

Montauk: Where to Eat, Stay and Play in the Anti-Hamptons

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Montauk Point Lighthouse

The once-sleepy town, transformed into a music scene by surfer/hipsters during recent summers, is drawing celebrity house-shoppers who crave its blend of salty authenticity and chichi new hangouts.

On Sunday night, July 13, at Montauk's The Surf Lodge, Grammy-nominated guitarist **Gary Clark Jr.** played on the deck of the boutique hotel to a crowd that included **Adrian Grenier**, **Jimmy Buffett** and **Will Arnett**. Meanwhile, hot NYC gallerist **Kyle DeWoody** hosted a dinner for the hotel's artist-in-residence **Daniel Arsham**, and **Harvey Weinstein** caught the FIFA World Cup final in the lobby.

It's the latest sign that the once-gritty blue-collar fishing village — located at the easternmost tip of Long Island, a three-hour, 120-mile drive from New York City — shows no sign of cooling off after being turned into a happening music and surfing scene by longboarding city hipsters during the past couple of years. It's a spot where fish chowder meets yoga (and lots of green juice). Hamptons-fatigued celebrities increasingly are showing up as well.

PHOTOS: What's New to Do in Montauk

"Montauk is a tale of 20 cities," says hotelier **Sean MacPherson** (NYC's The Bowery), owner of the town's inn and restaurant The Crow's Nest. "There's fisherman Montauk, Williamsburg Montauk, surfer Montauk, yuppy Montauk, even hedge-fund Montauk now. And they all kind of coexist."

Where to Stay

1. *The Crow's Nest*

MacPherson has expanded his nautical-rustic inn with five cottages named for **David Pharaoh**, the last Montaukett Indian leader. Eat at the popular restaurant, or have a cocktail by the fire pit with a view of the water. *Law & Order: SVU* actress **Stephanie March** recommends the chicken skewers with harissa: "They are served with the most delicious yogurt." Rooms from \$425 a night; 4 Old West Lake Drive

2. *The Montauk Beach House*

It's hard to believe this swank 32-room downtown retreat with vintage-inspired decor was the dingy Ronjo lodge just two summers ago. New suites feature cast-iron beds and claw-foot tubs. On Saturdays, poolside "frolics" feature DJs and Pimm's cup pitchers. Rooms from \$479; 55 S. Elmwood Ave.

3. *Ruschmeyer's*

This 19-room inn with an adult-summer-camp vibe attracts a mix of surfers and Brooklynites who jam the place for ping-pong, yoga classes and Tuesday burger nights. The folks behind NYC's The Smile are back running the kitchen. Rooms from \$395; 161 Second House Road

Where to Hear Music

1. *Sole East Resort*

The roster mixes established acts and locals at this Tudor-style boutique hotel. Bands set up late night at the restaurant or poolside, where the cocktails flow. 90 Second House Road

2. *The Surf Lodge*

Last summer, **Willie Nelson** and **Courtney Love** both headlined on the deck overlooking Fort Pond. Singer **Sky Ferreira** is set to play Aug. 24. Be prepared for sweaty crowds cooling off with plastic cups of Watts Up Spanish rosé, the label of fashion photographer and Montauk local **Ben Watts**, whose work dominates in the lodge's indoor dining room. Rooms from \$400; 183 Edgemere St.

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Where to Shop

1. Melet Mercantile

Bob Melet, who long oversaw vintage buying at Ralph Lauren, sells vintage jeans, sunglasses, maps and records at this shop that's part installation, part treasure chest. 102 Industrial Road

2. Surf Bazaar

This tiny whitewashed shop inside The Surf Lodge showcases house-label gauzy halter maxi dresses and owner/designer **Bethany Mayer's** collaboration with Love Leather on a line of perforated tanks that read "Surf." 183 Edgemere St.

3. Whalebone Creative

Jesse James Joeckel's limited-edition hoodies and tanks are the uniform for Ditch Plains Beach shortboarders, of which he is one. Joeckel grew up on the East End, studied graphic design at the Art Institute of California, then returned to his hometown to open his boutique, where he silk-screens each piece on the premises. Check the surf before heading over. "If the waves are good," he says, "nobody works." 65 Tuthill Road

Where to Eat and Drink

1. Clam and Chowder House at Salivar's Dock

When Salivar's, a famous dive with its trademark shark head, went up for sale, locals bemoaned the loss. Nonetheless, a happy ending: Montauk staple West Lake Clam & Chowder House moved in, keeping the shark head and bringing fresh-off-the-boat sushi and, of course, chowder. 470 W. Lake Drive

2. Duryea's Lobster Deck

Head to this 85-year-old family-run Montauk classic before it shuts at summer's end for its succulent lightly mayo-ed beloved lobster rolls with a side of chips and slaw and a view of Fort Pond Bay. Mayer also recommends the fish sandwich: "There's something so unbelievably buttery and perfect about it." 65 Tuthill Road

3. Montauk Brewing Co.

In 2012, **Vaughan Cutillo**, **Joe Sullivan** and **Eric Moss**, East End locals who've surfed and lifeguarded together since high school, took their passion for home brewing and created Montauk's first craft brewery. Their newly expanded gallery taproom offers four styles: Driftwood Pale Ale, Summer Ale, Offland IPA and Guardsman Stout, a dark milk stout named in honor of the Coast Guard — local members of which receive free growlers, should they stop by. Atlas Films co-founder **Michael Walrath**, owner of The Surf Lodge, recommends picking up cans of Summer Ale: "It's a perfect beer for an afternoon of fluke fishing." 62 S. Erie Ave.

4. Naturally Good Foods & Cafe

At this health-food shop, known for gluten-free muffins and smoothies, MacPherson recommends The Bruce, a fresh-caught tuna salad sandwich with avocado and cheddar. The owners also recently opened a restaurant on Main Street. 38 S. Etna Ave; 779 Main St.

5. Navy Beach

Soak in the French Riviera vibe by sampling its "rosé on the rocks" cocktails. The Piscine Rosé is a refreshing mix of rosé Prosecco, orange vodka, raspberry and cucumber. 16 Navy Road

6. The Montauket

To be a true Montauk devotee is to show respect for beloved old-guard Montauk institutions. One of them is this former 1960s fishing lodge. There is no better spot for sunset drinking than the restaurant's outside patio perched on the bluffs overlooking Fort Pond Bay — something the Montauket has over any and all high-profile newcomers. Just ask **Jimmy Fallon**, who stopped by recently. 88 Firestone Road.

7. La Brisa

There's an unwritten rule that every beach town worth its surf break must have a spot for authentic tacos and cold beer. Last summer the duo behind Manhattan taquerias Fonda Nolita and Café El Presidente brought their skills to this 1950s building on Main Street. Everything from the tortillas to salsas and juices is homemade fresh with local ingredients. This season there's an even bigger seafood focus with daily catch specials and favorites like crispy shrimp with cabbage slaw. At breakfast you can now take your Mexican hot cakes, huevos rancheros and café con leche on the patio in the sun. 752 Montauk Highway

Where to Work Out

1. CoreysWave

Corey Senese, a second-generation surfer who split his formative years between SoCal and Montauk, can divine how a person will surf — or not — just by the way they stand in the sand. His classroom is Montauk's legendary Ditch Plains beach, where a consistent break provides gentle waves that attract pro shortboarders, tech billionaires, Coldplay's **Chris Martin**, and troves of bearded hipsters with, as Senese notes, "expensive retro boards they can hardly use." Newcomers will likely have to book a member of Corey's all-star team since regulars book him preseason. "If it's in August," he cautions, "you probably won't get me."

2. Love: A Yoga Space

One block from the ocean, this airy ground-level studio with a floor painted the color of the Caribbean Sea and graffiti murals on the walls perfectly captures Montauk's edgy beach vibe. Co-owners **Sian Gordon** and **Jeff Schwartz** import high-profile teachers from NYC studios (The Shala, Jivamukti) to lead advanced and beginner vinyasa classes. Also on the menu: juice cleanses and retreats with Yoga for Bad People and surf/yoga packages. A Venice, Calif., counterpart will open this fall. 83 S. Elmwood Ave.

3. The People's Bootcamp

No equipment is necessary for celebrity trainer **Adam Rosante**'s 45-minute sessions of Cross Fit-like torture — not even shoes. Or a wallet. Students sign up online in advance and pay only what they can. Intervals of tuck jumps, cross-body bird dogs and push-up jacks with no break mean hundreds of calories torched. Since sessions are held on the lawn at Ruschmeyer's (Saturdays at 10 a.m.) the hotel's beloved breakfast spread of watermelon juice and avocado toast can provide some much needed incentive. Thepeoplesbootcamp.com; 161 Second House Road

Who to Know

1. Lili Adams

Back when beach fare meant hot dogs and ice cream, this local chef petitioned the town for permission to park her Ditch Witch food truck by the parking lot next to Ditch Plains Beach. For 20 years, she has served Costa Rican coffee and pressed sandwiches to surfers and celebs (Buffett has a tab). In 2011, when Montauk's new permitting procedure denied her a spot, a protest prompted an immediate reversal.

2. John Aldridge

The town nearly was brought to a standstill last summer by the harrowing rescue of this lobsterman, who got thrown from his boat early one morning. Movie rights were snapped up by The Weinstein Co.

3. Bill O'Reilly

The thing about celebrity residents is you hardly see them. There's **Julianne Moore**, **Rufus Wainwright** and designer **Cynthia Rowley**, who has a store (696 Montauk Highway) adjacent to the Memory Motel of Rolling Stones fame. In 2007, J.Crew CEO **Mickey Drexler** famously bought **Andy Warhol's** former estate for about \$27 million. **Ralph Lauren** and **Robert De Niro** own residences in Hither Hills, where **Bernie Madoff** had his house. Now add O'Reilly: In January, he paid \$7.65 million for a two-bedroom 1940s cottage on the water. Then he promptly razed it to build a new house.

4. Amanda Murrow and Katie Baldwin

Part of the Montauk aesthetic is to get your food directly from farmers. Murrow and Baldwin are partners in Amberwaves Farm, which, though technically in neighboring Amagansett, supplies many Montauk restaurants and brings their organic produce, herbs and flowers to the greenmarket in the Village Green every Thursday. Those out for the season can subscribe to their CSA to receive weekly boxes of seasonal bounty. Amberwavesfarm@gmail.com

5. Mike Repole

Outsiders buying up rundown motels and renovating them is a familiar Montauk story, but when the beloved East Deck Motel at Ditch Plains beach was purchased, everyone took note. For one thing, the buyer — who shelled out \$15 million for the 30-room, 1950s-era relic — is choosing to remain anonymous, though it's reportedly Vitaminwater founder and surfer Mike Repole. He's also choosing to keep his plans private in regards to the property as well as the parking lot, home to the Ditch Witch. Word on the street is that it's being transformed into a private high-end surf club. But not everyone thinks "members only" and Ditch go together.

What to Read

MTK Magazine

The mission of this brand-new labor of love from the publisher of *90265 Malibu Life & Style* is to deliberately avoid the slick, celebrity side of Montauk and "honor the people who actually run the town," says executive editor **Lara Rubin**. Hence forthcoming features on the second-generation commercial fisherman and Ditch Plains staple **Charlie Weimer**, the 75th anniversary of the fire department, local artists, old Montauk families and alternatives to the crush of Ruschmeyer's party scene.