

Indulge Your Senses in Narragansett

Warm winds blow beneath an indigo sky. Stars glitter and fade in their endless game as the first note of a lilting melody is heard above the ebb and flow of the tide....

And so begins an evening of music on Narragansett Beach as the Rhode Island Philharmonic plays their annual concert on July 13. And this is just one of many many delightful things you can do on this narrow strip of land.

For years, Narragansett attracted the monied, well-to-do in-crowd — 169 years to be exact. Joseph Heatly Dulles of Philadelphia, a cotton broker, met with Rowland G. Hazard, a textile mill owner from Peace Dale, to talk shop and do some business. Dulles was so taken with the beauty of the landscape that he brought all his family and friends back the following summer. In those days there were great travel restrictions, so they came for months on end. Narragansett became its own town in 1901 due to heavy resort activity. In fact, the rich and powerful came from all over to partake of sporting, culinary and cultural events - and at the center of their action was the historic Narragansett Pier Casino. It burned to the ground in 1900, but was rebuilt and resumed operations 10 years later.

Ah, but the beach was the thing. It still is. It's the playground of the ocean lovers, rich or poor. There are no boring spots on this crescent of land, no sir. But even if you're not a beachgoer, this quaint little bustling community offers numerous ways to while away your summertime hours.

'Gansett has a trolley service! Park for the day and hop on — tour the whole town if you want to. nstsri.com/schedule-info

Then you have to eat, right? Get over to Crazy Burger at 144 Boon Street. Besides the best damn burger you've ever had and the most creative menu you've ever witnessed, they serve one of the most delicious breakfasts on the planet. They also do mouthwatering smoothies, frozen lemonade and milkshakes. Their dinners are to die for, so please go back for those! Their eclectic feel and outdoor seating under the greenery and lights is reason enough to go back.

Want to work off some of that breakfast? Try hiking the Black Point Trail. It offers stunning ocean vistas as it winds around the dirt trail in a southerly direction. You can wander from the trail and explore the huge granite boulders and tide pools. The trail ends at Scarborough State Beach where the coolest old stone foundation can also be explored (be careful here though — people have slipped off the black rocks and drowned). There's excellent fishing in this area for striped bass, blue fish and scup. Point Judith Lighthouse is just a few miles to the south, so you'll want to get a glimpse of her statuesque beauty.

If you want to catch some rays, get onto the Town Beach (yep, that one) — hit the sand early as it does fill up. You can't go to Narragansett Beach without seeing the famous wall. It runs a length of Ocean Road, starting near the old town well at So. Pier and Ocean Roads, and culminates at this always-busy crescent of sand. Sit and watch the surfers do their thing, swim or take in the scenery. It attracts all manner of people - bikers, sun bathers, bikini watchers, people driving by to see or be seen, or just those sitting on the wall eating lunch. On the sand, join the local crowd at Chair 5. If the crowds are not your thing - here's a list of other beaches to suit your fancy:

Capt. Roger Wheeler State Beach - calm water, great playground, good for families; Sand Hill Cove

- a family beach closer to the shops and eateries in Galilee; Scarborough State Beach - this beach sees a lot of action - great waves, surfers everywhere

Sip on cool summer time drinks, you say? Head over to Turtle Soup at 113 Ocean Blvd, right across from the beach. There's lawn seating with a bar outside with gorgeous ocean views.

A snack might be in order (or a whole lunch). Trek over to Monahans - the Clam Shack is back. It's unfussy, and it's right on the seawall. Go get your food and sit outside under the umbrellas. No reservations needed, it's dog-friendly and it's located at South Pier and Ocean Roads.

If it's a Friday evening, catch the music under the gazebo in the center of town - grab a blanket or a chair, listen to some great music and check out the scenery. The concerts are free and open to the public, and they start at 6pm. narragansettri.gov/546/Gazebo-SummerFall-Concerts

Now, you can't leave Narragansett without going to the Towers, those beautiful iconic structures of stone at 35 Ocean Road. They once functioned as the entrance to the Casino. Lots of things happen here - from bands on Thursday nights to ballroom dancing lessons every Wednesday night. They also give free tours by appointment. thetowersri.com/events



For a daytime excursion, try kayaking the Narrow River. You can bring your own kayak like I do, or rent one. There's a cool sand bar where you can pull up with your picnic lunch and just relax. Take in the scenery of the ever-changing mouth of the river - on a hot day it's wonderful! (But be careful if you go beyond the mouth; it's open water and if you're not an experienced sea kayaker, it can be dangerous.) You can even walk across the dunes to the beach or paddle up to the general store at Middlebridge Road for a treat. You also can rent canoes and paddleboards. narrowriverkayaks.com/id17.html

Spend a day in Galilee, a beautiful little fishing village overlooking the Block Island Sound. It has some of the best food, the coolest little shops and some great music. Salty Brine State Beach is here, and it's one of the best beaches for kids because it's calm and protected by jetties all around. It's tucked right next to the Pt. Judith Waterway where you can watch fishing boats and the Block Island Ferry go in and out of Rhody's largest fishing port. From here, you can hop on the ferry and take a day trip to the Block, which offers great biking, eateries, beaches, boating and more. If you do, make sure you stop at the Yellow Kittens, a bar at 214 Corn Neck Rd, or the Oar at 221 Jobs Hill Rd, two of my faves.

If getting' happy and listening to jams is your thing - try the upstairs deck at Georges of Galilee - music

on weekends and on Thursdays, and burgers 'n' beer all day long. They have six dining rooms on two floors, al fresco dining and a take-out window. georgesofgalilee.com/events/.to

Over the bridge from Galilee is Great Island, a quiet and beautiful place to take a stroll. You can always get a little crazy afterward at Buster Krab's at 265 Great Island Rd, a stress-free zone with bright colors, good food and fun drinks. It's good for kids, too.

If you feel like a daredevil, go to Adventureland! Try their newest attraction, Big Air Jumping (suitable for all ages and abilities) or try go-karts, batting cages, mini golf or bumper boats. It's loads of fun and you can stuff yourself with ice cream after! adventurelandri.com/attractions

One of the most beautiful things I have seen in Narragansett is the silver moonlight on the water from the upper deck at the Coast Guard House, right next to the Towers. Sip on a hot Irish coffee with your fisherman sweater on. The view is gorgeous and the warmth feels good.

Whatever vantage point you have, you can indulge all of your senses in this town, from food to music to great hangouts and fabulous ocean vistas. This is only a small sampling, so come down and sea for yourself all Narragansett has to offer.