9 Things To Do In Charming Narragansett, RI

SANDI BARRETT

MAKE A MEME

Credit: Sandi Barrett

(Out to changing advisories, please check local travel guidelines before visiting.)

A seaside town, once the first stop on Rhode Island summer for long vacationers, Narragansett is now home to day/trippers, beachgoers, and weekend getaway adventurers.

Known to the locals as 'gansett, the beautiful, historic village has a wild past. Since the late 1800s, the town has come to the each summer as tourists swarm to the beautiful beaches, warm waters, and friendly atmosphere.

Back in the good ol' days visitors would arrive early in June and stay until the end of August. While there, they relished in gambling parties, and beachside fun. Narragansett is still a local summer attraction. The gambling and three-month long summer vacations are mostly a thing of the past, but the beachside fun now pairs with amazing food, boating, and kicked-back relaxation.

1. Visit The Towers

Steeped in history, The Towers were the gate to Narragansett Pier Casino. They represent bygone days when 'gansett was the summer-long party location for a well-off crowd. In the Gay Nineties, the Narragansett Pier Casino was the centerpiece of summer living.

The Casino burned down in 1900, was rebuilt in 1905, weathered many storms, and finally went the way of most turn of the century wooden structures.

The stone towers, however, have remained strong and are a symbol of Narragansett's past, present, and future.

Modern-day events at the Towers include luxuriously rustic weddings, ballroom dancing, and a summer music series. Historical tours are available. Your docent will guide you through the gilded age of Narragansett, highlighting the many families who flocked to the seaside town and made her famous.

When you stand under The Towers' bridge, you can almost hear the casino chips clicking.

Credit: Sandi Barrett

2. Relax At The Beach

Narragansett offers great beach options for your toes in the sand vacation.

Narragansett Town Beach is the major sandbox for 'gansett beachgoers. With almost 1½ acres of sandy beach, plenty of parking, soft sand, and room to spread out, you can lounge and enjoy sun and visitors love this beach. Situated near the center of the action, you can walk along the beach, take a break at one of the nearby restaurants for lunch, and head back out for more sun and surf. The town beach also has a designated surf area where you can try your hand at hanging ten or just sit back and watch the show.

Scarborough State Beaches (North and South) are popular places for spending the day. The long swath of soft sand sprinkled with cool, shady parks is the quintessential beach-day escape.

Roger Wheeler State Beach offers gentle surf due to the breakwater barrier dating back the years. This is a great place for small children and families due to the gentle surf and amenities. Formerly known as Sand Hill Cove, Roger Wheeler State Beach offers showers and a concession stand.

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Sally Birne State Beach has a recently completed beach pavilion. The new pavilion project involved the installation of a concession stand, a new boardwalk with overlook platforms, and shade structures.

3. Hike The Area

The Narragansett area is fairly flat, making it easygoing for hikers. AllTrails.com highlights several easy Narragansett hikes that showcase Rhode Island's rocky coastline.

The Black Point Trail is an easy 2.3-mile trail. However, it offers opportunities for rock scaling, bluff climbing, and awesome exploration. If you have a gang and need a break from the beach, this is a fun place for some beachside adventure. It is a good place to wear out those energetic little munchkins and tweens.

The easy, 2-mile Whale Rock Trail is another fun trail to explore. After a short walk through the woods, the trees open up and surprise you with a wonderful ocean view. There are plenty of options for exploration along this trail, too.

Credit: Sandi Barrett

4. Sail To Block Island

With the Point Judith Ferry to Block Island at your disposal, relax on an enjoyable hour-ish ride to New Shoreham. The ferry docks right in the center of the very walkable town studded with fun restaurants and shops.

You can take your bike across on the ferry or rent one at the dock when you land for a quicker way to get around town. Moped rentals are also available for your island exploration.

If you plan to take a trip over for a day or more, don't miss our tips on the best things to do during a Block Island getaway, where to eat, stay, and shop.

5. Gone Fishin'

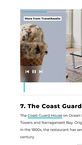
We will find many great fishing charters out of Narragansett Harbor. One of the best is Seven B's! Scheduled trips focus on porgy, squid, cod, fluke, and sea bass. They offer equipment and instruction for the new-to-fishing and big-water fun for the more experienced angler. If you have never been deep-sea fishing, a half-day excursion, gear included, with instruction is perfect for newbies. Be careful, you might find yourself a new hobby.

Bowsprisher.com will hook you up with a private charter. You can be the captain or hire a professional so you can fish or just relax. Rental options run the gamut from zodiacs to yachts. Imagine kicking back in your private boat, captain at the helm, beverages in the cooler, and the entire world at your feet. Sounds perfect.

6. People Watch

Park along Ocean Drive and grab a seat on the breakwall. You will have an unobstructed view of the bay on one side and a view of the gorgeous beach houses with sweeping lawns and wrap-around verandas on the other. As happy beachgoers pack and unpack their vehicles, walk by, or grab a seat on the wall, too, you will be entertained by the sights and sounds of seaside vacationing in full summer swing.

Watching families juggle chairs, kids, coolers, strollers, toys, blankets, et cetera may be very relatable or bring back some wonderful memories.



Credit: Sandi Barrett

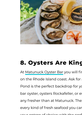
7. The Coast Guard House

The Coast Guard House on Ocean Drive is planted squarely between The Towers and Narragansett Bay. Originally a U.S. Coast Guard Station built in the 1800s, the restaurant has served the region for three quarters of a century.

Inside the wrap-around dining room, a wall of windows affords diners an unobstructed view of the rocky shore and bay waters. On the second floor deck, in addition to the bay view, you can relax in the shade of the Towers and enjoy watching beachgoers further down Ocean Drive.

Known for its wonderful cuisine, the Coast Guard House is also the perfect spot to enjoy a cocktail while sitting by the bay.

Narragansett Beer, remembered best for its 1950s "Hi Neighbor, have a 'gansett" tagline, is making a comeback. Take a trip down memory lane and enjoy a tall one at this iconic Narragansett location.



Credit: Sandi Barrett

8. Oysters Are King

At Matunuck Oyster Bar, you will find the most delicious seafood dishes on the Rhode Island coast. Ask for a seat on the patio, the view of Potter Pond is the perfect backdrop for your meal. Whether you prefer a raw bar (oyster, oysters Rockefeller, or even bourbon oysters, you won't find any fresher than at Matunuck). The main course menu encompasses every kind of fresh seafood you can imagine and the opportunity to pair your entree of choice with the perfect wine.

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Curious about where your phone comes from? Book a private, one hour tour of the Motorola Golden Farm, where you can experience Rhode Island aquaculture and pond to table farming. Located in Potter Pond, the tour leaves from the restaurant. Book a late afternoon tour and an early dinner for a unique and memorable outing.

9. Take A Drive

Some days just call for a "Sunday" drive. Navigate over to Route 1 and VI, the coastal route, and head north to the village of East Greenwich or south to Watch Hill. Route 14 will split and rejoin Route 1 several times. When you cross, stick to 14, where you will drive along the coast, explore quaint little towns, and ogle at gorgeous mansions. This dreamy coastal drive is an adventure waiting for you to arrive.

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For more on enjoying Rhode Island's coast, consider our beautiful Rhode Island coast road trip, Providence to Westerly.

Pro Tip

Paragonett is a water town's vacation dream. You will find yourself walking everywhere since there is really only one road in and out of the beach area. Make sure to pack your most comfortable flip flops, plenty of sunblock, and a fun hat.

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SANDI BARRETT

Sandi is a Nassau native who specializes in travel, food, and keepsake fashion. When a long career in marketing, she has been a freelance writer for 20 years, contributing her three daughters, babysitting her grandchildren, designing...

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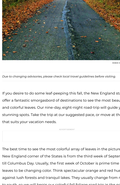
The Most Scenic New England Fall Foliage Road Trip

ROBIN O'NEAL SMITH

Jack Cubbon



DAVID DIAS, DDIAS

Due to changing seasonals, please check local travel guidelines before visiting.

If you desire to do some leaf peeping this fall, the New England states offer a fantastic smorgasbord of destinations to see the most beautiful and colorful leaves. Our nine-day, eight-night road trip will guide you to stunning spots. Take the trip at our suggested pace, or move at the pace that suits your vacation needs.

The best time to see the most colorful array of leaves in the picturesque New England corner of the States is from the third week of September till Columbus Day. Usually, the first week of October is prime time for leaves to be changing color. Think spectacular orange and red hues set against lush forests and tranquil lakes. They usually change from north to south, so we will begin our colorful fall foliage road trip in the north.

TOM CYCZEK, DEAN BRIDGE, NEWTOWNPIKE

Acadia National Park in Bar Harbor, Maine

Our first stop is Bar Harbor and Maine's Acadia National Park. Acadia National Park on Mount Desert Island is a 47,000 acre park that is beautiful year-round. It has a 27-mile park loop with plenty of places to stop and enjoy the leaves and take photographs of the foliage.

You can also visit the highest point along the Eastern Coast at the park's 1,527-foot Cadillac Mountain. You will have quite a view from there. Enjoy the leaves on maples and birches, along with a variety of evergreens. If you desire to get a bit of exercise, there are 57 miles of hiking trails.

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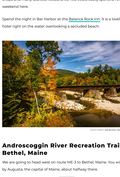
You could spend a half or a whole day enjoying the colorful orange and red hues of nature in the park. The town of Bar Harbor is also fun with shops and many seafood restaurants. You could easily spend an entire weekend here.

Spend the night in Bar Harbor at the Balance Rock Inn. It is a lovely hotel right on the water overlooking a secluded beach.



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Androscoggin River Recreation Trail In Bethel, Maine

We are going 6 miles west on route ME-3 to Bethel, Maine. You will pass by Augusta, the capital of Maine, about halfway there.

Bethel, Maine, is a small mountain village with exceptional views of fall foliage and interesting trails. From Bethel, you can check out the Androscoggin River Recreation Trail (accessible via the Bethel Pathway) on foot or by bike and see the gorgeous foliage and perhaps some wildlife.

Colorful leaves are also abundant nearby in White Mountain National Forest and Grafton Notch State Park.

A fun place to stay in Bethel is the Sunday River Ski Resort. Although you won't be skiing, they usually have a host of activities going on, including golf, hikes, zip lining, and more. The resort has a spa to help you relax and scenic lift rides that are great for taking pictures of the foliage.

If you desire, you could spend an additional day or two exploring the areas surrounding Bethel.

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The Kancamagus Highway in New Hampshire

Spectacular fall foliage awaits you as you leave the deep green pine forests of western Maine and enter New Hampshire's White Mountains. Drive west on U.S. 2 (watch for moose) and then take NH 16 south.

The 65. Washington Auto Road permits you to drive up to the peak of Mount Washington. There are also vans that give guided tours, or you can wait till you are on the western side and take the cog railroad up to the top. There is a museum and an observation area at the top.

A few places to be sure and stop are the C.L. Graham Overlook, which is just below the summit of Kancamagus Pass and the Silver Cascade Waterfall. Both are great places for photos.

Then it's on to the Kancamagus Highway for a 30-mile drive through White Mountain National Forest. Named one of the most beautiful highways in the United States, the Kanc, as it's referred to by locals, is a National Scenic Byway. During this drive, you will pass near dozens of waterfalls while binoculars, beaches, and maple trees blaze against a pine backdrop. It is beautiful, but be aware there are no restaurants, homes, or fuel stops on the Kanc.

Bretton Woods, a Mount Washington resort, offers stunning views of Mount Washington. Nearby is the Mount Washington Cog Railway, which will take you to the top of the mountain. I recommend this tour. It is the world's first cog railway, and it has been climbing the mountain for more than 150 years.

The Omni Mount Washington in Bretton Woods offers a view from every room, fine dining, and spa facilities and is a great spot to spend the night.

This area is abundant with things to do and see, so you could spend multiple days in the Mount Washington and Kancamagus Highway area.

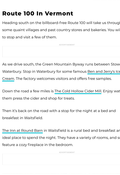
TOM CYCZEK, DEAN BRIDGE, NEWTOWNPIKE

A Night At The Trapp Family Lodge In Stowe, Vermont

Next, we will head west on VT-15 to Stowe. The white spire of Stowe Community Church identifies the beginning of Nervous Route 100's long skein of country villages. Try a cider donut from one of the many country stores in the area. A picturesque town albeit with beautiful leaves in the fall, you will enjoy spending time here.

There are hiking trails for those who desire a bit more exercise. Many restaurants feature farm to table dining and craft beer. While our itinerary includes a night here, you could easily spend a weekend if time permitted.

Spend the night in the European-style Trapp Family Lodge owned by the Austrian family who inspired The Sound of Music. They have rooms, suites, and villas as well as a variety of restaurants and activities. While you're in town, you can also consider the best things to do in Stowe, Vermont to fill out your itinerary.



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Route 100 In Vermont

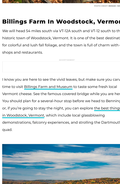
Heading south on the Hillboard Free Route 100 will take us through some quaint villages and past country stores and bakeries. You will want to stop and visit a few of them.

As we drive south, the Green Mountain Byway runs between Stowe and Waterbury. Stop in Waterbury for some famous Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream. The factory welcomes visitors and offers free samples.

Down the road a few miles is The Cold Hollow Cider Mill. Enjoy watching them press the cider and shop for treats.

Then it's back on the road with a stop for the night at a bed and breakfast in Waitsfield.

The Inn at Round Barn in Waitsfield is a rural bed and breakfast and an ideal place to spend the night. They have a variety of rooms, and some feature a cozy fireplace in the bedroom.



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Billings Farm In Woodstock, Vermont

We will head the rest south on VT-126 south and VT-12 south to the historic town of Woodstock, Vermont. It is one of the best destinations for colorful and lush fall foliage, and the town has a variety of rooms, and some shops and restaurants.

I know you are here to see the vivid leaves, but make sure you carve out time to visit Billings Farm and Museum to taste some fresh local Vermont cheese. See the famous covered bridge while you are here, too. You should plan for a several hour stop before we head to Bennington, or, if you're going to stay the night, you can explore the best things to do in Woodstock, Vermont, which include local glassblowing demonstrations, falconry experiences, and strolling the Dartmouth Quad.

PHOTO CREDIT: ERIC MARQUALL / SHUTTERSTOCK

The Shires Of Vermont Byway

We are off to Bennington via US-7 S for 85 miles. Shires of Vermont is the name of the southwest corner of Vermont, and it encompasses numerous towns, including the historic towns of Bennington and Manchester.

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The drive is a kaleidoscope of vibrant color in the Green Mountain National Forest.

In Bennington, the 306-foot-tall monument built in 1891 to commemorate the Battle of Bennington is the state's most famous historic site. It offers an unparalleled bird's-eye view of the surrounding areas, including Mother Nature's artistic showcase of leaves. The world's largest collection of Grandma Moses paintings is located nearby at the Bennington Museum.

A great place to stay for the night is the Four Chimneys Inn, a beautiful bed and breakfast that serves a hearty country breakfast each morning.

PHOTO CREDIT: BRIAN LOGAN PHOTOGRAPHY / SHUTTERSTOCK

The Norman Rockwell Museum In Stockbridge, Massachusetts

Our next stop will be Stockbridge, Massachusetts, via Route 7. Enjoy the colorful scenery through the Berkshires' rolling hills, and stop for a visit to the Norman Rockwell Museum, home to the largest and most significant collection of original Rockwell art. Plan to spend a few hours here.

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Continue on Route 7 for just over 100 miles to Norwalk.

PHOTO CREDIT: TOMAS KIRER / SHUTTERSTOCK

Antiquing In Woodbury, Connecticut (Or Hiking In Kent Falls State Park)

There are dozens of places to stop and take in the leaves or visit a delightful spot along the way. If you are into antiques, a stop in Woodbury might be in order. It is known as the Antique Capital of Connecticut. Plan for a stop at Kent Falls State Park to stretch your legs. The park has an easy hike that includes covered bridges and waterfalls.

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Spend the night at The Norwalk Inn, where you can have your choice of a room or a suite.

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The Steam Train In Essex, Connecticut

Head east via I-95 across Connecticut for 63 miles to Essex.

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Nestled in the Lower Connecticut River Valley is the Essex Steam Train. Let the steam locomotive and vintage railcars take you through the valley to see the vibrant changing leaves. Essex was named the perfect small American town in the book *1,000 Places to See Before You Die*.

Then cross the river to Old Lyme, where an old boarding house is now the Florence Griswold Museum.

Plan to stay at the Bee and Thistle Inn in Old Lyme for a good night's rest before the last day of the trip.

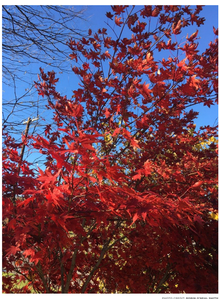

PHOTO CREDIT: ROBIN O'NEAL SMITH

The Rhode Island Coastline

Our final leaf-peeping segment will begin in Westerly, Rhode Island, and go along the Rhode Island coastline. Take 95 to Westerly at the state's extreme southwest corner, then hit Route 1A and enjoy a colorful scenic drive along the coast. The road meanders the inlets and coves, giving you views of the water on one side and the beautiful fall colors on the other.

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In Charleston, you might want to visit Burlingame State Park or the Fantastic Umbrella Factory. Near the factory are several small rustic stores and a cafe.

Travel Tip

Plan on cool crisp mornings and know that it may or may not warm up throughout the day. It is best to dress in layers and be sure to take a warm jacket.

The New England states provide hundreds of spots that are perfect for seeing fall foliage. Our colorful autumn journey showcases just a few of my favorites, and hopefully they will become your favorites as well.

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ROBIN O'NEAL SMITH

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Robin O'Neal Smith is a freelance and travel writer. A young baby boomer, Robin and her husband have traveled throughout North America, many of the Caribbean Islands, and Europe. She loves cruising and inspiring others to live their...

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