

MAGICAL MARTHA'S VINEYARD

So close yet a world away, this island getaway welcomes every lifestyle, no matter the season

BY WILLIAM DESOUSA-MAUK



Gay Head Cliffs (Photo: Robert Schellhammer)
(left) Gay Head Lighthouse (Photo: Martha's Vineyard Chamber of Commerce)

Only a seven-mile stretch of water separates Martha's Vineyard from Cape Cod. Yet, the experience of "away" is remarkable once you drive across the Cape Cod Canal, getting that much closer to this enchanting and unforgettable island resort by the sea. The one-hour voyage aboard the fast, convenient high-speed catamaran from Hyannis is an idyllic way to ease into a Vineyard getaway. Better yet, flying to the Vineyard provides an opportunity to get your aerial bearings on the island's distinctive landscape and triangular shape. No matter how you get there, Martha's Vineyard will provide an unhurried, timeless escape. Gay and lesbian travelers will feel completely comfortable and welcome all around Martha's Vineyard. So book your reservations or tables confident in the knowledge that there will be no raised eyebrows, only warm welcomes, throughout the island.

Summer on the Vineyard evokes memories of those happy childhood days at the shore, when the most cerebral decision you had to make was when to shower off the day's salt and sand before heading out to dinner. While summer's magic cannot be denied, spring and fall – the Vineyard's so-called "shoulder seasons" – yield a copious panoply of magic and wonder all their own. Without families with school-aged children who make their perennial summer pilgrimages to the island, Martha's Vineyard reveals itself totally anew. Spring's warm days and cool nights bring a promise of renewal, while autumn glows with its



Oaks Bluff

Illumination Night

many shades of luminous reds, oranges and yellows. Dozens of species of returning or departing birds offer their welcomes or farewells in a soothing avian choir. And autumn's gilded, ethereal light endows the landscape with soft edges and a unique palette that only islands confer. Best of all, waiting in line for practically anything is unheard of during these times.

Martha's Vineyard is a roughly triangular 100 square miles – 23 miles from east to west, 9 miles north to south, with 125 miles of coastline. Most visitors arrive via the water into the contiguous port towns of Vineyard Haven or Oak Bluffs. In the hustle and bustle of summer, many visitors opt to leave these ports. You can explore by taking an island tour, which provides a wonderful intimacy between visitors and this alluring isle. Start at Vineyard Haven and Oak Bluffs, which lie on the north, closest to Cape Cod. Clockwise from Vineyard Haven (the main port), you pass through Oak Bluffs along Beach Road to Edgartown on the southeast (which includes the enchanting — and infamous — island of Chappaquiddick). Martha's Vineyard Airport, surrounded by state forest, is in the center of the island along the north side of Edgartown-West Tisbury Road. Driving westward (clockwise), one approaches the bucolic town of West Tisbury. From here, take South or Middle Road to pastoral Chilmark, circumnavigating Menemsha Pond along State Road (or Moshup Trail) to the majestic, mysterious

Gay Head Cliffs at Aquinnah, a national landmark. Residents refer to east and west towns as down- and up-island, respectively — a reference to decreasing or increasing longitude. The Vineyard's six sibling towns are as distinctive and refreshing as brothers and sisters can possibly be. How ironic, too, that a place with the name "Vineyard" has four "dry" – or non-alcoholic – towns and only two "wet" towns. Oh well.

Spring and fall may be wondrous on the Vineyard, but it is summer when the island's divine beauty and energy peak. Packed with locals, seasonal residents and visitors, streets fill with colorful eye candy from the world over. Although already renowned, President Clinton's extended summer escapades here focused world attention on this slice of heaven. Shops and boutiques are plentiful – and who can resist something uniquely "Vineyard"? In particular, visitors make a beeline to The Black Dog store on Water Street in Vineyard Haven, not far from the iconic Black Dog Tavern on the harbor. It will take a few hours, or even a day, to adjust to the rhythm of Vineyard life, but adjust you will.

In the summer, the island's unsullied sandy beaches are the place to be – there are 19 in all, 14 of which are public. Vineyard Sound beaches range from clear and shallow in the north and east to true ocean beaches on the south side. South Beach, a three-mile barrier beach, is my favorite. (Sound beaches

are warmer than south-side ocean beaches.) For an unforgettable day, head to Menemsha Public Beach, dine on the dock and stay for the heavenly sunset. And don't forget your camera; Menemsha is someplace you will want to remember with pictures.

Bring your car, if you must. But there are so many other ways to travel, including bicycles, rented scooters, Jeeps and Smart Cars. There's also Vineyard Transit Authority buses, which run year-round. Cycling is one of the island's most popular activities, but avoid cycling up-island's main streets. Instead, cycle some of the bike-only routes for pure rolling satisfaction: Oak Bluffs to Edgartown along the causeway between the Sound and marshlands; the mid-Island bike path around the state forest; Chappaquiddick, which can be traversed by bicycle in its entirety; Edgartown-Katama Road, which ends at South Beach; or West Basin Road to Lobsterville Beach, and take the bicycle ferry to Menemsha.

You can take a relaxed approach to your island visit – read a book, sunbathe or people watch. Or you can be more active – comb the beaches, fish, snorkel, golf, play tennis, hike, kayak, jet ski, ice skate on a hot summer's day, sightsee, attend auctions, go antiquing, visit art galleries, or take yoga or aerobics classes, just to name a few options. Whether exploring island history, touring its architectural treasures (take a tour of Oak Bluffs' Gingerbread Cottage colony) or seeing

a theater production, the island offers plenty of active or relaxed pursuits. Take along a picnic to enjoy the sumptuously gorgeous Polly Hill Arboretum, a 70-acre public garden in West Tisbury. Its rare trees and shrubs from around the world are set among timeless stone walls, rolling meadows and verdant fields. Take a Cape Poge Lighthouse Tour by overland vehicle or kayak. Nancy Gardella, executive director of the Martha's Vineyard Chamber of Commerce, heartily recommends the latter as one of her favorite tours on the Island. "It is just a perfect way to enjoy all the natural beauty of Chappaquiddick and is also a must for birders, especially in May and June." Who would know better?

Dining on Martha's Vineyard is bewildering – there are simply too many wonderful restaurants for every palate. Surrounded by ocean, seafood is in ample supply. But there are also abundant fresh vegetables, herbs and berries – delectable companions for the wonderful fish, scallops, and clams. For those preferring haute cuisine, there are upscale restaurants like L'Etoile, with inspired and exquisite dining in a sumptuous setting. There's also the more affordable – but no less

Martha's Vineyard Chamber of Commerce
www.mv.com

WIFI & INTERNET ACCESS

Edgartown: Espresso Love, Edgartown Pizza, Harbor View Hotel

Oak Bluffs: Seasons, Offshore Ale

Vineyard Haven: Steamship Authority Terminal, Black Dog Café, MV Bagel Authority, Beetlebung Coffee House, Che's Lounge

West Tisbury: Airport Laundromat, Howes House
Internet access also available at town libraries

TRANSPORTATION

The Steamship Authority

www.steamshipauthority.com
Year-round passenger and vehicular transportation between Woods Hole in Falmouth and Martha's Vineyard (Vineyard Haven and Oak Bluffs)

The Island Queen

www.islandqueen.com
Seasonal passenger-only transportation between Falmouth Harbor and Oak Bluffs

Hy Line Cruises

www.hy-linecruises.com

Seasonal steamship and high-speed service between Hyannis and Oak Bluffs

New England

Fast Ferry

www.mvfastferry.com
New Bedford to Vineyard Haven and Oak Bluffs

Martha's Vineyard Transit Authority

www.vineyardtransit.com
Affordable and reliable year-round public transportation between all six island towns; offers unlimited one-, three-, seven- and 31-day travel passes

Chappy Ferry

www.chappyferry.net
Two-minute channel crossing from Edgartown to Chappaquiddick (\$12 round trip for car and driver)

Cape Air

www.flycapeair.com

AdamCab

Island Tour

www.adamcab.com/island_tours.shtml

Budget Rent a Car of Martha's Vineyard

www.budgetmv.com

Island Transport

www.mvtour.com

LODGING

Winnetu Oceanside Resort

www.winnetu.com

Harbor View Hotel & Resort

www.harbor-view.com

Charlotte Inn

www.charlotteinn.net

The Inn at Blueberry Hill

www.lambertscoveinn.com

Lambert's Cove Inn

www.menemshainn.com

Menemsha Inn

www.beachpluminn.com

Beach Plum Inn

www.isabellesbeachhouse.com

Isabelle's Beach House

www.kelley-house.com/newes_from_america

DINING
Newes from America Pub

www.legrenierrestaurant.com

www.legrenierrestaurant.com

The panoramic water views aren't the only thing that will take your breath away.

We could tell you it's our four acclaimed restaurants, our 6th Annual Cape Cod Summer Jazz Festival, our exclusive playing rights to Cape Cod National Golf Club, or our newest property enhancements including the Children's Center, Signature Collection Suites, Adult Lap Pool or our new Tennis Center that make us the finest luxury resort on Cape Cod. But we wouldn't want to be guilty of understatement.

To see for yourself, view us at www.wequasset.com or call 800-225-7125 for more information.

WEQUASSETT
RESORT AND GOLF CLUB
You have arrived.

Lure at The Winnetu
www.winnetu.com/dining.htm

L'Etoile
www.lettoile.net

Offshore Ale
Company
www.offshoreale.com

Theo's at Inn at
Blueberry Hill
www.blueberryinn.com/dining.html

Lambert's Cove
Inn Restaurant
www.lambertscoveinn.com/restaurant.html

Beach Plum Inn
Restaurant
www.beachpluminn.com/restaurant.htm

**ENTERTAINMENT,
RECREATION AND
SIGHTSEEING**

Polly Hill Arboretum
www.pollyhillarboretum.org

Mad Max Catamaran
Excursions
www.madmaxmarina.com

Felix Neck Wildlife
Sanctuary
www.massaudubon.org/Nature_Connection/Sanctuaries/Felix_Neck/index.php

Island Alpaca Farm
www.islandalpaca.com

Cape Poge
Wildlife Refuge
www.thetrustees.org/pages/286_cape_poge_wildlife_refuge.cfm

Trustees of
Reservations for Cape
Poge Lighthouse Tours
www.thetrustees.org/pages/1474_natural_history_tours.cfm

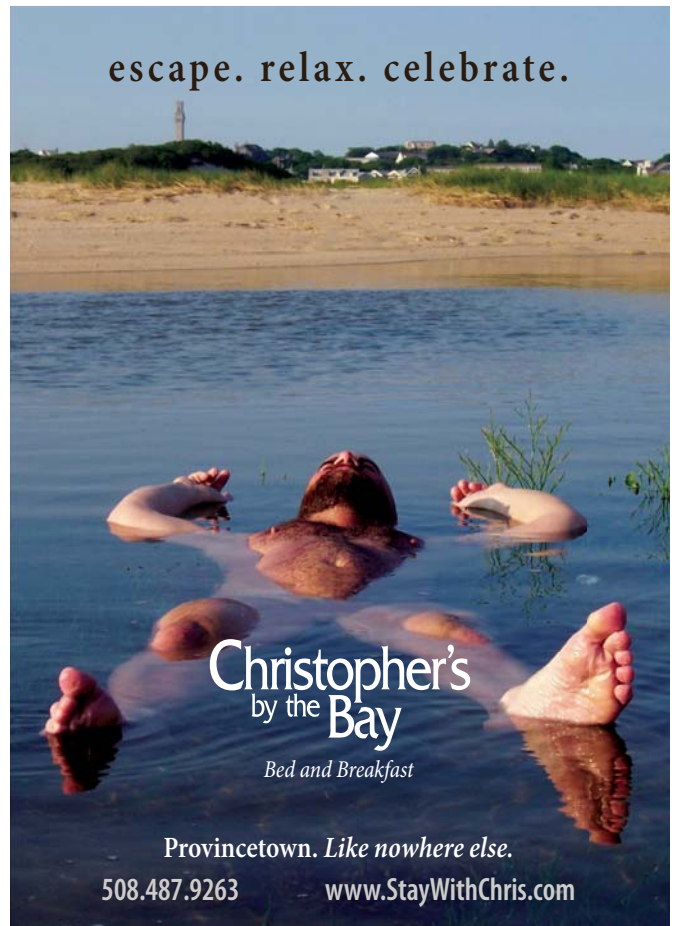
The Vineyard
Playhouse
www.vineyardplayhouse.org

celebrated – Lure at Winnetu Oceanside Resort. Here, “dressy casual” ocean-view dining features an innovative menu – and a daily complimentary sunset water taxi from Edgartown. Lure’s remarkable herb and tomato garden on the lawn ensures just-from-the-garden freshness. A more casual, popular spot is Newes from America Pub, serving pub food year-round. My favorite eatery is Vineyard Haven’s Le Grenier French restaurant, which is BYOB. The ambience is decidedly French and reservations are necessary, particularly in season.

Oak Bluffs’ Offshore Ale Company is a hotspot where they brew crisp, golden lagers, copper colored pale ales, award-winning Nut Brown Ale, coal black stouts and more. Renowned Lambert’s Cove Inn & Restaurant has a rotating menu featuring fresh island seafood, meat, poultry, in-season local vegetables and delicious desserts. In rural Chilmark, Theo’s at the Inn at Blueberry Hill offers whatever is freshest that day in an elegant but unstuffy atmosphere. Two new Edgartown restaurants at the lovely Harbor View Hotel are Water Street for fine dining, and Henry’s Bar, which is a bit more

casual. Henry’s offers wonderful food priced right with chic-casual ambience overlooking Edgartown Lighthouse and Harbor.

Summer may be the most vibrant, but my husband and I love late spring and fall, preferring the island during these quieter periods. Not only is the Vineyard more affordable but, with fewer visitors, serenity and seclusion are easy to find. We might be the only beachcombers along South Beach or the solitary visitors at Gay Head Cliffs. Over last year’s Columbus Day weekend, the weather was perfect. Days were warm and sunny, with a big blue sky and puffy fair-weather clouds. Evenings were enchanting – the moon sailed along through a starlit sky and, from our room, we could hear and see the ocean, which lulled us to sleep and awoke us gently. On this visit, we stayed at the Winnetu Oceanside Resort in Edgartown. This sprawling property, nestled alongside South Beach, features rooms with every creature comfort. We enjoyed chess on the life-size board near our room. After I handily won the chess match, we walked the resort’s seemingly endless lawns along the path to the



escape. relax. celebrate.

Christopher's
by the Bay
Bed and Breakfast

Provincetown. *Like nowhere else.*
508.487.9263 www.StayWithChris.com

LIFE AFTER DEBT...



Financing Made Easy.

Committed to providing the GLBT Community with mortgage services that exceed their expectations.

- 1st Time Homebuyers
- Purchases and Reverse Mortgages
- Refinancing
- FHA-VA
- Rehab Loans
- Jumbo Loans

Greenpark MORTGAGE 

140 Gould Street, Needham, MA 02494 • p: 781-726-6095 x 128 • f: 781-394-7700 • c: 508-735-5244
vmeranda@greenparkmortgage.com • www.vivianmeranda.com
MA LENDER/ MA BROKER MC# 1883

MTA BENEFITS
Massachusetts Teachers Association
Endorsed Lender of the Mass Teachers Association

beach and celebrated my victory with a bottle of red Bibich Riserva 2006 in the burnished autumn sunlight on the dunes. This indelible and cherished memory will keep us warm during many New England winters to come.

**THE VINEYARD'S TOWNS:
A QUICK OVERVIEW**

Vineyard Haven (aka Tisbury, population 3,755): Before the Cape Cod Canal opened, sailing vessels waited in its harbor anchorage for provisions, navigators and a good tide to help seamen around the Cape for points beyond. Today, the beautiful harbor is the main portal of entry for most visitors to the Vineyard and primary port of call of Steamship Authority ferries. This must-see town is full of wonderful shops, boutiques and restaurants. Although it is a "dry" town, BYOB is acceptable everywhere. The drawbridge on Beach Road draws photographers and artists moved to capture its iconic beauty.

Oak Bluffs (population 3,713): Lively Oak Bluffs is where party animals stay or visit. Starting in 1835, the town became a Methodist revivalist movement camp meeting site. Thousands would summer here for "camp" meetings, staying in tents that were eventually replaced

by pastel-painted gingerbread "campground Gothic" cottages, which are a joy to tour. Flying Horses Carousel – America's oldest continuously operating merry-go-round – merrily revolves in season. Band concerts under the oceanfront gazebo are popular on summer evenings. Dance clubs, bars and an excellent variety of restaurants make this an island hot spot.

Edgartown (population 3,779): An icon of New England elegance and grace, Edgartown overflows with white clapboard Greek Revival houses. For an eye-popping collection of these, walk along North Water Street. Main Street's magnificent six-columned Old Whaling Church is a performing arts center. Wonderful shops, boutiques and a bevy of restaurants – from clam shacks to haute cuisine – can be found amidst the architectural gems of this living museum town. And, of course, there is six-square-mile Chappaquiddick. Here, visit Mytoi Garden, a serene Japanese botanical oasis three miles from the ferry landing.

West Tisbury (population 2,467): This is the island's agricultural town, complete with rolling pasturelands. Its wooded hills, prim New England villages and interesting sights – such as the Field Gallery, Grange Hall, Alley's General

Store (home to the seasonal Farmers Market) and First Congregational Church – make this lovely town a photographer's and painter's dream. Polly Hill Arboretum will provide many hours of bucolic contentment among its varied stands of trees and incredible arrays of flowers.

Chilmark (includes Menemsha; population 843): As the population dwindles, the up-island towns' quintessential New England beauty increases exponentially. Stop at the overlook at Quitsa Pond (west of Beetlebung Corner). Pastoral scenes, seemingly lifted from canvases, abound here. While away the afternoon at the Chilmark Store's rocking chairs or bargain at the weekend Flea Market. Menemsha, a quaint fishing hamlet, has an active harbor where locals love to hang out. Sunsets are amazing here, so expect a crowd when there are no clouds.

Aquinnah (formerly Gay Head; population 344): Known for its trademark glacial, polychrome cliffs, Aquinnah is home to the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head, descendants of the island's original inhabitants. Its lighthouse is made from clay from the cliffs, although removing clay is no longer permitted. ♦



CompuNet Sales & Service, Inc.

Providers of Quality Service & Support

**CELEBRATING
15 YEARS OF
SERVICE**

**Call Direct:
781-953-4359**

**Or Toll Free:
800-669-6628**

- STACS First Responders***
- Onsite/Remote Technical Support
- Internet Connectivity
- Email, webmail
- Spam Filtering, Anti-Virus, Spyware
- Secure Firewall and VPN
- Custom Network Design
- Voice, Data Cabling Design & Installation
- Telephone Systems & VoIP
- Product Sales & Leasing
- Disaster Recovery and Backup
- Wireless Networks
- IT Managed Services
- High Speed Copier/Scanner/Fax/Printers
- Retainer Programs

**“OUR PERSONAL
APPROACH TO
SERVICE IS THE KEY
TO OUR SUCCESS.”**

*STACS (Smart Tactical Advanced Communications System)
Multi-line VOIP Integrated telephone, Satellite, EV-DO, WiFi data
Services and Radio Interoperability man portable solution. GLOBAL
MESHING capabilities with community based protocols.

All in a self contained 20 lb portable case. Deployable in less than
2 minutes.

