

# A Gilded Age Christmas

## 6 Days/5 Nights

Offered Early December



*Photo Credit: The Preservation Society of Newport*

Welcome to Newport, Rhode Island where the Christmas spirit meets the Gilded Ages. *Living Magazine* named Newport one of the 10 Best American Beach Towns for Christmas. The halls are “decked with boughs of holly” at the mansions and the carolers are ready to welcome you. “It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas,” everywhere you go!

### **Day One:**

Arrive by 4:00 pm in Providence, Rhode Island, the capital of Rhode Island and one of the oldest cities in the United States.

Step inside old-world charm when you check into your downtown Providence hotel. With European flair and New England hospitality, this landmark hotel is steeped in historic character dating back to the 19th century. Located in the heart of downtown Providence’s vibrant theater district, the owners’ culture and passion for the arts are reflected with vintage furnishings, art and classic novels sprinkled throughout the hotel. There will be time to relax and refresh.

The remainder of the afternoon and the evening are yours to enjoy at your leisure. If you wish, jump right into the holiday spirit as you explore the unique shops decorated for the holiday season along Westminster Street. The Westminster Arcade, built in 1828, is the oldest indoor shopping mall in the country and is a fine example of commercial Greek Revival architecture.

There are multiple choices for dinner is on your own. The hotel is within walking distance of the best restaurants, cafes and casual eateries. Or stay inside and have dinner at the hotel's Backstage Kitchen and Bar.

## **Day Two:**

A local guide will join you after breakfast and lead you on a fascinating windshield tour of Providence. During your tour, you will quickly learn why Providence has been voted one of America's favorite cities. You will travel through exciting neighborhoods as you learn the story of this capital city, its celebrated citizens and what it has contributed to America. You will also admire historic architecture and the most beautiful settings in the city. Your guide will also explain some of the city's age-old Christmas traditions. There will be opportunities along the way for you to disembark the coach and take photos.

Your tour will end in the historic Federal Hill area. This neighborhood is best known for its Italian American community and abundance of Italian restaurants. You'll feel instantly welcome when you walk under the Gateway Arch and its hanging La Pigna (pine cone) sculpture, a traditional symbol of welcome, abundance and quality. There will be time to scatter to have lunch on your own and to visit the shops and specialty food stores.

From Federal Hill travel a short distance to the Rhode Island State House. The State House is a neoclassical building that houses the Rhode Island General Assembly and the offices of the governor of Rhode Island as well as the lieutenant governor, secretary of state and General Treasurer of Rhode Island. The building is on the National Register of Historic Places. The building served as the United States Capitol exterior in the 1997 film *Amistad*. It also served as the City Hall of Capital City in Disney's *Underdog*.

The dome of the State House is the fourth-largest self-supporting marble dome in the world, after St. Peter's Basilica, the Minnesota State Capitol and the Taj Mahal. On top of the dome is a gold-covered bronze statue of the Independent Man, originally named "Hope". The statue, weighing more than 500 pounds, is 11 feet tall and stands 278 feet above the ground. The Independent Man represents freedom and independence and alludes to the independent spirit that led Roger Williams to settle and establish Providence and later Rhode Island.

It is an annual State House tradition to feature a Christmas tree and community and cultural holiday displays each December. A Fraser fir or Balsam fir is erected in the large central rotunda and decorated. The tree, donated by a local family or tree farm, is typically between 17 and 25 feet tall. It has become a holiday tradition in local media to feature stories about problems with Rhode Island's state tree, often meriting front-page treatment! There will be time to visit the gift shop after the tour.

Depart the State House and return to the hotel. There will be time to relax and refresh before the evening's activities.

Gather in the hotel's lobby and prepare to walk to your dinner destination, just 5 minutes from the hotel. This included dinner is one that you're certain "flip" over. The restaurant is renowned for its traditional French bistro-fare served in a high-end setting. Dine on fabulous cuisine while you take in the fascinating architecture and art displays in this historic building.

Following dinner, restaurant owner, Chef Robert, will show you how to flip a crepe while telling stories of his friendship with Julia Childs. Once the demonstration is complete, try your hand at flipping your own crepe! The "esprit" that inspires Pot au Feu is the idea that life is at its fullest when experienced around the table brimming with delicious food, intriguing conversation, friendship and love – l'amour!

After dinner, walk a short distance to the Alex and Ani City Center, Rhode Island's little "Rockefeller Center." Witness the beautiful Christmas tree decorated for the holidays. Bring out your inner child, rent a pair of ice skates and glide around the rink that surrounds the tree. Or, for those looking for something a bit more adventurous, challenge your co-travelers on the bumper cars.

After all of this fresh air, you may want to gather at a local, nearby pub for a hot toddy before you walk the short distance back to the hotel.

### **Day Three:**

After breakfast in the hotel, pack your bags and check out of your rooms. Today, your travels will take you to Newport.

Before you depart Providence, stop for a tour and demonstration at the renowned Scialo Brothers' Bakery. Learn how craftsman of fine bread and pastries have made wonderful products since 1916. Enjoy the samples and depart with some traditional Italian Christmas cookies to munch on during your trip.

Your next stop is at Smith's Castle in North Kingston. Built in 1678, it is one of the oldest houses in the state and was the original site of Roger Williams' trading post. Williams was the founder of Rhode Island and a prominent Baptist theologian. He built the trading post on the site in 1637 to trade with the Narragansett's after receiving the land from the tribe. Eventually, Williams sold the trading post to Richard Smith to finance his trip to Great Britain to secure a charter for Rhode Island. Join a docent, dressed in period costume for a guided tour of this historic home decorated in traditional style for the holiday season.

Travel a short distance to the quaint Wickford Village nestled amongst beautifully maintained churches and colonial homes. Established in 1709, Wickford Village provides picturesque waterfront streets lined with one-of-a-kind shops featuring jewelry, housewares, clothing, galleries and antique shops. There will be time to shop and to have lunch on your own at one

of the local eateries. (Schedule pending, you may be in Wickford during the Festival of Lights!)

Continue your travels to Newport and arrive at Thames Glass by 2:00 pm. Witness skilled glassblowers shape molten glass into hand-blown vases, ornaments, snowmen, paperweights, perfume bottles and other original designs. Your visit includes a hands-on glassblowing session led by a skilled glassblower where you will create your own glass ornament!

Next, travel less than 10 minutes and arrive at your full-service hotel and home for 3 nights, The Hotel Viking. This award-winning property opened in 1926 and is now a member of the Prestigious Historic Hotels of America. From the Front Desk depicting ancient Nordic Runes to the original 1926 brass letter box in the Lobby, the hotel offers a wonderful combination of style, comfort and modern amenities while brimming with stories of famous dignitaries and celebrities. The guest rooms feature beautiful, period-inspired furniture and the décor of Newport's Gilded Age, making the Hotel Viking the place to celebrate a Gilded Age Christmas!

After you have settled into your rooms, gather in the lounge of the hotel's One Bellevue Restaurant for a wine and cheese welcome reception. The Very Merry Dickens Carolers will entertain you with songs of the season that will instantly put you in a holiday spirit.

Next, gather in the Garden Room, adjacent to the restaurant. Prepare to please your taste buds as you dine on culinary treasures from the sea and the land.

Mrs. Astor will join you after dinner and offer a presentation of dining etiquette as it was during the Victorian Era. She will also present some serving pieces and accessories that adorned the tables of the Gilded Era elite.

#### **Day Four:**

After breakfast at the hotel, travel across Easton Bay and into "downtown" Newport where you will experience Christmas by the sea. Founded in 1971, Christmas in Newport began as a two-week festival that celebrated the noncommercial traditions of the holiday season. In community collaboration among residents, businesses and the city, only clear bulbs illuminate the scenic harbor, the restored colonials of the Point and Historic Hill sections and the Victorian splendor of Bellevue Avenue. The lights are meant to simulate candlelight and are the brainchild of Christmas in Newport founder, Ruth Myers, who wished to recapture the candlelit holidays of bygone days.

Upon arrival meet your local guide, who will be dressed as Mrs. Caroline Astor, the Grande Dame of Newport and New York Society. As you travel along scenic Ocean Avenue and witness the magnificent mansions, learn of the lavish celebrations that took place in these residences. Follow your guide a walking tour of The Point, one of the oldest neighborhoods in

Newport. It also has one of the highest concentrations of colonial houses in the United States. Witness the decorated front doors of these historic homes, as they participate in the Annual Newport Door Decorating Contest.

Next, visit the Elms, the former home of Philadelphia coal magnate, Edward Berwind. Thousands of poinsettias, spectacular evergreens, fragrant trees, decorated wreaths, fresh flowers and 19th-century style ornaments turn the house and its grounds into a Christmas wonderland. Dining tables set with period silver and china, and mannequins dressed in authentic costumes complete the elegant setting. In keeping with the turn of the century tradition, each of the seemingly countless windows are lit with individual white candles, casting a warm glow throughout.

Depart the Elms and travel to Newport's harbor front where you may stroll along the cobblestone streets of Bannister's Wharf. Store windows, lavishly decorated for the holiday season, will inspire your spirit. Shop for that special holiday gift at one of the many boutiques that line the street and have lunch on your own at one of the charming local eateries.

Depart Bannister's Wharf and travel to Blithewold Mansion, where you will arrive at 3:00 pm. In the early 1900's, the Van Wickle family built this stunning 45-room English-style mansion on 33 acres with sweeping views of Narragansett Bay. Every year during the holidays, the mansion transforms into a dazzling display where each room is filled with elaborate holiday decorations. Start your visit with a self-guided tour of the mansion. Then, gather in the formal dining room for High Tea. Sip your tea and savor the flavors of freshly prepared finger sandwiches, warm scones and a variety of pastries.

Depart Blithewold Mansion and travel back to the hotel. There will be time to refresh before you head out to your dinner destination.

About 6:15 pm, arrive at the Newport Playhouse for an evening of dinner and theater. This dinner theater is unique as it offers a great buffet, a wonderful play and a fun-filled cabaret. After dinner, walk into the intimate theater where professional actors will delight you with a wonderful play worthy of Broadway. After the play, return to the dining room that has been transformed into a delightful cabaret where the entertainment continues with song and laughter.

Depart the theater about 8:00 pm and return to the hotel.

### **Day Five:**

After breakfast at the hotel, visit the Marble House, the "Summer Cottage" of Mrs. Alva Vanderbilt. The minute you walk in, the glitter of gold and the sparkle of silver will dazzle you. Dining tables set with period silver and china, Christmas trees reflecting the individual room décor, fresh flowers and thousands of poinsettias will transport you back to a bygone era

as you embark on a self-guided tour. Each window is lit with an individual white candle, in keeping with the colonial tradition.

Next, visit the Elks Lodge Holiday Spectacular Artisan Craft Fair. If you are looking for one-of-a-kind, hand-crafted gifts, you'll love this stop!

Walk just a few steps from the Elks Lodge to your luncheon destination, La Forge Casino Restaurant. Situated within an acclaimed Stanford White building, The La Forge Casino Restaurant has served the community as a famous local establishment for years.

Established in 1880, The Newport Casino was built as the result of a causal bet between James Gordan Bennet Jr., owner of the New York Herald, and his guest, British Cavalry Officer, Captain "Sugar" Candy, for which Candy rode his horse into Newport's most exclusive Men's Club – The Reading Room.

Disgruntled at the other members' less than congenial response, Bennet bought the land across from his Bellevue Avenue mansion and built his own club – THE NEWPORT CASINO. It offered shops, concerts, balls, special events – never gambling - and a place for Newport's summer residents to gather. Now a national historic landmark, The "Casino" is today home of the International Tennis Hall Of Fame.

After lunch, visit the Seaman's Church Institute. Founded in 1919, this institute's mission is to provide men and women of the sea and the people of the community a safe haven in which they may find comfort, recreation and benefit. It is here, during each holiday season that the locals come to write Christmas cards to men and women serving our country overseas who cannot come home for the holidays. Join them and send a card filled with thanks and holiday blessings!

This afternoon, embark on a guided tour of the oldest Episcopal parish in the state. Trinity Church is a National Historic Landmark and was built in 1726. It is the only church in America today with a center-aisle, freestanding, triple-decker pulpit. (NOTE: Once travelers disembark at church, the coach driver will go to Thames Glass to pick up the glass ornaments that the travelers made.)

Now it's time to walk off those holiday treats! Late afternoon, join a local guide and embark on a Holiday Lantern Tour. Hear the history of early American holiday traditions as you visit the exquisitely preserved neighborhoods of Newport's Historic Hill.

After the tour, head back to the hotel to relax and refresh. There will be time for a casual dinner on your own in the hotel's restaurant. (Note: If guests wish, they may opt to remain in the "downtown area" and have dinner on own in one of the local eateries. The coach driver will pick them up on the way to the Breakers for the 7:00 pm performance.)

After dinner, visit The Breakers, the grandest of Newport's summer "cottages." This mansion is a symbol of the Vanderbilt family's social and financial preeminence in turn of the century America. Enjoy the music of the live symphony as you stroll through this magnificent house, decorated for the holiday season. A working, garden-scale model of the Vanderbilt family's New York City Central Railroad will be on display. The train travels through a village made up of gingerbread replicas of the Newport Mansions, created by local pastry chefs. Light refreshments will be served.

Return to the hotel and "snuggle in bed with visions of mansions dancing in your head."

### **Day Six:**

After breakfast in the hotel, there will be time to attend an optional mass at a religious establishment of your choice located near the hotel.

Late morning, check out of the hotel and stop at the Linden Place on your way to Warwick. Embark on a guided tour of this historic home and hear tales of the DeWolf family, from their privateering and slave trading to their financial ruin and triumphant return to prosperity during Victorian times. Learn about family members Pomeroy Colt, founder of United States Rubber, now Uniroyal, his mother Theodora DeWolf Colt, who as Madam Colt, ran Bristol Society from Linden Place as if she was Queen Victoria and the great actress, Ethel Barrymore who married into this prominent American family. Explore the Bristol Art Museum located in the on-site 19th-century barn.

Depart Linden Place and have lunch on your own at a local eatery in downtown Bristol. After lunch, board the coach and begin your travels home. Along the way, each traveler will receive a holiday souvenir to remember the trip.

### **Your package includes:**

- 5 Nights accommodations
- 4 Breakfasts
- 1 Lunch
- Wine and Cheese Welcome Reception at the Hotel Viking
- 3 Dinners –Including Newport Dinner Theater
- Time to shop at the Westminster Arcade
- Locally guided tour of Providence
- Time to explore Federal Hill
- Guided tour of the Providence State House
- After dinner hands-on Crepe Flipping Demonstration
- Christmas Lights at the Alex and Ani City Center with optional ice skating
- Tour and taste at Scialo Brothers Bakery including "to go" bag of pastries
- Guided Tour of Smith's Castle
- Visit to the historic Wickford Village

- Hands-on ornament glassblowing session at Thames Glass, with an ornament to take home.
- Christmas Carols with the Very Merry Dickens Carolers
- “Victorian Era Dining Etiquette” presented by ‘Mrs. Astor’
- Newport City Holiday Tour let by “Mrs. Astor”
- Tour of the Elms
- Time to shop on Bannister’s Wharf
- Visit to the Blithewold Mansion with High Tea
- Newport Playhouse Dinner Theater
- Tour of the Marble House
- Time to shop at Elk’s Lodge Holiday Spectacular Artisan Craft Fair
- Stop at Seaman’s Church Institute
- Guided Tour of Trinity Church
- Holiday Lantern Tour
- Holiday evening at The Breakers with a live symphony
- Guided tour of the Linden Place
- Souvenir Gift
- Baggage handling for one piece of luggage per traveler
- Private motor coach transportation round trip T.F. Green International Airport
- Accommodations, group meals, attractions and baggage handling for the coach driver
- Coach parking in Providence
- Taxes and gratuities (NOTE: Gratuities for the coach driver and local guides are not included and are at your discretion based on service.)

**Pricing Information:**

Contact us today for custom pricing



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