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# Traveler

## Top Things to Do in Nantucket

Written by Cassie Shortsleeve · July 01, 2016



CAP Don't just come during the day: Maladet Beach is the best spot in Nantucket for sunsets.

**Few things beat waking up on an island. Here, how to spend your waking hours in Massachusetts' whaling town-turned-weekend getaway.**

Nantucket is practically a cliché of a New England vacation, with its luxurious gray-shingled homes and crushed shell driveways; private jets dotting a sleepy runway; and barrier beaches and dunes with bikes parked alongside. With summer comes the crowds, and certain realities (like college parties on Nobadeer Beach) are inevitable. But they're also avoidable. To take advantage of new offerings like hip hotels infused with history and a just-opened culinary center, you must first navigate the island's historic cobblestone streets, en route to a perfect weekend that isn't a stereotype.

Consider this your guide.

### CHECKING IN

The kids may not appreciate the elegance of [The White Elephant Village Residences & Inn](#)—with its line of blue hydrangea bushes and in-unit fireplaces—but they will like its proximity to Children's Beach, just a quarter-mile away, and the private outdoor pool serving up summer snacks like fruit skewers. The residence and inn are a welcome extension of the iconic hotel on Easton Street; with private entrances and in-unit washer/dryers, you'll feel right at home.

For something new, try [Greydon House](#) (the name pays homage to Nantucket's nickname, Grey Lady), set to open in August. It's a 20-room boutique hotel home to overgrown gardens of sea roses and cocktails in copper pineapples.

### DAY ONE: BIKE AROUND TOWN

About 3.5 by 14 miles in size, the island greets ferry-goers with its streetlight-free downtown overlooking the Nantucket Sound. Here, you'll find quaint cobblestone streets peppered with boutiques, restaurants, museums, and even a historic Meeting House where, every Fourth of July, the Declaration of Independence is read. Start by renting bikes from [Young's Bicycle Shop](#), an island staple since the 1930s. All of the in-town must-hits are easily accessible by two wheels, like the [Nantucket Whaling Museum](#) and the [Samuel Owen Gallery](#), an art gallery posting up in the historic Seven Seas building—once home to Captain George Pollard of *The Essex*, the sinking of which inspired *Moby-Dick*.

You'll want to check out Brant Point Lighthouse, too, which you can reach by side streets lined with oceanfront homes proudly or punnily named, monikers like "Class ACK" or "Meant to Be." There, watch the ferries sail in and out of the harbor, passengers waving.

At [Dreamland Theatre](#), originally constructed in 1832 as a Quaker meetinghouse and now a LEED-certified establishment, you can catch an evening film, anything from *Finding Dory* to *The Last Bay Scallop?* (bonus: a Q&A with a local fisherman). Afterward, your nose will lead you just down the street to the Juice Bar, a no-frills gray storefront that lures you with the siren-scent of fresh waffle cones. Wait in line (even if it snakes around the corner) for homemade cones and scoops.



Oysters at Cru, located at the end of Straight Wharf.

## DAY TWO: BEACH BUM PRACTICE

The beaches of the Faraway Land, as it was originally named by the Wampanoag, may be the island's main attraction—and there are many to choose from. Start down Hummock Pond Road by bike or car until you hit the end: the shores of Cisco Beach. There, you'll find heavy surf and the [Nantucket Island Surf School](#) and a quieter vibe. (Just note: No restrooms.)

For people watching, walk the water's edge or make your way down three-mile Surfside Road (stopping at [45 Surfside](#) for sandwiches) to the sprawling Surfside Beach, an island favorite with a hodgepodge of beachgoers: families, young adults, surfers. Play in the waves (heeding the surf flags) or splurge on a burger from the snack shack.

Chase the late afternoon sun west, five-and-a-half miles from town, to Madaket Beach. It's one of the best on-island spots to watch the sinking sun turn the sky an Instagram-worthy fiery red. Fish tacos and margaritas at [Millie's](#), a boisterous (and usually packed) Mexican joint nearby, are a must.

## DAY THREE: A FOOD TOUR OF NANTUCKET

Start your morning with a don't-tell-the-doctor plate of eggs, bacon, and cheese grits at the classic, cash-only shop [Black Eyed Susan's](#) on India Street. Here, you're just blocks from Nantucket's most-talked-about opening: the state-of-the-art [Nantucket Culinary Center](#) that brings together the island's brewing, farming, fishing, and culinary communities. Sign up for a hands-on cooking classes from a local chef in advance.

Come lunchtime, sit back and take in the scene at [Cru](#), an oyster bar at the end of Straight Wharf that draws the well-heeled alongside beach bums keen to escape the sun dockside. Yes, the oysters are great, but don't skip the lobster role; it's arguably one of the best on the island.

During happy hour, stroll the streets in search of a craft cocktail, like the What's Up "DOG" (matcha tea, lemon, Bulldog gin, and coriander tincture) at [The Proprietors Bar & Table](#); a glass of red at the subdued but swanky [American Seasons](#); or an evening tasting at [Epernay Wine & Spirits](#).

Then leave town by way of a water taxi from The White Elephant to [The Wauwinet](#)—an oceanfront resort that dates back to 1875. Dinner (with a reservation) is at [Topper's](#), an acclaimed indoor-outdoor dining room, where seafood is served seriously local (Retsyo oysters are cultivated just 300 yards away) against a dreamy backdrop—calm waters and the fragile, remote [Coskata-Coatue Wildlife Refuge](#).