



Newport, Rhode Island – Houses, Mansions and Gardens from Colonial Days to Gilded Age, and to Today

Wednesday, May 1 to Saturday, May 4, 2024

Arrangements by Classical Excursions

Newport was founded in 1639 on Rhode Island, which is now called Aquidneck Island. No American seaside resort is more famous or historic than Newport. In part, that's because few other places retain so superlative and intact a legacy of extraordinary buildings dating from the early colonial period to the modern day. In the eighteenth century, Newport's harbor was the most important port in the country, especially in the American Revolution, making Newport a very prosperous town. In the mid-nineteenth century summer cottages started to appear and the Gilded Age kicked off around 1865 and ran up to 1915 and World War I. Preservation of historic Newport started in 1945 with the purchase of Hunter House (c.1748) in the Point Section of town – and this led to the formation of the Preservation Society of Newport County (now popularly called Newport Mansions). Newport Preservation Foundation and other groups followed. All major architects and firms are represented in Newport starting with Peter Harrison in the mid-1700's, then to Richard Upjohn, Richard Morris Hunt, McKim Mead & White, Horace Trumbauer, Peabody & Stearns, John Russell Pope, Delano & Aldrich, Charles Platt, to name a few. Today, firms like Fairfax & Sammons, Peter Pennoyer Architects and others are all engaged in projects.

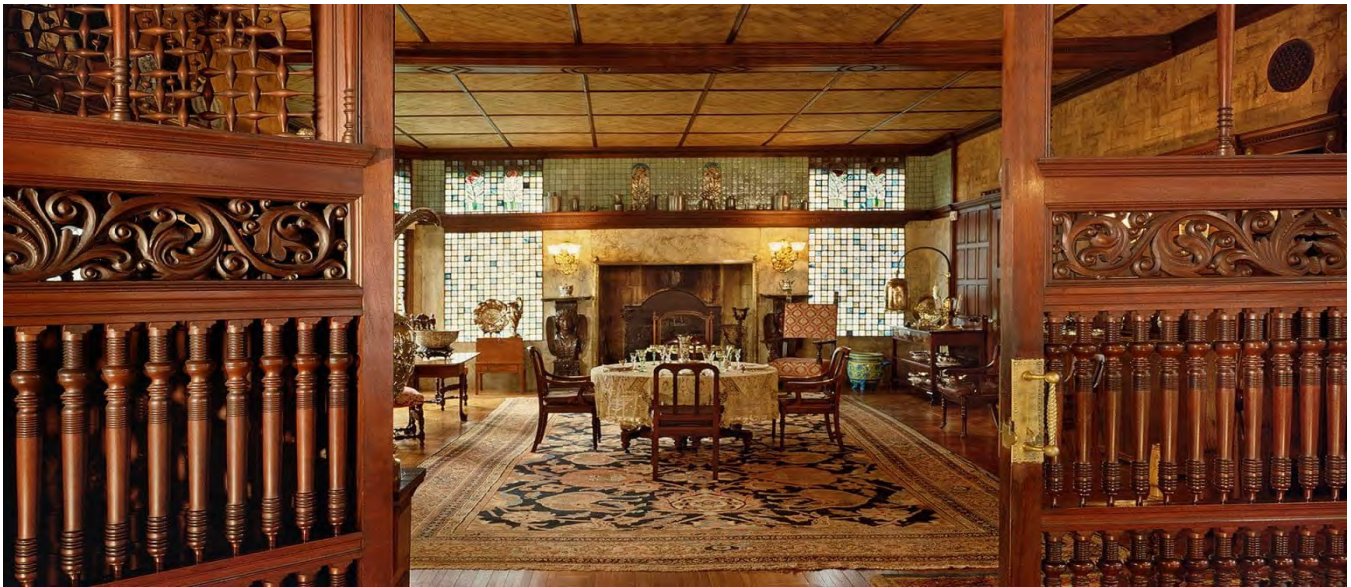


WEDNESDAY • 1 MAY:

We will start in the early evening so we ask you arrive in Newport by late afternoon – by around 4pm. We'll start our evening with a overview drive through the colonial era Point Section and then along **Bellevue Avenue** and **Ocean Avenue** with incredible sunset views of the Atlantic.

Welcome lecture and dinner at the **New York Yacht Club's** property called **Harbour Court** (images above). This once magnificent private home was built for John Nicholas Brown's family and completed in 1906. Perched high above the harbor, it offers incredible views of moored sailing vessels, yachts, Fort Adams, and Narragansett Bay. The house was designed by architect Ralph Adams Cram and inspired by the Chateau d'Osmoy. Our talk will be presented by architectural historian **John Tschirch**. John is an author of numerous books, and he is a professor at RISD and is former head of education at the Preservation Society.

NOTE on NEWPORT: We may substitute some of the visits if we have the opportunity for private visits to some homes.



THURSDAY · MAY 2:

Breakfast at the hotel.

We start our touring with a visit to **Kingscote**, a Gothic Revival 1839 mansion by architect Richard Upjohn. This was the era at the beginning of the “cottage boom.” In 1880, Stanford White was commissioned to design a dining room addition – image above. We will be meeting with Leslie Jones, Chief Curator and Head of Museum Affairs.

Then just up the street is the **Isaac Bell House** by McKim Mead & White dating to 1882 and is an outstanding example of the Shingle Style. We will have a behind-the-scenes visit as the house will just be completing a \$3.285 million-dollar major renovation. (*visit to the interior will be pending contractors work*)

Newport Casino, now the **International Tennis Hall of Fame** – c.1881, architects McKim Mead & White, and done in the shingle style. This was originally designed with both public retail along Bellevue and then private club facilities.

Lunch, followed by a short visit to the **John N.A. Griswold House**, designed by Richard Morris Hunt and completed in 1864 in the stick-style of architecture – it now is one of three buildings of the Newport Art Museum. Another museum building was designed by Delano & Aldrich and completed in 1919.

Special visit to **Redwood Library and Athenaeum**, c.1747, by architect Peter Harrison. On this private visit we will be welcomed by Director Benedict Leca. The Redwood was America’s first purpose-built library, and the oldest continuously operating in its original location. In 1875 the Redwood added Rhode Island’s first art gallery to the building. We’ll be able to explore with their curator a special selection of some of the treasures in the collection.

Our day will end with a private visit.
(pending homeowners schedule).

Dinner tonight on your own.



FRIDAY · MAY 3:

Breakfast at the hotel.

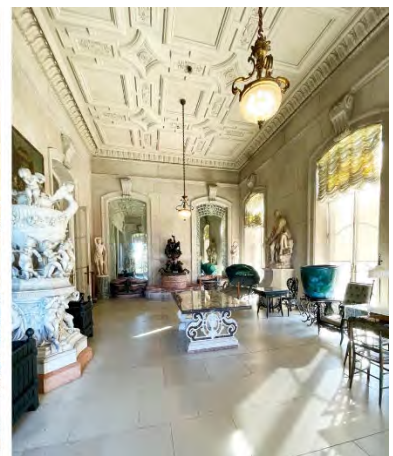
We will have a special morning visit to **The Breakers**, the grandest and largest of all the mansions. Built for Cornelius Vanderbilt II, it was designed by Richard Morris Hunt and completed in 1895. It is in the Renaissance Revival Style with interiors by Jules Allard and Sons and Ogden Codman, Jr. The mansion stands on the site of a previous brick and shingle Queen Anne style house by Peabody and Stearns that had burned to the ground in 1892. The landscape of both of The Breakers was designed by Ernest Bowditch. In



1948, Countess Gladys Vanderbilt Széchenyi leased the property to the Preservation Society of Newport County for \$1 a year to open the first and second floors and take care of the maintenance of the property. Members of the Vanderbilt family continued to use the third floor up until 2018.

We will have a private hard-hat visit to the third-floor of The Breakers, an area not open to the public. This floor contained eight bedrooms and a sitting room for guest, plus a north wing section for staff.

Following lunch, afternoon visit to **The Elms**. Built for Edward Julius Berwind and his family, it was completed in 1901 to the designs of architect Horace Trumbauer. Mr. Berwind's sister Julia kept the house until her death in 1961. Then there was sale of the contents in spring of 1962, and a developer hoped to redevelop the property for multiple housing lots. The Preservation Society was able to purchase the house and grounds in late 1962, saving it from the wrecking-ball. Since that time, approximately 20% of the original contents have made their way back – including, just earlier last year, a donation of Mr. Berwind's bed and dressing console – so there is always hope for more pieces to make their way back. We'll enjoy a walk on the grounds to admire the two garden pavilions, the sunken garden, and the carriage house. Several spaces, including the kitchens, have been featured in the HBO series *"The Gilded Age."*



Farewell dinner that evening. *(location to be confirmed)*

SATURDAY · 4 MAY:

Breakfast at the hotel.

Special visit before opening hours to **Rough Point**, the former home of Doris Duke and now part of the Newport Restoration Foundation which she founded in 1968. The English Manorial style home designed by architectural firm Peabody & Stearns for Frederick William Vanderbilt. Construction on the red sandstone and granite began in 1887 and was completed 1892. In 1922, the property was acquired by James Buchanan Duke and in 1925, 12-year-old Doris inherited the property upon her father's passing. Images below: exterior; Atlantic Ocean facing sunroom porch.



Private visit to Vernon House, c 1760. This architecturally distinguished colonial-era house is an unrestored property and not open to the public. It is a National Historic Landmark as it is known for its extraordinary Asia-inspired wall murals. During the American Revolutionary War, it served as the headquarters of the Comte de Rochambeau, commander of the French forces from 1780 to 1783.



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The **BRENTON HOTEL** is a new boutique hotel opened in July 2020 and overlooks the harbor on one side and the other looks up to historic Colony House on Washington Square. We will have deluxe rooms for 3-nights – you may also request through Classical Excursions to arrive a day ahead or stay longer after. Breakfast included each morning. Valet parking is available. Images: exterior; night view towards Colony House; sunset from hotel lounge; hotel’s The Living Room space for breakfast, and evening drinks and dining.

City View Rooms look into town (image below, top right) | Harbor View Rooms (image below, lower left)



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Ocean Avenue along the Atlantic