



JOSH ROBINSON-WHITE

A return to the Harbor View Hotel in Edgartown in a brave new world

By Megan Lisagor Stoessel
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

I last came to the Harbor View Hotel on Martha's Vineyard about a decade ago. Back then, my husband and I escaped summer in Boston for a weekend away with friends from New York. Excited for a break from the humdrum of young parenthood, the four of us swapped questions in advance: Would our baby boys sleep through the night? How many swim diapers should we pack? Could we leave them with a sitter and eat at an adult restaurant?

Those worries probably sound quaint now. When Alanna and I decided to return to Edgartown this June, it was with a COVID kind of trepidation. Our annual reunion in a shared house didn't make sense during the pandemic so we settled on a hotel and separate rooms. It seemed like a decent choice as far as going anywhere was concerned, given that the iconic property had begun booking guests in new accommodations after a major renovation.

Scanning my surroundings upon arrival, I felt more like a safety inspector than a travel writer. Masks? Check. Signage about social distancing? Check. Hand sanitizer and wipes?



Check. I have a friend who evaluates hotels for a global rating system, and I was reminded of his attention to detail on the business trips we've taken together. Sure, I care about cleanliness, but my usual focus is on fun, not the finer points of freshly laundered towels.

Well, it's a different world, and there's nothing fun or fresh about it. The Harbor View helped Alanna and me forget that reality for a short stretch of time. Ten years after our first visit, it offered a break from the humdrum of older parenthood — living with husbands, children, and puppies under one roof for the past several months

A room at the Harbor View Hotel, where the veranda offers views of the lighthouse and Chappaquiddick.

while supervising online learning and endless Zooms.

At last, I wasn't just staring at an island scene on a screen. I was actually there, lounging on salmon-and-white-striped cushions by a pool, eating a salad someone else had prepared. I appreciated it more than I did before, and that's one of those silver linings worth noting. "It's not ideal," our server said of

wearing her tie-dye mask in the heat. Still, she smiled because not ideal isn't half bad these days.

Here are my tips if you want to see for yourself.

STAY

Reserve a guest room in the Roxana with a balcony where you can enjoy your coffee and wine. The building marks the completion of the Harbor View's restoration by owner Bernard Chiu, whose Upland Capital Corporation purchased the property in 2018 and who has a house around the corner. Dating to 1891, the updated hotel looks like an inspiration board for Serena & Lily with its grass cloth and deep-blue décor. More important than the stylish design, it's all new — Alanna found a piece of painter's tape in her bathroom. In COVID times, that's a nicer touch than the Molton Brown products, though I liked those, too.

EAT

Pick up breakfast bagels and iced coffees at Espresso Love in town, strolling by Water Street's shingled houses with their hydrangeas in full bloom. For lunch, grab a table at the Roxy pool bar, another addition to the hotel. I recommend the kale Caesar and margherita flat-

bread with one of the craft cocktails. Bettini, the upscale restaurant on site, served as our dinner spot; we opted to order inside and then bring our food to the veranda with views of the lighthouse and Chappaquiddick. Depending on the night, our tray included oysters, scallops, and summer corn that were as fresh as the furnishings.

PLAY

Take the Harbor View's bikes to South Beach, a flat, 4-mile ride. The front desk will provide yellow-striped towels, which you can stash in your

wicker baskets. I also drove up-island — the hotel has loaner cars through a partnership with Mercedes so no worries if yours didn't make the ferry — to Menemsha, with a pit stop at the Chilmark General Store for cookies (and a bottle of Clorox; it's hard to break pandemic habits). Nearby at Beetlebung Corner that morning, comedian Amy Schumer led a demonstration to protest police brutality and racism. It was a reminder that there's important work to be done even in paradise.

Harbor View Hotel, 131 N. Water St., Edgartown, 877-867-9613, harborviewhotel.com

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Uncertainty persists in all aspects of life, but navigating what to do, where to go, and how to do it is especially challenging these days. When the time is right for you to travel again, Vermont's rural landscapes offer plenty of space to enjoy the mountain views and explore our remote lakes, ponds, and trails. Day or night, our historic downtowns are waiting to welcome you back with fun-to-find treasures, farm-to-table culinary delights and world-class craft beverages. That is, if you can keep yourself from exploring all we have to offer.

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