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TRAVEL

Travel Guide: Find Sun, Surf, and History in Narragansett This Summer

We're all itching to get away. Here's why this easy-to-reach seaside spot should be at the top of your list.

by **TODD PLUMMER** • 6/23/2020, 12:45 p.m.

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With Point Judith Lighthouse in the distance, a surfer takes advantage of the last few rays of sunshine. / Photo by Andrew Fisher

It's easy to see why 'Gansett, as the regulars call it, is one of New England's more popular beach towns: The laid-back sibling of tony Newport, it still offers those sandy Rhode Island beach vibes, with fewer mansions and Manhattanites and more surfers and clam shacks. The best part? There are no plane or ferry rides involved, so it's easy to keep some social distance—and close enough to head south just for a day.

Once upon a time, when this town was the summer sojourn of choice for America's Gilded Age elite, the Narragansett Pier Casino was *the* spot to see and be seen while playing tennis or billiards. After the structure burned down in 1900, all that remained were its imposing granite spires on either side of Ocean Road. Connected by a soaring archway, the Towers, as they're called today, still serve as the unofficial epicenter of the action, with a history gallery on the street level that's worth a glimpse. They're also a great starting point for a stroll through town, taking in all the Victorian shinglestyle architecture and exploring the shops at the Pier Marketplace and along Kingstown Road and Boon Street. Don't miss Cool Beans Café for smoothies and cold brew; locally made lotions and coffee-infused Java Body bath products at Simply Natural; and the waffle cones at Nana's Ice Cream.

Of course, you'd be remiss to visit Narragansett—long viewed as New

England's surfing capital—and not play in the water. When you're ready to catch a wave, sign up for a lesson at Narragansett Surf & Skate Shop, a local institution since 1978 (it also rents standup paddleboards if you prefer your water sports a little tamer). If terra firma is more your speed, the Black Point Trail is a straightforward 2-mile walk along an unspoiled stretch of beach where it's easy to ditch the crowds, even in peak summer months.

Worked up an appetite yet? Pick up classic summer favorites such as steamers and lobster rolls at Champlin's Seafood or a decadent spread from Crazy Burger (the "Nutty AF" vegan patty with sundried tomato–artichoke pesto is particularly mouthwatering). If the aprés-beach scene is up and running when you visit, stop by George's of Galilee for live music and killer cocktails—then watch the sun set over the water from the expansive deck while waving to the Block Island ferries as they cruise on by.

Getting There

Hop in the car for a painless drive down 95—with no traffic, you can get from the Back Bay to a beach towel in 90 minutes flat.

Staying There

If you're overnighting, consider the Break Hotel: With only 16 rooms, it feels less like an inn and more like your fabulous friend's retro-cool beach house. The heated saltwater pool is a compelling alternative if the beach feels too hectic, and the hotel's fleet of house bikes makes for an easy cruise down to the Point Judith Lighthouse.

While many destinations, hotels, and attractions have been affected by coronavirus, we hope you'll take advantage of our inspirational travel suggestions to plan your next trip.

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