

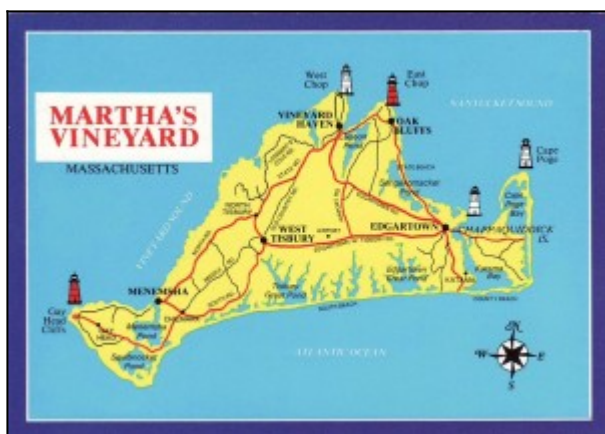
A Trip to the Vineyard



by Amy
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Spring has finally sprung, which always gears me up for my family's yearly tradition of heading to Martha's Vineyard. This has been going on for 16 years now: First we go for a couple of weekends, then we stay for a week during the summer. I guess you could say I am an expert of traveling to the island. The first question I'm always asked is, "You go to the Vineyard every year. What is there to do?" My answer is I go there to do nothing: I don't drive anywhere, I don't have to wait in long lines at an amusement park...I just take it day by day and enjoy doing whatever.

So now your thinking: "What if I want to do something? Is there anything to do?" Yes. There is actually much to see and do. Each town on the island has it's own unique character. The beaches on the Vineyard are wonderful, there are many different restaurants to try, many boutiques for browsing, and many places to for taking a leisurely stroll through Ocean Park in Oaks Bluff.



Getting to the Martha's Vineyard is easy. The Steamship Authority of Falmouth has ferries running daily, and they all allow cars and pets aboard. While you have other options, I always depart from Falmouth because the boat ride is only 45 minutes and it is our tradition. One-way

passenger tickets are \$8.00 each for adults, children ages

5-12 are \$4.25 each way, and children under 5 are free. The price for bringing your vehicle over is \$77.50 each way, and you must make reservations ahead of time. For more information visit: www.steamshipauthority.com. New Bedford has the Fast Ferry, leaving from 49 State Pier. The ride is 1 hour and the tickets are \$35.00 one way. This ferry only comes into Oak Bluffs and only runs during summer months.

During the busy season I always take the ferry that comes into Oak Bluffs (offseason it goes only to Vineyard Haven), because this is our final destination. **The Surfside** is a Motel that is directly across from the pier, which makes it easy to get off the boat with luggage and walk a few steps to the motel. This is a family run operation that has been in business since 1987. They offer complimentary continental breakfast each morning, suites along with regular rooms, and it is pet friendly. I have found the rates to be reasonable compared to other hotels in town, and the staff is super friendly and helpful. All rooms do come with Wi-Fi, blow dryers, microwaves, mini fridges, and did I mention daily views of the ocean. For more information about the Surfside: www.mvsurfside.com

After getting settled in at the Surfside, we head directly to one of our favorite restaurants called **The Offshore Ale Company**. Located a short walk from the motel on Kennebec Avenue, you enter into a rustic, nautical atmosphere. You are immediately engaged by the vats of beer that are being brewed on-site ,and then by the peanut shells that are scattered amongst the floor. At the front door you can grab a bowl and scoop up peanuts out of a huge barrel to bring the peanuts back to your table. Of course children love this, especially the part of whipping the shells onto the floor. I find that hard to do being a mother that always insists on putting things in the trash. If you love



beer this is the place to be, they brew lagers, pale ales, IPAs, Belgium-style offerings, stouts, and an award-winning Nut-brown Ale. You can bring some back with you by purchasing a growler and have them fill it up with your favorite beer.

They are also known for their brick oven pizza and pub style food. We usually get a few different pizzas to share; the ones we prefer are the potato pizza and the BBQ pizza. The potato pizza is mashed potatoes, bacon, cheddar cheese, and scallions with a side of sour cream on a thin crust and is to die for. The BBQ pizza consists of caramelized onions, bacon, mozzarella cheese, scallions and honey barbeque sauce on a mouth-watering thin crust. The price of pizzas are around \$17.95, but they are large and worth it. Other items on the menu range from soups and salads, to a raw bar along with seafood entrees and burgers. The Offshore Ale Company is a great family friendly, casual dining experience for all.

After dinner comes desert for us, so we head over to Circuit Avenue where there are many ice cream shops to choose from. The most famous is **Mad Martha's**, but there is also **Ben and Bill's Chocolate Emporium** and the **Carousal**. All of them are great and the portions are huge, but they are pricey: You can expect to pay about \$4.00 or more for a cone. Since I don't have a favorite ice cream shop, I go to the one with the smallest line. This is important because during the summer the lines can be out the door.



Mad Martha's Ice Cream, on Circuit Avenue.

Last year while at Mad Martha's my family and I tried to enjoy eating our ice cream, but it was difficult because President Obama's daughters were there with 50 secret service men in tow, seemingly watching our every move. It was weird being watched while licking my double chocolate ice cream cone.

I love going for breakfast when on the island, and there are a few places to choose from, but it depends on what you fancy in the morning. If you're looking for a good cup of coffee, **Mocha Motts** is the place. It is underneath a shop so you go down a flight of stairs into a small coffee shop. They serve pastries and breakfast sandwiches, perfect for taking you breakfast, going to a bench that sits facing the water and watching the ocean. **Linda Jean's** is a sit down restaurant that serves everything you could want for breakfast. The prices are fair and the service is fast and friendly, but if you head there any later than 9 am there will be a wait. Another place for a quick breakfast is **MV Bagels**; obviously they serve all different types of bagels along with pastries and coffee.

Oak Bluffs is the place to be if you are going with children. The other towns are great to visit but there isn't much for children to do. **The Flying Horses Carousal**, which is the oldest carousal in the country, was brought to the Vineyard from Coney Island in 1884. It is still in operation, the cost is \$2.00 per ride, and part of the thrill is getting the brass ring. If you do get the brass ring you can either stay on for another ride or take a ticket for a free ride later on. People young and old love it, and inside with the carousal are arcade games and you can get popcorn and souvenirs.

Ryan's Family Amusement is a two floor arcade. There is an aquarium there displaying small fish and you can watch a shark feeding at certain times. On rainy days there are two movie theaters, and there is always plenty of shopping in all the towns. There are buses that will take you to each town for \$2.00 and they run every 15 minutes. Ocean Park is another spot to check out; it's a large park across from the ocean

where many people fly kites, play frisbee or lay out a blanket for a picnic.

Martha's Vineyard is a great place to bring your family and spend the day or night. The best part is that it is close to home, but far enough that you think your somewhere else.