

# East Coast Guide: Get to Know Rhode Island In and Around its Waterways

**Melissa Curtin | September 22, 2023**

*A big thanks to [Visit Rhode Island](#) for hosting many of our activities. All opinions expressed within are my own.*

Get to know America's smallest state by its waterways. Whether in a colonial town, on a sandy shoreline, or on a harbor or river, you are guaranteed to find yourself enchanted with the Ocean State. Don't miss these exciting adventures in Little Rhodney.



# Blackstone Valley

Gain a new perspective of the Blackstone River Valley on a barge boat tour in Central Falls, a 240-square-mile region in the northern part of Rhode Island. The Blackstone River is the longest river in Rhode Island and the [Explorer River Tour](#) provides insight into the ecology and history of the area while immersing visitors in the area's quiet beauty.



Right off the dock, enjoy a meal at [Shark's](#), where Peruvian chefs blend local ingredients and family recipes. Share seafood ceviche, stir-fried beef over rice, and mussels topped with a Peruvian lime sauce medley of chopped onion, tomato, and cilantro. A Passion Fruit Pisco Sour or Lime Chilcano is a must. For an over-



the-top experience for four, order the Seafood Trio or the Ranch Grill exploding in all directions with rib-eye, pork ribs, anticuchos, rotisserie chicken, chorizo sausages, gizzards, and cocktail potatoes.



Consider Warwick in central Rhode Island for an accessible and affordable stay. Located right on the Pawtucket River, book a loft-style room at Hilton's [NYLO Providence Warwick Hotel](#), a former textile mill complex that produced the original Fruit of the Loom cotton cloth. For breakfast, mosey down to the hotel's river patio or grab a beer next door at [Apponaug Brewery](#) for some tasty local suds where it's easy to lounge at one of the many elevated seats on the river.



In Smithfield, Rhode Island, just twenty minutes away near Stump Pond and Stillwater Reservoir, find [Blackie's](#), a casual restaurant with a tasty seasonal menu – offering lobster stuffed mushrooms, a truffle steak and cheese sandwich, little neck clams and garlic pasta, and build your own burgers with 4 different patties. At the wine and pizza bar, numerous wood-fired pizzas are served piping hot as two 800-degree ovens – straight from Naples – crank out crisp pies, with one dedicated to gluten-free eaters. Make sure to order one of their inventive cocktails like a root beer float with vanilla vodka or Mezcal with barbecue spiced maple syrup rimmed with barbecue spiced bacon. Sate your sweet tooth with Blackie's carrot cake layered with ice cream.





## Providence

Providence waterways are a powerful source that connects all residents – running through rivers, pipes, and groundwater. Start your Providence exploration with an hourlong kayak on the rivers that run through the city. Book a single or tandem with [Providence Kayak](#) where you can paddle by Memorial Park, the RISD buildings, and under numerous picturesque bridges stuffed with cut timber because on select nights from May to November after sunset the river is lit with hundreds of torches often accompanied by music and art installations. Learn more about [WaterFire](#).



On the riverbank and across from the new \$22 million pedestrian bridge, peruse the Sunday Flea Market for local unique vintage finds. Just behind this outdoor community market, rainbow windows don the world's first plant-based food hall called [Plant City](#), an enticing culinary stop with four restaurants, three bars, a coffee bar, a bakery, and a marketplace and community space. Try the vegan truffle mushroom pizza upstairs.





Near the riverfront, dive deeper into Providence's past through a walking food tour with [Rhode Island Red Food Tours](#) to savor traditional and creatively inspired foods from Rhode Island's pool of talented food artisans. During the 3+ hour jaunt, guests learn stories behind the eateries, the dishes, and the chefs and gain a deeper appreciation for the important architecture and history of this beautiful revitalized city (reminding me today of a smaller Boston).



Certain areas of Providence conjure up visions of the studio lots in Los Angeles but here the REAL architectural gems dot the city landscape since the 1880s. Admire art deco styles like the Superman Building built in the 1920s, Greek revival buildings, vintage theaters, and the former nation's Jewelry District. Sample a Rhode Island Coffee Milk, Rhode Island clear broth clam chowder, and clam cakes. The food tour also introduces cereal-infused ice cream, Taiwanese tea, beer flights with pretzels, and more, with a promise you won't leave hungry. Later in the day, check out Federal Hill, Providence's Little Italy, for fried dough, a meatball sub, pizza and pasta, Italian ice, or a Del's Frozen Lemonade.





## Newport

Hop aboard a classic yacht in the “Sailing Capital of the World,” like an original rum smuggler boat built during Prohibition in the 1920s. This schooner cruises Newport Harbor and comes with an overview of Newport’s waterfront and history. Book a sunset sail on the motor yacht with [Newport Classic Cruises](#) to witness the New England landscape like the impressive estates of the Campbell soup heir and the childhood home of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy as well as Castle Inn, St. Mary’s Catholic Church, and lighthouses.



Along the eastern shore of Newport, step back into the Gilded Age with a stroll along the 3.5-mile [Cliff Walk](#) with crashing waves on one side and century-old mansions on the other. Dig deeper into the past with the [Elms Servant Life Tour](#) to witness behind-the-scenes details of butler and maid life with a climb up the back staircase from the basement to the roof to the servants' floor. Thanks to the Preservation Society, these former summer homes often with full wings for staff remain in pristine splendor. If time permits, tour another mansion like the Marble House or The Breakers to marvel at how the American Titans once lived.





Meander (or hop on the free trolley) to explore Newport's thriving downtown harbor with its many wharves, galleries, eclectic shops, and downtown bustling energy. The new [Sailing Museum](#) celebrates the heritage of sailing along with honoring sailing legends, new sailors, and inspiring innovators. This educational nonprofit is home to the National Sailing Hall of Fame and America's Cup Hall of Fame. Also, tennis lovers will want to check out the [International Tennis Hall of Fame](#) located in the Newport Casino, a stunning 19th-century building with grass tennis courts once a social club for the East Coast elite. Home to the first US Open, here a collection of tennis stories is brought to life with over 25,000 artifacts and digital exhibits. When you're ready to dine, unwind on one of the many dockside restaurants by ordering fresh lobster rolls, whole belly clams, local fish, and the popular Dark 'n' Stormy cocktail at the [Newport Lobster Shack](#), [22 Bowen's Wine Bar & Grill](#), or the legendary 18<sup>th</sup> century [Clarke Cooke House](#).



## Watch Hill

On the Connecticut border, the seaside village of Watch Hill is a quaint harbor town with some of the best beaches and filled with boutique shops, a longstanding candy store, and many lobster and seafood restaurants. Kids will adore riding the 'flying horses', America's oldest continuously operating carousel where grabbing the brass ring comes with winning a free ride. Today people admire Taylor Swift's home on the hill from the upscale yellow and white [Ocean House](#) where lobster rolls on the veranda atop the beach and lawn croquet are a quintessential New England experience. Just off the renovated historic resort, there is no better east coast beach day, whether you want to body surf, beach walk, or take in a sunset. Visit mid-week, off-season, and early morning for less crowds.





Find more adventures in some of our other favorite [Rhode Island](#) spots – Narragansett, Block Island, and Westerly.