

# The Boston Globe

DAYTRIP

## What's new (and not to miss) in Newport

There will be bugs — but the good kind. And music. And really good food.

By **Diane Bair and Pamela Wright** Globe Correspondent, Updated June 30, 2021, 2 hours ago



Just strolling around Newport feels like a vacation. And this year, the big events are back, so the streets will be bustling. DIANE BAIR

NEWPORT, R.I. — On our last trip to Newport, in the Year that Shall Not Be Named, our favorite preppy party zone was a ghost town, yachts bobbing forlornly on their moorings, streets empty of popped-collared pedestrians, shops shuttered. If New England had tumbleweeds, they would've rolled right down Thames Street.

Fast forward to the present: Even on a recent not-so-warm weekend, this seaport city felt wondrously, delightfully *normal*. Newport's famous Cliff Walk was dotted with tourists in full celebration mode. Folks were day-drinking and slurping seafood at outdoor raw bars. We saw a bachelorette party posse in tiaras and torn jeans, a sure sign that Newport is back.

And here's the biggest news: After going virtual last year, some of Newport's major events are back on. The Newport Folk Festival ([www.newportfolk.org](http://www.newportfolk.org)) will open on July 23, and the Newport Jazz Festival ([www.newportjazz.org](http://www.newportjazz.org)) follows on July 30. The venue for both is Fort Adams State Park, situated at the mouth of the harbor — a spot described by My Morning Jacket frontman Jim James as “just magical” in an interview in Spin Magazine.

These signature Newport events, launched in the 1950s, are back with some COVID-era modifications. Newport Folk will be spread across six days instead of three to accommodate reduced capacities (July 23-25, and July 26-28), and Newport Jazz will take place over three days (July 30, 31, and Aug. 1), organizers say. Performance note: The powerhouse singer Yola (nominated for four Grammys in 2019) will be performing at both the Newport Folk and Newport Jazz festivals. She is only the sixth artist to do so in the event's history. Among the artists slated to appear at Newport Folk are Grace Potter, Andrew Bird & Jimbo Mathus, and Billy Strings. (Events may be sold out by the time you read this, but the festival is maintaining a fan-to-fan ticket exchange. See [www.newportfolk.org](http://www.newportfolk.org) for details.) The talent line-up at Newport Jazz includes Andra Day, Wynton Marsalis, and Mavis Staples.



The entrance gate at The Breakers mansion in Newport, R.I. LANE TURNER/GLOBE STAFF

Of course, when you hear “Newport,” you think “mansions.” Happily, two of Newport’s famously stately dwellings ([www.newportmansions.org](http://www.newportmansions.org)) will be open for tours this summer: The Breakers and Marble House. Tickets are available online or at the properties. The coolest bit: Picnicking is allowed on the grounds, with the “Stroll the Gardens and Grounds” package, so grab some provisions (try A Market at 181 Bellevue Ave.) and enjoy. Choose one mansion, or the Newport Mansions Duo, or the Summer Passport, which includes admission to The Breakers, Marble House, and Green Animals Topiary Garden. For the operating schedule and rates, visit [www.newportmansions.org](http://www.newportmansions.org). The general opening schedule is through Oct. 31.

Got kids in your party? Definitely make Green Animals Topiary Garden in neighboring Portsmouth part of your agenda. We warn you — there will be bugs. But they won’t be real. Artist David Rogers’s large-scale insect sculptures will be on view through Sept. 26 — the perfect companions to shrubbery-shaped-like animals, no? [www.newportmansions.org](http://www.newportmansions.org).



Sandals made from sailing line? But of course. What else would you expect in this paradise for pleasure boating? We think they're actually a chew toy for dogs. DIANE BAIR

Meanwhile, Midtown Oyster Bar ([www.midtownoyster.com](http://www.midtownoyster.com)) has three outdoor decks, one with a view of Thames Street and the other two overlooking the water. The largest working raw bar in the city is a dandy destination for succulent local littleneck clams and freshly shucked oysters, but they've also upped Newport's taco game. Tuna tartare tacos with pineapple and tomatillo salsa elevate the typical fish version, but you may want to go adventurous, with octopus tacos, Cajun-spiced and charred, topped with house slaw and chipotle crema (\$16).

But there's more than seafood-with-a-view when it comes to outdoor dining. Newport native Sue Lamond offers a dinner menu that spans the globe at Salvation Café ([www.salvationcafe.com](http://www.salvationcafe.com)) in the burgeoning Broadway neighborhood. Cajun jambalaya with fresh littleneck clams (\$24), grilled tempeh curry (\$21) and pad Thai with a choice of tofu, chicken, pork belly, or shrimp (\$18) will entice you to snare a table on the small patio, or at least settle in for a coconut mojito in the tiki bar.

We did promise new, so here's a new-y (opened in July 2020) and goodie: Stoneacre Garden ([www.stoneacregarden.com](http://www.stoneacregarden.com)) in the Brick Market Place. Located a short walk from sister restaurant Stoneacre Brasserie, this whimsical eatery is situated under a colorful, circus tentlike awning, swathed in greenery. The menu relies on seasonal ingredients from local farms, including a four-course vegetarian tasting menu (\$30) that's winning raves. Make your way to the rooftop bar, overlooking America's Cup Avenue (and a glorious sunset, if you time it right).





An arched walkway alongside the year-old Hammett's Hotel offers access to the waterfront and an outdoor cafe. DIANE BAIR

## Make it a weekend

A day trip is fun, but who wants to drive back (and skip the sundowners)? Happily, the “Queen of Summer Resorts” (our favorite Newport nickname) has plenty of places to stay, including some newbies. Nobody would ever call Newport cheap, and the hotels definitely aren’t, but it definitely feels like vacation.

Opened last June, Hammetts Hotel ([www.hammettshotel.com](http://www.hammettshotel.com); rooms from \$319) is set on Hammetts Wharf along bustling Thames Street. An arched walk-through alongside the hotel serves as a public access to the waterfront. Independently-owned, the hotel has 84 snug guest rooms (four are suites) with an emphasis on common areas. A hallway gallery features work by local artists. On weekends, a mobile lobby bar offers cocktails and charcuterie. On the hotel’s west side, a patio, reserved for hotel guests, offers comfortable, spaced seating and sunset views. For dining on Hammetts Wharf, pop into Giusto (“quite right” in Italian; [www.giustonewport.com](http://www.giustonewport.com)), opened last September, for “free-style Italian” small plates by Rhode Island native chef Kevin O’Donnell. Giusto’s expansive patio is a fun, lively place to dig into some fried calamari with squid ink tempura and soak up the Newport vibe.



There's plenty of fun to be had in Newport this summer, including music festivals, raw bars, and . . . this place. DIANE BAIR



“We’re located right on the edge of town, but far enough removed from the action that it’s quiet here,” says Rachael Burns, sales director of the Brenton Hotel ([www.brentonhotel.com](http://www.brentonhotel.com); from \$349.) If “quiet luxury” suits your style, this recently opened 57-room hotel, with its yacht-y design, could be just right. Located across the street from the harbor, this one offers sun-drenched spaces, custom-designed furniture, Matouk linens, and little niceties, like a fridge stocked with local ice-cream treats on each floor. Suites have walk-out balconies. Guests quickly discover the rooftop deck, with firepits and heat lamps for chilly nights, a great spot to sip a cocktail and take in the views of city and harbor. Once the summer season is in full swing, they’ll offer harbor tours and island charters on their own Hinkley picnic boat. By land, a Mercedes SUV is at the ready to ferry you around town. Staff-led outdoor activities are available to guests (on a complimentary basis) including guided runs along Bellevue Avenue, and bike tours on Ocean Avenue led by managing director Andy Ross. Courtesy bikes are available for on-your-own exploration, as well.



Want a room with a view? Consider the 57-room Brenton Hotel, one of several recent openings (and refurbishments) in Newport. DIANE BAIR

In the not-so-new, but refurbished category is Hotel Viking ([www.hotelviking.com](http://www.hotelviking.com); from \$399.) Built in 1926 so that mansion owners on Bellevue Avenue would have extra room for their guests(!), the original hotel is connected via skyway to what was once the Viking Motor Lodge, constructed in the 1970s. Rooms are now classified as the Newport Wing (old Viking Motor Lodge) and Historic Wing (guestrooms from 1926.) No two guest rooms are alike. Over the years, the hotel has been restored to its Gilded Age glamor. Recently, they redesigned the spa and expanded the fitness center (now with Peloton bikes) and pool, and are adding gallery displays to an historic staircase. “People used to think of us as old and stuffy. Not anymore!” says marketing manager Emily Rossin. They’re keeping things lively, with elements like a Thursday night cocktail club featuring locally crafted beverages.

One thing that hasn't changed since 2020: We all want to be outdoors. Guests gather on the terrace outside of One Bellevue, the hotel's fine dining restaurant, for dinner and drinks around the fire. But the best spot in the house is on the Hotel Viking's rooftop deck, one of only two in the city, outfitted with lounges and firepits for cocktail-ing-with-a-view. "That is definitely the place to be this summer," Rossin says.