

AFAR

7 Of the Most Beautiful Beaches in Rhode Island

The Ocean State's beaches are still a well-kept secret. The state might be small, but there's a sandy getaway spot for almost everyone here.



Rhode Island's beaches, like the Ocean State itself, tend to be a bit overlooked. Cape Cod gets more attention as the New England beach destination, and although the city of Newport is famous for summer fun, Gilded Age mansions and yacht culture tend to overshadow the state's shimmering sands.

While Connecticut's beaches are placid affairs on the sheltered Long Island Sound, and Massachusetts's South Shore beaches tend to be more rocky and rugged, Rhode Island claims long swaths of shoreline facing the waves of the Atlantic, as well as calmer bay beaches. It may be a small state, but [Little Rhody](#) has a beach to suit anyone—even if most locals would thank you for not letting everyone in on it. Plus, having a relatively small state to work with has its advantages: a number of beaches (and state parks if you're looking to hike) are within an hour's drive of Providence. We pulled together some of the most popular beaches—some with miles of coastline, others with picnic areas and boardwalks, all with saltwater and soft sand to dig your toes into—to get your planning kickstarted.



1. Watch Hill Beach, Westerly

Admission: Parking is \$50 per car; [\\$12 admission per person](#) | [Reserve a parking spot here](#)

Spots like the [Ocean House hotel](#) and the [beachfront mansion of singer Taylor Swift](#) have brought national attention to the village of Watch Hill. But this far southwestern coastal community in the town of Westerly has been luring summer visitors since the 19th century, thanks to its broad, sandy beach, quaint shops, and renowned [Flying Horses Carousel](#). (On this unique, kids-only merry-go-round, riders “fly” outward as the carousel turns.) The Ocean House’s veranda and Seaside Terrace are open to visitors and guests alike for upscale seafood and casual beach dining, respectively. Take a walk into town for sunset drinks and a dinner of seafood or pasta at the century-old [Olympia Tea Room](#) or for ice cream at [St. Clair Annex](#), which has been making and dishing it out since 1887. Stretch your legs on a 1.5-mile walk from Fort Road to Napatree Point, a narrow peninsula where you’ll find seabirds, deer, and other wildlife living amid the ruins of a former artillery battery.

Know before you go: There are rentals (beach chairs and umbrellas) available at the beach. Additionally, there is a bathhouse that’s open for members and limited guest passes with changing rooms and restrooms. During the summer, there are also lifeguards on duty.



2. Misquamicut Beach, Westerly

Admission: Parking is \$6 Monday–Friday, \$10 on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays; a season pass is \$30

The three-mile-long [Misquamicut Beach](#) is everything you could want for a day of sunning and surfing—and even more if you love to just relax on the sand. As the first big ocean beach north of Connecticut, Misquamicut is one of the most popular beaches in the state and attracts locals, day-trippers, and summer renters. Beach bars like [Paddy's Beach Club](#) (check its schedule for live music) and the [Windjammer Surf Bar](#) attract lively crowds; the latter is adjacent to the family-friendly [Atlantic Beach Park](#), which has a 1915 carousel, kiddie rides, a snack bar, and an ice cream stand. For more all-ages entertainment, across the street is the [Water Wizz](#) water park. It's more than you can do in a day, but small hotels like the [Pleasant View Inn](#) and the [Breezeway](#) make it easy to extend your stay.

Know before you go: There are bathrooms on the beach. Guests can also use the playground, picnic tables, outdoor showers, gazebos, and concessions. In addition, three beach wheelchairs are available for free on a first come, first served basis. This is one of

the most popular state beaches, so the paid parking lot fills up fast during the summer months.



3. East State Beach, Charlestown

Admission: Parking is \$6 Monday–Friday, \$10 on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays; a season pass is \$30

This three-mile barrier beach is about as far in character from the sometimes-raucous vibe of Misquamicut as you can get. [East State Beach](#) is a bit off the beaten path and there's only one way in and out, making it the quietest of Rhode Island's state beaches. Stretching along Quonochontaug Neck on the south side of Ninigret Pond, the beach dead-ends at the inlet of the Charlestown Breachway. Plop down your beach blanket here and you'll have the seemingly endless Atlantic in front of you and the undeveloped [Ninigret National Wildlife Refuge](#) at your back. For even more solitude, drive your 4x4 vehicle onto the East Beach Sand Trail and pitch a tent at one of 20 campsites for a toes-in-the-sand night under the stars; it's one of the darkest spots between New York and Boston.

Know before you go: At one of the state's less developed stretches of sand, parking is very limited. There are six changing rooms on site. A lifeguard is also on duty during the summer. There are no beach-compliant wheelchairs on site to borrow.



4. Narragansett Town Beach, Narragansett

Admission: Parking is \$6 Monday–Friday, \$10 on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays; a season pass is \$30

In a state known for its beautiful beaches, laid-back [Narragansett Town Beach](#) has a broad, golden arc of coastline with reliable waves that attract surfers from far and wide across the eastern seaboard. You'll find most of the surfers at the south end of the beach by the seawall, families and sunbathers clustered in the middle, and adventurous beachgoers walking north toward the mouth of the tidal Pettaquamscutt (Narrow) River, which forms a broad sandbar where it meets Narragansett Bay. [Warm Winds](#) and the [Narragansett Surf and Skate Shop](#) offer surfing lessons, and dining options within walking distance range from [Monahan's Clam Shack](#) to the elegant [Coast Guard House](#) with its popular roof deck for after-beach libations. We recommend biking to Narragansett via the eight-mile [South County Bike Path](#) rather than dealing with the beach traffic.

Know before you go: In addition to accessible parking (standard parking fees apply), there are two beach wheelchairs available to use for free. You'll also find large changing rooms on the beach and accessible showers. Don't be afraid to work up an appetite in the water—there are seasonal concession stands. Lifeguards are on duty during summer months.



5. Sachuest Beach, Middletown

Admission: Parking is \$20 Monday–Friday, \$30 on weekends and holidays, and \$15 for motorcycles and scooters

South-facing [Sachuest Beach](#) (aka Second Beach) has views of the eminently Instagrammable Gothic chapel of St. George's School, plus waves steady enough to attract surfers to the aptly named Surfer's End on the northern part of the beach. Local families and summer visitors love it as an alternative to Newport's busier Easton's Beach, less than 10 minutes away. Along this one-mile crescent of sand, you'll find a campground, a surf school, and a concession stand selling typical beach fare like burgers and hot dogs (though you might do better at the food trucks that occasionally set up in the parking lot). Continue south and you'll walk onto the [Sachuest Point National](#)

[Wildlife Refuge](#), a favorite of bird-watchers. On the opposite side of the point is the even-less-populated Third Beach if you're looking for calmer waters for the kids; the [Norman Bird Sanctuary](#), with seven miles of hiking trails, is under five minutes away by car.

Know before you go: With limited parking, it's best to get to this beach early in the day—or off-season. Don't worry: You can still access the beach if the parking lot is full. In addition to bathrooms, there are outdoor showers and lifeguards on duty during the summer. To access the wheelchairs available for use, ask the parking lot attendant for more information.



6. Goosewing Beach, Little Compton

Admission: Parking is \$20 per day on weekdays, \$25 per day on the weekends

Goosewing Beach in the East Bay town of Little Compton sits between Quicksand Pond and the Atlantic, providing a home for seabirds like the least tern and piping plover. With a mix of sandy and rocky sections, the beach backs onto high dunes and cliffs and is part of the Nature Conservancy's 75-acre [Goosewing Beach Preserve](#). Visit the Benjamin Family Environmental Center to learn about this unspoiled coastal habitat

and join a guided nature walk, or relax for a laid-back beach day on the New England shore.

Know before you go: The only way to access the conservation area is through the beach, which is important to keep in mind no matter which one you're trying to visit. There is a daily parking fee (residents get a discount) that's charged between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Memorial Day through Labor Day. No pets are allowed at this beach. Concessions include a handful of stands, and there are Porta Potties on site. Lifeguards are on duty for the summer season.



7. Fred Benson Town Beach, Block Island

Admission: Parking is \$6 Monday–Friday, \$10 on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays; a season pass is \$30

Block Island's town beach is about a mile from the ferry terminal that brings day-trippers from Point Judith, Rhode Island, and New London, Connecticut, on summer days. Moderate surf and a full array of amenities, including rentals of beach chairs and umbrellas, make the beach very family-friendly and also alleviate the need to haul all your beach gear over from the mainland. As the day winds down, you can migrate to nearby bars and restaurants like the [Beachhead](#) and [Yellow Kittens](#) for casual dining and live entertainment before catching the last ferry back (around 8 p.m.) or spending the night at one of the island's restored grand [hotels](#) or bed-and-breakfasts.

Know before you go: There is no entry or parking fee for this beach (a rarity!). When it comes to facilities, there are bathrooms and outdoor showers on site. One beach-friendly wheelchair is available to use, on a first come, first served basis. You will find lifeguards on duty during the summer.

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