Beach and Quiet in Watch Hill, RI

Print PDF

View of Watch Hill Cove with the Ocean House on the left. Tab Hauser photos.

Watch Hill is a Great Escape for Boaters and the Wealthiest Vacationers

By Tab Hauser
Senior Writer

Watch Hill is a laid-back, small upscale beach and boating community located on the southwest tip of Rhode Island. It is surrounded by water on three sides that include the Atlantic Ocean / Block Island Sound, Pawcatuck River, and Little Narragansett Bay.

A two-hour drive from Boston and three hours from New York City, Watch Hill makes a perfect two-night stay.

Flying Horse Carousel in Watch Hill Rhode Island.

OUR LATEST TRAVEL VIDEOS

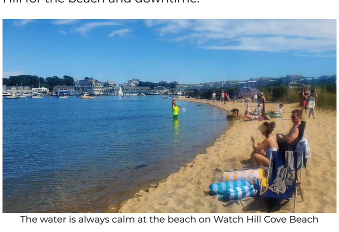
-10% -1% Shop on Houzz

As opposed to the more popular and bustling Newport, RI 35 miles to the east, Watch Hill has been said by the New York Times to be a "community with a strong sense of privacy and of discreetly used wealth"

Victorian Homes

While Newport has the over-the-top castle-like mansions, Watch Hill has its multi-generational sprawling restored Victorian homes. Watch Hill likes its comfort and luxury in a lower-key setting.

There are no theaters, concerts on the green, or things to do at night. You come to Watch Hill for the beach and downtime.



The water is always calm at the beach on Watch Hill Cove Beach

Watch Hill Beaches

There are a few places to enjoy the water in Watch Hill. **Napatree Point** is a narrow peninsular that stretches 1.5 miles into the Block Island Sound (everyone calls it the ocean). At one time it had homes stretching out to the end.

These were all blown off during the 1938 hurricane. Beach goers on Napatree can bob on the waves on the ocean or swim and float on the bay side. There are marked paths between the beaches.

To use the beach on Napatree you can pay $12 per adult to enter near the carousel. There you have some services including rental chairs and umbrellas. If you brought your chairs I would pass on paying the fee. Instead, walk to the end of Fort Road to the free conservation area entrance. From there you will walk about three minutes to the oceanside beach. The oceanside beach is better than the one on the bay.

For quieter and protected waters that are especially good for children, go to the top of **Watch Hill Cove** on the west side. To get there walk to the end of Fort Street and stay right after the Napatree entrance. You may see small speed boats at anchor by the sand with families enjoying themselves. For children, bring a net to capture and observe the little sea creatures here.

East Beach was our favorite place in the sand. It is located up the hill on Bluff Ave. You can access the beach past the road to the lighthouse or go past the Ocean House to another beach access.

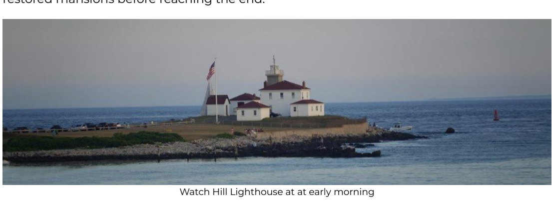
If you walk down the beach off Bluff Ave you will be between the Ocean House and Taylor Swift's 11,000-square-foot mansion above. If you enter past the Ocean House you will have fewer people around you.

East Beach with Taylor Swift's mansion on a hazy summer day

Things To See

The **Watch Hill Lighthouse** makes a nice stroll during the day or after dinner. It is a five-minute walk up the hill from Bay Street to Light House Road.

It is another five minutes on Light House Road where you will pass several pretty and restored mansions before reaching the end.



Watch Hill Lighthouse at at early morning

The Watch Hill Lighthouse has its history going back to 1745 when it was a tower and beacon. The present structure was built in 1856. Here you have sweeping views of the ocean ahead and the Ocean House Resort and Taylor Swift's home to the left.

The **Watch Hill Conservancy** offers free Saturday 9 AM nature walks on Napatree Point. (as mentioned in the Beach section above) A conservationist meets people at the end of Fort Road at the park's entrance.

Napatree nature walk

Adobe Stock
Get 25 free music tracks from Adobe Stock.
Start free trial

From here it is an easy 60 to 90-minute stroll stopping in different places to learn about the birds, flora, and things from the sea.

https://thewatchhillconservancy.org/napatree/experience-napatree/

Bay Street

The 600 feet of Bay Street is for retail therapy. Here you will find several fashionable boutiques, a pottery store, souvenir shops, a jewelry store, and a skincare shop. For the sweet tooth, there is a candy shop and ice cream shop. There are also a few places to eat here.

People gather on the Bay Street wall and lawn at sunset

A popular time to be on Bay Street is at sunset. Here you will find dozens of people sitting on the sea wall or grass enjoying the last moments of what was a fun day.

The Flying Horse Carousel built in 1876, and located at the end of Bay Street, is the only carousel of its type operating in the country. To ride it, children here are strapped onto a hand-carved wooden horse.

The horses are attached by swinging poles from the top giving the feeling of slowly flying around. Outer riders get a chance to pull the lucky brass ring. Note the real tails and manes on this movable piece of art.

Watch Hill Dining

Ocean Bistro's hot lobster roll with butter on the side, Yum!

Watch Hill in my opinion can use fewer boutiques and perhaps another restaurant or pub as dining is limited here if you stay more than a few days. Except for the Ocean Bistro, all the places named below are on Bay Street with in a few hundred feet of each other.

Ocean House Bistro was our splurge for a fine dining lunch before enjoying the beach on this side of Watch Hill. My New England clam chowder was not too thick and had the perfect amount of clams and bacon flavor.

On a recommendation, I also went for the lobster roll. This was served with large pieces of just steamed and picked apart lobster with hot butter on the side.

After lunch walk around this stunning old-world hotel-style resort. Admire its art, details on its interior, and views of Long Island and Block Island.

There are six good restaurants at Ocean House if you come back for dinner. They also have a lobster / seafood night and gourmet wine tasting dinners. Reservations are needed in season.

The Olympia Tea Room has been serving dinner in Watch Hill for over 100 years. There are many good drinks to pick from their craft cocktail menu to start. The food here is continental with a push on seafood.

We enjoyed the steam clams' starter, baked haddock, and their pasta dishes. Leave room for their tart and tasty Key Lime Pie. They don't take reservations. http://www.olympiatearoom.com

The Watch Hill Yacht Club is an imposing three-story building in the cove. The dining room here has a commanding view of the boats and sunset. We found the food very good and service very friendly on two visits. Dining is a little complicated here as you are supposed to be a member of a reciprocal yacht club.

Jackets are required in the main dining area so we sat at the corner tables that are first come, first serve and have a relaxed attire requirement. https://www.whyc.net/

The Bay Street Deli is a good spot for a quick sandwich. Try their Rhode Island clam chowder. Rhode Island chowder uses a seafood broth as opposed to cream based for New England style or tomato-based for Manhattan clam chowder

A sandwich and a sunset make a nice evening

-10% -1% Shop on Houzz

Ten Sandwiches is just as the name states. They make ten sandwiches along with salads and in the evening flatbreads. They have a cozy bar with a good selection of Tequila.

The St. Clair Annex has been around for over 125 years. This is the place in Watch Hill to try one of the many house-made flavors of ice cream.

Watch Hill Lodging

The premier five-star destination in Watch Hill is the **Ocean House**. This is a large and imposing yellow Victorian-style waterfront resort. Its history goes back to 1868.

The Ocean House is a classy and pricey boutique-style resort with only 49 guest rooms and 20 large suites. When entering its front doors we noticed croquette players in their dress whites playing on the side lawn.

The hotel was torn down and rebuilt in 2010 retaining much of its original looks and character both on the outside and inside.

This includes large porches where you can see Block and Long Island on a clear day. While here walk the entire resort and enjoy the art.

The Ocean House sits in front of a large white sand beach where its guests have use of chairs and umbrellas. There is plenty of staff for anything you need. During our beach time, they walked around with sample mango smoothies to keep cool. https://www.oceanhouseri.com/

The Victorian style Ocean House Resort

For lower-priced beachside accommodations, you can stay a few miles east in Misquamicut, RI. Watch Hill also makes an excellent day trip.

When in the area consider taking an afternoon stroll in the pretty village of Stonington, Ct, or spend a couple of days in Newport, RI

Take a relaxing cruise on an antique boat

Adobe Stock
Get 25 free music tracks from Adobe Stock.
Start free trial

Antique boats over 70 years old can be seen on the Watch Hill docks

You Might Enjoy Reading These GoNOMAD Articles:

Newport's Holiday Happenings Fall and Winter
Providence: Benefit Street: An Amazing Architectural...
Newport Rhode Island: Two New Hotels

Tab Hauser

Tab Hauser is from Long Island's North Shore. When not at home he is embracing his passions by combining travel, photography, boating, and writing. Tab has been to seven continents and over 65 countries. Find him on Facebook @TabHauser

tabhauser.com

We have exciting news! We started the GoNOMAD Podcast, a short-form travel podcast about travel trends, destinations and all things travel. We hope you will give it a listen and if you like a little travel fun every morning, please click here to subscribe.

-10% -1% -1% Shop on Houzz

Got a comment? Share it below!

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

COMMENT *

NAME * EMAIL *

POST COMMENT

Recommended for You — Outbrain

[Pics] At 58, This Is Courteney Cox's Net Worth — Sponsored | Health Clipboard
Full Dose, LED neon sign by Jonathan Adler — Pop this pill shaped neon sign up on the... — Sponsored | YellowPop US — Buy Now
Navidium Shipping Protection - 0.75 — Sponsored | YellowPop US — Buy Now
Men, You Don't Need The Blue Pill If You Do This Once A Day — Sponsored | iamhealth.life
Explore the moments that unite us. Discuss, Collect, & Share — Join Our Community — Sponsored | Vault by CNN — Join Now
[Photos] At 85, Robert Redford Lives In This Modest House With His Partner — Sponsored | TheDecorIdeas
Top 10 Best Nude Beaches In The World
Germany: Nude Spas Not For The Faint Of Heart
Absolutely no regrets by Madonna, LED neon sign - Light blue — Sponsored | YellowPop US — Buy Now
Brazilian Bum Bum Cream - 25ml — Sponsored | Sol de Janeiro — Shop Now
No Surgery No Chemicals! Reverse Hair Loss Naturally in 30 Days — Sponsored | myhealthyhabit.co
Ark Of Noah: Netherlands To Brazil
New Orleans' High-tech World War II Museum

Adobe Stock — Get 3 free HD videos from Adobe Stock. — Start free trial

Search

MEET US IN BRNO, CZECHIA, SEPT 13-15 FOR TRAVERSE 22!

POTTERY BARN — SHOP DECOR

MOST POPULAR TRAVEL STORIES THIS MONTH

Drive-In Movie Theaters Are Alive and Well in South Dakota
Kentucky's Natural Bridge by Motorcycle
Saudi Arabia with Zero Tourists: Tabuk, Tayma & Al Hufuf
Southeast Montana's Burger Trail and Badlands
Authentic Adventures at Rancho Cacachilas Baja California Sur
San Juan's Warmth and Vibrant Night Life
Butterfly Lovers Flock to East Coast Gardens

COX — Essential Internet plans. Every day low price. $49.99/mo. No annual contract. Includes Panoramic Wifi. Up to 100 Mbps included. Learn more

SELECT DESTINATION
Select Category

Sponsored by Gilead Sciences
First Step: Treat Your Hep C
Hear from real people who had Hep C and got cured. Today's treatments have high success rates, so don't wait to take the next steps. Talk to your healthcare provider to learn more.
LEARN MORE

Shop on Houzz

© GoNOMAD Travel 2022

AN ELITE CAFEMEDIA LIFESTYLE PUBLISHER

Adobe Creative Cloud for teams — Upgrade your plan. And your brand. — See how