



NANTUCKET

'On island' off season

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THE GRATEFUL TRAVELER

Nantucket is the convergence of sky, sea and land. The Nantucket Inn is the convergence of family, fun and casual sophistication.

You can get there from here

I am puzzled by the answers I have been given to my nearly constant question about traveling to Nantucket from the Capital Region. Have you been? I ask. I would say seven out of ten people I query say no. Yes, this is quite an unscientific poll yet it is a qualified one, as I only ask the folks who I know love to travel. If you are one of the individuals answering no, you need to go.

The trip involves a drive to the ferry. I went from Hyannis on Hy-Line Hyannis (high-speed catamaran) but in the summer months, you can choose from a wider range of locations from Harwich port on Freedom Cruise Line, on

a slower ship from Hyannis with the Steamship Authority, from Oak Bluffs, Martha's Vineyard on Hy-Line, from New Bedford on Seastreak, or from Woods Hole. The higher speed ship takes about an hour to cross into Nantucket and is quite a comfortable fast journey, so what are you waiting for? There are also several major air carriers now going to Nantucket.

The summer months are a bit crazy on the island and, honestly, planning a trip from September on into the winter months (the climate is a mild one compared to ours) and any time before school dismisses for the summer break allows you to avoid the crowded streets. The little island's population swells by as much as six times annually in summer and this past season was even more than six times. I cannot imagine the population larger than what I witnessed during the summer.

By going to Nantucket "off season," you can also avoid the hotel and inn minimums. True, you may sacrifice a seasonal restaurant

or two but, believe me, there are plenty of excellent choices still available.

What to do once on Island

Nantucket is very old and the charm of the island is, in part, because of tiny often cobblestone streets.

The Nantucket Whaling Museum was a highlight for me. The museum is of course dedicated to the history of whaling. It is run by the Nantucket Historical Association and this historical association should be the model of all others throughout the country. It is involved, dedicated and committed to inhabitants and visitors alike.

The museum offers visitors the opportunity to see a film written and produced by Emmy award-winner Ric Burns that I would have paid for in the theater. It is that good! It chronicles the effervescence of Nantucket's history. I certainly knew nothing of the island's past. The film covers the original Wampanoag



Photo credit: Nantucket Insider

Native American population and early Quaker culture to its international significance as the whaling capital of the world and to today's rebirth as an art and resort colony. Unpretentious Nantucket during its whaling days was the center of the universe. Do not leave this wonderful museum without seeing the harbor views from the upper deck and stopping by its gift shop.

Three of Nantucket lighthouses were originally built as directional tools. While we do not need these navigation tools any longer, they are wonderful to see and photograph. Brant Point, Great Point and Sankaty Head Lighthouse are still standing gracefully, having seen so much tragedy from the whaling days. Their locations offer exceptional views of the moors and the Atlantic Ocean.

Boating, fishing and water sports are plentiful with fishing excursions, beaches to romp on and sports of all varieties.

Nantucket by bus, bike, water, or on foot with an islander on hand to guide you is wonderfully entertaining. Whale sighting ships are accessible to see the majestic creatures up front and personal. Theater, film, music and nightlife for the adults and endless healthy options for the kids in the family also are available to you.

Architecturally, Nantucket is so unique. I challenge anyone not to fall in love with the colors and shapes of the houses along Vestal, Broadway and the Union Street area.

Island dining varies from fine dining to casual and take-out, to wonderful bakeries and gourmet markets for your beach picnic needs. Dining on the beach is always extraordinary and the one-of-a-kind sunsets even get wild applause each night. There seems to be a

fine dining restaurant on every street in downtown Nantucket, making the island a destination for people who love food. A few of the island's fine dining restaurants are open year-round, offering culinary treats during the deep winter months, but most are certainly open for Nantucket Daffodil Festival Weekend and close between Columbus Day and the Christmas Stroll.

The holidays on Nantucket begin Thanksgiving weekend with the annual Christmas Tree Lighting of more than 150 trees so the island is in full holiday spirit by December. You can also ring in the New Year on the beautiful island with family activities, restaurant events, comedy shows, pajama brunches and an unforgettable ball, all taking place December 30, 2016 through January 2, 2017.

The Nantucket Hotel & Resort is located in-town and within walking distance of beaches, shopping, restaurants, and the harbor. It truly has to be one of the most family-friendly hotels that I have ever seen yet it is elegant in every way. The property was originally built in the late 1800s but renovated entirely in 2012 by the current owners. The rooms are seaside chic, soothing to the senses with wonderful Nantucket style. Our suite had a reader's nook with glorious views, a large living room with nicely appointed kitchen, and king bed with a large whale pillow extending the width of the bed. There were burlap trunks and great storage for extended stays (who would want to leave?), a large bathroom with deep soaking tub and an enormous shower. The room was perfect in design and functionality while being drop-dead gorgeous.

While I was unable to have dinner at the

resort, I did have amazing breakfasts that were right out of the Mediterranean handbook on fabulous healthy breakfasts. As you can rightly imagine, I also sipped cocktails on the wrap-around porch next to the porch fire pits. Both the cocktail and the wine list were excellent.

The Nantucket Club at the Resort is a fitness and spa facility that offers yoga and various fitness classes; for the warmer weather, there are two seasonal, heated swimming pools, an outdoor hot tub, and saunas. The children even have their own pool and programs.

If it is true that location is everything, then the Nantucket Hotel & Resort is everything and then some. Walk anywhere, whether to local restaurants, historical sites or shopping, or simply stroll up and down streets that you will never forget and will hold dear in your memory for years to come.

Hint: Christmas time is an excellent time to go. Like Nantucket itself, there are many "holiday happenings" at the Resort. These include the Christmas Stroll Weekend Special – December 1-4; a Post-Christmas Stroll & Pre-Holiday Shopping Special – December 5-18; "Season of Whimsy" Christmas & December School Vacation Special – December 19-30; New Year's Eve Disco Ball and Children & Teens Event Specials – December 30-January 2. Do you love Elin Hilderbrand books? There will be a special three-day weekend with author on her hometown island of beautiful Nantucket from January 13-16. Elin will give you an escorted tour of the island, as well as a book signing and wine and cheese party at The Nantucket Inn. Activities and meals are packaged for your convenience, as well.