

Newport's Cliff Walk by Gilded Age mansions now smoke-free

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Now that smokers can no longer light up on Newport's iconic Cliff Walk, the only thing breathtaking is the view.

A new ban instituted last month applies to the 3 1/2-mile public walkway that runs between the Atlantic Ocean and some of the city's most spectacular Gilded Age mansions. It attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors a year and is Rhode Island's most visited tourist attraction.

Councilor John Florez said they don't want to subject tourists to cigarette smoke and litter.

"The cleaner the beaches, the more tourists we'll have," Florez said.

Newport officials said they aren't worried about losing tourists because of the city's new ban. In fact, many tourists at the Cliff Walk on Thursday said they liked it.

"We are nonsmokers, so we think it's a good thing, otherwise there will be rubbish around," said 22-year-old Franka Schulz of Essen, Germany, who visited the Cliff Walk with a friend during a trip across New England.

Cigarette butts made up 30 percent of the debris nonprofit organization Clean Ocean Access found during several beach cleanups in 2014, said Dave McLaughlin, executive director and co-founder of the nonprofit.

During two cleanups of the Cliff Walk last year, the group found nearly 400 cigarette butts, McLaughlin said.

"This started a wave of momentum," McLaughlin said.

The city banned smoking on city beaches, in city parks and on the Cliff Walk in June.

"We're the premier seaside community in the Ocean State, so we should set the example," Florez said.

The Cliff Walk's entrance hasn't yet been updated with a no-smoking sign, and there were still a few cigarette butts on the walkway on Thursday, but nobody was smoking.

Five cities in Rhode Island—Central Falls, Charlestown, Warren, West Warwick and Woonsocket—already ban smoking in municipal parks. Charlestown and North Providence have banned smoking at city beaches.

The American Lung Association of the Northeast thinks more bans like this are imminent.

"This is a trend we're seeing more and more of," said Michael Seilback, a spokesman. "We think this is going to be a positive development for families enjoying the beachside this summer."

Not everyone is a fan.

Ross Grandfield, 18, of Rehoboth, Massachusetts, said he doesn't agree with smoking, but he doesn't think that right should be taken away.

While walking along the Cliff Walk, he said a simpler solution could be

to install more ashtray stations along the path.

Dan Smith of Colchester, Connecticut, said [smoking](#) doesn't bother him in an open area, but he does worry about [cigarette butts](#) being thrown over the cliff and into the ocean.

Smith's wife, Amy, said she doesn't mind smokers on the Cliff Walk "as long as they pick up any butts."

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