



AllWays  
Traveller

Nantucket, Massachusetts, USA

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## An enduring love of the Grey Lady

Nantucket is an island measuring 14 miles long and 3½ miles wide, some 27 miles off Cape Cod's south coast in Massachusetts.

Its long and illustrious history is such that the National Park Service designated the entire island to be a National Historic District in 1975.

Nantucket's location offshore from the New England mainland also gives the island a unique weather pattern influenced by the warm Gulf Stream and the cooler Labrador Current in the Atlantic.

As a result, winters are more temperate than on the mainland with summers cooler.

The island does however attract thick fogs, which can blanket the island in a soft grey mist and accounts for its affectionate name of the Grey Lady.

Visitors to the island, and there are very, very many during the high season, will find the town of Nantucket a time locked delight.

Travel just a little further and there are quiet harbours, cliff backed sandy beaches and a network of cycle paths.

**Ashley Gibbins**

Commissioning Editor, AllWays traveller



[www.nantucket.net](http://www.nantucket.net)



[www.nantucket.net](http://www.nantucket.net) : Robert Burger



[www.theverandahouse.com](http://www.theverandahouse.com)

## No disguising Nantucket's distinctive allure

By Ashley Gibbins

It was a bracing, grey afternoon as the Steamship Authority's fast ferry from Hyannis slowed as it entered Nantucket harbour and we got our first sight of Nantucket town.

While a cloudy day can dim the initial perception of a coastal resort, Nantucket seemed to shimmer in this grey light.

And though the famed Nantucket fog was not in evidence, the *Grey Lady* looked enchanting and entrancing in equal measure.

Having been able to bolt on a short hop over to Nantucket, on our trip through Cape Cod, we were getting excited about the two days that lay before us.

We had left our car back at Hyannis and though this meant a bit of jiggling with the suitcases, it was a good move.

[www.steamshipauthority.com](http://www.steamshipauthority.com)

To begin with, and even during the Island's shoulder season of early fall, Nantucket is not the most car friendly of places.

The historical layout of Nantucket town, while ideal for strolling around, was laid out long before the combustion engine came to dominate our lives.

But then a car is not necessary here.

Nantucket town on foot is fine and the rest of the island is best seen from two wheels.

### A unreal quality

Pulling our small cases from the harbour to the Verenda House Hotel, we got a first impression of just attractive a Nantucket town is - to an almost unreal extent.

It is almost as if a design team had been tasked with creating a picture perfect New England settlement.

And yet, while this is absolutely not the case, one has to understand at least a little of its fascinating history to appreciate what Nantucket has come through.

### The Nantucket Whaling Museum

A great place to start a stay on the island is therefore with a visit to the Nantucket Whaling Museum, which is located in a restored 1847 candle factory.

The museum is one of a number of properties managed by the Nantucket Historical Association .

Before viewing the fascinating artefacts and exhibitions in the whaling museum, please spend 50 minutes watching *Nantucket-A Film*.

I know promotional films do not always warrant sitting through them, and this is more a documentary feature than a short burst promo, but it is so worth it.

Written and produced by Emmy award-winning filmmaker Ric Burns, this film provides a visual chronicle of Nantucket.

It takes the viewer from the island's original Wampanoag Native American roots, through early Quaker culture to the impact whaling had on the community and its more recent renaissance as a traveller destination.

[www.nha.org](http://www.nha.org)

# This small island was the whaling capital of the world

If one thing demands a chapter in the history of North America it is Nantucket's role as the genuine whaling capital of the world.

Although the island now known as Nantucket was first mentioned by Norsemen in the 11th century, the English did not establish a settlement here until 1659.

In doing so they lived in relative harmony alongside more than 2,500 Wampanoags who had long called the island home.

Grey whales would also come annually to the waters around the Island and they would be 'harvested' by the settlers.

This low impact hunting of whales laid the foundations for Nantucket's whaling industry, which expanded rapidly to meet the overwhelming demand for whale oil as a source of lamp fuel.

## Commercial whaling comes of age

By 1750, and for the next hundred years or so, the *Nation of Nantucket*, as it was known, was one of major whaling ports in North America and the world trade centre for the whaling industry.

Whaling captains, merchants and bankers with their families enjoyed an affluent lifestyle and cultural eminence.

Grand residences were built around a town bustling with stores selling the finest of goods and produce to the wealthy islanders.

These residents of Nantucket were also artistic leaning and liberal thinking and with their presence, the island also attracted a procession of political aspirants, philosophers and some of the finest scientific minds of the day.

All was well with this vibrant, thriving, outward looking and forward thinking community.

## Dark clouds forming

However, the dark clouds of economic despair were forming and, by the 1830s, things had taken a severe turn for the worse.

The global whaling industry was in sharp decline, with the petroleum fields of Pennsylvania producing kerosene, cheaper and more easily than the so called liquid gold the whalers sought.



Moreover, the gradual silting of Nantucket harbour prevented the heavily laden whaling ships from crossing the sandbanks and this already dwindling fleet opted instead for the deeper port of New Bedford.

And then gold was discovered in California and hundreds of Nantucket men went there to seek their fortunes.

## The great fire

The one time affluent Nantucket, which was being buffeted by severe financial hardship, suffered its 'great fire' in 1846.

Raging through Nantucket town it had destroyed almost 40% of the settlement before being brought under control.

And finally the Civil War would deliver the death blow with more than 300 Nantucket men serving in the Union army and seventy-three of these losing their lives.

With the loss of its industrial livelihood and much of the town to boot, the island residents began to desert Nantucket for parts offering a brighter future.

As Elizabeth Oldham of the Nantucket Historical Association writes :

*"Their families on Nantucket would have hard times.*

*The once bustling waterfront was filled with rotting hulks; there was no industry that could succeed or replace the whale fishery."*

Between 1840 and 1870, the population of Nantucket decreased from almost ten thousand to a little more than four thousand.

Once grand residences, which had no resale value, were abandoned to the vagaries of time and weather.

Nantucket entered into a veritable time-locked coma, with those who could not leave facing three decades of austerity and abandoned by the outside world.

## The Nantucket renaissance

But come the 1870s, with the Civil War over, a summer hotel opened to accommodate guests looking to enjoy the "invigorating and delightful indulgence of Sea Bathing".

Others followed, townsfolk renovated their homes, opening them to summer boarders with the promise of "large airy rooms" and "nicely cooked bluefish" and inns were established in other empty properties.

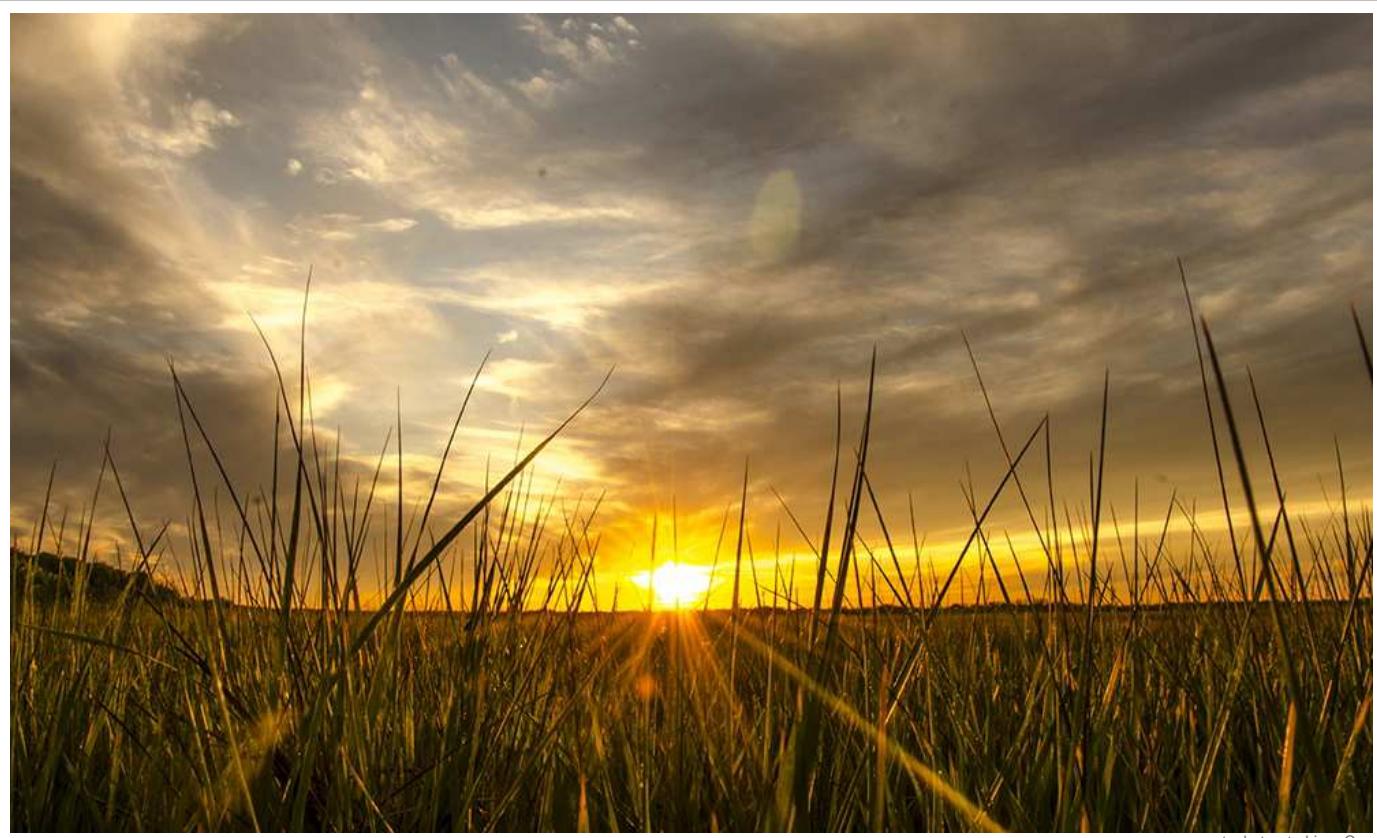
A ferry service began with two boats a day and the Nantucket tourist season was created.

## A new lease of life

The island embraced its new lease of life and has not looked back.

It is now one of the most popular destinations for its size in the world.

[www.nantucket.net](http://www.nantucket.net)



www.nantucket.net : Liam Cox

## The Cycle-Logical Way to See Nantucket Island

**Getting out and about on a bike is the best way to enjoy Nantucket.**

With no hills to speak of and well laid cycle routes, a leisurely day in the saddle will enable you to cross-cross the island.

And if looking to hire your wheels, Young's is the oldest bike rental company hire.

Harvey A. Young started Young's Bicycle Shop from the backyard of his home on Nantucket in 1931.

Harvey adopted a slogan : *The Cycle-Logical Way to See Nantucket Island*, which works as well now as it did this eight-five years ago.

The store moved to its Broad Street location in 1938 but has firmly remained in the Young family.

Young's also produces an excellent map of self guided tours of Nantucket highlighting areas to visit by bike or on foot.

### The town tour

The *Young's Self Guided Tour* is a trip around Nantucket town and the Brant Point Light House.

It provides the opportunity to appreciate the pre-Civil War New England architecture, historic cemeteries and many of the grey wooden clad mansions that have been restored and now preserved by residents and the Nantucket Historical Association.

### Out of town

Out of town you can visit :

#### Sconset

Siasconset ('Sconset to the locals) is a village on the eastern edge of Nantucket Island.

The Sankaty Head Lighthouse is found here as are bluffs and beaches bordering the Atlantic along with and narrow streets lined with rose covered cottages.



#### Madaket

Madaket, at the west end of the Island, is a village of weather worn cottages known for sandy beaches and stunning sunsets.

Small craft and fishing boats bob in Hither Creek and its harbour

#### Dionis

Dionis has Nantucket's tallest sand dunes and the calm, white sand beaches of the north shore.

#### Cisco

Cisco is a very popular destination for visitors and locals and home to Bartlett's Farm, Boathouse Farm, 167 Fish Market, the Community Gardens and The Cisco Brewery.

Taking the path to the south shore there is the chance to surf, sunbathe and search the beach for shells.

[www.youngsbicycleshop.com](http://www.youngsbicycleshop.com)



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# Taking in the lighthouses of Nantucket

An excellent way to plan a route around Nantucket island is to visit its three lighthouses

The ever-shifting battalion of sandbars, or shoals, lurking beneath the waters that surround Nantucket have caused between 700 and 800 shipwrecks in recorded history.

Each lighthouse, built as a navigational aid for shipping, has a distinctive look, personality and history.

They also provide a fine galvanising and stopping point on an island tour.

## Brant Point Light

For those who arrive (and leave) on Nantucket via ferry, the lighthouse at Brant Point Light is the first landmark to demand a photograph.

First erected in 1746, Brant Point Light is America's second oldest lighthouse and is only 26 feet tall, making it the shortest lighthouse in all of New England

Tradition has it that visitors toss a penny into the sea as they round the point leaving the harbour to ensure that they return someday to the Grey Lady's welcoming arms.

## Sankaty Head Lighthouse

The name of this lighthouse is derived from the language of the Native Americans who lived on Nantucket, the Wampanoags.

Their word "sankoty" means highland, and even erosion hasn't changed the appropriateness of that name.

The brick-and-granite structure sits 70 feet tall on the bluff at the end of what is now Baxter Road in Siasconset, flashing its white light every 7.5 seconds

Its location offers a view of the island's moors and the mighty Atlantic Ocean



Sankaty

## Great Point Lighthouse

At the northernmost point of the island out past Wauwinet, within the Coskata-Coatue Wildlife Refuge, the Great Point Lighthouse is most powerful light in New England!

Officially named the Nantucket Light, it was first erected in 1784 as a wooden tower.

The existing lighthouse, a 60-foot replica of the original 1816 tower, was constructed in 1986.

With its extreme location, the light at Great Point still aids mariners' navigation as it flashes every five seconds.

Today, this sweet young light may well feel like the black sheep in the Nantucket lighthouse family; it's the only one of the three that is not in The National Register of Historic Places.



Brand Point

Great Point : [www.nantucket.org](http://www.nantucket.org) : Jackie Maloomian

[www.nantucket.net/activities/lighthouses.php](http://www.nantucket.net/activities/lighthouses.php)

## While on Nantucket

## Out and about with Gail's Tours



If you are without a car and do not want to take to two wheels, a great way to get an overview of Nantucket is on a two hour tour of the island with Gail Nickerson Johnson.

A 6th generation native *Nantucketer*, Gail is a veritable institution in her own right and known by almost everyone on the island.

Gail's Tours is a perennial winner of best tour Award in the Inquirer and Mirror's Best of Nantucket Readers' Choice poll.

Beginning with a tour through Nantucket town it's then off on a relaxed yet highly informative circuit of the island with chances to stop for photographs on route.

There is little that Gail does not know about the island and it makes for a fascinating and excellent way to get to know Nantucket and make friends along the way.

[www.nantucket.net/tours/gails](http://www.nantucket.net/tours/gails)

## Coskata-Coatue Wildlife Refuge

Comprising a pair of long, fingery peninsulas, Coskata Coatue Wildlife Refuge (which is pronounced co-skate-uh coat-oo) is a fragile, wild and semi-remote coastscape.

Most easily accessible by boat or over sand vehicle, the Refuge also draws trampers and naturalists eager to observe shorebirds, raptors, and the Great Point Light.

The Refuge provides multiple habitats for coastal plant and animal species, including heather and beach plum, a maritime oak forest and savannah of red cedar – the largest of its kind in New England – which offer shelter to deer.

At the beachfront, there's the chance to watch horseshoe crabs, spot seals basking in the sun, and shorebirds skittering above the surf line.

## The Nantucket Historical Association



The Nantucket Historical Association (NHA) preserves an extensive art and artefact collections relating to all periods of Nantucket history.

These are displayed at the Whaling Museum and at its historic properties.

Its collections contain more than 5,000 volumes and 50,000 photographs

The Association also has an extensive archive including ship's logs, account books, family papers, and scrapbooks.

Among its properties open to the public is the Jethro Coffin House.

Built as a wedding gift in 1686 for Jethro Coffin and Mary Gardner, it is the sole surviving structure from the original seventeenth-century English settlement.

[www.nha.org](http://www.nha.org)

## Nantucket Lightship Basket Museum

The Museum preserves Nantucket's history of basket making through its collection of baskets.

The Museum also encourages new generations of lightship basket makers.

[www.nantucketlightshipbasketmuseum.org](http://www.nantucketlightshipbasketmuseum.org)



## Nantucket Shipwreck &amp; Lifesaving Museum

In the 19th Century, hundreds of ships passed by Nantucket Island each day, all navigating without the benefit of modern nautical technology.

Unpredictable storms, dense fog and strong currents often caught even the most experienced sailors off guard.

Treacherous shoals and inclement weather led to some 700 shipwrecks in the surrounding waters of Nantucket, causing the area to be dubbed a *graveyard of the Atlantic*.



The Nantucket Shipwreck & Lifesaving Museum preserves the memory of those Islanders who risked their lives to save shipwrecked mariners.

[www.nantucketshipwreck.org](http://www.nantucketshipwreck.org)

## The Veranda House – an historic bed and breakfast



By Ann Mealor

**The Veranda House is a short, cobbled street walk away from the ferry at Steamboat Wharf.**

This historic Victorian property sits high on Step Lane overlooking picturesque Nantucket.

Dating back to 1684, the mansion is named for the white latticed verandas that wrap around each floor of the hotel.

It offers visitor cool breezes and sweeping views of the harbour.

Our room was on the top floor and the cheery concierge was happy to help us carry our cases up the stairs.

Quaint and full of character, our suite had creaky, wooden floors, a private balcony overlooking the colourful gardens, a retro-chic lounge area with a blue patterned rug and a large red chest as a coffee table.

The king size bed, decked in luxury, white Frette linens, was extremely comfortable.

Plenty of toiletries were to be found in the bathroom along with soft, kimono robes.

### Contemporary cosy

The main Inn lounge has a contemporary but cosy feel with its flame effect fire, zebra print chairs and sophisticated burgundy and cream colours

A relaxed and homely atmosphere pervades the all parts of the Verandah House. This is a place to feel at ease in.

A selection of tea and coffee is available all day long and at 4 o'clock the fresh baked chocolate chip cookies, which I was extremely partial to, were brought out.

### Sparkling cranberry wine

Sparkling cranberry wine produced on the island, can be enjoyed each afternoon and a bowl of juicy, red hot tomale jelly beans is always on reception.

Guests are encouraged to buy their own wine and chill it in the kitchen fridge. With wine glasses provided, we enjoyed sipping our sauvignon, sat on the patio looking out onto the manicured, tiered lawns.



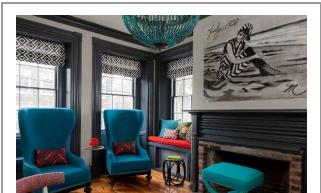
### Breakfast outside

A light breakfast is provided each morning and, on sunny days, can be enjoyed outside.

On the menu is fruit, a small but tasty smoothie, orange juice, a basket of fresh bread including muffins and a selection of unusual butters including strawberry with honey and jam.

There is also a choice of bagel, cereal or the special of the day – I enjoyed the Mexican crêpe, which was light and mildly spicy.

The Inn is within easy walking distance of many excellent restaurants and bars and the concierge is more than happy to make recommendations.



There is also a book of menus that can be flicked through at leisure.

This is a charming historic bed and breakfast, run by knowledgeable and friendly staff.

Ideally located for making the most of all Nantucket has to offer, The Veranda House will provide any visitor with a truly memorable stay.

[www.theverandahouse.com](http://www.theverandahouse.com)

## A snapshot of Nantucket



[www.nantucket.org](http://www.nantucket.org) : Kim Starbuck



[www.nantucket.net](http://www.nantucket.net) : Patrick Williams



[www.nantucket.net](http://www.nantucket.net) : Kim Starbuck



[www.nantucket.net](http://www.nantucket.net) : Jimmy Hall



[www.nantucket.net](http://www.nantucket.net) : Michael Torrisi



[www.nantucket.net](http://www.nantucket.net) : Lane Ehart



[www.nantucket.net](http://www.nantucket.net) : Elizabeth Kelly



[www.nantucket.net](http://www.nantucket.net) : Patrick Williams

## Doing the airport in style with the executive lounge



How often have you heard it said that it is the airport that is the worst part of flying.

The time it takes to get through security, the panic at the thought of checking in late and missing the flight and then the wait in crowded departure areas.

So is the best approach to spend as little time there as possible?

### Get there early

No. To avoid the stress and pressure of flying, get to the airport three hours earlier than necessary, check in and clear security in a leisurely 'no sweat' fashion and then head to one of the airport lounges to relax or work in style.



This costs a little more but, with all that lounges offer to make guests comfortable, it is money very well spent

### All you need

Comfortable chairs and a good view of the aircraft; Wi-Fi access and power points; a complimentary choice of hot and soft drinks and a selection of fine food and a wide range of newspapers and magazines (for reading there and on the plane).



It makes the airport experience a pleasure.



Passengers flying out of London (as I tend to do) should opt for the premium lounges by No.1 Lounges.

No.1 Traveller offers 'pay-as-you-go' airport lounges at Heathrow Terminal 3, Gatwick North and South Terminals, Stansted and also at Birmingham.

### Other services

In addition to its premium lounges, No.1 Traveller also offers chauffeur-driven airport transfers for 'driveway to runway', as well as travel spas and bedrooms.

You can then look forward to enjoying the flight in a fit state.



[www.no1lounges.com](http://www.no1lounges.com)

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