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Canoeing & Kayaking for Novices, Experts & Families on Rhode Island Blueways: America's Newest Statewide Water Trail Network

In a state renowned worldwide for beaches and ocean yacht racing, the secret is getting out: paddling the rivers, ponds and bays of Rhode Island is an experience within reach of just about everyone. Kayakers and canoeists ~ from beginners to experts ~ can enjoy freshwater and saltwater paddling blended with old-fashioned hospitality on miles of Rhode Island Blueways.

Rhode Island has all the ingredients you need for pleasant days and adventures on the water: a long season, diverse waterways to experience, a comprehensive listing of launch sites, great places to stay and eat, knowledgeable outfitters and guides as well as historical, cultural and natural resources throughout Rhode Island with regional tourism councils to assist in planning your visit.

Online Gateway for Paddle Trip Planning

Through www.ExploreRI.org, you will find suitable places to paddle given your skill level and interests. Click on icons for each launch site for trip-planning information. Or, search for sites by criteria, such as county, town, watershed (river system), or type of water (slow-moving, estuary, saltwater, etc).

Each site description also links you to three independent mapping services and describes driving landmarks, shoreline conditions, parking and other amenities. In 2009, more than 170 launch sites are listed.

What is Rhode Island Blueways?

Rhode Island Blueways is a statewide network of paddle trips, ranging from short outings on ponds to challenging crossings of Narragansett Bay. It is also a formal alliance of several

dozen public and private partners who cooperate to:

- Manage www.ExploreRI.org (the online public boat launch directory)
- Promote safety-first paddling,
- Promote conservation of the land and water we enjoy, and
- Make it easy for visitors and residents to line up outfitters, gear, transportation, food and lodging for everything from an afternoon outing to an extended vacation.

Contact Blueways Alliance Partners

[National Park Service - Rivers & Trails Program](#) contact [John Monroe](#).

[Narragansett Bay Estuary Program](#) contact [Meg Kerr](#).

[RI Canoe & Kayak Association](#) contact [Bill Hahn](#).

[RI Department of Environmental Management](#).

[RI Tourism](#) contact [Mark Brodeur](#).

[Ten Mile River Watershed Council](#) contact [Keith Gonsalves](#).

[Taunton River Watershed Alliance](#).

[Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association](#) contact [Denise Poyer](#).

[Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council](#) contact [Bruce Hooke](#).

What Makes Rhode Island a Destination for Paddlers?

Paddlers appreciate more than 400 miles of ocean shoreline (more shoreline per square mile than any other state) and freshwater connections. You can paddle from remote islands and secluded estuaries of Narragansett Bay right into working harbors and downtown waterfronts.

While not all of the state's 1,500 miles of rivers are navigable, Rhode Island has much to offer freshwater paddlers ~ from broad rivers to narrow winding streams, to lakes, ponds and reservoirs of all sizes.

Most of Rhode Island rivers are slow moving, scenic, and easy to paddle. You can paddle through the middle of downtown Providence on the restored Providence, Moshassuck and Woonasquatucket Rivers or venture deep into the Great Swamp on the Chipuxet River, where wildlife sightings are common. You can even find a bit of whitewater on the Branch River in northern Rhode Island.

Explore industrial heritage along the Blackstone River corridor, a waterway reborn after decades of pollution, now abundant with wildlife.

Rhode Island has a long paddling season; most rivers and streams can be paddled from spring through the fall, not just after snowmelt or a heavy rain. Many rivers and ponds are stocked with fish, making the area popular among anglers. The rich waters of Narragansett Bay are popular for salt-water fishing.

The state operates two waterfront campgrounds for tent camping:

- ❑ [George Washington Campground](#) on Bowdish Reservoir in Gloucester (northwestern Rhode Island) and
- ❑ [Burlingame State Campground](#) at Watchaug Pond in Charlestown (southern Rhode Island).

Several other [state park campgrounds](#) located near salt-water are limited to RVs or over-sand vehicles.

On Jamestown Island, the town-operated [Fort Getty Campground](#) is suitable for tents. It also has salt-water access from both the south and north (handy options to avoid wind and waves). Note: Paddling open water on Narragansett Bay is not suitable for inexperienced paddlers without a guide.

For paddlers looking to buy a canoe or kayak, Rhode Island charges no sales tax on boat sales!

Outfitters & Guides for Gear and Services

Outfitters offer a variety of rentals, lessons and guided trips for all paddling skill levels. Here is a sampling of what will be available. Please contact the outfitters directly for more information and to make reservations. You will find links to every outfitter at www.ExploreRI.org.

[Blackstone Valley Outfitters](#) - Kayak sales and rentals just steps away from the Blackstone Bike Path and the river's edge in the [Blackstone Valley River Heritage Corridor](#), entry-level kayak instruction for individuals and groups, and guided trips with naturalist through historic corridor of the Industrial Revolution.

[Canoe Passage Outfitters](#) - Kayak and canoe sales and rentals, guided trips including "Kayaks & Kreme" (trip ends with ice cream cone), moonlight, shell-fishing, and photography, instruction for beginners and intermediates, family kayak camp, rolling clinic, and bike rentals in charming Bristol.

[Eastern Mountain Sports Kayak School](#) - ACA/BCU-staffed kayak school and rental facility, classes and outings for group and corporate events, adaptive paddling for those with physical disabilities, ACA training and certification, wildlife and ecology tours, overnight camping, flat and open water, surfing, rolling, whitewater, wilderness first aid, and swift water rescue.

[Great Canadian Canoe & Kayak Co.](#) - Sales of canoes, kayaks and small craft (including fiberglass, poly and cedar) and accessories.

[The Kayak Centre of Rhode Island](#) - Kayak rentals and sales, instruction for all levels including women's program, "Kayak Kamp for Kids," families and navigation, and one- to three-day guided trips to Block Island.

[Kayak Today LLC](#) - Kayak rentals and river trips in South County (technically Washington County, RI).

[Narrow River Kayaks](#) - Kayak rentals with basic instruction and guided trips on the Narrow River, a shallow estuary. Ocean access is one mile downstream from launch site.

[Ocean State Adventures](#) - Kayaking sales and rentals, ACA-certified instruction and guided tours. Custom-designed team-building programs year-round for organizations. Week-long summer camps for 9- through 16-year-olds. Classes include basic kayaking, basic kayaking for women, stroke development, rolling and rough water maneuvering.

[Osprey Sea Kayak Adventures](#) - Sea kayak sales and rentals, ACA Pro School sea kayak instruction (including surf), guided tours, team-building programs, adventure trips in coastal Rhode Island, Cape Cod, the Bahamas, and the Greek Isles. Also, stand-up paddling and kayak fishing.

[Narraganset Pier Dive Shop](#) - Diving products and services, also kayak rental. One block from Narragansett Bay State Pier #5.

[REI store](#) and [Outdoor School](#) - Canoe and kayak sales, outfitter of outdoor gear and apparel, classes for novices, intermediates and families.

[URE Outfitters](#) - Canoe, kayak and gear sales with on-site waterfront to try out boats.

A Sampling of Outfitter & Hospitality Packages

Here is a sampling of just a few of the packages available for everyone from novice to experienced paddlers and families. See more offerings on websites.

[Woonsocket-to-Cumberland Trip](#) by [Blackstone Valley Outfitters](#)

Join us for a guided paddle along the historic Blackstone River. After meeting at the store we will shuttle to River Island Park in Woonsocket, RI for a six-hour paddle back to the store, including lovely spots accessible only from the water. We'll have lunch and tour of the museum at Kelly Island and finish with a quick water stretch near the end of the trip.

[Rose Island Lighthouse Tour](#) by [Eastern Mountain Sports Kayak School](#)

Join us for a paddling exploration of Rose Island Lighthouse in Narragansett Bay, built in 1870 on the ruins of 18th century Fort Hamilton. Originally called Conockoquit, Place of the Long Point, by the local Native Americans, this 18.5 acre island is a self-sufficient green facility and a National Historic Site. Rose Island itself is a wildlife refuge home to many rare bird species. After a meandering paddle to the island we will land and stay in the ground floor of the lighthouse which has been restored to its 1912 condition, complete with hand pumped water in the kitchen and a *water closet*. This gives you the chance to experience authentic turn of the century lighthouse life and be a *keeper for a night*. The

lighthouse generates 90% of its electricity via a wind turbine, and heats with passive solar and oil fired radiant floor heat. Filtered and purified rainwater is stored in a 3,000 gallon cistern, and bottled water is provided for drinking. We will bring our food and gear out in the kayaks with us, and cook ourselves a tasty dinner. The next morning after a nutritious breakfast, we will explore the island and look for American Oystercatchers and Glossy Ibis before paddling back to the mainland.

[Two-day and Three-day Block Island Fast Track Workshops](#) by [The Kayak Centre of Rhode Island](#)

Fast-track Block Island workshops are ideal for athletic beginners who really want to push themselves a bit, or experienced paddlers looking to refresh their skills and additional technique. The two-day course combines Oceanplay 2 and 3 programs, a day trip along the rugged Block Island coastline, one night of lodging, four meals, equipment and instruction. The three-day program adds a long open ocean paddle with a beach landing.

[Moonlight Paddles](#) by [Ocean State Adventures](#)

A spectacular way to end a summer's day is to join us for a moonlight paddle. We plan departure early enough to get everyone through the safety drill and familiar with basic paddling technique, then head out under the setting sun. As the sun sets and the moon rises, look for the natural phosphorescence in the water, then enjoy paddling back under the light of the full moon. There is no experience to compare.

[Westport Rivers Vineyard Tour](#) by [Osprey Sea Kayak Adventures](#)

What could be better than a day of kayaking on the Westport River? How about a day of kayaking and a tour of the award winning Westport Rivers Vineyard with a four course gourmet meal and wine tasting?! We'll spend the day exploring the East Branch of the quiet Westport River. Along the way we'll watch for osprey, herons, egrets as well as fiddlers and blue crabs. At the vineyard we'll enjoy a tour of the winemaking facility before we sit down to our gourmet wine pairing dinner. A fantastic trip for beginning and skilled paddlers alike.

Paddler-friendly Accommodations at [Wickford Junction Inn B&B](#)

We are a 1880's Country Victorian with three bedrooms, each with a private bath. We can also create a suite for families and groups, for ages 12 and up. Our property is 1½ acres of park-like gardens, full of wildlife. A full, hot gourmet breakfast is served daily. We also feature a Thermo Spa for 6 and a Endless Lap Pool, in our Victorian Conservatory. Both are great ways to soothe sore muscles after a day of paddling. Plenty of on-site parking, with a place to rinse off your canoe or kayak, and a bike rack and porch for bike storage. Sorry, no pets, due to allergies of our guests.

Paddling Events in 2009

In 2008, nonprofit river groups organized 13 paddling events to celebrate the launching of Rhode Island Blueways. Find links to 2009 events at www.ExploreRI.org during the spring and summer.

[Narragansett Bay Paddling Adventures](#) by [Save The Bay](#)

Save The Bay, a nonprofit group, is committed to fostering a personal connection between people and Narragansett Bay and encouraging investment in the Bay's future. With the support of our members, we work to protect, restore and explore Narragansett Bay and its watershed. Our *Explore The Bay* program welcomes over 20,000 people each year to experience the Bay aboard our marine vessels, along the Rhode Island shoreline and in our Providence and Newport education centers. On Saturday, June 20, 2009 we will lead a paddling trip out of Pawtuxet Cove and, if conditions allow, explore upper Narragansett Bay. Our second trip is scheduled for Saturday, July 18th in Barrington's Hundred Acre Cove. All trips come complete with marine educators, canoe guides and other enthusiastic paddlers. Canoes and equipment can be rented for the trip.

The [Rhode Island Canoe & Kayak Association](#) and [Appalachian Mountain Club](#) organize paddling trips all over, including flat water, whitewater and sea kayak.

Outfitters also offer many day outings, classes and guided trips, ranging from introductory lessons to advanced adventures. Contact the outfitters through www.ExploreRI.org for current information.

2009 is the 100th anniversary of [Rhode Island State Parks](#).

10th Anniversary of Rhode Island Rivers Day: Saturday, June 20, 2008. Paddle the Blackstone River with [Blackstone Valley Outfitters](#) or take a free historic river cruise aboard the *Blackstone River Explorer*, a 49-passenger boat, with the [Blackstone Valley Tourism Council](#).

[Aquidneck Island Blue Trail](#) - Explore historic and scenic Aquidneck Island on the Blue Trail for kayaks in Narragansett Bay. Information at [Aquidneck Island Planning Commission](#).

Monthly free river cruises aboard the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*: first Sundays, sponsored by Citizens Bank. [Blackstone Valley Tourism Council](#).

[10th Annual DragonBoat Races](#): Saturday, August 29, 2009 on the Pawtucket River. Taiwan Day Festival as part of the Pawtucket Arts Festival. Festival Pier, Tim Neary Way, off School Street in Pawtucket. Become a DragonBoat paddler by joining the [Ocean State DragonBoat Club](#).

What Else is There To Do in Rhode Island?

Compact size and diversity makes it easy to experience a lot with little travel and great for local *staycations*. From deep in the Great Swamp in southern Rhode Island, where signs of civilization are very hard to find, Providence is only half an hour away by car or bus.

According to Tourism Rhode Island, the Ocean State has more than 400 miles of scenic coastline, featuring more than 100 public and private beaches. Their pristine beauty is one of the state's most appealing attributes. Learn more at www.visitrhodeisland.com.

[WaterFire®](#), created by artist Barnaby Evans, is a series of summer evening celebrations enjoyed by thousands who stroll around Waterplace Park in the heart of Providence as bonfires in metal baskets glow in the Woonasquatucket, Moshassuck and Providence rivers.

The [Pawtucket Red Sox](#) (AAA affiliate of the Boston Red Sox) play 72 games during paddling season, just minutes from downtown Providence at McCoy Stadium.

The [Blackstone River National Heritage Corridor](#), including Roger Williams National Memorial and Slater Mill, offers a bike path, historic sites, museums, and events on the river.

The [Blackstone Valley Tourism Council](#) offers environmental and historical education programs aboard the *Blackstone Valley Explorer*, a 49-passenger riverboat, to school students, Elder Hostel, and the general public.

[Downtown Providence](#), including [Federal Hill](#) for Italian cuisine, [Brown University](#) and [Rhode Island School of Design](#) for galleries and events.

[Gallery Night Providence](#) provides a free, fun-filled introduction to Providence's rich art scene on the third Thursday of the month, starting in March and lasting through November. Each evening includes live music, refreshments, Art Buses, celebrity guides and, of course, a wealth of culture. Parking is free at eight different parking lots throughout the city and Art Busses circle the city from 5 to 9pm for your convenience every 25 minutes or so.

Rhode Island Blueways By the Numbers

- 400+ miles of ocean shoreline - relative to its size, Rhode Island has more saltwater coastline than any other state!
- 100 square miles in Narragansett Bay.
- 100 miles of ocean beaches open to the public.
- 230 access sites shown on www.ExploreRI.org
- ZERO % sales tax on boats charged in Rhode Island.
- 20,000 acres of salt ponds, ponds and lakes.
- 12 outfitters ready to serve visitors and residents with gear and services.
- 13 paddling events held in 2008 to launch Blueways.
- 2009 first full year of Blueways in full swing.

Did You Know That?

- Famous big-leaguers who've played for the [Pawtucket Red Sox](#) (AAA farm club of the Boston Red Sox) include Jim Rice & Wade Boggs.

- ❑ [Slater Mill](#) is part of the [John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor](#) and you can tour this historic birthplace of industry in America.
- ❑ Blackstone River is named for the first English Settler William Blackstone (Blaxton) who settled at the Ann Hope location in Cumberland in 1635.
- ❑ *Pawtucket* and *Pawtuxet* are both Native American terms for *falling water*.