

Title:

Newport RI - Jewel on the Ocean

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Summary:

In the 19th century Newport RI became a popular summer retreat for the wealthy. They built their magnificent mansions and brought along their extravagant yachts and boats. The legacy of this era abounds throughout Newport even today as you'll discover in this article.

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Article Body:

Newport RI has long been the playground for the rich and famous. In the 19th century it became a popular summer retreat for the wealthy escaping the hot humid weather in the large industrial cities of the Northeast. They built their magnificent mansions and brought along their extravagant yachts and boats. The legacy of this era abounds throughout Newport even today.

The mansions still remain and many can be visited and toured throughout most of the year. A trip around Newport conveys a city with a distinct nautical past, and which for many years was the pride and center of American yachting as the home for America's Cup races.

Whoever nicknamed Rhode Island - The Ocean State - must have been thinking of Newport when it was done. Newport lives and breathes the Ocean. In this article you'll experience the vibrant harbor area, relive the Gilded Age in a Newport Mansion, soak up the stunning views on Ocean Drive, and trek the famous Cliff Walk. Newport RI is in a class of its own and your gateway to all this... and much more.

Newport RI is located at the eastern mouth of Narragansett Bay. Either Newport Bridge from the west on route 138, or Mt. Hope Bridge from the North East on route 114 can reach it.

Founded in 1639 Newport quickly became an important seaport with trading routes to the West Indies. Its years as a major seaport ended with the British blockade in 1776, and the subsequent almost leveling of the town by the soldiers. In the

19th century Newport once again attracted attention, but this time as a vacation refuge for the social elite. Many of the attractions you'll visit in this article stem from that gilded age.

NEWPORT HARBOR

The center of the harbor area is Bannister's and Bowen's Wharf's. Here you can yacht "watch" while sipping your favorite beverage or savoring a few steamed mussels - my personal favorite. The alleys in the wharf area are full of specialty shops, restaurants, and open-air bars. In the summer this is a good area to visit mid-morning or late afternoon when it's not so busy.

If you have time experience the harbor on "The Spirit of Newport" cruise that leaves from Bowen's Wharf. This is a one hour narrated tour and passes by many striking attractions as it makes its way out to the southern tip of the Bay. You'll see smugglers coves, backyards of mansions and learn about the history of the city and its colorful citizens.

THE NEWPORT MANSIONS

One of the major draws to the area remains the Newport Mansions. The mansions were affectionately called "summer cottages" by the original owners because they were only used 6-12 weeks of the year during the summer season. These are 70 and 80 room houses and showpieces right down to the last beam of timber - or marble!

There are about 13 mansions in all to visit in Newport RI, with most located on or in the vicinity of Bellevue Avenue. The Preservation Society of Newport County operates ten of these and offers combo priced tickets. I suggest you try and visit no more than three in one day, as they are expansive and to be appreciated in unrushed discovery.

The most popular Mansions are The Breakers, Marble House, and The Elms. But to experience something different visit The Astors' Beechwood, where you'll literally be treated like a guest by role-playing hosts.

THE TEN MILE 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. A wonderful and popular way of enjoying the almost flat terrain is by bicycle, with plenty of places to stop and admire the views.

The Ocean Avenue part of the drive is probably the most scenic with magnificent

houses on rocky necks amidst the backdrop of a windy Atlantic Ocean. You'll see plenty people fishing and others clambering over the rocks searching for creatures in the tidal pools. Why not stop yourself and join them?

Brenton State Park is a halfway point on Newport RI Ocean Drive, and is one of my family's favorite stopping spots to have a picnic and fly a kite. The park allows pets, and has tables and open-pit grills - make sure you bring your own charcoal.

Leave the park heading back to Newport Harbor, and while the scenery isn't quite as spectacular on this part of the trip, you'll pass the landmarks of Castle Hill Lighthouse, Hammersmith Farm, and Fort Adams State Park. The Fort Adams area is worth a few hours touring the old fort and the recreation centers.

THE CLIFF WALK EXPERIENCE

The Cliff Walk provides spectacular views of the ocean, but you have to be prepared to work for it in parts, and it's not recommended for small children. The path is 3 1/2 miles in length and in some areas has been eroded and battered by the natural weather patterns of the area. Wear sneakers if you can, and show caution.

The North End Cliff Walk starts where Memorial Blvd meets Easton's Beach. The first part of the walk is easy on good pavement and leads you to The Forty Steps. After the steps you'll have great views of Ochre Point, Ochre Court, Cave Cliff, and Vineland.

You're now heading towards Bailey's Beach at the South End of the walk. This is a rough section and at times the path is narrow and even seems to stop. But by scrambling over the rocks you'll rediscover the path and be able to take in more stunning views of the ocean area.

Newport RI is a combination of invigorating ocean air with dramatic vistas, a town steeped in history and gorgeous mansions, and a boatload of delightful diversions and distractions to suit every taste, make this one of New England's top destination spots.