



The Flyin' Solo VanLife on the Highways and Byways of North America

RICK'S ROADS

Ride Along and Enjoy the People, Places, and Who Knows What



BLOG POST: 2024.06.10
Newport, Rhode Island (Day 2)



The Cliff Walk

This famous path winds along the top of the eastern coast of Aquidneck Island for about 3.5 miles. That means that the rocky shore and all the fancy mansions would be best seen in morning light.

I had considered following my Breakers tour with a saunter along part of the Walk, but I knew that anything I would want a picture of would have been in shadow or silhouetted against the lowering sun. Bah.

That would have been futile enough with my iPhone or even my SLR cameras, but even worse with a drone. Given that Little Bird had gotten the "Let's Fly!" notice on

my Aloft AirControl app – a 100% must-have for a drone pilot – I wanted to maximize my lighting for maximal wowness. And that meant an early morning flight.

But sun-up would've been overkill. What I needed first and foremost was my coveted primo parking spot. The Cliff Walk starts at Easton Beach on Memorial Boulevard. The public parking lot opened at 9:00, but metered street parking was available at 8:00. So when I arrived at 7:40 and saw that the very first metered spot was not taken, I knew it would be a good day.



You can see Blue Maxx secure in the Primo Spot in the photo above. The guy between Maxx and the white car is me, doing my piloting thing. (A small SUV pulled in behind me, illegally, but it was just a brief stop for a quick dog walk, then it departed.)



From this spot, I sent Little Bird out over the waters of Easton Bay, pointed his camera westward, then slid him southward, parallel to the coast and Cliff Walk, taking a sweeping video for several hundred yards. The photo below is a still taken from the spot where I turned him around, looking northward back toward Easton Beach.

The AirControl app had shown me – to my high surprise – that the Cliff Walk itself was just fine for drone flying. This is not to say that a droner can fly wherever and however (s)he feels like. Respect for private property is always paramount, so buzzing the balcony of The Breakers would be unacceptable behavior. Soaring 400 feet high over the water and getting sweet aerial views of these beautiful homes would be a-OK.



So, as I strolled along the opening stretches of the Cliff Walk, I was snapping from ground-level photos of the shore – the views of the homes from the path is really not very good – but I was mostly looking for a good launching pad for LB.

About a half-mile into the Walk, I came upon The Forty Steps. I had no idea what this would be, but it was exactly what the name implies: a 40-step, stone stairway. It leads down the rocky slope to the lower shore. You can easily walk from the bottom platform out onto the rocks if you're in a clambering mood.



Each of the granite steps has a name carved into it. These are the community members who contributed to the construction of the stairs 1990, when they replaced the dilapidated original wooden steps

In the display/rest area atop the Forty Steps, at the end of Narragansett Avenue, there were benches and few large placards with info about this place. There were also orange fencing and barriers at the south end, designating a closure of the Cliff Walk for the next couple hundred yards. A one-block-west-then-one-block-south-then-one-block-east detour walk was required.

But, since nobody would now have any possible reason to walk through the southernmost corner of this paved area, I decreed it a perfect spot to launch Little

Bird.

The pair of mansions that sit just south of Narragansett Avenue are beautiful and impressive. They are also the primary buildings of Salve Regina University. According to some lightpole banners, SRU's campus is ranked in the Top 6 Most Beautiful Campuses in the USA. You can see why. Hard to imagine five that are better.



After walking the detour (and snapping the RSU gate photo), I came back out to the Cliff Walk at northeast corner of The Breakers property.

That big yard is bounded by hedges and a fence. From the yard, neither of those look prohibitively tall; it's easy to look over them to gaze out at the sea.

But the fence sits atop a berm that puts it above head level for the Cliff Walkers, making it all but impossible to get a good look of the edifice. I stepped up onto the berm and held my phone up over my head (and over the top of the fence) to snap a distant photo of the mansion I had toured yesterday.



However, there was another rest stop here. The path continued around the tip of Ochre Point, but the builders of the Cliff Walk had laid down an outside lane that was wide enough for some benches and a close overlook of the cliff itself.

For my purposes, though, it was plenty roomy enough to launch Little Bird without causing consternation in the other Walkers.

I sent LB straight up, did a few general lookarounds, and snapped some cool stills (like the one above), but then I got an idea for a video.



I brought LB directly over the rocks at the point of Ochre Point, but up at about 200 feet of altitude. The video began with a wide straight-downward shot of the surf swishing up and between those rocks, then zoomed in (2X then 3X) from the same height, giving the effect of descending.

After a minute of so of somewhat hypnotic overwhelming, I zoomed



back out and slowly raised the gimbal (i.e., pointed the lens slowly upward to almost horizontal) to catch a sweeping view of the large grassy lawn and the path that curves around it. Then I raised the gimbal some more until it revealed the mansion itself.

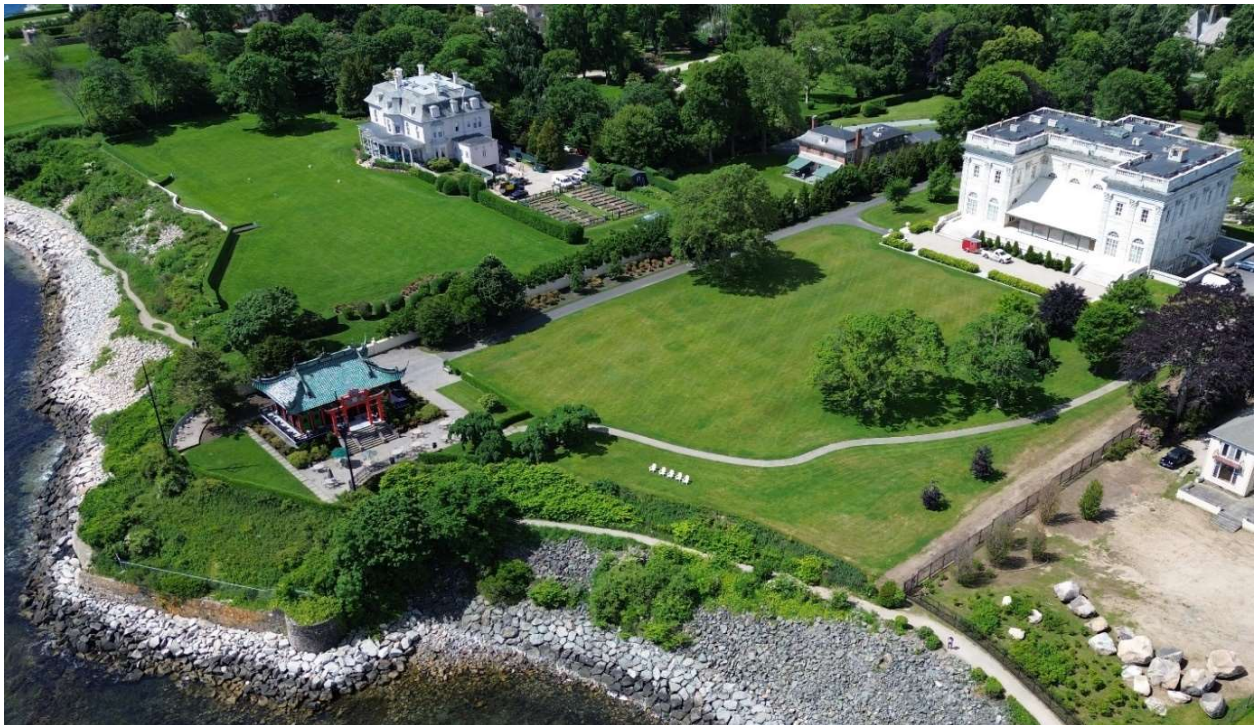
Finally, I panned up the mansion, then slid to the left while keeping the house centered in the shot, and I zoomed out while flying backwards out over the ocean. The closing shot shows all off Ochre Point, most of Aquidneck Island, and the water and bridges beyond Newport.

Later, in my video editing program, I added text and background music. Love how it came out. [[LittleBirdVideo.com/The-Breakers](https://www.LittleBirdVideo.com/The-Breakers)]

The Cliff Walk continued southward, so I did as well. The mansion right on the corner is called Anglesea. It would be a total mind-blow -- what with its glassed-in gazebo way out front and all (see photo on final page) – if it wasn't next door to a freaking Italian Renaissance Palace.

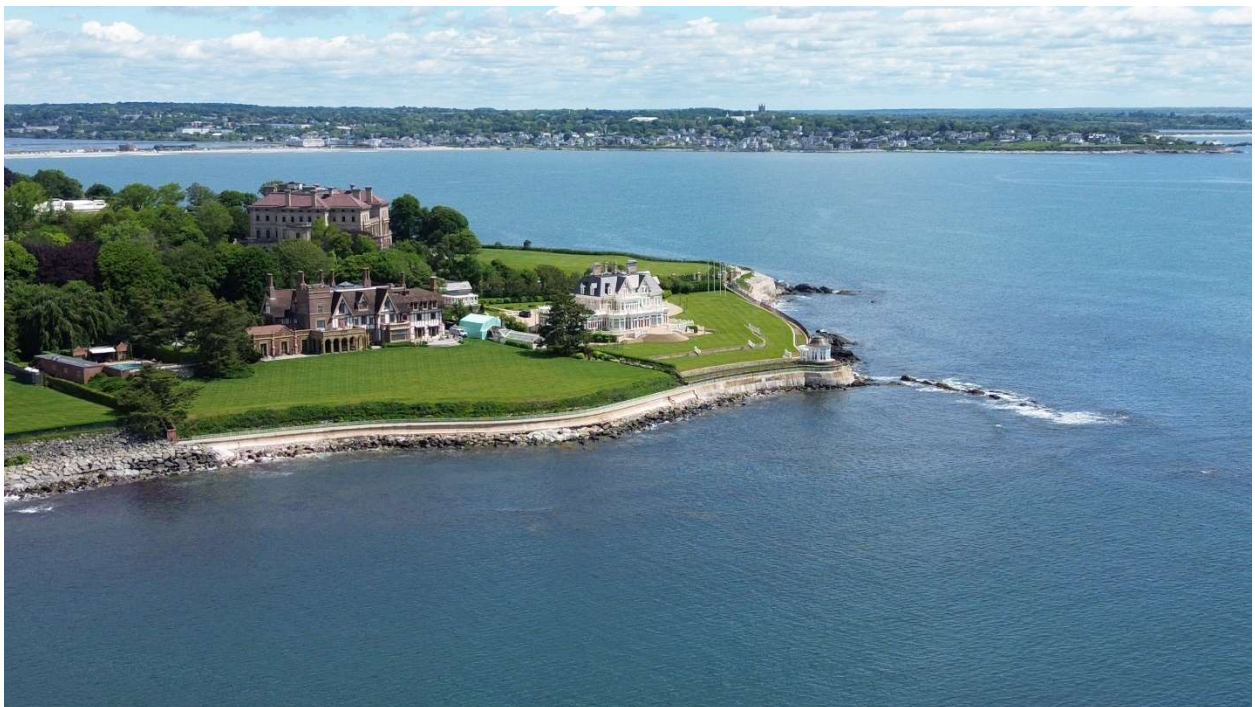
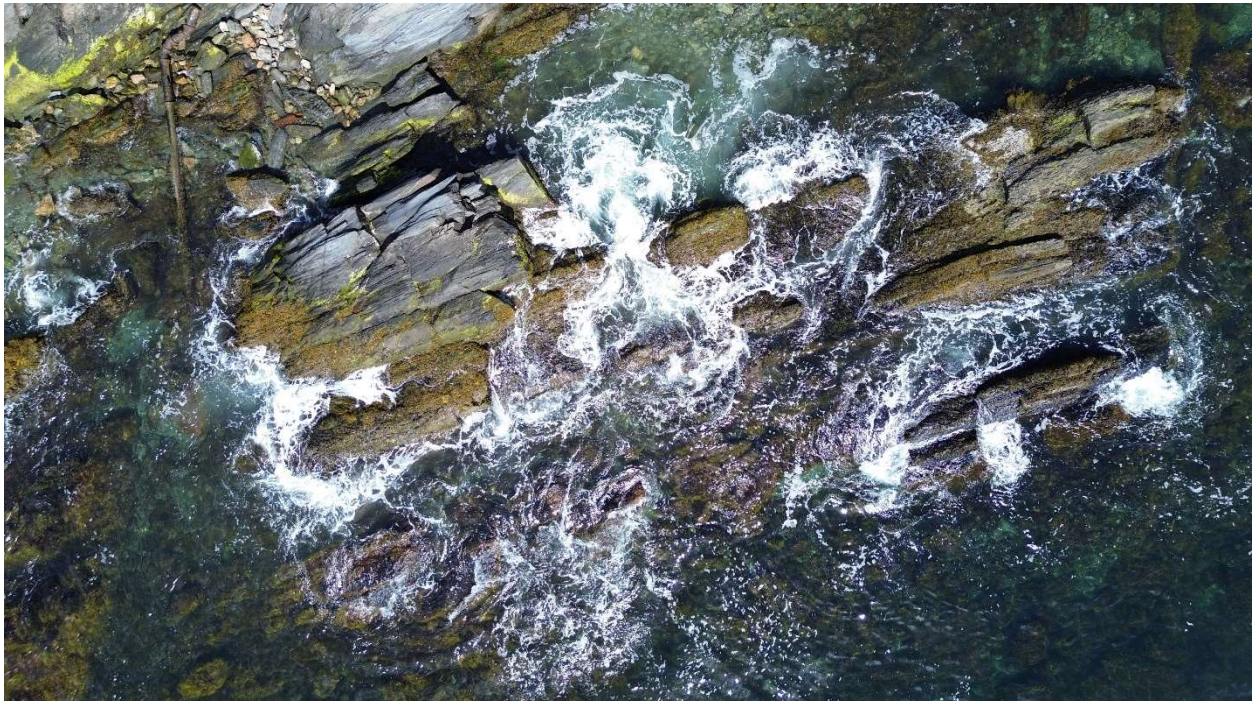
And the one beyond that was huge and amazing and so was the one beyond that. Quite the neighborhood. Trick-or-treating around here must be a kick.

The Walk itself changes complexion in this stretch; it shifts from flat walkway to a couple hundred yards of coastal boulders for a full-on clamber. You are warned not to even try it if you are not wearing proper footwear.



It changes to a sandy trail after that, though, as you get to the western extreme, where the mansions known as Rosecliff (center, in top picture, previous page) and Marble House (upper right in bottom picture, previous page) are. Again, though, the views of the mansions from the Walk are not very good.

So, here is where I launched for more aerial views. Fly, Little Bird, fly!





This last mansion owner sure does like a lot of rocks in his yard, doesn't he? The grounds crew must hate cutting that lawn. Well, the mower guy is probably OK with it; he just swings way wide of anything rocky. But the weed whackers got a whole lot o' whackin' to do, right?

So, here at Sheep Point, the trail changed over again, this time to a hiking kind of trail. It was labelled "difficult." This did not daunt me, of course, avid clamberer that I am. What did deter me, though, were the signs indicating that the Cliff Walk was closed to all. This was the beginning of the closed-off stretch that I had seen the end of at The Waves.

That was fine, though. I had seen the biggest and best mansions. Now I had a 2.5-mile walk back to Blue Maxx. It was only late-morning, so I had the full afternoon for some mansion hopping.



