

New England Travel

Sail off Newport, R.I., aboard one of the yachts of America's Cup Charters.



Cool ideas for days of sun 'n fun

Memorial Day kicks off summer

BY LAUREN DALEY | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

This is not a drill, people. Summer is here. Memorial Day Weekend — the Official Unofficial Start of Summer — is upon us. Cue the victory music, pack your bathing suit, and (finally) get outta the house. From sailing in Newport, R.I., to stargazing in Maine, we've rounded up some great ways to kick off this New England summer in style.

SAIL AWAY

Sailing from Newport, R.I., just oozes that classic Old New England-summertime vibe. Sail aboard an America's Cup winning yacht for a day on Narragansett Bay. America's Cup Charters's fleet includes the Weatherly, the 1962 America's Cup Winner, which — fun fact — was a favorite of JFK and Jackie O during that '62 racing season. Something to

keep in mind if you happen to sail May 29, JFK's would-be 100th birthday. (49 America's Cup Ave., Newport, R.I. 401-849-5868, www.americascupcharters.com)

ISLAND RESORT

After a day at sea, you might opt to stay at Newport's recently opened luxury resort, Gurney's Newport Resort & Marina. Located on Goat Island — a tiny island in Narragansett Bay connected to historic Newport via causeway — you're minutes from town, but a million miles away. The waterfront resort offers 360 degree views of the bay, plus spa, salon, indoor pool, outdoor saltwater pool with poolside cocktails, fitness center and outdoor yoga classes, bar with wrap-around deck, and various on-site dining options, from Italian-style coffee bar to Italian cuisine. (1 Goat Island,

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Sunset on the Brewster Flats.

AMERICA'S CUP CHARTERS (TOP); OCEAN EDGE RESORT



The grandest of the grand

The Mount Washington Hotel is still a stunner

By Jaci Conry
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Years ago, the first time I approached the kingly, red-roofed Omni Mount Washington Resort (commonly called the Mount Washington Hotel), I was awestruck. Majestically perched on a verdant pasture parallel to the Presidential Mountain Range in view of Mount Washington, the Spanish Renaissance Revival style hotel opened in 1902. It's a place entirely of another era. It was a marvel to me that day and every time I've gone back since that the structure still stands proud.

While the Mount Washington is the last vestige of a bygone era, there was a period when grand hotels were prevalent in the White Mountains.

During the mid-1800s, the peaks and valleys of northern New Hampshire began to lure wealthy travelers in search of cooler summer weather. As railroad lines to the region were constructed, an infusion of grand hotels sprouted up in the area. At one point, regular passenger service to Breton Woods, the origi-

nal name of the geographic area at the base of Mount Washington (the highest peak in the Northern United States), included 35 to 55 trains a day.

By the turn of the 20th century, there were nearly two-dozen grand hotels in the White Mountains. The last such hotel built was the Mount Washington Hotel, sprawled upon 10,000 acres, by far the grandest of them all.

The driving force behind the hotel was Joseph Stickney, a native New Englander who made his fortune as a coal broker. In 1900, Stick-

ney set about creating a grand palazzo equipped with every imaginable elegance and convenience. Charles Alling Gifford, an obscure New York architect, drafted plans for the Y-shaped structure, which had an innovative steel infrastructure and two eight-sided five-story towers to break up the horizontal lines of

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Ways to kick off summertime fun

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Newport, R.I., 401-849-2600, www.gurneysresorts.com/newport)

RHODE ISLAND BY FERRY

Starting June 16, you can hop a ferry from Newport, R.I., to Providence — a spectacularly summery way to visit both unique cities (seastreak.com). While historic Newport boasts cobblestone streets, mansion tours, tony downtown shopping, ocean bluffs, and wine tastings at Newport Vineyards (909 East Main Road, Middletown, R.I., 401-848-5161, www.newportvineyards.com), Providence is tragically hip, a fantastic day trip for art lovers. Summer is the perfect season to wander Thayer Street's boutique shops, Brown University's book store, indie film house and off-the-grill summer comfort food at Durk's Bar B Q (275 Thayer St. 401-351-2807, durksbbq.com). WaterFire is a Providence summer must: the gondolas on a fiery river, the smell of the smoke, the music — magic (next lighting June 10, waterfire.org). And don't leave without treating your inner kid-on-summer-vacation at boutique Knead Doughnuts. Try the Samoa: vanilla cake doughnut, topped with house-made caramel, toasted coconut and dark chocolate drizzle. (32 Custom House St., 401-865-6622, www.kneaddoughnuts.com)

THAT OLD CAPE MAGIC

Relax with a deep-tissue massage, meditation, or yoga at the Cape's new The Beach House Spa at Ocean Edge. Or grab some friends for Beer Camp — where the side porch is turned into your group's private area for massages, beer sam-

ples, oysters, and charcuterie. (2740 Main St., Brewster, 774-323-6230, www.thebeachhouse.spaceoledge.com). You might opt to stay at Ocean Edge Resort & Golf Club, which boasts an 18-hole course, tennis courts, pools, access to bike trails, standup paddle boarding and kayaking on the bay, and beachfront restaurant with raw bar and fire pits (2907 Main St., Brewster, 888-509-4600, www.oceanedge.com).

But for a Cape day at the beach? Mayflower Beach in Dennis. Hands down the most exotic beach on Cape Cod; lifted from a screensaver. The sand is so fine and powdery, the shoreline feels like clay. At low tide, you can walk seemingly forever, while high tide brings so many tidal pools, you barely tell where the pools end and ocean begins. Sunsets are out of a dream. Get ready to Instagram. Dunes Road, Dennis.

EAT MAINE FRESH

There's nothing like fresh-from-the-garden summer veggies. Nestled on a four-acre sustainable farm in Rockland, Maine, the bulk of the menu at Primo is harvested feet from your table. Because it's locally sourced and based on what's available, the menu changes frequently, but sample dishes include: farmer salad of frisée, romaine, and radicchio lettuces with olive oil-fried croutons, house-made bacon and a backyard poached egg; hand-rolled ricotta cavatelli with grilled farm chicken; or seared local scallops with roasted cauliflower



GURNEY'S NEWPORT



PAT PIASECKI/OCEAN EDGE RESORT

The outdoor patio at Gurney's Newport Resort & Marina. Below: Toasting marshmallows during sunset on the beach at Ocean Edge Resort on the Cape.

in Kennebunkport. The Kennebunkport Fest, celebrates food, wine, and music June 5-10, with dozens of ticketed events, including a Maine Craft Music Festival, a mini music fest with craft beer at the Captain Lord Mansion. (6 Pleasant St., kennebunkportfestival.com)

Afterward, you and your honey might stay at The Cape Arundel Inn & Resort, a 19th-century mansion by the sea with bungalows that boast hardwood floors, fireplace, and French doors that open to ocean-view balconies. Toast to summer while stargazing from your balcony (208 Ocean Ave., Kennebunkport, Maine, 855-346-5700, capearundelinn.com).

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er (2 Main St., Rockland, Maine, 207-596-0770, www.primorestaurant.com).

Wine lovers, head to Vinland, an organic farm-to-table restaurant boasting dozens of wild-fermented organically grown wines. Again, menu changes often, but par for the course: Maine lobster, rosemary oat cake, pork capocollo with fiddleheads (593 Congress St., Portland, Maine, 207-653-8617, vinland.me).

CYCLE, KAYAK, SWIM VERMONT

Head to the Green Mountains to cycle the Burlington Bike Path, part of the 14-mile trail connecting Burlington to the Champlain Islands. Afterward, splash into the gorgeous Lake Champlain in Burlington. You might rent a canoe, kayak, or stand-up paddleboard from Community Sailing Center. (234 Penny Lane, 802-864-2499, communitysailing

center.org)

We're not sure, but it may be against the Laws of Summer to visit Burlington after Memorial Day and not get a Ben & Jerry's ice cream cone. (36 Church St., 802-862-9620, www.benjerry.com)

KENNEBUNKPORT FEST

Check three items off your summer to-do list — outdoor artisan fair, music fest, food and wine tasting — next week

Majestic luxury in White Mountains

► **MOUNT WASHINGTON**
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the building.

It cost \$1.25 million (nearly \$50 million by today's standards) to design and build what was then, and still is, the largest primarily wooden structure in New England.

More than 250 Italian workers were imported to work on the project, many of them skilled artisans. Today, their meticulous work still impresses: vibrant Tiffany stained glass windows gleam; elaborate carved plaster motifs adorn the octagonal-shaped main dining room with a bit of whimsy.

The hotel had 300 guest rooms, more than 1,000 windows, 5,000 electric lights, shiny brass hardware and over-

size brass doorknobs that became a Mount Washington Hotel trademark. Rooms cost \$20 per night, four times the going rate at the region's other grand hotels, and each one had a private bathroom — an immense luxury for the era — and two kinds of window shades as well as lace curtains to help darken the room against the sun. The place had a complex plumbing and heating system, an on-site power plant, a telephone company, post office, and a state-of-the-art fire suppression system.

The crowning element of the hotel continues to be the 900-foot-long wraparound veranda. "Six laps around the porch equals a mile," says the hotel marketing director Craig Clemmer on my recent visit. Furnished with wicker sofas and chairs fitted with signature red cushions, the veranda is the spot to observe the majestic landscape and the resort's harmonious activity. On the back veranda there are sweeping views of the mountains, an 18-hole Donald Ross designed golf course, and gravel pathways that lead to hiking trails. There's an old wooden footbridge traversing a running brook and always, children rolling and laughing around the slopping lawn. Adults of all ages stretch out on Adirondack chairs, smiling as they enjoy ice teas or midafternoon cocktails. Absorbing the setting, one simply cannot help but feel relaxed.

During the hotel's heyday, guests arrived in July and stayed for a month or two. "They wanted their families in an environment where everything was cleaner, fresher, and cooler," says Clemmer. "It was about relaxing. There was a lot of napping. Much of the experience revolved around dining," says Clemmer. "Guests changed three times a day for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. It was about seeing and being seen."

With 23-foot-high ceilings and more than a dozen columns, the lobby was so cavernous that it was originally called The Assembly Hall. Dominated by a large fieldstone fireplace and anchored by the 19th century grandfather clock that has been in the same spot since the hotel first opened, today the space is the same as it was back then — though the wooden chairs have been replaced with comfortable



JOHN SINAL

A view from the hotel's wraparound veranda.

upholstered furniture.

Joseph Stickney passed away a year after the hotel opened. His younger wife, Caroline Stickney, however, made sure the place operated according to his wishes, returning every summer for the next 30 years. As the lore goes, she would stand behind a thin curtain on a mezzanine and watch the guests come down the main stairway to dinner. "If anyone was dressed better than her, she'd change her outfit before heading to the dining room," says Clemmer.

Caroline later married a French prince, earning her the title of "The Princess" around the hotel. Her private quarters at the hotel included her ornate, hand-carved, canopied maple bed. Each year, the bed was shipped back and forth between Paris and Bretton Woods. It's now located in the third-floor Princess Suite.

Deemed a National Historic Landmark in 1986, the hotel has persevered during lean times and a succession of owners, while gradually, the other hotels in the area shuttered.

As railway travel subsided, fewer and fewer guests made the trek to the hotel for the season. It suffered financial setbacks and maintenance of the gargantuan structure was difficult: parts of the place fell into disrepair. The hotel shuttered during World War II, though the closure was short-lived. It reopened in 1944 at the behest of the US government.

Government officials designated the hotel as the site of the

Bretton Woods Monetary Conference, an international gathering of more than 700 financial delegates from 44 countries. The government poured hundreds of thousands of dollars into reviving the hotel. In haste, some precious original furnishings were discarded and laborers were instructed to paint "everything that was nailed down white," says Clemmer. "Gorgeous mahogany doors were painted over — even the trademark brass fixtures." (In the ensuing decades, those details would be revived.)

At Caroline Stickney's blond wood, round dining table, seated upon her gilded chairs, delegates established the World Bank and set the American dollar as the gold standard. Today, visitors can envision this part of history in the Gold Room, where mementos from the event are displayed.

The hotel has been a four-season resort since 1999; the Bretton Woods Ski Area across the street is now part of the hotel. For the last several years, Omni Hotels and Resorts has owned the establishment; during the group's tenure, extensive renovations and expansions have gone into the hotel, though great care has gone into retaining the structure's original architectural details. Among the improvements was the addition of a 25,000-square-foot spa, which rivals any hotel spa in the Northeast.

On the lower level of the hotel, the granite walled Cave Grille was a lively speakeasy during prohibition, where whiskey was served and gambling occurred into wee morn-

ing hours. Babe Ruth was a regular during that time, and Bob Hope performed there in the 1920s. The Cave is now a cocktail bar and is open nightly. The signature drink is the secret recipe Prohibition Punch — with local craft beers on tap and a few appetizers.

More substantial fare is served across the hall at Stickney's, a steakhouse with indoor and outdoor tables overlooking the mountains. While the cuisine is just as refined as the food served in the main dining room, Stickney's has a more casual vibe that the main dining room upstairs, where up until a few years ago, men were required to wear dinner jackets.

More than a century has passed since Stickney unveiled his grand palazzo, but guests continue to partake in the pursuits enjoyed by its earliest vacationers: hiking, horseback riding, swimming, and golf. There are indoor and outdoor pools and a tennis pavilion. While today's guests are more inclined to stay a weekend than an entire month and there are flatscreen TVs, an arcade room, Wi-Fi, zip lines, and canopy tours at the ski resort, the hotel's original emphasis remains the same: Guests are encouraged to take it slow, connect with landscape, and let the fresh air rejuvenate the soul.

THE OMNI MOUNT WASHINGTON HOTEL 10 Mount Washington Hotel Road, Bretton Woods, N.H.; 800-843-664; www.omnihotels.com

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