Worshiping at the River

A fly fisherman finds a faith of sorts in Montana, where the waters still tell tales.

By Jon Gluck

"In our family, there was no clear line between religion and fly fishing." That's how the family's home stream runs just outside of Missoula, a town of some 75,000. It remains remarkably unspoiled, tucked away from the surrounding hordes of election-nestled "two by four by 30" in towns throughout the modern American West. (That's two people, four weeks a year and 30,000 square feet.) There are fewer rows and rows of lined-up boats and the smell of pale lagers wafting down the river scents the air. The river is a place of peace and solitude, a sanctuary from the hustle and bustle of the modern world. But the river is not just a place of peace, it is also a place of worship, a place where the voices of the fish and the rustling of the trees can be heard.

In the stillness of the morning, I put on my waders and head out on the river. The water is clear and cold, and the sun is just beginning to rise. I cast my line out into the current and wait for the first bite. As the morning hours pass, I fish and meditate, finding my own peace in the solitude of the river.
This sophisticated getaway is a bastion of conservation, offering both creature comforts and untrammelled natural wonders.

From left: Cisco Beach on Nantucket, where most of the 24 miles of beach are open to the public; Millie's, a casual elevated spot a short walk from Madaket Beach; and the Great Point Light at Cooks-Cummins Wildlife Refuge.

BY HANNAH SELIGSON

In "Many-Isled," Herman Melville famously calls "lovely" Nantucket an "island of sand that was all beach, without a background." The description is more appealing today. The 14-mile-long island, once a refuge for the proverbial "pilgrims," is now a summer refuge for the global elite. But don't worry, the sea-people haven't completely taken over. Thirty miles southwest of Nantucket is its "well-mannered" neighbor, Martha's Vineyard, a bastion of conservation, with about 45 percent of the land in trust, and over 900 pretzel-style windmills standing in its town center. There are virtually no tree-lined beaches, most of the 24 miles of pristine coastline are open to the public. Nantucket harkens back to a time when the island was a sophisticated getaway, with dining and shopping options that will please the most discriminating. Its serene moors and beaches hold little fast food - but beaches are quickly eroding, accelerated by climate change, and the island itself is projected to be undersea in several hundred years. So enjoy Nantucket's natural wonders while you can still see, striking the right balance of timeless island pleasures and new creature comforts.

FRIDAY

3:30 P.M. • • • COCKTAILS AND CLAMS
Most of Nantucket's institutions are centered around the harbor, including the historic Gurnet, Inman Fish, and East End Fish, offering the freshest seafood from the local waters.

6:30 P.M. • • • AKI ASIAN
One of the most secure restaurants in the world, Akiko's offers a unique dining experience with a view of the harbor.
**Friday**

1. **2 P.M. > GO NATIVE**
   Get to the beach as quickly as possible. En route, stop at the beloved local sandwich stand, Sladen's. There are various options for beachside strolls, and pick up a few of the plied-huge sandwiches such as an avocado, Cheddar, and chutney ($7.25 for a monster-sized half). Then walk 10 minutes east to the beach, which sits on the calm harbor side of the town. Soak in the panoramic view from the top of the steps before descending onto the soft white sand.

2. **6:30 P.M. > COCKTAILS AND CLAMS**
   Most of Nantucket's institutions are devoted to salt-of-the-earth New England, but the bar and restaurant Cru would blend in easily in St. Tropez. With an unrivaled location on the marina at the end of Straight Wharf, there isn't a better place to sip a glass of rosé ($14) and eat delicacies from the raw bar, arguably the best on the island, such as the enormous, juicy shrimp ($8 each) and littleneck clams ($2). Watching sailors coming in from their docked yachts is all part of the experience.

3. **8 P.M. > ACK ASIAN**
   One of the most inventive restaurants to open in the last few years is the Nauticus, which serves Asian fusion food with a nod to the island. Some of the standout dishes are small plates: Mmm's scallop sashimi ($9), Hawaiian tuna poke ($9), and the crispy prawn and calamari ($8). For two, with drinks, expect to pay around $20.

4. **9:30 P.M. > SWEET TREAT**
   There's a reason there is almost always a line at the Juice Bar, the homemade ice cream and smoothie joint in the center of town. It's addictive. There are no bad choices here, but make sure to get a hand-rolled waffle cone and fill it with any combination of chocolate, oreo, butter pecan, coffee and cookies & cream (two scoops, $7.25). Inside the blackberry ice cream makes for an exceptional milkshake ($4.70). Cash only.

5. **6:30 P.M. > MEXICAN MILLIE'S**
   Now you've worked up an appetite, hiking, swimming, and walking, reward yourself at Millie's, a casual but hip-notch Mexican-inspired seafood place, a 10-minute walk from Madaket Beach. An ideal selection: Ed Point tacos (stewed tuna with wasabi cream fraiche; $22) and a Gibbs Pond salad (lobster salad, corn, mixed greens, tomatoes and fingerling potatoes, $25.50).

6. **8 P.M. > ALFRESCO ITALIAN**
   Venturo, formerly 21 Federal, serves fresh, sophisticated Italian fare. Try to reserve a table on the outdoor patio, one of the most appealing on Nantucket. Start with a pepe picante, a cocktail made with tequila and three kinds of hot pepper ($15). Move on to appetizers of chicken fritti ($8). Try the tagliatelle with fresh garlic mushrooms, brussel sprouts, pancetta and crisp fried egg yolk and the spaghetti alle vongole (both $19). Share an order of the local catch of the day, and finish with the bomboloni, butterscotch chocolate doughnuts ($12).

**Saturday**

1. **8:30 A.M. > BY LAND OR BY SEA**
   Grab an egg, turkey bacon and cheese sandwich on a homemade biscuit ($5) from the Pettigrew Row Bakery. Then select a land or sea adventure to Coskata-Coots Wildlife Refuge, a sprawling, remote stretch of dunes and beach accessible by foot or by boat. The overland option, offered by the Trustees of Reservations, an organization dedicated to preserving land in Massachusetts, is a three-hour overland tour. It leaves daily from town at 8 a.m. or 1 p.m. (May to October), and takes you through some of the 1,200 acres of protected barrier beach habitat. Call ahead for reservations ($65). Or head out by boat on a seal-watching tour led by sheepwater Excursions to Great Point, the northeastern tip of the island. The two-hour tour leaves at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. ($95).

2. **12:30 P.M. > BIKE AND BEACH**
   Rent bikes at Young's Bicycle Shop ($35 for 24 hours) and start making your way via the Cliff Road bike path to Madaket Beach, a wave-lover's paradise. (From town, this is a 2-mile hike.) Bike riders that are new to the island can also take the half-mile loop, don't miss the path to the cliff's edge for a view of the harbor. Another option is to pedal up to Dinosaur, a perfect beach that's great for children. Or continue on the main path, which takes you past stretches of moors, wetlands and pine groves, toward Madaket Beach. For the cycling-averse, there's a public shuttle bus (the WAVE; $2 ride) running between town and Madaket.

3. **2:30 P.M. > MEXICAN MILLIE'S**
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4. **4 P.M. > BEERS AND SANDS**
   Either bike or take a taxi to Cisco Brewers (7.3 miles by bicycle on the main roads and bike paths from Millie's), which, along with making their own beer, wine and cider, turns into a party every weekend. Two bands play on Saturdays and Sundays — one at 3:30 p.m., the other at 4:30 p.m. The brewery is a piano to summer, where islanders and visitors bring their dogs and kids while sipping beer and wine in this picturesque setting. Don't miss the blueberry sangria ($5). Bonus: There's a free shuttle from the visitors' center in town to the brewery and back.

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