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A Cape escape

The Boston Globe

No hibernation here: Main Street keeps off-season Hyannis alive and kicking



Brookes Morrison, owner of Morrison Glassworks, demonstrates glassblowing with a torch at his workbench. (Vincent Dewitt for the Boston Globe)

By Patricia Harris and David Lyon

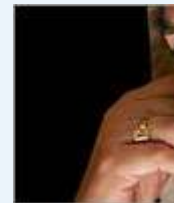
Globe Correspondents / December 30, 2007

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HYANNIS - On a late November day, the leaden sky and chill wind leave no doubt that winter is coming. At All Cape Cooks Supply on West Main Street, the furnace struggles to warm the two large rooms piled high with kitchenware. As sales associate Dianne Evans helps us search for an ice cream scoop, we ask what Hyannis folks do in the winter.

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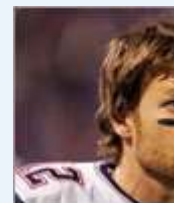
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IF YOU GO

Where to stay

Heritage House Hotel
259 Main St.

508-775-7000, 800-352-7189
heritagehousehotel.com

Two-night weekend packages \$199 per couple through Jan. 17, then starting at \$109 per person through May 15. Chauncy's Bar & Grille open for dinner and dancing Friday and Saturday. Entrees \$13.95-\$19.95.

Cape Codder Resort & Spa
1225 Iyanough Road (Route 132)
508-771-3000, 888-297-2200
capecodderresort.com

Large property outside the town center features 257 rooms plus a full-service spa and pool. Note that guests may share the pool with birthday parties Sunday through Thursday. One-night romance packages start at \$169 per room.

Where to eat

The Island Merchant
302 Main St.
508-771-1337

theislandmerchant.com

Locally based seasonal cooking is the strong suit. Good casual fare includes pulled pork sandwich with a side of macaroni salad. Dinner only, closed Tuesday. Sandwiches and entrees \$12-\$25.

Harry's Cajun Restaurant & Bar
700 Main St.
508-778-4188

harrysbluesbar.com

Burgers and barbecue are available all day, but you'll have to

"I go to Florida," Evans says with a laugh.

"About 20 of us go down every year. Before I come back in the spring, I call and ask, is it warm yet?"

Before Evans and her pals head south, they're regulars on the dance floor at Chauncy's Bar & Grille at the Heritage House Hotel. According to hotelier Peter Martino, live music and an outgoing bartender attract a loyal local following, including many retirees. "I can't keep up with them," he says.

The lobby windows overlook the hotel's biggest off-season draw, the indoor pool. This and other Hyannis lodgings serve a niche market of winter-weary Bostonians who can't escape to Florida but still want to paddle in a warm pool, soak in a whirlpool, or bake in a sauna. For example, the Cape Codder Resort, a mile from the village center on Route 132, boasts a gigantic indoor wave pool with two water slides and dancing water fountains.

The Heritage House's location on the east end of Main Street has recently grown more desirable. "When I bought the hotel in 1999, the street was seedy and a little run-down," Martino says, "but it's been completely transformed." Although shopping malls often suck the life from town centers, Martino contends that "Main Streets are coming back," and Hyannis proves his point: Winter visitors needn't resign themselves to soaking until their skin puckers. There's plenty of shopping, dining, and night life along Main Street's commercial mile.

But Hyannis isn't just for visitors. "Hyannis is Cape Cod's downtown," says Cynthia Cole, executive director of the Hyannis Main Street Business Improvement District (BID), which

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wait for dinner time to order the shrimp and crawfish tails in spicy lobster sauce over angel hair. Open daily. Sandwiches and entrees \$6.95-\$24.95.

Brazilian Grill
680 Main St.
508-771-0109

Meat fans line up for the churrasco: nonstop servings of skewered and roasted beef, chicken, pork, and lamb. Open daily for lunch and dinner. Entrees \$7.99-\$24.99.

HannaH Fusion Bar and Bistro
615 Main St.
508-778-5565
hannahsbistro.com

Cape Cod seafood often gets a Southeast Asian treatment at this true fusion restaurant. Open Wednesday-Sunday. Lunch buffet \$8.75, dinner \$22.95-\$28.95.

emBargo
453 Main St.
508-771-9700

Upscale tapas and other small Spanish-inspired dishes make this a great place to nibble between glasses of tempranillo. Paella "for two" is plenty for a whole table. Open daily for dinner. Tapas \$4-\$12, entrees \$15-\$28.

What to do

John F. Kennedy Hyannis Museum
397 Main St.
508-790-1970
jfkhyannismuseum.org

Reopens for 2008 during February school vacation, Thursday-Saturday 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Sunday noon-4. Adults \$5, children ages 10-17 \$2.50.

Where to shop

All Cape Cooks Supply
237 Main St.
508-790-8908

Open Monday-Saturday 10 a.m.- 5 p.m., Sunday 10-2.

Zizini Arts & Crafts
382 Main St.
508-790-2109
zizini.com

swung into action in 2000 to revitalize the street.

"Even 10 years ago there were lots of empty storefronts along Main Street," says Cole.

"Now we have almost full occupancy. We have this eclectic, soulful street with all kinds of personalities, interests, and looks." Shops still hawk souvenir T-shirts and boxes of fudge, but today's Main Street has more to offer.

"The world becomes more interesting when people are talking and engaged. That's the kind of thing that can happen in a smaller shop," Cole says, especially in winter, when shopkeepers have time on their hands. Allan Shaidi, who opened Zizini in 2003, discourses on the artists who make the masks, batik art, pottery, soapstone and wood carvings, etched gourds, beaded necklaces, baskets, and other African goods that he sells. He also runs safaris to his native Tanzania.

Maria Campbell regularly returns home to Russia to replenish her supply of amber for the jewelry that she makes and sells in Samovar Gifts & Jewelry. She met her husband while she was an exchange student on Cape Cod and happily traded her long surname for one that Americans can spell and pronounce.

"I love Hyannis," says Campbell. "It's the only place on the Cape where you can have your own shop, make your own hours, and be comfortable."

Glassblower Brookes Morrison returned to the Cape two years ago to open his own studio. "I grew up around here and I like it here," he says. "There's a lot more night life than when I was a kid." Then he gestures at a

Open Tuesday-Saturday 10-6,
Sunday noon-5.

Samovar Gifts & Jewelry
578 Main St.
508-775-7780
samovargifts.com

Open Tuesday-Saturday 11-6.
Morrison Glassworks
599 B4 Main St.
508-771-1775
Open Tuesday-Saturday noon-7.

Bee & Blossom
675 Main St.
508-771-3345
beeandblossom.com
Open Monday-Saturday 10:30-
5:30.

toddler's toys tucked away in a corner of his studio. "But I don't get out much anymore." Morrison demonstrates glassblowing to customers who linger near the glow of his workbench torch. He also participates in Artscape, an open house of shops and galleries on the first Thursday of the month, which will resume in February after a post-Christmas hiatus.

At the west end of Main Street, Lou Anne Colombo serves afternoon tea in Bee & Blossom, the florist and gift shop that she opened in the summer of 2006. Colombo also sells honey from her own hives, along with an

array of honey-based beauty products and beeswax candles. And then there are her scones with lemon curd and cream.

To encourage people to stroll the length of Main Street, BID oversaw several pedestrian-friendly projects. The street was narrowed (parking is still free) and sidewalks widened, with bumpouts at the crosswalks.

BID was also instrumental in developing the Walkway to the Sea to link Main Street to Hyannis Harbor. The red brick path begins near the John F. Kennedy Hyannis Museum, which chronicles the late president's attachment to Cape Cod. A statue in front of the museum captures the essence of summer as a youthful JFK walks barefoot on the beach.

In the days leading up to Christmas, the community was eagerly awaiting the installation of 57 new nautical-themed ornamental streetlights along Main Street. "That will be the icing on the cake," Cole says. But the wider sidewalks may have made the biggest difference since they paved the way, so to speak, for outdoor dining on Main Street.

In the winter, it's live music that lures diners indoors. At Island Merchant, where the tuna steak is encrusted with Hyannis-made Cape Cod Potato Chips, entertainment ranges from a jazz pianist on a weeknight to live bands or a DJ pumping out dance music on the weekend.

Local institution Harry's Cajun Restaurant Bar relocated in July into new digs where murals and faux balconies pay homage to the Big Easy, a stage hosts musicians every night, and diners can feast on clam chowder or gumbo, linguine with clam sauce or shrimp Creole. On Tuesday nights, patrons of the






Brazilian Grill's all-you-can-eat barbecue can eat to the beat of bossa nova or Brazilian pop music.

There's a distinctly worldly vibe to Main Street dining. At HannaH Fusion Bar and Bistro, opened two years ago, diners sip sake martinis and peer into the open kitchen where chef Binh Phu, a native of Vietnam, whips up East-West fusion such as calamari in Vietnamese curry. Restaurant emBargo opened earlier this year, transforming a former sushi bar into a sleek tapas experience, with glam decor and lighting and intense small dishes such as littlenecks dolloped with foie gras.

That should keep the chill off.

Patricia Harris and David Lyon, Cambridge-based writers, can be reached at harris.lyon@verizon.net. ■

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