

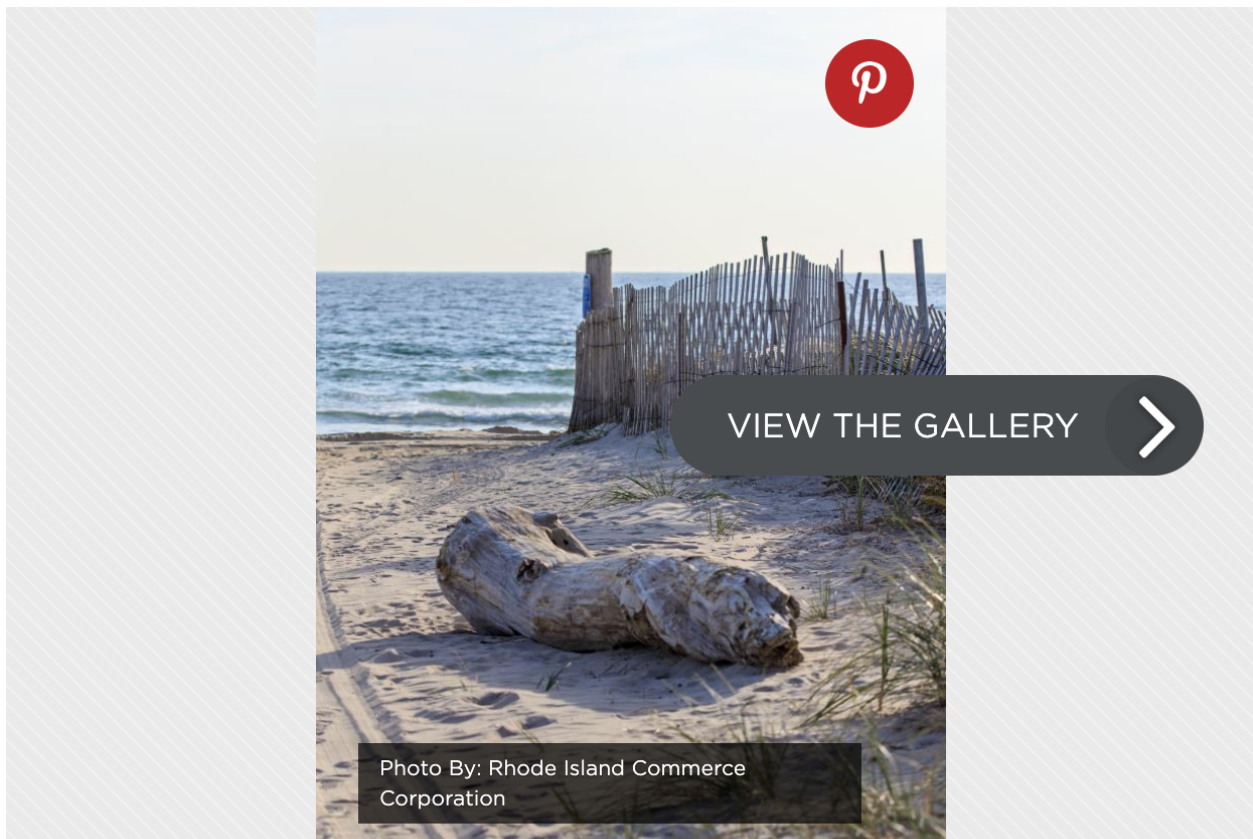


# 20 Best Rhode Island Beaches

Rhode Island has nearly 400 miles of coastline, studded with spectacular beaches. Here are just a few of the best.

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# Ample Beach Options

Rhode Island is most famous for the sailing capital of Newport, where some of the country's wealthiest families have built opulent summer homes for centuries. But it's only one of a few places around the state where you can find spectacular beaches, fresh local seafood and a quiet escape from the crowds — if you know where to look.

If you've ever met a Rhode Islander who hasn't told you that Taylor Swift owns a house on Watch Hill in Westerly (more on this later), not far from this beach, you should ask them if they were secretly born in Massachusetts. State pride runs deep, and Misquamicut State Beach (shown here) is a local favorite.



## Easton's Beach, Newport

That said, no trip to Rhode Island is complete without a trip down Newport's 3.5-mile [Cliff Walk](#), where you can get a gander at some of those grand estates to one side and a view of the ocean to your other. The walk runs from here at Easton's Beach south toward Bailey's Beach. Many of the mansions you'll see along the way, like [The Breakers](#), of the Vanderbilt family, now operate as museums.





## Napa Tree Point Conservation Area, Westerly

Perhaps the state's most tucked-away beach is Napa Tree Point, a narrow and curvy beach that juts out from the coast of Westerly. You'll have to climb a sandy path winding between fragile dunes to get out to it. The view is astonishing, especially at sunset.



## West Beach, Block Island

Block Island's West Beach is a great place to watch sailboats congregating offshore and to beachcomb for treasures washing in from afar. If you've got high hopes for finding a souvenir, keep your eyes peeled all around the island for orbs from the [Glass Float Project](#). Every year, artist Eben Horton makes glass orbs and collaborates with the town to hide hundreds of them around the island's pathways for people to find. Since it's 2021, all but 21 of the 550 hidden this summer will be clear glass, and the rest will be colorful orbs. If you find one, register it online and either keep it as a treasure or rehide it to make someone else's day later on.



## Mohegan Bluffs, Block Island

The Mohegan Bluffs of Block Island are easily the state's most surreal landscape. Take the stairs down to the beach on a foggy day, and you'd be excused for mistaking the dramatic cliffs for a tropical island far, far away. Make sure to check out the [Southeast Light](#) just atop the Bluffs, a stunning historic lighthouse built in 1875 and moved inland in 1993 to protect it from an eroding coast. From there, you can see stunning views of the coastline and horizon, including the Block Island Wind Farm, which was the country's first offshore wind farm when it was built in 2016.





## Fort Wetherill State Park, Jamestown

We might be stretching the definition of "beach" here just a tad, but Jamestown's Fort Wetherill is just too pretty not to mention. This fort dating back to the 1800s is right on the edge of a rocky outcropping offering stunning views of Jamestown's coastline. Somehow, even on weekends, you're not likely to find crowds here. Indeed, you might just have it all to yourself. Park in a small lot at the end of Fort Wetherill Road and take a path down to a tiny, stony beach with crystal-clear water. Keep your eyes peeled for familiar sights as you venture around the island — a mansion here was the setting for the Steve Carrell movie *Dan in Real Life*, and some parts of Wes Anderson's *Moonrise Kingdom* were filmed at Fort Wetherill, too.



## Third Beach, Middletown

Middletown is moments away from the tourist hotspot of Newport, also located on Aquidneck Island in the Narragansett Bay. But here, you'll find a much more peaceful crowd with a less touristy vibe. Third Beach is the kind of place you'll see families picnicking, small boats fishing and kids playing and paddling in gentle surf.





## Crescent Beach, Block Island

Many of Rhode Island's best beaches are on Block Island, an offshore escape that's long been a locals' favorite. Just a 30-minute ride on the [Block Island Ferry's Hi-Speed route](#) from Point Judith, or a 12-minute [scenic flight from Westerly](#), it's an easy day trip to feel far, far away from the mainland. The island is small and easy to get around on foot if you love walking, or you can take your bike or car over on the traditional ferry or rent one in town. If you're opting for a fully human-powered adventure, the soft sand and grassy dunes of Crescent Beach are a short walk away from the ferry landing in Old Harbor.





## Mansion Beach, Block Island

Block Island, a small island a ferry ride away from Point Judith on the mainland, is Rhode Island's favorite summer getaway. There are almost no chain businesses on the island, and if you're willing to walk or bike a little further than daytrippers staying close to the ferry landing, you can find solitude away from the crowds. Mansion Beach, on the northeastern shore of the island, is just north of Crescent Beach and is a 15-minute bike ride from rental spots downtown. The area offers pristine views, fewer crowds and bigger waves than some of the other beaches on the island.



## Scarborough State Beach, Narragansett

A true locals' beach, Scarborough offers a good mix of sand and surf. This expansive beach —which has plenty of parking — is the kind of place you'll see people setting up beach volleyball nets and sending kids out with boogie boards to ride small waves. There's an observation tower by the parking lot you can climb for good views of the horizon. Scarborough is within a short walk of many of the state's most beloved seafood joints, including [Aunt Carrie's](#) and [Iggy's](#). If you go, stay at [The Break](#), a quaint bed and breakfast just a moment's walk or bike ride from the water.



## Charlestown Town Beach, Charlestown

Charlestown Town Beach is the kind of place that has it all. Here, you'll find great swimming, surf spots, sailing and plenty of sandy coastline to stretch out and lie in the sun. You'll also find the southern terminus of the state's North South Trail here, which runs about 77 miles through the length of the state starting at the Massachusetts border to the north. The trail winds through neighborhoods in Rhode Island's more rural, western towns, as well as quite a bit of the state's forest land. There are a few campgrounds along the way, so it's feasible to backpack the journey in a few days if you're looking for a woodsy adventure.

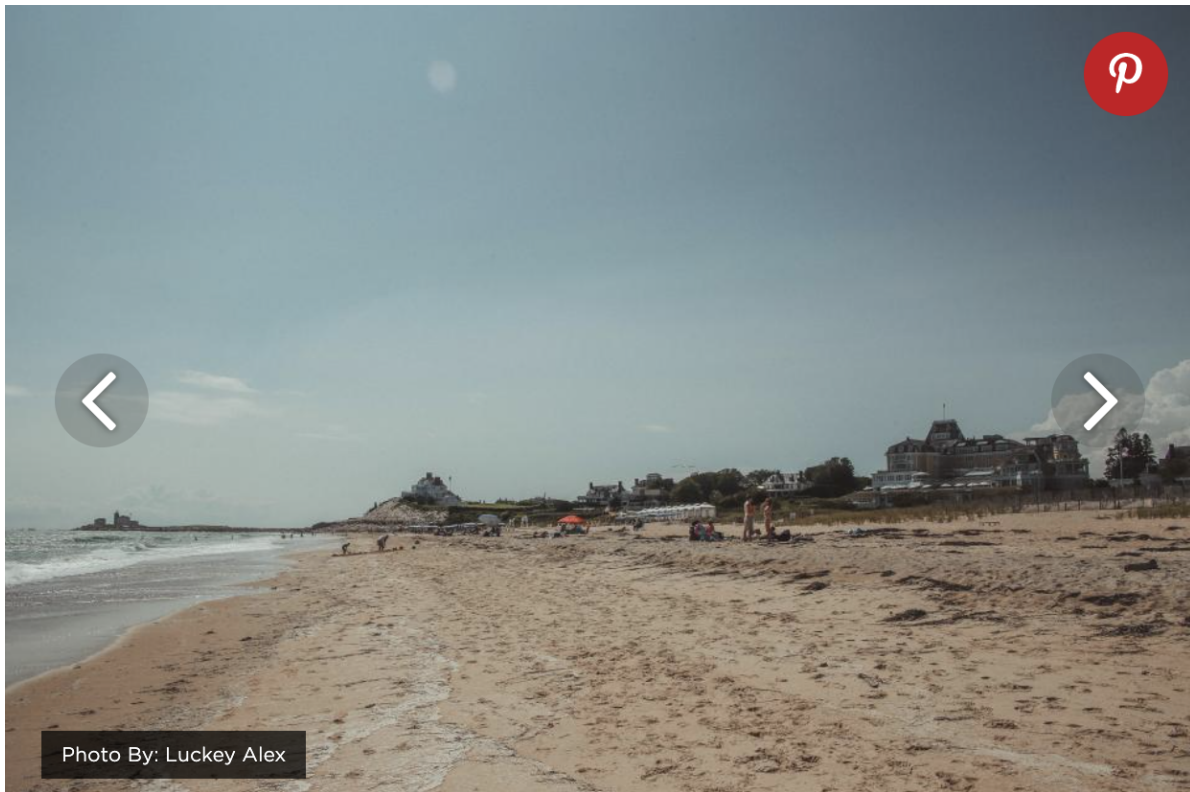




Photo By: John Woodmansee

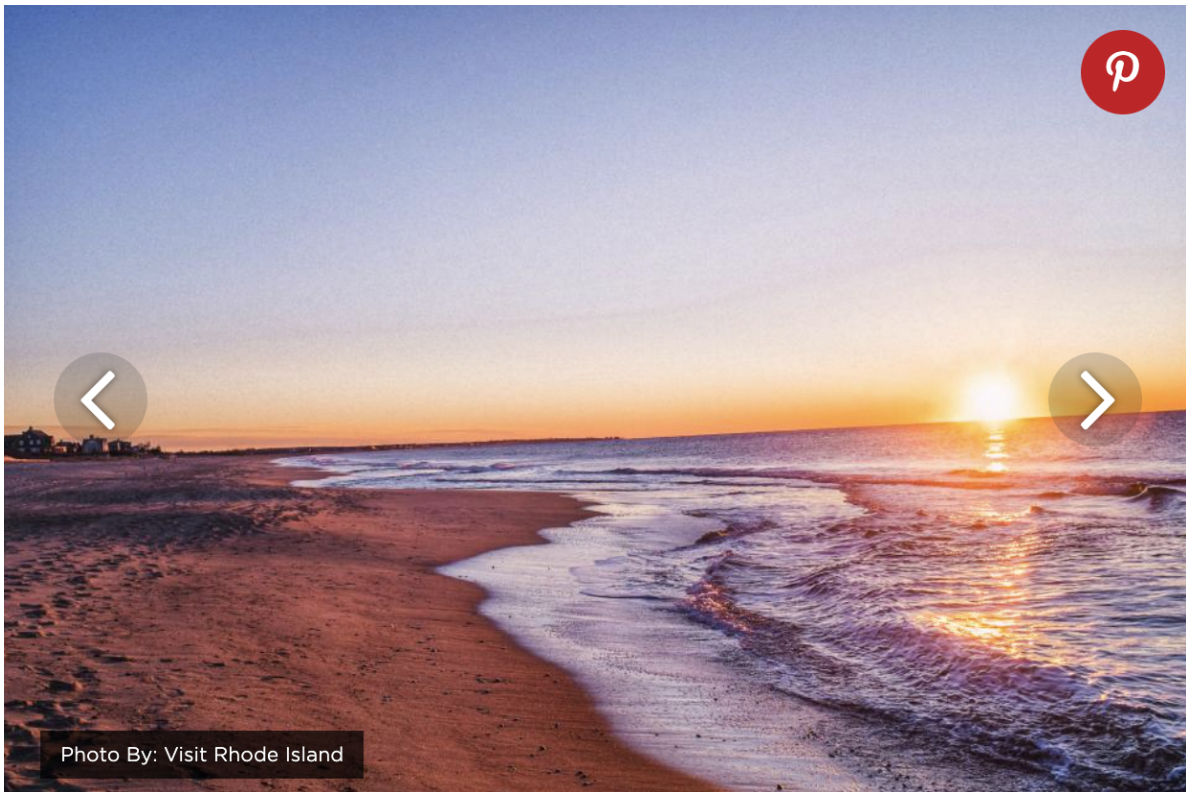
## East Matunuck State Beach, South Kingstown

Sandy East Matunuck Beach, with its picturesque dunes, is one of the state's prettiest. Make sure to visit the nearby [Matunuck Oyster Bar](#) for dinner. The restaurant grows its own oysters and also serves shellfish from other nearby Rhode Island farms. If shellfish farming intrigues you, book a [package for a private tour](#), including a boat ride out to the oyster farm in Potter Pond and oysters aplenty.



## Misquamicut State Beach, Westerly

Misquamicut Beach in Westerly, on the border with Connecticut, is one of Rhode Island's most popular, and it fills quickly in the summertime. You will likely battle crowds to sunbathe here, but a locals' tip for beaches around the state is to arrive late in the afternoon, when parking becomes free and most daytrippers head back home. [Shelter Harbor Inn](#), a tucked-away bed & breakfast with a help-yourself candy bar, is a short bike ride away from many of Westerly's beaches and lends cruiser bikes out for free to guests.



## East Beach, Westerly

Watch Hill is a famous corner of Westerly where many of its celebrity residents have summer homes. One of the greats? Taylor Swift, whose Watch Hill mansion is a literal stone's throw from East Beach. She broke the record for most expensive real estate purchase ever made in the state when she bought it for over \$17 million in 2013 — so pricey the then-governor tried to make a new luxury second home real estate tax named after her. East Beach is tucked away and doesn't offer much parking, so you're not likely to share with crowds if you can make it here.



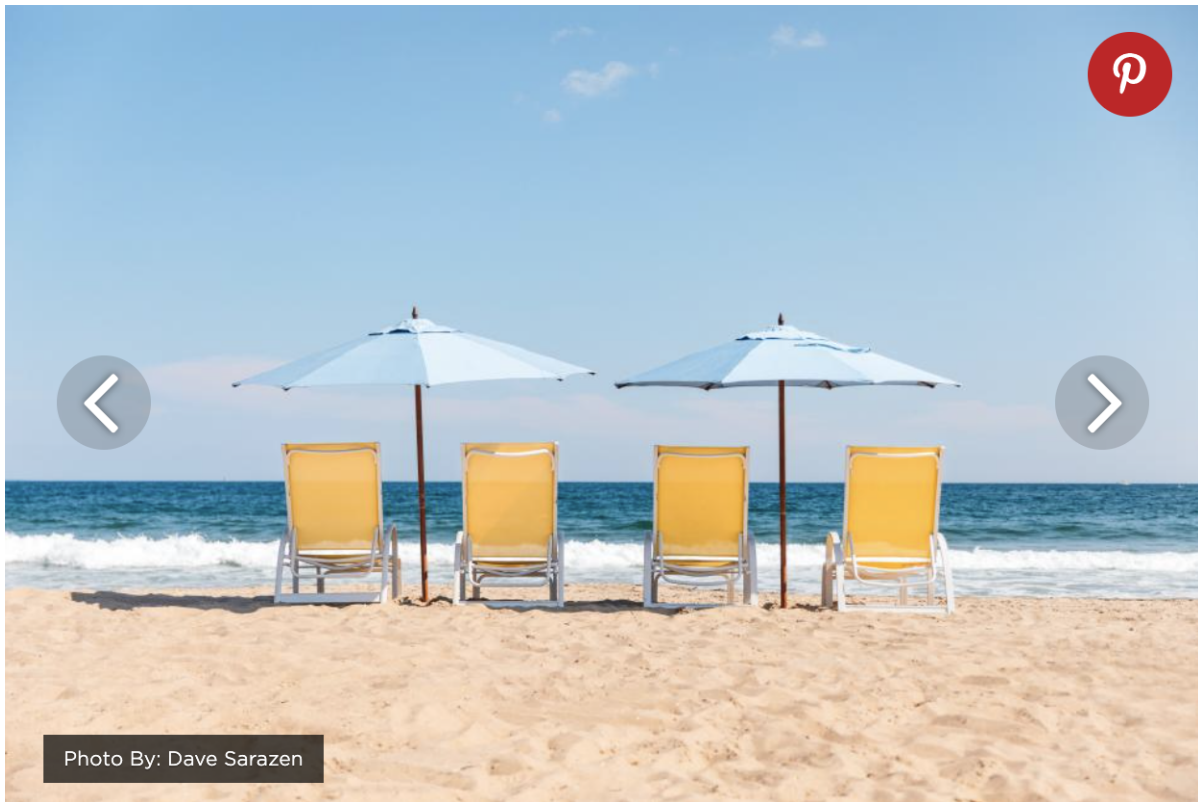


Photo By: Dave Sarazen

## Ocean House's Private Beach, Westerly

Rhode Island's beaches are mostly public, but if you're looking for a high-end escape, [Ocean House](#) has the state's largest private beach. This historic hotel is in the swanky town of Westerly, which plays host to quite a few celebrity residents. The beach is accessible only to overnight guests of the resort's properties, but you can get a gander at the phenomenal sunsets here from the hotel restaurant's patio. Ocean House serves locally-farmed and caught shellfish and seafood and recently debuted a summer [tea service in individual greenhouses](#) ideal for dining in a socially-distanced way.



## Roger Wheeler State Beach, Narragansett

Roger Wheeler is a great beach for swimming and kids, as protection from Block Island Sound prevents the surf from getting too rough and there's a slight dropoff so you don't have to venture too far from shore to actually swim. This Narragansett beach is next door to Salty Brine State Beach and a short walk from Galilee, where you can spot fishing boats coming in with their catch after a day out at sea.



## Salty Brine State Beach, Narragansett

Fishing boats based at Point Judith sail past a little area called Galilee, where locals have gone for decades for lobster rolls and fried seafood fixes from institutions like [George's](#). Stuffies —stuffed clams — and clam cakes —I like a fried dough ball stuffed with clams — and New England clam chowder are beloved local favorites. Get your food to go and have a picnic at Salty Brine beach just a moment's walk away, and make sure to grab a Del's frozen lemonade, if the carts are out. Frozen lemonade is another only-in-Rhode Island treat quite unlike the Italian ice you might be used to.





## Narragansett Town Beach, Narragansett

Even though Rhode Island may be most well-known for Newport, there are dozens of others a short drive away. Narragansett Town Beach is next to the historic [Coast Guard House](#), a former US Life Saving Service station that was turned into a restaurant in 1940. Narragansett is where many Rhode Islanders escape to summer beach houses, and it's a prime spot for catching waves. Never tried it? Take a lesson with the nearby surf shop [Warm Winds](#).



## Watch Hill Beach, Westerly

Westerly's Watch Hill Beach is home to a [historic Merry-Go-Round](#). Built in 1867 and abandoned on the beach in 1883, it's believed to be the country's oldest continuously operating carousel. Plan to park further away, or stay in town and walk — parking here is quite limited. One of the area's swankiest hotels just a moment's walk away is Watch Hill Inn, which has a unique [Lilly Pulitzer Suite](#) decked out in textiles and prints from the beloved designer. Guests there get access to the private beach at sister property [Ocean House](#), too.



## Town Way Beach, Little Compton

For a secluded place to sit and watch sailboats coming in and out of Narragansett Bay, drive to the end of Town Way Road in Little Compton and set up a picnic blanket on the shore. There's no formal beach infrastructure here — you won't find bathrooms or lifeguards — but you will find peace, quiet and lovely views on a sunny day.





## Goosewing Beach Preserve, Little Compton

Rhode Island's East Bay is a bit of a locals' secret. A "far" drive from Newport and the beaches of Narragansett (by local standards, anyway), the town of Little Compton is tucked away in wilder surroundings. The small but pristine [Goosewing Beach Preserve](#) here is owned by [The Nature Conservancy](#), which protects breeding birds like the piping plover and least tern. You can access the 75-acre preserve through South Shore Beach. While you're in town, hop over to [Carolyn's Sakonnet Vineyards](#), which has beautiful grounds to enjoy a wine tasting.