

# SO RHODE ISLAND

people + places in southern RI

6.09 ISSUE 22 FREE

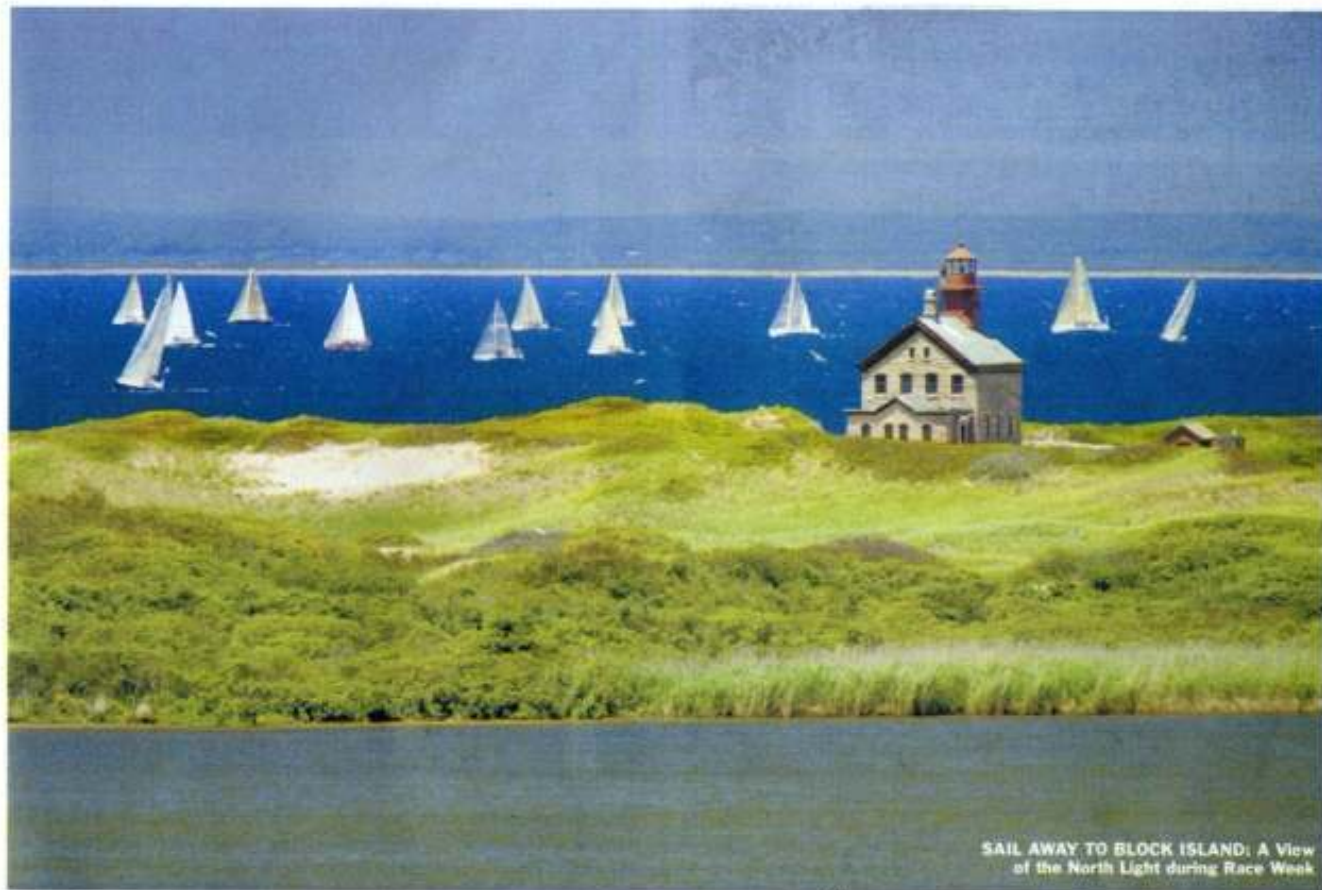
**SO OFFSHORE**

our guide to local  
island hopping



# sweet!

99 fresh ways to squeeze  
the most out of your summer



SAIL AWAY TO BLOCK ISLAND: A View of the North Light during Race Week

# SET SAIL

## Your Summer Guide to Local Island Hopping

By Andrea E. McHugh

Southern New Englanders flock here this time of year for our 100 miles of beautiful beaches, bucolic countryside, peaceful trails and mom-and-pop dining spots, but for locals, it just doesn't feel like vacation until you hit the road and get out of Dodge. Thankfully, three world-class islands lay just miles off Rhode Island's coast, and savoring their splendor is easier than ever.

### MARTHA'S VINEYARD

There's a reason why media moguls, politicians and musical icons escape to Martha's Vineyard for their summertime retreats. Though rumors are swirling that Chelsea Clinton is planning an August wedding on the island and the Obamas are preparing a late summer respite there, Ocean Staters need only hop a ferry to get to this hallowed hotspot.

**Getting There** Why pull your hair out in bumper-to-bumper traffic on the Bourne Bridge when you can make a short drive to Quonset Point to board the Martha's Vineyard Fast Ferry? Dockside parking is just \$10 a day and the recession-aware brass at the ferry reduced fares to \$69 round-trip (adult fare, advance reservations). Though the ferry is passenger-only (read: no vehicles), it's relatively easy to get around the Vineyard using public transportation, bikes, rental cars and your own two feet. The 90-minute scenic shoot across the bay is short, but if you want to get a jumpstart on your vaca, a full-service bar pours concoctions as early as the first departure. (Sunrise mimosas, anyone?) At speeds in excess of 33 knots, the outside deck brings new meaning to the words "whipping winds," so we suggest getting comfort-

able in the cushy seats in the air-conditioned cabin. Once arriving at Oak Bluffs, the island is your oyster. [www.vineyardfastferry.com](http://www.vineyardfastferry.com)

**Where To Stay** From pricey hotels to budget-friendly motels to charming bed and breakfasts, the Vineyard appeals to all price points, despite its affluent reputation. One of the more unique places to rest your head is aboard the MS Resolute, "A Bed and Breakfast Afloat," with rates comparable to a hotel or better B&B. The 40-ft. Islander Cutter sailboat docks in Oak Bluffs Harbor where you'll take in unobstructed views and the gentle tide lulls you to sleep. Ideal for two but able to accommodate four, the ship's amenities include a galley kitchen (where continental breakfast is served daily), powder room with shower, the "cock-

pit," where you can catch a tan, and the "salon," the boat's rendition of a living room (with TV).

Be aware that most accommodations require a two-night minimum during the summer season, a necessary evil that is hard to get around. Check out [www.mvy.com/islandinfo/placestostay.php](http://www.mvy.com/islandinfo/placestostay.php) for a complete listing of places to stay.

**What To Do** Adventurists can sail sloops, scuba and snorkel; nature lovers can explore seemingly endless trails, an arboretum and wildlife sanctuary; history hounds can check out the Martha's Vineyard Museum littered with relics of the island's earliest settlers and their whaling ways; gourmands can chow their way through top restaurants; beach-goers can tan at myriad sun-soaked beaches; wanna-be farmers can work the land, learn about sustainable



**GET AWAY (BUT STAY CLOSE TO HOME):** (this page) Block Island's scenic coast and Water Street; (next page) the High-End Meatloaf Sandwich at Nantucket's American Seasons

agriculture and harvest crops at a teaching farm; art-lovers can gallery hop; lighthouse enthusiasts can tour five of the oldest beacons in the country; and the over-stressed can have a wonderful time doing nothing at all!

**Must See** Catch a case of déjà vu on Menemsha's Squid Row, where a salty local is sure to tell you of his big screen debut as an extra in *Jaws*, while you order a lobster roll as fresh as it comes. Swing by to nearby Aquinnah Cliffs (also known as Gay Head) for a Kodak moment. Walk amid Edgartown's great white way – a string of early 1800s Greek Revivals built by whaling captains. Grab the brass ring riding one of Oak Bluff's Flying Horses, the oldest operating carousel in the country, dating back to 1876.

#### NANTUCKET

Derived from an Indian word meaning "land far out to sea," Nantucket is farthest from the mainland at 30 miles off the coast. This enclave of 8,000 residents swells to more than 50,000 during the summer season, all lured by 82 miles of unspoiled beaches and simple living, where stoplights, neon signs, big box stores and restaurant chains are noticeably absent.

**Getting There** Two choices: by air or by sea. While you may not be able to board Sandpiper Airlines, the fictional Nantucket-based airline that planted seven years of plot lines for the '90s sitcom *Wings*, Cape Air flights depart six

times daily from T.F. Green. Two ferry services, the Steamship Authority and Hy-Line Cruises, depart daily from Hyannis (the Steamship Authority is the only service that offers vehicle transport) and if you want to head a bit farther east on the cape, the lesser-known Freedom Cruise Line carries passengers from Harwich Port. For a few extra bucks, bring your bike on board – it's a great way to see the island, cheaper than public transport, and eliminates the hassle of navigating the tourist-packed tiny, cobblestone streets of downtown. Visit [www.nantucket-chamber.org/visitor/gethere.html](http://www.nantucket-chamber.org/visitor/gethere.html) for links to all methods of transport.

**Where To Dine** Clam shacks and culinary treasures are sprinkled throughout the island, so let the gastronomic getaway begin. Take-out at Sayle's Seafood promises everything from fresh scallops, fried clams, calamari and cod to landlubber staples, but seating is limited, so take your pal's order while they claim a spot. You'll find fine pub fare aplenty at The Brotherhood of Thieves – for the most authentic atmosphere there, dine in the 1840s whaling bar downstairs. The anti-seafood shanty American Seasons is where to plan your feast of first-rate food paired with fine wine. The oft-updated menu by Executive Chef Michael LaScola celebrates local fare and seasonal ingredients while paying tribute to different regions of the country. (Their toast to down south, for example, includes the High End Meatloaf Sandwich – rabbit

meatloaf on homemade brioche with seared foie gras, onion fondue and black grape ketchup – and Chicken-Fried Chicken Livers paired with avocado, grapefruit Creole remoulade and sweet chili jam.) Epicurean enthusiasts with thinner wallets can enjoy small plates at the tiny but swanky bar, where dishes including foie gras donuts with rhubarb jam, buffalo sliders with blue cheese fondue, and fried green tomatoes with a smoky crayfish butter weigh in at just \$5 apiece.

**What to Do** Rent a Jeep to go off-roading on Nantucket's famed pristine beaches. Be sure to ask if your rental comes with both Town and Great Point permits for beach driving and to thoroughly check out the 14-mile-long by 3-mile-wide "Grey Lady." When a designated driver has been named (i.e. who lost the coin toss), stop by Cisco Brewers, Triple Eight Distillery and Nantucket Vineyard, all in one location, to sample a bit of what the island is brewing these days. Save history by supporting the Dreamland, the historic, well-over-a-century-old theater perched stoically on South Water Street, by attending outdoor movies or a performance of *Sound of Music* in August. (For more events visit [www.nantucketdreamland.org](http://www.nantucketdreamland.org).) The back lot has traditionally hosted The Nantucket Farmers' and Artisans' Market, where you'll find locally grown produce and handmade wares, but with the Dreamland restoration, stop by the visitor's center



to find out its new locale. Of course, cinefiles and celebs are out in full force all summer long, but are easiest to spot at the Nantucket Film Festival (June 18-21). If you don't see a star, you can act like one at the famed Club Car, the rail car-turned-Nantucket institution on Main Street where a night cap is accompanied by singing show tunes 'round the piano.

#### BLOCK ISLAND

Dotted with more than 350 freshwater ponds and 17 miles of beach, Rhode Island's offshore gem is a haven for those looking to leave the fast-paced world behind. Noticeably more affordable (ergo less glamorous) than its two perhaps more sophisticated aforementioned cousins, Block Island, just 12 miles off the coast (and visible on clear days from as far away as Newport), still seems a world away.

**Getting There** It's just not summer without the Block Island Ferry Rastafari-inspired jingle playing endlessly in your head. High-speed ferries and the ol' traditional rust bucket leave Point Judith daily and often this time of year. There's also one round-trip daily out of Newport from July through mid-September, perfect for a day trip, but the travel time is a wee bit longer than Point Judith departures. (Visit [www.blockislandferry.com](http://www.blockislandferry.com) for schedules, rates and information.) Oh, and a word to the wise: the last ferry out is loaded with day-trippers or those bidding their vacation goodbye; it can be a rowdy bunch, so be prepared to dodge the not-so-sober masses. New England Airlines flies daily and year round from Westerly, making

for some 12 unforgettable minutes of aerial views of Block Island's famous Mohegan Bluffs.

**What to Do** Some might say Ballard's, an inn/beach/nightspot/restaurant, is synonymous with Block Island, and Frommer's wrote: "Sooner rather than later, everyone winds up at Ballard's." With live music day into night, beach servers to bring you endless piña colodas, and a beautiful stretch of beach, you may as well nest there early and make a day of it.

When not ordering umbrella-festooned drinks, the best way to get acquainted with this 11-square-mile seaside resort is by moped, and there are plenty of places to rent by the hour or the day. Scoot on over to the North Light House (part of the Block Island National Wildlife Refuge) and later the Southeast Lighthouse for breathtaking views, and don't forget to zip around the Great Salt Pond. While in those parts, stop at The Oar, at sunset if possible, for one of their signature mudslides or unpretentious meals, like the lobster roll or burger and fries — it's worth the trip.

**Where To Stay** While there's plenty of less expensive inns and B&Bs, Block Island is known for its beautifully restored Victorians, including The National, The Spring House, The Atlantic Inn and the Hotel Manisses. If you're not staying at one, surely visit for breakfast on the porch (at The National), tableside flaming coffee or after dinner drinks on the porch (at the Hotel Manisses) or lunch al fresco overlooking the sea (at The Spring House) for some 19th century ambiance. **SO**

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