

# Gimme Shelter

On Location in Shelter Island



Eleanor F. Labrozzi photo

By Diane Roncone

I was in an accident last summer that left me in a wheelchair for nearly three months. Once I was up and on my feet, I was determined to get active again. I had heard about a 10-mile hike taking place on Shelter Island at the Mashomack Preserve. Hiking had always been one of my favorite pastimes because it clears my mind and the nature aspect of it keeps me grounded. I knew that the Preserve had over 2,000 acres with miles of sandy coastline, and figured that this was a great way to break out of my wheelchair state of mind. Before I lost my nerve, I signed up. And I went.

Taking a ferry is the only way to get onto Shelter Island, and I had no problem getting a spot on the South Ferry (just outside of Sag Harbor). Once on Shelter Island, you can take the North Ferry across to Greenport (and back) if you want to do a little exploring on the North Fork (or vice versa if you've started up there). The ferry lines can be time-consuming at peak times though so plan your visit accordingly. After the ferry arrived at Shelter Island, I soon saw the entrance to the Mashomack Preserve.

**Fun Fact:** The Mashomack Preserve is owned by The Nature Conservancy and protects one of the most dense populations of breeding ospreys on the East Coast.

I parked at the Preserve's Visitor Center, and soon our group was assembled and ready to go. We hiked around curves, up hills, and through trails that opened to vistas of breathtaking meadows, with its natural grasses swaying gently in the breeze, and a view of the water beyond. Sometimes the trails were completely flooded so we made our way, painstakingly, through briar patches. We waded through water. We talked as we trekked along, and got to know each other. Four hours later (yes, four *hours*),



The visitor's center at The Nature Conservancy's Mashomack Preserve.

we were back at the Preserve's Visitor Center, feeling refreshed and exhausted at the same time. Having hiked 10 miles felt like a personal triumph after being wheelchair-bound, and this accomplishment was a great way to face—and embrace—the future. It might not seem like a big undertaking to many people, but that day gave me back my confidence.

Another thing I wanted to do while on the Island was visit the camp that houses the **Perlman Music Program**. I was surprised to see that the camp looked like it was straight out of the movie, *The Parent Trap*. Rustic cabins...not exactly the setting I had envisioned for the world-renowned violinist Itzhak Perlman. It was refreshing to see that this wholesome place was the environment for children who come from around the world to attend this program, instead of them being housed in a fancy hotel somewhere with a private doorman and room service. I felt inspired when I learned that Mr. Perlman stays on campus full time during the summer session, eats with the students, gives them private lessons each week, and participates in their activities. They give a few performances every summer so check their calendar.

**Fun Fact:** This year marked the 16th anniversary of the program; it served 37 musicians ages 11-18, *and* no student is ever turned away because of inability to pay!

After hiking at Mashomack and exploring the Perlman camp, I had worked up an appetite, so I had dinner next door at the **Pridwin Hotel**. Walking into their main room I got the feeling that I could easily spend a month at this gracious hotel overlooking the water. The service and food were both fantastic and there is a weekly cookout on the lawn every Wednesday evening during the summer. Feel free to arrive by water and tie up at Pridwin's private dock...*very* East End.

Other popular places to check out include the **Chequit Inn**, the beautiful, large Victorian on Grand Avenue, which has been a staple on

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**Wetsuits**

Wetsuits are made out of neoprene, a rubber substance with nitrogen bubbles inside it. The suit only keeps you warm if there's a very thin layer of water in it that is warmed up by your body heat. The tighter (snug is the word) the suit fits (without restricting movement) the better.



- Buy a surf-specific suit. These will usually have lighter weight material in the shoulder and knee areas where a lot of movement occurs, and a zipper in the back. You'll see suits labeled 3-4-5, 3-5, 3-4, etc. The numbers designate the thickness of the suit in millimeters. Multiple numbers mean a different thickness is used in different areas.
- A 4-5 or 3-4-5 will do you for all but, say December through February. You may want to consider buying a 2-3 or a 3 mil for early summer and fall, as well. Hardcore East Coasters go five-mil+ in winter and suffer. Drysuits are an option. These let no water in and rely on insulation you wear for warmth. Successful surf-specific drysuits are a fairly recent development.
- Yes, you can find wetsuits used...but note that the difference between a wetsuit and a drysuit is that you can pee in a wetsuit. You have officially been forewarned.
- If you'll be hitting cold water, you'll need boots, gloves, a helmet (neoprene), and a degree of masochism. If you're worried about head injuries — probably the reason why you're in the water in January — Gath makes surf-specific noggin protectors.

**Roof Racks**

So how do you and your board get to the beach? Roof racks. There are a zillion, with Yakima and Thule leading the pack. An outfit called Inno ([www.innoracks.com](http://www.innoracks.com)) makes attachments said to fit most factory car racks. FCS and others make soft (removable) racks. Either way, you'll need one ... plus they look cool.

- I prefer tail-first mounting. When loading think aerodynamics. The wind is trying to push the board off the car from the bottom-front. Fasten down appropriately.
- With new, lightweight boards, a cover is de rigueur. With your old board ... save the money.

- Tying boards to racks does not make them theft proof, though there are cable attachments that may — or make the thief angry enough to break the board. Yes, boards break ... and you will break one every now and again.

**Exercises**

If you can figure out a way to lay on your stomach while swimming your arms through molasses for hours on end, patent it. Otherwise, use elastics fastened to a wall and mimic swimming motions.

Anything to build chest and shoulder muscles.

- Do cardio exercises ... that's what surfing is; a series of wind sprints both paddling out and catching waves. Dig out your high school band oboe/trombone/clarinet and re-learn to play it.
- Stretch. Nobody does, but everyone should. The real pros do.
- Sit-ups. The paddling position requires an arched back. If the abs aren't in shape, you'll tire faster.
- Big wave surfers (e.g., Waimea, Mavericks, etc.) practice running underwater carrying large rocks. That's to prep for being held down by a wave during a wipeout. Breath control at all levels of surfing is a must and comes into play going out, in, and under.

**Etiquette**

Get a copy of *The Endless Summer* (the first one). A bit hokey today, but it will impart some historical perspective of surfing. The more recent *Riding Giants* is another good one.



- Don't paddle out through the middle of a lineup (where everyone is sitting waiting for waves). Paddle out around the ends.
- If you're standing up once every four times, stay on the edges of the break and take whatever waves you can get. It will take longer to get good, but when you get good at catching junk, catching good waves is a snap.
- Don't drop in. That means if another surfer is on the wave and is nearest to where it's breaking it's his/her wave; don't take off in front of them.
- Unless you have full control of your surfing, stay away from crowds. ☒

*Now stop reading this, grab a board –  
yeah, you can listen to some old Beach Boys tunes – and hit the surf.*