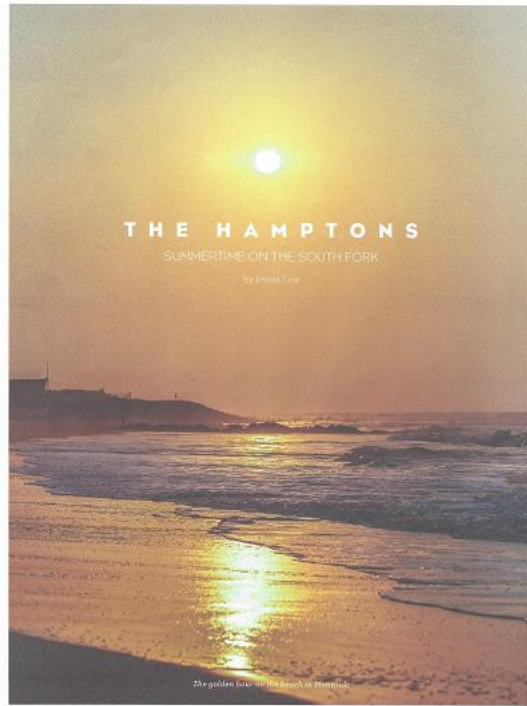


The Hamptons: Summertime on the South Fork



The golden hour on the beach in Hamptons

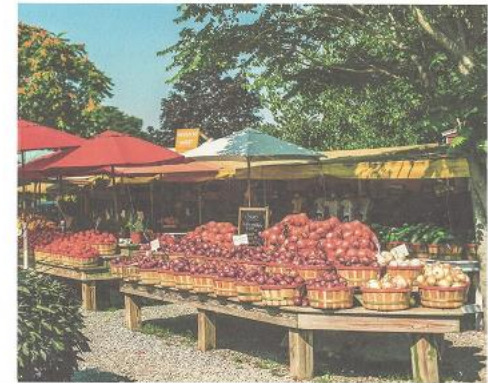


Refreshing cocktails at the Surf Lodge's bar

I'LL NEVER FORGET my first visit to the Hamptons. My high school friends and I drove from Bay Shore to Dune Road in Westhampton Beach. In our bathing suits and bare feet, we all piled into my boyfriend's red convertible to spend the day at the ocean. Even then, I knew the Hamptons were a special place and I promised myself I'd be back.

I've kept true to that promise. I've been driving to and through the 40-mile string of historic villages on Long Island's South Fork, known simply as the "The Hamptons," all of my adult life; places like sophisticated >

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The Hamptons are known for having numerous farm stands.

Southampton and the family-oriented Montauk. My husband and I used to take our daughters to the annual Shinnecock Pow Pow on an Indian reservation in Southampton, on sailing vacations to the Montauk Yacht Club and to Gosman's for steamed lobster.

I have fond memories of winter spa stays at Gutney's Inn in Montauk, where I'd take early morning walks on the silky sand, savoring the hypnotic rhythm of the waves. I still love the roadside farm stands for sunflowers, ripe tomatoes and sweet corn and I always keep a cooler in the trunk to bring back fresh seafood. When I crave a lobster roll from Napeague's perennially popular Clam Bar, I meet a friend and we sit at an

outdoor table, taking in the briny salt air as seagulls fly overhead. Heaven.

I've probably stayed at most of the historic inns on the East End for one occasion or another. One of my favorites is the Baker House 1850 in East Hampton overlooking the Village Green. And I always love spending time in Sag Harbor, that charming waterfront village with its antiques stores, Sag Harbor Variety Store and Bay Street Theatre. The walks are wonderful, too—a stretch of Long Beach or through the Elizabeth A. Morton National Wildlife Refuge. In fact, there are so many places throughout the Hamptons that provide a sense of serene beauty—from the curved, shaded back

roads to the magnificent Walking Dunes in Montauk.

There's plenty of culture in the Hamptons as well as natural beauty. Jackson Pollock lived and worked in Springs, near East Hampton and today his studio is open for tours. One of my favorite museums is the Parrish Art Museum in Water Mill, featuring works by artists who painted in the area including William Merritt Chase and Childe Hassam. And a true hidden gem is LongHouse Reserve in East Hampton, a stunning 16-acre sculpture-studded garden that's definitely worth a visit.

In the Hamptons, especially in the high summer season, there's always something going on, whether it be an art fair, charity event, polo match or film festival—it's as social as it gets (a highlight of the social season is the celebrity-studded Hampton Classic Horse Show in August) but it can also be as low-key as you desire. Sure, there may be sprawling cedar-shingled "cottages" that have sprung up on former potato fields, but it's still at heart, a seaside resort where you can simply get away from it all and enjoy the small town atmosphere and incredible local culinary bounty.

When I'm in East Hampton, one of my go to lunch spots is Babette's, for its fresh grilled tuna Niçoise salad. In Amagansett, the Meeting House—opposite The fabled Stephen Talkhouse, where music giants

like Billy Joel and Paul McCartney have performed—serves Montauk oysters and prosciutto-stuffed chicken. And at Swallow East, on Montauk Harbor, small plates of blackened shrimp tacos and steamed littleneck clams are best enjoyed on the covered porch overlooking clusters of charter boats.

One of the most welcome additions to the Hamptons scene is Topping Rose House, a restored 1842 Greek Revival mansion from famed restaurateur Tom Colicchio. The 22-room inn in Bridgehampton boasts a rotating art gallery, a four-treatment room spa and a destination restaurant that incorporates seasonal herbs and vegetables from its one-acre farm.

Recently, much of the buzz has moved east to Montauk, where a pair of super-stylish, bohemian hotels are attracting urban hipsters. There's

Ruschmeyer's, a former, three-acre campground with cedar plank-walled cabins that's a veritable summer camp for adults: picnic tables, ping pong, teepees and grills, plus, a late-night bar. Nearby, the Surf Lodge offers sunset views over Fort Pond, a surf-shack décor—sun-bleached pine, hammocks and lantern-topped wicker tables—and a popular summer concert series. And, the new owner at iconic Gurney's, which has been on a prime stretch of Montauk Beach since 1926, has recently completed its first phase of renovations: a new swimming pool and 38 oceanfront rooms. I'm already planning a visit. ■

In This Story

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