ANDY COHEN

TALKING IT UP WITH TV'S REALITY KING

PREP FOR SUCCESS
The Story Behind Clothing Sensation Vineyard Vines

Plus
SUMMER FUN ON MARTHA'S VINEYARD AND NANTUCKET
The Escape Artist (LINDSEY CANANT)
CALL TO ACK-TION
There are new openings and familiar treasures to be found on Nantucket.

DECKED OUT The White Elephant offers multiple options for lounging.

If the hassles of travel sometimes eclipse the fun, a Nantucket getaway melds the best of all worlds. Cape Air eliminates the headache of driving to Hyannis for a ferry by offering service from Logan Airport to the island, though, flight attendants may ask about your weight in order to distribute it evenly across the pocket-sized puddle-jumpers—expediency, it turns out, trumps vanity. And while a cab drivers’ union prevents hotels from running shuttles to and from the airport, taxis line up just outside to take passengers into downtown Nantucket following the 50-minute flight.

The iconic White Elephant hotel is often praised for its plush accommodations and classic clapboard-shingle exteriors. Having expanded to include the White Elephant Hotel Residences and the Inn at the White Elephant Village, the property is hard at work building a bastion of luxury in the Brant Point neighborhood. Fact is, impeccable lodging combined with proximity to downtown make it impossible to beat.

Pull up a blue deck chair on the White Elephant’s green lawn to watch the boats sailing into the harbor and the parade of Lilly Pulitzer-clad travelers marching down the bleached wooden docks. Inside, cozy rooms feature electric fireplaces, one-too-many flat-screen TVs and doors that open onto outside decks. Downtown Nantucket is a short stroll from the property, and bikes (including a handsome red tandem) can be arranged through the concierge.

A harbor view is the perfect accomplishment to breakfast on the deck of the hotel’s Brant Point Grill. But Nantucket has never been short on gourmet options. Up the road, American Seasons is an island mainstay, now celebrating its 25th anniversary. Overflowing flower boxes and hand-painted murals beget a cozy environment for sophisticated comfort food with comestibles culled from the area, like exceptional seared day-boat scallops with fried green tomatoes and smoky crayfish butter.

Islanders have been eager to check out the latest incarnation of Boarding House, marking its 20th year in business, but newly renovated after an unfortunate aquarium explosion at upstairs neighbor the Pearl cut last season short. Through the off-season, the staff retooled the menu with a focus on dishes like grilled Nantucket striped bass with saffron creamed corn. Mingle with the well-dressed crowd at the bar—even Bill Belichick forges his hood here. And don’t miss the chance to sample the superb wine list (note that “unfinished wine may be brought home”).

There are new developments on Nantucket, too. The Dreamland Theater first opened in 1911 as a spot where islanders watched silent movies and vaudeville, and remained the only on-island theater venue through 2005. Having recently completed a $30 million fund-raising effort, it reopens this spring with a 330-seat movie theater and the debut of Nantucket 24, a film shot by locals on Flip cams about a single day on the island.

Also undergoing a much-needed revamp is the waterfront eatery the Rope Walk, a harbormaster joint long beloved for its ambiance, if not necessarily its cuisine. It’s soon to be replaced by minimalist oyster bar Cru, promising a casually elegant New England-Mediterranean menu.

Before heading home, a brunch stop at cash-only diner Black Eyed Susan’s (again, celebrating its 20th year) is a must. Sit at the counter for hearty fare like sourdough French toast with orange Jack Daniels butter, Portuguese scrambles and huevos rancheros. You won’t regret the indulgence, even in light of weight-wary gate agents.

On an island of cobblestone, fresh seafood, sailboats and daffodils, it’s tempting to linger. But with travel headaches reduced to a minimum, there’s plenty of reason to return.

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**Traveler’s Checks**

* From yoga and film to comedy and wine, Nantucket has a summer-time festival for almost anything.

* For a peek at the island’s hot spots from an in-the-know local, check out facebook.com/TheNantucketBLACKbook.

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White Elephant and Brant Point Grill 50 Easton St., Nantucket (508-228-2500) whiteelephanthotel.com
American Seasons 80 Centre St., Nantucket (508-228-7111) americansenasons.com
Boarding House 12 Federal St., Nantucket (508-228-9622) boardinghousenantucket.com
Cru 1 Straight Wharf, Nantucket (508-251-9278) crunantucket.com
Black-Eyed Susan’s 10 India St., Nantucket (508-325-0308) black-eyedsusans.com