

The Breakdown: A Private Island

As splurges go, buying an exclusive offshore enclave like Scituate's Horse Island is a doozy. But bragging rights may be the easiest thing to acquire. Here's what it takes to turn some very green acres into a personal paradise.

By Kimberly Jones

The Purchase

Though undeveloped New England islands come up for sale occasionally, Horse Island is the only one in Massachusetts now on the market (privateislandsonline.com/horseislandmass.htm). Located a few hundred feet off Briggs Harbor, the 3-acre landscape of cedars and wild blueberries last sold in 1956 for \$5,000, as a Christmas gift from the buyer to his wife. Today the asking price has jumped to \$750,000, which is less of a steal than you might think.

Permitting

In our regulation-heavy state, breathing is about the only thing you won't need permission to do in your private paradise. First, you'll need to lobby the local zoning board of appeals to make sure you can build on the property; if there isn't a bridge or a causeway to your island, you won't qualify for a permit without the board's express consent. Before you put in a dock, the Department of Environmental Protection must approve; to trim the trees, you might need the okay of the local conservation commission.

Construction

Building a house in a place like Horse Island can cost anywhere from 25 to 40 percent more than it would on the mainland—and that's not including seawalls and underwater extensions to the power grid. (Last year the owners of a close-to-shore island in Maine paid \$100,000 just to lay power cables to the mainland.) Other unavoidable costs: a septic system to handle wastewater (around \$40,000), and a well (around \$10,000).

Transport

As you might imagine, hauling materials and equipment to an offshore site is a major undertaking. Though it's possible to walk through the marsh to Horse Island at low tide, high tide requires a small boat or canoe. One way to transport cargo is by helicopter, which starts at \$5,000 an hour—and that's after an initial fee of anywhere from \$8,000 to \$50,000. For moving heavy-duty equipment like forklifts, excavators, and concrete trucks, you'll need a barge.

Budget Boosters

If you're willing to skimp on luxury, island habitation can be relatively reasonable. A 900-square-foot yurt can be shipped and built for just under \$100,000 in five to six weeks. For power, a small wind turbine can be had for \$10,000. Even your choice of a privy can pay dividends: Composting toilets use less than 3 ounces of water per flush, as opposed to the typical gallon and a half, and yield flowerbed-quality compost.



Island Building Resources

Additional how-to info on how to splurge on a private island.

Helicopter rental

Carson Helicopter, 952 Blooming Glen Rd., Perkasie, PA, 18944, 800-523-2335,
www.carsonhelicopters.com

Composting toilets

Clivus Multrum, Inc., 15 Union St., Lawrence, MA, 01840, 800-425-4887, www.clivusmultrum.com

Yurts

Oregon Yurtworks, LLC, 1285 Wallis St., Eugene, OR, 97402, 800-211-8470, www.yurtworks.com

Wind and Solar Power System Installation

New England Breeze, LLC, 978-567-9463, www.newenglandbreeze.com

Barge rental

Island transporter, LLC, 79 Mechanic Street, Rockland, ME, 04841, 207-594-7860,
www.islandtransporter.com; Sterling Equipment, 551 South St., Quincy, MA 02169, 888-MRBARGE (888-672-2743), www.sterlingequipment.com

Marsh Buggies

Coast Machinery, LLC, 10012 Umbehagen Ln., Baton Rouge, LA, 70817, 800-827-5320,
www.marshmaster.com

Builder

Wright-Ryan Homes, 10 Danforth St., Portland, ME, 04101, 207-773-3625, www.wright-ryanhomes.com

Builder

Homebuilder

Boothbay Home Builders, P.O. Box 142, Boothbay, ME, 04537, 207-633-3818, www.knickerbockergroup.com

Every day
 Every game
 Is a chance
 to witness
 history.

Be there.



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