

The New York Times

36 HOURS

36 Hours in Newport, R.I.




Gretchen Ertl for The New York Times

From left: On Broadway, a guitar case that bears the image of the Newport Bridge; a trail at the Norman Bird Sanctuary in nearby Middletown, R.I.; display at Le Petit Gourmet on Bellevue. [More Photos »](#)


By FREDIA MOON

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WITH its summer cottages the size of palaces and its century-old status as a yachting capital, [Newport](#) is the quintessential playground of American aristocracy. Still, this harbor town is more than model ships and mansions. The waterfront — with views of wide, tentacled Narragansett Bay — is still Newport's soul, and the estates along Bellevue Avenue haven't lost their Gilded Age glamour. But in a town that seems, on the surface, so untouched by time, there's an undercurrent of youthful rebelliousness. Ambitious upstart restaurants, a boisterous night life and a beachy [surf](#) culture belie Newport's staid reputation.


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[Newport, R.I.](#)

Friday

6 p.m.

1) BOAT DRINKS

Order a sunset cocktail as you watch boats slide under the Newport Bridge, officially the Pell Bridge Newport, at Fluke (41 Bowen's Wharf; 401-849-7778; flukewinebar.com), a New American restaurant above Bowen's Wharf. For drinks, pass the dining room and climb the stairs to the attic-like third-story bar, where the cocktail list includes classics like a Cuba Libre ([rum](#), Coke and lime; \$7) and adventurous signature drinks invented by Jerri Banks, the mixologist behind the Juniperotivo at the Taj Lounge in New York. Try the Fluke Sunset (rum, passion fruit, ginger, lime juice and Super POM; \$12).

8 p.m.

2) NEW KID IN TOWN

Thames Street is Newport's main tourist strip and a spectacle on a warm night. But wander a block or two up from the boutiques, yachty bars and sweet shops, and you'll find quiet back streets that make for a pleasant predinner walk. When your reservation hour strikes — and yes, reservations are a must — head back to Tallulah

on Thames (464 Thames Street; 401-849-2433; tallulahonthames.com). This unpretentious, 10-table dining room is homey and creative; cookbooks line a long shelf above an open kitchen, and checks are delivered in wooden cigar boxes. The chef, Jake Rojas — who has “Live to Cook; Cook to Live” tattooed across his arm in [Spanish](#) — serves nuanced, artistically presented dishes like Bomster scallops (\$34) accented with “carrots in texture” (carrot foam, ginger-carrot purée and roasted baby carrots) and [sous-vide](#) lamb (\$36).

11 p.m.

3) LOCAL MOTION

To escape the summertime crush, head to Broadway Avenue (often called “local Newport”) for dancing at the Fifth Element (111 Broadway; 401-619-2552; thefifthri.com). Recently reopened in a new location after a long hiatus, this nondescript lounge and restaurant is a hangout for locals, who come for quality pub food, including a mean poutine (French fries, cheese curds and gravy; \$8) and pizzas (\$13 to \$16) fresh from a flaming oven. But on Friday nights, after the kitchen closes, the tables are cleared and a D.J. oversees an overflowing dance floor, playing everything from Lady Gaga to '70s dance tunes.

Midnight

4) JUDGEMENT NIGHT

Just down the street, at Pour Judgement (32 Broadway; 401-619-2115; pourjudgement.com), there are gracious bartenders, an impressive beer list — including large-format bottles of hard-to-find brews, like an Andean White Ale (\$12) from [Argentina](#) — and a crowd that includes cadets at the nearby Naval War College, off-shift service workers and traveling yacht crew members. The burger-and-a-beer special (\$7.50) is a hit.

Saturday

9:30 a.m.

5) A SIMPLE CUP OF JOE

On a quiet side street, Franklin Spa (229 Spring Street; 401-847-3540) is a down-to-earth diner with red vinyl booths, potted plants in the windows and a something-for-everyone menu that includes homemade muffins (\$2.50), fruit bowls piled high with seasonal produce (\$5.50) and a lobster Benedict special (\$11.95). You're unlikely to have your culinary mind blown here, but the helpings are fresh and huge, and the regulars, who linger over bottomless cups of coffee (\$1.85), are endearing.

11 a.m.

6) GET SPORTY

Go mansion-gawking by bicycle. Rent a two-wheeler at Ten Speed Spokes (18 Elm Street; 401-847-5609; tenspeedspokes.com; \$35 a day) and pedal along Bellevue Avenue, peering over fences and ornamental shrubbery. Where the avenue meets the Atlantic, take a tour of [Rough Point](#) (680 Bellevue Avenue; 401-847-8344; newportrestoration.org), the one-time vacation home of Doris Duke — tobacco heiress, competitive paddleboard surfer and camel owner. Built in 1891, the 39,000-square-foot, 49-room English manor-style summer house is one of Newport's less-ostentatious "cottages." The tour (\$25, Tuesday through Saturday, 9:45 a.m. to 3:45 p.m.) ends with this year's exhibition, "Dressed to Play: The Sporty Style of Doris Duke," which celebrates vintage bikinis, surfing trophies and Valentino snowsuits.

1 p.m.

7) SHIP SHAPE

Have lunch in classic Newport style — overlooking the marina and surrounded by maritime artifacts — at the Mooring (1 Sayer's Wharf; 401-846-2260; mooringrestaurant.com), the former Station 6 clubhouse of the New York Yacht Club. Socialites slurp oysters (six varieties, \$2.50 each) and throw calorie caution to the wind with a brown paper bag of deep fried lobster, crab and shrimp doughnuts (\$12). Afterward, if you're eager to get on the water, Classic Cruises of Newport (Bannister's Wharf; 401-847-0298; cruiseneport.com) offers tours of the bay in a former rum-smuggling yacht (from \$18) and a 72-foot schooner (from \$27).

4 p.m.

8) RUM AND REVOLUTION

In 1769, there were 22 distilleries in Newport — then the rum capital of the world, supplying liquor to the British Navy. Less than a century later, the [United States](#) was independent, and the last of the Newport rum factories had closed. In 2007, Newport Distilling Company (Coastal Extreme Brewing Company; 293 J. T. Connell Road; 401-849-5232; [newportstorm.com](#)) began producing Thomas Tew — named for the privateer turned pirate — the first rum made in [Rhode Island](#) in 135 years. Tastings (\$9) include a glass and a tour.

6 p.m.

9) TEMPTATION ROW

For gifts, picnic snacks and pick-me-ups, try Bellevue Avenue's Gourmet Trio. You'll find high-end, tea-infused truffles (in flavors like bergamot and jasmine peach blossom) and white chocolate and lavender hot chocolate at La Maison de Coco (28 Bellevue Avenue; 401-845-2626; [laisondecoco.com](#)), artisanal cheeses and local Aquidneck Honey at Le Petit Gourmet (26 Bellevue Avenue; 401-619-3882) and weekend wine tastings at the Newport Wine Cellar (24 Bellevue Avenue; 401-619-3966; [newportwinecellar.com](#); 4 to 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday).

8 p.m.

10) SALTY DOG

Mexican food might not be the first thing one thinks to eat in New England, but Perro Salado (19 Charles Street; 401-619-4777; [perrosalado.com](#)) — Spanish for “Salty Dog” — is a welcome respite from Newport's lobster-and-steak routine. Creative renditions of regional dishes, like tacos stuffed with Baja-style fish (\$16) or Ropa Vieja (seasoned, ultra-tender shredded beef; \$8), have international touches like fresh vegetables, tamarind glazes and panko crusts, without feeling like a fusion cliché. Sit beneath multicolored strands of Christmas lights in the brightly painted patio. After dinner, catch a movie at the Jane Pickens Theater (49 Touro Street; 401-846-5252; [janepickens.com](#)), a 92-year-old movie house in a former Episcopal church built in 1831. The theater shows a mix of art house classics, documentaries and first-run films (\$10).

Sunday

11 a.m.

11) DARK HORSE

At midday, the sun is high overhead, but inside the White Horse Tavern (26 Marlborough Street; 401-849-3600; whitehorsetavern.us) there are low ceilings, oil lanterns, wooden beams and dark maroon and gray walls. Built in 1673, the self-proclaimed oldest tavern in America is antique bordering on morose. Thankfully, the brunch menu has moved into this century, with options like lobster mac 'n' cheese (\$22) and baked egg frittata (\$12).

2:30 p.m.

12) UP IN THE AIR

Before leaving town, stretch your legs and get one last taste of salt air at the Norman Bird Sanctuary (583 Third Beach Road, Middletown; 401-846-2577; normanbirdsanctuary.org; \$6 trail fee), a 325-acre wildlife refuge. Follow the path to Hanging Rock, passing the pond – where you can sometimes spot goslings, herons and lazing turtles – to the edge of the massive, jutting rock formation, where there are views of forests and fields and out to the Atlantic. There are picnic tables on the lawn and a modest “Barn Museum” with taxidermied foxes and sea birds.

IF YOU GO

One-year-old **Forty 1° North** (351 Thames Street; 401-846-8018; 41north.com), on the water, has 28 rooms with stylish, modern touches, like iPads loaded with your morning newspaper, a wet bar and Malin + Goetz toiletries. Many rooms have bay views. Rooms from \$500.

Smack in the bustling center of downtown, the **Admiral Fitzroy Inn** (398 Thames Street; 866-848-8780; admiralfitzroy.com) is a former convent turned 18-room bed-and-breakfast with rooms from \$205, with a two-night minimum on weekends.

For more affordable accommodations, head to neighboring Middletown (about four miles away), where there are plenty of chain hotels with rates from around \$130.