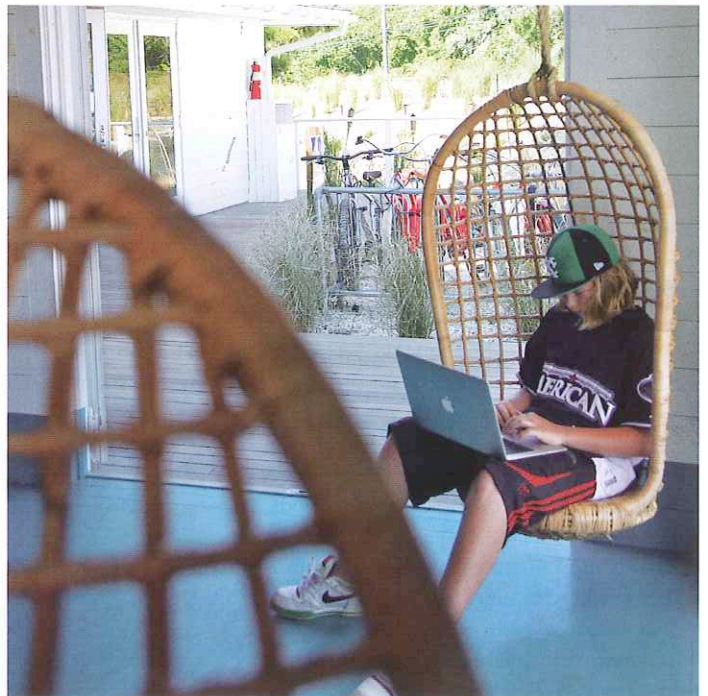


Where to stay

Reviews of the month Beach hotels in the USA Ibiza Seville Cotswolds Plus Suite talk



USA The Surf Lodge, Montauk, New York

Board and lodging

Kate Maxwell stays at the surfers' hangout that's attracting hip New Yorkers to a low-key fishing town

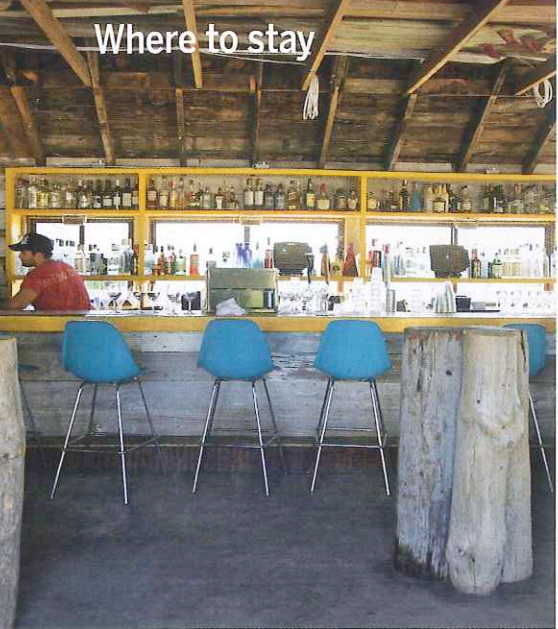
AT THE EASTERNMOST TIP OF LONG ISLAND, past the Waspy Hamptons with their Upper East Sider second homes, multiple Ralph Lauren boutiques and overpowering odour of exclusivity, is Montauk. A fishing town since it was settled thousands of years ago by Native American tribes, The End, as it is known to locals, is still the real deal: fishing tackle shops, dive bars and grocery shops line its Main Street; the seafood restaurants have plastic chairs and paper napkins; the beaches are rugged and

windswept. Most importantly, a reef out to sea produces the best waves in north-east America. People don't come here to pose; they come to surf.

Which is not to say that Montauk doesn't attract its fair share of celebrities: you might find Coldplay front man Chris Martin or ageing crooner Jimmy Buffett paddling in the swell off Ditch Plains beach or queuing for panini at the Ditch Witch van (plastered, last summer, with Obama stickers). But their common cause, the low-key vibe, and that ➤

Clockwise from top left: rooms at The Surf Lodge; Fort Pond; a guest in the lobby; the bar's sunken den

Where to stay



The bar, left, and deck, below, are quiet during the week but thronged at weekends in summer

lie above the bar and surf videos play on a loop, but the atmosphere is very much 21st-century *Great Gatsby*. I even spotted Ralph Lauren, godfather of the Hamptons.

Montauk's old-timers have worked hard to protect the town's unpretentious atmosphere, so inevitably The Surf Lodge has its detractors, who fear that it could spell the end of The End. Perhaps they've forgotten that the scene has seeped to this shore before. In the 1970s Andy Warhol frolicked here with Peter Beard, Jackie Kennedy and her sister Lee Radziwill (Warhol would have come more often had

A mile and a half from the beach, the lodge looks the epitome of breezy Californian surfer chic, with vintage surfboards lying above the bar

➤ great leveller, the black wetsuit, shield them from unwelcome attention.

In the past, those wanting to experience Montauk's salty charms had two options: vie for a room at one of the scruffy beachside motels, or prevail on the hospitality of friends with a summer house-share. Then, last May, the surfers got a new hangout and the 'scene' came hurtling down the Montauk Highway, through undulating parkland, to The End.

The Surf Lodge is co-owned by Jamie Mulholland, of Manhattan's ritzy GoldBar and Cain nightclub, and overlooks Fort Pond, a mile and a half from the beach. It looks the epitome of breezy Californian surfer chic, with 32 rooms in a souped-up, motel-style block beside the weatherboarded main building. All the rooms have balconies with hammocks, surf photos on the walls and cheeky touches such as Mr Zog's Sex Wax (for surfboards) on the pillow in lieu of a chocolate; the newer bathrooms have wooden basins. The West Coast branding extends to the staff, a preposterously good-looking troop in colourful uniforms by surfer-designer Tracy Feith, who has an on-site boutique.

The action is centred on a large deck, furnished with low tables, hurricane lamps and striped wicker chairs, and its restaurant, run by Sam Talbot (a former contestant on the TV show *Top Chef*), who serves seafood with an Asian twist: clams with Chinese hot-mustard broth, or lump crab ceviche with blueberries and ginger. On Saturday nights, convertibles snake around the block and the terrace swarms with guys in button-down shirts and girls in sundresses and Louboutins. Vintage surfboards may

the wind not played havoc with his wigs). The nearby Memory Motel inspired the Rolling Stones' song of the same name. The gang may have been dropping acid rather than sipping \$12 Montauk Storm cocktails, and I imagine their conversation was less sliding stocks, more free love; but they, too, were a raucous bunch.

If you'd rather not join the party, which, by the way, doesn't end before 3am at weekends during the summer, come during the week and you'll have the deck, and Montauk, more or less to yourself. Brave the surf, eat lobster at Duryea's restaurant on the other side of Fort Pond, catch the sunset at the Montauket inn with a pint of Sam Adams ale, chew the fat with the sailors at the Shagwong bar – but perhaps it's best not to mention where you're staying. **T**



THE SURF LODGE, 183 EDGEMERE STREET, MONTAUK, NEW YORK (00 1 631 668 2632; WWW.THESURFLODGE.COM). DOUBLES FROM \$244; FROM \$406 AT WEEKENDS. CLOSED IN WINTER

4 MORE BEACH HOTELS IN THE USA

SUNSET BEACH, SHELTER ISLAND, NEW YORK

You may know of André Balazs's Standard and Mercer hotels, but are you familiar with his Shelter Island beach shack? This hip, 20-room hotel remains under the radar for all but savvy New Yorkers. Each room has a sundeck and sea view; the restaurant serves French fare. 00 1 631 749 2001; www.sunsetbeachli.com. Doubles from \$241

DELANO, MIAMI

Miami has enjoyed a hotel boom of late, with the opening of the refurbished Fontainebleau, the Mondrian and Gansevoort South. But for a smack of the South Beach scene – Speedos, pneumatic breasts and all – it's still hard to beat the Delano, below. Rooms are celestial white, the loungers are oversized and the party continues after hours at Lenny Kravitz's Florida Room. 00 1 305 672 2000; www.delano-hotel.com. Doubles from \$390



THE WHITE BARN INN & SPA, KENNEBUNKPORT, MAINE

Pack your lobster bib: this is quintessential coastal New England. The 26 rooms at this Relais & Châteaux hotel (many with fireplaces) have wooden floors and Molton Brown bath products. The highly rated restaurant serves seafood and game. 00 1 207 967 2321; www.whitebarninn.com. Doubles from \$349

SHUTTERS ON THE BEACH, SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA

This is the city-beach resort of choice for Hollywood A-listers. Most rooms face the sea and have floor-to-ceiling windows with (you guessed it) shutters – useful for blocking out those pesky paparazzi. The lobby bar is the place to pretend not to be seen. 00 1 310 458 0300; www.shuttersonthebeach.com. Doubles from \$508