Martha's Vineyard is a picturesque New England island with captain's houses and lighthouses, white picket fences and ice-cream shops, an authentic fishing village and a Native American community, and miles of pristine beaches and rolling farmland. Unfortunately, it has been discovered, in a big way. If you can survive the hassles of getting to the island, and the crowds and traffic once you arrive, you may just have the perfect vacation. Better yet, visit the island in the off season, during May or October, when the weather is often mild and the crowds have cleared out.

When the former First Family, the Clintons, chose to vacation on the island several years in a row, it only served to increase the worldwide fascination with this popular place. In fact, the island is loaded with celebrities, but you are unlikely to see them, as they prefer private house parties. But don't come to this island for the celebrities; it's considered impolite to gawk, and, like jaded New Yorkers, the locals barely seem to notice the stars in their midst.

Instead, visit the Vineyard to bicycle the shaded paths hugging the coastline. Admire the regal sea captain's houses in Edgartown, and stop by the Edgartown Scrimshaw Gallery for a memento of the sea. Stroll down Circuit Avenue in Oak Bluffs with a Mad Martha's ice-cream cone and then ride the Flying Horses Carousel, said to be the oldest working carousel in the country. Don't miss the cheerful "gingerbread" cottages behind Circuit Avenue, where the echoes of 19th-century revival meetings still ring out from the imposing tabernacle. Marvel at the red-clay cliffs of Gay Head, now known as Aquinnah, a national historic landmark and home to the Wampanoag Tribe. Travel the country roads of West Tisbury and Chilmark, stopping at Allen Farm for sweaters made from the wool of their flock of over 200 sheep. Buy a lobster roll in the fishing village of Menemsha.
Unlike much of New England, Martha’s Vineyard has long been a melting pot in which locals, homeowners, and summer people coexist in an almost effortless comfort, united in their disapproval of traffic, their criticism of the Steamship Authority, and their protective attitude toward the island. The roots of Martha’s Vineyard’s diversity go back more than 100 years. In the late 19th century, Oak Bluffs, with its religious roots, was one of the first spots where African Americans of means went on vacation. Today, this community includes such notable celebrities as film director Spike Lee and Washington power broker Vernon Jordan. In the tiny town of Aquinnah, the Wampanoags are the only Native American tribe in the region to have official status in Washington, D.C. Twelfth-generation Vineyarders farm the land in Chilmark and rub shoulders at Cronig’s Market with posh Yankees from Edgartown.

There’s always a lot of “hurry up and wait” involved in ferry travel, so allowing yourself just a weekend on the Vineyard may be less than you need. If you’re traveling from New York, take an extra day off, allowing a minimum of 3 days for this trip. Four days will feel more comfortable. From Boston, a couple days is fine (the drive from Boston to Woods Hole takes 1½ hr. with no traffic), but beware of summer weekend bottlenecks (never aim for the last ferry). You really don’t need to bring a car to get around this small island, but if you absolutely have to be accompanied by four wheels, you’ll need a car reservation for the ferry (see “Getting Around,” below, for details).

Savor the 45-minute ferry ride to and from this pastoral place. The Vineyard’s pace is decidedly laid-back, and your biggest chore should be to try to blend in with the prevalent, ultra-cool attitude.

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**Fun Fact**  **Going Native on Martha’s Vineyard**

**Down-island:** If you must buy a Black Dog T-shirt, wait until you get home to wear it. Don’t loiter at the Charlotte Inn. Have cocktails on the porch of the Harborview Hotel. In Oak Bluffs, don’t ask when Illumination Night is (it’s a secret). Experience Edgartown on a snowy winter weekend or in spring when the lilacs are in bloom.

**Up-island:** When in doubt, don’t wear shoes. Sail a boat to a remote beach for a picnic. Don’t view the rolling farmlands from a tour bus. By all means, bike. Canoe. Rent a cottage for a week or two. Don’t be a day-tripper.
1 Martha’s Vineyard Orientation

For information on getting to Martha’s Vineyard, see “Getting There,” in chapter 2.

ARRIVING

Upon arrival, you’ll find taxis at all ferry terminals and at the airport, and there are permanent taxi stands in Oak Bluffs (at the Flying Horses Carousel) and Edgartown (next to the Town Wharf). Most taxi outfits operate cars as well as vans for larger groups and travelers with bikes. Cab companies on the island include Adam Cab (800/281-4462 or 508/693-3332), Accurate Cab (888/557-9798 or 508/627-9798; the only all-night service); All Island Taxi (800/693-TAXI or 508/693-7110); Martha’s Vineyard Taxi (508/693-9611 or 508/693-8660); Mario’s Taxi (508/693-8399); and Marlene’s Taxi (508/693-0037). Rates from town to town in summer are generally flat fees based on where you’re headed and the number of passengers on board. A trip from Vineyard Haven to Edgartown would probably cost around $15 for two people. Late-night revelers should keep in mind that rates are double from midnight until 7am.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Contact the Martha’s Vineyard Chamber of Commerce at Beach Road, Vineyard Haven, MA 02568 (508/693-0085; fax 508/693-7589; www.mvy.com). Their office is 2 blocks up from the ferry terminal in Vineyard Haven and is open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm year-round plus weekends in season. There are also information booths at the ferry terminal in Vineyard Haven, across from the Flying Horses Carousel in Oak Bluffs, and on Church Street in Edgartown. The Edgartown info booth is particularly convenient. It offers a free phone to call taxis, as well as an ATM, post office, and sundry store. You’ll want to poke your head into these offices to pick up free maps, tourist handbooks, and flyers on tours and events, or to get answers to any questions you may have. Most inns also have tourist handbooks and maps available for guests.

Always check the two local newspapers, the Vineyard Gazette (www.mvgazette.com) and the Martha’s Vineyard Times (www.mvtimes.com), for information on current events.

In case of an emergency, call 911 and/or head for the Martha’s Vineyard Hospital, Linton Lane, Oak Bluffs (508/693-0410), which has a 24-hour emergency room.
NEIGHBORHOODS IN BRIEF: DOWN-ISLAND, UP-ISLAND

The six towns on Martha’s Vineyard have distinct identities, but they can be divided into “down-island,” referring to Vineyard Haven (officially called Tisbury), Edgartown, and Oak Bluffs; and “up-island,” made up of West Tisbury, Chilmark, and Aquinnah.

**Vineyard Haven,** where the majority of ferry passengers disembark, tends to be a quieter community than the other down-island towns of Edgartown and Oak Bluffs, perhaps because of its “dry” status. Nevertheless, several fine restaurants, as well as some wonderful shops and galleries, are along Main Street. The town’s Vineyard Playhouse hosts a full season of plays every summer. Vineyard Haven has several inns within walking distance of the center of town, as well as a small public beach on the harbor.

To many visitors, prim and proper **Edgartown** is Martha’s Vineyard. It’s certainly the Vineyard’s fanciest community, where regal historic captain’s houses are lined up behind picket fences. Most of the island’s B& Bs and inns are in Edgartown, as well as many fine restaurants, bars, shops and galleries. Katama Beach is a short bike ride away, and State Beach lies between Edgartown and Oak Bluffs. You can also take a short ferry to the island of Chappaquiddick from Oak Bluffs.

**Oak Bluffs** feels like a more casual community than Edgartown: It has a touch of honky-tonk. This is where you find the famous gingerbread houses, which are elaborately decorated Carpenter Gothic summer cottages originally built in the late 19th century. The cottages surround a huge wrought-iron tabernacle, which hosts live concerts as well as church services in the summer. The Flying Horses Carousel nearby is one of the oldest in the country. Most of the island’s bars, as well as live music, are in Oak Bluffs. Several fine restaurants are on Circuit Avenue, which is Oak Bluffs’ main street. More casual restaurants, as well as shops, are along the harbor. Oak Bluffs has a range of lodging accommodations, from historic waterfront B& Bs to inexpensive motels and lodging houses.

**West Tisbury** is a rural community in the center of the island. The center of the community is Alley’s General Store, which operates much the same as it must have 100 years ago. The town has several fine art galleries, and the area features miles of beautiful countryside with rolling farmland and forests.

**Chilmark,** a rural community next to West Tisbury, is mainly residential, though it contains the charming fishing village of Menemsha on the coast. Menemsha, with its fishing boats lined up along
the pier, as well as a small selection of shops and restaurants, is worth a half-day trip.

Aquinnah, formerly known as Gay Head, is the headquarters for the Wampanoag Indian Tribe. Here you’ll find beautiful coastal scenery and beaches, as well as the famous red-clay cliffs.

GETTING AROUND
The down-island towns of Vineyard Haven, Oak Bluffs, and Edgartown are fairly compact, and if your inn is located in the heart of one of these small towns, you’ll be within walking distance of shopping, beaches, and attractions in town. Frequent shuttle buses can whisk you to the other down-island towns and beaches in 5 to 15 minutes. To explore the up-island towns, you’ll need to bike; it’s possible to tour the entire island—60 some-odd miles—in a day. In season, you can also take the shuttle bus up-island. Otherwise, you have to take a cab.

BY BICYCLE & MOPED You shouldn’t leave without exploring the Vineyard on two wheels, even if only for a couple of hours. There’s a little of everything for cyclists, from paved paths to hilly country roads (see “Beaches & Recreational Pursuits,” in chapter 6, for details on where to ride), and you don’t have to be an expert rider to enjoy yourself. Plus, biking is a relatively hassle-free way to get around the island.

Mopeds are also a way to navigate Vineyard roads, but remember that some roads tend to be narrow and rough—the number of accidents involving mopeds seems to rise every year, and many islanders are opposed to these vehicles. The renting of mopeds is banned in Edgartown. You need a driver’s license to rent a moped. If you rent a moped, be aware that they are considered quite dangerous on the island’s busy, narrow, winding, and sandy roads.

Bike-, scooter-, and moped-rental shops are clustered throughout all three down-island towns. Bike rentals cost about $15 to $30 a day (the higher prices are for suspension mountain bikes), scooters and mopeds $30 to $80. In Vineyard Haven, try Strictly Bikes, Union Street (☎ 508/693-0782); Martha’s Bike Rentals, Lagoon Pond Road (☎ 508/693-6593); or Adventure/Thrifty Rentals, Beach Road (☎ 508/693-1959), which rents mopeds only. In Oak Bluffs, there’s Anderson’s, Circuit Avenue Extension (☎ 508/693-9346), which rents bikes only; DeBettencourt’s Bike Shop, 31 Circuit Ave. Extension (☎ 508/693-0011); Ride-On Mopeds, Circuit Avenue Extension (☎ 508/693-2076); Sun ’n’ Fun, Lake Avenue (☎ 508/693-5457); and Vineyard Bike & Moped, Oak
Bluffs Avenue (608/693-4498). In Edgartown, you’ll find R. W. Cutler Bike, 1 Main St. (608/627-4052); Edgartown Bicycles, 190 Upper Main St. (608/627-9008); and Wheel Happy, 204 Upper Main St. and 8 S. Water St. (608/627-5928), which rents bikes only.

**BY CAR & JEEP** If you’re coming to the Vineyard for a few days and you’re going to stick to the down-island towns, I think it’s best to leave your car at home, since traffic and parking on the island can be brutal in summer. Also, it’s easy to take the shuttle buses (see below) from town to town, or simply bike your way around. If you’re staying for a longer period of time or you want to do some exploring up-island, you should bring your car or rent one on the island—my favorite way to tour the Vineyard is by Jeep. Keep in mind that car-rental rates can soar during peak season, and gas is also much more expensive on the island. Off-road driving on the beaches is a major topic of debate on the Vineyard, and the most popular spots may be closed for nesting piping plovers at the height of the season. If you plan to do some off-road exploration, check with the Chamber of Commerce to see if the trails are open to vehicles before you rent. To drive off-road at Cape Poge or Cape Wasque on Chappaquiddick, you’ll need to purchase a permit from the Trustees of Reservations (608/627-7260); the cost is $70 to $110.

National car-rental chains are at the airport and in Vineyard Haven and Oak Bluffs. Local agencies also operate out of all three port-towns, and many of them also rent Jeeps, mopeds, and bikes. The national chains include Budget (600/527-0700 or 608/693-1911), Hertz (800/654-3131), and Thrifty (800/874-4389).

In Vineyard Haven, you’ll find Adventure Rentals, Beach Road (608/693-1959), where a Jeep will run you about $130 per day in season; Atlantic/Consumer Car Rental, 15 Beach Rd. (608/693-0480), which rents small cars for about $60 per day; and Holmes Hole Car Rentals, Water Street (608/693-8838), where a four-wheel-drive vehicle rents for about $120 per day in season. In Edgartown, try AAA Island Rentals, 141 Main St. (608/627-6800; also at Five Corners in Vineyard Haven (608/696-5300). Another recommendable Island company that operates out of the airport is All Island Rent-a-Car (608/693-6868).

**BY SHUTTLE BUS & TROLLEY** In season, shuttle buses run often enough to make them a practical means of getting around. The Martha’s Vineyard Transit Authority (608/693-9440;
www.vineyardtransit.com) provides the cheapest, quickest, and easiest way to get around the island during the busy summer season and in the off season too. Connecting Vineyard Haven (near the ferry terminal), Oak Bluffs (near the Civil War statue in Ocean Park), and Edgartown (Church St., near the Old Whaling Church), the transit authority buses cost $2 to $4 per trip, depending on distance. The price is $1 per town. So, if you are going from Vineyard Haven to Oak Bluffs, the price is $2. If you are going from Vineyard Haven past Oak Bluffs to Edgartown, that trip will cost $3. A 1-day pass with unlimited trips is $6, a 3-day pass is $15, and a 7-day pass is $25. Seniors over 70 years old pay half-price and children under 6 years old ride free.

From early May to early October, buses run from 5:30am to 1am every half-hour or hour. Hours are reduced in spring, fall, and winter. From late June through August, buses go out to Aquinnah (via the airport, West Tisbury, and Chilmark), leaving every couple of hours from down-island towns and looping about every hour through up-island towns. The Edgartown Downtown Shuttle and the South Beach buses circle throughout town or out to South Beach every 30 minutes in season. They also stop at the free parking lots just north of the town center—this is a great way to avoid circling the streets in search of a vacant spot on busy weekends.

THE CHAPPAQUIDDICK FERRY The On-Time ferry (508/627-9427) runs the 5-minute trip from Memorial Wharf on Dock Street in Edgartown to Chappaquiddick Island from June to mid-October, every 5 minutes from 7am to midnight. Passengers, bikes, mopeds, dogs, and cars (three at a time) are all welcome. The one-way cost is $1 per person, $4 for one car/one driver, $2.50 for one bike/one person, and $3.50 for one moped or motorcycle/one person.

**FAST FACTS: Martha’s Vineyard**

**Area Code** The telephone area code for the Vineyard is 508. You must always dial 1 and this area code first, even if you are making a call to another Vineyard number.

**Banks** Automated teller machines (ATMs) are in a number of locations on Martha’s Vineyard. In Edgartown, ATMs are located at the Church Street visitors center; 2 South Water St. (near the corner of Main St.); and 19 Main St. (just west of...
North Water St.). In Oak Bluffs, there are ATMs on Oak Bluffs Avenue, at the Park Avenue Mall, and next to the Flying Horses. In Vineyard Haven, ATMs are at 75 Main St.; 53 Main St.; and 40 South Main St.

**Emergencies** Phone 📞 911 for fire, police, emergency, or ambulance; be prepared to give your number, address, name, and a quick report. If you get into desperate straits—if, for example, your money is stolen and you need assistance arranging to get home—contact the Travelers Aid office in Boston (📞 617/542-7286).

**Hospital** In case of a medical emergency, Martha’s Vineyard Hospital, Linton Lane, Oak Bluffs (📞 508/693-0410), has a 24-hour emergency room.

**Liquor Laws** The legal drinking age in Massachusetts is 21. Most bars are allowed to stay open until 1am every day, with “last call” at 12:30am. Beer, wine, and liquor are sold at package stores only. On Martha’s Vineyard, alcohol is only allowed to be served in the towns of Edgartown and Oak Bluffs. The other four towns, Aquinnah, Chilmark, West Tisbury, and Tisbury (Vineyard Haven) are “dry,” meaning no alcohol can be served or purchased. Many restaurants in those towns allow you to bring your own alcoholic beverages to accompany your dinner. Some charge a corking fee. Call ahead to be sure.

**Newspapers & Magazines** Martha’s Vineyard has two newspapers, the long-established Martha’s Vineyard Gazette, and the upstart, the Martha’s Vineyard Times. The Gazette is published twice a week in the summer and once a week in the off season. The Times, which is free, is published once a week year-round. The two newspapers have dueling editorial pages and it’s fun to compare and contrast the two, especially on big island issues.

**Public Restrooms** The Vineyard has numerous public restrooms. In Vineyard Haven, you’ll find them in the ferry terminals and in the A&P parking lot (open seasonally). In Oak Bluffs, bathrooms are next to the ferry terminal, on Kennebec Avenue, and beside the harbor next to Our Market. In Menemsha, public bathrooms are located on the pier across from the fish markets; and in Aquinnah, they are near the cliffs parking lot. In Edgartown, public bathrooms are at the Church Street Visitor Center and in Town Hall (weekdays only), as well as at Katama Beach. In West Tisbury, restrooms are in the Grange Hall next to Town Hall.
2 Where to Stay

When deciding where to stay on Martha’s Vineyard, you’ll need to consider the type of vacation you prefer. The down-island towns of Vineyard Haven, Oak Bluffs, and Edgartown provide shops, restaurants, beaches, and harbors all within walking distance, and frequent shuttles to get you all over the island. But all three can be overly crowded on busy summer weekends. Vineyard Haven is the gateway for most of the ferry traffic; Oak Bluffs is a raucous town with most of the Vineyard’s bars and nightclubs; and many visitors make a beeline to Edgartown’s manicured Main Street. Up-island inns provide more peace and quiet, but you’ll probably need a car to get around, including going to the beach. Nevertheless, you’ll find some wonderful places to stay on the Vineyard, and all of the following choices have something special to offer.

EDGARTOWN

VERY EXPENSIVE

Charlotte Inn 🌟🌟🌟🌟 Ask anyone to recommend the best inn on the island and this is the name you’re most likely to hear—not just because it’s the most expensive, but because it’s easily the most refined. Owners Gery and Paula Conover have been tirelessly fine-tuning this cluster of 18th- and 19th-century houses (five in all, counting the Carriage House, a replica) since 1971. Linked by formal gardens, each house has a distinctive look and feel, though the predominant mode is English country, with fascinating antiques, hunting prints, and quirky decorative accents. All but one room have televisions, and some have VCRs. Bathrooms are luxurious, and some are enormous (bigger than most hotel rooms). In the elegant 1860 Main House, the common rooms double as the Edgartown Art Gallery and feature Ray Ellis’s wonderful oil paintings. This is one of only two Relais & Châteaux properties on the Cape
and Islands—a world-class distinction that designates excellence in hospitality. The inn’s restaurant, L’étoile, is the island’s best fine-dining restaurant (see “Where to Dine,” later in this chapter).


Harbor View Hotel ★★★ This is the Vineyard’s version of a grand hotel. It has the most amenities, including outdoor pool, tennis courts, a very fine restaurant (The Coach House; see “Where to Dine,” later in this chapter), and a cozy bar that serves lunch and dinner (you can ask to be served by the pool, if you like). Enjoying a drink on one of the rocking chairs on the hotel’s expansive wrap-around porch has to be one of the ultimate Vineyard experiences. The view is one of the Vineyard’s best, Edgartown Lighthouse, Edgartown Harbor, and across to the island of Chappaquiddick. The rooms at the Harbor View are mostly standard, but front rooms that overlook that terrific view are very expensive and some would say well worth the price. In back of the hotel, a large pool is surrounded by newer annexes, where some rooms and suites have kitchenettes. The hotel is located just far enough from “downtown” to avoid the traffic hassles, but close enough for a pleasant walk past impressive captain’s houses.

131 N. Water St. (about ¼ mile northwest of Main St.), Edgartown, MA 02539. ☏ 800/255-6005 or 508/627-7000. Fax 508/627-8417. www.harbor-view.com. 124 units (all with tub/shower). Summer $345–$615 double; $575–$695 1-bedroom suite; $750–$775 2-bedroom suite; $925 3-bedroom suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Open year-round. Amenities: Restaurant; bar; heated outdoor pool; 2 tennis courts; concierge; room service (seasonal only: breakfast, lunch, and dinner); babysitting; same-day laundry service. In room: A/C, TV, fridge, hair dryer, iron, safe.

Hob Knob Inn ★★★ Owner Maggie White has reinvented this 19th-century Gothic revival inn as an exquisite destination now vying for honors as one of the Vineyard’s best places to stay. Her style is peppy/preppy, with crisp floral fabrics and striped patterns creating a clean and comfortable look. Sure, it’s meticulously decorated, but nothing is overdone. All rooms are equipped with bathrobes and fine toiletries. Returning guests get little extras, such as a small box of Chilmark Chocolates. Maggie and her attentive staff will pack a splendid picnic basket or plan a charter fishing trip on Maggie’s 27-foot Boston Whaler. The full farm breakfast is a
delight and is served at beautifully appointed individual tables in the sunny, brightly painted dining rooms. Bovine lovers will enjoy the agrarian theme, a decorative touch throughout the inn. The Thaxter House across the street, which is rented by the week, accommodates up to eight people in four bedrooms.

128 Main St. (on upper Main St., in the center of town), Edgartown, MA 02539. ☏ 800/696-2723 or 508/627-9510. Fax 508/627-4560. www.hobknob.com. 24 units, 4-bedroom cottage. Summer $275–$550 double; $7,500 per week for cottage. Rates include full breakfast and afternoon tea. AE, MC, V. Open year-round. Amenities: Exercise room; rental bikes ($20 per day); limited room service; massage (extra charge). In room: A/C, TV, hair dryer.

The Winnetu Inn & Resort (Kids) This is the island’s newest lodging option, a large luxury hotel on 11 acres overlooking South Beach in Katama. Guests can walk down a 250-yard path to get to the private beach. A 3-mile bike path links the inn to Edgartown, but the inn also runs a shuttle service that can pick up inn guests at the Edgartown ferry. Most rooms are two- and three-bedroom suites with kitchenettes, and there is one deluxe cottage with a four-person hot tub and a roof deck. Some have ocean views and conveniences such as a washer/dryer. Many have private decks or patios. The rooms are decorated in a modern, cozy style. The inn offers a number of amenities at an extra charge, including rental of beach cabanas, bicycle delivery service, grocery delivery service, and Wednesday evening family-style clambakes in season. For kids, the inn hosts children’s programs and has such on-site amusements as outdoor Ping-Pong, foosball, a pool, and a putting green. For active guests, the inn staff arranges “island adventure day trips” that include fishing, kayaking, and beach buggy rides for an extra charge. The inn’s fine-dining restaurant, Lure, is top-notch (see “Where to Dine,” later in this chapter). A general store is on-site for snacks and sun-dried items. In high season, late June to early September, there is a 3-night minimum stay during the week and a 4-night minimum stay on weekends. Several wheelchair-accessible rooms are available.

South Beach, Edgartown, MA 02539. ☏ 978/443-1733 (reservations line), or 508/627-4747. www.winnetu.com. 48 units, 1 deluxe cottage. Summer $305 double; $570–$630 1-bedroom suite; $1,255 3-bedroom suite. MC, V. Closed Dec to mid-Apr. Amenities: Restaurant; outdoor heated pool; pro putting green; tennis courts (6 Har-Tru, 4 all-weather); fitness room; children’s program (late June to early Sept, complimentary 9am–noon, charge in evenings, for 3-year-olds through pre-teens); concierge; laundry facilities. In room: A/C, TV/VCR, fridge, coffeemaker, iron, microwave.
EXPENSIVE

Ashley Inn Located on Main Street in Edgartown, this attractive B&B is just a short walk to the many shops and restaurants on Main Street, and the picturesque harbor. Innkeepers Fred and Janet Hurley have decorated the bedrooms in this 1860 captain’s house with period antiques and quilts, and some have canopy or four-poster beds. There are thoughtful extras at this B&B, like a little box of Chilmark Chocolates left on your pillow. In the morning, breakfast is served on individual tables in the dining room.

Colonial Inn of Martha’s Vineyard 🌟 Kids  This four-story, 1911 inn in the center of Edgartown has been transformed into a fine modern hotel, and recent extensive renovations have elevated it to what can accurately be described as “affordable luxury.” Its lobby serves as a conduit to the Nevins Square shops beyond, and two fine restaurants are on the premises. The 43 rooms, decorated in soothing, contemporary tones (with pine furniture, crisp fabrics, hardwood floors, beadboard wainscoting, and four-poster beds), offer all one could want in the way of conveniences. Guests whose rooms lack harbor views can wander onto one of the four common harbor view decks to have a cocktail and enjoy the scenery. Suites have VCRs (complimentary videos) and kitchenettes. Many rooms have gas fireplaces. Be sure to visit the roof deck, ideally around sunset, or, if you’re up for it, sunrise over the water.


Harborside Inn 🌟 This large hotel complex overlooking Edgartown Harbor has a great location in the center of town, just off Main Street. The rooms are fairly generic, but if you get one with a harbor view, you’ll be delighted. Among the seven buildings that make up the inn are restored whaling captain’s cottages from the 1700s. Some rooms have private balconies. A large heated pool is in the center of the courtyard, as well as a whirlpool tub and sauna.


The Jonathan Munroe House 🌟 Finds  With its graceful wraparound, colonnaded front porch, the Jonathan Munroe House stands out from the other inns and captain’s homes on this stretch of upper Main Street. Inside, the formal parlor has been transformed into a comfortable gathering room with European flair. Guest rooms are immaculate, antiques-filled, and dotted with clever details. Many rooms have fireplaces and bathtubs with whirlpool jets. All have sitting areas, perfect for curling up with a bestseller (provided) or matching wits over a game of chess (also provided). At breakfast, don’t miss the homemade waffles and pancakes, served on the sunny porch. Wine and cheese are served in the evening.
Request the garden cottage, with its flowering window boxes, if you are in a honeymooning mood.

100 Main St., Edgartown, MA 02539. ☏ 877/468-6763 or 508/627-5536. Fax 508/627-5536. world.jonathanmunroe.com. 8 units, 1 cottage (5 with tub/shower, 2 shower only, 1 tub and shower). Summer $190–$250 double; $290 cottage. Rates include full breakfast. AE, MC, V. Open year-round. No children under 12. In room: A/C, hair dryer.

**Victorian Inn** ★★★ Do you ever long to stay at a quaint, reasonably priced inn that is bigger than a B&B but smaller than a Marriott? In the center of Edgartown, the Victorian Inn is a freshened-up version of those old-style hotels that used to exist in the center of every New England town. The inn has enough rooms that you don’t feel like you are trespassing in someone’s home, yet it retains a personal touch. With three floors of long, graceful corridors, the Victorian could serve as a stage set for a 1930s romance. Several rooms have canopy beds and a balcony with a harbor view. Each year innkeepers Stephen and Karen Caliri have improved and refined the inn, and they are always quick to dispense helpful advice with good humor.


**MODERATE**

**The Arbor** ★ Value This 1880 farm house is at the far edge of town, but still within walking distance from the center. The inside is stylish, with a lovely cathedral-ceilinged living room where you can seek comfort in an overstuffed chintz couch. The rooms range from tiny to spacious, but all are nicely appointed, largely with antiques. Most of the rooms have small televisions. In the morning, the fresh-baked breakfast is served on fine china in the dining room. The rates are very reasonable here compared to other Edgartown B&Bs.

222 Upper Main St., Edgartown, MA 02539. ☏ 888/748-4383 or 508/627-8137. Fax 508/627-9104. www.arborinn.net. 10 units (2 with shared bathroom), 1 cottage. Summer $110–$120 room with shared bathroom; $145–$195 double; $1,000–$1,200 weekly cottage. Rates include continental breakfast. MC, V. Closed Nov–Apr. In room: A/C, no phone.

**Edgartown Inn** ★ Value This centrally located, historic inn offers perhaps the best value on the island. Nathaniel Hawthorne holed up here for nearly a year, and Daniel Webster also spent time here. It’s a lovely 1798 Federal manse, a showplace even here on captain’s row. Rooms are no-frills but pleasantly traditional; some have televisions. Breakfast, which is open to the public, is available in the dining room
for an extra charge ranging from $5.50 to $8.50. Some rooms in the front of the house have harbor views, and two have private balconies. Modernists may prefer the two cathedral-ceilinged quarters in the annex out back, which offer lovely light and a sense of seclusion. Service is excellent here; be sure to say hello to Henry King, who has been on staff here for over 50 years.


OAK BLUFFS

Those looking for a basic motel with a central location will want to stay at Surfside Motel across from the ferry dock on Oak Bluffs Ave. in Oak Bluffs (☎ 800/537-3007 or 508/693-2500; www.mvsurfside.com). Summer rates are $195 to $220 double; $295 suites. Rooms have air-conditioning, televisions, minifridges, and telephones. Open year-round; well-behaved pets are allowed.

EXPENSIVE

The Dockside Inn Set close to the harbor, the Dockside is perfectly located for exploring the town of Oak Bluffs and is geared for families. The welcoming exterior, with its colonnaded porch and balconies, duplicates the inns of yesteryear. Once inside, the whimsical Victorian touches will transport you immediately into the spirit of this rollicking town. Most of the standard-size rooms have either a garden or harbor view; they’re decorated cheerfully in pinks and greens. Suites have kitchenettes, and some have private decks. Location, charm, and flair mean this is a popular place, so book early. There are two accessible rooms for those with disabilities.


The Oak Bluffs Inn This homey, Victorian inn has a fun location at the top of Circuit Avenue, Oak Bluffs’ main drag that is full of restaurants, ice cream parlors, clubs, and shops. The inn stands out with its whimsical, colorful Victorian paint scheme and its prominent cupola, from which guests can enjoy a 360-degree view of Oak Bluffs, including the beach and harbor a few blocks away. It’s a 2-minute stroll from the inn to all the Oak Bluffs attractions, including the gingerbread cottages, the tabernacle, the Flying Horses Carousel, the waterfront park, the ferries, the harbor, and the beach.
With its large veranda, the inn has a particularly welcoming appearance. As is typical in a house of this vintage, some of the rooms are a tad on the cozy side, but others are spacious and even have comfortable seating areas. All rooms have ceiling fans.


In room: A/C, hair dryer, ceiling fan, no phone.

**The Oak House**  
An 1872 Queen Anne, bay-front beauty, this one-time home of former Massachusetts governor William Claflin has preserved all the luxury and leisure of the Victorian age. Innkeeper Betsi Convery-Luce trained at Johnson & Wales; her pastries (served at breakfast and tea) are sublime. The rooms toward the back are quieter, but those in front have Nantucket Sound views. The common rooms are furnished in an opulent Victorian mode, as are the 10 bedrooms (two are suites). This inn is very service-oriented, and requests for feather beds, down pillows, or non-allergenic pillows are accommodated. Anyone intent on decompressing is sure to benefit from this immersion into another era—the one that invented the leisure class.

**Wesley Hotel** Value  
Formerly one of the grand hotels of Martha’s Vineyard, this imposing 1879 property, right on the harbor, is now a solid entry in the good value category, especially with its low off-season rates. It occupies a terrific location in Oak Bluffs, across the street from the harbor, in the center of the action. Remnants remain from its years of grandeur—the rockers that line the spacious wraparound porch, and the lobby with its old photographs, dark-stained oak trim, old-fashioned registration desk, and Victorian reproductions. Most rooms are fairly compact and basic, though some are roomy with harbor views. The Wesley Arms, behind the main building, contains 33 air-conditioned rooms with private bathrooms, accessible by elevator. Eight suites and executive suites contain kitchenettes. There are five rooms equipped for those with disabilities. *Note:* Reserve early to specify harbor views, which do not cost more than regular rooms. This is one of the few Vineyard hotels that does not require a minimum stay in the off season.

In room: A/C, TV, no phone.

**MODORATE**

**Attleboro House** Value  
As old-fashioned as the afghans that proprietor Estelle Reagan crochets for every bed, this harborside guesthouse—serving Camp Meeting visitors since 1874—epitomizes the simple, timeless joys of summer. None of the rooms is graced with a private bathroom, but the rates are so retro that you may not mind. What was good enough for 19th-century tourists more than suffices today.

42 Lake Ave. (on the harbor), Oak Bluffs, MA 02557. ☏ 508/693-4346. 11 units, all with shared bathroom. Summer $125 double; $135–$220 suite. AE, DISC, MC, V. Closed Oct–May.

**VINEYARD HAVEN (TISBURY)**

**VERY EXPENSIVE**

**The Mansion House** 🌟🌟 Finds  
After a fire burned down the 300-year-old Tisbury Inn several years ago, the owners decided to rebuild, making this one of the island’s most full-service inns. The
building, occupying a prominent corner location in Vineyard Haven, a short walk from the ferry, is now a community hub, with a restaurant, health club, and shops. The three-story hotel is generous with comfortable amenities such as deluxe robes and bath products. The rooms range in size from cozy to spacious, and prices vary accordingly. Many have kitchenettes, plasma-screen televisions, and extra-large bathtubs. Some have harbor views and gas fireplaces. All rooms are equipped with high-speed Internet service at a cost of $9.99 per day. One unique feature of the inn is the 75-foot mineral spring (no chlorine) swimming pool in the inn’s basement. There is still a lot of history here among the thoroughly modern amenities: For instance, an antique oak bar with elaborate carvings, saved from the old Island House, serves as the inn’s bar. The roof deck offers...
wonderful panoramic views of Vineyard Haven and the harbor. A full gourmet breakfast is served buffet-style at Zephyrus, the hotel's restaurant (see “Where to Dine,” later in this chapter).

9 Main St., Vineyard Haven, MA 02568. 📞 800/332-4112 or 508/693-2200. Fax 508/693-4095. www.mvmansionhouse.com. 32 units. Summer $269–$449 double. Rates include full buffet breakfast. AE, MC, V. Open year-round. Amenities: Restaurant; indoor heated pool; health club; spa; room service to 8:30pm; shops. In room: A/C, TV, dataport, fridge, hair dryer, iron.

**EXPENSIVE**

**Crocker House Inn** Jynell and Jeff Kristal have renovated this 1920s home near the harbor into a comfortable and casually elegant place to stay. Rooms are particularly light and airy here, all redone with new linens, beds, and furniture with a country flavor. The third-floor suite includes a deck, minifridge, and two-person Jacuzzi. Jynell has Marriott experience, and it shows in the room details and service-oriented hospitality. Jeff bakes the blueberry muffins in the morning, and guests rave about his chocolate chip cookies set out with iced tea and lemonade in the afternoon.


**CHILMARK (INCLUDING MENEMSHA) & WEST TISBURY**

**VERY EXPENSIVE**

**Beach Plum Inn** This family-owned country inn, recently renovated, is on 8 lush acres, with a lawn sloping graciously down to Vineyard Sound. It’s a beautiful, secluded property tucked away in Menemsha, yet within walking distance of the harbor. On the grounds are a croquet course and Nova Grass tennis court, plus bikes to take exploring (extra charge). Rooms are in the main inn and in four cottages. The room decor is predominantly cottage-y, though some rooms lean toward elegance. Some of the rooms have canopied beds and are quite romantic. Linens are 275-count and above; towels are Egyptian cotton. Five of the rooms have a whirlpool bath. All but one room have decks or patios, some with views of Menemsha Harbor. One room is accessible for those with disabilities. Inn guests get beach passes to the private up-island beaches. The inn’s restaurant is one of the best fine-dining spots on the island (see “Where to Dine,” below).

11 units (all with tub/shower). Summer $200–$400 double or cottage. Rates include full breakfast in season, continental off season. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Closed Jan–Apr.

Amenities: Restaurant (fine dining); tennis court; croquet court; in-room massage; babysitting; laundry service for a charge; maid service twice daily; private beach passes. In room: A/C, TV, dataport, fridge, hair dryer, iron.

EXPENSIVE

The Inn at Blueberry Hill ✈ This bucolic property, formerly a farm dating from the late 1600s, is set on 56 acres in the up-island town of Chilmark. Book a room at this inn if you want a secluded vacation in the country, far away from the tourism crowds in Edgartown and Oak Bluffs. The comfortable rooms and suites are spread out in six traditional-style buildings. The overall feeling of the sunny rooms is serenity; they feature white cotton linens, ceiling fans, and hand-painted furniture. Many thoughtful extras are provided for guests, such as terrycloth robes, penlight flashlights (for evening strolls), and coolers for the beach. Exquisite Chilmark Chocolates are placed on pillows at night. Many have private balconies or porches. Though the property is ancient, the inn feels very up to date. The inn includes exercise and spa services, as well as a lap pool and a tennis court. Also on-site is Theo’s, an attractive fine-dining restaurant specializing in fresh island cuisine. The restaurant is BYOB, as Chilmark is a dry town. The Inn at Blueberry Hill is surrounded by 2,000 acres of conservation land with a network of nature trails. Guests are given passes and offered shuttles to the private beaches, Lucy Vincent and Squibnocket, which are about 4 miles away. Children over 12 are welcome at the inn.


Lambert’s Cove Country Inn ✈ A dedicated horticulturist created this haven in the 1920s, expanding on a 1790 farmstead. You can see the old adzed beams in some of the upstairs bedrooms. Among his more prized additions is the Greenhouse Room, a bedroom with its own conservatory. You’ll find an all-weather tennis court on the grounds, and the namesake beach is a mile away. The inn’s restaurant is known for skilled New American dinners. Set far off the main road and surrounded by apple trees and lilacs, this
secluded estate suggests an age when time was measured in generations. There’s no better place to relax.


Menemsha Inn and Cottages There’s an almost Quaker-like plainness to this weathered waterside compound set in the pines near Menemsha Harbor, though many of the rooms are quite inviting. Mostly it’s a place to revel in the outdoors (on 11 seaside acres) without distractions. The property is about a half-mile walk through a wooded path to the beach at Menemsha Harbor. The late Life photographer, Alfred Eisenstaedt, summered here for 4 decades, and the interior aesthetics would please any artist. There’s no restaurant—just a restful breakfast room. Cottages have televisions, VCRs, dataports, outdoor showers, barbecue grills, kitchenettes, and hair dryers. The most luxurious suites are located in the Carriage House, which has a spacious common room with a fieldstone fireplace. The suites are equipped with minifridges, hair dryers, and ceiling fans. All rooms have private decks; most have water views. Guests have access to complimentary passes and shuttle bus service to the Lucy Vincent and Squibnocket private beaches.

Off North Rd. (about ¼ mile northeast of the harbor), Menemsha, MA 02552. (508) 645-2521. Fax 508/645-9500. www.menemshainn.com. 15 units, 12 cottages. Summer $240–$265 double; from $310 suite; $2,200–$3,100 weekly cottages. Rates include continental breakfast for rooms and suites. No credit cards. Closed Nov to mid-Apr. Amenities: Tennis court; fitness room (step machine, treadmill, exercise bike, and free weights); beach passes. In room: TV.

MODERATE

The Captain R. Flanders House Set amid 60 acres of rolling meadows crisscrossed by stone walls, this late-18th-century farmhouse, built by a whaling captain, has remained much the same for two centuries. The living room, with its broad-plank floors, is full of astonishing antiques, but there’s none of that “for show” feel that’s prevalent in more self-conscious B&Bs. This is a working farm, so there’s no time for posing (even if it was featured in Martha Stewart’s Wedding Book). Two new countrified cottages overlooking the pond have living rooms but not kitchenettes. After fortifying themselves with homemade muffins, island-made honey, and jam at breakfast, guests are free to fritter the day away. The owners will provide you with a coveted pass to
nearby Lucy Vincent Beach, or perhaps you’d prefer a long country walk.

North Rd. (about ¼ mile northeast of Menemsha), Chilmark, MA 02535. ☏ 508/645-3123. www.captainflanders.com. 5 units (3 with shared bathroom); 2 cottages. Summer $80 single with shared bathroom; $175 double with shared bathroom; $195 double with private bathroom; $275 cottage. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, MC, V. Closed Nov to early May. Amenities: Private beach; shuttle bus passes. In room: No phone.

**INEXPENSIVE**

**Hostelling International Martha’s Vineyard**  The first “purpose-built” youth hostel in the United States, this homey, cedar-shake saltbox set at the edge of a vast state forest is still a front-runner. It hums with wholesome energy, from the huge group kitchen with recycling bins and two communal fridges, to the five sex-segregated dorms containing 74 beds. The hallways are plastered with notices of local attractions (some stores offer discounts to hostellers), and the check-in desk also serves as a tourist information booth. Outside, there’s a volleyball court and a sheltered bike rack. By bike, the hostel is a little more than 7 miles from the Vineyard Haven ferry terminal; shuttle buses also make the rounds in summer. You’ll have no trouble at all finding enjoyable ways to spend time during the “lockout,” from 10am to 5pm; just don’t forget the 11pm curfew.


### 3 Where to Dine

Restaurants tend to be rather expensive on the Vineyard, but the stiff competition has produced a bevy of places that offer excellent service, evocative settings, and creative cuisine. A note on spirits: Outside Oak Bluffs and Edgartown, all of Martha’s Vineyard is “dry,” including Vineyard Haven, so bring your own bottle; some restaurants charge a small fee for uncorking. **Great Harbour Gourmet & Spirits**, 40 Main St., Edgartown (☏ 508/627-4390), has a very good wine selection.

Refer to the accommodations maps earlier in this chapter for locations of many of the restaurants reviewed here.

**EDGARTOWN**

**VERY EXPENSIVE**

**L’étoile 🍂 🍀 🌃 CONTTEMPORARY FRENCH**  Every signal (including the price) tells you that this is going to be one very special
meal. Having passed through a pair of ormolu-laden sitting rooms, one comes upon a conservatory—a wonderfully summery room—sparkling with the light of antique brass sconces and fresh with the scent of potted citrus trees. Everything is perfection, from the table settings (gold-rimmed Villeroy & Boch) to a nouvelle-cuisine menu that varies seasonally but is always exquisite. Chef Michael Brisson, who came up through the kitchen of Boston’s famed L’Espalier, is determined to dazzle, and he does, with an ever-evolving seven-course menu of delicacies flown in from the four corners of the earth. Sevruga caviar usually makes an appearance—perhaps as a garnish for chilled leek soup. An étouffée of lobster with cognac, and chervil sauce may come with littlenecks, bay scallops, and roasted corn fritters; or roasted pheasant breast in a cider, apple, brandy, and thyme sauce may be accompanied by apple, sun-dried cherry, and mascarpone-filled wild-rice crepes. A chef’s tasting menu is offered for $120 per person.


EXPENSIVE

Alchemy French Bistro This spiffy bistro is a little slice of Paris on Edgartown’s Main Street. Such esoteric choices as oyster brie soup and Burgundy Vintners salad share the bill with escargot and chanterelle fricassee and lapin moutarde spatzle (yes, that’s rabbit). As befits a true bistro, there’s also a large selection of cocktails, liqueurs, and wines. In addition to lunch and dinner, a bar menu is served from 2:30 to 11pm. This choice isn’t for everyone, but sophisticated diners will enjoy the Continental flair here.

71 Main St. (in the center of town). 508/627-9999. Reservations accepted for parties of 8 or more. Main courses $22–$33. AE, MC, V. Apr–Nov Mon–Sat noon–2:30pm and 5:30–10pm, Sun 5:30–10pm; call for off-season hours. Open year-round.

Atria New American This fine-dining restaurant set in an 18th-century sea captain’s house on Upper Main Street in Edgartown gets rave reviews for its gourmet cuisine and high-caliber service. Pronounced with the emphasis on the second syllable (ah-tree-ah), the name refers to the brightest of three stars forming the Southern Triangle constellation. You can sit in the elegant dining room, the rose-covered wraparound porch, or the brick cellar bar downstairs for more casual dining. Chef/owner Christian Thornton’s
menu offers a variety of creative dishes with influences from around the country and around the world, with stops in the Mediterranean, Middle East, and Asia. It features organic island-grown produce, off-the-boat seafood, local shellfish, and aged prime meats. Popular starters include miso soup with steamed crab dumplings or seared foie gras with roasted quail. Unusual main courses include wok-fried Martha’s Vineyard lobster or seared Georges Bank scallops with short-rib ragout and cauliflower puree. Half bottles of wine are available on the extensive wine list. Live entertainment, usually an acoustic guitar or a jazz trio, is on tap during weekends in the bar.


Chesca’s  FINDS  ITALIAN  This modern-decor restaurant at the Colonial Inn is a solid entry, with yummy food at reasonable prices, and you’re sure to find favorites such as paella (with roasted lobster and other choice seafood), risotto (with roasted vegetables), and ravioli (with portobello mushrooms and asparagus). Smaller appetites can fill up on homemade soup and salad.

At the Colonial Inn, 38 N. Water St.  (508/627-1234.  Reservations not accepted.  Main courses $22–$36.  AE, MC, V.  Late June to early Sept daily 6–10pm; call for off-season hours.  Closed mid-Oct to mid-Apr.

The Coach House  FINE DINING  NEW AMERICAN  This is a terrific place to have a drink, or to dine with an exquisite view of Edgartown Harbor and the lighthouse. The long and elegant bar is particularly smashing. The menu is simple but stylish. To start, there’s soft-shell crab with arugula and teardrop tomatoes. As a main course, try the caramelized sea scallops with a salad of Asian pear and apple. Service here is excellent; these are trained waiters, not your usual college surfer dudes. At the end of your meal, you may want to sit on the rockers on the Harbor View Hotel’s wraparound porch and just watch the lights twinkling in the harbor.


Lattanzi’s  FINDS  NORTHERN ITALIAN  Some say Al Lattanzi cooks the best veal chops on Martha’s Vineyard. Lattanzi’s would be the ideal place to eat in the dead of winter, by the glow of the paneled living room’s handsome fireplace. Service is exceptional, and the wine list has a wide range of well-priced bottles. Back to the veal
chop. You have two choices: Piccolo Fiorentina, which is a hickory-grilled veal porterhouse chop with black peppercorns and lemon, or Lombatina di Vitello al Porcini, which serves the chop with porcini-mushroom cream. If it’s July, get the striped-bass special; from local waters, it’s luscious. Lattanzi also has a very good brick-oven pizzeria next door (☎ 508/627-9084).


Lure ★★ NEW AMERICAN This elegant restaurant on the second floor of the new Winnetu Resort in Katama is quickly making a name for itself as a wonderful place for dinner. Those fortunate enough to get a window seat or a spot on the deck in good weather will enjoy a great sunset view over South Beach. Executive Chef Ed Gannon, formerly of the Four Seasons Hotel in Boston, wows diners with his stylish preparations. The menu is divided into two sections, with “simpler” items such as pan-roasted Chatham cod, as well as fancier fare such as lobster with coconut basmati rice. A special section of the restaurant, called Osprey, features a children’s menu.


MODERATE

Among the Flowers Cafe ★★ Value AMERICAN Everything’s fresh and appealing at this small outdoor cafe near the dock. Sit under the awning, and you’ll just catch a glimpse of the harbor. The breakfasts are the best around, and all the crepes, waffles, and eggs are also available at lunch. The comfort-food dinners (chicken and black-pepper sauté over pasta, butter-and-crumb-crusted baked haddock with a sautéed lobster-and-shallot-butter cream) are among the most affordable options in this pricey town. There’s almost always a wait, not just because it’s so picturesque, but because the food is homey, hearty, and kind on the wallet.


Seafood Shanty ★ SEAFOOD This casual restaurant overlooking Edgartown Harbor features outdoor dining and cheerful service by college kids. This is a great place for lunch with a water view. Good lunch choices are the lobster roll or the cold poached salmon. For dinner, options include a classic bouillabaisse seafood stew or a
prime rib plate. There is also a children’s menu. The restaurant has a convenient walk-up counter in a shack on Dock Street in front of the restaurant where virtually the entire menu is available to go.


**INEXPENSIVE**

**Main Street Diner** **Kids** AMERICAN It’s a little kitschy-cute, what with cartoon wallpaper decorated with vintage doodads, but tony Edgartown could use a place geared to folks not out to bust the budget. Kids and adults alike will enjoy this ersatz diner, where the food and trimmings hearken back to the 1950s. A one-egg breakfast with home fries and a buttermilk biscuit will set you back only $2; the burgers and sandwiches (including a classic open-face hot turkey with gravy, potatoes, and cranberry sauce) less than $6. Grab a grilled cheese or BLT, and wash it down with a cherry Coke.

Old Post Office Sq. (off Main St. in the center of town). (508) 627-9337. Reservations not accepted. Most items under $15. AE, MC, V. Daily 7am–8:30pm. Open year-round.

**The Newes from America** **Finds** PUB GRUB This subterranean tavern is the place to come for pub food, including fish and chips and beer. Locals love the French onion soup here. Beers are a specialty: try a rack of five esoteric brews, or let your choice of food—from a wood-smoked oyster “Island Poor Boy” sandwich with linguica relish, to an 18-ounce porterhouse steak—dictate your draft; the menu comes handily annotated with recommendations. Don’t miss their seasoned fries, accompanied by a savory Southwestern dipping sauce.


**OAK BLUFFS**

**EXPENSIVE**

**Balance** **NEW AMERICAN** Chef Benjamin deForest is the creative force behind this expansive restaurant, centrally located on Circuit Avenue in Oak Bluffs. The loftlike space features an open kitchen on one side and a 30-foot long bar on the other. The specialties here are seasonal island-grown produce and seafood that Mr. deForest claims to be the freshest served on the island. The menu changes frequently, but specialties include a delicate yellowfin tuna tartare and Pernod sundae, and a unique salad with artichoke hearts, frisée, and shaved beets with truffle vinaigrette. For main courses,
big eaters will love the 16-ounce broiled salt-crusted New York strip steak with Roquefort Yukon potatoes. Fish lovers will find the grilled sake-marinated salmon with stir-fried baby bok choy to be a real treat. A six-course tasting menu costs $85 per person.


**Lola’s Southern Seafood** ✿ SOUTHERN  This sultry New Orleans–style restaurant drips with atmosphere: Crystal chandeliers, intricate wrought-iron, arched doorways, and starched linens in an ochre palette. Specialties include the chicken-and-seafood jambalaya and the rib-eye steak spiced either “from heaven or hell.” Meals are served family-style, with large helpings of side dishes. There’s live entertainment nightly in season (Fri–Sat during off season), while Sunday brunch also features live music. A less-expensive pub menu is served in the bar with its mural of island personalities.

At the Island Inn, Beach Rd. ☏ 508/693-5007. www.lolassouthernseafood.com. Reservations accepted only for 5 or more. Main courses $20–$36. DC, MC, V. Sun 10am–2pm; daily 5–11pm. Open year-round.

**Park Corner Bistro** ✿ NEW AMERICAN  The newest eatery in the center of Oak Bluffs is a quaint and cozy bistro that has a definite European aura. It’s an intimate and romantic space for casual fine dining. Owner Josh Aronie and his partner, chef Jesse Martin, serve up creative offerings, and locals and visitors keep the place packed all summer. Favorite appetizers are the beet salad and the Parmesan gnocchi, which is sautéed with chanterelle and black trumpet mushrooms. The best main course choices are the Australian lamb loin with sweet-corn flan and champagne corn emulsion, and the Black Angus steak with arugula, Yukon Gold whipped potatoes, and Vidalia onion compote. For dessert, don’t miss the warm fruit cobbler with vanilla ice cream.


**Sweet Life Cafe** ✿ FRENCH/AMERICAN  Locals are crazy about this pearl of a restaurant, set in a restored Victorian house on upper Circuit Avenue and run by chef/owner Jackson Kenworth. In season, the most popular seating is outside in the gaily lit garden. Fresh island produce is featured, with seafood specials an enticing draw. The menu changes often and everything is terrific. Expect yummy soups such as vegetable white bean pistou and main
courses such as roast lamb loin with ratatouille. If the roasted lobster with potato-Parmesan risotto, roasted yellow beets, and smoked-salmon chive fondue is offered, order it.

63 Circuit Ave.  
508/696-0200.  
Reservations recommended.  
Main courses $23–$36.  
AE, DISC, MC, V.  
Mid-May to mid-Sept daily 5:30–10pm; Apr to mid-May and mid-Sept to Dec Thurs–Mon 5:30–9:30pm.  
Closed Jan–Apr.

MODERATE

Tsunami *Finds*  
ASIAN/INTERNATIONAL  
For something a little different in fine dining, look for the bright red, two-story cottage on Oak Bluffs Harbor. When you climb up the stairs and enter the second-floor dining room of this small restaurant, you’ll feel like you’ve discovered something very special indeed. It’s a picture-perfect view of Oak Bluffs Harbor in a spare room with Asian accents. But people also come to Tsunami for the food. While the restaurant specializes in seafood, there’s also pheasant, duck, pork, and filet mignon, as well as wonderful pad Thai and tuna sashimi appetizers to start. The chef’s specialty is the seared tuna with mango-mint mashed potatoes served with mixed vegetables and onion soy relish. The downstairs bar, with its cozy sitting area, has become quite a summer hangout in the evenings.

6 Circuit Ave. Extension.  
508/696-8900.  
Reservations accepted.  
Main courses $15–$29.  
AE, MC, V.  
June–Aug daily 11am–3pm and 5:30–10pm; call for off-season hours.  
Closed mid-Oct to mid-May.

The Vineyard’s Best Sweet Shops

**Mad Martha’s**  
Vineyarders are mad for this locally made ice cream, which comes in 2 dozen enticing flavors. You could opt for a restrained mango sorbet, which isn’t to say you shouldn’t go for a hot-fudge sundae.  
10 Circuit Ave.  
(in the center of town).  
508/693-9151.  
Branches at 8 Union St., Vineyard Haven (508/693-5883), and 7 N. Water St., Edgartown (508/627-8761).  
Closed Oct–Apr.

**Murdick’s Fudge:** Since 1887, the Murdick family has been serving up homemade fudge, brittle, clusters, and bark. Bring the kids and watch the candy-makers in progress.  
5 Circuit Ave. and 21 N. Water St., Edgartown.  
888/553-8343 or 508/627-8047.  
Summer Mon–Fri 10am–5pm, Sun–Sat 10am–8pm.
Zapotec  

**MEXICAN/SOUTHWESTERN** Look for the chile-pepper lights entwining the porch of this clapboard cottage: They’re a beacon leading to tasty regional Mexican cuisine, from mussels *Oaxaca* (with chipotle peppers, cilantro, lime, and cream) to crab cakes *Tulum* (mixed with grilled peppers and cilantro, served with dual salsas), plus the standard chicken and beef burritos. There are also tasty fish tacos, topped with a creamy yogurt dressing, and a small children’s menu. A good mole is hard to find this far north; here you can accompany it with Mexico’s unbeatable beers (including several rarely spotted north of the border), refreshing sangria, or perhaps a hand-picked, well-priced wine.


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**INEXPENSIVE**

**Coop deVille**  

**SEAFOOD** Of the several open-air harborfront choices in Oak Bluffs, this one has the best service and food. This outdoor fried seafood shack serves up tasty beer-battered shrimp, grilled swordfish, lobster salad, and “world famous” chicken wings. Wing connoisseurs can choose from mild to suicide to 3-mi...
capers; and lobster Normande flambéed with calvados, apples, and cream. Despite the fact that Le Grenier means (and, in fact, is housed in) an attic, the restaurant is quite romantic, especially when aglow with hurricane lamps. **Remember:** You must BYOB here.

96 Main St. (in the center of town). ✆ **508/693-4906.** Reservations suggested. Main courses $22–$32. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Daily 11am–2pm and 5:30–10pm. Open year-round.

**Zephrus at the Mansion House** ★★★ INTERNATIONAL

This hip restaurant at the Mansion House in the center of Vineyard Haven is a great place to go for casual fine dining. Seating is at the sidewalk cafe on Main Street or inside by the hearth in view of the open kitchen. Menu items are creative at this high-energy venue, and portions are generous. For starters you may try the snow crab cakes or the spicy mussels. Main-course winners are pan-roasted pork tenderloin served with sweet ‘tater tots; and shrimp and farfalle pasta. Though the menu is in constant flux, there is always a good vegetarian choice such as the delicious vegetable risotto with truffle vinaigrette. Since the restaurant is in BYOB Vineyard Haven, you’ll want to bring your favorite wine to complement this winning cuisine. The corkage fee is $5 per table.

Main St. ✆ **508/693-3416.** Reservations recommended. Main courses $18–$35. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. July–Aug Mon-Sat 11:30am–3:30pm and 5:30–10pm, Sun 8am–2pm and 5:30–10pm; call for off-season hours. Open year-round.

**MODERATE**

**Black Dog Tavern** ★★★★ NEW AMERICAN

How does a humble harbor shack come to be a national icon? Location helps. So do cool T-shirts. Soon after Shenandoah captain Robert Douglas decided, in 1971, that this hard-working port could use a good restaurant, influential vacationers, stuck waiting for the ferry, began to wander into this saltbox to tide themselves over with a bit of “blackout cake” or peanut-butter pie. The rest is history, as smart marketing moves extrapolated on word of mouth. The smartest of these moves was the invention of the signature “Martha's Vineyard Whitefoot,” a black Lab whose stalwart profile now adorns everything from baby’s overalls to doggy bandannas, golf balls, and needlepoint kits. Originally, the symbol signaled Vineyard ties to fellow insiders; now it merely bespeaks an acquaintance with mail-order catalogs.

Still, tourists love this rough-hewn tavern, and it’s not just hype that keeps them happy. The food is still home-cooking good—heavy on the seafood, of course (including grilled swordfish with banana, basil, and lime; and bluefish with mustard soufflé sauce)—and the blackout cake
has lost none of its appeal. Though the lines grow ever longer (there can be a wait to get on the waiting list!), nothing much has changed at this beloved spot. Eggs Galveston for breakfast at the Black Dog Tavern is still one of the ultimate Vineyard experiences—go early, when it first opens, and sit on the porch, where the views are perfect.

Beach St. Extension (on the harbor). 📞 508/693-9223. Reservations not accepted. Main courses $14–$27. AE, MC, V. June to early Sept Mon–Sat 7–11am, 11:30am–2:30pm, and 5–10pm, Sun 7am–1pm and 5–10pm; call for off-season hours. Open year-round.

INEXPENSIVE

Art Cliff Diner ❋ ECLECTIC DINER Expect the best food you’ve ever had at a diner at this quirky establishment. It’s a short walk from the center of Vineyard Haven. Be aware that the hours are a little unreliable and you should call to be sure it is open before making the trek. The food here is really scrumptious, whether you are having the fish of the day that has just been caught that morning served with herbs from the chef’s garden, or a simple burger that is cooked just right. Desserts are homemade, of course.

39 Beach Rd. 📞 508/693-1224. Reservations not accepted. Main courses all under $15. No credit cards. July–Aug daily 8am–8pm; call for off-season hours. Closed Nov–Apr.

TAKEOUT & PICNIC FARE

Black Dog Bakery ❋ In need of a snack at 5am? That’s when the doors to this fabled bakery open; from mid-morning on, it’s elbow-room only. This selection of freshly baked breads, muffins, and desserts can’t be beat. Don’t forget some homemade doggie biscuits for your pooch.

Water St. (near the harbor). 📞 508/693-4786. Summer daily 5:30am–7pm; winter daily 5:30am–5pm.

CHILMARK (INCLUDING MENEMSHA) & WEST TISBURY

VERY EXPENSIVE

The Beach Plum Inn & Restaurant ★★★ SEAFOOD This jewel of a restaurant is located in an inn that sits on a bluff overlooking the fishing village of Menemsha. Extensive renovations and attention to quality have made this one of the island’s top dining venues. Guests can dine inside in the spare, but elegant, dining room, or outside on the new tiled patio. Either way, diners enjoy sunset views of the harbor. Chef James McDonough’s most popular dishes include hazelnut-encrusted halibut with Marsala wine beurre blanc sauce; and Alaskan king salmon, grilled over Peruvian blue
mashed potatoes with a morel mushroom sauce and crabmeat timbale. The most winning appetizer is the blackened lobster tips, served with mango cream sauce and house-cured gravlax with homemade wild rice and corn pancakes. For dessert, you'll flip for the chocolate quadruple-layer cake made with white and dark chocolate mouse and Chambord. In the spring and fall, there is usually an ethereal soufflé on the menu, either Grand Marnier or chocolate.

At the Beach Plum Inn. 50 Beach Plum Lane (off North Rd.), Menemsha. ☏ 508/645-9454. www.beachpluminn.com. Reservations required. Main courses $32–$40; 4-course fixed-price menu $68. Off season only 3-course fixed-price menu $50. Mid-June to early Sept daily seatings 5:30–6:45pm and 8–9:30pm; call for off-season hours. Closed Dec–Apr.

Home Port ⭐⭐ Kids SEAFOOD When the basics—a lobster and a sunset—are what you crave, head to this classic Vineyard establishment, a favorite of locals and visitors alike. At first glance, prices for the lobster dinners may seem a bit high, but note that they include an appetizer of your choice (go with the stuffed quahog), salad, amazing fresh-baked breads, a non-alcoholic beverage (remember, it’s BYOB in these parts), and dessert. The decor is on the simple side, but who really cares? It’s the riveting harbor views that have drawn fans to this family-friendly place for over 60 years. Locals not keen on summer crowds prefer to order their lobster dinners for pickup (less than half-price) at the restaurant door, then head down to Menemsha Beach for a private sunset supper.


EXPENSIVE

At The Cornerway ⭐⭐ NEW AMERICAN/CARIBBEAN
This elegant fine-dining restaurant in Chilmark was opened by Jamaican chef Deon Thomas. It’s a good dining option if you are staying at one of the up-island inns in Chilmark or West Tisbury. Chef Thomas, who cooks with Caribbean flair, specializes in combining the freshest ingredients with wonderful spices. The menu is changed daily, but be on the lookout for tasty starters such as the spicy cilantro-laced gazpacho, smoked mako bites, and Dutch-pot jerk venison. As a main course, consider the unusual fish dish, the rosemary-roasted whole pompano; the celebratory oven-crisped Oriental spice duck; or, of course, Jamaican jerk chicken. Remember this restaurant is in a “dry” town, so you must BYOB. Corkage fee is $4 per table.
Bittersweet NEW AMERICAN  It’s a bit of an adventure to take the long drive down winding country roads into the heart of the Vineyard to this very fine restaurant. This pricey but popular up-island restaurant is earning raves for the high quality of the food and service. It’s also a hip venue, the place where island-insiders who wouldn’t be caught dead in the down-island towns go to see and be seen. From the outside, it looks like a modest roadhouse, but the inside is stylishly decorated with fine dining in mind. The menu changes often, as the chef combines unusual ingredients with island produce, meats, and locally caught fish. The restaurant is located in West Tisbury, a dry town, so you must BYOB here. Also, no credit cards are accepted, so bring plenty of cash.

Lambert’s Cove Country Inn Restaurant NEW AMERICAN  One of the Vineyard’s favorite chefs, Joe Silva, is now cooking at this romantic country inn and drawing enthusiastic reviews. If you are staying in one of the down-island towns, such as Edgartown or Oak Bluffs, driving through the wooded countryside to this secluded inn feels like an expedition to an earlier time. The interior of the inn’s fine-dining restaurant is charming, with crisp white tablecloths and antique furniture. In good weather, you can dine al fresco on a deck surrounded by flowering trees and shrubs. Many people believe that Lambert’s Cove is the perfect place for a special occasion, say an anniversary dinner or a Mother’s Day brunch. The menu features fresh island seafood, veal, beef, poultry, and vegetables from local gardens and farms. You may begin your meal with a crab and asparagus Napoleon, or simply with a luscious cream of mushroom soup. Special dinner entrees include grilled marinated duck breast with orange sauce and green apple chutney, or sea scallop and leek casserole baked in a sherry lobster cream sauce. Desserts are homemade delicacies. Don’t forget: The town of West Tisbury is “dry,” so you must bring your own alcoholic beverage. Corkage fee is $4.
MODERATE

The Bite ★★★ Finds SEAFOOD It’s usually places like “The Bite” that we crave when we think of New England. This is your quintessential “chowdah” and clam shack, flanked by picnic tables. Run by two sisters using their grandmother’s recipes, this place makes superlative chowder, potato salad, fried fish, and so forth. The food comes in graduated containers, with a jumbo portion of shrimp topping out at around $26.

Basin Rd. (off North Rd., about ¼ mile northeast of the harbor), Menemsha. ☑️ 508/645-9239. Main courses $18–$30. No credit cards. July–Aug daily 11am–3pm and 5–7pm; call for off-season hours. Closed late Sept to Apr.

TAKEOUT & PICNIC FARE

Alley’s General Store Finds That endangered rarity, a true New England general store, Alley’s—in business since 1858—nearly foundered in the profit-mad 1980s. Luckily, the Martha’s Vineyard Preservation Trust interceded to give it a new lease on life, along with a much-needed structural overhaul. The stock is still the same, though: basically, everything you could possibly need, from scrub brushes to fresh-made salsa. Best of all, the no-longer-sagging front porch still supports a popular bank of benches, along with a blizzard of bulletin board notices. For a local’s-eye view of noteworthy activities and events, this is the first place to check.

State Rd. (in the center of town), West Tisbury. ☑️ 508/693-0088. Summer Mon–Sat 7am–7pm, Sun 8am–6pm; winter Mon–Sat 7am–6pm, Sun 8am–5pm. Open year-round.

West Tisbury Farmer’s Market Finds This seasonal outdoor market, open Wednesday from 2:30 to 5:30pm and Saturday from 9am to noon, is among the biggest and best in New England, and certainly the most rarefied, with local celebrities loading up on prize produce and snacking on pesto bread and other international goodies. The fun starts in June and runs for 18 Saturdays and 10 Wednesdays.

Old Agricultural Hall, West Tisbury. ☑️ 508/693-3638.