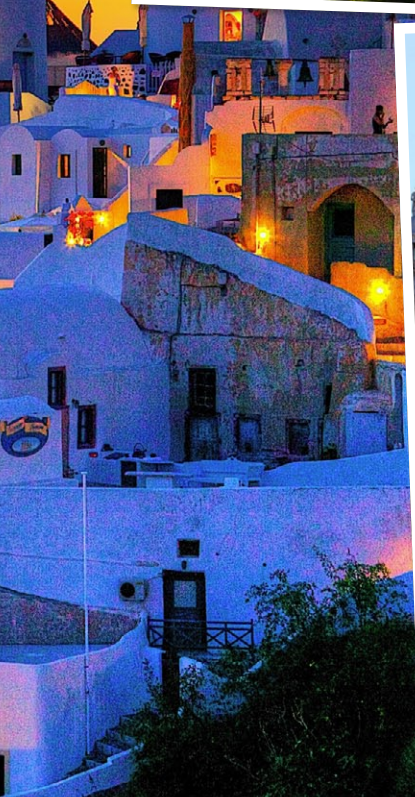
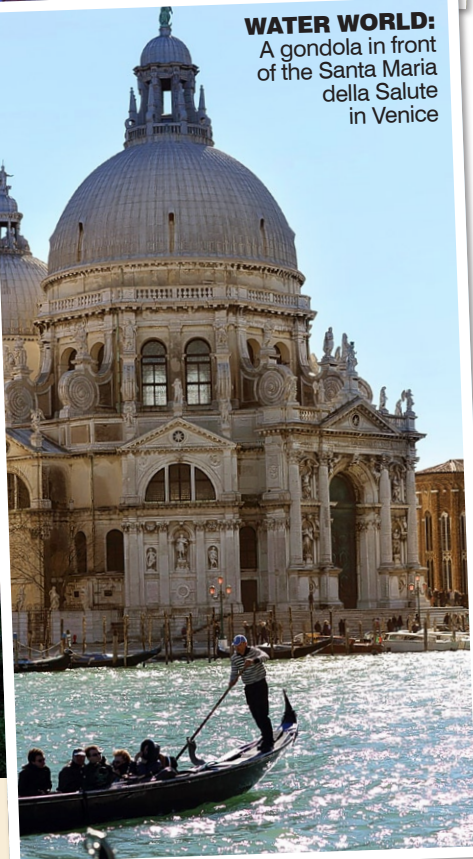




GRAND TOUR: Santorini, left, and Istanbul's Blue Mosque are included in Viking cruises



WATER WORLD: A gondola in front of the Santa Maria della Salute in Venice



38,000 beds

adults sharing for a quick overnight trip, new pull-out family beds will accommodate two extra people in family rooms.

To help create a warm and cosy ambience, Travelodge has introduced a 'feature wall' in its rooms. The wall is a tranquil blue, as research shows the body clock is programmed to relate the colour blue to the hours of darkness. Other additions include a contemporary en-suite bathroom with shower, a larger desk area, new reading lights and a phone charging socket built into the bed frame.

The first Travelodge on the northbound carriageway of the A38 opened in June 1985. In the summer of Live Aid, Britain had a new low-cost hotel chain which charged £19.50 a night and quickly proved there was a market for the US motel concept of affordable accommodation.

Travelodge has never looked back – it now has a grand total of 521 hotels.

● **Travelodge** (travelodge.co.uk) offers rooms from £35 a night.

Viking Cruises reports that the company has been 'encouraged' by the 'overwhelmingly positive response' Viking Star has generated among guests. 'We made a commitment to

reinvent ocean cruising, and we are well on our way,' he said. 'By 2017 we will have two more ships designed to enable our guests to better experience their destination. We will also have four new itineraries that offer our guests more time in port and enriching, cultural experiences at a better value than our competitors.'

New for this year, Viking is offering a 15-day Ancient Empires & Holy Lands Rome To Istanbul cruise. It will give passengers the opportunity to explore historic destinations in the Eastern Mediterranean, experience some of the sacred sights of the Middle East and travel through the heart of the Holy Land.

Guests will have the chance to spend three days in Israel, making stops in Jerusalem and Haifa, gateways to Bethlehem and Nazareth, and will also be able to explore the ancient cities of Rome, Athens and Istanbul.

Also worth a look is a new 15-day Bergen To The Bosphorus trip, stopping in Paris and Lisbon along the way. Once in the Mediterranean, travellers will visit Tunis, Valletta and Athens before concluding the trip in Istanbul.

Two sister ships to Viking Star are already under construction: Viking Sea will be launched this year, followed by Viking Sky in 2017.

Be a real New Yorker – escape to New England

Frank Barrett joins the stars in Cape Cod, Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard

BARRY Manilow sang: 'Time in New England took me away to long rocky beaches... and you by the bay', but his 1976 song Weekend In New England is a lot less romantic than it seems, as it's the story of an adulterous seaside affair.

The lyrics don't actually include the words 'weekend in New England' but they didn't need to; for New Yorkers, New England was a weekend break sort of place, an easy drive north-east from Manhattan for a couple of days in leafy Massachusetts and beyond.

Nantucket island, along with another island – nearby Martha's Vineyard – is the classic suave New Yorker's bolthole, but it has a very earthy, downtown downbeat connection. In searching for claims to fame, Nantucket's Wikipedia entry bizarrely nominates the fact that this small Massachusetts island is used as a 'rhyming device' in a 'noted limerick'.

Potential visitors might justifiably wonder whether an island which needs to flaunt its bawdy limerick connections might be the ideal place for a restful summer holiday. Surely there must be more?

Indeed there is. Famous 19th Century American poet Ralph Waldo Emerson revealed himself an early devotee: 'The air comes into your face and eyes as if it was glad to see you. The moon comes here as if it was at home.'

Nantucket, 30 miles off the mainland, has always made a living from the sea; when author Herman Melville wrote about Nantucket in his 1851 novel Moby Dick, it was a major whaling port.

In more recent times it has become a popular holiday place – a millionaire's retreat where homes change hands at extraordinary prices.

The wealthy arrive by private plane, but the not so wealthy take

advantage of the regular flights that serve the island from nearby cities including Boston. Flying from Boston, for example, with Cape Air takes 45 minutes, compared with the ferry service from Hyannis (a 70-mile drive from Boston) at just under two hours alone for the sea crossing.

There are 80 miles of unspoilt beaches where you can enjoy the island's famously bracing fresh salt air; inland Nantucket delights with its cobbled roads and picture-perfect seaside cottages complete with roses around their doors.

Handily placed for Nantucket town centre and a short walk from Children's Beach, yet in a tranquil spot, the White Elephant Village rates as one of the best places to stay. There is an excellent heated swimming pool and bikes if you want to explore under your own steam.

After de-stressing on Nantucket, it's time to head across to the mainland. Cape Cod is technically an island – it is described as an 'independent land mass' because a canal separates it from the continent, but this is nit-picking. When the Pilgrim Fathers arrived at

LIGHT FANTASTIC: Nantucket's Brant Point lighthouse



Plymouth Rock (although historians dispute the exact spot) on the Mayflower, Cape Cod became a key part of American history. For an authentic Cape Cod experience, stay at the Chatham Bars Inn, an imposing hotel which has strong echoes of The Great Gatsby about it.

For the final stop, take the ferry to Massachusetts' other great little island: Martha's Vineyard, the setting for another famous marine monster. Amity Island in Peter Benchley's novel Jaws was based on Martha's Vineyard.

The Menemsha Inn And Cottages is the perfect base. The hotel is in the 300-year-old fishing village of Menemsha, one of six towns on the 87 sq mile island.

Hotel guests enjoy access to two private beaches – Squibnocket and Lucy Vincent. The latter even has a famous 'bathing suit-optional' stretch if you're feeling brave.

And there are lots of celebrities.

'You should have been here yesterday,' said the lady at the coffee shop in Edgartown: 'Reese Witherspoon was sitting right where you are now.' We had almost been in the presence of Hollywood royalty...



PRETTY IN PINK: A rose-covered Nantucket cottage and Martha's Vineyard fan Reese Witherspoon

GETTING THERE

Cleveland Collection (clevelandcollection.co.uk, 0203 111 0798) offers a seven-night New England Explorer from £1,659 per adult and £1,519 per child under 12. This includes return flights, domestic flights with Cape Air, ferries, car rental, three nights at White Elephant Village, two nights at Chatham Bars Inn and two nights at Menemsha Inn on a room-only basis. For information about holidays in New England and the rest of the US go to visittheusa.com.