



endless **lewes** DELAWARE summer



Small, charming, civic-minded. Lewes, in the words of one smitten resident, is “the Martha’s Vineyard of the mid-Atlantic.” This historic seaport’s mix of cedar-shingled and brick buildings, stylish shops and galleries, convivial cafes, and nautical lore endear it to 3,000 year-round inhabitants. That its southern neighbor, Cape Henlopen State Park, embraces six miles of unsullied Atlantic beach makes Lewes doubly appealing to visitors, especially those who shun the boardwalk-and-bar scene. (That condos now sprout on the city’s western flank seems somehow inevitable.)

Lewes (pronounced “Lew-is”) is Delaware’s oldest town; it was settled by the Dutch in 1631, and remains a port of call for mariners today.

The boats bobbing at the city’s new marina on the Lewes and Rehoboth Canal are pleasure craft, and the harbor is filled with charter fishing boats. Pilots based in Lewes guide cargo vessels to nearby big-city ports, but the Lewes-bound ships plying Delaware Bay haul different goods: cars packed with visitors and commuters, who embark and disembark at the Cape May-Lewes Ferry terminal south of town.

Kathleen and John Leebel found their way to Lewes by way of Baltimore, where they lived until the birth of their first child. Both vacationed at the Delaware shore

since childhood, loved the area, and found just what they were looking for in Lewes.

“We’re pretty much convinced this is the perfect place to live,” says Kathleen, who was raised in Annapolis and is a frequent visitor to Cape Cod, where her parents own a house. “Getting that New England small-town feel was right for us.”

Now the couple—home-builders by trade—have started Concierge By The Sea (see “Inside Advice,” Rehoboth), a service catering to area vacationers who would rather spend their time staking out their spot on the beach instead of stocking up their pantry.

The Leebels will book clients a table for dinner, too, although that’s not essential in Lewes, even in the throes of summer, according to Kathleen. “We’re pretty laid-back here,” she says.

Walk-up seatings for dinner? Try that on the Vineyard in August.