also receive a free lesson about some of the local wineries in the area.

These are just some of the qualities that make The Rivah and New Beige great. What is of even more value, in my opinion, are the people. Welcoming, helpful, and hard working are the first words that come to mind when I think of New Beige. One never feels judged when walking down the street, and it is common to be greeted by a random stranger passing by. People

have a drive to be happy and healthy, whether it be a business owner or a student at the Umass Dartmouth Star Store grabbing some lunch for the day.

In these South Coast areas people work with what they have and live frugally while enjoying the land and ocean all around them. I have found that my previous assumptions were incorrect about these towns, and truth be told, they are enjoyable places to become part of. If you find yourself passing by I would recommend stopping in to grab a bite to eat, indulging in the cheap gas prices, and see for yourself what these towns really have to offer.