

A Taste Of
White Honey

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of shopping local

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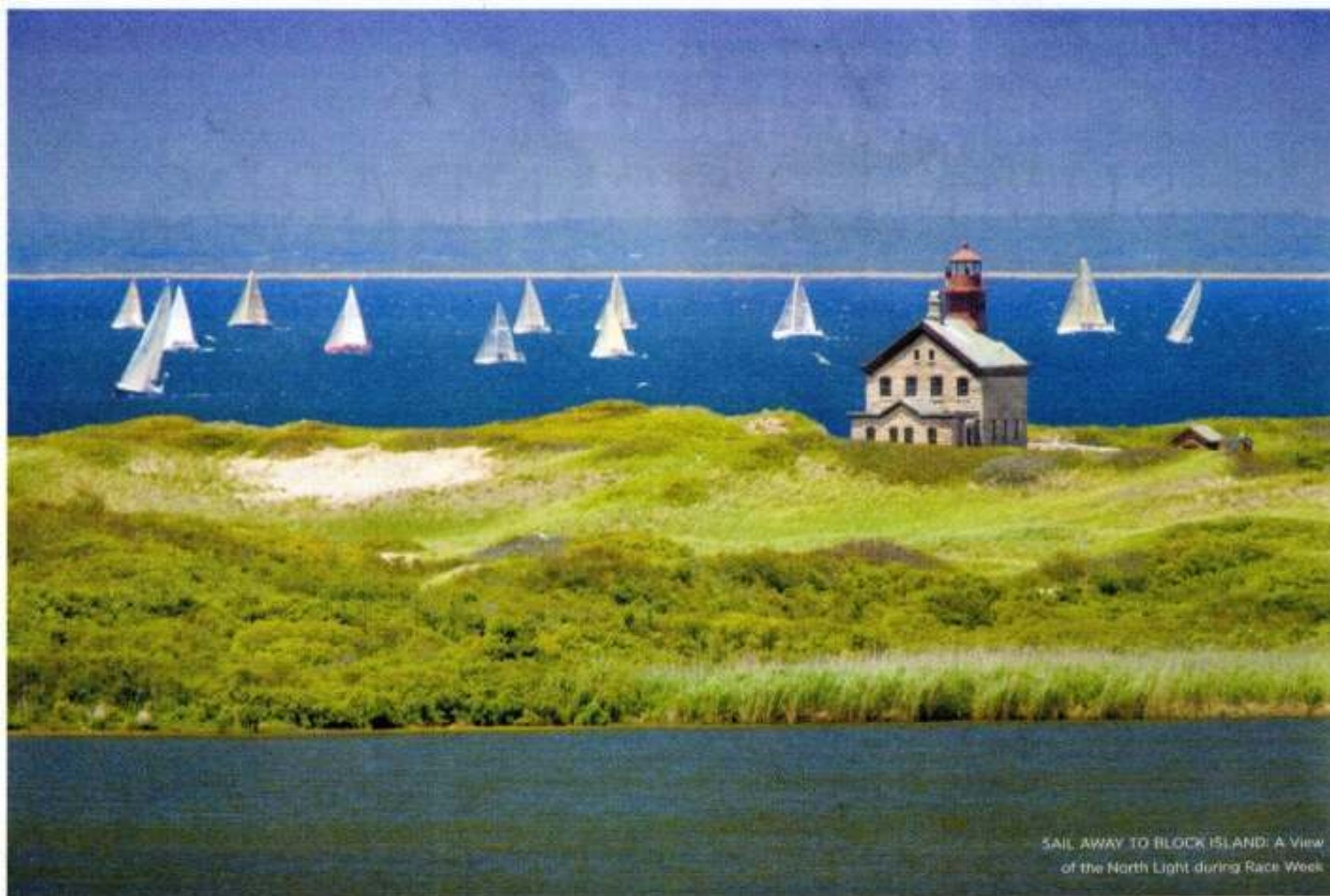


BEAT THE HEAT

Our guide
to surviving
summer in
the city



Vacationing
in Pawtucket -
no, seriously



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

TREASURE ISLANDS

Trade the concrete jungle for pristine beaches and island breezes

By Andrea E. McHugh

How to survive the city in the summer, you ask? Get the hell outta town. With three world-class islands just off Rhode Island's coast, a quick ferry ride is all it takes to savor coastal New England splendor at its finest. Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket and Rhode Island's off-shore pride, Block Island, are all less than 30 miles into the Atlantic and easily accessible by sea or by air.

Media moguls, politicians and musical icons escape to Martha's Vineyard and with ferry service from Quonset Point; now you can too. The Vineyard Fast Ferry (vineyardfastferry.com) is a scenic 90-minute jet-powered jaunt across blue waters until you arrive in the heart of Oak Bluffs. Leave your car dockside (just \$10 a day) as the Vine-

yard is relatively simple to navigate via public transportation, bikes, rental cars and your own two feet. Recession-resistant travelers can hop one of the many daily Cape Air flights from T.F. Green or New Bedford Regional Airport where you'll save time (but not money). Once there, adventurers can sail sloops, scuba and snorkel; nature lovers can explore trails, an arboretum and wildlife sanctuary; history hounds can peruse 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; wanna-be farmers can work the land, learn about sustainable agriculture and harvest crops at a teaching farm; art-lovers can

gallery hop, lighthouse enthusiasts can tour five of oldest beacons in the country and the over-stressed can unwind while basking on one of the Vineyard's 19 pristine beaches.

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. To get there by boat, you'll have to drive to Hyannis or Harwich Port on the Cape, so plan your trip around peak hours so you won't be atop the Bourne Bridge begging for traffic mercy. A broad spectrum of bed

and breakfasts dot the island, so those in need of an isolated respite should look to outermost locales while visitors looking to be in the heart of downtown should stay in close proximity to Main Street. Innkeepers on the island are known for sharing bits of its history and acting as impromptu concierges, including Ken and Deb Withrow, whose restored 1770s Union Street Inn is known for stellar homemade breakfasts. Speaking of epicurean delights, The Grey Lady (Nantucket's nickname) has more than its share of fine eateries. American Seasons' menu pays tribute to different regions of the country with local fare and seasonal ingredients while maintaining an unbelievably masterminded wine list. Nearby, pub



THE BEST OF THE SEASONS: The High-End Meatloaf Sandwich at Nantucket's American Seasons.

fare abounds at the downstairs 1840s whaling bar at The Brotherhood of Thieves. For time and convenience's sake, leave the car on the mainland and rent a Jeep to go off-roading on Nantucket's 82 miles of unspoiled beaches. After choosing a designated driver (i.e. who lost the coin toss), stop by Cisco Brewers, Triple Eight Distillery & Nantucket Vineyard (near Cisco Beach, South Shore) to sample a bit of what the island is brewing these days. 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).

It's just not summer without the Block Island Ferry's Rastafari-inspired jingle playing endlessly in your head. Rhode Island's off-shore gem is noticeably more affordable (ergo less glamorous) than its two perhaps more sophisticated aforementioned cousins. Though just 12 miles from the mainland (and visible on clear days from as far away as Newport), BI still seems a world away. High-speed ferries and the ol' traditional rust bucket leave Point Judith daily and often throughout the summer, but a word to the wise: the last ferry out of is loaded with day-

trippers mourning their mini-vacation goodbye, so be prepared to dodge the not-so-sober masses. (www.blockislandferry.com; note: July through mid-September there's one round trip daily out of Newport)

Some might call Ballard's, an inn/beach/nightspot/restaurant, a Block Island institution with live music day into night and servers to bring you endless piña colodas while lounging on a beautiful stretch of beach. Frommer's wrote: "Sooner rather than later, everyone winds up at Ballard's." 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 kiosks offering hourly or daily rentals. Scoot on over to the North Light House (part of the Block Island National Wildlife Refuge) and the Southeast Lighthouse for breathtaking views, and don't forget a zip around the Great Salt Pond.

Continually cooler than the mainland, an escape to one of these islands is too easy to pass up. Kiss the capital goodbye, if only for a weekend, and let your city folk cronies wish you "bon voyage." **PH**

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