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STAR-SP

Join the smart set and soak up the gentle charms of Nantucket, says JENNY COAD

RED trousers are on trend in Nantucket. Apparently, the cheery-coloured chino came into being here when a local clothing retailer fell into a cranberry bog wearing cream trousers and had a Eureka moment.

But let's not forget, this is the island from which whaling ships set out for months on end, leaving wives and children behind to keep the home fires burning. And where wild Atlantic surf crashes onto stretches of sand flanked by dunes and prairie grasses.

I am here on a hot holiday weekend. The sky is a brilliant blue, the breeze clear and cooling. It seems a million miles away from those whaling days.

Nantucket sits in the Atlantic, roughly 200 miles from New York and 100 from Boston. The original Nantucketers were Quakers and their modest principles are represented in the discreet style of local architecture. Every house is clad in cedar shingle, which turns a restful grey in the maritime climate.

Everything is calm on the eye, if catastrophic on the wallet.

Holiday here and you'll be rubbing shoulders with the likes of Hollywood stars Ben Stiller, whose family own a house here, Drew Barrymore and Leonardo DiCaprio, who drop in to get away from the world's gaze — or to attend the annual film festival.

Only 12,000 Nantucketers live here year round, and parts of the island — like Siasconset on the eastern tip — shut down for winter. Those perfectly manicured streets must be eerie under a chilly sea fog.

But in summer the island population swells to more than 50,000 — and on a sunny weekend, it's rammed. And not just with wealthy A-listers.

A night's stay starts at £80 at the Jared Coffin House. You can come here for a loved-up break, or an all-American family holiday. The White Elephant hotel has it all covered. Families will love the

main hotel, right on the water, which offers a child-friendly beach and pig-out Sunday brunch.

Groups of friends will like the centre of town loft for the easy stumble from bars and boutiques and option to self-cater.

Couples seeking solitude should catch the boat to The Wauwinet inn, on the north-east corner of the island, for lunch. The trip provides views of dreamy homes adorning the inner coast.

THE evening scene in town teems and everyone under the age of 40 is asked for ID. For a 30-year-old like me, that's a thrill. The bars are packed, especially the diminutive Club Car bar — a restored train carriage from the railway, which ran to Siasconset in the 19th century. In the Club Car there's live piano and we shuffle past each other in a sort of dance to get to the bar or loo.

At the harbour, there's more spacious outdoor drinking. Cru is glittering views of the moored yachts and draws a varied crowd, dandy hair dressers from Cape Cod and skin surgeons who've nipped over from Boston, among them. Cucumber martinis ahoj. The Big Apple and

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WORLD TRAVEL AWARDS 2012

THE Headland Hotel is a huge red-brick blob of Victoriana that stands high above Newquay's Fistral Beach in the manner of an austere schoolmaster who refuses to pack his bags and hop off into retirement.

'Good lord,' says my wife as we pull up just in time to enjoy a traditional cream tea. I'm a little uneasy myself.

There's some faded glamour going on (the Prince of Wales, later Edward VIII, convalesced here after having mumps), but the main hall and public sitting areas are gloomy. Retirement home comes to mind.

Mind you, the welcome is warm and friendly, and we are escorted to

AN INSPECTOR CALLS



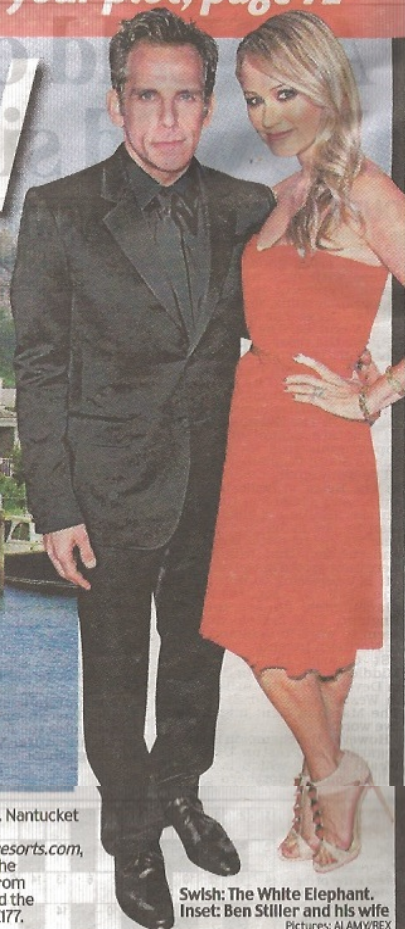
and a super-duper new spa opens for business later in the year.

People come from all over, many of them German, attracted by the link to Rosamunde Pitcher, who used to attend parties at The Headland. Pitcher's books are German TV stalwarts.

A Renault romp, page 70

Plans for your plot, page 72

ANGLED HAVEN



Swish: The White Elephant.
Inset: Ben Stiller and his wife
Pictures: ALAMY/REX

Boston feed the island scene. Those owning a home in either city as well as on Nantucket must feel they have made it.

I stop over in Boston for a few days. People say this elegant city looks like London. But it is smarter, cleaner and, at 38c in summer, much hotter.

Happily, there are plenty of cool diversions. Isabella Stewart Gardner's captivating museum is my favourite. She was a wealthy patron of the arts, and friends with artist John Singer Sargent.

The museum, which opened in 1903, was designed by Isabella to house her vast collection.

Almost every major artist you can name — from Michelangelo to Matisse, Manet, Raphael, Vermeer, Degas, and Botticelli — is represented on the walls. There are letters to Isabella from the great and the good, including one from the actress, Ellen Terry, to arrange a lunch date. It's stuffed with all sorts of antiques

— from Roman sculpture to sarcophagi and a sedan chair. There are letters written by Isabella, too. 'I am drinking myself drunk with Europa and then sitting for hours, thinking and dreaming about her,' she wrote of Titian's masterpiece.

Isabella's other home was 152 Beacon Street, where the smart set still live. The architect of Beacon Hill was a great fan of London squares and the area has a refined elegance.

Wander here for attractive lamp-lit streets, quirky shops and a pint of Sam Adams in The Sevens, a real-life Cheers-type bar.

The Oak Long Bar and Kitchen at the central Fairmont Copley Plaza hotel, where I stay, hosts what a local describes as 'an old town crowd'.

It has lobster macaroni and cheese on the menu. New England lobster is the best — and it's served every which way. Which reminds me, in the White Elephant on Nantucket you can order a lobster Bloody Mary. What a heavenly combination.

TRAVEL FACTS

British Airways, 0844 493 0758, ba.com, offers three nights at the five-star Fairmont Copley Plaza from £849pp based on selected travel during September/October 2013. Includes return flights and

accommodation. Nantucket Island Resorts, nantucketislandresorts.com, offers rooms at the White Elephant from £126 per night and the Wauwinnet from £177.

WEB WISDOM

Herman Melville based *Moby Dick* on Nantucket's whaling industry, which was at its peak in the 1800s. Read more at travelmail.co.uk



Bed and board: The Headland Hotel

windows galore looking out over Fistral Beach, a surfer's heaven.

Boarder dudes might find the main dining room a little formal. We don't, though the decor doesn't quite know in which century it belongs. The staff are all chatty and keen that everyone should have a good time.

'The chef is very excited by the lobster that was caught out there this morning,' says our charming Parisian waitress as she waves in the general direction of the Atlantic.

And so he should be. His lobster and crab starter is a thriller.

We avoid sore heads in the morning and take breakfast seriously, flitting back and forth from the well-stocked but canteen-like buffet. Ideally, we should be sitting on the terrace rather than the dining room, where windows inexplicably remain closed.

The Headland is adjusting to modernity. My wife says it's a work in progress, but I think it's had long enough to sort itself out. It can afford to be more bold — and it needs an injection of style and some fresh air. They could start by throwing open those dining room windows.

The Headland Hotel, Fistral Beach, Cornwall TR7 1EW. Double rooms from £149, 01637 872211, headlandhotel.co.uk

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Days 1 & 2 London to Vilnius. Fly to Vilnius for two nights. City tour includes the KGB Museum and Gediminas Castle. Afternoon at leisure.

Days 3 & 4 Vilnius to Riga. Travel to Rundale Palace for a visit and lunch before continuing to Riga for two nights. City tour visits the Dome Cathedral and St. Peter's Church viewing platform. Afternoon at leisure.

Days 5 to 7 Riga to Tallinn. Visit Pärnu, Estonia's 'summer capital'. Three nights in Tallinn. Walking tour includes Nevsky Cathedral and the Town Hall. Afternoon at leisure. Travel to Kadriorg Palace to visit Peter the Great's house and palace.

Day 8 Tallinn to London. Return flight from Tallinn to London, or extend for 2 nights in Helsinki.



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