

A SOCIAL LIFE WEEKEND

By Karen Berliner

EAST HAMPTON



Old Hook Windmill, East Hampton



Beach in the Hamptons

As we well know, Mother Nature came down hard on us this past winter, and the East End endured blow after blow. After the damage was assessed, the lavish string of villages known as the Hamptons picked itself up and carried on with the task at hand, preparing for another Memorial Day-through-Labor Day stretch. With spring finally upon us, the once-fierce Atlantic Ocean waves now break gently on our shores, only this time around with nothing but the kindest of intentions. The region is up and running, welcoming us to another glorious season in the Hamptons.

Whether by car or train, by Hampton Jitney or Hampton Luxury Liner, we arrive coasting down Route 27 in orderly single file, the road flanked on either side by trees in their early stages of re-dress. Smatterings of green leaves mingle with the region's early flora, creating a perfect collage to greet us.

With great pride and cordiality, the quaint village of East Hampton hosts us for our first visit of the season. Luxurious resorts and beloved historical hotels mix with chic international and local boutiques along Main Street, such

as Elie Tahari, Hugo Boss, and Roberta Freymann, with galleries, antique shops, museums, and premium restaurants all adding a cultural dimension.

Once here, we take a leisurely drive along one of the most coveted addresses, Lily Pond Lane, hoping to catch a glimpse of a celebrity or two beyond the hedge-lined streets. Stopping for a treat, we visit Scoop du Jour ice cream parlor. A Hamptons staple since the 1950s, it offers crisp waffle cones stacked generously with flavors like cake batter and cotton candy. Still feeling the chill of the season? Enjoy a delectable Crumbs' cupcake or some of Dreesen's famous doughnuts instead. Add a hot specialty beverage and you are good to go.

It is indeed a perfect day for a stroll, so we walk and window shop until it's time for lunch. Looking for a more casual takeout option, we head over to La Fondita and discover Mexican tiled counters showcasing a line of homemade salsas and Tabasco sauces, as well as colorful wall décor. Lively Mexican music fills the air, and the aromas of the savory foods that await us drift from the open kitchen. Traditional Mexican street food, such as the *plattos tradicionales* tempts us. For lighter fare, we sample the *taco de pescada*, a Baja-style fish taco with chipotle mayonnaise and shredded cabbage, accompanied by an ice-cold tamarind juice on the rocks. We delight at the outdoor picnic tables, enhancing the authentic feel of the street-food dining experience.

Ready to settle in for the weekend, we drive over to the quaint and historic c/o Maidstone Hotel. This 18th century, 19-room hotel is just a stone's throw from the region's pristine beaches, boutique shopping, and trendy art galleries, making it the perfect destination. Scandinavian cozy is the concept here expressed via warm and vibrant furnishings. Step into the lounge, filled with comfortable sofas and armchairs that allow for anything from relaxation to champagne and an intimate chat. Three cottages and rooms allow for personal taste choices,



Maidstone Dining



La Fondita



The Mill House Inn

each with a unique design that includes tributes to iconic designers, historical personages, and cultural figures. Add beach parking permits, vintage Scandinavian bicycles, and yoga classes, and you have it all.

Getting hungry? Maidstone's dining room features inventive cuisine, thanks to talented chef Mathias Brogie. Top wines are perfectly paired with his signature contemplative menu, much of which is sourced locally. Handsome waiters and lovely servers move like efficient chess pieces about the room, pampering guests with old school manners infused with youthful charm. We sample a few small plates, including lojroms toast, a Swedish caviar on toasted brioche with sour cream and red onion, as well as the foie gras slider with frisée salad, pickled onion marmalade, and a lime-marinated apple. We toast with Bellini martinis and move on to our main courses: grilled Arctic char with early spring vegetables, lemon, and dill, and pan-seared turbot with red beet confit, fresh horseradish, and melted butter. Both are sublime choices: moist, delicate, and flavorful.

We retire for the night only to wake up to the aromas of a scrumptious breakfast with offerings such as Swedish pancakes with lingonberry jam, pure Vermont maple syrup, and whipped cream. After breakfast, we take a pair of vintage Scandinavian bicycles and enjoy a leisurely ride about town. We make it all the way to Rowdy Hall, named for a local boardinghouse frequented by the first artists and writers to visit the Hamptons at the turn of

the 19th century. This English pub-like spot features dark wood floors, ceiling beams, a roaring fireplace, and tables throughout the dining space. The copper-topped bar is backed by a stained glass bottle rack, which glows with jeweled colors during the day. Signature dishes here include steamed mussels with white wine and shallots and the ever-popular fish and chips.

Our next night of lodging takes us to The Mill House Inn, a luxury bed and breakfast featuring beautifully appointed and spacious rooms, spectacular child- and dog-friendly suites, and what is known far and wide as the best breakfast in the Hamptons. Overlooking the historic Old Hook Windmill, resplendent with lush gardens and sitting areas, we are indulged here from start to finish. After enjoying an especially good night's slumber, we are graciously invited into the dining room for a tasting. A fresh fruit platter with honey drizzle whets our appetites for the feast that is to come. A variety of frittatas and omelets entice diners, along with fresh blueberry pancakes, making the choosing difficult. At the end of our stay, we are encouraged to raid the common refrigerator in the main foyer and help ourselves to a variety of snacks for the road, including several types of scrumptious cookies, bottled water, or, even nicer, the inn's freshly brewed iced coffee in glass bottles. This is a lovely touch, indeed.

Looking to rent a house for the summer, or just for an extended stay? Located in the center of East Hampton

Village, The Mill House's sister property, The Graybarn Cottage, is perhaps the home in the Hamptons we have been longing for. Ageless style, upscale amenities, and spectacular service make it the perfect luxury house rental.

In the evening, we head over to Bostwick's Chowder House. This space features a casual atmosphere with a beach and seaside theme. Light colors, exposed wood, and fun décor that features surfboards and beach art, add summer ambiance and charm. The outdoor area features tables with umbrellas. A variety of chowders, as the name suggests, makes it tough to decide. Add raw bar items and steamed or baked seafood appetizers, and your craving is quelled. Fresh, whole lobsters are offered as well, served with corn on the cob, coleslaw, and drawn butter.

On Sunday, we pack up and spend the day at the beach. The water is crisp and inviting. It beckons us to return, and return we will.

We dine our final meal of the weekend at Fresno, a local favorite with a pleasant and relaxed atmosphere. Featuring a sky-lit room with a wall of French doors overlooking a landscaped patio, we enjoy dining al fresco under a pergola. Choosing from a sampling of appetizers, we select seared Hudson Valley foie gras with sautéed apples, cherry compote, and cider gastrique, and an arugula salad with duck prosciutto, black mission figs, spiced marcona almonds and white balsamic vinegar. The food is delicious. As a Wine



Fresno

Spectator award participant, Fresno also hosts wine maker dinners in which special selections are paired with the chef's cuisine. We promise ourselves a return visit here.

It's time to head back to the city, but perhaps we should make one last stop along the way. Long Island's wine country boasts a microclimate similar to that of Bordeaux, France, and although the North Fork's wineries are better known, the South Fork's wineries are respected, as well. Duck Walk Vineyards in Water Mill, for example, makes a number of varieties, including merlot, pinot grigio, and chardonnay, plus they offer live music on its veranda every weekend from 1:30 to 5:30 p.m. through October.

Talk about a perfect ending to a perfect weekend.



Bostwick's

