

PureWow

The 15 Most Charming Small Towns in Rhode Island

SEAFOOD, ANTIQUES AND OCEAN VIEWS GALORE

By [Emma Singer](#) Published Apr 14, 2024



When you feel the itch to flee the big city (or even the suburbs), nothing beats a little ocean air. Enter: the most charming small towns in Rhode Island. The Ocean State might be small, but this mid-Atlantic destination proves it's a mighty nice place to vacation—particularly if you're seeking a quiet coastal retreat, replete with natural beauty and as much fresh seafood as you can put away. From the quiet landscapes Foster and Middletown to coastal living in (Taylor Swift-approved) Watch Hill and Narragansett, check out our list of the most charming small towns in Rhode Island and get ready to pack your bags.

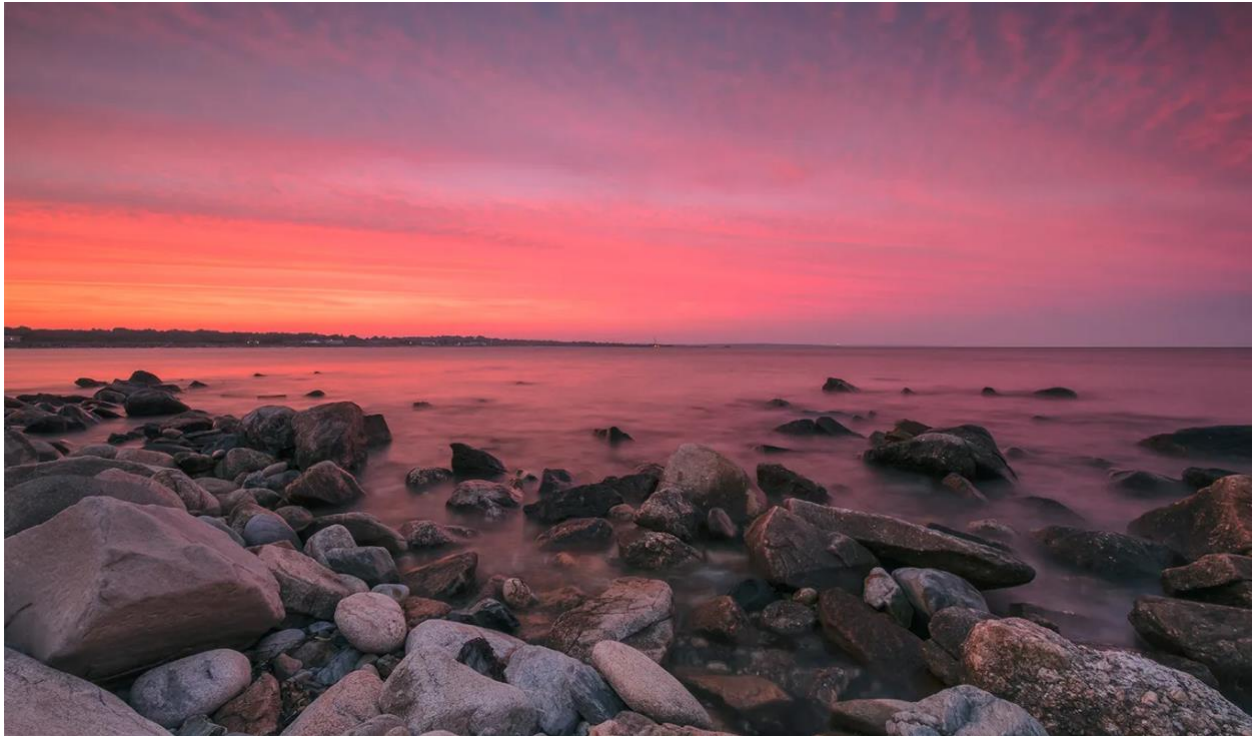


1. Westerly

- **Why We Recommend It:** water activities, beautiful beaches, laid back vibe
- **Where to Stay:** [The Villa at Westerly](#) (from \$219/night); [Blue Whale Inn](#) (from \$149/night); [Home Away Cottage](#) (from \$123/night, sleeps 4)
- **Things to Do:** [Napatree Point Conservation Area](#), water activities, [Atlantic Beach Park](#)

Located on Rhode Island's southwestern shore, Westerly boasts impeccably clean, sandy beaches and a more homegrown vibe than some of the better-known beach towns in the state. In fact, throngs of tourists are the only thing you'll be missing out on when you pay a visit to Westerly, since there is an abundance of water activities on offer ([sailing](#), surfing and fishing, to name a few). And the kids are guaranteed to love romping through Napatree Point Conservation Area and Atlantic Beach Park.

EXPLORE HOTELS IN WESTERLY



2. Narragansett

- **Why We Recommend It:** historic, impressive architecture, beautiful beaches
- **Where to Stay:** [The Sea Loft](#) (from \$320/night, sleeps 6); [The Boho Bungalow](#) (from \$260/night, sleeps 8); [Riverview Beach Cottage](#) (from \$145/night, sleeps 4)
- **Things to Do:** [Point Judith Lighthouse](#); [Coast Guard House](#); [Roger Wheeler State Beach](#)

This historic seaside village is easy to recognize by its two iconic, castle-like towers, which originally served as a casino in the 19th century and continue to draw tourists from near and far. Stunning architecture isn't the only thing you'll find in Narragansett, though. There are also a number of pristine beaches—including Roger Wheeler and Scarborough state beaches—where visitors can soak up the sun. You'll also want to catch the views at Point Judith Lighthouse and the Coast Guard House. The latter is known for its stunning views and classic Rhode Island fare.

EXPLORE HOTELS IN NARRAGANSETT



3. Tiverton

- **Why We Recommend It:** scenic, outdoor recreation, historic
- **Where to Stay:** Cottage by the Sea (from \$180/night, sleeps 6); Waterview Cottage (from \$300/night, sleeps 4); Captain's Waterfront Cottage (from \$138/night, sleeps 2)
- **Things to Do:** Audobon Emilie Ruecker Wildlife Refuge; Four Corners Gallery; Lizzie Borden House

This quaint farm town on the Sakonnet River is home to a host of historic buildings and just a stone's throw away from some of the state's most beautiful hiking spots, including the Audobon Emilie Ruecker Wildlife Refuge and Weetamoo Woods, where the trails wind through a stunning landscape of wildflowers and oak-holly forests. In town, there are charming cafes and art

galleries galore, including Four Corners, which features paintings, ceramics, jewelry and photography. As for those who seek a supernatural thrill, you can tour (and stay at) the Lizzie Borden House, considered by some as the most haunted bed and breakfast.

EXPLORE HOTELS IN TIVERTON



VALERIE PARENTI / EYEEM/GETTY IMAGES

4. New Shoreham

- **Why We Recommend It:** scenic, quiet beaches, outdoor recreation
- **Where to Stay:** [The Atlantic Inn](#) (from \$598/night); [Rose Farm Inn](#) (from \$578/night); [Hilltop Happiness Cottage](#) (from \$183/night, sleeps 2)
- **Things to Do:** [Mohegan Bluffs](#); [South East Lighthouse](#); [Poor People's Pub](#)

When it comes to picking a destination for a peaceful seaside escape, New Shoreham is hard to beat. New Shoreham is the smallest town in the smallest state; it's also the only town on Block Island—a 700-acre swath of land just 12 miles from the Rhode Island coastline. If you hop a ferry to this picturesque town, we suggest you visit the Mohegan Bluffs for stunning views of the Atlantic Ocean, stroll the scenic nature trails, tour the historic lighthouses and lounge on one of

the many pristine beaches. And the trip isn't complete without a meal at the local favorite Poor People's Pub, where both the food and atmosphere are lively.

EXPLORE HOTELS IN NEW SHOREHAM



HOPKINTON/FACEBOOK

5. Hopkinton

- **Why We Recommend It:** historic, scenic, outdoor recreation, water activities
- **Where to Stay:** [Weekapaug Inn](#) (inquire for rates); [Cornerstone Farm Vintage Cottage](#) (from \$185/night, sleeps 6); [Hopkinton Apartment](#) (from \$155/night, sleeps 2)
- **Things to Do:** [Festival Farm](#); [Ell Pond Trailhead](#); camping at [Yawgoog Scout Reservation](#)

Located in the southwest corner of the state, recognized on the National Register of Historic Places and prized for its proximity to major natural attractions—this Washington County gem will make nature lovers swoon. Scenic day hikes are on offer at the nearby [Narragansett Trail](#) or Ell Pond Trailhead, water activities abound at the freshwater ponds in the area, and there are memorable backpacking and [camping](#) experiences to be had at the Yawgoog Scout Reservation. When you're done with your outdoor adventure, be sure to check out the art galleries, food shops and restaurants in town—all of which are easily accessible on foot.

EXPLORE HOTELS IN HOPKINTON



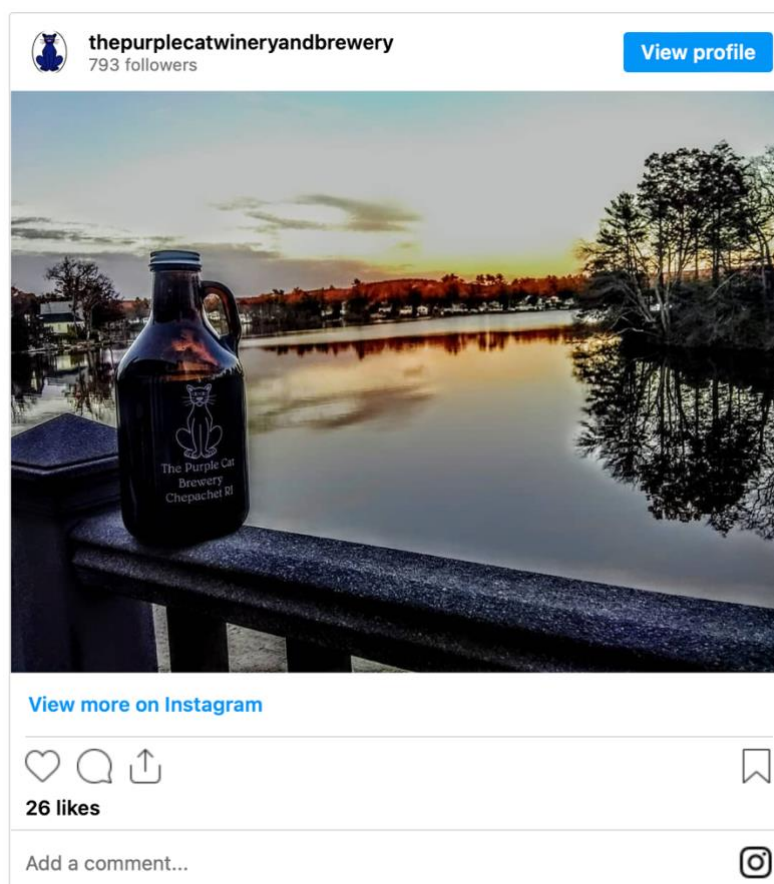
MATT CARR/GETTY IMAGES

6. Foster

- **Why We Recommend It:** relaxing, local wine, water activities
- **Where to Stay:** [Blueberry Pointe on the Lake](#) (inquire for rates); [Country Cabin](#) (from \$250/night, sleeps 6); [Scituate Cottage](#) (from \$85/night, sleeps 2)
- **Things to Do:** [Swamp Meadow Bridge](#); [Nickle Creek Vineyard](#) (open seasonally, beginning in May); [Killingly Pond](#)

The atmosphere is peaceful, the locals are oh-so welcoming, and the town is so quaint, you'll feel like you died and went to postcard heaven. For these reasons and more, Foster ranks high on our list of places to go for an authentic small town experience—and though it might be on the sleepy side, there's still plenty to do in this rural Providence County town. For starters, Swamp Meadow Bridge and [Jerimoth Hill](#) are ideal places to take a romantic walk in a picturesque setting, Killingly Pond is a popular spot for fishing and kayaking, and the local wines served up at Nickle Creek Vineyard can't be missed. Basically, a stay in Foster is like [chicken soup](#) for the city dweller's soul.

EXPLORE HOTELS IN FOSTER



7. Glocester

- **Why We Recommend It:** antique shopping, wine tasting, hiking, water activities

- **Where to Stay:** [Pheasant Ridge Lodge](#) (from \$995/night, sleeps 14); [Burrillville Lakefront Guesthouse](#) (from \$290/night, sleeps 4); [Chepachet Cottage](#) (from \$180/night, sleeps 4)
- **Things to Do:** [Purple Cat Winery](#); [Old Post Office Antiques](#); [Pulaski State Park and Recreational Area](#)

Glocester is yet another Providence County spot with a vibrant personality and plenty to offer. Once you've scored something unique at one of the impressive antique stores (Old Post Office Antiques is a must) in town, head to the outskirts of town for a taste of the outdoors at the nearby lakes, ponds and hiking trails. (We recommend Pulaski State Park with its 13-acre pond and paved trails.) Finish up with a visit to the Purple Cat Winery—a quirky and unpretentious place to taste top-notch vino—and you've got yourself a small-town success story in the making.

EXPLORE HOTELS IN GLOCESTER



BROOKS PAYNE

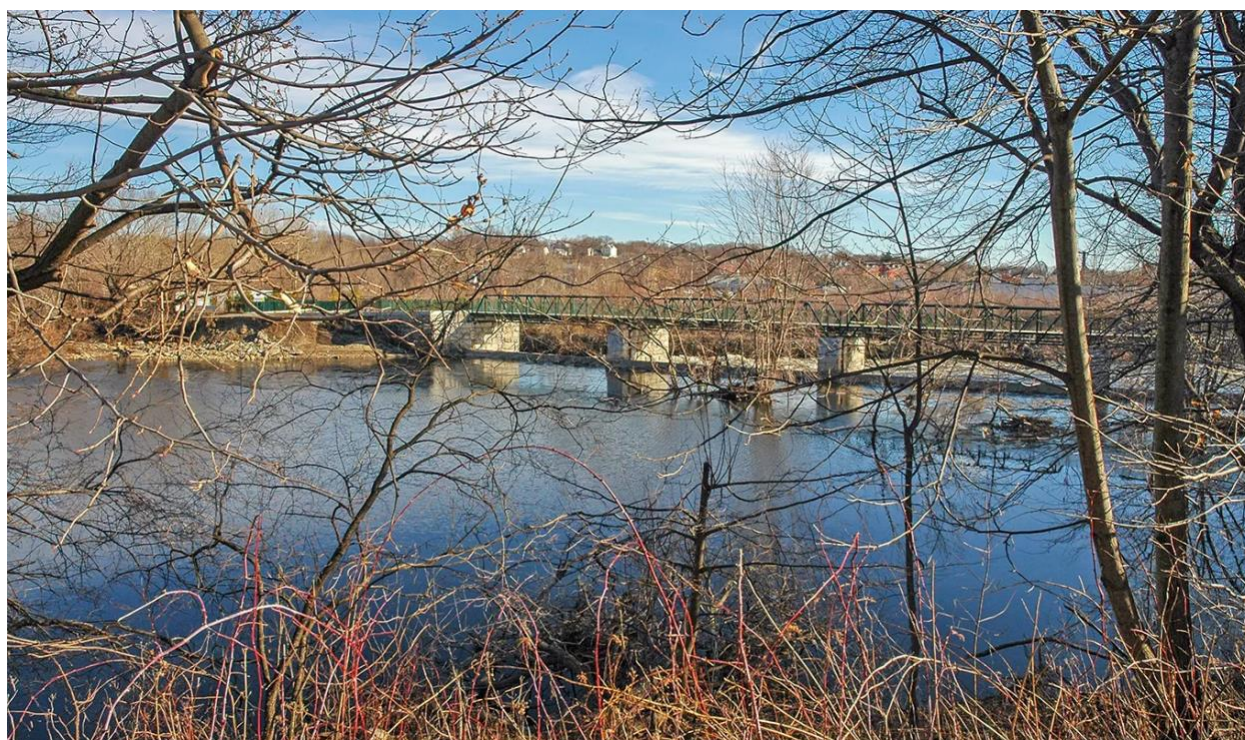
8. [Middletown](#)

- **Why We Recommend It:** historic, natural attractions, beautiful beaches, good eats

- **Where to Stay:** [Carriage House Inn](#) (from \$368/night); [Homewood Suites](#) (from \$409/night); [Middletown Townhouse](#) (from \$165/night, sleeps 4)
- **Things to Do:** [Sachuest Point National Wildlife Refuge](#); [Whitehall Museum House](#); [Sweet Berry Farm](#) (open seasonally from May 12 through Christmas)

Presenting a Newport County town that's decidedly cooler than the (namesake) resortdestination next door. Skip Newport and head to Middletown instead for historic architecture, unspoiled beaches and nature preserves. We suggest starting with a jaunt through Sachuest Point National Wildlife Refuge for serene ocean views. Then, Head to the Whitehall Museum House and dive into colonial history through the farmhouse of Dean George Berkeley. Cap everything off with a stop at Sweet Berry Farm, a beloved outpost for local provisions and a U-pick fruit season.

EXPLORE HOTELS IN MIDDLETOWN



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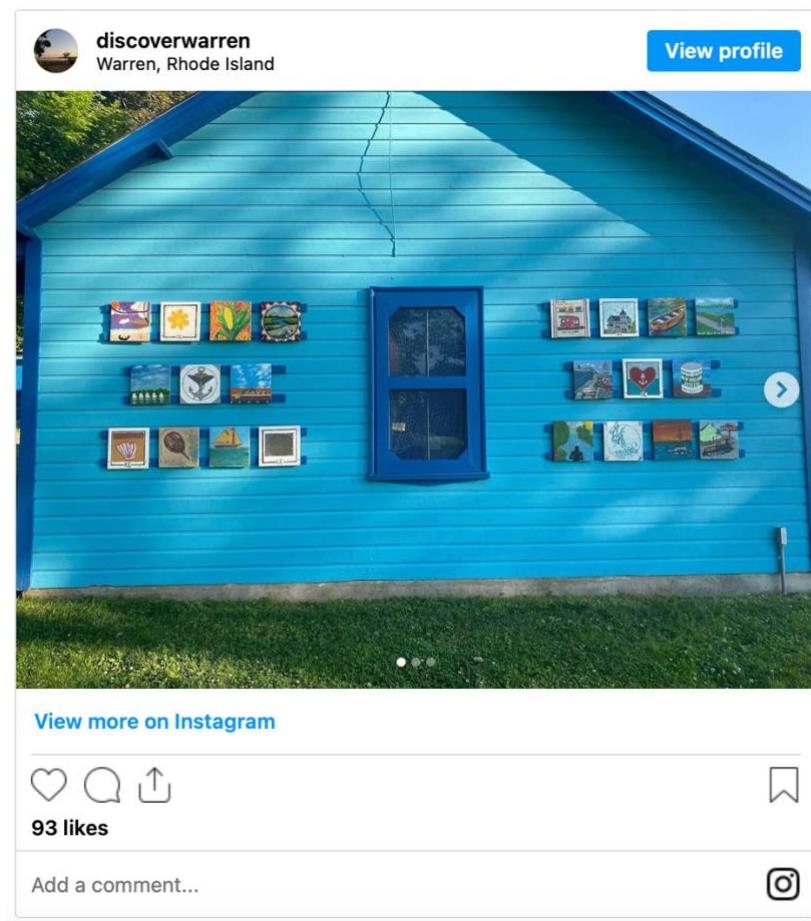
9. Lincoln

- **Why We Recommend It:** historic architecture, natural beauty, outdoor activities, family friendly

- **Where to Stay:** [Residence Inn](#) (from \$239/night); [Brookside Cabin](#) (from \$112/night, sleeps 4); [Loon Mountain Studio](#) (from \$89/night, sleeps 4)
- **Things to Do:** [Lincoln Woods State Park](#); [Arnold House](#) (open seasonally June through October); [Hearthside House Museum](#)

Lincoln is best known as the home of Lincoln Woods State Park, a 627-acre woodland treasure that nature enthusiasts flock to for hiking, swimming, horseback riding and just about every other form of outdoor recreation you can think of. That said, history buffs might want to stick around town, where attractions like the well-preserved Arnold House and the Hearthside House Museum promise to give visitors a taste of the town's rich past. Traveling with kids in tow? No problem: Between paintball wars at [BattlegroundZ](#) and an interactive gaming experience at [TimeMission](#), there's plenty to keep the whole family entertained.

EXPLORE HOTELS IN LINCOLN



10. Warren

- **Why We Recommend It:** bird and animal watching, beach, boutique shopping, good eats
- **Where to Stay:** [Candlewick Inn](#) (inquire for rates); [Warren Bungalow](#) (from \$234/night, sleeps 6); [Waterfront Guesthouse](#) (from \$151/night, sleeps 4)
- **Things to Do:** [Audubon Society of Rhode Island](#); [Touisset Marsh Wildlife Refuge](#); [Ink Fish Books](#)

Here, a tiny Bristol County town with a little bit of everything. It's easy enough to spend a day wandering streets of Warren, dipping into [Alfred's Consignments](#) and [Carmen & Ginger](#) for vintage treasures, and picking up a new read at Ink Fish Books. But there's also a beautiful beach for swimming and lounging, and opportunities for bird and animal watching at the Audubon Society of Rhode Island and the Touisset Marsh Wildlife Refuge. Hint: We suggest you set aside a full weekend for this one.

EXPLORE HOTELS IN WARREN



KEVIN TRIMMER/GETTY IMAGES

11. East Greenwich

- **Why We Recommend It:** good eats, great shopping, museums, natural beauty
- **Where to Stay:** [Springhill Suites](#) (from \$205/night); [East Greenwich Country Home](#) (from \$444/night, sleeps 12); [Honey Rock Farm Cottage](#) (from \$233/night, sleeps 6)
- **Things to Do:** [Varnum Armory Museum](#); [New England Wireless and Steam Museum](#); [Frenchtown Park](#)

For a swankier small town experience, head to East Greenwich—one of the state’s most well-to-do communities and a paradise for foodies and shopaholics alike. That said, East Greenwich is more than just first rate waterfront restaurants, craft [cocktails](#) and bougie boutiques. You can also get some education at the Varnum Armory Museum and the New England Wireless and Steam Museum and view some wildlife in an idyllic natural setting at Frenchtown Park, which is just a hop, skip and jump away.

EXPLORE HOTELS IN EAST GREENWICH



CARRIE BLYTHE / EYEEM/GETTY IMAGES

12. [Little Compton](#)

- **Why We Recommend It:** unspoiled beaches, wine tasting, natural beauty

- **Where to Stay:** [The Edith Pearl Historic Bed and Breakfast](#) (inquire for rates); [Sakonnet Bungalow](#) (from \$398/night; sleeps 6); [Salt Box](#) (from \$250/night; sleeps 5)
- **Things to Do:** [South Shore Beach](#); [Carolyn's Sakonnet Vineyards](#); [Goosewig Beach Preserve](#)

Not to be confused with the Compton on the other coast, Little Compton is a serene seaside town that has, against all odds, fought the commercial-powers-that-be and won. You won't find any big box stores spoiling the natural beauty of the town, or its two gorgeous beaches (South Shore Beach and Goosewing Beach Preserve). Plus, when you're done with the sun and sand, this little oasis on the peninsula has plenty of art galleries to explore and is just a short drive away from Carolyn's Sakonnet Vineyards, an oh-so pretty 150-acre property where award-winning [wine](#) is always on the menu.

EXPLORE HOTELS IN LITTLE COMPTON



MARION FARIA PHOTOGRAPHY/GETTY IMAGES

13. [Bristol](#)

- **Why We Recommend It:** scenic, great of easy hiking, 4th of July destination
- **Where to Stay:** [William Grant's Inn](#) (from \$348/night); [The Monroe House](#) (from \$214/night; sleeps 6); [Boho Bristol Cottage](#) (from \$162/night; sleeps 4)
- **Things to Do:** [Colt State Park](#); [East Bay Bike Path](#); [Blithewold Mansion, Gardens & Arboretum](#)

Calling all patriots: The folks of Bristol love the red, white and blue...and there's a good chance you will, too, if your visit coincides with the town's annual Independence Day bash—a full weekend affair featuring parades, fireworks and lots of enthusiastic locals. The charming mom-and-pop stores and cute cafes that line the streets of town are open year-round, though, and the same goes for the 464-acre Colt State Park and 14.5-mile East Bay Bike Path. But if sports aren't your thing, don't fret: You can pass a sublime afternoon at the Blithewold Mansion and Gardens. Suffice it to say, there's no wrong time to visit Bristol.

EXPLORE HOTELS IN BRISTOL



DENISTANGNEYJR/GETTY IMAGES

14. Jamestown

- **Why We Recommend It:** waterfront views, quiet charm, good eats
- **Where to Stay:** East Bay Bed & Breakfast (inquire for rates); Charming Victorian Cottage (from \$420/night; sleeps 6); Iolee Cottage (from \$247/night; sleeps 2)
- **Things to Do:** Beavertail State Park; walk Main Street; have a lobster roll at JB's on the Water

It might be best known as the starting point of the Conanicut Sailing Around the World Competition, but Jamestown has plenty to offer folks interested in land activities, too. Enjoy a scenic coastal hike at Beavertail State Park or head to the lighthouse for the spectacular views of the Naragansett bay before browsing the many shops on Main Street and digging into a delicious seafood dinner at a local restaurant. (You definitely want a lobster roll at JB's.)

EXPLORE HOTELS IN JAMESTOWN



MARION FARIA PHOTOGRAPHY/GETTY IMAGES

15. Watch Hill

- **Why We Recommend It:** beautiful beaches, scenic views, shopping
- **Where to Stay:** [The Ocean House](#) (inquire for rates); [Watch Hill Village Apartment](#) (from \$915/night; sleeps 4); [Waterfront Watch Hill Condo](#) (from \$688/night; sleeps 4)
- **Things to Do:** [Watch Hill Merry Go Round](#); [Watch Hill Lighthouse](#); [Olympia Tea Room](#) (opens seasonally starting April 19)

Maybe its the town's flying horse carousel and waterfront boutiques, or perhaps it's just the breathtaking coastal views and gleaming beaches. All we know is that

Watch Hill is so wonderful that not even Taylor Swift could resist its charm. (Seriously, she has a house there.) We recommend trekking out the Watch Hill Lighthouse for some peaceful ocean views, then heading into town for a bite at the legendary (and 100-year-old) Olympia Tea Room.

[EXPLORE HOTELS IN WATCH HILL](#)