

How to Have the Perfect Day at NYC's Rockaway Beach

Rockaway is now the coolest spot to hang out in New York — that frankly doesn't feel like New York at all.

[New York City](#) may not be known for its beaches, but when the sweltering summer heat sets in, you'll want to be by the ocean. And one of the best places to [spend a summer day](#) is at Rockaway Beach, on a narrow peninsula at the southeastern end of Queens. Something about the Rockaways just hits the sweet spot: It's easily accessible by subway; the beach is totally free, spacious, and clean; and its uniquely laid-back crowd is neither the [Hamptons](#) nor the [Jersey Shore](#) — just a perfectly chill mix of beach bums, families, hipsters, and surfers.

As a self-proclaimed Rockaway early adopter (I've been riding the A train out to this beach haven for the past decade — yes, even when I lived two hours away in the far reaches of the Upper West Side), I've seen it survive the [devastation of Hurricane Sandy in 2012](#), then bounce back and grow into the vibrant community it is today. After preaching the Rockaway gospel to anyone who will listen for years, the word has steadily gotten out about this unlikely urban beach town. With more restaurants and shops popping up each year to add to the appeal, and the arrival of the hip [Rockaway Hotel](#) solidifying its growing popularity, this once humble surf spot has become a summer destination in its own right.

Where to Stay

The Rockaway Hotel



CREDIT: KYLE KNODELL/COURTESY OF THE ROCKAWAY HOTEL

Rockaway has been sorely lacking in accommodations – until now. With [the opening of the chic Rockaway Hotel](#) in the summer of 2020, this is far and away the best place to spend the night. With a buzzy pool surrounded by loungers and cabanas, a leafy rooftop bar where DJs spin sunset sessions, daily fitness classes on the roof deck, and gorgeous airy design throughout (pampas grass, blonde wood, and rattan abound), a getaway here truly feels like you've escaped busy New York City life and arrived at a destination beach resort. The staff's impeccable and attentive service adds to the blissed out feeling of being on a vacation – even though you're just a subway ride away from home.



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When the beach gets a bit too windy (as it so often does in the afternoons at Rockaway), or you're ready for cocktail hour, the pool deck is the perfect place to lounge away the afternoon. Afterwards, grab a seat at the beautiful wood-paneled bar at the hotel's restaurant Margie's, and enjoy a seafood tower of fresh oysters, snow crab claws, and lobster tail. Before you leave, be sure to check out [Tunie's](#) in the lobby, a beautifully curated shop with swimwear, summer gear, and knick knacks from local Rockaway brands.