

TOPIC: **TODAY**
From the Mar 2022 issue

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A Beach of One's Own | Spring Happiness at Napatree Point in Rhode Island

Happiness is an empty stretch of Rhode Island sand.

Ann Hood · February 22, 2022 · 1 Comment



★★★★★
5.00 avg. rating (86% score) - 1 vote



Sunset at Napatree Point in Westerly, Rhode Island.
Matt Andrew/Cavan Images

Because I grew up spending hot summer days on a crowded Rhode Island state beach—transistor radios blasting, strangers' blankets touching ours, salt air mixed with smells of Coppertone and fried clam cakes—as an adult I love out-of-the-way beaches, off-season. An empty beach, when the breeze is cool and the only sounds are waves and gulls, makes me happiest these days. I am lucky that my husband, Michael, feels the same and is my boon companion, lugging our beach chairs and picnics across endless stretches of sand.

That is how we came one Saturday last April to Westerly's Napatree Point, a long, gracefully curving elbow that looks out across the ocean to Block Island and Fishers Island. The weather had finally turned warmish; we needed our fleeces still, but not our mittens and hats, and we spent the afternoon doing what we like best: reading and eating and gazing, our feet buried in sand.

One of the perks of the beach in spring (or winter or fall) is free parking, and in Watch Hill, the part of Westerly where Napatree Point hides, this is especially wonderful. In summer, the narrow streets are jammed with cars and tourists, and parking is nearly impossible to find. But on this day, parking spaces were as plentiful as the spring sunshine. We carried our chairs and picnic across the street and then across a condominium's parking lot to the entrance at the mouth of the beach.

On one side, a long, calm stretch of sand facing away from the ocean. On the other, up a steep path and then down, the ocean side. Here waited, really, the perfect beach. A lone kite surfer skittered above the waves. Only a few people walked or lounged, the sounds of tired kids and mothers, partying teens, and barking dogs replaced by the waves crashing gently. To our right: driftwood and dunes. To our left: the water glistening.

Something happens to me when I step onto a beach in spring. All of the tensions of obligations big and small leave me. I mean, I *feel* them ooze out of me and blow away in the breeze. In their place is a calm and joy and rightness that comes, no doubt, from years and years of being by the ocean. From memories of diving headfirst into the waves and eating melting root beer Popsicles on a sandy blanket; of chasing my own kids across the sand and building sandcastles with plastic pails and Dixie cups; of quiet beach days filled with walks holding my husband's hand, then dropping into our brightly striped chairs and tilting our faces upward to meet a cool spring breeze or gray clouds or, like today, a warm sun.

That's what we did this day, grateful for this beautiful place. We walked its length and back, fleeces zipped. We sat, books open in our laps. We lifted our faces, smelled the salty air, listened to the crash of waves, closed our eyes.

"This is nice," Michael said. "Sand in our toes."

His hand found mine and held on tight. Summer, thankfully, still seemed a long way off.

For information on visiting Napatree Point, go to thewatchhillconservancy.org.

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Bill February 23, 2022

As a life long, 6 decade, native of the town, most of the time I cringe when I see a out of townner write an article about our slice of heaven BUT this article was so beautifully written it left a smile on my face and pride in my heart!

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