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
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.

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 frizzingly 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 fillet 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 (nantuckiterals.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 northeasternmost reaches. Sybarites gravitate to this boutique Relais & Châteaux property to escape the world and the “hub-bub” of downtown Nantucket, 30 minutes away. Con-
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.

Choose from the extensive wine list—1,450 choices—and commence the evening with an order of local “Restyo” oysters on the half-shell, harvested 300 yards from the hotel. Then feast on that butter-poached local lobster (yours or the chef’s) served over chestnut ravioli, butternut squash and porcini mushrooms in a brown butter sauce.

Contrary to the uber-tranquil Wauwinet, sister hotel the White Elephant (whiteelephanthotel.com) trumpets loud and proud in the heart of the Nantucket scene. Located alongside the lively harbor and boutique-lined downtown, the White Elephant delivers exquisite accommodations just minutes from the island’s greatest density of shops, galleries, restaurants and museums. True to its name, the hotel employs plenty of white in the interiors of its 53 guest rooms and suites: plantation shutters, walls, select furnishings and organic fine linens, all with the intention of drawing attention to the sea blues through the windows and the roaring orange hues of the working
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 coast,” 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 slack breast over hazelnut granola and ginger-thyme vinagrette, and further inoculate your Nantucket experience from the ordinary—well, as ordinary as a vacation to this Utopia-Steptford hybrid can be. 

---

PALM BEACH’S FIRST BLOW DRY SALON

ALL BLOWOUTS $45 (Sorry Diva’s, The Rent!)
Go Mondays & Go Tuesdays $35 (The least we can do)
BOOK APPOINTMENTS ONLINE • WALK-IN’S WELCOME • ON LOCATION • HOUSE CALLS AVAILABLE
OPEN 7 DAYS - FREE VALET PARKING
340 Royal Poinciana Way, Suite 327 (south side), Palm Beach
(561) 557-1102 • Blow-Go.com
PALM BEACH • BOCA RATON • PARKLAND

Wash, Blow & Go
A BLOW DRY SALON

Douglas Elliman most cares for our clients in real estate. Do you?

ASK ELLIMAN