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THE CHANLER AT CLIFF WALK | NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

BY OWEN McDONALD

In some places, classic style goes on age after brilliant age, blithe in the face of trendiness. But what does “classic” mean today? Even the finest traditions evolve, after all. At its best the “new classic” hotel/restaurant has a glamorous, easy energy. It glows. The whole scene moves to its own playlist. From the flowers to the Foie Gras, it puts a spell on you.

In Newport, Rhode Island, “exceptional” is nothing new. And you can still find very formal, embellished experiences here. The Chanler at Cliff Walk is a different kind of elegant.

GUEST ROOMS AND PROPERTY

Reception is welcoming—a tone set by the Shufelt family, hoteliers whose standards are impeccable. If you’re staying in the villas, a polite staffer conducts you along an outside pathway to an oversized beach door. The Mediterranean Suite behind it is an elaborate duplex with walled patio garden and personal outdoor Jacuzzi/Sauna on ground level, and bedroom parlor above. There’s an undeniable island aura to this villa overlooking Easton’s Beach.

A tiled gas fireplace anchors the room, which is dominated by a grandiose colonial four-post canopy bed. Architectural and interior design are remarkable. Exquisite moldings and evocative décor; the master bathroom with Adriatic motifs and deep soaking tub; floor-to-ceiling French doors opening onto an upper patio with a painter’s view of the crescent beach.

The cliff walk itself is magnificent—almost wild in parts for what is really a manicured pathway along the bluffs. It’s slightly Wuthering Heights around the edges, which fans of gothic prose will love. Down the road in one direction you arrive at gorgeous Sachuest Beach, a coastline drive made for convertibles and songs played loud. Continue from there to Sachuest Point National Wildlife Refuge, a local marvel that preserves and protects a unique ecosystem.

A ten-minute walk in the other direction from the Chanler puts you right in the Bellevue Avenue mansions district with its intimate streets, smart shops, nice restaurants and historic sights.

Chanler at Cliff Walk is also a destination in itself. The great rolling lawn is legendary, with gourmet picnics served in season by beach butlers. The hoteliers here have a clever sense of programming, which embraces everything from Newport Restaurant Week to Scotch & Cigar tastings, to special tours of nearby historic places. Their sense of bespoke is astute.

DINING

A divine lunch is served in The Veranda and in The Cliff Walk Terrace. The dinner-only Spiced Pear at the Chanler has found its way onto many top 10 lists in recent years. Executive Chef Thomas Duffy is a star in a town with hot





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competition. With a true passion for food, the native Rhode Islander is a perceptive culinarian who leads a confident kitchen.

Duffy began a recent meal with his new wild boar ragout appetizer—tangy and tender, served with gnocchi. Paired with a sharp Cuvaison pinot noir, it's a sublime dish. The sorbet after was tart and dark. His Butter-Poached Maine Lobster with asparagus tips, black truffle and celery is a delicate preparation, paired with a bright Couly-Duteil Chinon rosé. The chocolate soufflé was a soft crescendo—cloudlike and irresistible. Talk about a brilliantly designed meal.

The room service menu is smart, too. Try the flavorful angus burger on sourdough bursting with fresh avocado and melted swiss. It's simply one of the best kitchens in coastal New England.

BRAND NEWPORT

American elegance has come a long way from its European forebears. We have only a passing attachment to rituals; we mostly want to be inspired. Great hotels do that. Which should remind us that great hotels happen because of people. At the Chanler, everyone you meet is either a hospitality professional, or on their way to being one. They make it perfect.

Newport is a four-season destination, and if you miss the summer do not skip the rest of the year. In this part of coastal New England, foliage colors are still blazing in mid-November, and the crowds are gone. It doesn't get any better. How you experience your Newport moment is a big choice. The Chanler at Cliff Walk has a glamorous energy that makes moments glow. ●



Owen McDonald is the Editor in Chief of *Coastal Connecticut* magazine, and an award-winning journalist and marketer.