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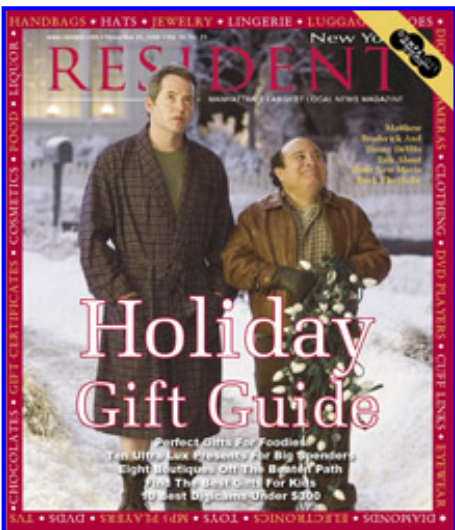
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In Montauk, The Last Town On Long Island, Summer May Not Be Endless—But It Sure Lasts Long

By Lynn Andriani

About 100 miles east of Manhattan, Montauk is the antidote to the Hamptons: relaxed and unaffected, with waters that attract surfers and fishermen. It's predictably fun in the summertime, but the off-season—fall, especially—is lovely. Daytime temperatures in the fall usually hit the mid-70s, and swimmers can still brave the ocean, which usually hovers around 66 degrees. Hotels offer lower rates, restaurants remain open (and can be filled on weekends, so call ahead) and finding a spot on the beach is no problem at all.

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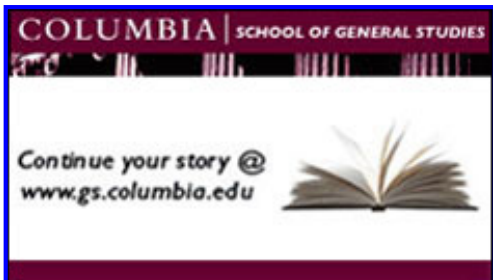
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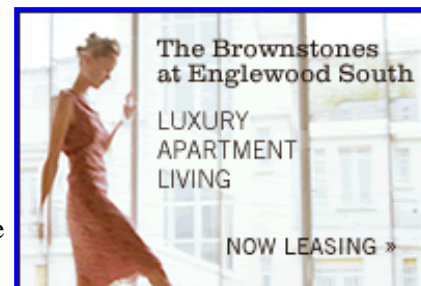
Hotels

Visitors arriving by train will most likely wind up at one of the town's many beach motels. These establishments may be dated and lacking high-speed Internet access, but they make up for their old-style accommodations with pleasant owners and laid-back charm. Rooms at the Hawaiian-themed Ronjo Resort Motel (The Plaza, (631) 668-2112) start at \$60 after Labor Day. The motel (which does close during the winter) is a block from the beach, and some rooms have private balconies and kitchenettes. Another in-town option is the Royal Atlantic (S. Edgemere St., (631) 668-5103), where ocean-view rooms go for \$70 a night from October through December. If you have a car, your hotel options broaden slightly; near the harbor, there's the Montauk Yacht Club (32 Star Island Rd., (631) 668-3100) and Harborside Resort Motel (371 W. Lake Dr., (631) 668-2511).

As far as beach vacations go, Montauk is pretty low-key. There's no boardwalk, no amusement area with rides or games, no water slides for the kids. Instead, enjoy walking along the town's beautiful coastline, watching the surfers (Ditch Plains is an especially good area), and, for many visitors, fishing is a favored sport. Given that the best known attraction is the Montauk Point Lighthouse, it begs the question: what else is there to do? Answer: eat!

Restaurants

Montauk's dining scene is varied, though unsurprisingly, it skews toward seafood. The area around the docks is home to a handful of solid seafood restaurants, while the center of town offers more burgers and family fare (though fish and chips, fried shrimp and clam chowder are on nearly every menu). At MTK Cafe (779 Main St., (631) 668-6852), chef Sean Jacoby serves spiffy diner fare with Greek flair. Lobster salad wraps and beer battered cod sandwiches share the menu with gyros and souvlaki. The spanakopita with Greek salad and fries is fantastic (a thin puff pastry envelops a rich bundle of chopped spinach) and the rice pudding has big grains of rice and notes of vanilla and cinnamon. Gurney's (290 Old Montauk Hwy., (631) 668-2345) is a sprawling, 80-year old resort, spa and conference center situated on the ocean, a short ride from town. The dining room at the Sea Grille is a white-tableclothed,



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nautical-themed affair, with picture windows looking onto the Atlantic. One of the most traditionally formal restaurants in Montauk, Gurney's is a good choice for almost any occasion.

Happily, Montauk is devoid of coffee shop chains. Those looking for a caffeine and wi-fi fix should visit 668 The Gig Shack (782 Main St., (631) 668-2727), a hip, airy coffee shop that morphs into a lunch and dinner spot/live music venue for the après-beach crowd. And although Montauk has its share of pancake houses and diners that'll make eggs any way you like, your best bet for breakfast might be the Montauk Bake Shoppe (The Plaza, (631) 668-2439), home of the decadent "cruffin" (a hybrid crumb bun-muffin with fresh fruit and a dollop of cream cheese inside) and other buttery, sugary delicacies. For pub fare, check out O'Murphy's (The Plaza, (631) 668-5005), where the clam chowder is thick and filled with clams, and the burgers are humungous. The Shagwong (774 Main St., (631) 668-3050) is a Montauk institution; its bar scene is lively, and the restaurant's dinner portions are enormous.

For a truly special dining experience, head to The Backyard (Shepherd's Neck Inn, 90 Second House Rd., (631) 668-2105). The restaurant's owners have achieved something special with this new spot; it's as sophisticated as anything you'd find in Manhattan, but retains the laid-back feel of the beach. A casual place with inventive food, the Backyard is definitely the choice for foodies keen on eating local ingredients prepared with verve.

Spas

When you've had enough eating, go see Robert. Robert Bonavolta, known locally as just "Robert", is a former member of the 2002 Olympic Sports Massage Team and a personal trainer at the Atlantic Corrective Therapy & Massage. He is the go-to guy for a serious rub-down and to fix anything that aches. For a fluffier experience, Deborah Thompson Day Spa welcomes you to the sights and sounds of Marrakech, right in the village at 37, The Plaza. Exotic scents, soothing sounds and an unforgettable spa experience will keep you coming back for more.

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Events

October brings the 14th Annual Hamptons International Film Festival through October 23rd, and you don't want to miss the Halloween Parade on October 31st down Main Street in the village. November marks the popular Turkey Raffle on the 18th and the annual Holiday Book Sale on the 25th at the Montauk library.

If You Go...

Getting to Montauk is relatively easy compared to other area beach communities. While the Long Island Expressway is notoriously traffic-choked on summer Fridays, September and October are generally more trouble-free. Having a car for your Montauk vacation is nice, since many restaurants and attractions are spread out among the town's 17.5 square miles. However, you can still enjoy Montauk without wheels. Long Island Railroad trains depart from Penn Station every few hours, and the ride takes about three hours (an off-peak round-trip ticket costs \$29). Many hotels will pick you up at the train station, and for the rest of your stay, taxis are readily available in town (Lindy's Taxi, (631) 668-8888).



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