

NEW YORK POST

Relax like a Vanderbilt in this vamped Newport mansion turned hotel



Many celebrate the Golden Hour, that notable time around sunset when cocktails are socially legit.

At the Vanderbilt, **Auberge Resorts Collection**, a grand boutique hotel in Newport, Rhode Island, guests may partake in the Green Hour, an absinthe experience featuring the supposed hallucinogenic tippie nicknamed the green fairy, and popular with the Parisian demimonde during L'Age d'Or, a time referred to in America as the Gilded Age.

It was around that time Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt (scion of the shipping and railroad family) built what is now the Vanderbilt, which is emerging this summer with a brand-new room design, the finishing touch to an extensive top-to-toe make-over.

There are two versions as to why Alfred built this beautiful

The boring one is that it was built as a YMCA. But the rumor persists Alfred built it for his mistress Agnes.



Audaciously positioned minutes way from the main Vanderbilt summer cottage, the massive, monumental, and quite magnificent the Breakers on Bellevue Avenue, perhaps that was the final straw for Alfred's wife Elise, who filed for divorce.

With the affair now public, Agnes committed suicide. Upon completion in 1909, the building was donated to the city.

At just 37 years old, Alfred died tragically and heroically (famously saving women and children) on the RMS Lusitania, which was torpedoed by German U-Boats in 1915. Ironically, he had a ticket for the Titanic in 1912, but changed his plans.



After the city sold the building in the mid 1990s, it was eventually souped up into a luxury hotel.

Capturing a richly toned Gilded Age influenced redesign, latest owners Auberge Resorts Collection retuned the sleek blond interior to shades of teal and inky blue, including the wainscoting lined guest rooms, which have four poster beds, antique furniture, hand-printed wallpaper and mini bars stocked with champagne, CBD sodas, and local wines and beers.

Heavy velvet curtains and potted palms in the lobby add to an intimate turn-of-the-19th century vibe — ascending the grand double staircase almost feels like being a houseguest, not a hotel one. (Rooms from \$551 per night.)



Add-on adventures for the summer include drives in a gorgeous vintage car loaned from the nearby Audrain Auto Museum — with a picnic, that sets you back about \$550 (for two), museum admission included.

The Vanderbilt's revamped bars and restaurants include the bright Conservatory, which leads to outdoor patio dining by the small pool.



the Rooftop bar, where a ship's bell clangs at 5 p.m. each Friday to mark the start of the weekend with complimentary tipples for hotel guests; and the un-confusingly named the Dining Room, where an April Bloomfield designed menu includes tender asparagus in a creamy morel and pea sauce; roasted cauliflower flavored with garam masala; and local oysters and fish, such as fluke ceviche and crispy daily catch katsu.

Along with the odd stuffed pheasant hanging off the walls, the Dining Room houses one of two magnificent brick fireplaces. The other grand hearth is in the sumptuous, sultry Parlour sitting room, where the secret absinthe bar is located behind a hidden door.



Head bartender, Brooklyn native Ariel Brodsky conducts exclusive presentations of absinthes from this cabinet of alcoholic wonders, and instructs on the history behind the wormwood laced aperitif, while ice water from the absinthe fountain slowly drips over a sugar cube and turns the drink its famous pale green.

After quaffing that, absinthe cocktails are expertly constructed and served with nibbles — ossetra caviar on fluffy blinis, tiny samosas and savory choux buns (\$300 per couple).

It's no surprise that The Vanderbilt feels more adult and couples-y than family oriented — besides secret absinthe bars and rooftop rum toasts, next to the indoor pool, the seductively low-lit spa feels like a boudoir where wellness director Randi Wallace has created a netherworld of calm and healing, elevating me-time with intimate bespoke experiences.

Enter the unique relaxation room, a real healing space, and recline in an oh-so-pretty treatment room, where a rejuvenating facial or perfectly named Tailored to Perfection massage (60 minutes \$225; 90 minutes \$300) is guaranteed to bring on a delicious trance.

If that doesn't do the trick, there's always the "green fairy" in the Parlour!