

HAMPTONS

HOME DESIGN ISSUE



Zoom in

Love On The East End

HILARY RHODA + SEAN AVERY PLAN THEIR
GLAMOROUS WATER MILL WEDDING

BY ANDY COHEN

THE FAMOUS CHEQUIT REOPENS!
A METICULOUS RESTORATION OF
SHELTER ISLAND'S HISTORIC INN

PRISTINE POOL HOUSES
CLEAN LINES + MODERN
ARCHITECTURE

PLUS
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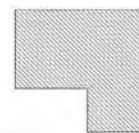
TAKE SHELTER

THE FAMED CHEQUIT HOTEL REOPENS, BRINGING THE FIRST-EVER LUXURY ACCOMMODATIONS TO THE UNSPOILED BEAUTY OF SHELTER ISLAND, JUST IN TIME FOR SUMMER.

BY CARRIE DOYLE
 PHOTOGRAPHY BY COSTAS PICADAS

No destination feels more like a vacation than a trip to an island. Something about having to take various modes of transportation—planes, trains, automobiles, and, of course, ferries—to arrive at an elusive, breathtaking island makes the arrival that much more gratifying. What makes it even sweeter is having a fantastic place to stay, and that's why vacationers heading to Shelter Island are thrilled that the famed Chequit has reopened, just in time for the summer season.

Refurbished, renovated, and rejuvenated under new owners David Bowd and Kevin O'Shea of Salt Hotels, the 37-room inn has been returned to its former glory and is now a luxurious hot spot. With a combined 29 years of experience in the hospitality business—including stints working under such high-end lodging giants as Hilton, Marriott, Ian Schrager, André Balazs hotels (Bowd), and Starwood Resorts (O'Shea)—the partners met working at Morgans Hotel Group before eventually launching their own boutique hotels in Provincetown, Massachusetts, in 2011. Within four years their hotels have won numerous accolades, have been featured on a host of top-10 lists, and are much in demand among vacationers.





The well-appointed patio is for exclusive use by hotel guests.
OPPOSITE PAGE:
Owners David Bowdler and Kevin O'Shea have breathed new life into The Chequit with a renovated design.



The hotel's owners salvaged antiques, like this well-used bar cart, to add personality to guest rooms.



And it's no surprise considering the care and consideration Salt Hotels gives to its properties.

"Our philosophy is putting the guest at the center, and that's what is missing from a lot of hotel and restaurant experiences," explains Bowd, who hails from northern England and has worked his way up from bellman. He primarily coordinates most of the business end of the properties: "This is all about the guests and their preferences. We don't want our hotels to be 'nightclub' hotels; that's not who we are."

"Right," O'Shea strongly concurs. "We take these fabulous buildings and give life to them, but at the same time we are restoring them, making them look beautiful and focusing on the guest [experience]."

"The core of our business is redefining the bed and breakfast," adds O'Shea, who has a background in interior architecture and design. "It's about getting rid of the Victorian interiors. Sometimes when you stay at a B&B you have the owner hovering over

you, you sleep in a lumpy bed, the showers are horrible, and the floors are creaky. That's not us. We are about taking the best of the luxury boutique hotel experience that you get in the city and importing it into our model, but also making sure to incorporate the local connection—all of our hotels are designed to have a cohesion with the location so that you know where you are staying."

Indeed, the history of the 121-year-old Chequit is undeniable, and efforts have been made to make you feel that you are staying at a place with a storied past. Situated on a hill that affords beautiful views of the bay and harbor, the structure holds a prominent place in the center of Shelter Island Heights. Set in an area known for its naturalistic beauty and picturesque landscapes, it is clear that it was designed to stand out. Originally built in 1872 by the local Methodist church to serve the community as a dining hall, the space was converted into an inn in 1894. (The name Chequit is a Manhasset Native American word for "weakfish.")

Through the 1940s and 1960s, the inn enjoyed a renaissance of sorts, reportedly hosting celebrities and luminaries such as Marilyn Monroe and members of the Kennedy family. But lately, few would disagree that the inn was in need of a makeover, especially with the increasing popularity of Shelter Island as a vacation destination. It takes an extra effort to slog through the Hamptons traffic and then hop on a ferry, so there better be a good meal to dine on and a nice bed to rest your head on when you arrive. Enter Bowd and O'Shea.

"The bedrooms were dowdy before. It felt like Grandma's room," laments O'Shea. "But we want authenticity, to take a light approach to how we renovate and keep things quirky and fun so that people have a sense of place."

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: The 121-year-old Chequit inn has been refurbished and reopened, with a warm welcoming lobby and an entrance flanked with topiaries.





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: The inn's rooms are done in a palette of blush and gray; hotel guests have exclusive access to the wine and Champagne lounge every evening.

Today there is no doubt that guests will feel that another renaissance has begun at The Chequit. The interior design is simple and clean, with public spaces whitewashed and bedrooms sporting a soft colorful palette—blush, gray, and white. Every bedroom décor is unique, as the owners salvaged a medley of antiques when they bought the property and have added historical fixtures to each space. Wall-to-wall carpeting was ripped up, and the original floors were refurbished. Although a hint of the Victorian past remains in the feel of the hotel, the amenities are first-class. The renovated bathrooms are stocked with C.O. Bigelow bath products and Further soaps. The beds are made with 400-thread-count sheets. There are unique touches like Turkish towels and sun hats available in each room for guests to bring to the beach.

"The Summer House," formerly a separate structure for staff housing, is now a shabby-chic six-room cottage available to rent room by room or to take over for a wedding or a weekend with friends. It has an intimate feel. And rates start at \$195 a night, which is a steal for the Hamptons.

"We felt that Shelter Island could be very expensive in the summer, and we wanted to allow a great mixture of guests, which has always worked for us," explains Bowd. "We wanted to bring in a sense of community." (That is why the inn will remain open year-round, and 75 percent of its employees hail from the area.)

But the new dining opportunities may be the most exciting aspect of the new Chequit. Chef Richard Pims, who has a passion for local and seasonal cuisine, oversees Red Maple, the 156-seat restaurant open for lunch and dinner. The menu is composed so that there is something for everyone. Featured dishes include everything from smaller plates for sharing (Montauk fluke crudo; house-made country pâté

and smoked bluefish rillettes) to flatbreads (English and mint pea or oven-dried tomato) to hearty mains (spiced grilled lamb burger; pan-roasted Atlantic cod and garlic prawns) to the "Simply Composed" element (grilled local fish; wood-roasted chicken or charred flatiron steak with a simple salad). "The menu is designed in such a way that you can stay with us for a week, eat at the restaurant every night, and have a completely different menu," explains O'Shea. The goal is to allow the diners to decide if they want a hearty meal or something light.

Every evening hotel guests will have exclusive access to the wine and Champagne lounge that starts in the lobby and spills out to the well-appointed porches, featuring some local favorites on tap. (Yes, wine on tap.) Breakfast is also offered only to guests, and besides hot selections there is a yogurt parfait bar with a range of toppings, including homemade jams and granola. (For those who like to sleep in, there is also a "breakfast in bed" option, with selections delivered in a wonderful little bag.)

The Chequit also has made some strategic and sure-to-be popular partnerships: The White Hill café, an immaculate and modern space, is open to the public and features cult favorite Jack Stir Brew's coffee and pastries provided by Baked, the much-buzzed-about bakery with outposts in Brooklyn and Tribeca. Also available in the café are a variety of interesting wraps, salads, and spreads created and boxed by the kitchen so that you can pop them in your beach bag and have a lovely outdoor banquet. (To ensure all your needs are met, picnic baskets and outdoor-dining paraphernalia are on sale as well.) And to further round out your beach experience, Wampum—the hip surfer clothing store—is opening an outpost in the hotel with exclusive items developed especially for The Chequit. (Wampum also designed the waitstaff's uniforms, natch.)

"The great thing about opening a hotel is how it all comes together," says Bowd. "We've done it enough times, and we have a great team at The Chequit." 23 Grand Ave., Shelter Island Heights, 749-0018; thechequit.com **H**

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 —KATY O'SHEA



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GET PACKING

What you need to encompass the island's laid-back, luxe vibe.

Shelter Island is like that understatedly chic cousin who is unflatteringly stylish no matter what—and so your wardrobe should be, too. Start with a pastel bikini from cool Aussie brand **Zimmermann** (\$260, 27 Newtown Lane, East Hampton, 604-6291; zimmermannwear.com), then add accessories in a muted, sophisticated palette. Round sunglasses by **Marc by Marc Jacobs** (\$120, *Solstice* Sunglasses, East Hampton, 324-4591; solsticesunglasses.com) in pink ombre make a subtle statement, and a rugged raffia fedora by **Heidi Klein** (\$124, 46 Jobs Lane, Southampton, 377-3431; heidiklein.com) exemplifies the island's casual-polished aesthetic. Stash your sunscreen in a screen-print pouch by **Zubi** (\$150, *Scoop Beach*, 51 Newtown Lane, East Hampton, 329-6800; scoopnyc.com), and be sure to hydrate after a day in the sun with **Aerin** Lilac Path Body Cream (\$58, 83 Main Street, Southampton, 353-3773; aerin.com). Leave your heels at home, and opt for mesh espadrilles from **Aquazurra** (\$595, *Intermix*, 87 Main Street, East Hampton, 907-8025; intermixonline.com) from beach to bicycle to bar. Now just add water and a glass of rosé.

ISLAND KNOW-HOW

Rachel Medina, house manager at The Chequit, shares her list of must-do activities.

BEACHES

There are four official beaches on Shelter Island: Wades Beach, Crescent Beach, Shell Beach, and Hay Beach. You'll also need a beach pass if you want to park the car. If it's family fun you're seeking, Wades Beach is the best bet. But if it's an escape you crave, we recommend grabbing a picnic from White Hill Café and heading out to Hay Beach or Shell Beach. Have time for a photo op? Make your way to Kissing Rock. #thechequit #kissingrock

BIKING

Only seven square miles, Shelter Island is a great place to get around by bike because all the roads on it are bike-accessible. When heading out from The Chequit, be sure to explore the Shelter Island Heights, with old Victorian homes dating back to the 1800s. For the water-view biking experience, Dering Harbor will not disappoint. Piccozzi's Bike Shop provides half-day, daily, and weekly rentals. 177 N. Ferry Road 749-0045; jwpiccozzi.com

HIKING

Mashomack Preserve covers a third of the island and encompasses 12 miles of coastline. Considered one of the richest preserves in the Northeast—with more than 2,000 acres of pristine land, interlacing tidal creeks, mature oak woodlands, fields, and freshwater marshes—it was purchased by The Nature Conservancy in 1980 in an effort to stop development and to preserve and protect habitats and such species as the osprey. Feeling adventurous? The nine-mile Blue Trail will not disappoint. Stop in at the visitors' center to learn about the many inhabitants of Mashomack. 47 S. Ferry Road, 749-1001; nature.org

KAYAKING

For a brief respite from the high-energy Hamptons, Shelter Island Kayak Tours runs outings, starting at 10 AM daily and led by Jay Damuck. The two-hour tour around Coecles Harbor promises spectacular views of Taylor's Island and Mashomack Nature Preserve, which will likely include glimpses of ospreys, baby foxes, and swooping egrets. For those who prefer to brave the waters unaccompanied, double and single kayaks are available to paddle around alone. Bring the whole family for a tour, or come alone and meet other adventure seekers. Route 114 at Duvali Road 749-1990; kayaks.com



WILDLIFE

You may have already asked yourself, "What are those giant nests everywhere?" Shelter Island is home to a broad population of osprey. These incredible birds build their distinctive nests out of sticks atop man-made poles that are strategically placed throughout Shelter Island. Want to get a closer look? Their nests can be seen along the causeway on Ram Island. You may even be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of these amazing anglers diving into the water to grasp their catch of the day with their talons. Like so many islanders, ospreys return to Shelter Island year after year for the summer season.

FOOD SHOPPING

The Shelter Island Farmers Market is held on Saturdays at The Shelter Island Historic Society (16 S. Ferry Road, 749-0025; shellenlandhistory.org/farmers-market) June 6 through September 12. Vendors include Blue Duck Bakery, Goodale Farms, Browder's Birds, Zombie Free Farm, Castello di Borghese Vineyard, and Sylvester Manor. And gourmet specialty food store Table of Content General Store (59 N. Ferry Road, 749-5862) features organic and ecofriendly items, including homemade nectar chutney.

SYLVESTER MANOR

Originally a Native American hunting and fishing ground, Sylvester Manor (80 N. Ferry Road, 749-0626; sylvestermanor.org) was home to 11 generations of European settlers' families, dating back to 1652. Now preserved and never to be developed, it is operating as an organic farm and arts and educational center. Its farmstand, set on Sylvester Manor Windmill Field (21 Manwaring Road, sylvestermanor.org/our-farm/our-farmstand), and open on Saturdays from 9 AM to 12 PM until November 22, offers products from Catapano Dairy Farm and Murray's Cheeses. The grounds are open from 9 AM to 5 PM for self-guided tours. To take a deeper look at the history, schedule a guided tour of the Manor House.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMY PATAI FOR THE HAMPTON MAGAZINE (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP)