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Holiday Celebrations in Coastal Rhode Island

Where to have a merry time by the seaside this holiday season.

Yankee Staff · November 29, 2021 · Add Comment

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When it comes to celebrating the holidays on the Rhode Island coast, the city of Newport always comes in for a fair bit of attention — what with its grand mansions decked to the hilt and quaint boutiques on cobblestone streets. And thanks to its monthlong roster of holiday events, visitors can make a festive getaway at any time leading up to Santa's Big Day (see more in *Yankee's* November/December 2019 cover feature, "[Christmas in Newport](#)").

But the Yuletide spirit also shines brightly in many of Newport's neighbors by the sea — close-knit towns like Bristol and North Kingstown — that put so much energy into making merry, it's worth saving the date so you can get in on the fun, too. With that in mind, here are some favorite holiday celebrations in coastal Rhode Island.

When a giant snowflake sparkles over Hope Street, it's Yule time in Bristol, RI.  
[Discover Newport](#)

### Holiday Celebrations in Coastal Rhode Island

**Bristol Christmas Festival | Bristol**  
Nov. 12 through December

Like Newport, Bristol believes in making the season last. Highlights include the Christmas Snow Ball on Nov. 12 (a grown-up evening that sees many guests dressed in their Dickensian finest) and the Grand Illumination on Dec. 4 (the official kickoff to the season, with a visit from Santa and the lighting of the town tree as well as the giant snowflake over Hope Street). The 2021 schedule is still being finalized, but judging from past lineups, Bristol's merchants, churches, schools, and arts groups will have plenty on tap this holiday season.

See the talents of local decorators on display at the historic Blithewold estate in Bristol.  
[Courtesy of Blithewold](#)

**Christmas at Blithewold | Bristol**  
Nov. 26–Jan. 9, 2021

For some people, Christmas isn't Christmas until they've wandered through a glittering holiday house. In Bristol, that house is the historic Blithewold estate, which each year transforms into a dazzling display celebrating the magic of the season. This year's theme is "Life in the Garden," which means local decorators will be drawing on the beauty of Blithewold's grounds for inspiration as they deck every room of the mansion. (Note: If shopping is more your style, don't miss Blithewold's Winter Marketplace on Nov. 24; preregistration is required.)

**Tree Lighting Ceremony and Christmas Village | Westerly**  
Nov. 27, 2021

Ignite the Christmas spirit at the annual tree lighting ceremony and Christmas Village at Watch Hill's own Ocean House. Enjoy shopping, caroling, complimentary cookies and cocoa, and fireworks. After Santa Claus makes his arrival on a firetruck, youngsters will have the opportunity to visit and take photos with the jolly old elf. Guests are kindly asked to bring an unwrapped toy for the hotel's holiday toy drive.

Kiddos ride along with Santa as he trades reindeer for carriage horses in downtown Wickford.  
[Via I Love Wickford Village on Facebook](#)

**Wickford Festival of Lights | North Kingstown**  
Dec. 2–5, 2021

Seeing Santa arrive by boat is just one reason to visit Wickford during this extra-long weekend festival. As this North Kingstown village is transformed into a winter wonderland by thousands of white lights, visitors can choose from a full slate of family-friendly activities: wagon rides, an elf parade, live entertainment, and more. Plus, most shops will stay open late for holiday gift browsing.

**Christmas at the Castle | North Kingstown**  
Dec. 4–5, 2021

Explore the c. 1678 Smith's Castle when it's all decked out for a celebration of Christmas past. Enjoy live music reminiscent of a bygone era, snap a photo with Father Christmas and Santa Bob, and fortify yourself with cookies and hot mulled cider. History buffs will not want to miss the chance to marvel at the award-winning restoration on display at this, one of the oldest houses in the state of Rhode Island.

**Holiday Faire | Narragansett**  
Dec. 4, 2021

Join in this townwide celebration with a walk around the artisan gift barn, Santa sightings, and ice skating with plenty of delicious food, live music, and more!

**Holiday Stroll & Luminaria | Westerly-Pawcatuck**  
Dec. 7, 2021

From 5 to 9 p.m., the streets of downtown come to life with the glow of countless sidewalk luminarias as well as with the energy of happy holiday makers. Enjoy a hayride with Santa while listening to strolling carolers, fortify yourself with hot chocolate and a cookie, and check out specials from downtown merchants and artists.

**Holiday Ramble | Charlestown**  
Dec. 11, 2021

Ring in the holiday season with local merriment and one-of-a-kind shopping throughout the village of Cross Mills in Charlestown. Events will include caroling, Santa's arrival on a firetruck, children's activities, and more.

Do you have a favorite holiday celebration in coastal Rhode Island? Let us know!

*This post was first published in 2019 and has been updated.*

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