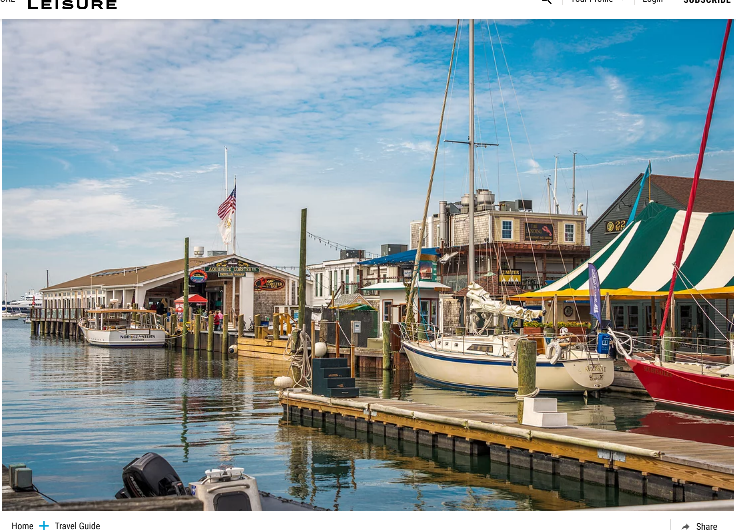
AdChoices
Social Security benefits calculator
When you claim...
100%
AGE 63 AGE 64 AGE 65 AGE 66 AGE 67 AGE 68 AGE 69 AGE 70



Rhode Island Travel Guide

By Kaye Toal | March 02, 2021

There are few better beach destinations than Rhode Island. With 400 miles of gorgeous Atlantic shoreline, Rhode Island is a dream for any traveler looking for a classic New England experience — especially if they want that experience to almost always be within walking distance of a beach. If you've never been to Rhode Island, you might think that the main point of interest is Providence — and while this city is wonderful and well worth your time, you'd be missing out on some of the most wonderful parts of the state if you only stayed there. From beaches and museums to the Newport Mansions and award-winning Roger Williams Park Zoo, Rhode Island is full of hidden and not-so-hidden gems that are worth visiting.

Chase Credit Journey Score Simulator
Free tools to help you do more.
Sign up
CHASE
MAKE MORE OF WHAT'S YOURS
ADVERTISEMENT

Time Zone

Eastern Standard Time

Best Time to Go

Many of Rhode Island's fun activities are outdoors, so while you can really go any time of year, the spring and summer are best, when the weather is mild to warm and nature is at her best. Winter and fall visits are enjoyable as well, but be prepared to spend less time outdoors.

Things to Know

If you're planning to explore Rhode Island beyond Providence, you'll want to rent a car, as many of the best things to do here are easiest and most enjoyable when you have your own ride. Locals know to get to most of those things early — the Ocean Drive, for instance, is gridlocked by noon, but pleasant at 8 a.m. You can have a cheaper vacation if you spend part of it outside of Providence; there are a ton of smaller inns and bed-and-breakfasts throughout the state that are just as lovely for a fraction of the cost of a metropolitan hotel. Rhode Islanders are friendly, and some of the state shares an accent with Boston (it's different, but to the untrained ear, it'll sound fairly similar). Definitely try Rhode Island institutions: Del's frozen lemonade, a coffee cabinet (like a milkshake, if milkshakes were thicker and somehow more delicious), coffee milk (sweet coffee concentrate plus milk plus the need to have more than one glass), fries with vinegar, and hot dogs with celery salt.

ADVERTISING
PEAK ENTERTAINMENT
Paramount+
TRY IT FREE

How to Get Around

Trains: The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) runs regular service from Boston through Rhode Island, if you're looking for local stops. Otherwise, Amtrak services Providence, Kingston, and Westerly.

Buses: If you don't have your own car, the main way to get around Rhode Island is with RIPTA, Rhode Island Public Transit Authority's bus systems. Daily unlimited passes are $6; otherwise, it's $2 per trip.

Taxis: Taxis are available throughout the state, though a call in advance is required in non-metropolitan areas. Rachel's Big City Transportation is a favorite around Providence.

Car Service: Lyft and Uber are available as usual throughout Rhode Island.

Credit: Courtesy of The Ocean House Watch Hill

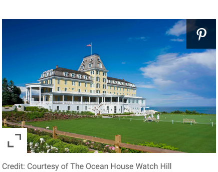
Best Hotels

Weekapaug Inn

Address: 25 Spray Rock Road, Westerly, RI 02891
Phone: (855) 679-2995
Website

The Weekapaug Inn is a favorite for travelers looking to enjoy chic New England charm during their Rhode Island visit. Adding to its popularity is the fact that it's explicitly family- and pet-friendly. Built in 1899, the property has been updated with modern finishes and classic touches. Guests can also expect sweeping ocean views from many rooms.

Ocean House



Credit: Courtesy of The Ocean House Watch Hill

Address: 1 Bluff Ave, Westerly, RI 02891
Phone: (401) 584-7000
Website

For those seeking a romantic New England getaway, Westerly's famed Ocean House boasts a private beach and a spa. Originally a mansion, Ocean House is now a unique, beautiful hotel with thoughtfully maintained historical details. If a room is not quite your dream, the property also offers several private cottages, all with the same comforts and amenities.

Hotel Providence

Address: 139 Mathewson St, Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 861-8000
Website

Hotel Providence is the only AAA Four Diamond boutique hotel in Providence, and it is a stay worth indulging in. The sophisticated decor evokes the comfort and elegance of a bygone era, creating a real oasis in the midst of the city. Hotel Providence is also pet-friendly, making it a must for anyone traveling with their furriest family members.

Christopher Dodge House

Address: 11 W Park St, Providence, RI 02908
Phone: (401) 351-6111
Website

This charming bed-and-breakfast is an award-winning, quaint homage to New England seaside cottages, with an enviable location and thoughtful amenities. There are 14 individually designed rooms to choose from, each with their own working fireplace. Located a quick walk from Federal Hill and the city center, the Christopher Dodge House is an excellent choice for anyone searching for a home away from home.

The Chanler at Cliff Walk

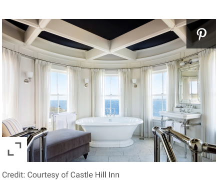
Address: 117 Memorial Blvd, Newport, RI 02840
Phone: (401) 847-1300
Website

The Chanler at Cliff Rock is truly a luxury hotel; in its storied history, it has been visited by President Theodore Roosevelt, poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and more. Now an elegant five-star stay, The Chanler is an iconic part of Newport, complete with an award-winning restaurant and oceanfront cafe.

The Francis Malbone House

Address: 392 Thames St, Newport, RI 02840
Phone: (800) 846-0392
Website

If you wish to stay in one of Newport's colonial mansions, The Francis Malbone House is tough to beat. Restorations here have meticulously maintained its colonial details; staying here feels like a break from modern life without any of the drama of time travel. The nearby ocean, Cliff Walk, and Thames Street just sweeten the deal.



Credit: Courtesy of Castle Hill Inn

Castle Hill Inn

Address: 590 Ocean Drive, Newport, RI 02840
Phone: (888) 466-1355
Website

Boasting a private beach and cottage-style rooms, Castle Hill Inn is one of the most famous of the many Newport luxury hotels — not only for its stunning, cozily chic decor, but also for its indoor Dining Room's delicious dinner service and its outdoor restaurant, The Lawn, and its beachfront views. Castle Hill Inn is at the very end of legendary Ocean Drive, making it a perfect cap to a Newport visit.

Credit: Courtesy of Al Forno

Best Restaurants

Oberlin

Address: 186 Union St, Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 588-8755
Website

Small plates in a homey atmosphere are what define Oberlin, a Providence gem that has garnered much critical acclaim for its seasonal menus. Oberlin's open kitchen and cozy atmosphere set it apart from other similar restaurants; there's no pretension here — only delicious food and a community mindset.

Mission

Address: 58 Aquidneck Ave, Middletown, RI 02842
Phone: (401) 324-5811
Website

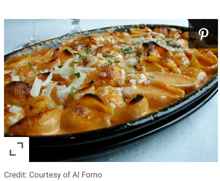
Mission is worth a drive to enjoy its gigantic, delicious burgers — widely considered to be the best in Rhode Island — hand-cut fries, and wide selection of craftsman beers. Better yet, Mission has started offering handmade choco tacos — guess you'll be getting dessert, too.

Los Andes

Address: 903 Chalkstone Ave, Providence, RI 02908
Phone: (401) 649-4911
Website

Bolivian and Peruvian cuisine come together in a bright, bold atmosphere that makes dining at Los Andes a unique and joyous experience. Don't miss out on the lobster paella — and the margaritas.

Al Forno



Credit: Courtesy of Al Forno

Address: 577 S Water St, Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 273-9760
Website

Rustic Italian on the riverfront — few things sound better. Al Forno's pasta and entrees, made in wood-fired ovens, are delicious, but they are most famous for their pizza: grilled and made fresh to order. Pizza options include classics as well as chef specials.

UMelt

Address: 129 Weybosset St, Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 383-6732
Website

Located in the heart of Downtown Providence, UMelt specializes in the ultimate comfort food: grilled cheese. What constitutes a grilled cheese gets a broad interpretation; get one with four different types of cheese, or another with barbecue pork and mac and cheese. It's not for the faint of heart, but definitely for the lover of cheese.

The Dining Room at Castle Hill Inn

Address: 590 Ocean Drive, Newport, RI 02840
Phone: (888) 466-1355
Website

Newport hotels and inns pride themselves on their phenomenal restaurants, and The Dining Room at Castle Hill Inn is one of the best of the best. A seasonal, carefully curated menu and extensive wine list make The Dining Room a perfect destination for a romantic night out. Reservations are recommended.

Cara

Address: The Chanler at Cliff Walk, 117 Memorial Blvd, Newport, RI 02840
Phone: (401) 847-2244
Website

Serving dine-in dinner nightly, Cara is a Forbes 4-Star restaurant at The Chanler at Cliff Walk. Two menus are available, developed individually and seasonally to ensure the freshest possible ingredients and a true New England culinary experience. Reservations are recommended.

Champlin's

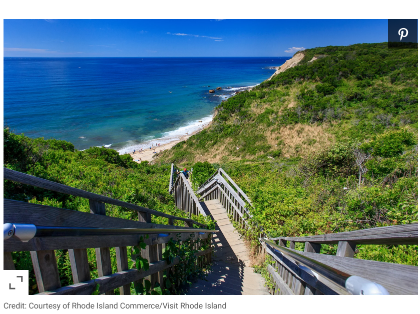
Address: 256 Great Island Rd, Narragansett, RI 02882
Phone: (401) 783-3152
Website

Get a lobster roll (or two) at this classic counter-service spot, which offers entirely outdoor seating. If you're visiting out of season, never fear — Champlin's Seafood Market is open year-round, so you can take home the heavenly seafood of Narragansett Bay to prepare on your own.

Monahan's Clam Shack By The Sea

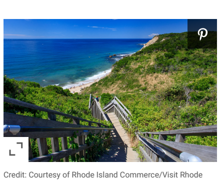
Address: 190 Ocean Road, Narragansett RI 02882
Phone: (401) 782-2524
Website

Open seasonally starting in April, Monahan's uses only the freshest seafood to create its menu. This walk-up classic clam shack can scratch any seafood itch, from lobster rolls (both hot and cold), to every kind of clam chowder, to a generous portion of fish and chips.



Credit: Courtesy of Rhode Island Commerce/Visit Rhode Island

Things to Do



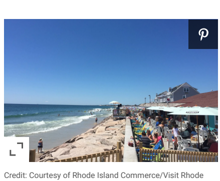
Credit: Courtesy of Rhode Island Commerce/Visit Rhode Island

Monhegan Bluffs Beach

Address: New Shoreham, RI 02807

The natural bluffs that surround this beach are a wonder in and of themselves, providing natural shelter and a beautiful vista. Getting down to the beach and back up the bluffs requires walking up a steep staircase — be mindful if going with a child or an elderly family member.

Misquamicut State Beach



Credit: Courtesy of Rhode Island Commerce/Visit Rhode Island

Address: 257 Atlantic Ave, Westerly, RI 02891
Website

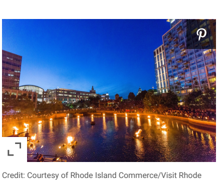
One of the most popular beaches in Rhode Island is popular for a reason — it stretches along several miles of beautifully maintained shoreline, and has a ton to do for antsy families. When you're done sunning and swimming, rent a jet ski, go for a round of mini golf or bumper cars at Bayview Fun Park, rent an ocean kayak, or enjoy the carousel and arcade at Atlantic Beach Park.

Roger Williams Park Zoo

Address: 1000 Elmwood Ave, Providence, RI 02907
Website

The Roger Williams Park Zoo is a 150-year-old conservation and education zoo, featuring hands-on experiences for animal lovers of all ages. In addition to sustainable, high-quality exhibits, the location features green spaces, ponds, and a rose garden for visitors to enjoy. Seasonal events, like the drive-through Jack-o-Lantern Spectacular, are family favorites.

WaterFire



Credit: Courtesy of Rhode Island Commerce/Visit Rhode Island

Address: 4 N Main St, Providence, RI 02903
Website

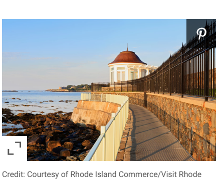
An iconic art installation that frankly defies explanation — "a bunch of metal basins are lit on fire and floated down the river" is factual but not quite evocative enough — WaterFire draws over a million participants every year. Formerly confined to a once-yearly lighting, WaterFire has expanded to include an associated Arts Center and additional events. Check the website for event details.

The Breakers

Address: 44 Ochre Point Ave, Newport, RI 02840
Website

The most famous of the Newport Mansions, The Breakers was once owned by the Vanderbilts and is now a stunningly preserved Gilded Age museum with a self-guided audio tour. The entire mansion, including the stable and carriage house, is open to visitors.

Cliff Walk



Credit: Courtesy of Rhode Island Commerce/Visit Rhode Island

Address: Cliff Walk, Newport, RI 02840
Website

The Cliff Walk meanders along some of Rhode Island's most gorgeous coastline, with views of the ocean and famous Newport Mansions. Do yourself a favor and go early in the morning for a sunrise view, or in the evening to enjoy at sunset.

Ocean Drive Historic District

Address: Newport, RI 02840
Website

A famous 10-mile drive around the circumference of Newport, the Ocean Drive is a must for architecture, history, and nature lovers. Don't get stuck in an unending line of traffic — go early in the morning to avoid crowds, and even earlier for a stunning sunrise view.

Newport Art Museum

Credit: Courtesy of Rhode Island Commerce/Visit Rhode Island

Address: 76 Bellevue Ave, Newport, RI 02840
Website

Housed in one of the Newport Mansions, the Newport Art Museum has a lovely collection and exhibitions that change every few months. Spend part of an afternoon here and take in not only the collections, but also the beautiful architecture of the museum itself.

Credit: Courtesy of Rhode Island Commerce/Visit Rhode Island

Best Shopping

Credit: Courtesy of Rhode Island Commerce/Visit Rhode Island

Bannister's Wharf

Address: 1 Bannister's Wharf, Newport, RI 02840
Phone: (401) 846-4500
Website

This outdoor shopping plaza features 24 local gems, high-end shops, beautiful galleries, and the Candy Store Cup regatta every year. Grab a latte at the Coffee Grinder to refuel between shops, or take a yacht cruise via Classic Cruises of Newport.

Aardvark Antiques

Address: 9 JT Connell Hwy., Newport, RI 02840
Phone: (401) 849-7233
Website

A Newport institution, Aardvark Antiques is an antique-hunter's dream, and pretty fun for people who like odd, vintage, or interesting things. It's easy to get lost in their incredible collection, which spans 30,000 square feet and includes every conceivable genre of antique.

The Fantastic Umbrella Factory

Address: 4820 Old Post Rd., Charlestown, RI 02813
Phone: (401) 364-1060
Website

The Fantastic Umbrella Factory describes itself well — it is absolutely fantastic. A fun, funky bazaar consisting of eight locally owned boutique shops, it's easy to spend hours browsing each unique offering — plus, the Small Axe Cafe and Lunch Box Food Truck will keep you fueled for your shopping.

Simple Pleasures

Address: 6 Richmond Sq., Providence, RI 02906
Phone: (401) 331-4120
Website

Unique, eclectic goods and gifts housed in a historic forge — enough said. If that isn't actually enough to convince you, know that Simple Pleasures is a local favorite, with handmade jewelry, boutique handbags and scarves, and an ever-changing variety of other curiosities.

The Providence Flea

Address: 10 Sims Ave., Providence, RI 02908
Website

Whether indoors for the winter or outdoors for the summer, the Providence Flea — a local favorite for years — features local artisans, nonprofits, small and micro-businesses, and more.

The Arcade Providence

Address: 65 Weybosset St., Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 454-4568
Website

An architectural masterpiece, The Arcade Providence is an 1828 shopping arcade that's now home to local boutiques, restaurants, and micro-loft apartments. Architecture buffs will love a visit *almost* as much as avid shoppers.

Credit: Courtesy of Rhode Island Commerce/Visit Rhode Island

Brown & Hopkins Country Store

Address: 1179 Putnam Pike, Chepachet, RI 02814
Phone: (401) 568-4830
Website

Established in 1809, Brown & Hopkins Country Store is older than most American states, and has been in continuous operation since opening. Carrying a variety of gifts, goods, and groceries, their selection changes with the seasons; you might never find the same thing twice.

Cities and Towns to Know

Providence: Rhode Island's capital city is also its largest, and the main destination for many visitors. With no dearth of things to do, it's a bustling small city with a youthful energy, thanks to Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design. Visit for the 18th- and 19th-century homes on College Hill, the RISD Museum, and of course, WaterFire.

Newport: Located on Aquidneck Island, Newport is surrounded by beaches. Made famous most recently by Taylor Swift's *Folklore* album, Newport's mansions have a storied and fascinating history. Some are now museums, if you're interested in checking out how those during the Gilded Age lived. Stroll along Bellevue Avenue to take in the ocean view and architecture, then stop at The Dining Room at Castle Hill Inn for coffee and dessert.

Narragansett: Known to locals and summerers as Gansett, this sleepy, beautiful town is just across the Long Island Sound from Newport. Its population doubles in the summer months, as it is a prime destination for beachgoers from Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York. Be sure to visit Point Judith and the Point Judith Lighthouse, or head over to the Point Judith Country Club for a round of golf on a beautiful course, built in 1895.

Block Island: Take the ferry out to picturesque Block Island for a day of sun, sand, and idyllic relaxation. Home to the stunning Mohegan Bluffs, Block Island is a hiker's paradise as much as it is a home for beach loungers — there are several beautiful trails and walking routes, including Rodman's Hollow, a 230-acre conservation area with a stunning trail suitable for casual hikers.

Westerly: The highlight of this beachfront community is Misquamicut State Beach, a favorite for ocean lovers in Rhode Island, Connecticut, and beyond. Visit Watch Hill for the Flying Horse Carousel and Watch Hill Lighthouse, or take a relaxing walk through the gorgeous Napatree Point Conservation Area.

Weather

Spring in Rhode Island can be quite rainy, with about half of the season's days seeing some clouds. Average temperatures in the spring range from 30°F at the beginning of the season to around 72°F at the end.

Summer is balmy and humid — appropriately, perfect beach weather. June enjoys temperatures starting at 55°F, and it rarely gets hotter than 90°F; usually, at the height of summer, the average high temperature is round 83°F. Summer is not quite as rainy as spring, though you may see some thunderstorms.

Fall is cool and comfortable in Rhode Island, with average temperatures ranging from 33°F to 78°F. Fall is also very dry, with little rain, especially compared to spring. If you're not a beach person, many of Rhode Island's other outdoor activities can be best enjoyed in the beautiful New England autumn.

Winter can get very cold, and Rhode Island does see occasional snow. Bring layers if you choose to visit in the winter — temperatures can range from 21°F to 46°F, and rarely fall much lower than 15°F.

Apps to Download

Waze: Traffic updates and directions
iOs | Android

Moovit: Public transit times and best routes
iOs | Android

OpenTable: Restaurant reservations and menu previews
iOs | Android

Popular in Travel Guide

Brooklyn Travel Guide
Article

Hilton Head Island Travel Guide
Article

Cape Cod Travel Guide
Article

Maine Travel Guide
Article

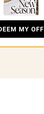
All Topics in Travel Guide

City Vacations

TRAVEL + LEISURE

Magazines & More

TRAVEL + LEISURE MAGAZINE
$1.00 an issue



REDEEM MY OFFER

Learn More

Subscribe
Contact Us
Advertise
Content Licensing
Sitemap
Travel Guide Sitemap

Connect

Follow Us

Subscribe to Our Newsletters

SIGN UP

OTHER TRAVEL + LEISURE SITES

OTHER MEREDITH SITES

meredith

Travel + Leisure is part of the Travel + Leisure Group. Copyright 2021 Meredith Corporation. Travel + Leisure is a registered trademark of Meredith Corporation Travel + Leisure Group All Rights Reserved, registered in the United States and other countries. Travel + Leisure may receive compensation for some links to products and services on this website. Offers may be subject to change without notice.

Privacy Policy | Terms of Service | Ad Choices | California Do Not Sell | Web Accessibility