

# PureWow

## Why Newport, Rhode Island Is the Cozy (& Family-Friendly) Winter Getaway You Didn't Know You Needed

YES, THERE'S MORE TO DO THAN VISITING THE MANSIONS



By Rachel Bowie • Published Feb 21, 2024



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It's easy to associate Newport, Rhode Island with summer—the waterside views, the walkability, its reputation as the “sailing capital of the world.” But we’ll let you in on a little secret: The colder months offer an equally enjoyable (and less crowded) experience that still comes with plenty to see and do. The restaurant scene alone is worth a visit, but there’s also plenty of boutique-hopping and museum-exploring to experience. And while the weather may be brisker, you can still easily get out on the water. (During a recent stay, we did!)

The best part? It's all set against a backdrop featuring quaint streets, colonial-era buildings and a harbor that, from every angle, sparkles in the sun. Here, why this New England hamlet has everything you need for a picturesque winter weekend getaway.



## Where to Stay

The [Brenton Hotel](#) is relatively new in Newport (it opened in July 2020) and centrally located so that you can walk to most destinations on your itinerary while in town. (That said, valet parking is also an option.) The boutique—and luxury—property offers 57 rooms and suites, many of which offer floor-to-ceiling views of Newport’s waterfront. (The natural light, especially in the wintertime, is space-warming and spectacular.)

A few of our favorite amenities: The in-room seating area in our standard king-sized room made the [450-square foot room](#) feel extra-large. Additionally, it was a thrill to be able to pop to the “ice room” and access the hotel’s complimentary dessert bar, open 24/7, which was fully stocked with ice cream sandwiches, Hoodsie cups and more. We also spent more than our fair share of time in the [Living Room](#), a name that aptly fits the cozy and chair-filled design of the Brenton’s lobby restaurant and bar that offers waterside views and Wi-Fi. (We highly recommend the avocado toast for breakfast.)

For those traveling with kids, FYI: the Brenton may not have its own pool, but via a partnership with the [Newport Marriott](#) (located directly out its backdoor), you can easily pick up a pool pass at the front desk, then walk over and dive in.





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## How to Get Around

One of the best things about a stay in Newport is how walkable it all is. The location of the Brenton helped, but we found the downtown area—including all the restaurants, shopping and sightseeing—quite easy to navigate by foot. In fact, even in the cold, we walked almost everywhere.

Depending on where you're traveling from, it's worth noting that Newport is about a 35-minute drive from T.F. Green International Airport in Providence. We'd recommend either taking a cab or exploring car rental options. (We're huge fans of [Turo](#) for this, a car rental marketplace that offers a range of vehicles from trusted, local hosts, so you can choose the car that best suits your family size and travel needs. It also has plenty of options in the Providence/Newport area.)



## Where to Eat

Newport's culinary scene offers a range of options that feel both low-key and luxe. It was surprising how kid-friendly they were, too, even on a bustling Saturday night in the city where there wasn't a single table to spare at the eateries we chose. (Newport's dining scene actually seems to cater to kids—nearly every restaurant offered more than just the typical coloring book-style menu and crayons; they instead offer Wikki Stix, a parent favorite for keeping little ones entertained.)

About that aforementioned Saturday night meal: We had a corner table for three at Bar 'Cino and it was at full capacity even at the early bird hour of 5:30 p.m. The place is known for its pizza and pasta, but we mixed things up adding the Statler Chicken Breast to our order and savored every bite. (It also features shallots, capers and scallions with a side of EVOO mashed potatoes and asparagus—the perfect warm-you-up kind of meal.) For pizza, we did try out Mother Pizzeria and were delighted by their Roman-style sourdough pies—not to mention the cacio e pepe garlic knots. (Actually, we ended up requesting a second order of those.) At Mother, the drinks recommendations were so good, my spouse ended up chatting extensively with the beverage director and later tracking down the bottle of Vermouth he tried, which—in spritz form—was paired with elderflower and bubbles.

Other restaurants worth stopping at: We loved the ambiance (and tacos) at La Vecina Taqueria, which also happens to be an easy and low-key lunch spot. For a seafood experience, the Mooring is located right along the wharf and is a terrific spot for a lobster roll. (It's also tough to beat those marina views.)



## What to Do

OK, it's true: There are numerous mansions to see and tour—and it is one of the main reasons to visit Newport. (In the winter, it's worth peeping the visitor openings in case any of the hours have shifted.) But we found plenty to do that was a little more off the beaten path while still taking in pristine views of American history, too.

First, there was a cannot-be-missed stop at the [Sailing Museum](#), which puts visitors directly in the driver's seat (captain's chair?) as they learn what it takes to navigate the choppy seas aboard a sailing vessel. What was most unique is that your visit is personalized—a barcoded slap bracelet means that your journey through the museum is full of experiences that are tailor-made to you. (For example, name and design your boat upon entry and it's the exact same boat you'll later race in a digitized regatta-style event.) For kids in particular, this museum is incredibly hands-on. They'll get to hoist a sail, test their agility and more. Prepare to spend quite a bit of time here.

More sights to be seen during a winter weekend: the [Tennis Hall of Fame](#) has more memorabilia (and nostalgia) than you could ever imagine. We also managed to make it out on the water for a seal and harbor tour offered by [Coastal Queen Cruises](#). The boats offer indoor heated areas, but we still recommend properly bundling up so that you can pop out on the deck to see the seals without any view interruptions. It's also worth noting the value of these harbor cruises from a history capacity—our guide pointed out so much Newport history as we traversed the harbor for two hours. Our favorite sight? [St. Mary's Church where John F. Kennedy famously wed Jackie in 1953](#).



Finally, if you must visit the mansions, take the scenic route. We squeezed in a jaunt along the Cliff Walk, a three-and-a-half-mile stretch that places the best of the Gilded Age mansions on one side, panoramic ocean views on the other. For this, we departed from the Chanler Inn, a stunning and waterfront retreat in the form of a five-star hotel. This time of year, they offer cups of hot cider to go, the perfect accompaniment for a brisk—and beautiful—winter walk.



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## Bottom Line

Yes, Newport is a warm and welcoming summer locale—but its beauty and pleasures can be enjoyed year-round. We can't wait to go back.