

A Fabled Island Comes Closer

EDITORIAL AND PHOTO
BY TERENCE BAKER



Edgartown lighthouse

As the crow flies, Montauk, the tip of Long Island, is only 70 miles from Martha's Vineyard, the fabled Massachusetts island. However, to get from one to the other, visitors endure a plane stopover in Boston or a five hour-plus ferry trip from Manhattan.

To the rescue is JetBlue, its 100-seat planes starting daily, summer service from and to JFK on May 26 (until Sept. 6). A "new" destination has become more readily accessible. This innovation is the talk of the island (that, and Lady Gaga's recent purchase of a Chappaquiddick mansion), even at the airport, which when I was there consisted of one check-in person, one other passenger and two security personnel. From entering to taking off took five minutes; don't expect that with another 99 passengers, but it stands to reason that travel time will be meaningfully curtailed.

I'd always thought MV off-limits—too difficult to reach, too competitive. As a small island (26 miles by 9), there are limited hotels and restaurants, and prices clearly mirror market tolerance. Perhaps increased visitors will spark competition and lower prices?

Dividing its six towns are ponds, lagoons, reed beds and forests. Vineyard

Haven, Oak Bluffs (see its "gingerbread" cottages) and Edgartown to the east get busy, but there's breathing space in the three western villages of West Tisbury (Alley's General Store is a must), Chilmark and Aquinnah, where a red lighthouse guards multicolored cliffs and the even more isolated village of Cuttyhunk on the Elizabeth Islands (now it's *there* that I feel excluded from). I sat on the pier in Menemsha (part of Chilmark) eating chowder from clams gathered that morning, pondering exciting, unlikely, future trips and watching boats prepare for departure.

Of course, MV is not isolated, but I felt the glow of being somewhere I never considered it probable I'd get to. I felt the same in the Argentine province of Jujuy, driving an incredibly rutted, impossibly beautiful, unmapped track to an ugly zinc mine called El Aguilar, coming in the back way to the consternation of llamas and security guards. This wasn't illegal, but no one is invited, and there I was. Humans dreamed about reaching the Moon, too, never thinking they actually would. Personally, I'm content searching our own home (well, if asked, I might go into orbit for *Car & Travel* research purposes). Standing beside the very last piece of Gobi Desert mud and straw that technically is the Great Wall of China is another personal example. I'm sure I'm far from being alone in feeling the thrill that comes from being some-

where I always wanted to go and now am standing in.

I took the two-minute ferry to the islet of Chappaquiddick (with a bike from Wheel Happy in Edgartown) and on to Dikes Bridge, where senator Ted Kennedy got into trouble in 1969. This gorgeous islet possesses a Japanese garden. I loved the name, too, of MV's Squibnocket Pond and kayaked there with Eco Adventures' Erik VanLandingham, who was born here (I rather had the impression this was rare, like meeting someone born in *and* still living in Manhattan).

At sunset, I watched another ferry come in from Woods Hole, Cape Cod, sitting on the beach below the wonderful, eight-room Crocker House Inn (great coffee and cookies; even greater hosts), thinking this intrastate water route takes as long as a flight now will from New York City and that one of the noblest ideas in American law is the inalienable right for Americans to travel exactly where they want (of course, some spots you would not want to go to, but that's besides the point). At the risk of sounding trite, the freedom to move is the freedom to dream, and increased accessibility just makes those dreams more obtainable. **BT**

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