

USA TODAY TRAVEL | EVENTS TO MARK THE NATION'S BIRTHDAY

GO ESCAPE

SUMMER 2026

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New England Escapes

Boutique resorts offer local, luxurious experiences from coast to countryside

BY LISA A. BEACH

Headed to New England this summer? Trade cookie-cutter hotel rooms for character-filled resort stays, where the experience goes well beyond a bed and a beach chair. From Vermont's green hills to Connecticut's countryside and Cape Cod's coast, these boutique resorts lean into local flavor, curated programming and polished luxury. Whether you're planning a multigenerational trip, a romantic escape or a girlfriends' getaway, these properties transform your New England visit into a standout vacation.

SKILLCATIONS IN THE GREEN MOUNTAINS Woodstock Inn & Resort, Vermont

In the village of Woodstock, Vermont, the Woodstock Inn & Resort, a MICHELIN One Key Hotel, feels like a classic New England grande dame that secretly moonlights as a summer camp for grown-ups. Its new Passion Pursuits program reimagines vacation as a "skillcation," inviting guests to dive into hobbies — from gardening and birdwatching to yoga and fly-fishing. On-staff "Passionistas" lead each skillcation experience as well as other guided outdoor adventures. The idea is less check-the-box sightseeing and more follow-your-curiosity immersion. That

might mean learning pickleball, indulging your inner plant lover in Kelly Way Gardens, or trying a hands-on falconry session.

Summer days here are made for mountain biking and hiking on nearby trails, cooling off in the pools, or playing a round at the historic Woodstock Country Club. Food-obsessed travelers can time a stay with the Red Barn Dinner Series, when the culinary team turns just picked produce into multicourse, farm-to-table feasts in a restored barn. With a full-service spa and a sprawling athletic club, Woodstock Inn & Resort is a strong choice for active couples and families who want to chase a different "passion" by day and regroup over garden-driven dinners at night. >

WOODSTOCK INN & RESORT



GARDEN-TO-GLASS WELLNESS RETREAT

Mayflower Inn & Spa, Connecticut

Tucked into 58 acres of gardens and woodlands in Washington, Connecticut, the Mayflower Inn & Spa, Auberge Collection, feels like a polished country house just two hours from New York City. Last year, the resort received One Key Hotel distinction from MICHELIN, which recognizes hotels for outstanding stays. This summer, the resort spotlights its newly reimagined outdoor pool, designed by interior designer Celerie Kemble in partnership with Schumacher Hospitality, complete with loungers, a new pool menu, curated lawn games and a daily Spritz Hour. A roaming ice cream cart and "Country Cone Hour" on summer Saturdays keep things playful.

The resort, which boasts 28 rooms and seven suites, really shines for couples' retreats and girlfriend getaways, thanks to its destination spa and elevated dining. The Garden Room's new dinner menu leans into three pillars — Garden, Pasture and Sea — with vegetables in starring roles, responsibly sourced meats, refined seafood, and cocktails infused with tea from local brand Harney & Sons. Between forest bathing, time in the 20,000-square-foot wellness retreat, and evenings that feel like relaxed country dinner parties, the Mayflower Inn & Spa aligns with wellness travelers who want to exhale in style. ■

COASTAL FOODIE PLAYGROUND

Chatham Bars Inn, Cape Cod

Chatham Bars Inn in Chatham, Massachusetts, is the seaside showstopper: a 25-acre oceanfront resort with shingled cottages, a quarter-mile private beach, and views of Chatham Harbor. Opened in 1914 as a luxury hunting lodge, it still shines as the Cape's storied manor more than 110 years later. Chatham Bars Inn is also the only Forbes Five Star hotel on Cape Cod. Last summer, the reimagined South Lounge debuted a restored vintage bar and French doors opening onto Bayview Terrace for sunset cocktails, light bites and live music.

Out on the water, the inn's private fleet of seven custom boats transforms typical, overcrowded group tours into a private charter experience. From lobstering to fishing to sunset cruises, guests leave right from the inn's private dock. Instead of jockeying for rail space, you can board Shooting Star — designed by Billy Joel — for an intimate whale watching outing. Back on land, the inn's 8-acre farm fuels a weekly summer farm dinner series with ever-changing menus built around just-harvested produce and locally sourced

meats, seafood and fish. Add in multiple dining options, an oceanfront pool, and seasonal kids' programming and you've got a standout for food-loving families and multigenerational groups who want beach time, boating and delicious cuisine at one stop.



SERGE DETALLE/AUBERGE COLLECTION; CHATHAM BARS INN