



How to spend 48 hours in Rhode Island

The perfect weekend itinerary for folks who have just 48 hours to spend in the nation's smallest state.

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Photograph: By Collins Unlimited / Shutterstock

Rhode Island may be the smallest state in America, but it packs a big punch with cultural amenities and fun activities for all ages. It's not uncommon to hear Rhode Islanders talk spontaneously and authentically about how lucky they are to live in the Ocean State. It makes sense, considering the state's rich assets—400 miles of coastline, colonial history, maritime traditions, the dazzling WaterFire, the renowned Newport Folk Festival, and a beloved beverage called Coffee Milk.

Thankfully, given the state's petite proportions, you can cover a lot of ground, even if you're only able to stay for 48 hours. For this guide, we're focusing mostly on Newport and Providence with a few stops in between. A heads up that you'll need a car or an

Uber account to make the most of your visit. On your next weekend trip to Rhode Island, use our guide on where to eat, drink, play, and stay.



Photograph: Courtesy of Rail Explorers

Friday late afternoon

No matter how you're getting into town—by plane, train, or car—you're probably going to want to stretch your legs after the journey, so let's get right to it. Head to [Rail Explorers](#), which is located between Providence and Newport.

Rail Explorers turns railroad tracks into spaces for recreation with rail bikes where you can sit back, relax, and enjoy the scenery while chatting with your group. Unlike a typical bicycle, which can be difficult or impossible for many, these machines welcome all ages and abilities.

Expect to spend about 90 minutes on the railbike cruising through the coastal woodlands of Aquidneck Island and past Narragansett Bay. It's impossible not to smile as the beautiful vistas come into view as you pedal along. [Here's more](#) about our experience at Rail Explorers.

Time Out tip: Prices range between \$40 and \$50/person; be sure to [book in advance](#).



Photograph: By Rossilynne Skena Culgan for Time Out New York

Friday evening

After all that sightseeing and fresh air, it's time to relax. Check into your hotel—[Newport Harbor Island Resort](#)—then get an Uber to [Newport Vineyards](#) for excellent wines (the Great White is an award winner), small-batch beers, and farm-to-table meals.

Chef Andy Teixeira, a semifinalist in the James Beard Foundation's Best Chefs in the Northeast awards, is in charge of the menu, and he's passionate about creating local, seasonal fare. Though the menu changes frequently, you can expect a fresh, perfectly dressed salad; a chowder option (it is New England, after all); Newport Sea Salt Pretzels; a local meat board; pastas; burgers; pizzas; mac-and-cheese; and more. No matter what you choose, it's obvious how much care Teixeira puts into each dish. It's a popular spot, so be sure to get a reservation in advance.

A long list of in-house wines and beers are available to pair with your meal or try a flight to sample even more. Though Rhode Island may not have the same prestige as

California when it comes to wine-making, its coastal location and mild climate makes for some surprisingly stunning sips.

Time Out tip: If you're a big oenophile, the vineyard offers fascinating daily tours, which explore the winery, vineyard, and include a tasting.



Photograph: Courtesy of Newport Harbor Island

Friday late night

After getting a ride back to your hotel, head to the in-house Torpedo Bar & Lounge and ask for a seat outside. In warmer months, you'll feel the ocean breeze as you enjoy the views. In cooler temperatures, you'll be able to cuddle up near a fireplace with blankets. Order a nightcap or a dessert to enjoy while you get some fresh air before turning in for the night.



Photograph: By Paul Brady Photography / Shutterstock

Saturday morning

Grab a breakfast pastry or sandwich at the hotel's cafe before checking out. Then kick off the day at Bowen's Wharf, a 20-minute walk from your hotel or accessible on the hotel's shuttle. This popular marina is packed with restaurants, boutiques, and galleries. Stop by for a quick lunch amid your picturesque stroll.



Photograph: By Rossilynne Skena Culkan for Time Out New York | Inside Rosecliff.

Saturday afternoon

Speaking of picturesque, Newport is packed with gorgeous Gilded Age mansions that were once the playground of wealthy New Yorkers seeking a vacation from the city. Now, all can tour these mansions, and there are a lot of options to choose from. [The Breakers](#) is the most famous, of course, as the home of the Vanderbilts, but don't sleep on other options such as [Marble House](#) and [Rosecliff](#).

Rosecliff, for example, boasts the biggest ballroom in Newport. This turn-of-the-century mansion was designed after the Grand Trianon, the garden retreat of French kings at Versailles. Architect Stanford White certainly hit that mark. The mansion features a heart-shaped staircase, sparkling chandeliers, ornate wood flooring, and moldings so ornate they look like icing on a cake. Don't miss heading up to the on-site museum, which features rotating art exhibits.

Time Out tip: Before you go, stroll along [Cliff Walk](#), a 3.5-mile path with ocean views on one side and mansion views on the other. Stroll for as long as or little as you like.

After that, it's time to head from Newport to Providence for the rest of your stay. There are a bunch of hotel options in town, including [The Beatrice](#), which is well-regarded as among the best in the city.

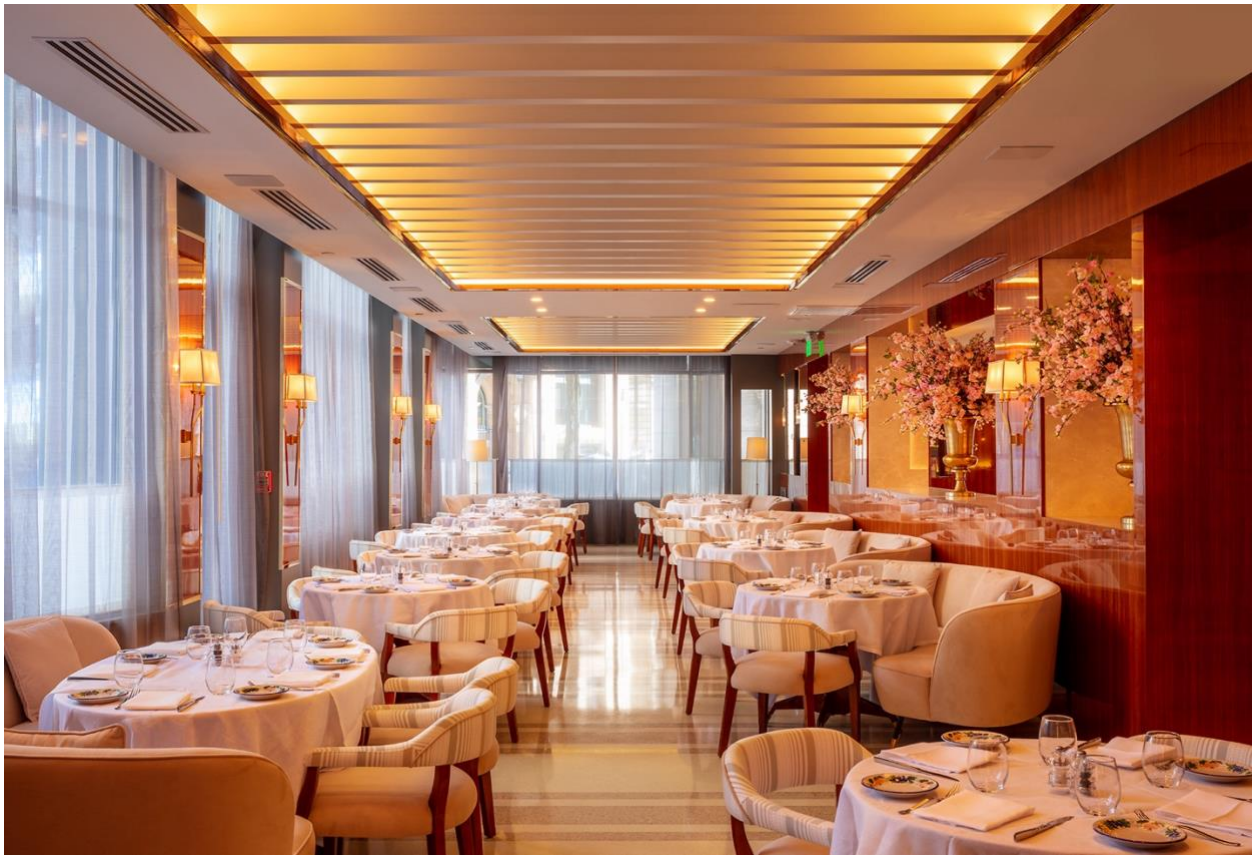


Photograph: Courtesy of WaterFire

Saturday evening

We highly recommend booking your trip around [WaterFire Providence](#). During select nights throughout the year (often on Saturdays), the rivers around Providence light up with bonfires. Torch-lit boats cruise through the river, lighting each brazier and playing ceremonial music. The whole town smells like wood smoke. The firelight casts flickering shadows on nearby bridges, making for a captivating public art experience unlike any other.

Time Out tip: Check the [WaterFire](#) calendar to see when it's scheduled for the coming months. As it starts at sunset, you'll want to adjust your dinner plans accordingly to make sure you're able to see WaterFire light up.



Photograph: Courtesy of Bellini Providence

Now, speaking of dinner, we have two options for you.

The first, if you want an elegant experience in town is Bellini. This modern Italian spot promises sophisticated dining with mouthwatering pastas and a solid cocktail list (with a stand-out Bellini, obviously).

If you prefer something more casual with a truly inventive menu, [The Hangry Kitchen](#) is worth the 10-minute drive. There, chef-owner Stacy Deetz makes everything from scratch with almost entirely locally sourced ingredients, changing the menu weekly. That ethos helps her to focus on supporting local agriculture and reducing the restaurant's carbon footprint. Though the menu changes often, expect dishes like Green Crab & Grits, Chicken Pot Pie Johnny Cakes, Seared Halloumi, Frico Fries, Lasagna Soup, and several seasonal salads. The Parkerhouse Rolls are a must-order.



Photograph: By Rossilynne Skena Culgan for Time Out New York | Cielito Mexican Kitchen

Sunday afternoon

Sleep in a bit for your last day and pack up before ending the trip with a super grand finale: Rhode Island Red Food Tours. On this three-hour tour, you'll eat from a variety of local restaurants while learning about Providence history along the way with an expert guide.

A few highlights from our tour included: Vegetarian cuisine at Plant City, the squash blossom taco at Cielito, and specialty hot pretzels at Malted Barley. No matter where your tour goes, you can expect to be nice and full before heading out of town.

Time Out tip: As you depart Providence, the Amtrak station is located within the downtown area, and the airport (PVD) is just a 15-minute drive from the city center.