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Nantucket Hotel and Resort.

# A look at the two Nantucket hotels rated ‘best in the country’

By [Christopher Muther](#), Globe Staff

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NANTUCKET — I was expecting a small flock of cherubs to descend from the heavens, clutching a banner reading “Welcome dear friend” in their plump tiny hands, as I approached the entrance of [the Nantucket Hotel & Resort](#).

This was, after all, the hotel that [TripAdvisor](#) ranked as the best in the country for 2017. Let me be clear. TripAdvisor named the Nantucket Hotel & Resort not just the top hotel in Massachusetts, or New England, but *the entire country*.

Perhaps now you understand why my expectations were so high.

I didn’t see the cherubs, but I did see a vintage fire truck and an adorable olde tyme (archaic spelling used to denote charm) shuttle bus, which brings guests to the beach during the summer. There was an expansive wraparound porch, and the lobby was cheery and smart. These are ideal spaces for a layabout to park himself on an afternoon when the weather turns sour.

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I grabbed my key, went to my room, and took it all in. It was nice. Actually more than nice, but it didn't jump out to me as "best hotel in the US" nice. I wasn't staying in a suite, so perhaps that was coloring my early reaction. But before I went into full hotel critic mode, I needed to find out how TripAdvisor determined that the Nantucket Hotel reached the pinnacle of lodging experiences.

"The winners are based on the millions of reviews and opinions from travelers on TripAdvisor gathered over a 12-month period," spokeswoman Tara Lieberman explained in an e-mail. "The algorithms are proprietary, but primarily take into account quality and quantity of traveler reviews, opinions, and ratings."

I couldn't do much with a proprietary algorithm, but I could start exploring. The hotel had no idea I was a travel writer. To the staff I was simply a strange man who wandered the property like a lost ferret.

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fitness facility, a spa, and a studio for yoga and fitness classes. More importantly, I found the hot tub.

The more I explored, the more I realized how special the property was. The 1891 hotel was restored five years ago into a true resort. Looking from the street you'd never know that there were two large heated pools (one for adults, and one for families) and multiple areas for lounging in front of gas fire pits.

This was a solid, comfortable property with a Cape Cod-meets-[Kelly Wearstler](#) flair. I still wasn't sold that this was the best hotel in the country. Then I met Sue Champagne. No, Sue Champagne is not my imaginary friend who appears after I've sipped too much bubbly. She is the concierge at the hotel. If there is a sainthood status for concierges, I'd like to nominate Champagne for the honor.

I was idly looking at pamphlets and maps in the lobby when she approached and started drumming up activities and itineraries for me. She sat down and carefully mapped out bike routes and offered to make dinner reservations. When I told her it was my first time at the hotel she excitedly asked if I wanted the grand tour. I got a glimpse inside the hotel's incredible suites that felt more like stand-alone beach houses. These rooms offered sweeping views and full kitchens. If I was lucky enough to be in a suite at the height of summer riding the olde tyme shuttle and frolicking in the heated pool I suspect I would be swooning over the experience.

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After the tour, Champagne offered to set me up by the fire with a blanket (it was chilly), and then fetched me a Diet Pepsi. I could also make s'mores over my personal fire if I so wished. The TripAdvisor algorithm was beginning to make sense.

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and these are minor — were that the coffee maker in the room was a bit old fashioned for a hotel of this caliber, and I didn't find the breakfast buffet particularly interesting. There are hundreds of TripAdvisor users who disagree, so please take my opinion with a grain of salt and a shot of tequila.

Meanwhile, down the street, another historic Nantucket property is also basking in the TripAdvisor limelight. [The Union Street Inn](#) took top honors as [the best small hotel in the United States](#). Again, that's the best small hotel in the *entire country*.



The Union Street Inn on Nantucket, ranked by TripAdvisor as the best small hotel in the United States for 2017.

Naturally, I needed to stay a night there as well. At first blush, the 12-room Union Street Inn is not normally the kind of place I'd gush over. I lean toward modern accommodations, while Union Street is decidedly cozy and traditional.

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But it didn't take much for Union Street to win me over. The bed and its high-end Frette linens and Matouk duvets were pure luxury. [I am obsessed with hotel toiletries](#), and the inn supplied one of my favorite brands, Malin + Goetz. Union Street Inn was small, but it thinks big. If there's such a thing as a boutique bed and breakfast, this was it.

It claims to be the only bed and breakfast on Nantucket to serve a full, cooked-to-order gourmet breakfast. If you're feeling antisocial you can also take your breakfast in bed. I consider myself a connoisseur of blueberry pancakes, and mine were just the right balance of fluffy and flavorful. In the afternoon there are cookies and other treats left out for guests to enjoy. There isn't shuttle service to the beach, but after all of those pancakes and cookies, you'd be well served to rent a bike and get some exercise.

The inn is located in a restored 1770 whaling captain's home, so there isn't space for pools and hot tubs, but there is a beautiful garden in the back. The service was extraordinary, and just like at the Nantucket Hotel & Resort, the staff did not know I was a travel writer reviewing the property.

On the ferry back to Boston I flipped through my notes and started plugging away at my own algorithm to determine if I had just stayed at the top hotel and the top small hotel in the country. My algorithm failed to produce an answer as definitive as TripAdvisor's, but it did tell me that we're lucky to have such charming and top-notch hotels nearby.

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Summer rates at the Nantucket Hotel & Resort range from \$650 to \$4,945 per night. Winter rates range from \$195.00 to \$1,220 per night. Spring and fall rates range from \$225 to \$3,220.00 per night. [www.the](#)

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rates fall to \$189 to \$319 per night. The inn is closed in winter. [www.unioninn.com](http://www.unioninn.com), 508-228-9222.



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Nantucket Hotel and Resort's most luxurious suite is on the top floor and features three walls of windows with a spectacular water views.

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