

## Lakeside By the Sea

Lakeside By the Sea is a small enclave of Mediterranean style, homes established in 1990

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### The Village of Matanzas Shores

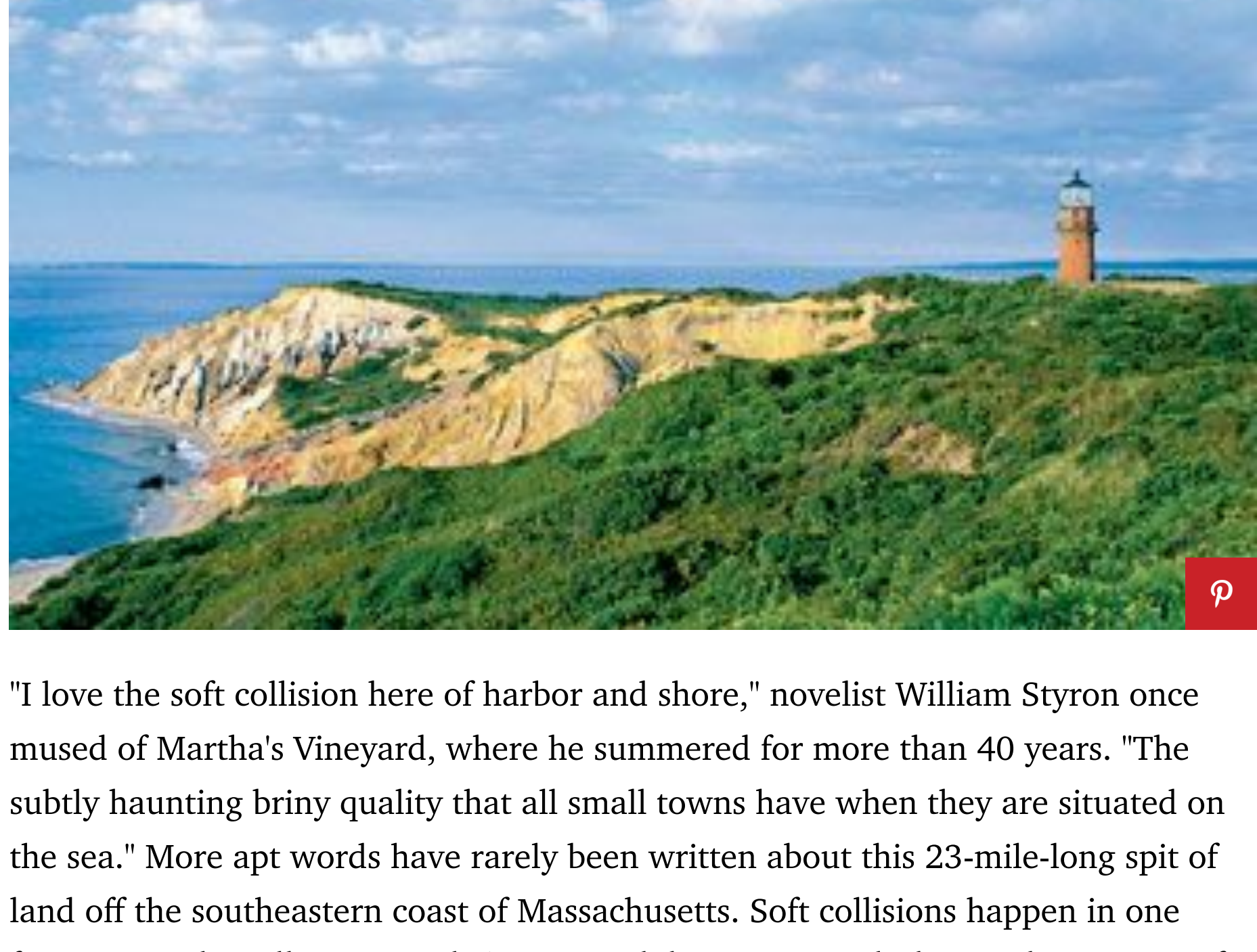
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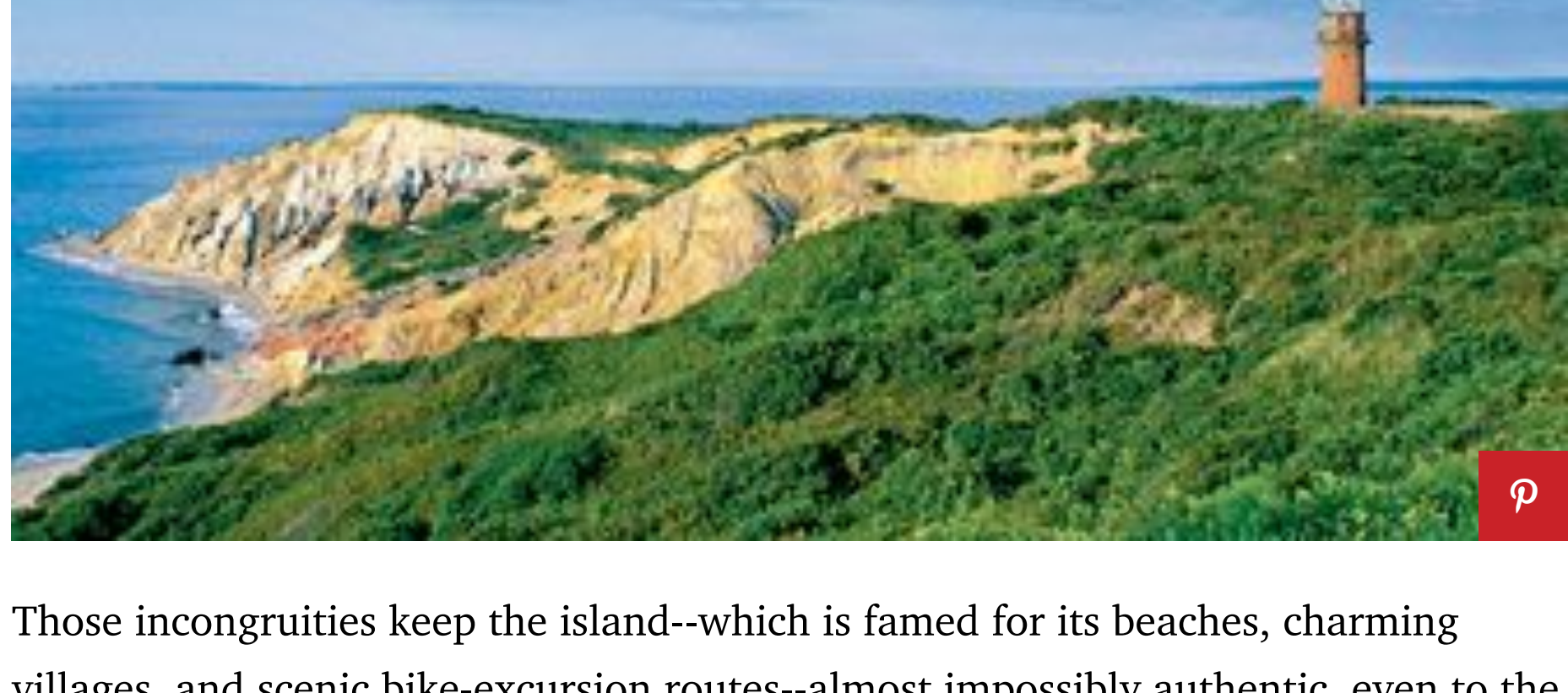
## ELLE DECOR GOES TO MARTHA'S VINEYARD

*The laid-back allure of a New England paradise*

By ALEXANDRA HALL JUN 18, 2008

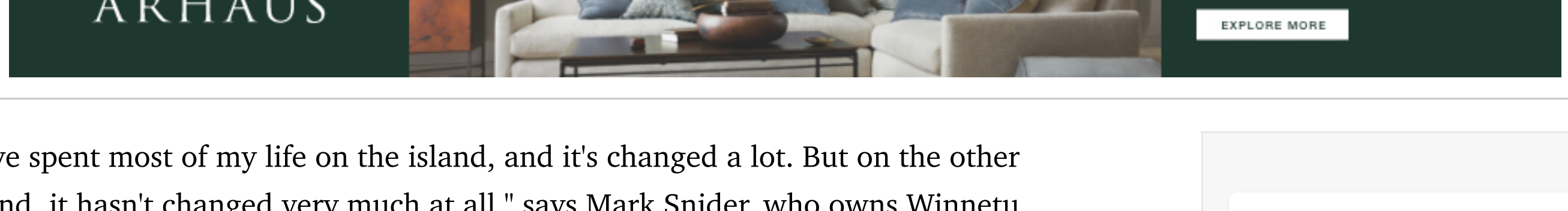


"I love the soft collision here of harbor and shore," novelist William Styron once mused of Martha's Vineyard, where he summured for more than 40 years. "The subtly haunting briny quality that all small towns have when they are situated on the sea." More apt words have rarely been written about this 23-mile-long spit of land off the southeastern coast of Massachusetts. Soft collisions happen in one form or another all over Martha's Vineyard, beginning with the gentle merging of its landscapes and disparate communities and ending with the intermingling of the time periods, traditions, cultures, and social strata that swirl about its shores.



Those incongruities keep the island—which is famed for its beaches, charming villages, and scenic bike-excursion routes—almost impossibly authentic, even to the celebrities it attracts. "It doesn't matter who you are here," says Boston developer Richard L. Friedman, whose Edgartown farm has been lent to Hillary and Bill Clinton. "There's this tremendous diversity of people and walks of life, and no matter how stressed-out or important you are off the island, here everyone is just folks."

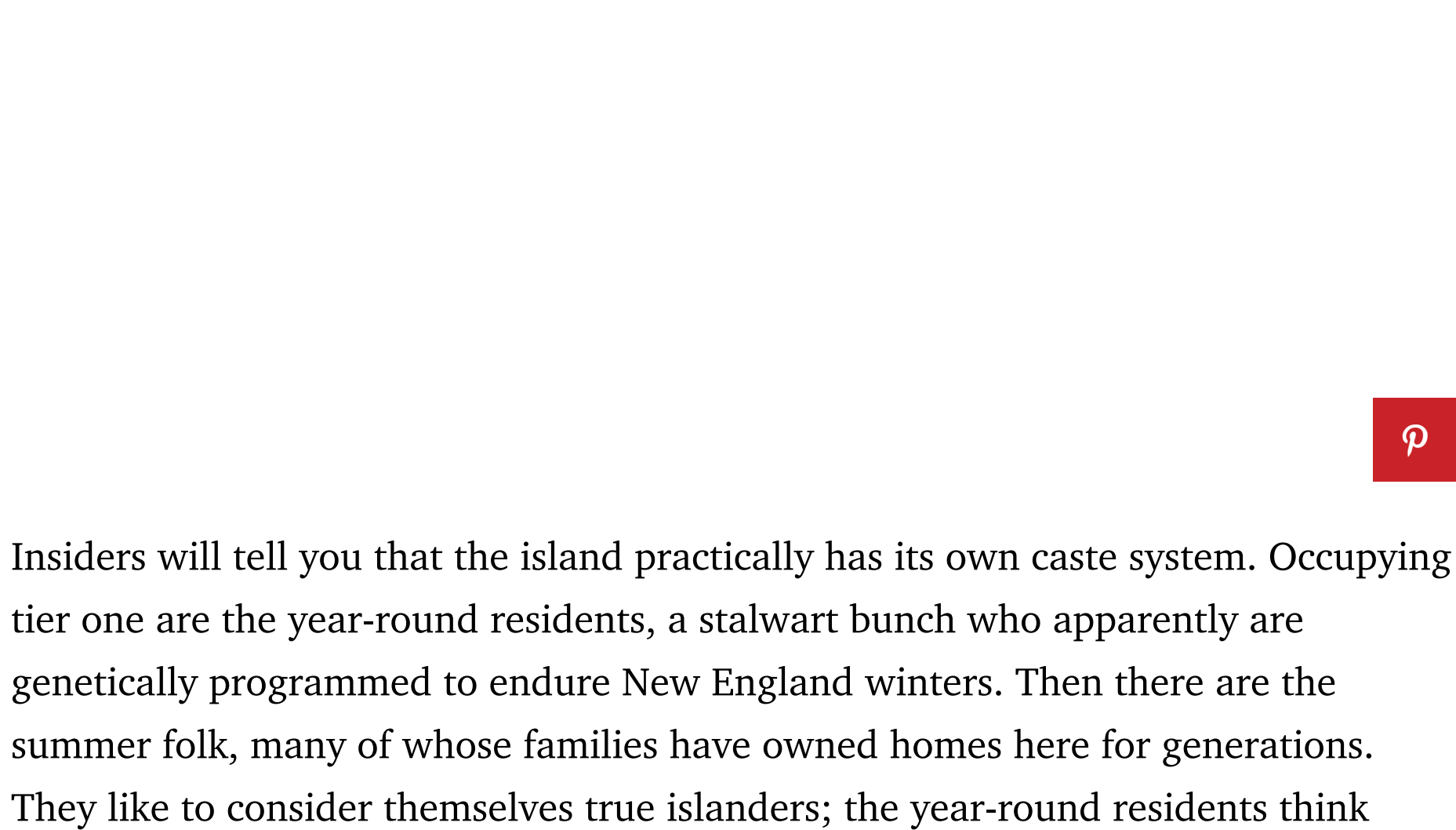
Learning to savor the cultural salad that exists on the Vineyard is a key part of the relaxation process. This is a place where, in a high season that more than quadruples its year-round population of 15,000, salty New Englanders can find themselves bumping into the lawyer and longtime summer resident Alan M. Dershowitz at Lucy Vincent Beach in Chilmark one moment and strolling past Chappaquiddick Island homeowner Meg Ryan at the preppy Vineyard Vines clothing shop in Edgartown the next. International travelers are welcomed with open arms, but international chains are outlawed. The concerts and lectures at Oak Bluffs Tabernacle find Hollywood directors sharing benches with college kids and toddlers covered in sand and ice cream. And CEOs may well plunk down increasing millions for beachfront estates, but when the 4 A.M. newspaper boat gets delayed, they have to wait for the morning headlines along with everyone else.



"I've spent most of my life on the island, and it's changed a lot. But on the other hand, it hasn't changed very much at all," says Mark Snider, who owns Winnetu Oceanside Resort with his wife, Gwenn. "As more new people have come, they've had to embrace the idiosyncrasies of the place. So it's never lost its traditions."

For instance, the island has yet to shake the Puritanical influence of its 17th-century British settlers; three of its six towns are still dry (no alcohol is sold in stores or restaurants). Relics abound, such as the Greek Revival captain's houses that line the streets of Edgartown, evidence of the 19th-century whaling industry. But the sea's dominion can still be felt directly (and deliciously) with the ultrafresh seafood that rules menus everywhere. For thoughtfully modern takes on the bounty, look to Catch at the Terrace at the Charlotte Inn, where Edgartown oysters come into contact with pickled cucumber, pineapple, radish, and wasabi tobiko. Or you can brave the crowds at the Black Dog Tavern for a clam bake bucket with quahog chowder and steamed lobsters.

The island's evolution from whaling center to star-studded resort began in 1835, when Oak Bluffs became the site of an annual Methodist revival camp. By 1880 the original tents had been replaced by hundreds of Carpenter Gothic houses and fretworked cottages. And since the 1930s, Oak Bluffs has been a popular destination for the African-American elite, including eminences such as actor Paul Robeson, singer Ethel Waters, Martin Luther King Jr., and cultural critic Henry Louis Gates Jr. Each August, Oak Bluffs hosts the Grand Illumination, where thousands gather to see the houses strung with colorful paper lanterns.



Insiders will tell you that the island practically has its own caste system. Occupying tier one are the year-round residents, a stalwart bunch who apparently are genetically programmed to endure New England winters. Then there are the summer folk, many of whose families have owned homes here for generations. They like to consider themselves true islanders; the year-round residents think otherwise. Next on the totem pole are vacationers who rent a house for a few weeks. By their fifth day on the island, they have usually come to consider themselves insiders—of course, members of the all-summer population beg to differ. Then there are the camera-wielding day-trippers, most of whom lay no claim to islander status and are often too busy trying to get a glimpse of Jake Gyllenhaal to bother with the intricacies of social stratification anyway.

When the Clintons began spending summer vacations here in the 1990s, seemingly all of Hollywood arrived in their wake: David Letterman, Sharon Stone, Michael J. Fox—the list of celebrity touchdowns goes on and on. To be fair, Spike Lee and Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis (daughter Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg summers on her mother's former estate in Aquinnah) fell under the spell of the island's charms pre-Clintons, and Carly Simon, a partner in the bohemian clothing and accessories boutique Midnight Farm in Vineyard Haven, vacationed here as a child and is now a full-time resident. "Almost anyone who has a recognizable name has a home that's hidden where the public can't see," Snider says. And when the boldface names do venture into town, their presence goes largely unnoticed by most residents.

"The great mix of people on the island is what keeps things relaxed," Friedman says. "It doesn't matter if you're a businessman, a politician, or an artist. White, black, or Native American. Everyone's here, there isn't just one place to be, or one way to act." And nor, adds Snider, do those folks come expecting bells and whistles. "When they go to Hawaii, they're met with a lei," Snider says. "When most people get to the Vineyard it's by ferry, and they're met with luggage racks. It's not Disneyland."

Perhaps not, but with its profusion of pristine beaches, conservation land, unfettered sea views, and meticulous gardens at every turn, Martha's Vineyard is certainly idyllic. The topography is as diverse as the people, and every last inch of it is stunning, particularly Chappaquiddick Island, with its windswept nature preserves. Dazzling too are the Aquinnah Cliffs, where multicolor layers of clay and sand, created by six separate glaciers, meet frothy waves 150 feet below.



Even the most remote spots, however, are never far from a whiff of stylishness. The rugged fishing port of Menemsha is filled with weather-beaten dinghies, lobster traps, and dove-gray shingled shacks, but at its shores, boho-chic families and sun-kissed couples arrive late in the day for another island tradition, toting tables, candles, precooked lobster, oysters, and ice buckets: Champagne glasses raised and bare feet in the sand, they applaud and whoop as the sun melts into the luminescent harbor.

Somehow the scene manages to be earthy and sophisticated, innocent and worldly all at once. "That's the beauty of the Vineyard," explains Gwenn Snider of Winnetu Oceanside Resort, who is planning readings by local authors. "It's the kind of environment that just absorbs people from different walks of life and brings out the best parts of each—even when they have completely divergent perspectives. I think that's why so many artists and creative people find it an inspiring place to be."

Certainly that notion wasn't lost on William Styron, who worked steadily during his summers here -- even when surrounded by throngs of visitors who had come to the island for a very different reason. "I hear the sails luffing in the harbor," he told a local reporter in 1982, "and I take a perverse delight in eschewing all those wonderful pleasures and hunkering down in my damp little mildewed studio in Vineyard Haven, and saying, 'I'm doing my work while they're playing.'"

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