

Boston Herald

Beat the winter blues with a trip to Lil' Rhody



The Weekapaug Inn in Westerly, Rhode Island will put you seaside in a cozy setting and makes for a perfect winter escape. (Photo courtesy The Weekapaug Inn)

By **MOIRA MCCARTHY** |

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Gray skies and early darkness; cold weather but not a lot of that pretty snow. Sounds like someone has a case of the Januarys.

There's a cure: Head south! By that we mean Rhode Island. Lil' Rhody packs a great escape punch this time of year.

With January hotel discounts at more than 30 destinations (40% at most spots), RI Restaurant Month still in full swing and a breadth of lodging choices for whatever your winter mood desires, this may be the best time in winter to escape there.

Hotel Month Rhode Island (visitrhodeisland.com/rhode-island-hotel-month/) is the state's way of welcoming guests this time of year. On that site, you'll find destination ideas, travel plan suggestions and, best of all, discounts up to 40% off per night for everything from B&Bs to quaint inns to posh and even city-based hotels.

From a spa day and dining outing in Providence to a winter retreat beachside, you can find all kinds of winter vibes there. And while that beach may be cold, the beauty and sense of escape (at a discount) warm the soul.

Here are a few options, but there are many more.

Winter beach perfection

Westerly, R.I., is a breathtakingly lovely place.

And while the beach rocks in the summer, its beauty and drama are a winter draw as well. With the town quieter and the wide open beach nearly unpopulated, it's a perfect time to pack those warm mittens, socks and sweaters and take a winter beach escape.

Great choices? The Weekapaug Inn (weekapauginn.com) puts you seaside in a cozy setting.

You can hang indoors and soak in the outside from there; the sitting areas have telescopes, huge windows, lots of board games and plenty of spots to watch the sun sparkle off the deep blue winter sea.

Getting outside is special there, though: Their on-site naturalist can take you on hikes (some even help you make a necklace from rocks you find), beach walks (you may even spot a whale or seal) or even take you out at night for clear winter star-gazing. There are few things as lovely as looking up at Orion as waves crash just a few feet from you.

The dining there is great too — and you have usage rights to the nearby Ocean House as well.



Cozy up to the fireplace in the living room of the Shelter Harbor Inn.

More inland but just as cozy is the Shelter Harbor Inn (shelterharborinnri.com), where you'll find a contemporary casual vibe peppered with a local historic feel.

The inn draws you in — you'll want to dine and sip cocktails at their Farmhouse Kitchen + Bar, which draws on local ingredients to create winter food and beverages like their Spiced Apple Pie drink made with local gin, or their rock and rye that blends local Cask & Crew Walnut Toffee Rye, citrus juices and a cinnamon stick.

Their spa has a winter twist too. How warming does a rosemary mint scalp massage and a peppermint vanilla foot massage sound?

The inn can set you out on adventures too, including a winter seal cruise. Bundle up, see the seals up close and learn all about them, then return to your inn for a warm drink by the fire.

Out in the country winter style

Never before heard of the Preserve Sporting Club Reserve & Residences (preservesportingclub.com)? While it's amazing in the summer, winters at the club are just as unique an escape.



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The sun sets behind the Preserve Sporting Club Reserve & Residences





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Take in the wintry landscape of the Preserve Sporting Club Reserve & Residences.



Those who love a good scotch and cigar will be in heaven: The Preserve embraces, celebrates and elevates that culture. In the winter, you can set up a private “safari” tent experience centered around cctoch, cigars and s’mores.

The Preserve is home to an OH! Spa as well, where you can get a locally sourced warm lavender massage and other great treatments.

They have great dining choices, including their unique Makers Mark Hobbit Houses, where you can savor bourbon dinner pairings in a warm and unique setting.

In the city

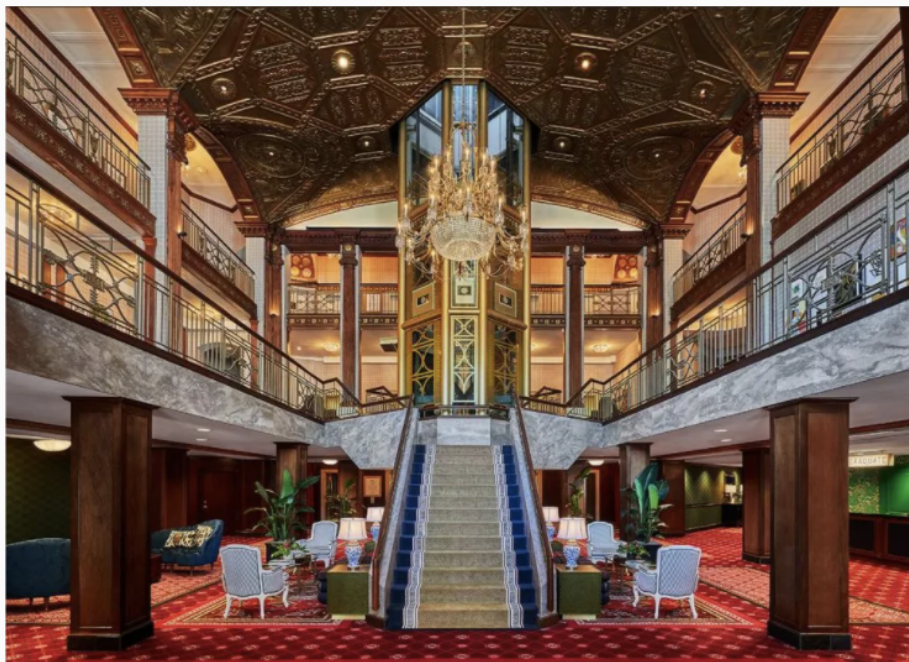
And should you want a city-vibe escape, you’ve got options as well.

Graduate Providence (graduatehotels.com), formerly the Biltmore, gives you a grand yet warm setting to settle into as well as use as a home base to explore winter style.



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The Graduate Providence was formerly the Biltmore.



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Revel in the luxurious lobby of the Graduate Providence.



Their new Norwich Spa is a great spot for mellowing out, and their new Reiner's Bar and Game room offers a fun spot to embrace your sporty side while staying warm.

It's walking distance to so many museums, the lovely river that cuts through the city — and lots of dining. RI Dining week runs through Jan. 22 so there are deals and specials all over Providence.

And should you want to morph some crazy fun winter outside with that lovely indoor winter spot, head to the Providence Rink for — get this — winter bumper cars.