



THE GREATER MERRIMACK VALLEY

# Group Planner Guide



**Greater Merrimack Valley  
Convention & Visitors Bureau**

[www.merrimackvalley.org](http://www.merrimackvalley.org)

*Massachusetts*  
[massvacation.com](http://massvacation.com)

# Groups Welcome!

Welcome to our corner of Massachusetts. The Greater Merrimack Valley is a fantastic place to have fun, relax and explore – but don't take our word for it. People come from across the country and the globe to experience all that we have to offer.

The Greater Merrimack Valley region includes 21 towns and communities, each with a distinct character. We're proud to be home to rolling meadows, bustling cities, two national parks, farms, suburban towns and forests.

America was born in our region when colonists took up arms against the British in Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775, setting off the spark that began the American Revolution. Take a walk along the five-mile Battle Road where the patriots marched, tracing the path of Paul Revere's famous midnight ride.

Great American authors also called the Greater Merrimack Valley home. A solitary cabin on Concord's Walden Pond inspired Henry David Thoreau to write "Walden." Orchard House, the home of author Louisa May Alcott, served as the setting for the classic children's novel "Little Women." And Beat Generation writer, Jack Kerouac, was born and raised in Lowell. Many places in the city have been mentioned in his novels.

The American Industrial Revolution was born in 19th century Lowell, when textile mills lined the banks of the Merrimack River. Today Lowell's mill buildings serve as apartment lofts, businesses, museums and artists' studios. The Lowell National Historical Park has preserved several mill buildings, and continues to educate visitors about the city's industrial past.

The Greater Merrimack Valley is home to a vibrant arts scene, including live theater and music venues. We offer great outdoor recreation opportunities and numerous museums and galleries. The region's many immigrant communities have made the Valley the go-to place for great ethnic dining north of Boston. And our hotels and inns offer accommodations for groups of all sizes, and for all kinds of budgets.

The Greater Merrimack Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau welcomes the opportunity to host and help plan your next group excursion. Please contact the Greater Merrimack Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau at 800-215-9805 or email [sales@merrimackvalley.org](mailto:sales@merrimackvalley.org). **Adventures Await!**



## The Greater Merrimack Valley: Easy to get to & easy to explore.

Located just north and west of Boston, the Greater Merrimack Valley is easily accessed by four major highways: Interstate 95, Interstate 93, Interstate 495 and State Route 3.

Three airports conveniently service the region:

- Logan Airport in Boston
- Manchester-Boston Regional Airport, NH
- Hanscom Regional Airport in Bedford, MA

### *Distance from Major Cities (Mileage approximate)*

Atlanta	1040 miles
Boston	27
Chicago	958
New York City	217
Philadelphia	308
Washington, D.C.	440
Montreal, Canada	290

Direct commuter rail service is available between Boston and Lowell and Boston and Concord. Airport shuttles as well as regional and local bus services are available throughout the region.

## Our Services

Planning a group tour in the Greater Merrimack Valley? The Convention & Visitors Bureau can help. Our local experts are here to assist you with whatever your group may need. From tour planning, guides, escorts, ground transportation to hotel, restaurant, attraction and show bookings, our specialists will handle all the details. Contact the Greater Merrimack Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau at 800-215-9805 or at 40 French Street, Second Floor, Lowell, MA 01852.

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Funded by the Massachusetts Office  
of Travel and Tourism.

From the leafy, tree-lined streets of Lexington and Concord, where the battle for America's freedom began, to the 19th century textile mills lining the Merrimack River in Lowell, whose workers and goods gave birth to our nation's modern economy, the story of the Greater Merrimack Valley is the story of America. Your group will claim a piece of our history with a visit to our two National Historical Parks, by retracing Paul Revere's midnight ride with a tour on the Liberty Ride, and while following in the footsteps of some of America's greatest thinkers: Thoreau, Hawthorne, Emerson, Kerouac and the Alcotts.

Just 30 minutes northwest of Boston, the Greater Merrimack Valley is home to a vibrant arts community, unique shops, fine and ethnic dining and endless choices for sightseeing, performing arts, museums and nightlife.

## Day One

Lowell was the first industrial city in America. Enjoy a guided tour of its canals, gate houses and the still-functioning mill buildings that are part of Lowell National Historical Park. Your group will have the chance to see how the "mill girls" lived with a visit to a restored 19th century textile mill boarding house.

Stop by the American Textile History Museum. From spinning wheels to airplane wings, power looms to baseballs, the history of American innovation really comes alive here. You'll see firsthand how many of the clothes you wear were once wood, crude oil or even plastic soda bottles.

End the day with a stop at the New England Quilt Museum, the only museum of its kind in the northeast and a showplace for traditional and contemporary quilts. Fabric produced by the Lowell mills can be purchased at the museum gift shop.

Dinner in Lowell is always a treat. The city's long history of welcoming immigrants from afar has given it an edge when it comes to cuisine. From fine French wines and Italian pastries, to Greek roasted lamb, Portuguese seafood and Cambodian delicacies, the city offers something for every palate and price range.

An evening at the Lowell Memorial Auditorium can play a "starring role" in your visit. They offer a full schedule of Broadway-style shows and celebrity performances.

## Day Two

It was in Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775 that the minute men took a stand by challenging the British Redcoats. From that day forward, Lexington and Concord have been known as the birthplace of the American Liberty.

Begin your day with a Liberty Ride tour, introducing your group to the sites of the first days of the American Revolution. This 90-minute trip is led by a guide dressed in colonial costume who will give you detailed information on major Revolutionary sites and the region's literary history.

In the afternoon, visit the Concord Museum where you'll see many Revolutionary War artifacts, including powder horns, muskets, cannonballs, fifes and the lantern that Paul Revere used to warn the colonists that, "The British are coming!"

Step back in time to the 19th century, and visit the homes of influential American writers. Tour Orchard House, where Louisa May Alcott wrote her famous novel, "Little Women." Not too far away is the Ralph Waldo Emerson Memorial House, where America's foremost philosopher wrote his famous essays, including "Self-Reliance" and "The American Scholar."

No trip would be complete without a visit to Walden Pond where Henry David Thoreau was inspired to write his book, "Walden."

Dine at Concord's historic Colonial Inn, built in 1716, known for their traditional New England fare.

## Day Three

Shopping is one of the great joys of traveling. The things we buy on a trip become souvenirs, tangible memories of a great visit. And if the items we purchase are unique, handcrafted or locally made, all the better! The Greater Merrimack Valley region covers a lot of territory, from rolling farms to small historic towns, to urban centers. You'll find shops selling art, antiques and collectibles, clothing, jewelry and an eclectic mix of uncommon objects, new and old, with price tags to fit any budget.

The arts also thrive in the Greater Merrimack Valley. You'll find many opportunities to purchase art, jewelry, unique photographs, clothing and one-of-a-kind items at Western Avenue Studios and the Brush Art Gallery.

When you've shopped to your heart's desire, movie lovers will want to take advantage of the new "Behind the Scenes Wicked Cool Movie Tour," a guided coach tour featuring the sites where the Lowell-made film "The Fighter" was filmed. The tour is fully customizable for groups of all sizes, and features highlights like a visit to Ramalho's West End Gym, where both Micky Ward and Mark Walberg have graced the ring.

When you get hungry, you'll find wonderful cafes and tea shops, enjoy fresh-churned ice cream at Kimball Farms in Westford, or dig in to a hearty meal at the Cracker Barrel Old Country Store in Tewksbury.



**MUSEUMS****AMERICAN TEXTILE HISTORY**

**MUSEUM Lowell** – The world's largest textile museum, featuring new and exciting exhibits that tell the story of textiles and cloth-making in America.

**THE BRUSH ART GALLERY AND**

**STUDIOS Lowell** – Watch artists create at their in-house studios, or purchase their work in the gallery shop. Exhibitions by local and international artists are also shown.

**CONCORD MUSEUM Concord** – Highlights include Revolutionary War and American literary treasures such as the famous Paul Revere lantern, Thoreau artifacts and Emerson's Study.

**FRUITLANDS MUSEUMS Harvard**

A collection of four museums, including the site of the 1843 *Fruitlands* experiment led by Bronson Alcott, the world's first Shaker museum, a Native American museum and a fine art gallery.

**LOUISA MAY ALCOTT'S ORCHARD**

**HOUSE Concord** – Alcott Family home, where the beloved classic, *Little Women*, was written in 1868. Guided tours, and special living history events offered. Museum shop.

**NEW ENGLAND QUILT MUSEUM**

**Lowell** – The Northeast's only quilt museum is a showplace for traditional and contemporary quilts by regional, national and international quilters.

**WHISTLER HOUSE MUSEUM OF ART**

**Lowell** – James McNeil Whistler's birthplace (circa 1823) houses an exhibit of Whistler etchings and a permanent collection of 19th century New England artists.

**NATIONAL PARKS****LOWELL NATIONAL HISTORICAL**

**PARK Lowell** – A historical look at Lowell's role in the American Industrial Revolution. Park attractions includes five miles of canals, cotton textile mills, gatehouses, mill worker housing, trolley rides, and canal and riverboat tours. Major attractions include the Boott Cotton Mills Museum, Boott Gallery and the Mill Girl Exhibit.

**MINUTE MAN NATIONAL HISTORICAL**

**PARK Concord** – Preserving the history of the battle between the colonists and the British in 1775 that launched the birthplace of American Liberty. Travel the Battle Road, a 5.5-mile pathway that winds past historic homes, farming fields, wetlands and forests.

**FESTIVALS AND CONCERTS**

**LOWELL FOLK FESTIVAL Lowell** – The largest free folk festival in the country brings three days of music, dancing and ethnic foods to the region the last weekend in July.

**MERRIMACK VALLEY JAZZ FESTIVAL**

**Lowell** – Held in August on the stunning banks of the Merrimack River. This two-day musical event offers music lovers with many different sides of jazz, food, entertainment, and more.

**LOWELL QUILT FESTIVAL Lowell**

– This contemporary and traditional art form is celebrated each August, with four days of exhibits, classes, demonstrations and shopping.

**PATRIOTS DAY CELEBRATION**

**Lexington and Concord** – The third Monday in April these historic towns commemorate the battle between the American colonists and British soldiers that began the American Revolution. Battle reenactments, parades and local celebrations.

**EVENING ACTIVITIES**

**DINING** Fine dining, casual pubs and ethnic restaurants throughout the area.

**THEATER Lowell Memorial Auditorium**

– This beautifully restored 1930s auditorium is host to Broadway Musicals, concerts, and the Merrimack Repertory Theater.

**SPECIAL EVENTS Tsongas Center at UMass**

**Lowell** – An 8,000-seat multi-purpose arena hosts many concerts, conventions, and special events.

**SHOPPING**

Unique boutiques and specialty shops, art galleries, designer outlets and upscale malls.

**SPORTING EVENTS**

**LOWELL SPINNERS** – Professional baseball from the Class A affiliate of the Boston Red Sox.

**A HAVEN FOR THE ARTS**

One of Massachusetts' largest and most energetic arts communities is in the Greater Merrimack Valley. Our region is full of museums, working studios, artists' lofts and galleries. The Greater Merrimack Valley has become a destination not only for artists themselves, but for everyone who loves and supports their work.

**OTHER FUN ADVENTURES****LIBERTY RIDE Lexington & Concord**

– Travel along the historic Battle Road through Lexington and Concord, stopping at sites including the Battle Green and the Old North Bridge. A costumed guide recounts the exciting events of April 19, 1775.

**KIMBALL FARM Westford**

– Since 1939, the Kimball family has taken pride in its tradition of old fashioned homemade ice cream. Driving range and 9-hole pitch & putt golf course, 36-hole miniature golf course and bumper boats!

*The Greater Merrimack Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau can also assist you in organizing guest programs and tours in and around our region. Nearby, you will find whale watches, deep-sea fishing, white sandy beaches and a wealth of history and excitement in and around the hub of Boston.*

*Our receptive tour operators can create customized itineraries for groups of all sizes and interests. For more information call (800) 215-9805 or visit [www.merrimackvalley.org](http://www.merrimackvalley.org).*



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