

New England vacations: 9 ways to enjoy the water this fall

Swimming is still possible, the fish are plentiful, and the tourists are gone. Now's the smart time to head to the region's lakes and beaches.

By **Alyssa Giacobbe**, September 12, 2019, 8:46 a.m.



Sailboats at rest in Stonington Harbor in Connecticut. (CLAY BURKHALTER)

FALL MIGHT REPRESENT a certain end to seasonal wanderlust — back to school, back to routine — but it shouldn't mean you're doomed to be landlocked until summer's all-too-faraway return. Many New Englanders know that the autumn months are actually the best time to get out on the water — the ocean's warm(ish) enough to be swimmable, the fish are plentiful, the seals are back, the tourists out of the way. Mornings and evenings may be a bit brisker than what you enjoyed back in July but, you know, that's what fleece is for.

Fishing for Striper | Block Island, Rhode Island

A trip to Block Island is a little like going back in time: Miles of old stone walls, vast expanses of land trust-preserved green space, and what locals endearingly call “island Wi-Fi” (hopefully your e-mail can wait). While the majority of lodgings have stayed true to the island’s Victorian-era roots — heavy on the four-poster beds and floral wallpaper — this year’s renovation of the former Surf Hotel brings the Block a more retro-modern alternative. Redone by New England-based boutique hotel group Lark Hotels, the new Block Island Beach House (blockislandbeachhouse.com, 401-466-5500) has 31 minimalist-chic rooms featuring original artwork, vintage surfboards, and Polaroid cameras to rent.



The Block Island Beach House. (FROM LARK HOTELS)

September and October offer some of the island's best saltwater fishing, and Captain Chris Willi at Block Island Fishworks (sandypointco.com, 401-466-5392) will drag you out of bed at 4:30 a.m. for a fruitful morning of trolling Narragansett Bay for bluefish, striped bass, and the occasional fluke. Plenty of rocky outcroppings, such as Old Harbor Point, also offer the opportunity to spearfish. At night, celebrate your catch with water-view cocktails on the lawn of the Atlantic Inn (atlanticinn.com, 401-466-5883), followed by nachos topped with local tuna at Eli's (elisblockisland.com, 401-466-5230) or Narragansett Bay mussels at the tucked-away Winfield's (winfieldsbi.com, 401-466-5856).

Ocean Racing and Drinking in the View | Newport, Rhode Island

A regular stop on the professional racing circuit, Newport is arguably the country's epicenter of high-performance sailing, and each of the retired 12-meter class racing yachts at 12 Meter Charters — *Columbia*, *Heritage*, and *Onawa* — come with stories of hard-won victories and close-call defeats (12metercharters.com, 401-851-1216). Get a feel for what it's like to compete in the America's Cup with the three-hour racing experience, which pits two of the boats against one another in a simulated regatta. Participation is entirely optional; you're more than welcome to just sit back and hold on. Spend the night at The Cliffside Inn (thecliffsideinn.com, 401-847-1811), recently refurbished under new ownership and just steps from the 3.5-mile Cliff Walk — one of New England's most stunning oceanfront paths — or the waterfront Gurney's (gurneysresorts.com, 401-849-2600), which recently unveiled bilevel suites. Plenty of area restaurants offer post-sail ocean views, but the one to beat is from the rooftop of the Vanderbilt Hotel (aubergeresorts.com/vanderbilt, 401-846-6200), which serves up a stunning sunset, a stiff Negroni, and blankets for when it gets just a little too fall-like. Sit back and enjoy the autumn twilight as it sets over Newport Harbor; winter, after all, will be here before you know it.