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## Art and luxury still abide by the sea in Newport

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NEWPORT, R.I. — Mussel art is popular here. At the new latitudinally named waterfront hotel, Forty 1° North, they do up mussels big. Guests entering through the lattice front door see a whopping floor-to-ceiling installation of mussel shells created by French shell artist Blott Kerr-Wilson.

The curly crustacean display, which is especially iridescent in the morning light, is part of the gleaming white hotel's contemporary theme. It opened a year ago, the first all-new hotel construction in the city in years. That might seem risky given the economic climate, but according to George Moore, one of the hotel's partners, it has been worth it.

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### If You Go

#### Forty 1° North

351 Thames St., Newport  
401-846-8018

[www.41north.com](http://www.41north.com)

Summer room rates \$375-\$2,620  
per night.

“We bought the property in 2006 and things were OK then,” Moore said. “Then things turned but we were dedicated to doing it. We provided 100 construction jobs and since we opened, more than 100 hotel jobs. Things have gone well in the first year of operation.”

With Moore, a Philadelphia lawyer, the partners are Dorrance H. “Dodo” Hamilton, the billionaire philanthropist and Campbell Soup heiress who has summered in Newport most of her life, and Peter Borden, a Pennsylvania native and now Newport contractor.

The hotel's location seems ideal, just off lower Thames Street where Memorial Drive bends up toward Bellevue Avenue. It's a two-minute walk to the left to the high-end stores and restaurants on upper Thames. To the right is the older district that is home to many small, locally owned boutiques and restaurants, an area that's more of a working waterfront of blue-collar fishing boats and not the multimillion-dollar yachts moored off America's Cup Avenue.

Forty 1° North had been a members-only hotel and restaurant before it was bought, razed, and replaced with this new property. Since it sits right on the harbor, deck dining and imbibing on the wharf is superb, in cushioned rattan furniture with the twinkling lights of Newport Bridge to the right. The place was quiet on the late-spring Tuesday night when we visited, but on weekends, bar manager Dan Reagan said, it's jammed with people having drinks and watching the sun set.

The hotel's “campus,” as it's called, consists of 24 guest rooms and suites in the main building, and four cottages and lofts in stand-alone structures. The guest rooms in the main building are bright and airy with muted gray design and windows that open to allow in sea breezes. Our room

was on the third floor with a slider that opened to a railing (no balcony but the much larger suites have them) affording a smashing harbor view.

The room also had a gas fireplace, flat-screen TV, a shelf of books, and big bathroom with Malin and Goetz toiletries, a mosaic-tile shower, and huge soaking tub. There is a fully stocked wet bar — but stay away unless you don't mind spending \$104 on a small bottle of Scotch. Rooms have preloaded iTouches and iPads, where you get your digital daily paper.

The main restaurant is The Grill, at the water-view end of the second floor. It is wide open with glass sliders all around. You can dine on the surrounding deck and having breakfast in the sun is a great option. The dining area is separated from the dark-wood, circular bar in the middle of the floor by panels of sequin-imbued glass. Beyond the bar is the lobby seating area, and beyond that a leather-and-wood den, with fireplace, pool table, and library.

The Grill's dinner entrees run \$33-\$50. The second dining option here is in a stand-alone building, the hotel-owned Christie's, with a Euro-bistro feel. For those familiar with Newport, this was the Cheeky Monkey many years back. It is long and narrow, with high ceilings, hardwood floors, and a large 20-person wooden communal table in the middle, illuminated by teardrop lights. Painted on one wall is a mural of 1950s bathing beauties. We ate in a smaller dining area with retro-chic, hard-plastic scoop chairs, enjoying Tuesday night \$5 martini specials, Thai mussels for \$11, and pad Thai chicken for \$12. The tapas menu runs from \$5 edamame to \$23 chicken-fried lobster tail. Another playful touch here are triangular fabric chairs hanging from the ceiling in a separate lounge area.

For boaters, the hotel has its own marina, custom-built to hold yachts up to 250 feet long and offering full provisioning, a concierge, boat wash downs, launch and tender services, laundry, and free high-speed Wi-Fi.

Forty 1° North fills a void, Moore said, in a city “where there was no modern boutique property. There are many wonderful old B&Bs, but we recognized there was room for a modern, cosmopolitan type of property.”

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