

# TRAVEL+ LEISURE

## The Surprising History Behind the 2-week Vacation

We have Rhode Island to thank for the two-week vacation.

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Car maker [Henry Ford is credited for creating the weekend](#) back in the 1920s but the history of actual vacations is an entirely different story. It dates as far back as 1524 when the first documented 14-day vacation was taken by an Italian explorer on the coast of what is today Rhode Island.

More specifically, Giovanni da Verrazzano arrived in North America aboard the *Dauphine*, determined to find a direct passage to China and Japan via the Atlantic. (Da Verrazzano is often credited as one of the first Europeans to reach the New World, which he explored from Florida to Nova Scotia.) In a letter penned on July 8, 1524 (known as the [Cèllere Codex](#)) to his “boss,” King Francis I of France, Verrazzano described a long and rough journey. The crew faced wild

storms and lost several ships and men, and the looming threat of encountering cannibals had them constantly on edge.

Once they reached the shores of modern-day Rhode Island, they found a lush green coastline where they were greeted by welcoming natives — the [Narragansett Nation](#). Anchoring the *Dauphine*, Verrazzano was so struck by the landscape's beauty and the Narragansetts' hospitality that he decided he and his crew would remain for 15 days to “take advantage of the place to refresh themselves.”

While he may not have had advanced approval for this vacation from the king, the crew spent the next two weeks enjoying their time off in what would eventually be coined “[America’s First Vacationland](#).” They spent their time exploring the wilderness before finally resuming searching for a direct passage to Asia.

At present, the United States is the second-worst country in the world for paid vacation days according to a 2022 report by career resource website [Resume.io](#). What's more, Expedia’s recent [Vacation Deprivation study](#) found that U.S. workers took an average of 11 vacation days a year total — far less than two weeks!