

# The Week Ender

# South County



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**Why we love South County:**

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- The freshest seafood (don't sleep on the chowder).

On our last WeekEnd escape, we stopped and smelled the flowers in Pennsylvania's [Brandywine Valley](#). This weekend, we're heading to Rhode Island's [South County](#) to tiptoe through the tulips (sorry, couldn't resist), chill on the beach, explore the nature preserves, and eat the freshest seafood.

South County stretches along 100 miles of Rhode Island coastline, encompassing 449 square miles in the southernmost part of the state. We've already spent a weekend in one of South County's best-known towns: [Westerly](#) (where Taylor Swift has a beach house). On this WeekEnd getaway, we're taking a deeper dive and exploring the other little towns throughout this pretty slice of Rhode Island.



*Keriann & Jeroen Koeman (L), MoMo Camara (R)*

One of the big draws in spring is [Wicked Tulips](#), the country's first U-pick tulip farm. It's the creation of Rhode Island native Keriann Koeman (who calls herself a "green girl") and her husband Jeroen Koeman (who comes from a Dutch family of tulip growers). They opened this farm in Exeter, where you can pick tulips, buy bulbs, and do yoga, dance, and enjoy music surrounded by the colorful blossoms. Jeroen says they were attracted by all this area has to offer. "You can find hikes and walks that are breathtaking, and if you're into birdwatching, the nature preserves are perfect," he says. "We also love the close proximity to some of the most beautiful beaches."

This setting is also what fuels chef [MoMo Camara](#)—who grew up on the Ivory Coast and has lived and worked everywhere from New York City to New Orleans. He moved to South County last year to open [The Kitchen at The Surf Shack](#), where he's made a name for himself by blending local ingredients with flavors from French Polynesia, Southeast Asia, Japan, China, and Korea. "What I love about South County is the ocean. The beach is my favorite place to spend a relaxing morning or even a late-night swim after work," says Camara. "The food scene is also pretty amazing and only getting better."

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*Kevin Durfee (L), Jackie & David Moore (R)*

Speaking of the food scene, another big local name is Kevin Durfee, a life-long resident of Narragansett and third-generation owner of [George's of Galilee](#), one of the oldest restaurants in the state. This restaurant's claim to fame? It put Rhode Island's clear clam chowder on the map. Durfee says he loves South County because it has a completely different vibe than the rest of the state. "Even though Rhode Island is the smallest state and you can drive through it in 45 minutes, South County seems much farther away," he says. "It has a much more relaxed atmosphere."

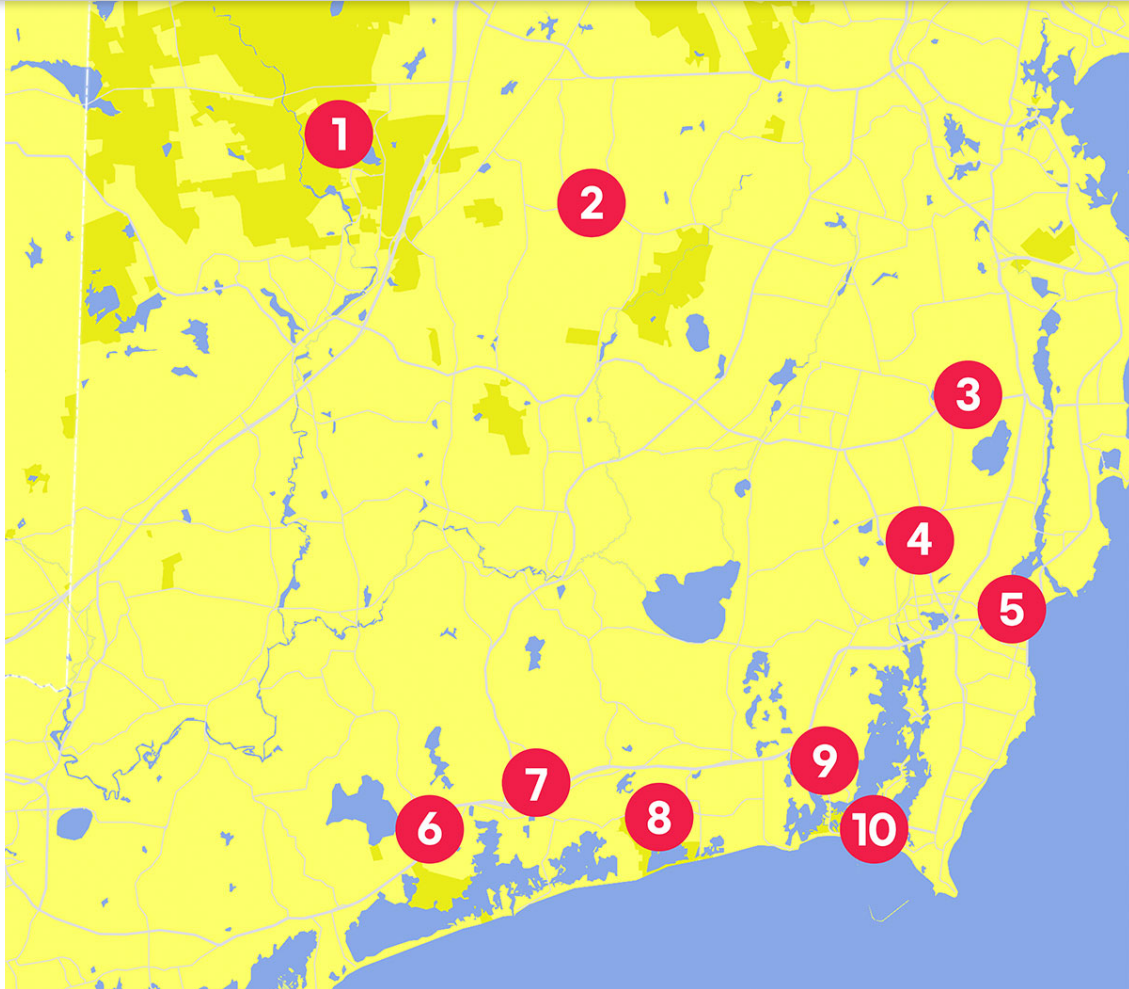
And when you're ready to relax, you might consider the 280-year-old [General Stanton Inn](#), which has hosted four U.S. presidents, including George Washington. The inn is now owned by David Moore, another South County native, and his wife, Jackie. They moved away for a bit but were lured back. "The ocean here is magnetic. It sets your mind and your soul at ease," he says. "Life takes you in different directions, professionally. We were semi-retired and looking for a project, so we bought this 1740 inn, which needed major repairs, and overhauled it. We jumped in with both feet."

We're jumping in with both feet, too, ready to explore South County.

*[-Laura Begley Bloom](#), New York's Senior WeekENDER Writer*

## Map of the area





1. Tomaquag Museum
2. Wicked Tulips
3. The Farmer's Daughter
4. Whalers Brewing Company
5. The Surf Shack
6. Ninigret Park
7. General Stanton Inn
8. Trustum Pond National Wildlife Refuge
9. Matunuck Oyster Bar
10. George's of Galilee

## Where to stay

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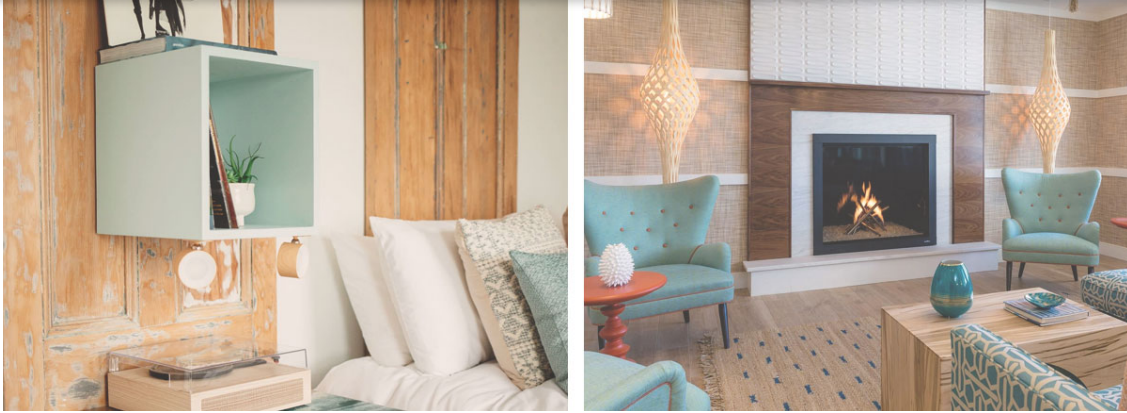


*General Stanton Inn*

If you're into small hotels with tons of charm, you'll be spoiled for choice in South County.

**For history buffs:** [General Stanton Inn in Charlestown](#) - This 1740 inn has had several lives: It's been a stagecoach stop, an underground railroad safehouse, an off-the-books gambling spot, and a speakeasy during prohibition. "It's a fascinating old building where the wood beams are exposed and it feels like you're walking through time," says Moore. The property now has 15 luxurious guest rooms, five dining rooms, and a weekend jazz brunch.

**For Instagrammers:** [The Surf Shack in Narragansett](#) - There are plenty of photo ops at this cool new hotel just steps from Narragansett Beach with onsite bike and surfboard rentals. "It's a beautiful bed-and-breakfast with six newly renovated and well-appointed modern rooms and a chic beach vibe," says Camara.



*The Surf Shack (L), The Break Hotel (R)*

**For sweethearts:** [The Break Hotel in Narragansett](#) - Every room has a gas fireplace at this ocean-inspired spot with an outdoor sauna and a year-round heated pool. “The ocean view from their restaurant, Chair 5, is stunning—perfect to catch the sunset,” says Camara.

**For serenity seekers:** [Shepherd's Run in South Kingstown](#) - “This gorgeous inn has a great spa and beautiful rooms,” says Camara. “The property is very tranquil and is my go-to when I want to hide away and relax.”

**For an affordable stay:** [The Anchor Motel in Narragansett](#) - We love a funky motel that doesn't try too hard, and that's what you'll get at this old-school spot right across from the beach.

## Where to eat

With 100 miles of shoreline, South County puts seafood front and center. But some creative chefs are also adding global and Indigenous flavors to the mix.

### Best breakfasts



*Queen of Cups*

**[Dave's Coffee](#) in Charlestown** - "Dave's breakfast sandwiches and coffee are the best. I love to stop there on my way to the beach and our son, Kees, loves their chocolate chip sea salt cookies," says Keriann. "You can take the food to go or sit in their magical garden."

**[South County Bread Company](#) in Wakefield** - "I treat myself to their danishes and ham and cheese croissant," says Camara. "They make everything there—it's amazing."

**[Queen of Cups](#) in Narragansett** - Get your caffeine fix at this artisanal coffee shop right on the Narragansett Pier. "I always start my day with coffee at Queen of Cups," says Camara. Don't miss the homemade spin on Pop-Tarts in flavors like white chocolate raspberry and peach pie.

**[Hungry Haven](#) in Charlestown** - Right around the corner from the General Stanton, this is Moore's go-to for breakfast when he's not eating at his own inn. "It's a diner-style spot with every type of egg you can imagine, homemade jams, and pancakes," says Moore.

## Lunchtime

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*Breachway Grill (L), Crazy Burger (R)*

**Breachway Grill in Charlestown** - “They’ve got real nice pizzas,” says Moore, who recommends the Greedy Meaty with pepperoni, sausage, bacon, and meatballs.

**Crazy Burger in Narragansett** - Craving a burger? There are options for vegans, vegetarians, and meat lovers alike.

**Ocean Mist in Wakefield** - This beachside pub delivers on all fronts—it kicks off the day with breakfast, serves up solid eats for lunch and dinner (tacos, grilled flatbread pizzas), does double duty as a beach bar, then transforms into a nightclub and concert venue. “An icon to the area. It has incredible music, great bar food, and is virtually on top of the ocean,” says Sarah Cooper, owner of Westerly’s Margin Street Inn (keep reading for her shopping tips).

## **Global flavors**



*The Kitchen at The Surf Shack*

**[The Kitchen at The Surf Shack in Narragansett](#)** - Camara combines influences from around the globe in dishes like the fan favorite Mo's Dan-Dan Clams, a mildly spicy udon noodle dish with a Chinese mala chili sauce base, coconut milk, and Manila clams topped with peanuts. According to Camara, the crispy pork belly steam buns and lamb ribs are also crowd-pleasers.

**[Jayd Bun in South Kingstown](#)** - Husband-and-wife team Annie and Joe Parisi serve the handmade comfort food that Annie grew up with in Tianjin, China. The restaurant's trademark dishes are the pan-fried buns and noodles prepared with dough made daily.

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**[Sly Fox Den in Charlestown](#)** - Chef-owner Sherry Pocknett, a member of the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe, won a 2023 James Beard Award for her Native American fusion food. The ingredients change according to what's in season (venison, eel, pheasant). And don't miss the fry bread, used in tacos, strawberry shortcake, and more.

## Seafood shacks



*George's of Galilee (L), Monahan's Clam Shack (R)*

**[George's of Galilee in Narragansett](#)** - You thought New England and Manhattan chowder were good? Wait till you try the clear broth Rhode Island chowder—and this is the place. The restaurant—which overlooks the fishing port of Galilee—is also committed to serving sustainable seafood caught right nearby.

**[Monahan's Clam Shack in Narragansett](#)** - Locals say this clam shack in a converted gas station right on the Narragansett seawall has the best lobster rolls in the area.

**[Aunt Carrie's in Narragansett](#)** - For more than 100 years, this family-owned spot has been serving up fried seafood by sea—including its legendary clam cakes.

## Date night





*Matunuck Oyster Bar*

**[Coast Guard House in Narragansett](#)** - This former Coast Guard station was turned into a seafood restaurant in the 1940s, and it's been an institution ever since. "It's a beautiful, fine-dining, multi-tiered restaurant," says Moore, who worked here in college. "It's on the ocean and the views are spectacular."

**[Purslane in Wakefield](#)** - This new brick-and-mortar spot is from the owners of a popular local food truck, with small shareable plates that change with the seasons. "Their drinks are just as imaginative and delicious as the food," says Camara.

**[Matunuck Oyster Bar in Wakefield](#)** - A true farm-to-table experience: The oysters are grown in the pond right outside and the vegetables come from a nearby farm. You can even book an oyster farm tour and learn all about aquaculture. "We try to get there once a week for a date night," says Jeroen. "Keriann loves the Matunuck Martini with their fresh local oysters, and I enjoy a local IPA with the fish and chips."

**[General Stanton Inn in Charlestown](#)** - The only fine-dining spot in Charlestown was named best new restaurant in South County in 2023 by *Rhode Island Monthly* readers. There are five dining rooms, including a tavern and a prohibition room built in the 1920s. According to Moore, people love the Portuguese cod (served with chorizo, little neck clams, and tomatoes), the baked oysters (with caramelized fennel and sambuca cream sauce), and the burger (topped with a secret sauce).

## Drinks

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*Georges Beach Tiki (L), Whalers Brewing Company (R)*

**Georges Beach Tiki in Narragansett** - Durfee built this beachside tiki bar as a place for people to go during the pandemic. “Being outdoors with your toes in the sand having a tiki beverage was just what people needed,” says Durfee. “It’s still here, and it’s one of the best things to do in the summer.”

**Whalers Brewing Company in Wakefield** - This microbrewery known for its artisan ales has tours with samples—or grab a growler to go. Moore’s brew of choice is the Rise, a pale ale-style craft beer.

**Sons of Liberty in South Kingstown** - Sample this distillery’s house-made craft whiskeys and its flagship beer, Chair 2 (another favorite of Moore’s), which was named the best light lager in the U.S. at the 2021 World Beer Awards.

## Sweets



*Greenline Apothecary*

**Greenline Apothecary in Wakefield** - "I have a sweet tooth, and the Greenline Apothecary has a shake/soda fountain bar inside that has amazing ice cream," says Camara.

## What to do

On the water

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*Narragansett Beach (L), Narrow River Kayaks (R)*

From 20 ocean beaches to a seven-mile long tidal inlet called the Narrow River, there are plenty of ways to get out on the water. And the geography has something to do with what makes it so great here: “Because our coastline faces south, our beaches are among the finest in the world,” says Moore. (Yes, it’s a thing—southern-facing beaches tend to get more sun exposure and have warmer waters.)

**[Narragansett Beach](#) in Narragansett** - An easy stroll from Narragansett Pier, this mile-long stretch is a classic—popular with surfers, thanks to its gentle break. “Whenever I have the time, the Narragansett town beach is great for relaxing and getting some good surf in as well,” says Camara.

**[Charlestown Town Beach](#) in Charlestown** - “The beach is wide, the sand is fine, the water is phenomenal—both for surfers and for people who love to swim in the ocean,” says Moore. “And you get the added benefit of amazing stargazing over the ocean.”

**[Peter Pan Surf and Stand-Up Paddleboard Academy](#) in Narragansett** - Surf champion Peter Panagiotis (aka Peter Pan) is an icon in these parts—and he loves showing people how to ride the waves. “You’ve got to take a surf lesson with this Hall of Fame surfer,” says Durfee.

**[Narrow River Kayaks](#) in Narragansett** - This kayak outfitter will take you out on the Narrow River, a peaceful tidal estuary. “You can kayak all the way up the river to Gilbert Stuart’s birthplace (the painter who painted the pic of George Washington that is on the one-dollar bill),” says Durfee.

## On land



*Wicked Tulips*

Tulip farms, wildlife preserves, hiking trails—here are a few of South County’s highlights.

**[Wicked Tulips in Exeter](#)** - Holland, eat your heart out—there are tulips in every direction here when spring goes into overdrive. “We opened the country’s first U-pick tulip farm with the goal of sharing the extraordinary beauty of nature with others,” says Keriann. Be sure to book a photo session—trust us, it’s worth it.

**[Trustom Pond National Wildlife Refuge in South Kingstown](#)** - When Moore is looking for a breath of fresh air, he heads to this 787-acre refuge with fields, shrublands, woodlands, fresh and saltwater ponds, and sandy beaches and dunes.

**[Ninigret National Wildlife Refuge in Charlestown](#)** - This former World War II air base has been transformed into a refuge that protects endangered birds, their nests, and their eggs. There are also six miles of hiking trails to explore.

**[Long and Ell Pond Trail in Hopkinton](#)** - “A hidden gem that’s especially lovely in the spring

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## Arts and culture



*Tomaquag Museum (L), Theatre By The Sea (R)*

If you want to take in local history, avant-garde culture, or serious summer stock theater, you're in luck.

**[Tomaquag Museum](#) in Exeter** - You can learn about the state's original inhabitants at one of the oldest tribal museums in the country, which also showcases Native American objects from across the continent.

**[Ninigret Park](#) in Charlestown** - This local park doubles as a cultural destination. Coming on May 5: two massive troll sculptures by internationally renowned recycle artist Thomas Dambo. And at night the Frosty Drew Observatory is a great way to view the night sky. "Very few people get the opportunity to go into a real observatory with a high power telescope and see the Milky Way, every nook and cranny on the moon, and the rings around Saturn," says Moore.

**[Theatre By The Sea](#) in Matunuck** - In the summer months, check out this historic theater and playhouse in a converted barn. "People like Clark Gable and Talullah Bankhead came through here back in the day," says Moore. "And it still has shows with polished actors and actresses."

## Shopping





### *The Farmer's Daughter*

In our Westerly issue, we introduced you to the stylish [Margin Street Inn](#), set in a pair of historic houses on the banks of the Pawcatuck River. Now we've asked co-owner Sarah Cooper to share a few of her favorite South County shopping spots.

[Dove and Distaff in Wakefield](#) - Looking to give your home a coastal overhaul? Cooper recommends this home decor store with rugs, bedding, throw pillows, and more.

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sculptures since 1974.

**[Kosmic Kitty in Wakefield](#)** - Cooper heads to this eclectic boutique and consignment shop “for funky women’s clothing.”

**[The Farmer’s Daughter in South Kingstown](#)** - You don’t need to have a green thumb to appreciate this garden store with landscape displays, a produce market, and a gift shop. “It’s the most amazing garden center experience,” says Cooper.

**[South County Center for the Arts in West Kingston](#)** - “For local art treasures,” says Cooper.

### Getting there

Narragansett is one of the main towns in South County, **[about two-and-a-half hours](#)** by car from Midtown Manhattan, depending on traffic.

### Pit stop

Getting hungry along the drive? New Haven makes an excellent halfway stop en route to South County. We recommend **[Frank Pepe Pizzeria](#)** for the iconic clam pizza and **[Louis’ Lunch](#)**, where many claim the hamburger was invented.

### Listen

**[“The Tortured Poets Department”](#)** - This is Taylor Swift country, so you know you need to get her latest album as soon as it drops on April 19.

## Weekend plans. Shared.

**[Send](#)** The WeekEnder to your favorite road trip pal.



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