

**BLOCK ISLAND**

# Block Island | Summer Trip to “Bermuda of the North”

Lori Pedrick • May 3, 2013 •



★★★★☆

4.25 avg. rating (83% score) - 8 votes

Last summer, I went on a scouting trip to Block Island — that lovely little locale some 13 miles out to sea off the Rhode Island coast. The goal was to generate ideas for a cover that would best suit our “Islands” theme for the May/June 2013 Travel Guide (on newsstands now — we work a year out to capture the seasons authentically). We were planning a special feature on “6 of New England’s Best Island Daytrips.” The story included Block Island, Monhegan Island, Peaks Island, Star Island, Nantucket, and Martha’s Vineyard, all of which we knew could provide awesome cover images (and we tried variations of a number of them). But I knew we hadn’t featured Rhode Island on a cover in quite some time; we like to spread the love among all six states as much as we can.

I have a few close friends who grew up on Block Island, none of whom could believe I still hadn’t visited, and all of whom recommended I do just that as soon as possible. I knew, without question, that we’d be able to obtain several stunning options for our cover. I set out to find the hidden spots that best embody the spirit of an island in summer and the spirit of Block Island in particular. Our article, written by Peter Voskamp, was a great starting point for inspiration. I wanted to see, firsthand, each corner of the island; I wanted to find something fresh and evocative, something our readers might not have seen before: something that spoke to summer on this island, and those secret spots that only the locals know about.



Block Island Harbor  
Lori Pedrick

With Peter's article in hand, I contacted Kathy Szabo, executive director of the Block Island Chamber of Commerce. Kathy put me in touch with Stan Mickus, whose family owns and operates the Block Island Express. Our schedules clicked, and after an overnight visit with family in Old Lyme, Connecticut, we set out to catch a late-morning ferry out of New London. My husband and 1½-year-old son, Emmett, joined me. Traveling with a toddler can prove challenging, especially when you're working within a 24-hour time frame on a task as ambitious as this. The notion of touring the island by bike was very appealing, however — with toddler in tow, I needed a quick form of transportation. I needed to make the most of my time here, seeing as much of the island as I could.

Once we landed in our room (with an amazing view) at The 1661 Inn & Hotel Manisses, Kathy suggested we start with a taxi tour with local driver Marguerite Donnelly. Marguerite was lovely and patient in addition to being extremely knowledgeable. It was no surprise to find that she'd grown up on the island. I knew we were in good hands. At every stop along the way, we had ample time to pop out of the car, explore the site, take pictures, and continue on our trek. (This seems to be the average experience with Marguerite, so if you're ever on Block Island, be sure to take her tour.) I wanted that local knowledge, someone who really knew where to be at what time of day to get the best light and the most amazing shots that would really capture Block Island.

And so, our exploration began ...











Heading to Block Island.

Lori Pedrick

We boarded the Block Island Express, a high-speed ferry service out of New London, Connecticut. We couldn't have asked for better weather. A crisp blue sky, the deep-blue ocean, the smell of the salty air, and an island on the horizon. It was idyllic. The gentle hum of the motor put Emmett to sleep for a much-needed afternoon nap before our arrival. From New London, this high-speed ferry takes almost an hour from point to point. While Emmett was asleep, I took advantage of a free moment and headed up to the deck. My excitement grew as I glimpsed of Clay Head Cliffs coming into view and finally Old Harbor and the iconic National Hotel, where our ferry docked.







A quick stop to take in the sweeping views at the Spring House Hotel.

Lori Pedrick

While we were waiting for our 4 o'clock tour with Marguerite, we took a short walk up to the Spring House Hotel — a classic setting with unbelievable views looking out to the Atlantic and almost clear across the island. You can order a quick bite and eat it right out front on the lawn or sit in one of the hotel's Adirondack chairs and soak it all in.





A visit to Southeast Light on Block Island's rocky coast. Marguerite Donnelly (in cap), our gracious tour guide, photographed beside Lisa Nolan, administrator for Southeast Light.  
Lori Pedrick

Southeast Light was built in 1875 along Block Island's Mohegan Bluffs to help deter shipwrecks that the island's other lighthouse (North Light, built in 1829) wasn't entirely successful in preventing. Block Island is surrounded by dangerous shoals and ledges, earning it the moniker "stumbling block" of the New England coast — a nickname that didn't bode well for approaching vessels.





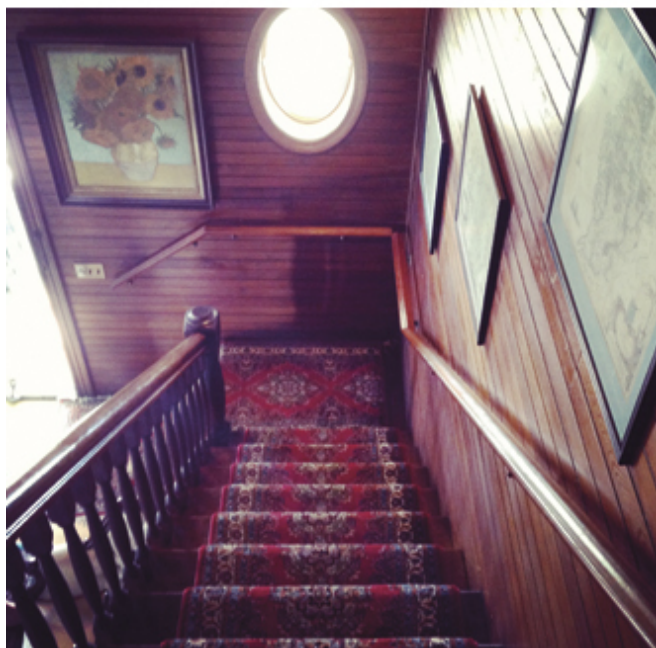
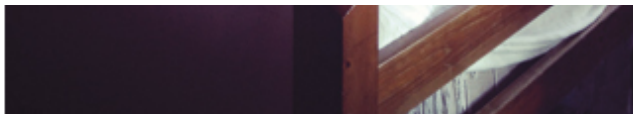


Taking in Block Island's famous Mohegan Bluffs and Rodman's Hollow.  
Lori Pedrick

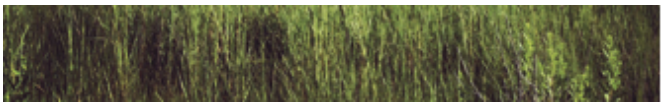
Our next stop was the Mohegan Bluffs, a truly exceptional site. I've seen hundreds of photographs of this location, but being here, walking down the iconic steps (over 100), taking in the salty air, looking down to the white sandy beach kissed by the clear blue ocean, was something I'll never forget. A few minutes away, as we hugged the coast with our guide, we arrived at Rodman's Hollow. Just under 50 acres, this vast blanket of green overlooking Black Rock Point offers a number of trails you can explore on foot. The island has a surprising amount of conservation land.











It's easy to see why The Sullivan House on Block Island is such a popular wedding spot.

Lori Pedrick

The Sullivan House, owned by Rosalie and Sean Kivlehan, Mike O'Brien, and Phil O'Brien, was one of the most promising locations to capture our cover. Many weddings and other functions are held here, and no wonder — just look at the view. This location really spoke to me. The porch was the perfect inviting place to find an escape and watch the sunset over Great Salt Pond. This Victorian inn is exquisite. The rich wood interior is elegant and refined.



As they say at Dead Eye Dick's restaurant, "Come for the food, stay for the view!"

Lori Pedrick



When it was time to eat, we made our way to the interestingly named Dead Eye Dick's, located at Payne's Dock in New Harbor. It first opened in the 1940s and is now owned by the Wronowski family. I decided to live it up and order Surf & Turf. In addition to the food, the meal came with an unbeatable view overlooking the southern end of New Harbor and Great Salt Pond. Insider tip: Be sure to stop in for a fresh donut at Payne's Donuts in nearby New Shoreham! They offer plain, sugar, and cinnamon. These treats are the best to begin (or end) any day.





Back at The 1661 Inn & Hotel Manisses, we sat on the rooftop deck off in the Edwards Room and watched the sunset as the last of the day's ferries floated into and out of the harbor. Our room was charming, with a 4-post canopy bed, TV, and loft with whirlpool tub. The breakfast buffet the next morning was also amazing, offering up omelets to order and all the fixings you can imagine. Apart from the to-die-for rooftop ocean view and the buffet, however, the charming front porch was my favorite part. I enjoyed sitting and watching folks stroll by.



The Manisses Animal Farm on Block Island is a kid-favorite.

Lori Pedrick

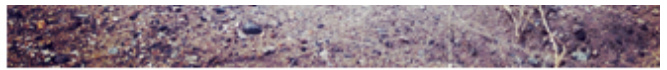
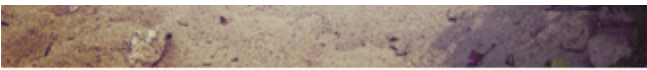
The next morning, at The Manisses Animal Farm, a petting zoo located in a meadow just across from our inn, we met Nyla the friendly camel, the zebu (half zebra, half donkey), and Mr. McDuff, the Scottish Highland steer (who passed away last year). They had an array of exotic animals for the little ones to



feed.







Enjoying the views near Sachem Pond and Settler's Rock.  
Lori Pedrick

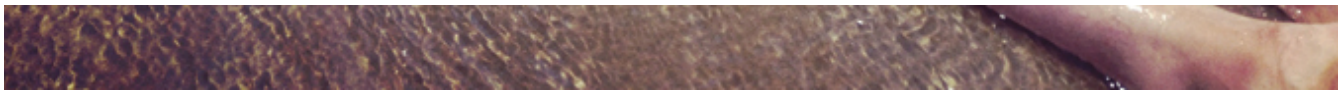
We made our way to North Light, and though we didn't make the trek out to the actual lighthouse, we did spend some time enjoying the views at Settler's Rock and the lush green around Sachem Pond.











Fred Benson Town Beach — the perfect place to end the day on Block Island.

Lori Pedrick

We made our way across the island that day, but we ended the day at Fred Benson Town Beach, once called State Beach, on Corn Neck Road, where we had the chance to refresh ourselves in the cool waters. The bathhouse and pavilion are fully equipped, and best of all, there's plenty of free parking, and admission is free, too.

I moved to New England about five and a half years ago as *Yankee's* art director. I had nearly 12 years of experience working on New England-based publications and a great familiarity with much of the region. I'd always had this notion that some of our islands were just far away, this coming from a transplant now living in southern New Hampshire. I felt I couldn't afford to go or that I needed to dedicate a significant amount of time to get to see each of them. Either way it felt daunting. Considering that we live in south-central New Hampshire, where everything seems to be 2 or 3 hours away, I figured it was inconceivable to have a meaningful trip to any one of our islands, let alone Block Island, which seemed so far. A surprising and delightful discovery was that we can actually go for a day (or an easy overnight) at a very reasonable price, especially during the off-season. Our "Daytrips" story proved to me that our islands aren't as far away as they seem. And if you plan it right, you can find surprising deals, and even a quick daytrip can afford you ample time to explore these treasures, with a bit of time to relax, kick back on one of the beaches, soak in a little sun, taste some local cuisine, and dip your toes in the Atlantic while dreaming of your next visit. We even figured out that if we left Dublin (NH) at 6:00 in the morning we could make it to Block Island and be back in time to tuck Emmett into bed by 9:00 that night.

On a personal level, one of the things I liked most about our trip was how family-friendly Block Island is. It's known for its miles of free public beaches, sparkling waters, spectacular natural beauty, and activities for all ages. Without question, it can be difficult to travel with small children — but all of the vendors and business owners we came across were very accommodating. It truly was a relaxing experience. This seemed to be the norm for "the Bermuda of the North," as author Peter Voskamp calls it.

We visited in mid-July, the height of the season, when there were just enough people scattered across the island to keep the energy level high and that summer-on-an-island vibe alive. It wasn't overly crowded, and we were able to bop around and really see it all. There's a lot to do right as you get off the ferry in Old Harbor: plenty of shopping, dining, and so on. But what impressed me the most was that Block Island is so much larger than I originally thought (all the more to explore). We were there for only a short 24 hours, and yet the impression it left on me was everlasting. I can't wait to return (next time we might bring our own car for ease of transport with the tot). With each trip away from the office, I fall more deeply in love with our region, and I remind myself how lucky I am to have a job that I'm so passionate about, one that affords me the opportunity to learn about and share the wonderful gifts of New England.



Comments

Amanda December 11, 2014

We also love Dead Eye Dick's! Try some of these other restaurants next time!

<http://www.blockislandbedandbreakfast.com/best-restaurants-block-island/>

Reply

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Liza August 13, 2013

One of my favorite places!

Reply

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Lori May 13, 2013

Thank you Julie. You are correct, I mislabeled the hotel. We are correcting the error now.

Many thanks.

Reply

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Julie May 10, 2013

That's not the "Inn at Old Harbor" – it's the National Hotel. 😊

Reply

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