



Cliff House



Swimming pool

At a Glance

Commandeering an impressive perch on Bald Head Cliff, Cliff House is a magnificent oceanfront retreat with stylish interiors, a host of amenities and scenic views.

Indagare Loves

- The tranquil spa which features a range of sea-inspired treatments
- The lobster dishes at Tillers and Nubbs
- The panoramic views from every angle of the property

Cliff House Review

Cliff House was the vision of the enterprising Elsie Jane Weare, a captain's wife and mother of seven, who traveled to Maine on the Boston-Maine Railroad in 1866 and realized the location's potential for a summer resort. The setting was certainly

dramatic: 70 acres of panoramic oceanfront aloft a 72-foot sheet of rock that plunged precariously into the ocean below. After six years of construction, Cliff House debuted in 1872 and its repute as an oceanfront retreat for the refined spread quickly. The resort enjoyed decades of success until World War II when the US Army took over the property as a stationed look out for enemy ships.

Although it was re-opened by the Weares and updated significantly throughout the 20th century, the grande dame never fully returned to her former glory. Destination Hotels, a hotel group that seeks properties manifesting a distinct sense of place, similarly saw the promise that Elsie Weare recognized almost 150 years earlier. With sustainable practices embedded in the construction and Vermont-based design firm TruexCollins at the helm, Cliff House was reduced to its bones in late 2015 and rebuilt, tastefully transformed from an aging behemoth into the pinnacle of contemporary seaside luxury.

Throughout the architecture and interior design of Cliff House, a pervasive sense of soothing comfort is confronted by the powerful majesty of nature. The modern, grey-shingled buildings lined with glass walls wend around the rim of the boomerang-shaped cliff. Strict building laws today would have prevented construction so close to the edge, but because the 19th-century foundation was already in place, the resort is afforded a spectacular perch that seems to float above the Atlantic. This focus on the interplay of sea and sky is immediately illuminated upon entering the lobby: one's gaze is swept outwards to the double-height glass windows that act like the transparent hull of a ship. The heartbeat of the property is the lobby and Tidesmark Lounge, the grand common spaces that overlook the ocean. The décor evokes a sophisticated and convivial feel, boasting roaring fireplaces, leather arm chairs and teakwood bookshelves brimming with weathered titles, bulbed sea-glass bowls and lantern lighting. Cozy nooks abound in which to read a book, play a game of backgammon, enjoy a cocktail or listen to live music performances by local groups. Despite the grand scale, these curated interiors manage to feel intimate and create a finespun sense of fellowship amongst guests.

The maritime-chic motif is further stitched thoughtfully into the 225 hotel rooms and suites, which achieve the perfect equilibrium of airy and cozy. The smart design hints slightly Scandinavian with a neutral color palette, blonde hardwood floors, TempurPedic beds and soft furnishings balanced with nautical accents. Each of the breezy cocoon-like accommodations open onto a spacious balcony that either faces the endless vista of ocean or coastline. With a setting so close to the water, guests are lulled to sleep by the distinct sound of waves buffeting the cliff.

Maine's 3,500 miles of coastline (more than California!) produce a diverse bounty of fresh seafood, and Cliff House's dining venues celebrate the local abundance. **Tillers**, the relaxed but refined main dining room, is surrounded with floor-

to-ceiling glass windows that overlook the waves that crash against the Bald Head massif. The restaurant serves breakfast, lunch and dinner, and the sophisticated comfort cuisine evolves with the seasons, tides and harvests. A dinner here may begin with char-broiled local oysters with cranberry-horseradish sauce or a farmers' picnic board with pickled vegetables and hummus, then entrees like boiled Maine lobster with mashed potatoes or crispy skin native salmon with mushroom quinoa follow. For dessert, guests can head to the oceanfront community fire pit and roast s'mores over the blaze. For a more casual lunchtime meal, **Nubbs Lobster Shack**, an open-air restaurant with alfresco picnic tables, serves classics like fresh lobster rolls, steamed whole lobster and crab cakes, along with craft beers and speciality cocktails.

Although the striking scenery can certainly calm one into quiet bliss, the resort has an endless menu of activities. Active types can hike on nearby scenic trails, kayak or embark on boat excursions, while wellness seekers can exercise at the hotel's state-of-the-art fitness center or indulge in a treatment at the hotel's spa. The exquisite 9,000-square-foot spa features Red Flower products and sea-inspired massages, facials and body scrubs, and spa guests can relax before or after a treatment in the serene sanctuary space seemingly cantilevered over the crashing waves. The property has two swimming pools: an indoor pool with lanes and a freeform pool overlooking beautifully landscaped terraces that level down to the cliff's edge. An adjacent flat lawn is set up with games like corn hole and spike ball. The spacious outdoor hot tub is kept heated year-round, and there are plans to build a second swimming pool geared towards families in the addition that will be completed by the end of 2017.

The property is located across the road from the Cape Neddick Golf Club, where the concierge can arrange tee times, and tennis courts can also be organized in nearby York. The hotel shuttles guests to nearby sandy beaches in Ogunquit with all the necessary accoutrements. On-property there is a packed schedule of activities for each day, which may include workout classes, art and crafts in the kids club, movie nights, guided hikes and live music. Art lovers should not miss the **Ogunquit Museum of American Art**, a wonderful small museum just a few minutes' drive from the hotel where the works of Winslow Homer, John Marin and Marsden Hartley are on display as well as a sculpture garden that extends along an oceanfront bluff.

Cliff House is located in Cape Neddick, Maine, approximately 75 miles north of Boston and 275 miles northeast of New York City. The property is a 50-minute drive south of the Portland Airport, which is serviced by most major US cities.

Who Should Stay

Cliff House's wide array of activities and spectacular natural setting make it a perfect

long weekend getaway year round for anyone: solo travelers desiring quiet, families looking for an oceanside escape, couples on a romantic weekend or groups of friends looking for a luxurious base from which to explore the region. While the summer months boast cooling ocean breezes and outdoor activities, the fall and winter months beckon those seeking solitude and wellness in particularly striking surrounds.

- Kira Reinke on August 8, 2017

