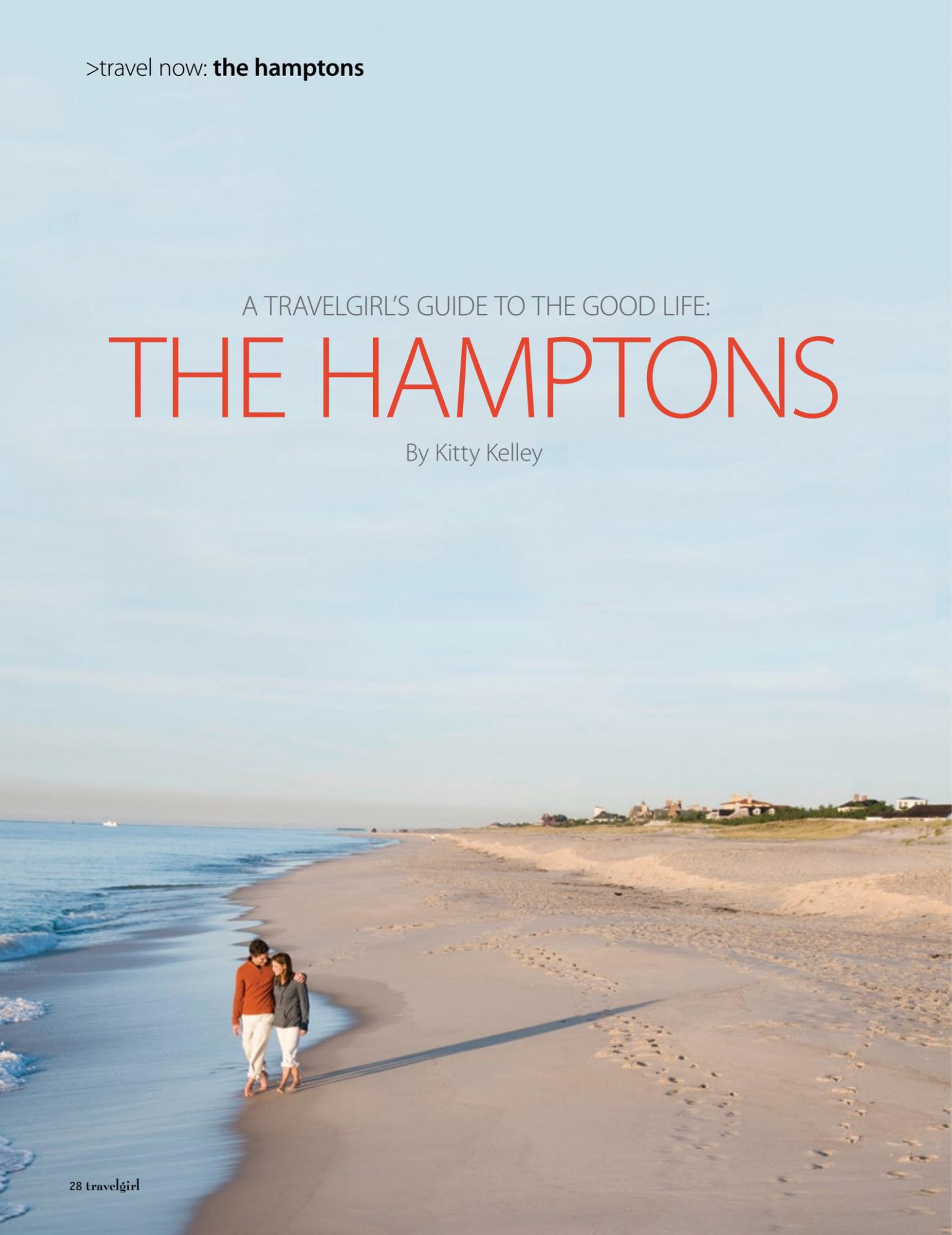


A TRAVELGIRL'S GUIDE TO THE GOOD LIFE:

THE HAMPTONS

By Kitty Kelley



The little girl looked forlorn. Standing in the Starbucks line in East Hampton, she tugged at her mother's cashmere sleeve, almost in tears. "Oh, Mummy," she said. "I forgot to kiss Daddy good-bye this morning before he got in the helicopter."

This child of the "one percent" summers with her prosperous parents on the luscious East End of Long Island known as "The Hamptons," a term that annoys many locals, who prize the uniqueness of each little village and hamlet tucked into the 27 miles from Montauk Point to East Hampton. This elite stretch of land includes Wainscot, Sagaponack, Bridgehampton, Water Mill, Southampton, Sag Harbor, Amagansett and Shelter Island, which can only be approached by ferry.

"The Hamptons" conjures the good life of pristine beaches, million dollar mansions, gleaming yachts and emerald green golf courses where even the sand traps glisten. In addition, the area boasts windmills, horse farms, flowered meadows, rolling fields of corn and acres of vineyards. The food is farm fresh and, just like Provence, there is a farmer's market (in season) every day in a different town offering fresh fruits and vegetables, sunflowers, eggs still warm from the hen house and even fresh chicken.

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For foodies, there are gourmet chefs and starred restaurants, notably Nick and Toni's (East Hampton), Tutto Il Giorno (Sag Harbor), Tom Colicchio's Topping Rose House and Pierre's (Bridgehampton). The most romantic restaurant by far is the bricked alley of Sant Ambroeus (Southampton). The orchids cascading from the walls and candles flickering at small tables make you feel like Cinderella with two glass slippers, plus a fairy godmother who grants your every gourmet wish from fresh seafood to locally harvested wines. The princess-worthy menu is served by waiters who look (and act) like Prince Charming.

"The Hamptons" also mean celebrities, celebrities, celebrities. In East Hampton you're bound to see Alec Baldwin with his yogi wife, Hilaria, carrying their baby down Main Street. If you breakfast at the American Hotel in Sag Harbor, you can be sure the former president you see ordering an egg white omelet is Bill Clinton. He and Hillary (aka "Billary") are summer regulars. Kitchen czarinas like Martha Stewart and Ina Garten are fixtures as are tycoons like Ron Perlman (Revlon), Ronald Lauder (Estee Lauder), and Len Riggio (Barnes & Noble). Don't be surprised if you see Howard Schultz, CEO of Starbucks, standing at the door welcoming customers.

Fashionistas love spotting Tory Burch, Calvin Klein and Ralph Lauren and fans occasionally glimpse Madonna, Paul McCartney, Jon Bon Jovi, Jerry Seinfeld, Sarah Jessica Parker, Matthew Broderick, Jennifer Lopez, Kelly Ripa, Andy Cohen, Gwyneth Paltrow, Mariska Hargitay and Christie Brinkley, who at 60 looks better than when she was Billy Joel's "Uptown Girl."

The main streets of every town in the Hamptons are filled with bistro bars, patio restaurants, antique shops and pricey boutiques. You'll find many of your favorite labels at the shops like Ralph Lauren, InterMix, J.Crew, Wonder, Tory Burch, Michael Kors, Calypso, J. McLaughlin, Theory and Elie Tahari. In East Hampton you can buy a cashmere sweater for \$1,250 at Brunello Cucinelli or an \$18 T-shirt from Bookhampton that says, "I Believe in Books." (I skipped the sweater and bought the T-shirt).

While in East Hampton make your way to The Monogram Shop (www.themonogramshops.com) on Newtown Lane for *anything* you want personalized. The place is overflowing with ideas, from finely stitched pillow cases, bathrobes and night gowns to beach bags, sun bonnets, glasses, placemats, napkins (paper or linen) stationery, invitations, and place cards for your dinner parties (the funniest being monogrammed *Stop Talking* beneath which the impish owner, Valerie Smith, wrote the name of Bill O'Reilly). She also sells 16 oz. shatterproof glass cups that go in the dishwasher and — ta dah — predict presidential elections.

"The cups know," said Smith. "The cups always know." Since 1994 she has been monogramming political cups — the last ones were Obama/Biden and Romney/Ryan. "I keep a daily tally of how many sold and post it in the window so passers-by can see the results, and every four years my cups have accurately predicted the presidency."

Beyond the glitz and glamour of the Hamptons is a cornucopia of culture — theater, music, dance, art, film and spectacular garden tours. Nearly every night in the summer there is a charity event open to the public to raise money for every good cause from local schools and libraries to hospitals and hospices. Not to be missed is an evening of Shakespeare Under the Stars at Mulford Farm in East Hampton presented by HIT-Fest (Hamptons Independent Theatre Festival: www.HITFest.org). Bay Street Theatre in Sag Harbor offers a summer comedy series and top-quality productions by Equity actors. One of the funniest evenings is "Celebrity Autobiography" at Guild Hall in East Hampton, featuring a troupe of actors reading inanities from books written by celebrities such as Dolly Parton, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Tony Danza.

An absolute must-see is LongHouse Reserve (www.longhouse.org) in East Hampton, the 16-acre sculpture garden created by world-renowned textile designer Jack Lenor Larsen. He has filled his little piece of paradise with towering oaks, weeping Japanese cherry trees and Hemlock hedges surrounded by flowers in full bloom year-round. You will be mesmerized by the marriage of art to nature as you stroll through 37 pocket gardens under rose-entwined arches. Wandering around ponds teeming with lilies and pools bedecked by outdoor furniture as colorful as peacock feathers, you will see sumptuous sculptures — a de Kooning here and a Chihuly there. Yoko Ono's mammoth white marble chess set gleams in a green garden not far from an arresting fiberglass dome designed by Buckminster Fuller.

On summer weekends the main roads of the Hamptons are clogged with Jaguars and Ferraris. The traffic is bumper to rich



ILLUSTRATION BY KARLA TRAPP

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bumper; crossing guards (try to) protect pedestrians and parking places are strictly monitored. A ticket could cost you more than the price of an upscale dinner. Fleets of jitneys arrive from Manhattan filled with Generation X-ers heading for summer rentals and Saturday night clubbing. The one-percenters fly in on private planes and then helicopter to their multi-million dollar mansions by the ocean. The sky traffic over the Hamptons on Friday afternoons and Monday mornings has kicked up such a kerfuffle that Sag Harbor recently held a town hall meeting to discuss the racket. The local newspaper headlined the story: "The Very Rich are Angry at the Extremely Rich," and quoted one resident as

saying, "When I look up at small planes and choppers, I see a fleet of middle fingers across the sky."

While the Hamptons are famous for summer vacations, any season can be rewarding, especially without the hordes of tourists. The Baker House (www.bakerhouse1650.com) in East Hampton features canopy beds, plus a spa and honor bar. So whether you choose the full celebrity throttle of summertime, the dialed-back leisure of spring or the fireplace romance of fall and winter, a journey to the Hamptons promises to be a memorable trip.

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This page: Southampton Village, like most towns in the Hamptons, has a walkable area with fabulous restaurants and shopping. Opposite page top, from left to right: Executive Chef Joseph Realmuto and co-owner Mark Smith of Nick and Toni's, an East Hampton restaurant mainstay, where you may find yourself dining next to Alec Baldwin or Jimmy Fallon; The marina at the Montauk Yacht Club in Montauk, Long Island; Bikes are a popular mode of transportation in the Hamptons — even for high-end shopping at 55 Main; The Baker House 1650, a luxury B&B in East Hampton; Longhouse Reserve in East Hampton, a museum, garden and a sculpture park created by world-renowned textile designer Jack Lenor Larsen; Romantic Southampton restaurant Sant Ambroeus is known for its veal Milanese. Its gelato also gets rave reviews.