



Hotel of the Week

July 08, 2020

The world is slowly—at its own pace and in stages—reopening for travelers near and far. Because we're hearing from hotels and destinations that they're opening their doors and need your support more than ever, we're bringing the Hotel of the Week newsletter back to your inboxes. We've reached out directly to the hotels we're covering in this and upcoming editions, to ensure they're open and operating. We're happy to welcome them back—and know they're ready to welcome you, too.



HOTEL

Ocean House

It's easy to turn back time at the Ocean House. Propped up on a magnificent bluff overlooking Little Narragansett Bay in Rhode Island's historic Watch Hill neighborhood, the rambling, sunshine yellow Victorian structure recalls the days of the Grand Tour, when men of means would gallivant around the world, and the wealthy were lured from the city to the sea come summer. Though the porticoed property had 159 rooms when it opened in 1868, it ultimately fell into disrepair and was shuttered in 2003. But a \$146 million facelift in 2010 left it shiny and new—and a lot roomier. It now has 49 rooms and 18 signature suites, all of which are breezy, bright, and pinstriped, capturing the beach-feel but still managing to feel luxurious.

◆ 1 Bluff Ave., Watch Hill, Rhode Island 02891, United States

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Our Review

BY TODD PLUMMER

Why did this hotel catch your attention? What's the vibe?

Sweeping ocean views, the smell of salt water on the air, a historic property dating back to when the Vanderbilts and the Astors summered on this idyllic stretch of coast—it doesn't get much more iconic New England than this. Bust out your favorite boat shoes and L.L. Bean weekender bag, because leaning into the preppy history of this hotel is all part of the fun.

What's the backstory?

Built in 1868, the original Ocean House eventually fell into disrepair before its unfortunate demolition in 2005. Luckily, the current owners have an enormous respect for this Rhode Island icon's history, and they lovingly rebuilt Ocean House for the twenty-first century and retained more than 5,000 artifacts from the original building. The original front desk, for instance, was taken out, completely resorted, and put back into place. From the front and sides, the new building is an almost exact replica of the original, with welcome updates like modern plumbing, expanded room sizes, ocean views, and a spa.

Tell us all about the accommodations. Any tips on what to book?

It's hard to go wrong with the rooms here, as many offer ocean views of the Atlantic. After a long day of hitting the beach, you can count on some of the best sleep, with even the entry level rooms offering comfy mattresses, 400-thread-count embroidered linens, plus throw blankets, and both memory foam and goose down pillows. For larger groups, Ocean House also offers a range of individual homes through its "Cottage Collection"—so you can summer like an American aristocrat while still indulging in the amenities of the main hotel.

Is there a charge for Wi-Fi?

For a historic property that retains much of its original look and feel, the Wi-Fi is refreshingly whip-fast—and there are even hotspots down by the water so you can post to Instagram from the comfort of your beach chair.

Drinking and dining—what are we looking at?

The award-winning, highly acclaimed COAST restaurant is some of the best waterfront dining you'll find on the East Coast. It's a seasonal menu that draws many ingredients from local farms, with offerings changing not often day-to-day (just remember the "evening resort wear" dress code, which encourages "jackets preferred for gentlemen"). Obviously seafood is a strength, with pretty much everything being sourced from area fishermen. During the summer months, there are three more casual al fresco dining concepts scattered around the resort: The Verandah (get the catch of the day), Dune Cottage (get the brick-oven pizza), as well as vegan and vegetarian options at Seaside Terrace.

And the service?

Simply sublime. Ocean House wants to be the luxurious summer retreat that you return to again and again, so the staff takes excellent care to ensure a smooth and comfortable stay. Ten days before check-in, you'll receive a call asking for preferences and dietary restrictions, or if you'd like to book a spa appointment, or perhaps join a complimentary croquet class on the hotel's lawn.

What type of travelers will you find here?

There are lots of families in the summer, as well as preppy New England couples looking for a weekend escape, and part of the charm of Ocean House is that everyone is enchanted by the oceanfront location and the history. But whether they're old or young, you can count on two things about the clients here: they're probably a repeat guest, and they have at least two pairs of boat shoes in their luggage.

What about the neighborhood? Does the hotel fit in, make itself part of the scene?

Ocean House is an iconic, indispensable part of the Watch Hill community, and ever since the 2010 reboot, it has become a hub for locals and weekenders alike. Having a drink on the lawn is something like a rite of passage for any New England summer, so you're as likely to see a group of college graduates giggling over gin and tonics as you are a multi-generational group making memories.

Is there anything you'd change?

No!

Any other hotel features worth noting?

As a Relais & Chateaux property, fine dining takes center stage at Ocean House, and its Center for Wine & Culinary Arts is a highlight. Guests can enjoy complimentary classes to learn about Rhode Island food and wine, and the space can be rented out for intimate events and private wine dinners.

Bottom line: Worth it? Why?

The price tag can be a little steep for a summer getaway, but between the views, the history, the quality of service, the food, and the rooms, Ocean House has it all. If you're looking for a memorable summer weekend splurge, this is the place to do it.

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