

Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, USA

www.allwaystraveller.com



A different pace of life on Martha's island

Martha's Vineyard is an island seven miles off the Cape Cod peninsula in Massachusetts.

Once a major whaling centre it has become, in more recent times, a favoured summer resort for those with demanding, frenetic or spotlight focused lives, including US Presidents Bill Clinton and Barrack Obama.

It is easy to understand why people choose Martha's Vineyard as a place to unwind.

There is the natural beauty of the rugged coastline and gently rolling countryside, the quality of island hotels, inns and restaurants and the understated, yet genuine welcome offered by island residents.

And finally, there is the added cachet that comes with visiting a small island.

Ashley Gibbins
Commissioning Editor
AllWays traveller





A name to conjure with and a place to commend

By Ashley Gibbins

Martha's Vineyard, the name itself conjures up enticing and evocative emotions.

I first heard of the island when it was an offshore retreat for Carly Simon and James Taylor who, during my impressionable, early teenage years, were the epitome of cool and champions of a culture I aspired to.

My CD's of Simon and Taylor still make it into the music system, when I want a nostalgic wallowing, and now I can say I have also made it to Martha's Vineyard.

Though the years may have compounded my expectations I was not disappointed.

Across from Woods Hole

Martha's Vineyard was clearly visible from the forward open deck of the Steamship Authority's ferry, before we pulled out of Woods Hole.

And though the sailing was just 45 minutes, dock to dock there was, none-the-less, an excited buzz of expectation among those of us for who it was a first crossing.

One could spot the regular island commuters, who sat inside the ship or, if on deck, were reading with the disinterest of having 'seen it done it'.

I was very much in the former. I do enjoy boat trips wherever they are taking me, and heading towards Martha's Vineyard there was a genuine feeling of going somewhere that was going to be different.

I remained at the bow of the boat for the whole crossing where I was joined, on a flag pole, by a seagull who had decided to sit out the trip across.

A life more meandering

Arriving at Vineyard Haven, with the ferry disgorging its passengers and their trucks, cars, a couple of busses and umpteen bikes, the place was a frantic, albeit good natured, melee with everyone trying to get away as quickly as possible.

Thankfully, in no more than 15 the congestion eased and we were out of town and on the open road.



From then on, and until we returned to take the ferry back to the mainland, we were able to enjoy the island's natural beauty at a meandering pace.

That said, we were able to visit Martha's Vineyard in early fall.

I understand the visitor numbers during high season can be an issue.

A toe-tipping approach to tourism - then Jaws

Martha's Vineyard has a year-round resident population of 15,000 and they see the island as very much home first and a visitor destination second.

This goes some way to explaining why the island was relatively slow to embrace tourism.

When the Cape Cod whaling industry collapsed towards the end of the 19th Century, Martha's Vineyard lost an income that had sustained it for over 250 years.

This was a severe economic setback to an island community that slowly and carefully began to embrace the tourist dollar.

Personal recommendation from those who had discovered the pleasures of Martha's Vineyard, rather than a concerted tourism effort, saw a steady flow of summer visitors.

An escape from life's rigours

The island became particularly popular with those looking to get as far away from the rigours of modern life as a seven mile boat trip made possible.

Celebrities from the film and music world also welcomed the anonymity afforded by residents who were anything but star struck by their presence.

Chappy puts it in the spotlight

The island hit the headlines in 1969 when a young female companion of Senator Edward Kennedy drowned in suspicious circumstances.

The ensuing scandal gave the island an international focus, if not for the right reasons.

Then Jaws comes on the scene

In complete contrast, the worldwide success of Jaws in 1975, which saw Martha's Vineyard double as the fictional summer resort of Amity, was a veritable travelogue for the island (if not for swimming in the waters around it).

Visitor numbers surged and the island's status was further enhanced by the frequent visits of the Clintons in the 1990s.

Martha's Vineyard was now a tourist hotspot and visitors have risen ever since.



Martha's Vineyard CoC

So who was Martha?

As a journalist, the first question, of course, is OK, who was Martha?

Well, the general consensus is she was the young daughter of British explorer Bartholomew Gosnold, who landed here in 1602 and set up a trading post.

A smaller island first took the name Martha's Vineyard before being transposed to the larger one that has retained her name.

I quickly discovered, however, that the 'locals' tend to neglect the poor girl, preferring just The Vineyard. (Rest assured, Martha, I will give you due recognition.)

Up and down island

Martha's Vineyard is also referred as being *down-Island* or *up-Island*, a reference to longitude.

Going up island (west) means heading up in longitude while, when travelling east, one travels down longitude" towards Greenwich, England which is "zero" longitude.

Wet, moist and dry

Of more relevance are the rules regarding alcohol on Martha's Vineyard.

While Edgartown and Oak Bluffs are *wet* towns, Tisbury (aka Vineyard Haven), West Tisbury, and Aquinnah are known as *moist* towns and allow beer and wine to be bought with the purchase of food.

The only dry town is Chilmark, where Menemsha is located, and here BYOB exists in all restaurants that don't serve alcohol.

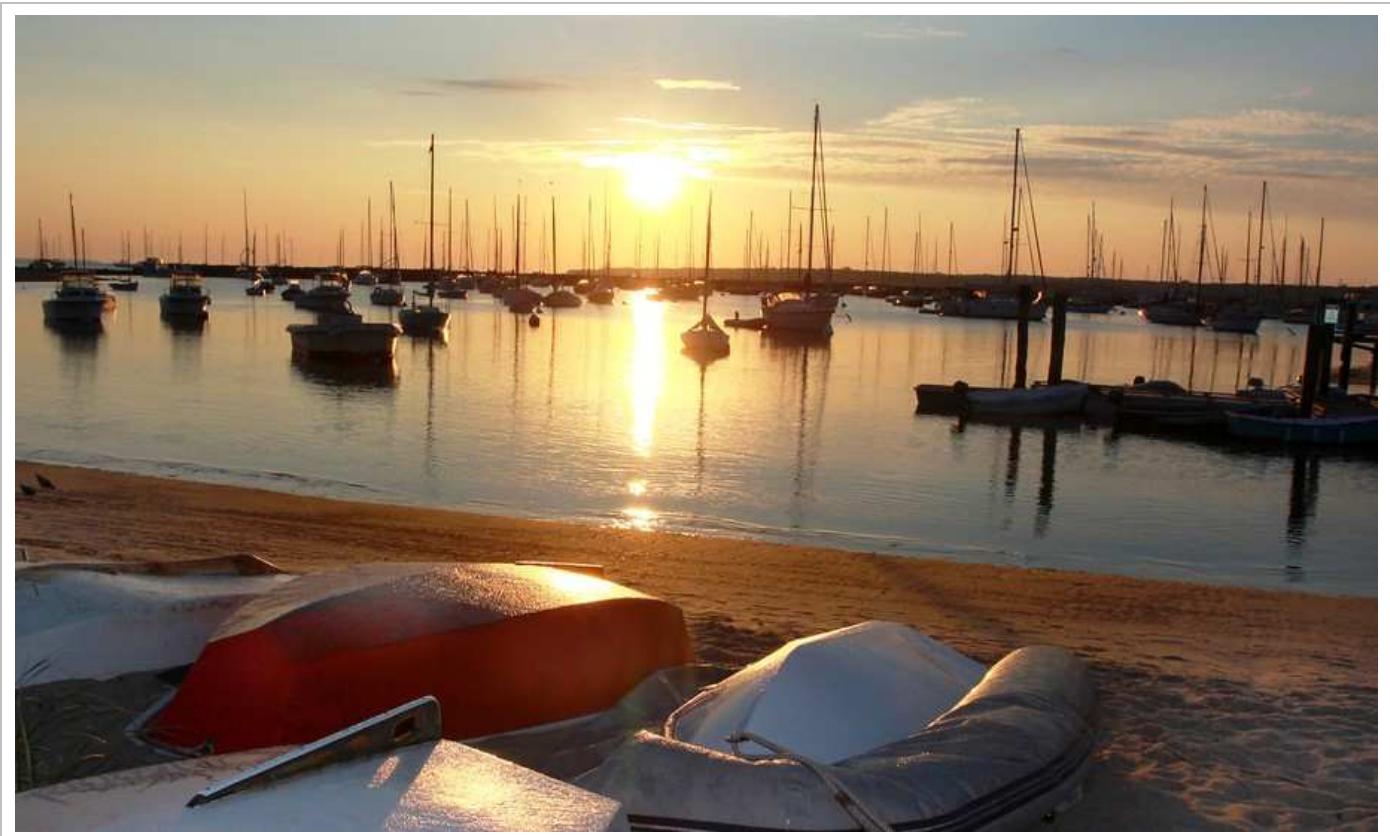
It caused no problems whatsoever, except when visiting the small fishing village of Aquinnah, which looks little changed from the time it formed the backdrop to Jaws.

We were there on a warm, early fall day that just cried out for a cold beer.

I was sure I would come across a ramshackle bar cluttered with fishing and seafaring artefacts.

I would join weather worn fishing boat captains and their crews who would recount tales of their lives at sea.

Alas, Aquinnah being dry is something I realised when asking why I could not find a bar and looking foolish when told.



A short break on Martha's Vineyard

We enjoyed a three night break on Martha's Vineyard staying in Edgartown (so no problem getting a beer).

This was ample time for strolling the town itself, taking in Chappaquiddick, while also enjoying a trip Up-island and spending time in Oak Bluffs.

Edgartown

Edgartown is an elegant seaport town that offers an enticing reflection of a grand and affluent past.

A whole host of its old colonial and Greek Revival properties and the residences of wealthy whaling captains have been restored and now serve as guest houses, galleries, upmarket stores and restaurants.

The town's Great Harbor provides a haven for a veritable flotilla of dinghies, motor launches and sailing craft.

During the season it throngs with sailors competing in any number of regattas.

Edgartown also remains a busy fishing port with the return of the boats and their catch of the day attracting an excited gathering of buyers and interested onlookers alike.



Come late afternoon and evening, Edgartown is the place to make for to absorb the atmosphere and browse the many fine restaurants to determine where to dine.



Being 'wet', Edgartown also has some wonderful old shipping inns and enticing bars, with the rooftop Seafood Shanty a particular favourite for a sundowner.

Chappaquiddick - so near and yet a world away



From Edgartown it is a very short hop, aboard the Chappy Ferry, to Chappaquiddick.

Five hundred and twenty-seven feet, and a couple of minutes, to be precise.

That said, the wait in line for the four car berths on the ferry can take far longer, particularly at peak times.

Those in the know tend to opt for two wheeled transport when making a visit as cyclists can cross speedily and with a deserved smugness.

Back and forth between two worlds

The sign on the Chappy's dock tells you it goes back and forth between two worlds.

How true this is.

With a resident population of under 200 and just one store, which only opens 'occasionally', Chappaquiddick could be a world and an age away.

Visitors are attracted to its miles of windswept beach and coastal walks and the Cape Pogue Wildlife Refuge, a migration stopover for thousands of birds.



A Japanese oasis

On an otherwise rugged outcrop of an island, the Mytoi Japanese gardens offer a veritable oasis of horticultural extravagance.

Exploiting a location sheltered by a pine grove, the gardens are an exotic enclave of native and non-native flowers, plants, shrubs and foliage.

They were first laid in the late 1950s, when Hugh Jones, an Edgartown resident and architect of Japanese design, began his design and planting and landscaping.

Hugh devoted the rest of his life to the development of the gardens and, on his death in 1965, the gardens have been nurtured by a passionate board of trustees.

www.thetrustees.org



Lucy Vincent : Martha's Vineyard CoC

A glorious day up-island

Driving Martha's Vineyard is a pleasure, particularly in the off peak seasons.

Winding roads dappled with the sunlight shining through the trees that line the way and almost converge overhead.

On our tour up-island we were given a route by the kind people at the Winnetu Beach Resort and this worked just fine.

Morning Glory Farm

First stop is the Morning Glory Farm shop.

The farm was started in 1975 by James and Deborah Athearn, is one of the most attractive farm shops one could imagine.

The Athearn's and their team grow about 60 acres of vegetables and small fruits on the island, including sweet corn, lettuce, carrots, beets, tomatoes, melons, potatoes, beans, squash and pumpkins.

The farm keeps beef cows on pasture in Chilmark and also produces eggs, pork and fresh, pasture-raised chickens to sell in the farm shop.

Whether you buy or not, a quick visit to this farm shop comes highly recommended.

www.morninggloryfarm.com

Alley's General Store

It was on to historic West Tisbury and Alley's General Store, is the oldest operating retail business on Martha's Vineyard.

Completely renovated by the Martha's Vineyard Preservation Trust, in 1993, Alley's still delivers in its reputation as "dealers in almost everything."

The store, an Island tradition, also acts as a community meeting place and a fine place for visitors to get to chat with the locals.

In addition to Alley's, the Trust also owns and maintains 24 other historic properties on Martha's Vineyard.

www.mvpreservation.org

The Field Gallery

Across the road from Alley's is the Field Gallery, which was established in 1970 by four artists and their families.



The galleries original barn structure was built by friends, summer house guests, and passers by all volunteering their time and this working together ethos prevails.

Today, the gallery continues represents more than 25 talented artists, each with a distinct island connection.

Run by a small staff, the Field Gallery is a truly unique viewing experience with constantly changing artwork and Vineyard charm.

Artist receptions, which are held Sunday afternoons throughout the summer, have become an island tradition.

www.fieldgallery.com



Lucy Vincent : Martha's Vineyard CoC

Taking in Aquinnah and Menemsha

Go as far as you can and you will get to Aquinnah on the island's western most point.

Here is the chance to admire the clay cliffs and quiet natural serenity.

The Gay Head Light, at Aquinnah, is an historic lighthouse that was recently moved a short distance from the eroding cliffs.

Menemsha

The fishing village of Menemsha is a short drive from Aquinnah.

The village's historic harbour serves local fishermen, many of them several generations of fishing families, and is a base for charter boats to the nearby Elizabeth Islands.

This is the place for one of the most stunning sunsets in New England and was the featured fishing dock in *Jaws*.



And finally to Oak Bluffs



The final stop on our day's tour of Martha's Vineyard was Oak Bluffs and back into 'wet' territory.

With its location on the shores of Nantucket Sound, Oak Bluffs has the feel of a traditional Victorian style seaside town.

A grand grassy expanse, complete with band stand, slopes down to the long promenade with bracing sea views and access to long stretches of sandy beach.

The town's marina is also Martha's Vineyard's largest.

Gingerbread Cottages

Move into the town itself and you find Wesleyan Grove, a curving network of brightly painted Carpenter's Gothic *gingerbread* cottages, complete with front porch and picket fences.

A veritable magnet for photographers

The Flying Horses Carousel

The Flying Horses Carousel, now in the ownership of the Martha's Vineyard Preservation Trust, is the nation's oldest platform carousel and a designated national landmark.

Constructed in 1876 by Charles Dare, it is one of only two Dare carousels still in existence, with its horses having real horsehair manes and tails and distinctive objects in their glass eyes.

A 1923 Wurlitzer band organ plays tunes on original paper rolls and a highlight of every ride is the chance to grab the lucky Brass Ring!

Downtown

The Oak Bluffs downtown is a bustling, lively area, particularly along the harbour walk, with restaurants, bars and live entertainment.

This is also the island's liveliest night time entertainment district, when it takes on a real party atmosphere.



Getting around the island



With Martha's Vineyard covering some 100 square miles it offers great cycling opportunities.

The island has 44 miles of bike and multi-use paths for cyclists, walkers, runners and roller skaters) and miles of cycle tracks.

All cyclists under 16 must wear a helmet.

Martha's Vineyard Regional Transit Authority

There is also an excellent bus service provided by the VTA, a year-round Island-wide public transportation system.

Buses run daily on 13 individual routes.

Ticket prices are very reasonable, with the day pass a good way to plan a tour of the whole island.

Apart from the views one gets on board there is invariably the chance to meet and chat with really nice people.

www.vineyardtransit.com

More information



www.mvy.com
www.edgartown-ma.us
www.wampanoagtribe.net

The Winnetu Oceanside Resort

By Ann Mealor

The Winnetu Oceanside Resort, which is situated on a glorious stretch of South Beach, is styled on a New England seaside resort.

Just three miles from the centre of Edgartown, it has everything you could want for an enjoyable couple of days on Martha's Vineyard.

Top of the list is the wide and beautiful beach that stretches for miles along the island's south coast.

A private path leads from the resort to the shoreline and anything you need for a day on the sands can be found at the Resort, including deck chairs and wind breaks.

As well as a tennis club, bike hire (there are miles of scenic cycle paths); heated swimming pools; yoga and fitness classes on the lawn; a fully equipped gym and a children's day programme, there is also the resident antique fire truck that give rides around the grounds every afternoon.

Games in the garden

Games available to play in the garden and surrounding grounds that are a lot of fun for children – and adults!

I enjoyed a few hotly fought table-tennis matches with Ashley, as well as table football.

There were also football nets on the lawn, throwing games and a giant chess board with two huge chairs positioned each end for the players.

Sitting on one of these, I really did feel as if I was part of Alice in Wonderland!

The comfortable lounge area was also full of board games and books for rainy day activities.

Complimentary shuttle

A frequent, complimentary shuttle to and from Main Street in Edgartown gives guests a chance to explore the quaint streets and shops and dine at the many excellent restaurants.

Not having to worry about driving or trying to find a parking space in this popular little town is a real bonus.



Our room

Our room had a very beachside feel - tiled floors and blue and white décor. There was a small kitchen area, fully equipped for a short stay.

The bed was large and comfortable and the lounge nicely furnished with a sofa, TV, small table and chairs.

Our private patio looked out onto the gardens and was a great place to sit and unwind with a glass of wine in the evening.

Breakfast on the deck

The continental breakfast on offer each morning was excellent.

Served in the restaurant or outside on the deck we tucked into fresh berries, melon, yoghurt, granola, smoked salmon, bagels, pastries, cream cheese, tomatoes, capers, fresh juices, coffee, butter and jams.

This set us up for the day, but if we felt a bit peckish later on, we had a few home baked cookies, which were available in reception every afternoon.

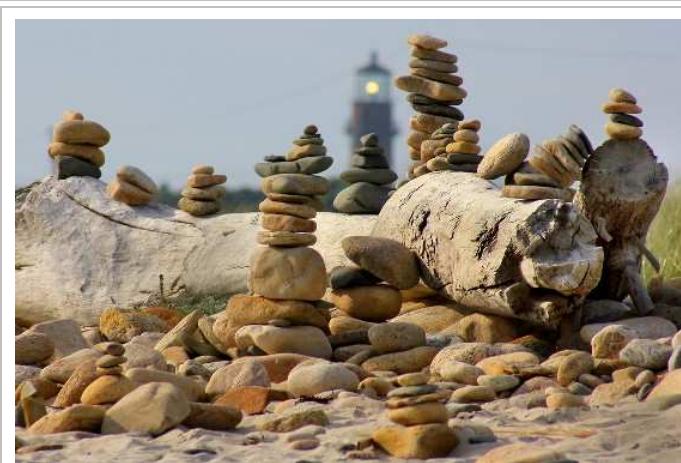
The perfect base

With its friendly and helpful staff, beautiful setting, great food and stunning views, the Winnetu provides the perfect base for a wonderful visit to Martha's Vineyard.



www.winnetu.com

A snapshot of Martha's Vineyard



AllWays consider

Doing the airport in style with the executive lounge



How often have you heard it said that the airport 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.

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