

## Title:

Fall Foliage Scenic Drive in Rhode Island

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## Summary:

Rhode Island may be the smallest state in the union but when it comes to scenic drives it has one of the best. With over 400 miles of coastline and 20 percent of America's National Historic Landmarks, Rhode Island packs plenty of distractions in this fall foliage coastal drive.

## Keywords:

fall foliage, scenic drive, rhode island

## Article Body:

Rhode Island may be the smallest state in the union but when it comes to scenic drives it has one of the best. With over 400 miles of coastline and 20 percent of America's National Historic Landmarks, Rhode Island packs plenty of distractions in this fall foliage coastal drive.

The trip is a one-way 61-mile scenic drive on Route 1A along Block Island Sound until turning North to follow the western shore of Narragansett Bay. You'll eventually hook-up with Route 138 east and shoot over to historic Newport and the scenic 10-mile Ocean Drive.

Along the way are plenty of detours for lighthouses, wildlife refuge trails, beach walking, and quiet village rambles in autumn splendor. And if you've got an extra day, dock yourself at Point Judith and take the ferry across to Block Island and rent a bicycle to tour around and enjoy the stunning fall scenery.

But back to the drive, and let's get going...

Start your scenic drive by heading south on U.S. Highway 1A from Westerly. Look for the sign to Watch Hill Road, which takes you out to Watch Hill, a marvelously preserved Victorian seaside town.

Attractions in Watch Hill include The Flying Horse Carousel, the oldest continuously operating merry-go-round carousel in the U.S., and the Watch Hill Lighthouse, a granite and brick-lined 19th Century masterpiece. The Lighthouse has no parking so you'll park in town and stroll out the 15-minutes it takes to

get there - but it's worth it!

Continue the scenic drive by retracing the road back to US 1A and then heading east. Route 1A merges with Route 1 as you drive towards Charlestown and the Point Judith Area. This part of the drive has numerous beaches, long sand spits, inlets, coves, and turnoffs for salt ponds and wildlife refuges protected by the natural beach barriers on Block Island Sound.

Follow Route 1 until it intersects with Route 108 south and head down to Point Judith and the Junction of Route 1A. Drive the short distance to Point Judith Lighthouse, which was built in 1857. Here you'll also get another great view of Block Island and its cliffs on the horizon. The island is just a short ferry ride from Point Judith and a popular daily excursion for many during the fall foliage season.

Take Route 1A North to Narragansett Pier and on to farms and countryside surrounding the Pettaquamscutt River. This area of stonewalls and forests once housed many Rhode Island plantations that gave the state its formal name of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. In the fall foliage season the forests are ablaze with autumn and add a satisfying splash of color to this coastline tour.

Continue the scenic drive north until it meets Route 138 and then head east on Route 138 over Jamestown Bridge to Conanicut Island, and then over the magnificent Newport Bridge into the city of Newport - once the home of the America's Cup races, and still one of the sailing capitals of the world.

Newport is on the southern tip of Aquidneck Island, and the final leg of this fall foliage scenic drive. It is one of my favorite cities in New England - anytime of the year - but especially during autumn. There's plenty to see and do, as you'll discover...

After the Newport Bridge follow the signs to the Transportation Center. Stay on the main road as it winds through the harbor area, and which offers views of the alleys and passageways leading to million dollar yachts berthed at the docks. Eventually the road becomes Memorial Boulevard until it meets Bellevue Avenue on the right.

Bellevue Avenue is home to many of the famous Newport Mansions and when time allows worth a visit to a few on a return trip. For now admire the "summer cottages" as they were once called, from your driving view and work your way towards Ocean Drive.

Ocean Drive is a 10-mile route that starts on Bellevue Avenue and follows Ocean

Avenue around a rocky peninsular with fishing coves, swimming beaches, and public parks.

The Ocean Avenue part of the drive is probably the most scenic with magnificent houses on rocky necks amidst the omnipresent Atlantic Ocean. A rest stop at the halfway point on Ocean Drive is Brenton State Park, and is popular for picnics and flying kites - it has tables and B-B-Q pits if you can remember to bring your own charcoal.

As you head out of the park you're heading back to Newport Harbor, and you'll pass the Castle Hill Lighthouse, Hammersmith Farm - where former Jackie Kennedy spent childhood years - and Fort Adams Park.

The Fort Adams State Park is on Harrison Avenue and another wonderful destination of its own another day. Turn left at the next intersection, and left again onto Halidon Avenue. Continue right onto Wellington Avenue and you'll pass by King Park on your left, which is at the southern end of Newport Harbor, and leads you back into the city center where the tour ends.

There's a lot of diversity packed into this fall foliage scenic drive and it's in one of my favorite areas of New England, and after you've take the ride yourself I suspect it could be one of yours.