

LEISURE

Sea Star

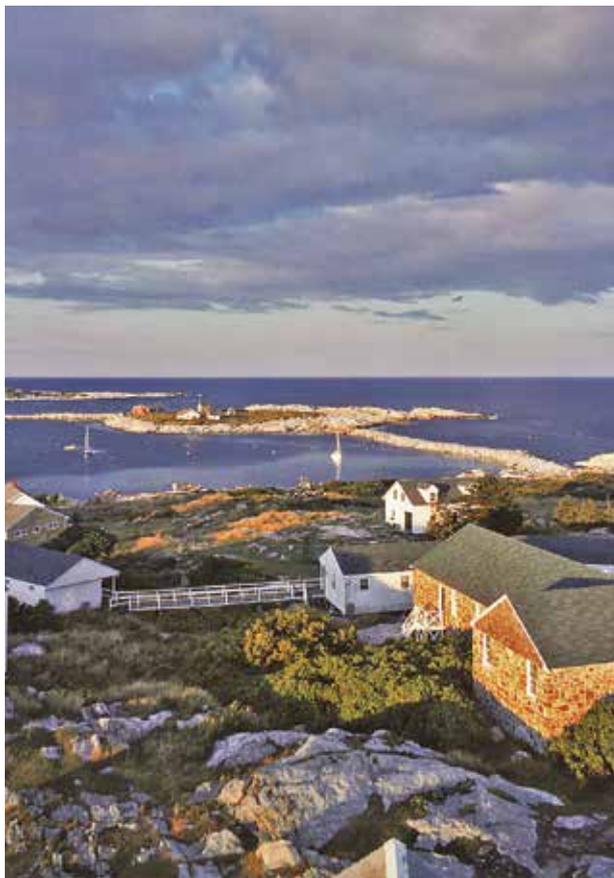
Eight miles off the coast of New Hampshire, Star Island makes visitors feel as if they have stepped back in time.

By Carrie Tyler

AS I SETTLE INTO bed, the summer breeze gently rattles the sea-worn shutters. Shining through the slats, the moon casts a warm glow over my simple accommodations. In the distance, the chime of the bell buoy lulls me to sleep as the waves lap against the rocky shoreline. I can't help but think this place is magic.

The sense of peace Star Island offers is why I have returned every summer for the last 12 years. One of the Isles of Shoals—located eight miles off the coast of Portsmouth, New Hampshire—Star Island offers guests a unique space to rest in a way that few mainland hotel stays can. Views of the endless sea, open porches with rockers, winding paths, lichen-covered rocks, and charming old stone buildings are just a few things that add to its romance. History and community surround this island gem.

I lovingly refer to the island as an adult summer camp—rustic, but adequate. Walking up the wildflower-laden path from the pier takes you back in time as you approach the 139-year-old Oceanic Hotel, once a grand Victorian seaside vacation destination for the well-heeled. Today,



the hotel's accommodations are simple: You won't find a television or Internet (though there is a business center for emergencies); shared baths are stationed in the upstairs halls, and guests dine family-style at long tables. But what Star

Seaside Star: Clockwise from top, the island is dotted with various structures; the stone Gosport Chapel dates back to the 1800s; the view is picture perfect.

structure by candlelight—the effect is breathtaking and soul-enhancing.)

In 1915, the hotel became a nonprofit retreat house and continues in this capacity today. Visitors can enjoy the island by attending one of the numerous conferences or by visiting for the day or overnight. Many of the conferences overlap, making it a mecca for creativity and learning. A typical day might include morning yoga on the lawn and contra dancing in the lobby at night. The list of topics offered are as endless and diverse as the population of people that choose to return year after year.

At Star Island there is always an opportunity for some downtime away from the activities—for instance break out the camera and explore, open some wine, or read a book. If you let it, Star Island will enrapture you, and you'll feel the pure magic for yourself. starisland.org

