

Doggin' Rhode Island

**The 25 Best
Places To Hike
With Your Dog In
The Ocean State**

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Cruden Bay Books



There is always a new trail to look forward to...

**DOGGIN' RHODE ISLAND: THE 25 BEST PLACES TO HIKE
WITH YOUR DOG IN THE OCEAN STATE**

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*“Dogs are our link to paradise...to sit with a dog on a hillside
on a glorious afternoon is to be back in Eden,
where doing nothing was not boring - it was peace.”
- Milan Kundera*

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Introduction

Rhode Island can be a great place to hike with your dog. Within an hour's drive you can hike on sand trails, climb hills that leave your dog panting, walk on some of the most historic grounds in America, explore the estates of America's wealthiest families or circle lakes for miles and never lose sight of the water.

I have selected what I consider to be the 25 best places to take your dog for an outing and ranked them according to subjective criteria including the variety of hikes available, opportunities for canine swimming and pleasure of the walks. The rankings include a mix of parks that feature long walks and parks that contain short walks. Did I miss your favorite? Let us know at www.hikewithyourdog.com.

For dog owners it is important to realize that not all parks are open to our best trail companions (see page 12 for a list of parks that do not allow dogs). It is sometimes hard to believe but not everyone loves dogs. We are, in fact, in the minority when compared with our non-dog owning neighbors.

So when visiting a park always keep your dog under control and clean up any messes and we can all expect our great parks to remain open to our dogs. And maybe some others will see the light as well. Remember, every time you go out with your dog you are an ambassador for all dog owners.

So grab that leash and hit the trail!

DBG

Hiking With Your Dog

So you want to start hiking with your dog. Hiking with your dog can be a fascinating way to explore Rhode Island from a canine perspective. Some things to consider:

Dog's Health

Hiking can be a wonderful preventative for any number of physical and behavioral disorders. One in every three dogs is overweight and running up trails and leaping through streams is great exercise to help keep pounds off. Hiking can also relieve boredom in a dog's routine and calm dogs prone to destructive habits. And hiking with your dog strengthens the overall owner/dog bond.

Breed of Dog

All dogs enjoy the new scents and sights of a trail. But some dogs are better suited to hiking than others. If you don't as yet have a hiking companion, select a breed that matches your interests. Do you look forward to an entire afternoon's hiking? You'll need a dog bred to keep up with such a pace, such as a retriever or a spaniel. Is a half-hour enough walking for you? It may not be for an energetic dog like a border collie. If you already have a hiking friend, tailor your plans to his abilities.

Conditioning

Just like humans, dogs need to be acclimated to the task at hand. An inactive dog cannot be expected to bounce from the easy chair in the den to complete a 3-hour hike. You must also be physically able to restrain your dog if confronted with distractions on the trail (like a scampering squirrel or a pack of joggers). Have your dog checked by a veterinarian before significantly increasing your dog's activity level.

Weather

Hot humid summers do not do dogs any favors. With no sweat glands and only panting available to disperse body heat, dogs are much more susceptible to heat stroke than we are. Unusually rapid panting and/or a bright red tongue are signs of heat exhaustion in your pet.

Always carry enough water for your hike. Even days that don't seem too warm can cause discomfort in dark-coated dogs if the sun is shining brightly. In cold weather, short-coated breeds may require additional attention.

Trail Hazards

Dogs won't get poison ivy but they can transfer it to you. Stinging nettle is a nuisance plant that lurks on the side of many trails and the slightest brush will deliver troublesome needles into a dog's coat. Some trails are littered with small pieces of broken glass that can slice a dog's paws. Nasty thorns can also blanket trails that we in shoes may never notice.

Ticks

You won't be able to visit any of Rhode Island's parks without encountering ticks. All are nasty but the deer tick - no bigger than a pin head - carries with it the spectre of Lyme disease. Lyme disease attacks a dog's joints and makes walking painful. The tick needs to be embedded in the skin to transmit Lyme disease. It takes 4-6 hours for a tick to become embedded and another 24-48 hours to transmit Lyme disease bacteria.

When hiking, walk in the middle of trails away from tall grass and bushes. And when the summer sun fades away don't stop thinking about ticks - they remain active any time the temperature is above 30 degrees. By checking your dog - and yourself - thoroughly after each walk you can help avoid Lyme disease. Ticks tend to congregate on your dog's ears, between the toes and around the neck and head.


Water

Surface water, including fast-flowing streams, is likely to be infested with a microscopic protozoa called *Giardia*, waiting to wreak havoc on a dog's intestinal system. The most common symptom is crippling diarrhea. Algae, pollutants and contaminants can all be in streams, ponds and puddles. If possible, carry fresh water for your dog on the trail - your dog can even learn to drink happily from a squirt bottle.


Outfitting Your Dog For A Hike

These are the basics for taking your dog on a hike:

- ▶ **Collar.** It should not be so loose as to come off but you should be able to slide your flat hand under the collar.
- ▶ **Identification Tags.** Get one with your veterinarian's phone number as well.
- ▶ **Bandanna.** Can help distinguish him from game in hunting season.
- ▶ **Leash.** Leather lasts forever but if there's water in your future, consider quick-drying nylon.
- ▶ **Water.** Carry 8 ounces for every hour of hiking.

 *I want my dog to help carry water, snacks and other supplies on the trail. Where do I start?*

To select an appropriate dog pack measure your dog's girth around the rib cage. A dog pack should fit securely without hindering the dog's ability to walk normally.

 *Will my dog wear a pack?*

Wearing a dog pack is no more obtrusive than wearing a collar, although some dogs will take to a pack easier than others. Introduce the pack by draping a towel over your dog's back in the house and then having your dog wear an empty pack on short walks. Progressively add some crumpled newspaper and then bits of clothing. Fill the pack with treats and reward your dog from the stash. Soon your dog will associate the dog pack with an outdoor adventure and will eagerly look forward to wearing it.

🐾 *How much weight can I put into a dog pack?*

Many dog packs are sold by weight recommendations. A healthy, well-conditioned dog can comfortably carry 25% to 33% of its body weight. Breeds prone to back problems or hip dysplasia should not wear dog packs. Consult your veterinarian before stuffing the pouches with gear.

🐾 *How does a dog wear a pack?*

The pack, typically with cargo pouches on either side, should ride as close to the shoulders as possible without limiting movement. The straps that hold the dog pack in place should be situated where they will not cause chafing.

🐾 *What are good things to put in a dog pack?*

Low density items such as food and poop bags are good choices. Ice cold bottles of water can cool your dog down on hot days. Don't put anything in a dog pack that can break. Dogs will bang the pack on rocks and trees as they wiggle through tight spots in the trail. Dogs also like to lie down in creeks and other wet spots so seal items in plastic bags. A good use for dog packs when on day hikes around Rhode Island is trail maintenance - your dog can pack out trash left by inconsiderate visitors before you.



🐾 *Are dog booties a good idea?*

Dog booties can be an asset, especially for the occasional canine hiker whose paw pads have not become toughened. Some trails around Rhode Island involve rocky terrain. In some places, there may be broken glass. Hiking boots for dogs are designed to prevent pads from cracking while trotting across rough surfaces. Used in winter, dog booties provide warmth and keep ice balls from forming between toe pads when hiking through snow.

🐾 *What should a doggie first aid kit include?*

Even when taking short hikes it is a good idea to have some basics available for emergencies:









- ▶ 4" square gauze pads
- ▶ cling type bandaging tapes
- ▶ topical wound disinfectant cream
- ▶ tweezers
- ▶ insect repellent - no reason to leave your dog unprotected against mosquitoes and blackflies
- ▶ veterinarian's phone number

I can't think of anything that brings me closer to tears than when my old dog - completely exhausted after a hard day in the field - limps away from her nice spot in front of the fire and comes over to where I'm sitting and puts her head in my lap, a paw over my knee, and closes her eyes, and goes back to sleep. I don't know what I've done to deserve that kind of friend."

-Gene Hill

Low Impact Hiking With Your Dog

Every time you hike with your dog on the trail you are an ambassador for all dog owners. Some people you meet won't believe in your right to take a dog on the trail. Be friendly to all and make the best impression you can by practicing low impact hiking with your dog:

-  Pack out everything you pack in.
-  Do not leave dog scat on the trail; if you haven't brought plastic bags for poop removal bury it away from the trail and topical water sources.
-  Hike only where dogs are allowed.
-  Stay on the trail.
-  Do not allow your dog to chase wildlife.
-  Step off the trail and wait with your dog while horses and other hikers pass.
-  Do not allow your dog to bark - people are enjoying the trail for serenity.
-  *Have as much fun on your hike as your dog does.*

"No one appreciates the very special genius of your conversation as a dog does."

-Christopher Morley

The Other End Of The Leash

Leash laws are like speed limits - everyone seems to have a private interpretation of their validity. Some dog owners never go outside with an unleashed dog; others treat the laws as suggestions or disregard them completely. It is not the purpose of this book to tell dog owners where to go to evade the leash laws or reveal the parks where rangers will look the other way at an unleashed dog. Nor is it the business of this book to preach vigilant adherence to the leash laws. Nothing written in a book is going to change people's behavior with regard to leash laws. So this will be the last time leash laws are mentioned, save occasionally when we point out the parks where dogs are welcomed off leash.



No Dogs

Before we get started on the best places to take your dog, let's get out of the way the trails that do not allow dogs:



Claire D. McIntosh Wildlife Refuge - *Bristol*

Davis Memorial Wildlife Refuge - *North Kingstown*

Emilie Rucker Wildlife Refuge - *Tiverton*

Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge - *Exeter*

Florence Sutherland Fort & Richard Knight Fort Wildlife Refuge
- *North Smithfield*

George B. Parker Woodland - *Coventry*

John H. Chaffee National Wildlife Refuge - *Narragansett*

Kimball Sanctuary - *Charlestown*

Lathrop Wildlife Refuge - *Westerly*

Lewis-Dickens Farm - *Block Island*

Lime Rock Preserve - *Lincoln*
Long Pond Woods - *Rockville*
Marion Eppley Wildlife Refuge - *West Kingston*
Norman Bird Sanctuary - *Middletown*
Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge - *Smithfield*
Touisset Marsh Wildlife Refuge - *Warren*
Trustom Pond National Wildlife Refuge - *South Kingstown*
Waterman Pond - *Coventry*

How To Pet A Dog

Tickling tummies slowly and gently works wonders.

Never use a rubbing motion; this makes dogs bad-tempered.

A gentle tickle with the tips of the fingers is all that is necessary to induce calm in a dog. I hate strangers who go up to dogs with their hands held to the dog's nose, usually palm towards themselves.

How does the dog know that the hand doesn't hold something horrid?

The palm should always be shown to the dog and go straight down to between the dog's front legs and tickle gently with a soothing voice to accompany the action.

Very often the dog raises its back leg in a scratching movement, it gets so much pleasure from this.

-Barbara Woodhouse

*The 25 Best Places
To Hike With Your Dog
In Rhode Island...*

I

Arcadia

Management Area

The Park

Arcadia is the largest management area in Rhode Island, keeping almost 14,000 acres in a natural state “more or less,” as the state says. Almost the entire area is blanketed in forest cover with a nice mix of leafy deciduous tree and scented white pine.

Elevations range to 541 feet and canine hikers can take advantage of dirt access roads and narrow foot trails, often cushioned by a layer of paw-friendly pine straw.

The Walks

The sheer variety and quality of these shady trails conspire to make Arcadia the best place in Rhode Island for a day of hiking with your dog. Route 165 neatly bisects the forest to use as a starting point for your explorations. There are 30 miles of trails broken into out-and-back segments so you will need to create your own circuit loops or bring two cars for a shuttle to avoid return trips in your own pawprints.

If you want your dog to tackle some of the most rugged hiking in Rhode Island - although it is a stretch to call it strenuous save for the distance - try the *Tippecansett Trail*, the longest trail in the Arcadia system sliced into three equal three-mile legs by two highways. You’ll get varied terrain, rocky ledges and swimming ponds on this ramble.

For an exceedingly peaceful hike take the *Ben Utter Trail* north of Route 165 to visit Stepstone Falls. The soft dirt path traces the lively Wood River under giant pines that escaped logging due to their awkward location by the stream and passes foundations of old mills. Another water-enhanced option is the *John B. Hudson Trail* that follows Breakheart Brook to Breakheart Pond.

The *North-South Trail*, a greenway that travels 75 miles for the length of

Exeter

Phone Number
- (401) 539-2356

Website
- None

Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- From Interstate 95 take Exit 4. Go three miles north to a blinking yellow light. Go left on Route 165 West and turn left at the sign for the forest office.

Bonus

If your dog is after views and sniffing in every direction, include the *Mt. Tom Trail* on your agenda.

This pleasant trail skirts Parris Brook and climbs quickly but easily to the 430-foot summit - not the highest point in the park but blessed with 360-degree views of miles of treetops from the rocky ledges.

Rhode Island, passes through Arcadia as well. Look for the blue-and-white markers to follow this footpath for awhile.

Trail Sense: There is a trail map that you will want to have in hand before heading out; they are not available at trailheads but can be picked up at the forest headquarters on Arcadia Road. The named trails are not designated at the trailheads and the colored blazes - yellow and white - correspond to trail systems rather than individual trails so you will need to stay alert in your wayfinding.



There is plenty of boulder-hopping for your dog atop Mt. Tom.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are permitted on the Arcadia trails, campgrounds and in picnic areas but not in swimming areas.

Traffic

Mountain bikers and horses can use the trails but you are likely to go hours without seeing any other trail users on most days. Many dirt roads are gated but others that are not support active vehicular traffic. When hunting season is in progress 200 square inches of blaze orange is required for users of any state management area.

Canine Swimming

There are several ponds to serve as doggie swimming holes and many streams for splashing.

Trail Time

Many hours - or days if you are so inclined.

Goddard Memorial State Park

The Park

In the late 1800s Henry Grinnell Russell, like most of his Rhode Island neighbors, walked around a property that was stripped bare by agriculture and deforestation. Russell, who came by this property when he married his Civil War buddy, Captain Thomas P. Ives', sister, wasn't content to lead a treeless life.

As he walked the sandy dunes Russell would drop acorns from his pockets, planting them in holes punched with his cane. He would fill the holes with three acorns - one oak for the squirrels, one for the worms, and one to grow.

Henry Russell would add different trees to his Oaks Estate and by the early 1900s foresters from the U.S. Forest Service called this "the finest example of private forestry in America." After Russell died Colonel Robert Hale Ives Goddard came into possession of the Oaks and continued the reforestation project. When he died in 1927 the estate was left to the state to remain forever in its natural state and opened as a public park on June 1, 1930.

The Walks

The canine hiking at Goddard Memorial State Park is conducted primarily on bridle paths through the tall forests sandwiched between the bay and the open fields of the picnic areas and golf course. Don't despair about taking your dog down the chewed up paths often associated with horse trails - these wide, sandy avenues through the forest are packed sand and extremely paw-friendly.

This is easy going throughout on gentle terrain. Pick a trail that leads to a dog-friendly beach. At Long Point your dog can indulge in the gentle waves of

Warwick

Phone Number
- (401) 222-2632

Website
- www.riparks.com/goddard.htm

Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- Goddard Park is on the south side of Greenwich Bay. From Route 1 take Cedar Road east and bear left on Ives Road. Continue past the park exit to the main entrance at 1095 Ives Road.

Bonus

The old Oaks estate included many buildings such as barns and the mansion house, which burned down in the 1970s. One structure that survives is the circular wooden building that housed the park's carousel, built in 1931. The merry-go-round is gone now but its round enclosure can still be seen near the beach.

Greenwich Cove and you can continue on the sand around to the other side of the main beach. The bridle trail network consists of 18 miles of multi-intersecting short trails.

Trail Sense: The trails are not marked but there is little fear of losing your way. A park map is available, just in case.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are permitted throughout the park.

Traffic

This is a popular park so expect plenty of company on these trails, including, of course, horses.

Canine Swimming

There is a splendid sand beach on Greenwich Cove around Long Point and plenty of superb dogpaddling in Greenwich Bay.

Trail Time

A half-day of exploring is possible here.



The wide paths at Goddard are a delight for dogs to trot down.

3

The Greenway

The Park

Back in 1972 Block Islanders looked around and noticed houses going up at an alarming rate. Captain John Robinson “Rob” Lewis led a small group to form the Block Island Conservancy with the modest goal to just save Rodman’s Hollow, a precious glacial outwash basin. They were able to raise enough money to preserve this region of maritime scrubland.

Hundreds of islanders donated money and the conservation movement flourished. Over the years some land was donated and more made available below market value. Today over 40% of Block Island is protected from future development.

So effective were the efforts of the Conservancy that the Nature Conservancy designated Block Island as one of its original “Last Great Places” in the Americas.

The Walks

Take away the ferry ride and the half-hour walk along shoulderless - and sometimes busy - two lanes road and The Greenway would be the finest place in Rhode Island to hike with your dog. What is your dog interested in? Open fields? Sporty hills? Long vistas? A romp on the beach? A swim in a pond? Unique woodlands? The Greenway has them all.

There are about 12 miles of footpaths crisscrossing the southern half of Block Island in the tradition of walking the English countryside. In addition to paw-friendly mown grass and soft dirt trails you will need to go down dirt roads and paved streets to get to some trailheads. To reach the beach use Black Rock

Block Island

Phone Number
- (401) 466-5675

Website
- www.nature.org/wherework/northamerica/states/rhodeisland/preserves/art3146.html

Admission Fee
- None (ferry fee may be necessary; dogs sail for free)

Directions
- The Nature Conservancy office on Block Island is on High Street, straight ahead out of Old Harbor.

Bonus

Block Island supports some 40 rare or endangered species. One that is found only in Rodman's Hollow, in huge kettleholes gouged by Godzilla-sized chunks of glacial ice that melted, is the Block Island Meadow Vole, first discovered in 1908. It is part of the magic of the island that it is a thrill here to see rodents considered vermin on the mainland. It's not easy to see a brown-and-black vole but you may see their tunnel-like trails through the grass.

Road in Rodman's Hollow. If you find yourself with your dog walking along Mohegan Trail/Spring Street you can descend a flight of wooden stairs to the beach at the foot of the spectacular Mohegan bluffs from Payne Overlook.

Trail Sense: Your first stop on Block Island should be in the Visitor Center on the dock to buy a trail map for a small fee. This will show you the way to the trailheads. Signs are posted at some trailheads and along the trails.

Dog Friendliness

Block Island is a dog-friendly island - don't come without him!

Traffic

As magnificent as they are, the walking paths are your best place to find tranquility on the island; dirt roads allow bikes but not mopeds.

Canine Swimming

There are 17 miles of public beaches on Block Island so your dog will get an ocean swim. Crescent Beach, a few pawprints from the ferry landing, is the most convenient but crowded in-season. As the new arrivals fan out from the ferry the beaches offer more room for your dog. One beach that is too small for sun worshippers but ideal for dogs is just south of Old Harbor along Spring Street - as you reach the crest of a hill drop down to the sand in front of a guardrail for great canine swimming along a breakwater.

Trail Time

Allow a full day of canine hiking to explore The Greenway.



Sometimes it seems like nature made the beach at Mohegan Bluffs just for dogs.

4

Beavertail State Park

The Park

The first lighthouse built at Beavertail was the third in the country when it was constructed in 1749 - after only the Boston Harbor Light (1716) and the Great Point Light on Nantucket (1746). Four years later the Newport Light, as it was called, became America's first lighthouse to burn to the ground.

The rubble tower that was built next lasted a full century until it was replaced by the current granite tower that guides vessels into Narragansett Bay today.

The United States Navy took control of this point in World War II and erected Fort Burnside in honor of Civil War general and Rhode Island governor Ambrose Burnside. In 1980 the state acquired the land as surplus property.

The Walks

Canine hikers can come to Beavertail for the Cliff Walk without the tourists - especially in the off-season. You can hike with your dog from one end of the park to the other atop the rocky shoreline on park roads and a narrow dirt path. If the weather is calm and the seas benign you can include the craggy rocks in your route.

The views will be spectacular at almost any point in your hike with four specific overlooks designated. Interpretive signs describe the area, including the Beavertail fault with its geologic story of ancient Rhode Island.

Make sure to bring plenty of fresh water for your dog at Beavertail. There isn't much shade out on the point and no drinking water.

Trail Sense: There are no marked trails or map but nowhere to get lost.

Jamestown

Phone Number
- (401) 423-9941

Website
- www.riparks.com/beaverta1.htm

Admission Fee
- None

Directions
- From Route 138 exit towards the town of Jamestown on North Main Road. Continue to South East Avenue and pick up Beavertail Road to the end.

Bonus

The Beavertail Light celebrates its 150th year of operation in 2006 at the southern end of Conanicut Island. In addition to the lighthouse and a museum there is a small aquarium in an old fog horn building where you can see creatures from the tidal pools in the rocks below.



A trail option at Beavertail State Park takes your dog down on the rocks around the historic lighthouse that has stood since 1856.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are welcome throughout Beavertail State Park.

Traffic

On any nice day there will be plenty of folks picking their way along the slabs of broken rock.

Canine Swimming

If the waters are calm your dog can catch a swim in a tidal pool but you don't want her to get too adventurous.

Trail Time

Without sightseeing, there is less than an hour of hiking here.

5

Clay Head Nature Trail

The Park

David and Elise Lapham first visited Block Island for a vacation in 1951. Over the next decade they kept returning and finally decided to buy five acres on the island's north end. While looking at a small parcel of land across the road they ended up instead with almost 200 acres atop the clay bluffs gouged out by retreating glaciers some 10,000 years prior.

David Lapham discovered he had an affinity for trail building. He picked up a chopping machine and began clawing out brush and thickets in every direction. One day he set out to measure his walking paths and found out he had nine miles of trails on his property.

With his trail system complete the Lathams began decorating the footpaths. Over the years more than 7,000 daffodil bulbs went into the ground. Thousands of trees were planted. From the beginning, the Laphams wanted to share their land with its spectacular setting. When they decided to leave the property in the stewardship of the Nature Conservancy it was with the proviso that the public would have access to the trails.

The Walks

David Lapham's trail system has come to be known as "The Maze." These grassy trails are unmarked but well-maintained and a delight for your dog. You can pop out at a stone wall or one of the best views on the East Coast. The *Clay Head Nature Trail* runs for about one mile along the top of the 70-foot bluffs. It is easy going but will be one of the longest miles you've ever taken your

Block Island

Phone Number
- (401) 466-5675

Website
- www.nature.org/wherework/northamerica/states/rhodeisland/preserves/art3146.html

Admission Fee
- None (ferry fee may be necessary; dogs sail for free)

Directions
- From Old Harbor, head north on the Corn Neck Road (the only road to the north end of Block Island) to the trailhead at a post marker about 2.5 miles from town.

Bonus

Setting out from the northern terminus of the Clay Head Trail you can reach the North Light with your dog after about a 20-minute walk on a sandy beach. Dangerous shoals and frequent fog banks made the passage around Block Island a tricky affair for mariners. Between 1819 and 1839 alone fifty-nine ships wrecked on or near Block Island.

The current granite lighthouse dates to 1868 and was the fourth light to be built here. The first three, dating to 1829, fell victim to shifting sands, faulty design and voracious waves.



dog on when you factor in the frequent stops for watching the crashing waves or charting the progress of a passing vessel.

Trail Sense: Your first stop on Block Island should be in the Visitor Center on the dock to buy a trail map for a small fee. This will show you the way to the trailheads. Signs are posted at some trailheads and along the trails.

Dog Friendliness

Dogs are allowed on the Clay Head Trail. The North Light is on land managed by the Block Island National Wildlife Refuge that is the only one of Rhode Island's five national refuges that allow dogs but that could change.

Traffic

This is one of the prime destinations on Block Island but there is plenty of trail space to spread out. Foot traffic only.

Canine Swimming

Take a trail to the beach and let your dog enjoy the waves.

Trail Time

If you have to make the walk from the ferry up Corn Neck Road to the trailhead this canine hike will last at least half the day, depending on how much time you devote to The Maze, the beach or the views.