



## Stolen identity

Sandra Martin reports on the coming Alzheimer's crisis [focus](#)

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Ocean House has a 15-star rating (five each for its restaurant, spa and hotel) from Forbes.

## SLEEPOVER OCEAN HOUSE

# Old-world elegance in Rhode Island

**MONICA KUCHARSKI**  
WATCH HILL, R.I.

As we drove up the Rhode Island coastal road, the resort came into view like a gorgeous, old-world luxury liner. I'd heard the Ocean House had just landed a 15-star rating from Forbes, now I was about to experience it. We pulled up alongside Porsches and Ferraris as a team of valets scurried about. "Welcome to the Ocean House," they smiled, reaching for my door. "Welcome to the 1 per cent," I smiled to myself.

Since it was built in 1868, the Ocean House has been the resort of choice for New England's upper class and Hollywood escapees, hosting the likes of Douglas Fairbanks, Jean Harlow and David Niven in its heyday. In 2003, the aging resort was closed by new owner and Wall Street financier Charles Royce, who gave the grand dame a \$146-million (U.S.) remake over the next seven years. Much of her original charm and grace remain, but this Relais & Châteaux property now features all the comfort, convenience and technology modern guests demand. This year, a new 3,000-square-foot Center for Wine and Culinary Arts opened on-site offering classes, lessons in local food foraging and even "mystery basket" challenges that pit guests against one another in the kitchen.

### LOCATION, LOCATION

About a 1½ hour drive from Boston, the Ocean House is perched on the bluffs of Watch Hill — a picturesque hamlet at Rhode Island's most southwestern point. Dotted with many quintessentially New England mansions, this quaint village offers plenty of architecture and Atlantic Ocean vistas. True to its name, this Forbes 15-star resort (five each for its restaurant, spa and hotel) is oceanside with its own private beach just a two-minute stroll down a gentle hill.

### WHOM YOU'LL MEET

The Ocean House oozes old-world elegance but stuffiness or la-di-da attitudes are entirely



Hotel restaurants feature farm-to-table cuisine, which means lots of fresh, local foods on the menu.

non-existent. The vibe is definitely relaxed in the classy, comfy living-room-like lobby. While there's a distinct lack of denim (and men should pack a jacket for dinner), families abound. That speaks to the place's informality — who wants to take their kids on vacation to a place where they would have to mind their Ps and Qs? And how is this for a neighbour ... Taylor Swift's place is only five mansions up the street.

### IF I COULD CHANGE ONE THING

I wish the two-lane lap pool was outdoors where I could enjoy the breathtaking views and sunshine. The pool is also smaller than you'd expect, with kids often splashing about. ("Adults only" time is early in the morning, when guests are likely sleeping off the night before, and late afternoon, which cuts into cocktail time.)

### EAT IN OR EAT OUT?

The Ocean House has six dining venues, from the sophisticated fare at Seasons to casual meals at Dune Cottage. The ocean view from our table at Seasons was romantic and the service gracious. The farm-to-table cuisine of the Atlantic Northeast meant lots of fresh, local foods on the menu. But while my foie gras torchon and North Atlantic halibut loin were a feast for the eyes, the portions were small. Instead, our favourite meal was had at the nearby Weekapaug Inn, a 10-minute drive away. I'm a tomato addict/connoisseur,

and my native tomato salad sent me over the moon with its exotic mixture of flavours, while my duck entrée was roasted to perfection.

### BEST AMENITY

There's a lot to choose from: breezy shoreline tours aboard a 1930s-style wooden yacht; hands-on culinary courses (I'm ready to impress dinner guests with soufflé expertise!); and the spa-like bathrooms, so romantic with its Edwardian-style fixtures (I spent a lot of time in our three-foot-deep bathtub for two). But it was the evening turn-down service that blew me away. One night, a bookmark was slipped into my husband's novel and a lip balm from the hotel's Oh! spa was placed on a little plate by my nightstand. The following night, a screen-cleaning serviette was left on our GPS (were they trying to tell us something?) and freshly baked cookies filled the room with their homey aroma. I was tempted to stay for a couple more nights, just to see what other thoughtful goodies we'd receive.

Ocean House, 1 Bluff Ave., Watch Hill, R.I., [oceanhouseri.com](http://oceanhouseri.com); 49 rooms and 16 suites from \$295 (U.S.).

The writer was a guest of the hotel.

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