

the public. Perhaps the best of them all is the **Breakers**. This 70-room mansion was built in 1895 for Cornelius Vanderbilt and offers a spectacular view of the Atlantic Ocean. Behind the Breakers lies **Cliff Walk**, a path which starts at **Salve Regina College** and passes by the Breakers and several other mansions. The combination of the ocean scenery and all those glorious houses makes a gorgeous view.

Unfortunately, Newport is not all stately homes and history. It's a tourist trap as well. Thus in central Newport on **Thames Street** you'll find block after block of tourist shops, bars and restaurants. If you can make it past all of that, you'll also find the **Museum of Newport History** (Thames Street at the bottom of Washington Square; 1-401 841 8770), which explains, in rather exhaustive detail, the history of the town. This gives you a thorough introduction for your own sightseeing.

Other attractions in Newport include the **International Tennis Hall of Fame**, the world's largest tennis museum, and the **Newport Art Museum**, which offers exhibitions of work by well-known regional artists, both historic and contemporary.

Newport is also the site of one of the world's premier music festivals. The **Newport Jazz Festival** is held each August, as is the **Ben & Jerry's Folk Festival** (1-401 847 3700 for both events). Both attract tens of thousands of music lovers and sun worshippers eager to spend days sitting out in a field listening to top international musical acts.

The Newport area has three beaches to choose from – which are neatly aligned and numerically named as First, Second and Third beaches. Of these, locals tend to think that Second Beach is the nicest. But for true sun worshippers, the best beach experience is a 30 minute drive away in **Little Compton**. The town, which was founded late in the 1600s, refuses to give in to commerce, so what it lacks in strip malls, convenience stores and even hotels, it gains in natural, untainted beauty.

Route 77 is a single lane country road winding along the rugged Atlantic coast. It offers spectacular views of Little Compton's harbour and acres and acres of farmland. It's ideal for bicycling, or for pretending you're in the south of France. Wine lovers can make a pit stop at **Sakonett Vineyards** and get a tour of the winery and a taste of the product. Sakonnet is the oldest and largest vineyard in New England, and is open daily for tours, tastings and wine sales. If you indulge just a bit too much, sober up across the street at the world-famous **Olga's Cup and Saucer**, a charming little café where you can load up on home-made bread, pastries, cookies and pizzas. They've



The Breakers – where the other half lived.

also got a pleasant outdoor patio protected by leafy trees for warm days. Patrons at Olga's can lazily sip on their iced coffees while they eye the produce for sale nearby at **Walker's Farm**. Walker's supplies many Boston restaurants with organic produce, and late in summer there are bins packed with ripe tomatoes, corn and blueberries, and every other fruit and vegetable you can imagine, all creating a colourful vista.

Further down Route 77 (also called the Main Road) is **Four Corners**, which consists of precisely that – it is nothing more than an intersection. On one side is an antiques store, on another an art gallery and on the opposite sides are **Grey's Ice Cream** and a gourmet shop called the **Provender**. Grey's offers an eclectic selection of home-made ice-creams and yoghurt, while the Provender sells everything from coffee, cookies, olive oil and pâté to its signature sandwiches on freshly baked bread.

Once you've loaded up, make your way along West Main Road to gorgeous **Goosewing Beach**. Getting to Goosewing is tricky, and it's worthwhile to ask for directions from locals, but it's worth the effort. Goosewing offers five miles of pristine beach surrounded by grassy farmland. It is one of the cleanest beaches in all of New England and is usually free of crowds, even in the heat of summer. Parking costs \$5 in spring and \$10 during the summer. Grilling food on the beach is permitted, as is surfing and even nudity in some parts. Families would be

wise to set their lawn chairs by the rocks near the car park (where there are two public toilets and a food stand). Those looking for more serenity, or even a little romance in the buff, can walk further down the beach and stretch out in one of the alcoves near the high beach grass.

### The Breakers

*Ochre Point Avenue, Newport (1-401 847 1000).*

**Open** Winter 10am-5pm Sat, Sun. Summer 9am-5pm daily. **Admission** \$12; \$4 concessions. **Credit** AmEx, Disc, MC, V.

### International Tennis Hall of Fame

*194 Bellevue Avenue, Newport (1-401 849 3990).*

**Open** 9.30am-5pm daily. **Admission** \$8; \$6, \$4 concessions. **Credit** AmEx, Disc, MC, V.

### Newport Art Museum

*76 Bellevue Avenue, Newport (1-401 848 8200).*

**Open** 10am-4pm Mon-Sat; noon-4pm Sun. **Admission** \$4; \$3, \$2 concessions. **Credit** AmEx, Disc, MC, V.

### RISD's Museum of Art

*224 Benefit Street, Providence (1-401 454 6500).*

**Open** 10am-5pm Tue-Sun. **Admission** \$5; \$4, \$2, \$1 concessions; free under-5s. **Credit** MC, V.

### Sakonett Vineyards

*162 West Main Road, Little Compton (1-401 635 8486).* **Open** 11am-5pm daily. **Admission** free.

### Where to eat

Because of its popularity with the higher social circles, the dining and entertainment options here are quite good. The best seafood in town is served by **Scales and Shells** (527 Thames Street; 1-401 846 3474). This casual restaurant tends to be a little noisy but has a good wine list and an extensive menu. If you're looking for a slower pace and a more romantic atmosphere you need only cross the street and hope there's a table available at **Café Zelda** (528 Thames Street; 1-401 849 4002). This candlelit room features cosy tables with dark wood walls, and the food is as good as the lighting. However, it can be just a little expensive. If you're in the



The Newport Jazz Festival. See p268.

mood for quick, cheap American fare, try **Gary's Lunch** (also on Thames Street). Its kitsch vinyl booths are a good place to sit and eavesdrop on the locals over a plate of steaming blueberry pancakes.

### Where to stay

There are no hotels or inns in Little Compton, so your best bet is to find lodging in Newport, which is about a 15 minute drive away. Luckily, when you get to Newport you will find there are many modern hotels and quaint, Victorian bed and breakfasts to choose from. One of the more convenient and (relatively) affordable B&Bs is the **Admiral Fitzroy Inn** (398 Thames Street, Newport; 1-800 343 2863 or 1-401 848 8000; rates \$85-120 off-season, \$165-\$215 in summer). It's a charming, European 19th-century building right in the centre of downtown, and it affords a view of the ocean. A good deal can also be found at the **Newport Gateway Motel** (31 West Main Road, Middletown; 1-800 427 9444/1-401 847 2735; open Apr-Sept; rates \$49-\$59 off-peak, \$79-109 peak). This two-storey motel is nothing to write home about in terms of its appearance, but it's only a five minute drive to downtown Newport. Those looking for an old-world experience, on the other hand, can always try the **Hotel Viking** (1 Bellevue Avenue, Newport; 1-401 847 3300/www.hotelviking.com).

### Getting there

#### By car

Providence is 50 miles from Boston on I-95. Newport is about an hour's drive from Boston. Take I-93 south to Route 24, to either Route 114 south, or Route 138 south. To get to Little Compton, look for signs to Tiverton while you are on Route 24. Take Route 77 south toward Tiverton.

#### By bus or rail

Bonanza (see p278) links Boston to Providence by bus; Amtrak (see p278) by rail. Buses operating locally are run by the Rhode Island Public Transportation Authority (RIPTA; 1-401 781 9400)

### Tourist information

#### Greater Providence Convention & Visitors' Bureau

*1 West Exchange Street, Providence (1-401 274 1636).* **Open** 9am-5.30pm daily.

#### Newport County Convention & Visitors' Bureau

*23 America's Cup Avenue, Newport (1-401 466 2982).* **Open** Summer 10m-5pm Mon-Sat; 10am-3pm Sun. Winter 10am-5pm Mon-Sat.