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The Escape Artist {ANDREW RIMAS}

ELEPHANT WITH A ROOM

A perfect summer's day on Nantucket.

PACK YOUR TRUNK Tranquil elegance at the Inn at the White Elephant Village.

SOME ISLAND HOLIDAYS CAN be tailored. Iceland, for instance, is a fun vacation spot for gourmands, ornithologists and Viking re-enactors alike. Maui's got a famous astronomical research facility along with the snorkeling. Prince Edward Island boasts both the Russet Burbank and the Yukon Gold potato. But other islands are less varied. As you wouldn't go to Ibiza if you disapproved of thongs, you don't go to Nantucket if you've got an aversion to preppies. If preppiness is embraced, however, there's no better place to flaunt your whale pants.

Much has been written in the pages of this magazine about the diversions of Nantucket's town center—its cobblestones and art galleries, its well-groomed couples walking even better groomed Labrador retrievers, its $4 pizza slices. There are wine festivals and Christmas Strolls and Figawis. But an ideal day on Nantucket involves a very specific pleasure: sipping a glass of port on the back porch of the Inn at the White Elephant Village while waiting for your shuttle bus to dinner at Topper's.

TRAVELER'S CHECKS

Don't attempt to cycle in the streets around the harbor. Cobblestones are hell on your tires, to say nothing of your bone structure when you fall off.

*

At Topper's, try the roasted veal sweetbreads with frogs' legs, if available. Just do.

*

There's also much to recommend the oyster chowder with leeks and sea urchin, garnished with caviar.

Standing in front of the weathered shingles of the Inn at the White Elephant Village, the careless visitor might assume the 20-unit building dates from the era of baleen corsets. It dates, in fact, from the era of YOLO hashtags. As a sort of bridge between the White Elephant Hotel and its more palatial residences, the Inn tempers its traditional exterior by offering Vegas-style cabanas by the pool.

Excess, of course, isn't the same as luxury. The Inn's lobby, for instance, is the antithesis of Trumpdom. Looking as if it were designed by a mermaid with a taste for ecru, it's a tranquil space of wainscoting and whitewash, textured with soft upholstery and brittle shells. It's also where you can snag a homemade cookie or a nibble of cheese before appraising the stuffed elephants in the gift shop.

This sense of muted swank carries into the guestrooms, which are determinedly beige. True, you'll see scallop shell whites and the odd glimmer of seafoam, but the opulent velvets, woolens, leathers and linens blend into a plush neutrality. Rain showers, deep tubs and recurring flat-screen televisions further pad out the understated comfort.

SHELL GAME The Inn's lobby has an aquatic feel.

In front of the Inn, an outdoor heated pool laps behind a tall, wooden fence, its white cabanas standing in military trim by the deck chairs. But Nantucket is an island for a reason. Next to the hydrangeas, a rack of bicycles offers an easy means to escape the town and explore the beaches. Take the Easton Street exit from the property, turning left past the Nantucket Hotel & Resort and heading up the pretty, tree-lined Cliff Road. After a few blocks, the vistas open up on a designated bicycle path that leads west to the ponds and summer rentals of the north shore. Sheltered, family-friendly Dionis Beach is only three miles out of town, and the Inn will pack you water and towels for the outing.

But a perfect island day demands crustaceans, and the finest butter-poached lobster available to man is at Topper's, the fine-dining jewel in that statement piece of Nantucket hotels, the Wauwinet (hop on the shuttle from the driveway of the White Elephant Hotel). The staging of the flowers, service and sunsets give the restaurant a feel of event—the crystal here has seen many an anniversary toast. This year the kitchen celebrates its own 25th year, and to mark the occasion, cellar master Craig Hanna uncorked the Woody 25, Topper's first proprietary whisky. Aged and bottled by Nantucket's own Triple Eight distillery (best known in Boston for their brewing arm, Cisco, which makes the admirable Whale's Tale Pale Ale), it's a Scotch-style single malt with a complex, fruity nose and a nuanced sweetness evocative of balanced, somewhat delicate whiskies like Glenmorangie or Balvenie. Don't be put off by the name, for while there's a hint of oak at the finish, it's mellowed to a whisper. You can order the Woody in a sour or Rob Roy, but be sure to taste it neat, alongside a plate of fresh oysters.

It's not often that anyone in Massachusetts spends a quarter century making a drink. But that's a large part of Nantucket's appeal: where tradition meets 21st-century standards, and the turndown service reveals Pratesi sheets. ***

Inn at the White Elephant Village *50 Easton St., Nantucket (508-228-2500) whiteelephantvillage.com.*
Topper's *120 Wauwinet Road, Nantucket (508-228-8768) wauwinet.com*

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