

COUNTRY & TOWN HOUSE

THE BEST OF
BOTH WORLDS

JULY 2017 £3.90

NATURE'S TREASURES

*Jewels inspired by
British landscapes*

DUTCH COURAGE

*Game of Thrones'
Carice van Houten*

FINE TIMES

SIMON DE BURTON'S WATCH SPECIAL

PLUS

48
HOURS
IN CAPE
TOWN

FOOD & TRAVEL

EAT · DRINK · ESCAPE

Looking for New England

Nantucket offers the sophisticated simple
life in spades, says **Sarah Gilbert**

A typical Nantucket sunset



White Elephant Village on Nantucket, as seen from the water

Everything from sailboats to superyachts bobbed around the ferry as it entered Nantucket's postcard-perfect harbour and I gazed at the historic waterfront buildings reflected in the cobalt blue water.

Lying 30 miles off the coast of Cape Cod in Massachusetts, tourism began in the second half of the 19th century, when the diminutive island – just 15 miles long and three miles wide – became a refuge for city-dwellers escaping the hustle and heat of Boston and New York.

Today it's one of America's most exclusive holiday destinations. But forget the celebrity-packed Hamptons or the Gilded Age mansions of Rhode Island, Nantucket is the epitome of laid-back New England charm, with shingled cottages surrounded by white picket fences, pristine, pale-sand beaches and a vibrant foodie scene.

I was staying at the White Elephant Village, part of the Nantucket Island Resort's small collection of luxurious hotels and inns, each with its own unique charm. Less hotel room, more sophisticated apartment, my vast one-bedroom Residence came with all the comforts of a super-stylish home-from-home, and beach-chic interiors, not to mention a gorgeous, cabana-fringed pool.



Welcome to White Elephant Village

It was just a short stroll from Nantucket Town, and one sun-filled morning I joined a walking tour from the Whaling Museum to learn about the island's fascinating history. Home to the Wampanoag people, in 1659 it was colonised by English settlers from Massachusetts and New Hampshire and soon became the wealthy whaling capital of the world. Nantucket whale oil lit the streets of London and the sinking of the whaling ship *Essex* inspired *Moby Dick*.

Sailors once said that you could smell Nantucket before you saw it. The entire island is a National Historic Landmark, so they would still recognise the cedar wood-shingled houses and cobbled streets, but today they're filled with boutiques, bars and hotels.

Franchises are banned – there's no McDonald's

or Starbucks here – and, Ralph Lauren aside, Main Street's 19th-century storefronts are filled with independent boutiques. You can still find an authentic pair of 'Nantucket Red' chinos at Murray's Toggery Shop, and the island's highly prized lightship baskets, but shopping on the island has evolved to include artisan beauty products at Follain, contemporary design at Milly & Grace and handcrafted jewellery from Jessica Hicks.

The foodie scene has become increasingly sophisticated too. That evening, I ate at The Nautilus, a buzzy restaurant that serves creative cocktails and Asian fusion food with a Nantucket twist. Irresistible small plates kept appearing



Sunset from the White Elephant's back lawn

from the open kitchen – crispy marinated calamari, Manny's scallion pancakes, Hawaiian tuna poke – followed by Nantucket Bay scallop khao soi and blue crab fried rice.

The following morning at the White Elephant all-day dining restaurant, Brant Point Grill, I couldn't resist the New England Lobster Benedict, while I drank in the views. Then, in a bid to work off some of the gastronomic treats, I borrowed a bike. The island is blissfully flat and almost half of it is protected, crisscrossed with 30 miles of cycle lanes, so it was an easy pedal past stretches of moorlands, forest and the famous cranberry bogs that are a sea of fiery red in autumn.

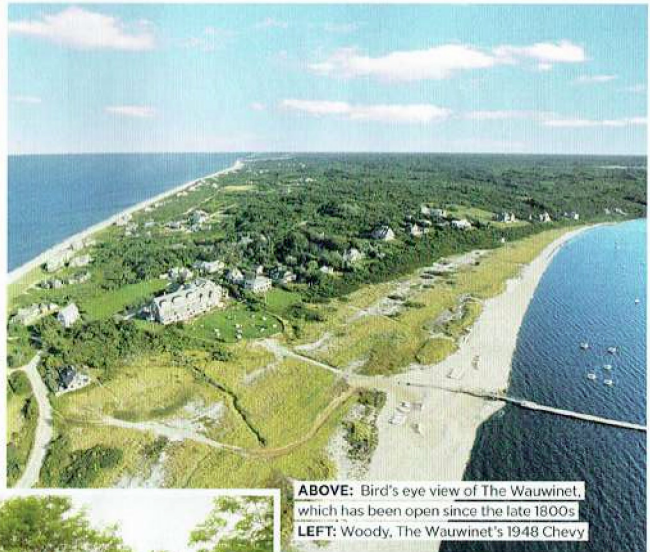
Two wheels is the perfect way to go beach hopping and Nantucket has plenty to choose from, each with its own character. Every local has their favourite, from calm Jetties Beach close to town, to the glorious sunsets of remote Madaket Beach on the west and Cisco, the surfers' favourite, on the south.

I took a taxi to another Cisco; a brewery, winery and distillery all rolled into one. Don't be fooled by the rustic appearance of this popular local hangout. What began as a boutique winery now has a state-of-the-art distillery and its barrel-aged single malt has been named best non-Scotch single-malt in the world. They also create cranberry vodka and an inspired selection of craft beers, from hop-heavy IPAs to seasonal fruity flavours.

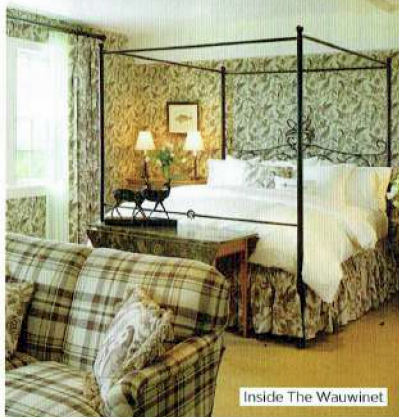
I headed east to my next resort, The Wauwinet, a Nantucket fixture that has welcomed guests since the late 1800s. Over its long life, this fisherman's inn has morphed in to a sophisticated bolthole, with 32 elegant rooms dressed in soft pastel shades, white shutters and marble bathrooms.

A path from the hotel garden leads down to a beach that seems to stretch for miles in both directions, separating the calm of Nantucket Bay from the wild Atlantic rollers. And there are plenty of cosy nooks in the library to curl up with a good book over coffee in the morning, iced tea in the afternoon and Port and cheese in the evening.

I set off to explore this corner of the island with Captain Rob in Woody, The Wauwinet's perfectly preserved 1948 Chevy. His family has lived on the island for 300 years, and as we barrelled down



ABOVE: Bird's eye view of The Wauwinet, which has been open since the late 1800s
LEFT: Woody, The Wauwinet's 1948 Chevy



Inside The Wauwinet

the narrow lanes, he told me that Nantucketers talk of 'leaving for America' when they go off island.

He drove me to Siasconset, known locally as Sconset. In the early 1900s, it attracted actors and writers from Broadway; now it's less about Hollywood and more an under-the-radar hangout for billionaire businessmen and politicians, where erstwhile fisherman's cottages come with a hefty price tag.

That evening, after taking in the stunning sunset views from the deck, chilled chablis in hand, I indulged at the hotel's award-winning restaurant, Topper's, with a seasonally inspired menu from chef Kyle Zachary that focuses on hyper-local ingredients and three sommeliers on hand to guide you through the dizzying array of wines from the 20,000-bottle cellar.

Lemon ricotta pancakes are popular at breakfast, while a low-key al fresco lunch might include an outsized lobster roll or a succulent Wagyu burger, perhaps washed down with a tangy Bloody Mary.

At dinner, it was hard to choose from deconstructed clam chowder and a sea urchin risotto, or lobster poached in seaweed butter and cooked-to-perfection New York strip steak. I managed to save room for dessert and the – literally – just-baked cookies that melted in my mouth were worth the wait.

I returned to Boston by puddle jumper and, skimming low over the city skyscrapers, I already missed Nantucket's combination of timeless island pleasures – fresh air, seafood and the simple life – and sophistication that keep people returning year after year. ■



Brant Point Grill raw bar at the White Elephant

BOOK IT

The White Elephant, doubles from \$225.
The Wauwinet, a Relais & Châteaux Hotel, doubles from \$195.
nantucketislandresorts.com

One-way fares with Norwegian direct from London Gatwick to Boston from £135.
norwegian.com/uk

One hour from Boston, Mirbeau Inn & Spa in Plymouth is the perfect stopover before catching the ferry to Nantucket, doubles from \$195.
mirbeau.com