

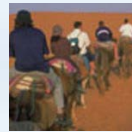
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New England Girlfriends Getaway with Blount Small Ships

By: [Jan Ross](#)

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I stepped aboard [Blount Small Adventures Grande Caribe](#) cruise ship and heaved a sigh of relief and pleasure. There is nothing quite like cruising for a relaxing girlfriends getaway - no unpacking, no meal planning, no making your own bed, no worries! This particular cruise was visiting several islands in Rhode Island and Massachusetts in July which could possibly be the best time to visit this area on a cruise ship as it is high season and finding a hotel room in all the many locations we would visit could be difficult.

The Grande Caribe is not a large cruise ship; with space for about 80 passengers in comfortable staterooms just small enough to be homey. The lounge area is furnished with plenty of upholstered furniture and the adjoining bar area includes space for the liquor and wine bottles that Blount encourages you to bring aboard and soda dispensers where you are welcome to fill a glass with ice and a drink whenever you want. Not only do they encourage you to bring aboard your own liquor and wine, they even provide snacks and mixers to accompany them and two very nice cocktail parties during the week long cruise with scrumptious hot appetizers.

The upper deck includes a shaded area and lots of tables and chairs, along with loungers for relaxing in the sun as the ship cruises along the waterways. The dining room downstairs is full of tables of varying sizes where you will meet and get to know your fellow passengers much better than you ever have on any large ship cruise. There's also a soft drink dispenser down



there, along with fresh coffee and other hot drinks, cookies, pastries, and fresh fruit for snacking in between meals. You will not go hungry on this cruise and you will enjoy every bite.

One reason we were so relaxed and comfortable at the beginning of the cruise was that we had added on some time prior to embarking in Newport, Rhode Island which is truly one of the most beautiful

coastal towns we have had the pleasure to visit. Providence, Rhode Island provided us with one of the most unique experiences in our travels - a gondola cruise of the Providence River with [La Gondola](#). That's right, they provide an authentic experience in a Venetian gondola with a singing gondolier decked out in Italian clothes complete the flat topped straw hat. You should not miss this experience! We spent two nights at the [Hotel Providence](#) and I can't say enough about the service at this lovely, luxury boutique hotel conveniently located downtown. When we checked in, I asked if our room had a tub as we were heading out on a cruise with a small shower for a week - and they not only provided us a room with a tub but upgraded us to a large and sumptuous suite with a separate living room.

Stay for a night or two in Newport at the equally lovely, luxury boutique hotel, the [Vanderbilt Grace](#), and you may never want to leave. Located on Mary Street right in the quaint historic district and just a short walk from the waterfront with plenty of shops and restaurants, this hotel truly epitomizes service in every aspect of your stay. From the moment of our arrival to the moment we left when they insisted on getting us fresh coffee and ice water for the trip, we were pampered. We had our first taste of clam chowder in New England at the charming Conservatory restaurant located on a lovely enclosed back porch with a view of the area and it was sublime. We didn't have time to enjoy the beautiful pool on the property but maybe next time!

We were able to see Newport from the water before we even left on our cruise by taking a tour with [Classic Cruises](#) on their classic speedboat Rum Runner II. Combining the history of the area with a fun and fast cruise around the area, it's a great introduction to Newport.



Ready at last for our cruise, we headed to tiny Warren, Rhode Island where Blount Small Ship Adventures is based and where the Islands of New England cruise embarks. One of the nicest things about this cruise is the fact that we could park for free in their parking lot, hand over our luggage, and walk aboard with no fuss. After unpacking and finding a place for everything in our small stateroom (this is made easier by the fact that you can stow all your luggage under the beds), and a delightful lunch of fresh lobster salad, we headed to the top deck to watch our ship begin the short journey to Cuttyhunk, the outermost of the Elizabeth Islands in Massachusetts, and where we would drop anchor for the night. The beginning of our voyage set the tone for the rest of the trip with friendly fellow passengers, gorgeous weather, and calm water. Quiet Cuttyhunk was mainly a place to spend a night sleeping blissfully but a few of us did disembark and stroll the silent paths in the dusky evening.

Nantucket was our next stop and the only location where we had to tender in to shore. No problem as we were all anxious to see this lovely island and clambered aboard the tender to make our way to land. A bus tour provided as an optional excursion by Blount (shore excursions were offered at every location) was the perfect way to see the place and we experienced shock at the gas prices (everything on an island has to get here somehow!) and awe at the beauty of the gray shingled New England homes - something we would see on every island on our cruise. Quaint cobblestone streets, bicyclers, lines for the ferry on and off the island, dozens of shops with clothes way above our budget, and a local farmer's market set up for the morning seemed to epitomize the island. We had not signed up for the walking tour but instead picked up a walking tour map at the tiny visitor center and strolled around the neighborhoods on our own trying to imagine how many millions of dollars some of the mansions must cost. Choosing not to take the tender back to the ship for lunch, we had a

quick sandwich on a restaurant terrace and spent the time people watching. Finally, we headed back to our new home away from home and our new friends onboard for a sumptuous dinner and relaxing evening.



credit: WanderlustWonder

Martha's Vineyard the next morning provided another bus tour but this time we made a stop at the historic Southeast Lighthouse to appreciate the astonishing view and get some photos. After lunch back on the ship, we decided to brave public transportation as a bus stopped precisely where we were docked and we hopped aboard, paid the extremely reasonable fare, and headed back to Oak Bluffs for a stroll along the coastline and, once again, to marvel at the astonishingly beautiful Victorian mansions in the area. A large and very popular park lies in the middle of town surrounded by truly amazing mansions, all of which are single family dwellings and many of which are only used in the summer. Families were relaxing in the park, many with picnics and several with kites which caught the strong wind from the ocean.

New Bedford, MA was once the whaling capitol of the world and their fascinating and historic whaling museum was where we headed the next day after our arrival in port and a walking tour of the waterfront. Lunch, a nap, and an afternoon of reading on deck made this the perfect day onboard. Soon enough, it was time for another fabulous dinner. Our meals onboard the Grande Mariner were absolutely delicious, each one better than the last. We had lobster in some form every day, including an authentic lobster bake. The chef and assistants set up a steamer oven on the top deck consisting of a plywood frame enclosing a stove with seaweed layered under the freshly caught lobsters, potatoes, and fresh corn. When we were served a whole lobster that night, some of us had no clue how to eat this monstrosity but, after a demonstration of how to crack the claws and tail, we all dug in and relished every

buttery bite.

Heading back in the direction of Rhode Island the next day, we stopped on Block Island which was a shock. Expecting a quiet island with a few homes, we were pleasantly surprised by the busy town with shops and restaurants full of tourists. Our bus tour soon pulled away from town though and we saw the island we were expecting with wonderful views, beautiful oceanfront homes, stone fences, lighthouses, and ponds filled with gorgeous, blooming lily pads. We spent some time strolling around town and had lunch on yet another restaurant patio, this time with a view of the ocean. We couldn't get enough lobster rolls and ordered yet another one for lunch. This ubiquitous New England treat is basically a lobster salad comprised of mainly cut up lobster and mayonnaise, served on a buttered and toasted bun and it's delicious! Don't leave the area without sampling one - or possibly two or three.

Blount Small Ship Adventures was very astute and planned this cruise to include an extra-long stay at the end in Newport. Although we had started our journey in Newport, we were thrilled to return because we had not spent nearly enough time in our favorite place on the cruise. Don't leave Newport without touring some of the incredible mansions which were summer homes for some of the most affluent families in America a hundred years ago. The Breakers is especially stunning and allows you access to the Cliff Walk, a sidewalk which wends along the cliffs overlooking the gorgeous Atlantic Ocean. After our tour, we grabbed lunch at Benjamin's and had an amazing seafood wrap which I recommend you order as well!

We drowsily awoke early in the morning as the Captain skillfully steered us out of the Newport harbor and back towards Warren where we would sadly disembark. After last minute packing and breakfast, we waited in the lounge, chatting with our new friends as the passengers who had planes to catch were helped off the ship, and then we disembarked, loaded up our suitcases, and headed home.

All the while discussing which of the many Blount cruises we might choose for our next cruise with them. And began counting down the days until that could happen.

Jan Ross is a freelance travel writer who has been traveling the world since way back before she can even remember. Her dad was in the Marine Corps so she is used to packing up at a moment's notice! She loves writing hotel and restaurant reviews since it means she gets to stay in fabulous places and eat wonderful food. She especially loves writing spa reviews because that means she gets phenomenally pampered and, seriously, who does not like that? She has visited lots of places but still gets a thrill of excitement when she boards a plane, steps into a new hotel room, or sees a new location for the first time. And she hopes that thrill never, ever goes away.

For more information on Jan, visit her website at WanderlustWonder.com.

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