

# GALAVANTE

TRAVEL FOR THE WORKING JET SET

Rhode Island Vacation

## ON THE RHODE AGAIN

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Our smallest state enjoys a low profile, what with neighbors Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard constantly basking in the spotlight. But we are totally OK with that, since Rhode-I's DL status means that locals (and road trippers, alike) can selfishly enjoy its striking beaches solo. Which can be precisely what you're looking for in a quick escape from Manhattan.

The state's coastal towns maintain a low-key, surfer-meets-small town New England vibe. Don't expect a scene, but do expect top-of-the-line seafood delivered on fishing boats to Point Judith, across from the Block Island Ferry. Also readily available: antique shops, farms, a sprinkling of galleries and independent bookstores, hidden vineyards and a carousel. There are plenty of opportunities to get out on the water, but don't miss a chance to tour the coastline from above in a 1940 **biplane**. Nothing says road trip like the wind against your face at 800 feet.



**Where:** [Ocean House](#), Watch Hill, RI

**Distance from Manhattan:** 140 miles, about 2.5–3 hours

**Good for:** Spa weekends, corporate retreats, romantic getaways, culinary boot camps, couples' trips, family beach vacays

**The scoop:** One glance at Ocean House, a Relais & Châteaux resort set on 13 oceanfront acres, and you may be compelled to cheat on the Hamptons. Its 650-foot private beach – just a few doors down from Taylor Swift's home – is where yoga, boot camp and tai chi classes are held in warm weather. Two squash courts are available; intro lessons or hands-on clinics are offered. Once you walk past the tournament-level croquet lawn and putting green, and step onto the resort's sweeping verandah with views of Montauk, you'll hope the Ocean State remains a secret.

The hotel reopened in 2010 after a \$147 million renovation. Its 49 coastal-chic-gone-über-decadent guest rooms have marble bathrooms, deep-soaking tubs and 100% cotton Italian-woven towels. As alluring as the outdoor offerings of a New England summer may be, these amenities make it hard to leave the tub, let alone the room. If you're looking to go all out, rent the three-bedroom Penthouse Suite, one of 15 signature suites designed for extended stays. It has two dining rooms, two living rooms, a separate den and open chef's kitchen. Still need convincing? No problem. It's also got an outdoor deck with an additional kitchen and dining area, a lounge, jacuzzi and three-seasons room with 360-degree views of ocean and bay.

In the case that having three dining rooms doesn't tempt you to eat in your suite, options are aplenty on the restaurant front. **Seasons**, a fine-dining venue, is farm-to-table; its menu changes daily with a focus on modern regional cuisine.

The **Bistro** offers classic comfort food like lobster rolls, Caesar salad and burgers. And Sunday Jazz Champagne brunch is a must.



Taking things to the next level (notice a theme here?), Ocean House partners with the Culinary Institute of America, leading guests through a two-part culinary boot camp, and its Farm + Vine dinner series invites noted Relais & Châteaux chefs to prepare three-course, wine-paired dinners. The 12,000 square foot **OH! Spa** and Salon offers a seasonal collection of treatments focusing on rejuvenation. Which is a pleasant follow-up to both a long drive and indulgent meal.

**Not to miss:** Holiday celebrations here are epic, especially the resort's Independence Day Beach Ball (think cocktails, clambake, live music and fireworks), as well as its 12 days of Christmas celebration and New Year's Eve gala.

**What to know:** Rates start at \$555 in the off-season and \$805 for a summer stay. There is a minimum two-night stay on weekends. During peak season (July 1 through Labor Day) there is a two-night minimum on weeknights and three-night minimum on weekends. September can be Rhode Island's best month, since water and outdoor temps are still high. Tourists disappear with Labor Day's fireworks, and traffic on 95 is a breeze compared to summer Fridays. Or take the "road" out of your "trip" and charter a flight into Westerly airport, which is less than 10 minutes from the resort.

**The deal:** Spa getaway package (through June 30 and Sept. 4–Dec. 20) offers

Deluxe and Terrace Water View rooms, daily farm-to-table breakfast, \$150 spa credit per person per night, 10% off all spa additional treatments and spa gift; rate is \$1,185 per night, double occupancy.

The Chef's Counter Experience gives you the chance to sit in front of the restaurant's gorgeous open kitchen and watch as chefs prepare an eight-course meal based on local, seasonal ingredients. \$175 per person; optional wine pairings start at \$95 per person. Reservations are required.



**Where:** [Weekapaug Inn](#), Weekapaug, RI

**Distance from Manhattan:** 145 miles, about 2.5–3 hours

**Good for:** Romantic getaways, family retreats, couples' weekends, spa vacation

**The scoop:** This Relais & Châteaux destination – Ocean House's sister property – redefines modern New England comfort. It's intimate but luxurious, lavish but not over the top; serene but never boring. If Ocean House is Daniel, Weekapaug is Boulud Sud. Tucked alongside Quonochontaug Pond (or Quonnie, as locals say) with views of the Atlantic, the inn has an unaffected elegance. Open spaces with views of the cove and ocean incorporate private nooks for reading by a fire or enjoying a quiet cocktail. It's the kind of place where guests are comfortable engaging in conversation without oversharing.

The main building has 24 rooms and 4 suites, each with different features – some with soaking tubs, patios, cathedral ceilings, enclosed private decks with Jacuzzi – but all with vintage and modern décor, Frette linens and killer views. The two-bedroom signature suites have a chef’s kitchen, full bar, dining area, a library with fireplace and washer/dryer for all those trips to the beach.

The resort’s dining is regionally inspired, and the weekly lobster bakes, complete with s’mores, are not to be missed. If you want to hit the beach for a sunset ride, hop on one of the resort’s bikes. Swimmers have a choice between a seasonal outdoor lap pool and private beach, but the pond is a hub of activity, with paddleboards, kayaks, row boats and crabbing. If leisure is more your speed, grab a Bloody Mary and hop aboard the Quonnie Queen, a six-passenger boat that tours the pond.



**Not to miss:** Everything out of Executive Chef Jennifer Backman’s kitchen is spot-on, but her tortellini with chestnut-white corn polenta, black truffle, cider and brown butter is one of the best pastas on the East Coast. Other highlights include: truffled deviled eggs, clam chowder, Georges Banks sole and housemade ice cream.

**What to know:** Rates start at \$380 in the off-season, and \$445 for a summer stay. There is a minimum two-night stay on weekends. During peak season (July 1–Labor Day), there is a two-night minimum on weeknights and three-night minimum on weekends. Weekend traffic can be tough in the summer, but usually opens up after New Haven. The Merritt Parkway is a nice option if 95 is

slammed; just be sure to check before you commit to a route. A spa getaway package (through June 30 and Sept. 4–Dec. 20) offers a Cove View Deluxe room, daily farm-to-table breakfast, \$150 spa credit per person per night and 10% off all spa additional treatments; rates start at \$935.

*(Photos courtesy of Ocean House and Weekapaug Inn)*