

THE YACHT report

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Why Newport?

HOME OF YACHTING
IN THE USA

Roger Marshall, our US Editor, gives his perspective

Why bring the American Superyacht Forum (formerly Project USA) to Newport, Rhode Island? Newport can be hard to get to. The weather is only agreeable for, at best, eight months of the year. The harbour is small and contains a fishing pier upwind of the best large-yacht yard; and there are a limited number of moorings available for very large yachts.

But the truth of the matter is that these drawbacks are minor compared to all the things that Newport has to offer. Newport and Narragansett Bay give access to some of the finest cruising grounds on the entire East Coast. This fact was recognised as long ago as 1860 when the Herreshoff family started to build and race boats in Bristol, Rhode Island, in the upper reaches of the bay.

They founded the Herreshoff Manufacturing Company, which built many America's Cup defenders, and they also helped establish the Narragansett Bay area as a hotbed for yachting. That tradition continued in the later nineteenth century when many of the very first megayachts lay to anchor in Newport Harbor, among them Commodore Morgan's 302-foot *Corsair* launched in 1898.

The US Navy also recognised Narragansett Bay as a prime port when it established a major naval base on the shores of the bay to the north of Newport. Now only the Naval Underwater Systems Center (NUSC) and the Naval War College remain from those years when the Navy had such a strong presence in the area. Later, the

special event – american superyacht forum



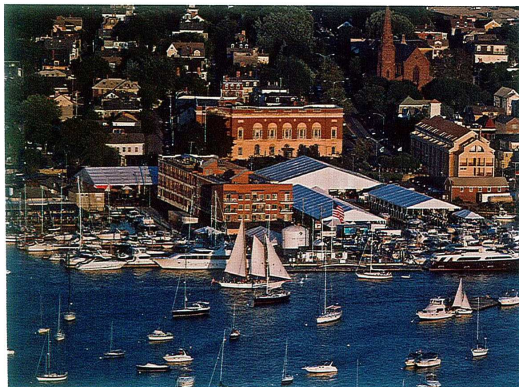


New York Yacht Club established a station in Newport that eventually became the club's Harbour Court facility. When the America's Cup was restarted in 1957, it was held off Newport and stayed there until the NYYC lost it to the Royal Perth YC in 1983. During this time Newport became a haven for yachtsmen from all over the globe, and many of them stayed on to live and work in the Newport area.

Since the US Navy departed Newport in 1973 and the America's Cup left a decade later for its

current imbroglio, Newport has found it necessary to remake itself. Many of the old shipyards along the waterfront have now become condominiums and time-share facilities. Of the old yards, only Newport Shipyard (formerly American Shipyard) and Casey's Marina survive. Newport Shipyard, under the able guidance of Charlie Dana and his son Eli, has expanded to fill all its available space. It is usually running at full capacity during the summer months, leaving yards in other parts of the bay to pick up the slack. Many of these other yards are currently under development, with plans to include facilities for large yachts. But until then, Newport Shipyard is the place to stay and be seen if you are connected to the yachting business. Some of the events at the ASF will be held in Newport Shipyard, or at the nearby Hyatt hotel, which is undergoing a complete refit.

Where are there berths in Newport for large yachts other than at Newport Shipyard? Even now the inner harbour is virtually sold out for the coming summer. In recent years Casey's Marina has been filled up with yachts, and it looks as if it will remain that way this summer. In addition, Goat Island Marina often has a few yachts moored alongside the Northrop & Johnson brokerage office located there. A new restaurant, 41 North, has a single 310-foot-long T-shaped pier with about five feet of water at the inboard end. According to their media person Kimberly Hallman, "There's room for a supermegayacht and another one or two 150-160-foot yachts along this pier. Two 100-foot yachts can be docked on the north dock. And on the end pier – the T-head – boats up to 140 feet can dock." However, you may not refuel, run a generator, or pump out at the facility. "On several occasions last season, upwards of five boats – all over 100 feet – plus several 70-footers were docked at Forty 1" North," she commented.



Many of the former naval facilities dotted around Narragansett Bay are being remade into updated developments, some of which will also cater to yachts. Additional facilities for yachts are under development in other parts of the bay as well. Developer Brian O'Neill has two huge projects under way on the shore of Aquidneck Island to the north of Newport, while across the bay the old SeaBee naval base at Quonset Point is being redeveloped as a mixed use industrial and marine park where IGY is reputed to be considering building a large-yacht refit yard and small marina.

Roger Marshall

Photos: Caroline Hillier, Newport Tourist Office & Onne Van der Wal