



Rhode Island Essentials

WHAT'S IN A NAME

The state's official moniker is "Rhode Island and Providence Plantations," which is the longest name of any state in the union. The name is a bit of a puzzler as the pocket-sized land mass that comprises much of the state is not in fact an island.

One explanation is related to Giovanni da Verrazzano's 1524 visit to Narragansett Bay. Verrazzano, an Italian exploring the Atlantic Coast on behalf of France, spied what is now called Block Island and thought it similar in appearance to the Greek island of Rhodes and so bestowed the name "Rhode Island" upon it. Later, English colonists, perhaps out of confusion, applied this name to Aquidneck Island which is larger and much closer to the mainland.

Another version of the story holds that the "Rhode" name may have come from the 1614 voyage of Dutch explorer Adrian Block, who not only named Block Island after himself, but applied the name "roode" (Dutch for red) to Aquidneck.

Regardless of its provenance, the name was cemented when England's King Charles II granted the 1663 Royal Charter to the "Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations." Recently, the "Providence Plantations" part of the name, which technically refers to the state's mainland, has generated controversy. Some Rhode

Islanders, particularly those of African descent, find the word “Plantations” racist, and would like to see the state’s official name shortened to the commonly used “Rhode Island.”

Location: One of the six New England states, Rhode Island is bordered on the north and east by Massachusetts, on the south by the Atlantic Ocean and on the west by Connecticut.

State capital: Providence

Motto: “Hope”

Nicknames: The “Ocean State” and “Little Rhody”

State seal: The seal features an anchor and the word “Hope” surrounded by the words “Seal of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, 1636.”

State flag: The flag’s background is white and features a circle of thirteen gold stars at its center. In the middle of the circle lies a gold anchor with a blue ribbon below it inscribed with the word “Hope.”

Year of entry into the Union: 1790

Time zone: Eastern Standard Time

Area code: 401

Voting age: 18

Drinking age: 21

Zip codes: 91 zip codes, all beginning with “028” or “029.”

Legal holidays: New Year's Day (January 1), Memorial Day (last Monday in May), Independence Day (July 4), Victory Day (second Monday in August), Labor Day (first Monday in September), Columbus Day (second Monday in October), Veteran's Day (November 11), Thanksgiving Day (fourth Thursday in November), and Christmas Day (December 25).

License plate: "Ocean State" appears at the bottom, and "Rhode Island" is along the top with a small anchor at the top left. The plate number is superimposed over a wave motif. Specialty plates include designations for war veterans, Purple Heart recipients, National Guard members, and firefighters. There are also specialty plates featuring a sailboat design, Mr. Potato Head (benefits the Rhode Island Community Food Bank), and Conservation Through Education (benefits Save the Bay and the Audubon Society of Rhode Island).

State quarter: Issued in 2001, it reads "Rhode Island 1790 The Ocean State" and features a vintage sailboat in the foreground, and the Claiborne Pell Newport Bridge in the background.

POPULATION

Rhode Island's population was estimated at 1,050,788 in July 2008. Among the six New England states, Rhode Island ranks fifth in population, ahead of Vermont which has about 621,000 people, and behind New Hampshire and Maine which have roughly 1.3 million people each.

Rhode Island is the 43rd most populous state in the US; Hawaii is number 42 and Montana number 44. Other places with a population comparable to Rhode Island's include the Caribbean nation of Trinidad and Tobago, and the western Canadian province of Saskatchewan. Rhode Island's largest city is Providence with a population of 172,459, ranking it 131st in the nation. The population of the Providence-New Bedford-Fall River RI-MA metropolitan statistical area is 1,600,856, ranking 36th in the nation.

- Rhode Island's percentage of the US population of 304.1 million: 0.035
- California's percentage of the US population: 12.1
- Rhode Island's percentage of New England's population: 7.3

Source: US Census Bureau.

COUNTIES

Rhode Island has five counties, and contrary to popular belief there is no such official entity as "South County"; South County Beaches are actually located in Washington County. Almost two-thirds of Rhode Island's population lives in Providence County, which in addition to the city of Providence includes the municipalities of Woonsocket, Cumberland, Pawtucket, East Providence, North Providence, Johnston and Cranston.

TAKE 5 MARK PATINKIN'S TOP FIVE SIGNS YOU'VE BEEN IN RHODE ISLAND TOO LONG

Mark Patinkin grew up in Chicago, but has lived in Rhode Island for more than 30 years. His syndicated column appears in the *Providence Journal* three times weekly, and he is author of *The Rhode Island Dictionary* and *Up and Running: The Inspiring True Story of a Boy's Struggle to Survive and Triumph*. Patinkin lives in Providence with his wife and three children.

1. You stop using turning signals.
2. You haven't gone to a restaurant that's more than 10 minutes away in two years.
3. You get a vanity plate.
4. You start planning your retirement in "Flahrider."
5. You start giving directions by landmark instead of street name: "And then you go under the overpass they tore down 10 years ago...."

County	Pop in thousands	County Seat or Courthouse
Providence	629.4	Providence
Kent	168.6	East Greenwich
Washington	126.9	West Kingston
Newport	82.8	Newport
Bristol	50.1	Bristol

Source: US Census Bureau.

SMALL, BUT DENSE

At 1,045 square miles of land, Rhode Island is the smallest state in the union. Number 49 ranked Delaware is about twice as big, and the city of Houston, Texas is a little more than half Little Rhody's size. Rhode Island's diminutive footprint results in its invocation as a unit of measurement for everything from icebergs, fires, and oil spills to western cattle ranches and foreign principalities. Whether describing an ice shelf or European duchy as "half the size of Rhode Island" clarifies matters is another story.

Moreover, there is no agreement on Rhode Island's size — it is variously reported as just over 1,000 square miles (US Census Bureau), approximately 1,200 square miles (State of Rhode Island) and over 1,500 square miles (World Almanac). It all depends on whether inland and Narragansett Bay water is included. Regardless, Rhode Island's 39 cities and towns are crammed into a limited space, making the state the second most densely populated in the country, trailing only New Jersey.

They said it

" . . . Rhode Island's biggest tourist attraction is not so much its glittering coastline, but its seedy gothic heart . . . "

– Penelope Green, *New York Times*, 2001.

You Know You're From

- You think imprisonment is a standard part of a politician's career path.
- You feel a twinge of pride when you see an Ocean State Job Lot store while vacationing in New Hampshire.
- Employees at multiple Dunkin' Donuts franchises greet you by name and know your "reguluh."
- You don't consider Brown University (unlike RIC, URI and PC) a true Rhode Island school.
- You own a commemorative plate of either JFK & Jackie, Frank Sinatra, or a Pope.
- You can think of no greater honor than having a low-numbered license plate.
- A coffee table fashioned from a wooden lobster trap is in your Florida room or parlor.
- You pronounce "Woonasquatucket" fearlessly.
- You think "a couple of cases of beer" is suitable payment for any favor, from plant watering to bid rigging.
- You shudder at the memory of white knuckle car trips looking down at the grates on the old Jamestown Bridge, certain you would never make it to the other side.
- You have a cache of swizzle sticks and matchbooks from Twin Oaks and other "special occasion" Rhode Island eateries.
- Rocks and sea glass gathered from South County beaches adorn your mantel piece.
- Your children attend the same elementary school as you did.
- You've bet on Newport jai alai players and Lincoln dogs, even though you suspected that both were fixed.
- You've argued about whether the thing on the Federal Hill arch is a pignoli producing pinecone, or a pineapple.

Rhode Island When . . .

- You think of Foster as “out west.”
- You can’t park in your garage because a boat resting on cinderblocks is in the driveway.
- Your family is split on whether the Cardi Brothers are loveable or scary.
- You think crossing the bridge on I-195 linking downtown Providence to East Providence constitutes a major outing.
- Your children are (or were) Feinsein Jr. Scholars.
- You keep meaning, one of these days, to get to the Newport Jazz or Folk festival.
- You think the ultimate hockey franchise is the Mount Saint Charles Academy Mounties.
- You think there is no treasure so rare that it can’t be obtained on Route 2 in Warwick.
- You’ll drive five miles out of your way to save a quarter on a tank of gas, but spend ten minutes idling in the Dunkin’ Donuts drive-thru.
- You know the path to the State House: LaSalle Academy, Providence College, Suffolk University Law School.
- You decide the governor and Congressional delegation are out of touch if you haven’t bumped into them within the last month.
- You’re on a first name basis with the mayor of your town because you (or your cousin, neighbor or aunt) went to school with his sister.
- You think everyone is Catholic.
- Your ears prick up when you hear Rhode Island mentioned in the national media, but you stop listening when you realize it’s only because it’s being used as a unit of measurement.

POPULATION DENSITIES PER SQUARE MILE

Wyoming	5
Massachusetts	816
Rhode Island	1,029
New Jersey	1,175
United States	84
Mexico	145
Netherlands	1,259
Providence	9,400
Central Falls, RI	15,652
New York City	27,281
Tokyo	33,617

TAKE 5 TOP FIVE RHODE ISLAND SYMBOLS

1. **An Anchor.** The anchor is the state's most prevalent official symbol; it was first adopted as colonial seal in 1647.
2. **Rhode Island Red chicken.** The Rhode Island Red originated in the 1850s when a domestic chicken was bred with an Asian rooster. It is considered an outstanding egg layer and was named the state bird in 1954.
3. **The Independent Man.** The 500-pound 11-foot tall gold plated Independent Man sits atop the State House and represents independence and freedom.
4. **Mr. Potato Head.** A 1952 creation of Pawtucket's Hasbro Inc., Mr. Potato Head has been widely licensed and is much beloved in his home state.
5. **The Big Blue Bug.** The 58-foot long nine-foot tall termite is a familiar sight to anyone who has driven I-95 south of downtown Providence. The bug, the mascot for New England Pest Control, debuted in 1980 and has been featured on state lottery tickets and in the movie *Dumb & Dumber*.

CRADLE TO GRAVE

Births: 12,687

Deaths: 9,809

FALLING POPULATION

Rhode Island's 2008 population of just over 1.05 million was down several thousand from the previous year, continuing a trend of yearly population losses. The 2007 count was lower than any year since 2001. Moreover, Rhode Island and Michigan were the only states to lose population in the July 2007 to July 2008 period. Rhode Island is gaining people due to natural increase (births minus deaths), and net international migration (those coming to Rhode Island from abroad minus those leaving). Each of these categories added about 3,000 people to the state population in 2007; however, Rhode Island is hemorrhaging population to other states, losing over 10,000 residents to other US locales during the same period.

MEDIAN AGE

Rhode Island	38.3
US	36.4

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

BIRTH RATE

Rhode Island's birth rate (births per 1,000 population) is 11.6. The rate for the US is 14.2; Utah has the highest rate with 21.0, and Vermont the lowest at 10.4.

Source: CDC.

Did you know. . .

that Rhode Island is the only state which still celebrates Victory Day (otherwise known as V-J Day) commemorating the WWII surrender of Japan to the Allies? The second Monday in August is a legal holiday and local and state government offices are closed, although most businesses remain open.

TAKE 5 ROBIN KALL'S TOP FIVE RHODE ISLAND READS

Robin Kall is the creator and host of Reading with Robin, a Providence radio talk show which debuted in 2002. The program is heard on WHJJ (AM 920), and is devoted to authors, readers, and their favorite books. Kall is Honorary Chair of the Rhode Island Center for the Book's "Reading Across Rhode Island" program. She is also a leading promoter of the American Cancer Society's "Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk," and the "Walking with Robin" team is a perennial top fundraiser. Robin Kall lives in East Greenwich with her husband, two teenagers and a dog.

1. **Ruby — Ann Hood.** A grief stricken thirty-something widow finds a worldly, tough talking, pregnant 15-year-old on the doorstep of her Rhode Island vacation house. West Warwick native Hood lives on Providence's East Side and is the author of a number of books, including *The Knitting Circle: A Novel*.

2. **Confidential Source — Jan Brogan.** A page-turning mystery set in lots of familiar Rhode Island locations and featuring corruption, addiction and a lovable protagonist in Hallie Ahern. Former *Providence Journal* reporter Brogan hits all the right spots in this follow up to her debut, *Final Copy!*

3. **R is for Rhode Island Red A Rhode Island Alphabet — Mark Allio (writer) and Mary Jane Begin (illustrator).** A beautifully designed and illustrated children's book that captures Rhode Island's culture, attractions and natural beauty from "A" to "Z." Barrington's Begin has illustrated numerous children's books, collaborating on this title with her husband.

4. **The Memory of Running — Ron McLarty.** When an accident kills his parents, an out-of-shape middle-aged loser decides to bicycle from Maine to California. His mission? To claim the remains of his long lost schizophrenic sister, now in a Los Angeles morgue. The quixotic narrator recalls his East Providence childhood during an incident packed journey.

5. **Outside Providence — Peter Farrelly.** A coming of age tale that contrasts blue-collar Pawtucket with the tony Connecticut prep school the 16-year-old narrator attends. The 1999 movie adaptation was written by Farrelly and his brother Bobby, and directed by Rhode Islander Michael Corrente.

LIFE EXPECTANCY

Men	75.5	(US 75.4)
Women	80.3	(US 80.7)

Sources: Rhode Island Department of Health, CDC.

POPULATION COMPONENTS

- Percentage of the RI population under 18: 22
- Percentage 65 and over: 14
- Percentage female: 51.7
- Percentage male: 48.3
- Percentage of Rhode Islanders born in the US: 87
- Percentage of Rhode Islanders born within the state: 59
- Percentage 25 years or older who have graduated from high school: 83
- Percentage 25 years or older with a bachelor's degree or higher: 29

Source: US Census Bureau.

ON A TYPICAL DAY IN RHODE ISLAND . . .

- 35 children are born
- 27 people die
- 19 marriages take place
- 8 people divorce

Source: CDC.

Did you know . . .

that Rhode Island drivers are no longer the worst in the US? According to a test administered by GMAC Insurance, Rhode Islanders ranked 41st in the nation in 2008 in driving knowledge. This places the state in the bottom quintile, but is up from Rhode Island's miserable 47th place showing in 2007, and its execrable last place (51 out of 51) performance in 2006.

TAKE 5 TOP FIVE MOST POPULOUS CITIES

1. Providence	172,500
2. Warwick	85,100
3. Cranston	80,500
4. Pawtucket	72,300
5. E. Providence	48,800

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION (2007-08)

- Number of public schools: 338
- Total public school students: 147,629
- Number of school districts: 36
- Number of charter schools: 13
- Number of students enrolled in charter schools: 3,100
- Students attending Catholic schools: 16,000

Did you know . . .

that Rhode Island has 764 bridges? The state has the regrettable distinction of leading the nation in percentage of “structurally deficient” and “functionally obsolete” bridges.

Did you know . . .

that the Roger Williams statue located at Roger Williams University in Bristol actually features the face of Ted Williams, the famed Boston Red Sox slugger of the 1940s and 1950s? There were no definitive images of Roger Williams created in his lifetime, and so North Scituate sculptor Armand LaMontagne used the visage of “the Splendid Splinter” in his stead. The Pawtucket-born LaMontagne also created the Ted Williams statue for the Baseball Hall of Fame.

- Students attending independent non-Catholic schools: 12,208
- Per pupil spending: \$11,769
- Per pupil spending rank in the US: 6th

Sources: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, National Center for Education Statistics, US Census Bureau, Providence Journal.

Brown University

Brown University, founded in 1764 as “The College of Rhode Island” in Warren, moved to the East Side of Providence in 1770. Originally a Baptist institution, it acquired the Brown name in 1804 in honor of benefactor Nicholas Brown, a leading Providence businessman of the time. Brown is one of eight Ivy League schools, and is the seventh oldest college in the nation.

Brown admitted its first woman in 1891 with the establishment of a parallel Women’s College, which received the name Pembroke College in 1928 and merged entirely with Brown in 1971. Brown is well-known for an innovative undergraduate curriculum which allows students unusual latitude in choosing their course of study. This “New Curriculum” evolved in 1969-70 and was conceived by students.

Brown’s long history has lately seemed as much of a liability as an asset. Brown’s current president is Ruth J. Simmons who became the first African American to head an Ivy League institution when she assumed the position in 2001. In 2003, Simmons appointed a committee to study Brown’s relationship to the slave trade. The committee’s “Slavery and Justice” report was released in 2006 and noted that the Brown family were slave owners and traders, and that the college’s first president, Reverend James Manning, was also a slave owner. Moreover, slave labor was used in the construction of Brown’s oldest building, University Hall, and the slave trade was used to generate Brown’s endowment. The report recommended social justice efforts, memorials and educational measures that would acknowledge the college’s historic ties to slavery, and attempt to make some redress.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Rhode Island is home to over a dozen postsecondary institutions enrolling more than 80,000 students. Brown University is the best known, but the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) and the US Naval War College (NWC) in Newport aren't far behind. RISD has spawned a number of big shot artists, while the NWC has its own War Gaming Department.

The University of Rhode Island (URI) is the state's largest university and was established in 1892 as an agricultural school. URI is locat-

TAKE 5 TOP FIVE THINGS NAMED AFTER ROGER WILLIAMS, RHODE ISLAND'S FOUNDER

1. **Roger Williams Park**, Providence. The 430-acre Victorian era park includes a zoo, natural history museum, carousel, botanical center and other attractions.
2. **Roger Williams University**, Bristol. The university occupies 140 acres on Mount Hope Bay in Bristol. Originally chartered as Roger Williams Junior College in 1956, it moved from Providence to its current location in 1969. Younger students can attend Roger Williams Middle School in south Providence.
3. **Roger Williams Medical Center (RWMC)**, Providence. Located in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood of Providence, RWMC specializes in geriatric care and cancer related services.
4. **Roger Williams National Memorial**, Providence. The memorial comprises a small area just north of downtown Providence near where Williams and the other colonists lived. The park-like memorial is run by the National Park Service and has a visitors' center staffed by a ranger.
5. **Roger Williams Inn**, home of the Westerly International Hostel, Westerly. Located in downtown Westerly and constructed in 1880, the inn offers private and shared accommodation for travelers on a budget.

They said it

"A smudge in the fast lane on the way to Cape Cod."

– Journalist Steve Morin describing Rhode Island
in the *Wall Street Journal* in 1983.

ed in Kingston, and is renowned for its Graduate School of Oceanography. Rhode Island College (RIC) is in Providence, and was founded in the 1850s as a teacher's college. The Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) has four campuses throughout the state.

Johnson and Wales University, the state's largest private university, has one of the top culinary arts programs in the country, and New England Tech in Warwick is known for automotive and computer technology. Other Rhode Island colleges include Smithfield's Bryant University, which boasts a top-flight business school, and Roger Williams University in Bristol, home to Rhode Island's only law school. Salve Regina University, a Catholic institution founded by the Sisters of Mercy, occupies a number of the famed Newport Mansions overlooking Rhode Island Sound. Providence College (PC) is also a Catholic school; it was founded by the Diocese of Providence and the Dominican Friars, and has a strong undergraduate liberal arts program, not to mention a top-flight basketball team.

They said it

"[Rhode Island] is a place where politics and governance have been an everchanging soap opera and spectator sport. It is a place of natural beauty and resources unduplicated anywhere in the country, providing a quality of life that natives and wannabes are fiercely proud of."

– *Rhode Island Monthly* President and Publisher John J. Palumbo in
the twentieth anniversary edition of the magazine in May 2008.

They said it

"Beginning as an unpromising collection of outcasts, malcontents, squatters, and dissenters, followed by a century and a half of internal dissension and external hostility, Rhode Island emerged as a special place."

– Historians George H. Kellner and J. Stanley Lemons,
Rhode Island The Independent State.

College	Founding	Main Campus	Total Students
Brown University	1764	Providence (East Side)	8,200
RI College	1854	Providence (Mt. Pleasant)	9,000
Bryant University	1863	Smithfield	3,600
RI School of Design	1877	Providence (East Side)	2,200
US Naval War College	1884	Newport	600
University of RI	1892	Kingston	16,000
Johnson & Wales University	1914	Providence (Downtown)	10,000
Providence College	1917	Providence (Elmhurst)	5,300
Salve Regina U	1934	Newport	2,500
New England Tech	1940	Warwick	3,000
Roger Williams U	1956	Bristol	5,100
Community College of RI	1964	Warwick, Lincoln, Providence, Newport	16,000

Did you know . . .

that more than 72 percent of all Rhode Island newborns are delivered at Providence's Women & Infants Hospital? Women and Infants' 9,462 deliveries in 2007 ranked seventh in the nation.

MAJOR RHODE ISLAND HOSPITALS

Hospital Name	Location	Founding	Beds
Butler	Providence	1844	117
Rhode Island	Providence	1863	719
Newport	Newport	1873	129
Landmark Med Ctr	Woonsocket	1873	214
Roger Williams Med Ctr	Providence	1878	146
Women & Infants'	Providence	1884	197
Our Lady of Fatima	N. Providence	1892	269
Miriam	Providence	1902	247
Memorial	Pawtucket	1910	294
South County	Wakefield	1919	100
Westerly	Westerly	1925	125
VA Medical Ctr	Providence	1949	119
Kent	Warwick	1951	359

COMMUNICATIONS

NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES: *The Providence Journal* is available statewide and has a circulation of 149,000, ranking 73rd among US dailies. The state's other dailies are Woonsocket's *The Call*, *The Kent County Daily Times*, *The Warwick Daily Times*, Pawtucket's *The Times*, the *Newport Daily News* and the *Westerly Sun*. In addition to the dailies, there are dozens of other papers, many of them small town weeklies, as well as student, ethnic, foreign language, religious and niche publications. Among the more prominent weeklies is the *Providence Phoenix*, a free alternative paper with a circulation of 60,000, which covers Rhode Island politics, arts and entertainment. The best known monthly is the glossy *Rhode Island Monthly* whose "Best of Rhode Island" edition is among several special issues it publishes yearly.