



The Chanler at Cliff Walk: Romantic Luxury & Culinary Excellence in Newport



Refinement, Romance, and Inventive Repasts in Newport

There's something quite special about Newport, Rhode Island. A tiny city in an even tinier state, boasting a rich history dating to the 1600s, a robust nautical legacy, and exceptional architecture. Just 74 miles (119 km) south of Boston and 180 miles (290 km) northeast of New York City, the city's ideal location between the Atlantic Ocean and Narragansett Bay lured millionaires of the Gilded Age to build their summer "cottage" mansions. It was here they escaped the stuffy cities to take advantage of the ocean breezes, create a lasting social scene and, of course, sail their yachts. It was for that very reason that the New York Yacht Club chose Newport to host the America's Cup back in 1930. And while it has decades since Newport has hosted these races, June 2024 sees another epic yacht race – the 635 nm biennial Newport-Bermuda Race – return to the destination we briefly touched on in our multi-day autumn road trip via Ferrari 296 GTS in Issue 75 of NAVIS Magazine.



We stayed at The Chanler at Cliff Walk, which was originally one of those gilded-era mansions. The manor formerly known as Cliff Lawn was commissioned by John Winthrop Chanler who, along with his wife, Margaret Astor Ward, the great-granddaughter of John Jacob Astor, settled within its splendor in 1873. After later incarnations as a school and a bishop's summer home, it reopened in 2003 as The Chanler, updated and modernized, yet still paying homage to the opulence and glamor of that era. The 20 accommodations at this property recall that splendor, with nods to architectural history, unabashed romance, and a fabulously – and famously – attentive staff renowned for their attention to detail and service. Last, but by no means least, the Chanler boasts a forward-thinking chef who curates fantastic culinary experiences with his team at the hotel's Forbes Five-Star restaurant, Cara. But more on its culinary fame later.

The arrival experience is just as exceptional as the hotel itself. Massive entrance gates welcome guests to a serene seaside setting on an estate of just over 5 acres of exquisitely landscaped gardens in serious competition with its glorious ocean views. Fresh air and rejuvenating sea breezes with the mesmerizing sound of the ocean washing over the rocks create a feeling that is both as restful as it is invigorating. One is immediately impressed by the mansion and its gardens, but most especially by the welcome reception of the team. While I declined the offer to valet my car, one of The Chanler's immediate assets is its on-premise parking, since space in this tiny city is at a premium. There is a house car available to chauffeur guests around Newport's many attractions, a welcome amenity, and one of the best guest conveniences.

The only luxury hotel along the aforementioned Cliff Walk, The Chanler has its own access to the three-and-a-half mile (5.6 km) path which boasts exceptionally picturesque views no matter which way one looks. This refined setting may seem like a world away, but it is only a short distance from the shopping, bars, and dining of the bustling wharf area. Also close by are the art galleries, the Tennis Hall of Fame, various museums, mansions, and abundant other attractions that make Newport such a wonderful place to visit. Newport's calendar of much-anticipated events such as the Boat Show, Jazz and Folk Festivals, the Mansions Wine & Food Festival also offer a considerable draw to the stellar destination.



Each of the twenty unique accommodations at The Chanler is a work of art in itself, individually designed to reflect a different historical period or theme. The 14 rooms and suites within the Chanler mansion focus on an architectural era, such as Federal, Greek Revival, Gothic, and Empire. They boast fireplaces, wet bars, baths with heated floors and soaking tubs, along with antiques and artwork to complete each period. Many rooms feature private balconies or terraces, offering breathtaking views of the ocean or the beautifully landscaped gardens, making them perfect for more private moments with sundowners. Scattered discreetly amidst the gardens and along the estate's coastal edge are the intimately romantic villas, each with its own entrances and private courtyards. The three Garden Villas sport charming monikers like "English Trellis" and have their own private courtyard with a hot tub surrounded by lush gardens and bubbling fountains. The three Ocean Villas, each with names recalling great New England coastal towns like Martha's Vineyard. Each villa features a private exterior entrance, a courtyard garden, a private outdoor hot tub and sauna, as well as an upper deck overlooking the Cliff Walk with breathtaking ocean views.

One very forward-thinking direction for a hotel so rooted in tradition is The Chanler's Forbes Five-Star restaurant, Cara, headed by Chef Jacob Jasinski. Cara provides an avant-garde and intimate dining experience with just four tables in a magnificent setting. Here guests can savor and be delighted by an entirely innovative blind-tasting menu. Dietary restrictions and preferences are noted, of course, but the result is a highly orchestrated performance conducted by Chef Jacob. With dining limited to eight parties per night in two seatings and operating only from Wednesday through Sunday in season, advance reservations are definitely a must. Also, a must is the optional wine pairing, curated nightly for each dish from a wine cellar that boasts Wine Spectator's Award of Excellence.



When we dined, the five courses highlighted local ingredients harvested at their peak of flavor and freshness. Owing to unparalleled preparation and plating that showcased each ingredient as a work of art, these included such delights as first-of-the-season Nantucket Bay scallops glazed with citrus and honey, Fall Mushrooms with foie gras, and Slow-Roasted Kuro Wagyu Rib Steak, among just a few items on the evening's menu. Each were carefully presented by the expert team and described in detail by Chef Jacob. The quality of imagination, service and food is exceptional as is Chef Jacob, who was attentive, informative and friendly. His team and the dining staff were equally gracious. This ultimately was a creative process that evolved into a dynamic interaction between the chefs, service team, and guests.

The Chanler at Cliff Walk Hotel, with its laudable Cara Restaurant, embodies romantic luxury, culinary excellence, and superior service. Its timeless charm, breathtaking oceanfront location, and commitment to creating unforgettable experiences make it a destination of choice for those seeking an exceptional escape. For special occasions, romantic getaways, or simple indulgence in culinary adventures, The Chanler supplies a welcome oasis of elegance and sophistication.