

SUMMER LIVING

*New Yorkers who descend on the Hamptons have summer stays down to an art. But for out-of-towners, **Julie Schwiert Collazo** has the lowdown on where to go and what to do in the Long Island villages beloved of VIPs.*

*Photographs by **Daniel Gonzalez**.*

The Hamptons has long been the “it” place for New York City residents to get away for the summer and the appeal of this collection of villages on the eastern end of Long Island seems to grow with each passing year. To summer in the Hamptons is to make a satisfying tickmark on the New Yorker’s bucket list.

Though there *are* people who live here year-round, the Hamptons really come alive just after Memorial Day weekend (the last weekend in May). Storefront windows are

shined up, the “By Appointment Only” signs of autumn and winter are stored away and the season’s social calendars are finalised. Beach bungalows from **Westhampton** to **Montauk** are aired and opened up as the population starts to swell and business booms.

The **Hampton Jitney** – New Yorkers’ preferred means of transportation to and from the Hamptons – rolls into the villages more frequently. Its doors *whoosh* open and “the summer people with their designer clothes and hurry-up suntans”, as essayist

Wilfrid Sheed called them, step into the salty air and adjust their sunglasses, ready to see and be seen. Thus it begins: summer in the Hamptons.

Many New Yorkers have summer in the Hamptons down to an art. They know when to show up and where to sun. They know which restaurants serve the best food and where unique beach souvenirs can be found. And they know which events will give them biggest bragging rights once they’re back in the city. How do you get your head around it as an out-of-towner?



ESCAPE TO THE HAMPTONS



First, get your bearings. The Hamptons occupy southeastern Long Island, referred to locally as “**South Fork**”, and comprise about eleven villages, starting with **Westhampton** on the southwestern end and working all the way up through **Southampton**, **Bridgehampton**, **East Hampton** and, finally, **Montauk**, on the southern side of the fork. On the northern side is **Sag Harbor**, also considered part of the Hamptons, though locals like to refer to their village as the “un-Hampton”. While the villages are grouped together as “the Hamptons”, each has its own vibe. Sag Harbor, for example, preserves much of its past as a whaling village, while **East Hampton** embraces its identity as a more laid-back, coastal version of Manhattan. Its Main Street is New York City’s Fifth Avenue in miniature, with luxury shops such as Tiffany & Co and Coach drawing deep-pocketed shoppers.

It’s possible – and advisable – to choose one of the villages as your base, venturing out to explore the other ones during your stay. The Hamptons are relatively compact and you can rove about by car or by

Previous pages, kite surfing in the Hamptons. Clockwise from above, bathing beauties – Sagg Main Beach, Bridgehampton; it doesn’t get any better than this ... it could be the motto for Hamptons life; Main Beach Easthampton.

bike, the latter being a good option during the traffic-congested summer months when parking is pricy, if it can be found at all. Approaching the Hamptons in this way will give you a good sense of each village’s vibe. Inevitably, you’ll come away with a favourite.

What all the Hamptons villages share, of course, and what serves as the main draw during summer months, are beaches. There’s a remarkable variety, from the rocky, shell-ridden **Montauk Point Beach**, picturesque with its surf-casting fishermen, to the wide expanse of **Wainscott Beach**, and the dune-swept, soft-sand spread of **Gibson Beach**. Like the villages themselves, each beach has a distinct personality and attracts a different type of crowd. The young, fun partying set heads to **Sagg Beach** and **Flying Point Beach**; show up in your best brand-name bathing suit, with a beach umbrella and your own cooler full of beer.

Slightly lower-key, family-friendly spots are **Main Beach** and **Indian Wells Beach**. Forget the beach book that was recommended to you as the perfect summer read; people watching is the activity of choice here. No one cares that the northern Atlantic’s turbulent, tea-coloured waters lack the calmness and the crystalline topaz hues of the Caribbean; it’s all the more reason why the people are the Hamptons’ main attraction.

Though beaches are what most people come to the Hamptons for, they’re not the be-all and end-all of summer social life. Stroll the shore for seashells in the morning and sunbathe for a bit in the afternoon, but roll up the beach towel as the sun starts to dip because the day is still young. Good food, good art and good times occupy afternoon and evening hours, and their pursuit pushes the most adventurous long into the night.

Many of those good times are organised by celebrities, and trying to snag an invitation to an A-list party is a prime pastime. But even

BEST BEACH

How do you choose amongst the Hamptons’ many beaches? Take the advice of Dr Stephen Leatherman (aka “Dr Beach”), who releases an annual list of America’s best beaches. He ranks Coopers Beach as the Hamptons’ best.

ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHS BY FRANCISCO COLLAZO



Beachcomber's souvenirs decorate the shingle on a harbour house.

if you're not so lucky, you are likely to see a familiar face during your visit. Author **JK Rowling** has spent some of her Harry Potter fortune on a home here, and **Madonna, Billy Joel, Martha Stewart, Steven Spielberg** and **Jerry Seinfeld** are a handful of the A-list names you'd recognise on mailboxes around town ... if their names were listed on mailboxes. Seinfeld's spread is particularly impressive, complete with a 22-car garage (and yes, it's full). Though they come here to retreat to their "cottages", celebrities are fixtures on the local social circuit and it's unlikely you'll return home without rubbing elbows with one or more of them.

Arrive on a Friday afternoon and check in to the historic, upscale **Hunting Inn**, right in the heart of East Hampton. Literally steps away from Main Street's shops and

restaurants, you can't find a place to stay that's more convenient; it's also across the street from a Hampton Jitney stop. If you're hungry, the renowned steakhouse, **The Palm**, is inside the inn; it also serves fresh lobster and other seafood dishes. Popular among locals and visitors alike, The Palm consistently ranks on *Zagat's* best restaurants of Long Island list, released annually.

If you're willing to range farther afield, **Starr Boggs**, in Westhampton, is a must-dine restaurant known for its seafood and its original Andy Warhol paintings decorating the walls. Conch chowder and crab cakes are house specialties, but don't miss Little Neck Clams, either; they're harvested fresh from the Long Island Sound. The restaurant's mahogany wood bar is a tantalising invitation to tinkle and, from your stool, you'll see the Hamptons' glitterati parade past en route to a table.

THE INSIDER'S GUIDE

Originally from Dublin, **Janet O'Brien** is a leading light on the Hamptons social scene – not just because she's on every guest list, but as the force behind her company, Janet O'Brien Caterers+Events Inc., based in NY and the Hamptons. She opens her little black book for us.

"Sag Harbor, or the 'Hidden Hampton', is my first port of call. First up, the 'lovely hour' at **The American Hotel** is like 'happy hour' only prettier. This vintage Victorian hotel on Main Street in Sag Harbor hosts the well-heeled crowd for lunch, dinner or drinks. Be sure to book a table on the porch for brunch. (001 631 725 3535, theamericanhotel.com)

Surrounded on three sides by water, Long Island's east end is best enjoyed by sea. Whether you're looking for a casual cruise or an elegant yachting experience, Jenny Landy can arrange your charter at **East Hampton**



Yacht Company. (001 917 743 2525, easthamptonyachtco.com)
East Hampton, voted one of America's most beautiful villages, is home to c/o **The Maidstone Hotel**, a country inn with Swedish flare. Its **Living Room Restaurant and Lounge** is the place to rub elbows with notable celebrities. (001 631 324 5006, careofhotels.com/maidstone)

Voting on who serves the best Lobster Roll in the Hamptons is more divisive than national politics. With its pond-side setting and catches fresh from the sea, **Duryea's** in Montauk gets my vote. Arrive onsite with your bottle of wine or grab "to go" to watch the sunset session at **Ditch Plains Beach**. (001 631 668 2410, duryealobsters.com)

Surf Lodge in Montauk

serves up killer cocktails and sunsets. Its chill lounge deck on Fort Pond with DJ Rob or live music from local songstress Nancy Atlas, is a social epicentre and a favourite of mine. (001 631 668 1562, thesurflodge.com)

The Hideaway, also in Montauk, is a must for the most delicious fresh and authentic Mexican food. It's the perfect après surf, après beach local spot. (001 631 668 6592, thehideawaymontauk.com)

Everyone, from kids to hedge fund managers, is into the surfing culture of the Hamptons. Your one-stop-shop for all the gear you need and lessons is **Air and Speed** in Montauk. You can take surf lessons by the day, hour, or week. (001 631 668 0356, airandspeedsurf.com)



The local farming families that sell the freshest local produce straight from the field (squeezing tomatoes allowed) are quintessential to my business success. Visit **Pike's Farm Stand** in Sagaponack on Sagg Main Street just south of Route 27 (001 631 537 5854) or **Halsey's Farm Stand** 512 Deerfield Road, Watermill (001 631 726 4843) and stock up on the best produce for your picnic."

PHOTOGRAPH BY TANYA MALOTT

ESCAPE TO THE HAMPTONS



GETTING THERE

If you're going to sit in traffic – and you are, if you travel by anything other than helicopter or boat – let someone else do the driving and take the Hampton Jitney. From JFK, you'll need to take a taxi from the airport to Fresh Meadows, Queens (tell the driver to leave you at the corner of 190th Street and the Eastbound Service Road of the Long Island Expressway). The stop for the Jitney is in front of

the Fresh Meadows Cineplex Odeon Movie Theatre. There are regular Hamptons departures; check the website for specific times (approx \$53 return for weekend ticket; hamptonjitney.com). The trip can take from 2.5 – 4 hours, depending on traffic. Another option is to take Long Island Rail Road's Montauk Line train from Penn Station in Manhattan. Average trip time is three hours. (mta.info/lirr)



Surfers' delight – Montauk is known for its quality surfing – and chilled out nightlife.

several shops rent gear and offer lessons for first-timers. End the day at any of those renovated hotels' bars or restaurants; **Surf Lodge** and **Sole East** are popular spots for those in-the-know.

Following Long Island's winery trail is another option for daytime activities and is a perfect way to fit in a visit to many of the Hamptons' villages. A favourite stop on the winery trail is the **Wolffer Estate Vineyard**, a 23-year-old European style winery and vineyard that sits on about 20 hectares of a 70-hectare parcel. Visitors can arrange tours in advance or show up any time for a tasting. If you're searching for gifts to give friends and family, there are plenty of shops waiting to help you fill your suitcase

... for a price. Cynthia Rowley's boutique at the newly opened **Capri Hotel** in Southampton sells colourful, casual jewellery, sun hats and board games that spark memories of sun and sand. **Montauk Carriage House**, in Montauk, sells handmade jewellery and prints of local landmarks, such as the Montauk Point Lighthouse, one of the oldest lighthouses in the US.

You might even want to pick up a souvenir for yourself, proof that you were here, summering with New York's cool set. 🍷



Aer Lingus flies from Dublin to New York twice daily, and from Shannon to New York, Mon, Wed, Fri and Sun.