



Avoiding Nantucket and the Vineyard because they've gotten too stuffy and overcrowded? Think again. We've found plenty of ways to have a classic, low-key summer on Boston's favorite islands.

By **MADLINE BILIS, BRITTANY JASNOFF, REBECCA NIMERFROH,** and **THOMAS STACKPOLE**

E S C A P E
T O T H E
I S L A N D S !



SWIM

LUCY VINCENT BEACH

WITH ITS ONE-OF-A-KIND ROCK FORMATIONS and, ahem, clothing-optional section, Lucy Vincent is such a locals' spot that it was named for one of Chilmark's longest-serving and liveliest librarians. But we'll let you in on a little secret: Though this stretch of sand is technically limited to Chilmark residents and their guests, those staying at the inns in town are usually granted a day pass. Snag one—and a carton of juicy strawberries from Morning Glory Farm at the West Tisbury farmers' market, and spend the day watching the spirited surf roll ashore.

OR TRY: Seeing red at **Moshup Beach**, set against the backdrop of the sanguine Aquinnah Cliffs. Though it may be tempting, refrain from building sandcastles with the cliffs' reddish clay to help protect against further erosion.

EAT

OUTERMOST INN

GLASS OF SANCERRE ON THE TABLE AND rolling hills as far as the eye can see: This is a meal at the insanely picturesque Outermost Inn, perched on the Aquinnah Cliffs. But the restaurant, with its enormous windows overlooking the stunning landscape, is more than just a pretty face: Chef Christopher Gianfreda, who's worked with such big names as L'Espalier's Frank McClelland, serves up an elegant prix fixe drawing on vegetables from the inn's own garden. outermostinn.com.

OR TRY: Tucking into the dry-aged rib-eye at West Tisbury hot spot **State Road**—any place that's good enough for the Obamas is good enough for us.

PLAY

CHARLOTTE

ON A HOT, BREEZY ISLAND DAY, THERE'S nothing better than throwing on a pair of swim trunks and popping a bottle of bubbly at sea. Especially if you're cruising on a classic yacht like *Charlotte*, a 50-foot-gaff-rigged wooden schooner designed, built, and operated by famed shipwright Nat Benjamin. With few frills and many comforts, the

interior was built with the graceful simplicity of the golden age of yachting. But the real pleasure is feeling her heel and accelerate in a stiff breeze as you lounge on the sun-warmed teak deck. If winds permit, charter the boat and tack west out of Vineyard Haven harbor (which is, yes, down-island) to take in the lush green coast of West Tisbury, Chilmark, and Aquinnah from a whole new perspective. gannonandbenjamin.com.

OR TRY: The reward at the end of Chilmark's **Great Rock Bight Preserve trail** is 1,300 feet of unspoiled shoreline. Take a dip in the water and behold the 1.5-mile hike's namesake: the mightily scalable (and Instagrammable) Great Rock.

From left, a quiet moment on Lucy Vincent's shores; savoring blue skies and calm waters aboard *Charlotte*.

STAY

BEACH PLUM INN

THE FIRST SIGN YOU'VE MADE IT TO THIS up-island retreat? The chickens roaming freely on the grounds (their eggs are on the menu at the in-house restaurant). The almost 70-year-old inn exudes a rustic elegance: Appreciate the stillness of the property on its patio, surrounded by hydrangeas and roses, and peep its unparalleled views of Menemsha harbor. All of that R&R will leave you recharged for the outdoor activities that await—the inn provides bike and kayak rentals. beachpluminn.com.

OR TRY: Built by a whaling captain during the 18th century, **Captain Flanders House** harkens back to the island's agricultural past, thanks to stone walls, grazing horses, and antique cottages on the grounds.



CHRISTOPHER CHURCHILL (BEACH, BOAT, LARSEN)

LOCALS KNOW BEST



Saltwater is practically in **Betsy Larsen's** blood: As the daughter of a lifelong fisherman, Larsen, along with her sister Christine, took over the Menemsha Fish Market from their parents as teens. Now, Larsen and her extended family dominate the Vineyard's fishing industry, with a total of four markets. Ahead, she shares her picks for what locals eat up-island—and where to eat it.

1. "To see the sun set in Menemsha, your best bet is to utilize the free parking on Tabor House Road and take the free shuttle bus to Menemsha. Once there, you can grab lobster rolls from **Larsen's Fish Market** or—if you call us ahead that day—a steamed lobster."

2. "Driving up to the Gay Head cliffs for fried clams and ice cream is another must. Enjoy both at the **Aquinnah Shop**."

3. "There are a number of roadside farm stands, each of which has its own character and special items. Among my favorites: **Mermaid Farm, Beetlebung Farm, and Ghost Island Farm**."

MARTHA'S VINEYARD

UP-ISLAND

When you've had one too many Mad Martha's ice cream cones, ditch the crowds and catch an ocean breeze on the laid-back side of the Vineyard.



From left, getting the lay of the land aboard a Classic Aviators biplane; the patio at Edgartown's Port Hunter is the perfect spot for a plate of Katama Bay oysters.



MARTHA'S VINEYARD

DOWN-ISLAND

Slurp oysters, soar through the skies, and revel in the hustle and bustle of the social side of the island.

SWIM

GREAT POND BEACH

IT'S GENERALLY ACCEPTED THAT THE only way to avoid the throngs on the Vineyard's few public beaches is to get your hands on a town beach permit. But finagling a private pass isn't necessary to luxuriate in the lengthy expanse of Great Pond Beach, a sandy spit that separates Edgartown's largest pond from the invigorating surf of the Atlantic. That is, if you can get there—the isthmus is accessible only by canoe or kayak, making it a haven for adventurers seeking a blessedly quiet retreat. Set out from the town launch at Meshacket Neck, then paddle a mile across the pond to the beach (note the wildlife and welcome lack of other humans along the way).

OR TRY: Can't fit all of your beach gear onto a paddleboat? Set up for the day

at **South Beach** (also known as Katama Beach), where parking is plentiful and there's lots of room to spread out on the soft sand.

EAT

THE PORT HUNTER

PLUMP AND DEEPLY BRINY WITH A HINT of sweetness, the oysters farmed along Katama Bay are the food of summer on the Vineyard. And they're best enjoyed by the dozen on the patio of Edgartown's the Port Hunter—provided you can snag a coveted spot. When the sun goes down, the bustling, exposed-brick interior is the ideal place to kick back with a basil julep and, yes, more seafood: From Chatham mussels with red and green curry to fish tacos made with Vineyard flounder, the Port Hunter draws on all the fish in the sea

for its creative menu. *theporthunter.com*.

OR TRY: Getting cozy on the candlelit garden patio of **the Sweet Life**, a date-night staple since the '90s.

PLAY

CLASSIC AVIATORS BIPLANE TOURS

THE HUM OF THE ENGINE. THE WIND whipping in your hair. The glorious views of Chappaquiddick, Aquinnah, and the sandy shores in between. You haven't really seen the island until you've hopped aboard a bright-red biplane for a bird's-eye view. Taking off from Edgartown's Katama Airfield, Classic Aviators' delightfully old-school tours give the lay of the land from open-cockpit planes. Flights range from 15 to 60 minutes and come with radio headsets so you can pipe up with questions—"Wait, is that Obama practicing his swing?" *biplanemv.com*.

OR TRY: Ascend the spiral staircase of Chappy's 217-year-old **Cape Poge Light-house** for a different kind of aerial view: The Trustees of Reservations offers tours.

STAY

WINNETU OCEANSIDE RESORT

MORE THAN A CENTURY AGO, THE MAT-takeset Lodge offered Edgartown visitors a true island escape: classic clambakes, dances under the stars, and, of course, gentle ocean breezes. Inspired by the retreat's legacy, the Winnetu's owners have taken a page from the same playbook, encouraging guests to slow down and savor the Vineyard's simpler pleasures. Families still relish weekly clambakes, hosted just around the corner from a brand-new swimming pool and hot tub. They still leisurely meander along a path to the beach for good old-fashioned sun-soaking. And they certainly still gaze up at constellations from the property's sprawling courtyards. *winnetu.com*.

OR TRY: The Arts and Crafts-style **Nobnocket Boutique Inn**, which recently received a bright, bold renovation. The boutique inn offers seven ultra-luxe rooms complete with Frette linens—and, naturally, croquet on the lawn outside.



CHRISTOPHER CHURCHILL (OYSTERS, THE PORT HUNTER, BIPLANE); MADELINE BILUS (EAGLE)

LOCALS KNOW BEST



Jewelry designer **Sioux Eagle** knows a little something about island style, having spent the past 35 years helping tourists and locals alike accessorize their summer wardrobes at her eponymous Vineyard Haven shop. But away from the high-season crowds, she's also well versed in the art of having a good time. Here, she shares her favorite down-island pastimes.

1. "The **Featherstone Center for the Arts** in Oak Bluffs has rotating art shows and wonderful outdoor concerts. It's fun watching the kids run free while everybody else has their beach chairs, some wine, and an appetizer, listening to the music."

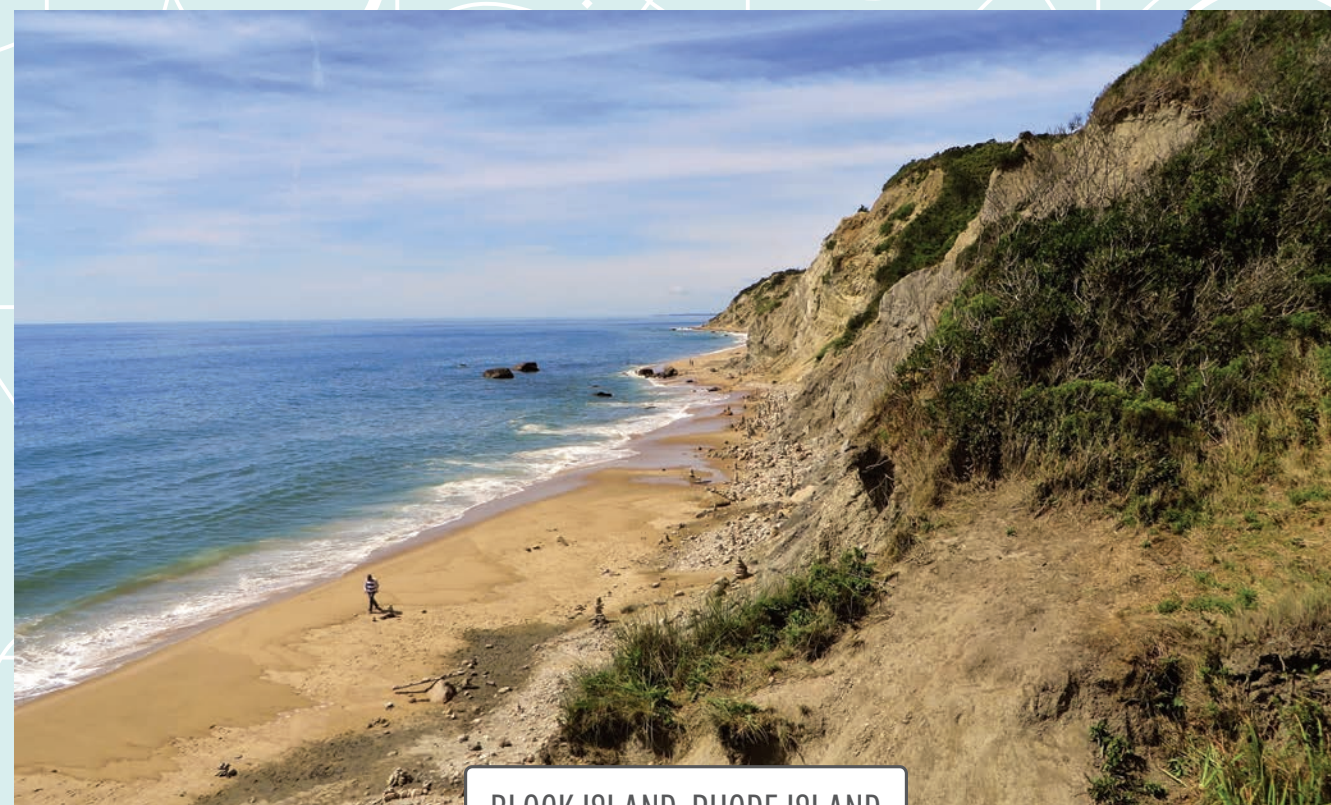
2. "I love bowling, and the **Barn Bowl & Bistro** is just great family fun. They also have excellent food, so even if you're waiting for lanes you can get something to eat."

3. "The **Vineyard Playhouse**, in Vineyard Haven, always has something worth attending. It's a real gem to be able to go to the theater and see such high-quality shows."



THE FAIREST ISLES OF THEM ALL

From quaint to rugged, urban to completely off the beaten path, New England's archipelago is all over the map. These are the places worth leaving the mainland for.



BLOCK ISLAND, RHODE ISLAND

• **HOW TO GET THERE**
Ferry service runs from Narragansett, Newport, and Fall River.

• **THE VIBE**
Blissfully chilled out (it's nicknamed the "Bermuda of the North") and bikeable.

• **WHERE TO EAT**
Housed in a charming gray-shingled building, **Eli's** eschews summer staples like fried clams and chowder in favor of niçoise-style seared tuna and steaks with foie butter.

• **WHERE TO STAY**
One of the island's most iconic properties (it's hosted the likes of Mark Twain and Ulysses S. Grant), the **Spring House Hotel** debuted a shiny new boutique inn on the property in 2015.

• **WHERE TO PLAY**
Soak up the scenery (and get your daily steps in) with a visit to Mohegan Bluffs, 185-foot-tall clay cliffs that descend via steep stairs to a sparkling beach.

THINKSTOCK

PEAKS ISLAND, MAINE



• **HOW TO GET THERE**
A 20-minute ferry departs from Portland's waterfront 14 times a day.

• **THE VIBE**
Decidedly no-frills and home to a rugged, close-knit community that balloons in the summertime.

• **WHERE TO EAT**
One of a handful of restaurants on the island, the **Cockeyed Gull** is the only one open year round.

• **WHERE TO STAY**
The **Inn on Peaks Island** is rich with elegant curb appeal among the

island's modest cottages. Six suites boast cathedral ceilings and fireplaces, not to mention private decks framing views of the Portland skyline.

• **WHERE TO PLAY**
Trace Peaks' rocky coastline on a bike rented from **Brad's Bike Rental & Repair** (pro tip: opt for a tandem if you're exploring with a pal). A trip around the 720-acre island takes about an hour, leaving plenty of time for a quick visit to the world's only **Umbrella Cover Museum**.

ASHLEY CAROLINE (INN AT PEAKS ISLAND); THINKSTOCK (VINALHAVEN, BOSTON HARBOR ISLANDS)

VINALHAVEN, MAINE



• **HOW TO GET THERE**
Ferry service runs from Rockland, Maine, daily—or hop on Penobscot Island Air's 10-minute flight from Owls Head.

• **THE VIBE**
A quaint, quiet lobstering enclave with ultra-friendly neighbors.

• **WHERE TO EAT**
Seafood's the star of the plate at **Salt** restaurant, which offers surprisingly sophisticated takes on Maine classics—think poached Vinalhaven lobster with Thai-coconut *beurre monté* and black rice.

• **WHERE TO STAY**
Built on a bridge above Carver's Harbor, the aptly named **Tidewater** feeds off the ebb and flow of the water beneath it. Accommodations are simple—all the better to focus on the views.

• **WHERE TO PLAY**
Take a dip in the former **granite quarries**. Enjoy a long, contemplative walk in the nature preserves. Or do absolutely nothing at all—that's the beauty of island life.

THE BOSTON HARBOR ISLANDS



• **HOW TO GET THERE**
Boston Harbor Cruises boats depart from Long Wharf daily.

• **THE VIBE**
Otherworldly, considering the city is visible from the island chain's shores; brimming with history, flora, and fauna.

• **WHERE TO EAT**
The **snack stands on Spectacle and Georges islands** joined forces with chef Barbara Lynch last year, resulting in some seriously elevated noshing options. Don't miss the signature lobster roll.

• **WHERE TO STAY**
If you manage to book early enough, the **yurts on Peddocks Island** offer a novel rustic retreat. Equipped with a screen door, bunk beds, a dining set, and the relative luxury of electricity, the tented cabins are the closest you'll get to glamping in the city.

• **WHERE TO PLAY**
Roam the cavernous corridors of **Fort Warren** on Georges Island, then catch a vintage baseball game (players don Civil War-era uniforms) on its parade ground.

NANTUCKET

IN-TOWN

The gray-shingled houses, the sweet smell of pocket gardens, and the secret to getting away from it all—while staying in the thick of it.

SWIM

STEPS BEACH

PERCHED HIGH ON THE CLIFFS AT THE edge of town, this secluded spot is known for its exclusivity, having served as a backyard of sorts for the likes of Tommy Hilfiger and John Kerry. Since it's unlikely you'll get an invitation inside one of the nearby manses, you'll want to stock your cooler with sandwiches and local beer from Fresh Nantucket—then spend the day swimming, shell collecting, or simply watching the stream of ferries cruise in and out the harbor. Come August, this is the go-to spot for those seeking bioluminescence, caused by a combination of algae and plankton that sparkles at night when it comes in contact with swimmers. Although not technically allowed, skinny-dipping is the norm—let the neon light guide the way back to your clothes.

OR TRY: Kayaking across the sailboat-dotted harbor to **Coatue**. One of Nantucket's best-kept secrets, the 390-acre, state-protected shoreline is home to nesting piping plovers and not much else. With a shell-fishing permit pinned to your swim trunks, use a clamming rake to score dinner.



Your passport to the island awaits: a bike (with a basket, of course) from Youngs.

EAT

LANGUEDOC BISTRO

AS ONE OF THE OLDEST RESTAURANTS on Nantucket, this bistro housed in a whaling-era home eschews the loud, Manhattan-like vibe of other high-end spots in favor of a quaint, romantic ambiance and French-leaning fare with an island twist. Pull up a chair at the basement bar and tuck into freshly shucked Nantucket oysters accompanied by a crisp white Burgundy, then head upstairs to the white-tablecloth dining room, where a choice between the pan-roasted lobster with polenta or a burger served on a homemade English muffin will surely feel like the hardest decision of your vacation. languedocbistro.com.

OR TRY: Throwing on your Nantucket Reds and heading to the **Sandbar at Jetties Beach** for a casual evening of lobster rolls and frosé.

PLAY

NANTUCKET'S BIKE TRAILS

BAGUETTE AND BRIE IN YOUR STRAW basket, wind in your hair, and a sense of adventure percolating in your soul: When

the sun's out and the water's (relatively) warm, tried-and-true Nantucketers know the best way to get around is by bike, thanks to more than 30 miles of pristine asphalt paths that stray from the main roads and meander through green hills and valleys. Start your cycling sojourn with a visit to Youngs, a family-run downtown operation that's been outfitting islanders with beach cruisers since 1931. Then pedal out in the direction of Polpis, home to saltwater creeks, white herons, and songbirds; on your way, be sure to stop at the Shipwreck & Lifesaving Museum, with exhibits dedicated to the heroic efforts made in the waters surrounding Nantucket. Don't miss the swing set on the lawn made from life preservers—give the kids a push or enjoy a quiet moment yourself while taking in the view of the harbor. youngsbicycleshop.com.

OR TRY: There's a reason why so many wooden benches are placed strategically around downtown: Here, **people-watching** is an armchair sport. Grab a smoothie from the Hub, on Main Street, and secure a spot just outside its double doors, watching families stroll leisurely from store to store.

STAY

CLIFFSIDE BEACH CLUB

ELIN HILDERBRAND, THE QUEEN OF BEACH reads, once wrote a novel based on this irresistibly beautiful resort at the edge of town. It's no wonder: With a stretch of white sand just steps from the plush guest rooms, you can literally roll out of your Matouk linens and onto the private shore, marked by the resort's cheerful blue, green, and yellow umbrellas. Be sure to make a reservation for an al fresco meal at the oceanfront Galley Beach, where Whispering Angel flows like water and sunsets have been a nightly celebration since 1958. cliffsidebeach.com.

OR TRY: Enjoy unspoiled views from your room at **the Cottages & Lofts at the Boat Basin**, situated on Old South Wharf. At night, grab a light sweater and cruise along the docks to admire the sailboats and yachts that, if only for a night, have traveled from all parts of the world to call the island home.



LOCALS KNOW BEST



As the toweringly tall and always jovial bar manager at Cisco Brewers, Nantucket native **Tyler Herrick** knows how to imbibe on island time. Con-juring up his bachelor days of yore, the now-settled-down father of two recommends his favorite spots to get tipsy downtown.

1. "Rent a paddleboard and do a self-guided booze cruise. You can paddle right up to harbor-front restaurants for a cocktail at **Slip 14, Cru, Straight Wharf,** and **Brant Point Grill.**"

2. "Cozy up to the open-air bar at **the Gazebo**, order the island-famous Mudslide, and take in the view of the crowds filtering on and off the ferry."

3. "I love to have an afternoon drink at **Tree Bar**, named for—you guessed it—a tree that grows right in the middle of the bar. Heat lamps and twinkling lights make this a cozy spot even on cooler summer days."



NANTUCKET

OUT OF TOWN

Growing tired of shopping and museums? Sink your toes in the sand and savor every last second of seclusion on an island where all roads lead to the beach.



SWIM

MADAKET BEACH

AT AROUND 7 P.M. IN JUNE, SOMETHING magical happens in Madaket, 7 miles west of downtown. As the sun worshipers make their way off the sand, they're replaced with the evening shift, toting a favorite beach chair on one arm and a picnic basket brimming with wine and cheese in the other. There they sit to watch the most spectacular show on the island—the sky turning from bright blue to gold, orange, red, and purple—until they've worked up an appetite for a cone of s'mores ice cream at Millie's Market. If heaven is a place on earth, it's Madaket Beach at sunset.

OR TRY: Staking a claim to a beach all your own on **Esther's Island**. To get there, simply air down your tires, drive onto the sand at Smith's Point, and follow deep tracks until you can go no farther.



Clockwise from left, the walkway to the grand Wauwinet; the historical Sankaty Head Lighthouse; a little wine and cheese on Madaket at sunset.

CHRISTOPHER CAUGHILL (BEACH, LIGHTHOUSE, WINE)

KATTIE KAIZER (WOOD)

EAT

THE CHANTICLEER

NANTUCKET, MEET ENGLAND: HOUSED BEHIND THICK green walls of privet, this charming, rose-swallowed 'Sconset respite has a tea-party-chic vibe—in fact, the building opened as a teahouse more than a century ago. The beloved Sunday brunch is best enjoyed at one of the sunny tables under a heavy awning of ivy. If you while away the entire afternoon hovered over a mimosa and several orders of the famous cod beignets, we promise you'll fit right in. chanticleernantucket.com.

OR TRY: When the thought of changing out of your beach clothes is too much to bear (and why shower off that summer glow?), head back west to **Millie's Restaurant**, where you can tuck into striped-bass tacos accompanied by a refreshing Madaket Mystery (spoiler alert—it's rum punch).

PLAY

SANKATY HEAD LIGHTHOUSE

IT'S AS PRETTY AS A PICTURE, BUT THERE'S MORE THAN meets the eye at this landmark, which still sweeps its light on Nantucket and the surrounding sea with a continual seven-second rotation: Due to heavy erosion in the area, in 2007 the historical lighthouse was moved 405 feet from the edge of the bluff to stable ground. Make a day of it and stroll the 'Sconset Bluff Walk, a gorgeous walkway that begins by the rose-covered cottages and ends at Sankaty. Or come at night and revel in the beauty of an oh-so-timeless light show from the warmth of your car. sconsettrust.org.

OR TRY: Trekking out to **Great Point**, the northernmost tip of the island, reachable only by sand (the Trustees of Reservations offers tours). Here you'll find hundreds of nesting seals and you'll soon learn why—the water is excellent for fishing.

STAY

THE WAUWINET

THE ONLY THING MORE CLASSICALLY NANTUCKET than arriving at the Wauwinet's elegant restaurant, Topper's, by water taxi? Lounging on one of its white-wicker chaises overlooking the harbor. But those aren't the only plush amenities at the luxe resort, situated along the northeast point of Nantucket. From the daily port and cheese in the library to the fire pit on the flagstone patio, the hotel offers something for every kind of island hoper. wauwinet.com.

OR TRY: Visiting the pros at **Compass Rose Real Estate** to rent a rose-covered 'Sconset cottage of your own.

LOCALS KNOW BEST



Wooden-whale sculptor **Sunny Wood** knows a thing or two about life on the water, having spent nearly 10 years on a sailboat in the harbor. Now happily residing on dry land, the tradesman turned artist gives his tips on how to make the most of Nantucket's less-traveled shoreline.

1. "My perfect summer day would be heading out to **Cisco Beach**, renting a board from Gary 'Kona' Kohner at **Nantucket Island Surf School**, and paddling out onto the waves."

2. "Take a hike! I load my dog into the car and head to any of the south shore beaches, which are great for walking because they are wide and generally blocked from the wind. **Nobadeer** is a favorite."

3. "Kiteboarding is my new passion. Anyone can learn; call the guys at **KiteTucket** or **Next Level Watersports** and book a private lesson. I'm happy I no longer live on a sailboat, but when I spend my days kiteboarding out in the harbor, I think I begin to miss it!"