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NANTUCKET VIP VACATIONS

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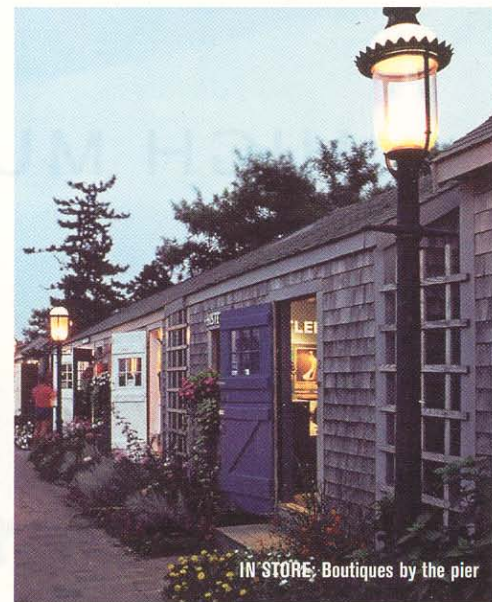
THE RADAR TRAVEL

BY TRAVIS NEIGHBOR WARD

SAND CASTLE: The Wauwinet, the island's only Relais & Châteaux hotel

POST-SUMMER LOVIN'

On Nantucket, VIPs say the best time to play is in fall, when the tourists are away.



IN STORE: Boutiques by the pier

HOUSE BOUND

Aside from Jimmy Choos and Nantucket red chinos, the island's ultra-pricey boutiques include an abundance of top-drawer home stores. Here are three of our favorites:

WAYNE PRATT If you're addicted to American antiques, this shop with a sister store in Woodbury, Connecticut, will give you a high. Friendly manager Miranda Holmes offers 18th-century American case furniture (a Queen Anne carved maple highboy circa 1760-1780 costs \$48,000), reproductions, decorative accessories, and authentic '50s "friendship baskets" and woven purses by Jose Formoso Reyes, the Philippine immigrant whose designs have inspired knock-offs the island over. Purses start at \$5,200. 28 Main St., 508.228.8788 or www.wayneprattantiques.com. Open until Christmas.

RELAIS RACE

As the mad rush of tourists to Nantucket dies down and evenings get cooler, there is another group of visitors just beginning to board Cessnas for what insiders consider the best season on the island other than early June. And while locals routinely insist that, unlike Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket is not a place to star gaze, it does attract its fair share of A-listers. Jack Welch, Lee Iacocca, Jerry Stiller, Jimmy Buffett and Debra Messing all own homes here, as well as Tommy Hilfiger, who paid a mere \$4.6 million for his McCottage estate on Hill Road in 1997. (Today a seven-bedroom oceanfront estate costs about \$20 million.) "There's nothing like Nantucket," says Marisa Amick Anderson of the Atlanta-based Concentrics Restaurants empire, who goes often to stay at one of the several houses her parents bought on the island 15 years ago. (She was also married on Nantucket last fall.) "It's the quaintest, most charming little town. It's very casual, very chill and very romantic. It's hard to get there from Atlanta and it is expensive... But it's well worth it."

Especially worthwhile is a stay at The Wauwinet, the only Relais & Châteaux hotel here, which opened doors on its new "Spa by the Sea" this May. Run by *très chic* Bettina Landt, who grew up in Westchester but is originally from Zurich, The Wauwinet is 9 miles from Nantucket Town and tykes under 12 aren't allowed anywhere on the property. The mood is low-key to say the least: Aside from lounging on two private beaches, playing tennis or taking a mountain bike out on loan, guests chill out by the fireplace in the library where bleached maple flooring, beadboard walls and skirted tables set the tone. Or, they lounge on Pratesi bedding in one of the 32

CONTINUED...

NANTUCKET LOOMS Don't leave without at least one of the stylish, hand-loomed rugs or hand-woven throws by local artisans, of which the latter can cost upwards of \$1,200 (for a cashmere-silk blend). Cotton rag rugs by local weaver Hilary Anapole are a leap above the norm and start at \$56 per square foot. And ask owner Liz Winship, a New York transplant, to tell you the story of selling her original location on Main Street to Ralph Lauren himself. 16 Federal St., 508.228.1908 or www.nantucketlooms.com.

NINA HELLMAN You can satisfy the ancient mariner within at this shop specializing in nautical antiques for true connoisseurs. Open through December, it peddles everything from antique model schooners to authentic scrimshaw. Even the carved wooden whales are antique and priced around \$750. 48 Centre St., 508.228.4677 or www.nauticalnantucket.com.



Left to right: The Wauwinet's formal dining room at Toppers. Chef David Daniels.

...CONTINUED guest rooms or four cottages while watching DVDs on plasma TVs and enjoying complimentary popcorn service. Yes, there is Wi-Fi capability, but BlackBerries are definitely out of place here.

Most of the buildings on the property were built in 1850, and though the hotel is looking to renovate bathrooms, for now the standard tubs may seem outdated. The new spa more than makes up for it, between Kashmere cashmere blend blankies, Ipod docking stations and a menu featuring services designed around herbal products by Kerstin Florian and Georgia-based Anakiri.

That emphasis on all things natural also extends to Toppers, the on-site restaurant. If you're really lucky, you'll stay here during a week when executive chef David Daniels is dishing up his \$20 prix-fixe menu. Succulent garlic and citrus-roasted chicken wings on a bed of goat cheese fondue set a delicious stage for dishes like "deconstructed tuna niçoise" prepared with seared rare ahi, marinated olives and Yukon gold potatoes. The menu changes regularly and caters to what is grown on the island and, whenever possible, includes striped sea bass caught by local fisherman. And then there's the 1,800-label wine list, which has won *Wine Spectator's* Grand Award consistently since 1996, and makes collectors pepper the three full-time sommeliers with questions about hard-to-find and ultra-luxe vintages (the Hermitage Cuvée Cathelin from Jean-Louis Chave, 1990, is priced at \$1,325 per bottle).

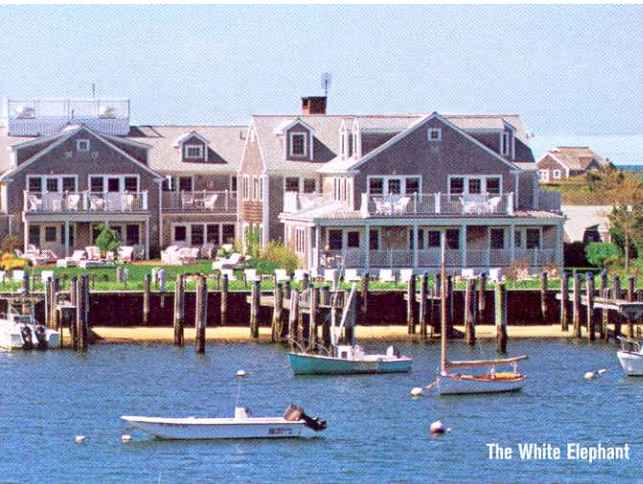
Of course, all good things have to come to an end—and in the case of The Wauwinet, it's on October 26, when the hotel closes its doors until spring. *The Wauwinet*, call 800.426.8718 or visit www.wauwinet.com. Guest rooms start at \$380 in September; cottages start at \$700.



SEE-WORTHY: The dining room at The Pearl

DINNER CLUBBING

Nantucket Town is full of gourmet eateries that sport cutting-edge cuisine amidst traditional décor. But contemporary design-seekers flock to The Pearl, where the interior is glam and the atmosphere moody. Owners Angela and Seth Raynors have made cameos in *The New York Times*, *Bon Appétit* and *W* magazines (Seth is also the executive chef), and the restaurant has landed a *Condé Nast Traveler* "Best of the World" award. Perch at the back-lit marble bar for icy cocktails, then kick back on a pearl-white leather banquette to dine on dishes inspired by the couple's Far Eastern travels, including American Kobe beef dumplings with black truffles and tempura of soft shell crab. Between the potted orchids and oversized aquarium, this is as cool as they come. *The Pearl*, 12 Federal St., 508.228.9704 or www.boardinghouse-pearl.com.



TURN UP THE HEAT!

For a gourmet food fest that will last all weekend, sign up now for one of the "Chef & Shop" fall weekends featuring star chefs from around the east at The White Elephant, one of the island's most luxurious intown properties. You can book a room or suite in the main building, or stay in one of 11 guest cottages nestled on side streets five minutes from the town center. The latter are spacious by Nantucket standards (remember, these are historic houses) and well-appointed with kitchens, living rooms and family rooms, plus a top-notch housekeeping service that arrives twice daily bearing blue-and-white boxes of chocolates. The cooking demonstrations and wine tastings include executive chefs Alexandra Guarnaschelli of Butter in New York (October 26-28), Dan Silverman of Lever House in New York (November 2-4), Geoff Gardner of Sel de la Terre in Boston (November 9-11) and Bob Iacovone of Cuvée in New Orleans (November 16-18). Or, you can always stroll to the hotel's Brant Point Grill and dine *en plein air* on traditional sea fare while watching ships sail into the harbor across the lawn. Don't pass on the Countneck clams, stuffed with spinach, truffle oil, bacon bits and bread crumbs on a bed of cheddar cheese. Room rates start at \$260 this month or \$300 for a one-bedroom cottage. 800.445.6574 or www.whiteelephanthotel.com. **A**