

# FATHOM

Best Day Ever

## Good Luck Spending Only One Day on Block Island

by Chris Adair



Photo courtesy of Visit Rhode Island/Rhode Island Commerce Corporation.

*So you're planning a day trip to Block Island? Good luck leaving at the end of the day.*

BLOCK ISLAND, Rhode Island — The next morning's fishing trip was effectively canceled when I found out there was a stately hotel across the harbor called [The National](#). If my friends didn't want to stay the night on the island, they shouldn't have pointed out the perfect spot for me to indulge my love for both old hotels and making impulsive travel choices. Lucky for me, we happened to be on the deck at [Ballard's](#) — a well-looked-after property in its own right — attending to an unobstructed view of the Atlantic, an absurdly large tray of chilled seafood, and several bottles of white wine. So, everyone was *very* amenable.

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I'm sure it's possible to successfully day trip Block Island. You just have to understand that your day trip may unexpectedly involve a night, then another day.

Block Island sits just off the coast of Rhode Island, southwest of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. It maintains a much more under-the-radar status than its neighbors, which is hard to imagine given the island's wide-open terrain, ranging coastline, and unpretentious charm.

Daily flights leave from Westerly. To fly, though, would be to miss out on a (as designated by me) New England institution: the [Block Island Hi-Speed Ferry](#) and its inexplicably delicious hot dog/bloody mary combination. By the time you've washed it down with a plastic cup of prosecco, you're already there.



Photo by Chris Adair.

Ferrygoers empty out onto the promenade of New Shoreham, Block Island's only township. Busy with T-shirt shops and ice cream parlors, it feels like an amalgam of every classic New England beach destination you've ever seen — exactly like *Jaws*, though only the good parts. This is where you'll want to rent a bike, which is by far the easiest and most efficient way to explore the island.

Heading south, the road out of town winds through wide open fields, stretching past colonial homes and farmland. It's almost all uphill, a fact I was unaware of before I agreed to tow a 50-pound Yeti full of tequila, ice, and beer behind my bike. The views along the southeastern coast of the island, coupled with a pleasantly unyielding sea breeze, make it hard to complain. The low-rolling hills are unassuming and bucolic, making it all the more dramatic when they eventually yield to the plunging Mohegan Bluffs.



Mohegan Bluffs. Photo by Chris Adair.

A narrow dirt path brings you from the trailhead to the landing of a steep wooden staircase and a panorama of the island's jagged shore. Deep aquamarine and turquoise water is juxtaposed against weather-beaten coves that are more reminiscent of Monterey, California, than New England. Once down the stairs, from the precarious, rocky beach — waves crashing below, and cliffs towering above — you can feel the immense wildness of the island spreading out in front of you.

We hiked up to our bikes, and started back toward New Shoreham — downhill, mercifully. The road basically dead ends at Ballard's, just before town. It's the perfect spot to rest your legs, and maybe ply your friends with crab and sauvignon blanc while you figure out how you're going to extend your stay, if not spend the rest of your days, on Block Island. And it's where we were when someone pointed out the inviting hotel across the water, whereupon I pointed out that we really didn't need to go back to Connecticut just yet.



If stately hotels or cozy inns aren't convincing enough, the island's pristine beaches, small family farms, and bountiful seafood options should lure your beach party into expanding their definition of day trip. As for those meetings or fishing trips you'd had planned for the next morning, well, they'll still be there next week.

## Where to Eat

[Aldo's](#) serves rustic, homestyle Italian in an intimate setting.

Naturally, New England seafood staples abound on the island. Head to [The Oar](#), [Rebecca's](#), or [The Beachead](#) for clam chowder, lobster, and a cold Narragansett.

[Winfield's](#) and [Eli's](#) serve inventive menus of seasonal, local ingredients.



Photo by Chris Adair.

## Where to Stay

[The National](#) is indeed the grand dame of Block Island. Ocean-facing suites are air conditioned only by the sea breeze, which is more than adequate. Head to the back patio at dusk, where martinis are served around fire pits and a garden party kicks off the evening. For breakfast the next morning, a \$10 stipend included with the room. Use it on lobster frittata.

[Ballard's](#) is perfectly located, sprawled across a point on the outer edge of Old Harbor. Its well-appointed suites provide both beach access and air conditioning. On your way to the beach, grab a pitcher of daiquiris from one of the beachfront, thatch-roofed bars.



To round out the New England beach vibes, book a room at a B&B on the north side of the harbor: [Blue Dory Inn](#), [The Darius Inn](#), or one of several inns nestled into unbelievably picturesque environs in the countryside like [The 1661](#), [The Rose Farm Inn](#), and [The Atlantic Inn](#).

## What to See

[Fred Benson Town Beach](#) is situated just up the road from Old Harbor. For a slightly more secluded feel, head a bit further north to [Mansion Beach](#).

The [Southeast Light](#) is a stunning red brick lighthouse situated near the Mohegan Bluffs trailhead. It's a National Historic Landmark, and the handful of shipwrecks laying off the BI coast speak to its strategic and historical significance.

*Want even more reasons to stick around? Read [Finding Summer Bliss on Block Island](#) next.*

*A version of this article originally appeared on [Chris Adair's blog](#) and is reprinted here with permission.*