

Escape

S NANTUCKET SPLENDOR

Simple grandeur reigns on the New England isle—and coveted American destination

BY PAUL RUBIO

Nantucket. The very name evokes imagery of a postcard-perfect New England—a land of windswept seascapes, historic lighthouses, a bustling harbor and charming, late-eighteenth century seaport architecture. Over the past century and a half, the former whaling colony 30 miles off of Cape Cod, Massachusetts has evolved into one of America's most coveted tourist destinations and even earned the title of "Best Island in the World" by *National Geographic* magazine.

Despite cyclical booms in Nantucket real estate and tourism, strict laws governing island development have stymied the onslaught of high-rise condominiums, imposing shopping malls and chain establishments. Environmental stewardship



THE 170-FOOT-TALL SANKATY HEAD LIGHT LIGHTHOUSE WAS BUILT IN NANTUCKET IN 1850. IT WAS THE FIRST LIGHTHOUSE IN MASSACHUSETTS WITH A FRESNEL LENS, WHICH WAS REPLACED IN 1950 WITH A ROTATING AEROBEACON. THE LIGHT WAS AUTOMATED IN 1965, AND COAST GUARD PERSONNEL OCCUPIED THE STATION UNTIL 1992.



CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: WAUWINET'S BACKYARD, GUEST ROOM, SUMMER FARE AND TRADITIONAL FACADE.

has led to the sanctioning of nearly 50 percent of the island as conservation land. Building regulations have deftly preserved the island's early architectural heritage to the point of mandating that nearly all construction conform to low-rise, iconic gray-wood shingle and white-trim cottages. In the case of Nantucket, tenacity has yielded an exquisite end game: a petite island of sand dunes, grasslands, cranberry bogs, mansions and quaint, mirror-image cottages, collectively imbuing visitors and residents with a patriotic spirit and a sense of American enchantment.

Arrive on Nantucket and you'll quickly see an era bygone in mainland America is alive and well at sea.



ROOFTOP AT REVERE (BELOW) IS A 16,000-FOOT OUTDOOR BAR AND LOUNGE TOWERING SEVEN STORIES ABOVE BOSTON'S BUSY STREETS.

BEANTOWN STOPOVER

Most Nantucket sojourns begin with a short flight from Boston, America's beloved "Cradle of Liberty." A recent hostile takeover by upscale entities has bestowed the city with an overdue, big-city edge, throwing a Red Sox curve ball into a longstanding college-town culture. The city's latest luxury hotel opening: the Revere Hotel (reverehotel.com) off Boston Common, which embraces the apex of Boston's chic evolution. Tufted leather headboards, sleek work desks, colorful chaise loungers and larger-than-life floor lamps help define the glamorous rooms and suites of this all-balcony hotel. By day, the Revere's cabana-lined pool deck vies for attention with the city's renowned landmarks. Come dusk, the hotel's rooftop bar, Rooftop at Revere, erupts with a true summer sophisticate scene. It's the place to see and be seen with a vodka-infused, strawberry-lemonade cocktail in hand as the city lights illuminate the sky.



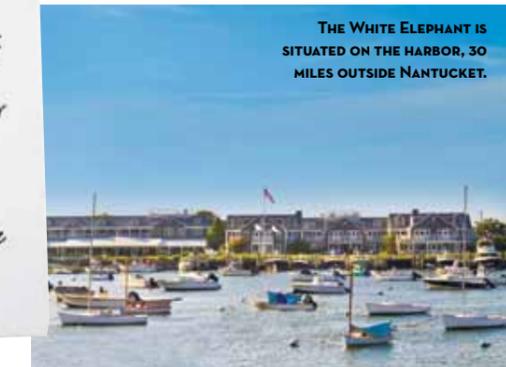
structured around 1875, the history-steeped Wauwinet offers serenity at its finest, with a sprawling bayfront lawn strewn with oversized white loungers idyllic for deep thought and relaxation. All 32 elegantly appointed rooms in this waterfront retreat flaunt traditional seaside beauty, each with singular antiques and furnishings to complement the soft floral prints and wicker ornaments. Afternoons are spent enjoying Port and cheese in the cozy, living-room style lobby, while summer mornings may include kayaking or paddleboarding in the bay or sun worshipping along either of the hotel's two private beaches—one on the ocean, the other on the bay.

At both ends of the summer peak season, cooler temperatures prompt the hotel to heat up the activity roster. During spring and fall, you're less likely to sunbathe on the lawn and more likely to enjoy a bay cruise, cooking classes with renowned in-house Chef Kyle Zachary, an eco-tour through Great Point Wildlife Refuge, lessons in surfcasting (fishing from the shoreline) or a "lobstering" excursion, where you might catch your butter-poached dinner. Even if you don't reel in your own meal, you'll feed your wildest sea-"foodie" and oenophile fantasies at Topper's, often recognized as the top restaurant on Nantucket.

Clambakes, fireworks and family gatherings designate summertime. Days consist of bicycle rides, good books, long walks and excellent meals. Myriad trails zigzag across the 14-by-3.5-mile island; some lead to the island's trio of storied lighthouses, others to uninhabited points along 80-plus miles of beach, still others to expansive swathes of windblown grasslands and the island's rare flora. Flurries of "hellos" and genuine hospitality welcome passersby, whether browsing the downtown boutiques, ambling pristine Siasconset (pronounced "Sconset") Beach or frivolously wading in a cranberry bog within the island interior. Families and friends gather for the daffodil festival weekend in April, the wine festival in May, the film festival in June, the boat races in August and the scallop festival in October. Life here is simple yet rich.

For those who've yet to fork out a few million for a second (or third) home on this enchanted isle, Nantucket Island Resorts (nantucketislandresorts.com) offers the next best thing for visitors. This collection of five luxury properties includes The Wauwinet and the White Elephant, Nantucket's most esteemed lodging options, open seasonally from mid-April to late October.

Sandwiched between the Atlantic Ocean and Nantucket Bay, The Wauwinet (wauwinet.com) rests on a remote strip of land on the island's northeastern-most reaches. Sybarites gravitate to this boutique Relais & Châteaux property to escape the world and the "hub-bub" of downtown Nantucket, 30 minutes away. Con-



THE WHITE ELEPHANT IS SITUATED ON THE HARBOR, 30 MILES OUTSIDE NANTUCKET.

TRAVEL NOTES

- Nantucket first-timers will want to tick off major historic sites like the Whaling Museum and Old Gaol, one of America's oldest surviving jails.
- For casual but incredibly delicious bar bites and local brews, head to Brotherhood of Thieves (brotherhoodofthieves.com).
- Don't miss Siasconset Beach, where you'll gawk at mansions, curious seals and the pristine beach.

Escape



THE AMERICAN SEASONS (ABOVE) SERVES DELICACIES SUCH AS CHARCUTERIE (LEFT) AND PRESSED SPANISH OCTOPUS (BELOW LEFT).



fireplaces. Expansive outdoor patios and decks elevate the experience.

Through the years, the White Elephant's Brant Point Grill has become a regional institution, famed for its original homemade New England clam chowder. You can balance out your calories with a lighter main such as Nantucket fluke fillet over charred leek and sweet New England corn ragout or the cedar-planked salmon prepared on the "fire cone," a Native American-inspired coal-fired grill.

Beyond the White Elephant, in the heart of downtown, American Seasons (americanseasons.com) is a tried and true locals' favorite—25 years strong and sourcing all of its ingredients from on-island farms and local fishermen. Dare to indulge in the tobacco-rubbed duck breast over hazelnut granola, and ginger-rhubarb vinaigrette, and further inoculate your Nantucket experience from the ordinary—well, as ordinary as a vacation to this Utopia-Stepford hybrid can be. ◀◀

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