

Dining, shopping and nightlife in Montauk

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Brooklyn indie bands -- and the occasional rock star -- play concerts at Surf Lodge on weekends in the summer. (Credit: Aaron Zebrook)

Guys with thick glasses and beards. Women in vintage clothing from various eras. Bicycles everywhere. Indie bands doing free summer shows. The scene screams Brooklyn, specifically hip and happening Williamsburg, but the actual locale is Montauk. But, please, don't refer to this as a hipster world, at least not while in town.

The term "hipster" refers to a type of city-based person whose style defies mainstream culture. However, hipsters don't like to be called hipsters. And some locals aren't sure it's applicable.

"Hip? What's hip about them?" asks Donna Matlock, 49, who moved to Montauk from Tennessee three years ago.

"The crowds are changing for sure," says Emily Martinez, a 19-year-old Montauk native, adding, "This was a quiet town when I was growing up. Now the energy is much busier, and the roads can't handle the extra traffic."

Despite the influx of city folk, Montauk remains a place devoid of fast-food drive-thrus, traffic lights and all-night convenience stores (save the one 7-Eleven). David Orion Traver, a 32-year-old DJ who has lived in Brooklyn since 2004, regularly comes to Montauk to relax with his fiancée and her family: "It has a small-town feel, and it's laid-back and family-oriented," but adds, "although that vibe seems to be changing the past few years."

Plenty of local dining, shopping and nightlife options are still in the hamlet, many of which are attitude-free and reasonably priced. "No one here cares if you're driving a luxury car, or if you eat only in expensive restaurants, or need to be seen," says Cassandra Thatcher, a 20-year-old Manhattan resident and student living and working in Montauk for the summer. "It's perfect for younger people just getting out of college."

As the old community contends with the urban influx, Montauk has become a place where nature and rural options meet city chic and trendy style. Here's a guide to "classic," old-school Montauk as well as spots with some "city" hip.

SHOPPING

MELET MERCANTILE OUTPOST

102 Industrial Rd., 631-668-9080

CLASSIC OR CITY

THE DEAL This well-kept secret, in an industrial area along the north edge of Fort Pond, holds a stockpile of vintage clothing, art pieces, jewelry and other items.

WHALEBONE CREATIVE

65 Tuthill Rd., whalebonecreative.com

CLASSIC OR CITY Classic and City

THE DEAL Owned by Montauk-born graphic artist and surfer Jesse James Joeckel, the store sells casual surf-skater clothing under his Whalebone brand, which is also his "brand," as he custom-prints his items in-store with a silk-screen machine.

FUDGE N STUFF

7 The Plaza, 631-668-4724

CLASSIC OR CITY Classic

THE DEAL This 30-year-old business is famous for its homemade fudge, chocolates, milkshakes and candies.

DINING

GOSMAN'S DOCK

500 W. Lake Dr., 631-668-5330

CLASSIC OR CITY Classic

THE DEAL Seafood is king at Gosman's, a Montauk mainstay since the '50s that has three restaurants, a clam bar and a fresh fish market, including the Topside Bar.

NAVY BEACH

16 Navy Rd., 631-668-6868

CLASSIC OR CITY City (but with classic nods)

THE DEAL With a New American menu, the food is a modern experience. Dining outdoors on the sand of Fort Pond Bay, the decor isn't just Montauk-inspired, but Montauk itself.

THE HARBOR RAW BAR & LOUNGE

440 W. Lake Dr., 631-668-8260

CLASSIC OR CITY City

THE DEAL Open only since May, this New American small-plates spot has been party-friendly with DJs and mostly Brooklyn-based bands on weekends and Sunday Champagne brunches.

SHAGWONG RESTAURANT

774 Main St., 631-668-3050

CLASSIC OR CITY Classic

THE DEAL This casual Montauk landmark has been serving a menu that has plenty of turf among its surf dishes since the late '60s.

PARTY RESORT STYLE

Surf Lodge

183 Edgemere St., 631-483-5037

CLASSIC OR CITY City

THE DEAL Casual meets chic at this upscale hotel with a restaurant serving eclectic food, a bar, a patio with wide water views and a fire pit, but the crown jewel is its weekend concert calendar featuring breakout Brooklyn indie bands and the occasional rock star.

GURNEY'S MONTAUK RESORT & SEAWATER SPA

290 Old Montauk Hwy., 631-668-2345

CLASSIC OR CITY Somewhere in between

THE DEAL Although it has been in business year-round since the 1920s, Gurney's offers many modern amenities, including a seawater pool, a spa, upscale dining and parties that take place either afternoons or evenings, some on its Atlantic Ocean beach.

ALSO TRY

RUSCHMEYER'S (161 Second House Rd., 631-668-2877) has a bohemian feel with trendy appeal, including bicycles for rent and yoga. For a little more luxury, **MONTAUK BEACH HOUSE** (55 S. Elmwood Ave., 631-668-2112) hosts daytime parties on weekends based around DJs who are either celebs or have a high hip factor.

BARS AND CLUBS

THE SLOPPY TUNA

148 S. Emerson Ave., 631-647-8000

CLASSIC OR CITY Neither. Its personality is "everybody party hard."

THE DEAL The Sloppy Tuna has a restaurant that serves a full menu and features DJs and live music, and, with no dress code, it's come as you are. Expect lines, massive crowds and wild times.

ALSO TRY

Year-round local bars pride themselves on their unpretentious ways, so skip arriving in overly hipster style when patronizing such pubs as **LIAR'S SALOON** (401 W. Lake Dr., 631-668-9597), **THE DOCK** (482 W. Lake Dr., 631-668-9778) or **THE POINT** (697 Montauk Hwy., 631-668-1500).

TAKE THE FAMILY

THE BEACHES

CLASSIC OR CITY As classic as it gets

THE DEAL The hamlet of Montauk is surrounded by shoreline, but Kirk Park Beach is the only town beach that doesn't require a parking permit (nonresidents pay \$10). However, Hither Hills State Park also is an option (\$10 as well), with many amenities, including a playground, campgrounds, trails for hiking, biking, horseback riding and fishing. You can surf at Hither Hills, too, which is good to keep in mind, for while surfing is a major pastime in Montauk (the popular spot to catch waves is Ditch Plains Beach), parking for nonresidents is no easy feat.

MONTAUK LIGHTHOUSE

CLASSIC OR CITY More than classic, it's iconic

THE DEAL Often used as a symbol of Montauk, the lighthouse was authorized by the Second U.S. Congress in 1792 under President George Washington and was completed in 1796. A major tourist stop, it features a museum and gift shop; for all visitors' details, check out montauklighthouse.com