

Andrew Harper's Hideaway Report[®]

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Traveling the world in search of truly enchanting places



The old town of Matera, a collection of ancient troglodyte dwellings, some of which are now boutique hotels

BASILICATA: ITALY'S BEST-KEPT SECRET

Extraordinary hotels, untouched landscapes, distinctive cuisine

Basilicata is one of the most remote and least visited parts of Italy, but during a recent road trip, we discovered a fascinating and stunningly beautiful region that will remain long in the memory. The serene southern Italian landscape is marked by dramatic cocoa-colored ravines, rolling fields of golden wheat and white villages perched on hilltops that look like low clouds from afar.

Although one of Italy's smallest provinces, Basilicata can boast a sandy coastline on the Ionian Sea, a distinctive

cooking style and some excellent little-known wines. Its true gem is the town of Matera. Continuously inhabited for more than 9,000 years, Matera is both a modern town, where most of its inhabitants live today, and an old town, which was originally a troglodyte settlement, with caves bored into the soft vanilla-colored limestone of a bluff.

It is the recent emergence of Matera as an intriguingly offbeat destination that has put Basilicata on the map. And now is the time to go, since its eerie beauty

and timeless atmosphere will doubtless be discovered by many more travelers when the city becomes one of Europe's two Capitals of Culture in 2019.

Basilicata has no major airport of its own, and its gateway is the city of Bari in the neighboring province of Puglia. In the early 20th century, Basilicata lost much of its population through emigration, as mechanization decreased the need for farmworkers. Lacking a significant port and poorly served by rail, it became so isolated that Mussolini sent political

Andrew Harper editors travel anonymously and pay full rate for all lodging, meals and related expenses. Since the launch of *Andrew Harper's Hideaway Report* in 1979, the featured hotels and restaurants have been selected on a completely independent basis. For comments and inquiries concerning *The Hideaway Report*, please email aharper@andrewharper.com.



THE ENDURING APPEAL OF NANTUCKET

Stylish new inns, enticing new restaurants

The word “Nantucket” most likely derives from a Wampanoag word meaning “faraway land.” But despite its poetic name, the island lies just 30 miles from the south shore of Cape Cod. Its glory days as a whaling port lasted until the mid-1800s, when a double punch of the harbor’s natural limitations and a major fire brought an end to its prosperity. In search of livelihoods, many inhabitants left the island, which went into a Brigadoon-like period of suspended animation. However, this exodus resulted in much of its architecture

being preserved. In 1966, the Town of Nantucket was designated a National Historic Landmark District for being the “finest surviving architectural and environmental example of a late 18th- and early 19th-century seaport town in New England.”

Today its population jumps from 11,000 year-round to more than 50,000 during the summer months. In contrast to neighboring Martha’s Vineyard, which gathers a crowd of artists, writers and journalists, as well as showbiz folk and politicians, Nantucket tends to attract

hedge fund moguls and Wall Street executives. As a result, property values have become stratospheric. On my recent trip, a real estate broker told me that a two-bedroom starter home now begins at around \$1.2 million.

Over the years that I have been going to Nantucket, I have seen the number of mansions increase exponentially. However, the steep price of land and strict local regulations help to ensure that the island is not overrun. The Nantucket Islands Land Bank levies a 2 percent fee on most real estate transactions, money

Coskata-Coatue Wildlife Refuge on Nantucket Island, and Greydon House in the Town of Nantucket



PHOTOS BY ANDREW HARPER

that goes to preserving acreage for “open space, agriculture and recreational uses.” As a result, almost half the island is protected. A body called the Historic District Commission limits the colors for painting houses to a palette of only about a dozen shades. I once saw a T-shirt that said, “Turn left at the gray house with white trim,” which describes so many houses as to render the directions laughably meaningless.

The Greydon House opened in the fall of 2016 to enthusiastic reviews. Located at a choice corner location in the Town of Nantucket, just a brief walk from the ferry terminal, the 16-room inn brings together the old and the new in a way that you do not often see here. The old is a stately white 1850 Greek Revival structure that was once the office of the island’s physician; the new is an adjoining three-story building that was recently constructed in a Second Empire style with a mansard roof.

On entering the reception area, I was surprised by the color scheme of deep blue walls with dark wood accents. The space struck me as being antithetical to the brightness I expect in an island property. This same décor prevailed in the hallways and on the staircase. Our room, however, provided a welcome contrast, with multiple windows letting in a flood of light. Walls done in two-directional shiplap wainscoting — both horizontal and vertical — provided visual liveliness. And being painted white, it contrasted strongly with the rich, warm hue of the reclaimed chestnut floorboards. Aside from the bed, our room had a couple of small side tables and a rather uncomfortable sofa. The lighting was meager, with two disc-shaped fixtures flanking the head of the bed, plus a small table lamp. The size of the room called for more illumination at night. The bath came with a single vanity, a large counter, a walk-in shower with a hand-painted mural and Aesop products.

Unusual for a property of this size, Greydon House has its own restaurant. The main dining room is bright and



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pleasant. Chef Marcus Gleadow-Ware, who hails from New York’s *Aureole*, oversees the fine kitchen, and the restaurant deservedly enjoys a loyal following on the island. We opted for a simple meal of oysters, followed by succulent black bass.

To have opened a new inn despite Nantucket’s watchdog regulations is a considerable achievement. Alas, I found the dark public areas at Greydon House to be unappealing. And deficiencies in our room, especially the inadequate lighting, detracted from my enthusiasm for the property.

A short distance away, **76 Main** is situated on the town’s cobbled principal thoroughfare, just steps from shops, galleries and restaurants. Its



Exterior, courtyard and room at 76 Main. The 20 accommodations occupy a restored sea captain’s house.



Bed and bath of our suite, lobby-lounge, and pool at the Inn at White Elephant Village

“Despite its island location, the Inn at White Elephant Village has many of the advantages of an upscale city hotel.



20 rooms occupy a restored former sea captain's house, with a white exterior and picket fence. Inside, accents and artwork support a nautical theme and are complemented by grass-cloth wall covering and exquisite woodwork.

Attentive staff greeted us at the small reception, beyond which we found a library-lounge. Our room in the main house came with high ceilings, tall windows and cream-hued walls. It was furnished with two reading chairs, a seagrass rug atop polished hardwood floors, an ample chest of drawers and a large desk. The relatively small bath had a single vanity and a comfortably sized walk-in shower.

Although 76 Main does not have a restaurant, it does offer a delightful café. This leads to a tree-shaded courtyard, where there are chairs and tables, plus couches for enjoying the fire pit in the evening. The inn provides a bar service of glasses, ice and mixers, so you are welcome to bring your favorite wines and spirits.

At 76 Main, we often felt as if we were staying as guests of a friend who knew our needs and strived to meet them.

I have long recommended the White Elephant hotel, a traditional property on the harbor just outside of town. The summer of 2012 saw the debut of the **White Elephant Village**, an inn and residences, a six-minute walk away.

The inn is set within a renovated building and comprises 20 rooms and suites. The lobby and reception area embody the property's stylish, contemporary décor. On arrival, the front-desk staff could not have been warmer or more professional.

Our suite (one of 14) had the soothing color scheme of cream and putty found throughout the property. It came with a coffered ceiling, wall-to-wall carpeting and large windows with plantation shutters. The bedroom offered crisp linens, plenty of closet space and a big chest of drawers. The separate living

room provided an ample desk and was ideal for an afternoon read. The bath was equipped with a soaking tub and a walk-in shower.

The inn does not have a restaurant, but a Continental-style breakfast is served, as well as wine and cheese in the late afternoon. Room service is available from the *Brant Point Grill* at the White Elephant hotel. And of course, inn guests are welcome to dine there. Unlike the original White Elephant, the inn has a swimming pool with reservable cabanas.

The adjacent residences are ideal for families. The one-, two- or three-bedroom cottages come with kitchens and washers and dryers. They are done in an identical style to the inn and are served by the same congenial staff. Games (electronic and traditional) are provided for children, and bicycles can be rented.

Despite its island location, the Inn at White Elephant Village has many of the advantages of an upscale city hotel. **HR**



NANTUCKET NOTEBOOK

RESTAURANT DISCOVERIES

I was happy to find the Nantucket dining scene as lively and as varied as ever. There are restaurants in all styles, featuring a variety of cuisines. Not surprisingly, you will find seafood in abundance. Settings range from beachside, to in-town romantic, to historic wharves. Even though Nantucket is a small island, you won't lack for choice.

AMERICAN SEASONS

The announcement in 2015 by Michael and Orla La Scola that they were selling their highly regarded restaurant caused considerable dismay. But when the new owner was revealed to be Neil Ferguson of the equally well-loved *Galley Beach*, the furor began to subside. Ferguson continues to serve excellent food in this charming, atmospheric place just a short walk from the center of town. We began with a chitarra pasta with fresh tomatoes, followed by a special of roasted duck breast. Service was excellent, and the wine list is full of delights.

80 CENTRE STREET. TEL. (508) 228-7111.

COMPANY OF THE CAULDRON

Cozily decorated in the style of a French auberge, this place is owned

by Joseph Keller, a distinguished chef who worked with his famous brother, Thomas, on the openings of both *The French Laundry* and *Per Se*. Keller offers a single three-course meal every night; the daily choices are published in advance. We began with an exemplary Caesar salad, followed by moist, flaky swordfish. A luscious berry cake brought the evening to a happy conclusion. The ebullient Keller circulated the dining room and made a point of chatting with every guest. Reservations are essential. 5 INDIA STREET. TEL. (508) 228-4016.

GALLEY BEACH

This airy restaurant has come a long way from its 1958 origins as a humble clam shack. It now has a lively bar and a dining room that

runs right onto the sand. My rich mushroom risotto was delicious. And a main course of roasted halibut came in a broth enlivened with clams and chorizo. 54 JEFFERSON AVENUE. TEL. (508) 228-9641.

STRAIGHT WHARF RESTAURANT

This engaging place takes its name from its location on one of the liveliest of the Nantucket wharfs, dating to 1723. Set in a loftlike space, the restaurant also has an outdoor area with views of the harbor. I opted for a starter of pork belly and Nantucket clams, a wonderful combination augmented by kale, tofu and grilled bread in a luscious broth. I continued the pork-seafood theme with a main dish of seared scallops with bacon, wild mushrooms, caramelized corn and roasted tomatoes. 6 HARBOR SQUARE. TEL. (508) 228-4499.

FOG ISLAND CAFE

For a great breakfast, many people on Nantucket will tell you to head to *Black-Eyed Susan's*. We did and were treated with less-than-welcoming hauteur. So instead we tried *Fog Island Cafe*, where we were warmly welcomed. We sat down to a satisfying meal of blueberry pancakes, sausage, and endless cups of delicious coffee. The clam chowder at lunch is said to be among the best on the island. 7 SOUTH WATER STREET. TEL. (508) 228-1818.

INTRIGUING SMALL MUSEUMS

WHALING

The Nantucket Historical Association's Whaling Museum explores life on the island when the business ruled the local economy, plus the arts and crafts to which the industry gave rise. I recommend the all-access pass, which will admit you to the museum as well as other sites administered by the Nantucket Historical Association.

LIGHTSHIP BASKET

No handicraft is more closely associated with Nantucket than the lightship basket. These were first made of rattan and were free-form. Over time, they acquired the wooden base that gives them structure. When the whaling business on Nantucket faded, many former crew members served on lightships. With time at their disposal, some of these men elevated the art of basket making. The museum has wonderful displays outlining the basket's evolution and of notable baskets past and present.

SHIPWRECK & LIFESAVING

Among the most interesting exhibits at this museum are a surfboat used in rescues by the Massachusetts Humane Society; artifacts from the *Andrea Doria*, which sank off the island in 1956; and a wonderful film on Mildred Jewett, an island character who lived by the sea and obsessively watched out for ships in distress. Her efforts saved many lives.

Nantucket Whaling Museum



HOTELS AT A GLANCE

GREYDON HOUSE 89

LIKE Excellent restaurant; rooms come with a lovely beach bag containing sunblock. **DISLIKE** The dark color scheme; smaller rooms are very small. **GOOD TO KNOW** There is an elevator, which is rare for a small inn on Nantucket. *Deluxe Room*, \$500; *Suite*, \$600. 17 Broad Street. Tel. (508) 228-2468. greydonhouse.com

76 MAIN 91

LIKE The prevailing atmosphere of good cheer; the hospitable staff. **DISLIKE** They forgot to give me the recipe for their chocolate chip cookies! **GOOD TO KNOW** The rooms around the courtyard tend to be larger than those in the main house but have relatively low ceilings. *Main House Room*, \$330; *Courtyard Room*, \$480. 76 Main Street. Tel. (508) 228-2533. 76main.com

INN AT WHITE ELEPHANT VILLAGE 93

LIKE Guests have full access to the facilities, including the restaurant, at the White Elephant hotel. **DISLIKE** The otherwise inviting front porch looks onto the parking area. **GOOD TO KNOW** The private parking is a real luxury in a town that is often extremely crowded. *Deluxe Room*, \$495; *Junior Suite*, \$570; *Suite*, \$615. 19 North Water Street. Tel. (508) 228-1500. whiteelephantvillage.com

 PRECEDING A RATING, DENOTES AN OFFICIALLY RECOMMENDED HOTEL THAT WILL BE ADDED TO THE ANDREW HARPER COLLECTION.