



# StyleBlueprint

CONNECTING WOMEN TO THEIR COMMUNITY

## How to Spend a Weekend in Rhode Island

by [Lisa Mowry](#)

[Rhode Island](#) may be the smallest state, but its charisma is huge. Where else can you drive from one end of the state to the other in just an hour, never be far from a coastal view and see New England charm at every turn? Rhode Island is called the Ocean State for a reason; with 400 miles of coastline to draw from, most towns are on the water or not far from the sea.

Because of its compact size, a long weekend can include the small-city attractions of Providence. But less than an hour away is upper-crust Newport, home of the Gilded Age mansions and yachts. (SB TIP: Consider keeping Providence as a home base, hotel-wise, and do day trips to ritzy Newport.) Rhode Island's T.F. Green Airport in Providence is convenient and not as busy as others in the northeast, but with 200+ flights a day, it gets the job done.



The new pedestrian bridge in downtown Providence, Rhode Island, offers panoramic views of this walkable city. Image: [Lisa Mowry](#)

## Day One

After your flight arrives, make your first stop picturesque Newport, home to sailboats, folk festivals, and historic homes big and small. It's an easy drive with a rental car or — if visiting during summer months — a 45-minute trip [by ferry](#) from downtown Providence. Check into the posh [Gurney's Resort](#), located on Goat Island, adjacent to the town of Newport. The grounds themselves are relaxing and fun to explore — and don't miss the resident goats in their very own mini-mansion goat house, inspired by the bigger vacation homes elsewhere on the island.

Walk across the bridge to downtown Newport, where 18th-century houses and charming shops bring visitors year-round. Lunch at [Bar Cino](#), a hip new restaurant made for grazing or more serious meals, will give you a relaxing spot to people-watch in historic Washington Square. Eat up, because you'll need the energy for walking. A must see-and-do in Newport is the [Cliff Walk](#): This 3.5-mile coastal path along the shore gives you a unique vantage point to view the summer homes of the rich and influential. These Gilded Age mansions were home to families like the Vanderbilts, and they still reflect a time of luxury and opulence. Make sure to tour inside one of the mansions, and note that Newport in December offers a chance to see holiday decorating and activities on a big scale. As an alternative activity, tennis lovers will enjoy the [International Tennis Hall of Fame](#), where you can play on a grass court and interact with a hologram of Roger Federer, just for starters.

Head back for dinner at [Scarpetta's](#) on the Gurney's property, with relaxing views of the harbor and an Italian-influenced menu. They're known for their simple — yet perfect — spaghetti, but excel at all sorts of seafood dishes, as well.



A quintessential New England view: This small lighthouse at the end of Goat Island, looking across the bay to Newport, is lined with boats and historic houses. Image: Lisa Mowry



Rhode Island has more chef-owned restaurants than any other state, partly due to the renowned Johnson & Wales culinary school in Providence. And while many of them are innovative eateries, you'll also find plenty of "old school" diners, such as the [Crow's Nest](#) in Warwick, where local favorites such as a lobster salad or quahogs (clams) are served in a casual atmosphere on the water. Image: Lisa Mowry



Pretend to be a Vanderbilt at [The Breakers](#), one of 10 turn-of-the-century mansions open for touring in Newport. The 70-room summer estate for Cornelius Vanderbilt II and family is adorned with marble, alabaster and gilded wood throughout. Image: Lisa Mowry



[Gurney's Resort](#) in Newport is technically on adjacent Goat Island, just across the bridge, and in honor of its heritage hosts a posh goat enclosure for some resident mascots (named after Vanderbilt ancestors, including CNN's Anderson Cooper). Image: Lisa Mowry



Pesto-chicken flatbread pizza at [Bar Cino](#) in downtown Newport comes with scissors for easy cutting. Image: Lisa Mowry

## Day Two

Explore an area in between the two main cities. One option: drive to quaint [Warren, Rhode Island](#) to wander around the small coastal town. It's a good opportunity to pop into [Delekta Pharmacy](#) to down a "Coffee Cabinet," the official beverage of Rhode Island; this coffee milkshake has a wee bit of caffeine, but it's light enough that children of all ages drink it growing up. Another choice: Bike through the historic and scenic Blackstone Valley, along the Blackstone River Bike Path, with bikes from [Blackstone Bicycles](#). As an unusual but clever way to see the scenery, you can hop on a pedal-powered vehicle (sort of like a paddleboat on land), at [Rail Explorers Tour](#), which traverses along a scenic stretch of railroad tracks outside of Newport.

Head to Providence, less than an hour away, and check into the stylish [Graduate Hotel](#). It has all the history and grand architecture from its days as The Biltmore Hotel, and a little interior design pizzazz befitting of the Graduate Hotel brand. (Hint: Oriental-style rugs have donuts in their design.) For lunch, head over to [Plant City](#)— a vegan restaurant near the new pedestrian bridge that's all the rage. Spend the afternoon exploring one of the charm-filled neighborhoods in Providence, such as Benefit Street, filled with historic homes and buildings in the Brown University-Rhode Island School of Design area. Dinner at [Nick's on Westminster](#) is a treat. The chef-owned restaurant is a perfect balance of fine dining and casual atmosphere. If you're around on an evening from May through November, definitely don't miss the spectacular [WaterFire](#) that turns downtown Providence into a magical, musical event with crackling fire and quite the light show; visitors travel to Rhode Island just to experience this one-of-a-kind show.



For 15 years, downtown Providence has been hosting the magical [WaterFire](#) events during May through November, where dramatic fire, music and crackling wood draw hundreds of thousands of people. The best way to experience the fun is "down close" on a boat tour. Image: Rhode Island Commerce



The elegant Biltmore hotel, a staple of Providence life since the '20s, has been rebranded as [The Graduate Providence](#), with a dose of the college-town hotel chain's bold decorating as part of the fun. Image: Lisa Mowry



Rooms at The Graduate always reference local lore, such as this pillow depicting downtown Providence. Image: Lisa Mowry



Part of Providence's charm is its reputation as a college town — home to Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design, among others. The bell tower at Ivy League Brown is an iconic structure. Image: Lisa Mowry



Drink like a local and try a "coffee cabinet," which is more or less a coffee-flavored milkshake. Delekta Pharmacy in [Warren, Rhode Island](#) serves up a small-town version of the old-fashioned drugstore. Image: Lisa Mowry



New to the Providence food scene, [Plant City](#) is all about plant-based, vegan meals and educational events.



[Federal Hill](#) in Providence is mostly known as "Little Italy," but also features cuisines from other nationalities. Image: Rhode Island Commerce

### Day Three

Before you head for home, wander down to Ellie's for a hearty breakfast, with a bit of Parisian flair, in the heart of downtown. And if there's time, stop in the renowned art museum at [Rhode Island School of Design](#), a New England treasure that is sure to ignite the creative juices before your departure.

When you're ready to start planning your visit to Rhode Island, check out [visitrhodeisland.com](http://visitrhodeisland.com).

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