

New England Travel

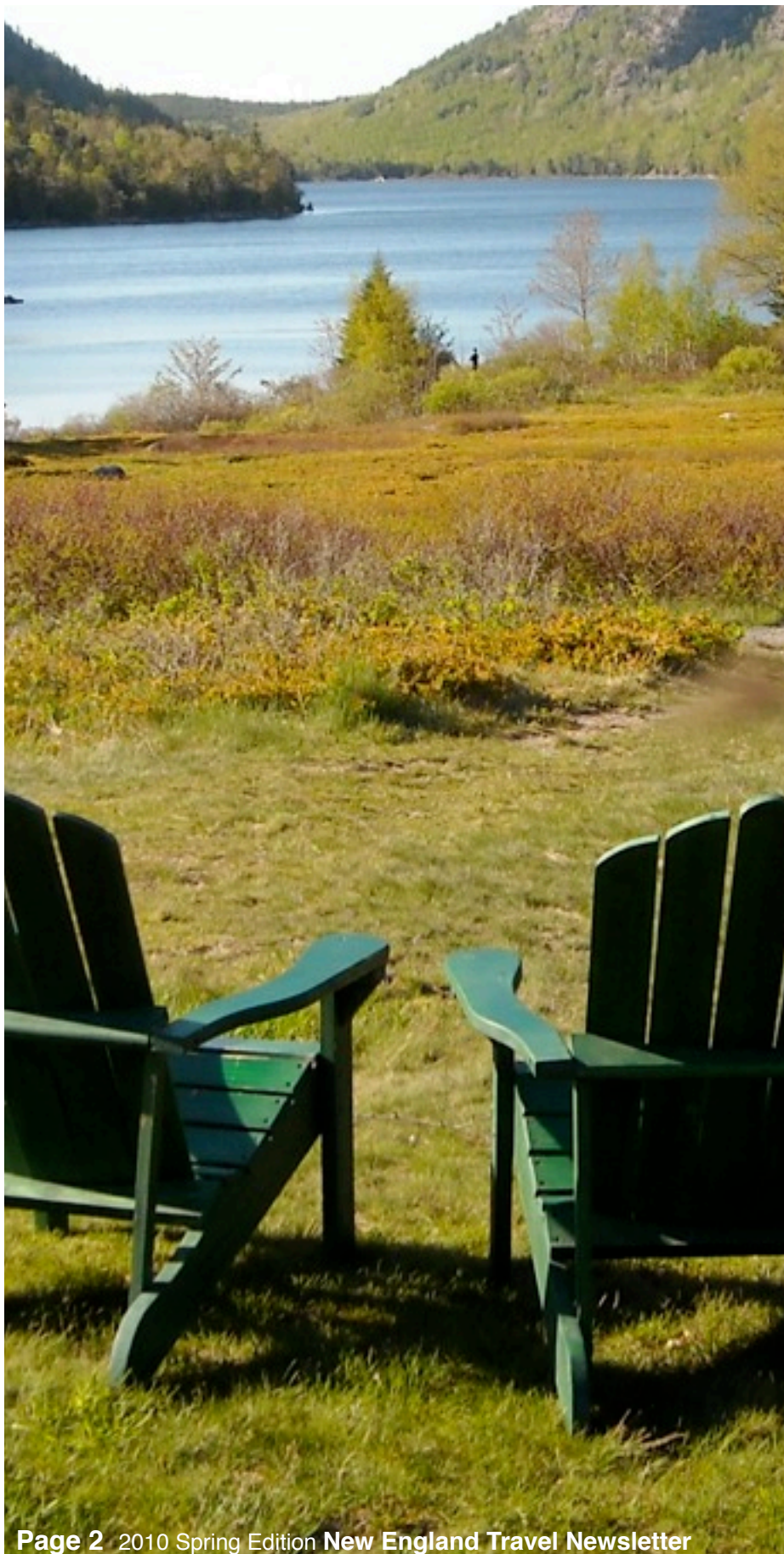
THE NEW ENGLAND NEWSLETTER BROUGHT TO YOU BY "THE LOCALS"

SPRING 2010



Dock Square, Kennebunkport, Maine (photo by Eric H.)

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Coast into Spring in Kennebunkport, Maine

This quaint southern Maine town is like a "greatest hits" package of the Maine coast



Article and photo by Eric H.

Kennebunkport receives a great deal of travel press, and with good reason: this quaint Maine town is sort of like a "greatest hits" package of the Maine coast.

With stunning rocky coastal ocean views at Ocean Drive, plenty of interesting little shops (boutiques, galleries, gift shops, traditional old-time stores) and waterfront seafood restaurants in its visually appealing, colorful small downtown at Dock Square, Kennebunkport truly offers a grand introduction to those interested in visiting the Maine coast. It's a place of grand old sea captain's homes -- some of which have become inns and bed and breakfasts -- and narrow, crooked streets to stroll by the coast. Our 41st U.S. President, George W. Bush, Sr., also has a spectacular summer home here, which can be seen from Ocean Drive.

At times during the summer and revered Christmas tree lighting ceremony where the downtown is beautifully lit with thousands of lights, Kennebunkport can seem a bit hectic and not built for the crowds -- this is, after all, a small little town. It is spring, however, that brings about the best in visiting Kennebunkport -- the crowds are less but the same spectacular, appealing southern, coastal, Maine scenery remains intact for you to view with less tourist obstruction.

If you seek some peace and quiet, have no fear: Kennebunkport has areas of nearly perfect solitude, especially on the outskirts at the isolated stretch of beach at Goose Rocks, and Cape Porpoise with its views of Goat Island Lighthouse and the brief yet charming village mix of lobster pounds, fish markets, local stores and a few restaurants. Kennebunkport is a special Maine spring destination, one that we can recommend as one of the true quintessential coastal Maine towns.

Dining recommendations: Allison's, 11 Dock Square, Kennebunkport, Maine. Tel. 207-967-4841 - Four out of five Kennebunkport, Maine, residents recommend Alisson's restaurant when dining out locally. [Read full story...](#)

Lodging recommendations: Rhumb Line Inn, Ocean Avenue, Kennebunkport, Maine. Reservations: 1-800-337-4862 - For lodging, it's hard to beat the value of the Rhumb Line Resort. [Read full story](#)

Five Boston Spring Attractions That Will Make You Feel Like You're At The Hub Of the Universe



Boston Trip Planning Resources

Affordable Boston Hotels

[Best Western Terrace Inn](#)

[Best Western Roadhouse Suites](#)

[Boston - Days Inn](#)

[Boston Hotel Buckminster](#)

[Chandler Inn Hotel](#)

[Holiday Inn Boston - Logan Airport](#)

[Midtown Hotel](#)

[More Boston, MA, hotel listings...](#)

Dining Out

The owner of [Hidden Boston](#) has done the local dining scene a service by reviewing restaurants that aren't likely to take out a full-page color ad telling you why they perceive themselves as one of the best restaurants in the entire free world. At Hidden Boston, you'll find some truly cheap, unassuming inexpensive restaurants for your discount travel vacation, ranging from Thai and Mongolian to good old-fashioned burgers and pizza.

Article by Eric H. Photo, courtesy of Sarah Musumeci, [MassVacation.com \(MOTT\)](#)

A [Swan Boat Ride](#)

through the Boston Public Gardens area is a low-cost attraction, great for families. The novelty of the plastic swans on the boat and a truly relaxing experience is a nice way to spend part of an afternoon. Speaking of the Boston Public Gardens, the area is a virtual oasis with its fountains, flower beds and trees. It's beautiful and free to walk around.

The scenic, pristine and free [Arnold Arboretum](#) with 265 acres and 15,000 trees, shrubs and vines is a

nature lover's delight and a true oasis in this busy city.

[The Fenway Park Tour](#)

is just as enjoyable, for some, as the game itself. Colorful, Boston tour guides take you on a walk through the historic stadium, including the famed Green Monster. Chock full of fun anecdotes and lots of laughs!

[Castle Island](#) in South Boston is free to visit and features water views, swimming, a network of walking trails for walking, hiking or jogging, biking, fishing, picnic

opportunities and the great Sullivan's hamburger stand!

[The Freedom Trail](#)

allows tourists to learn about America's Revolution by walking a 2.5 mile red brick walkway where historic meeting houses, museums, churches and other landmarks offer a colorful, scenic educational experience. Includes the Boston State House, Park St. Church, Old South Meeting House, site of the Boston Massacre, the Paul Revere House and Faneuil Hall.

Out and About New England in the Spring

These day trips and special vacation getaways will get you in the warm weather mood



Article and photo (Wolfeboro, N.H.) by Eric H.

Wolfeboro, N.H. If the tourist crowds and stores and traffic ever get to be too much in Wolfeboro, N.H., center, the remedy can be found by walking around the corner from the main drag and into the scenic wonderland of Lake Winnepesaukee. Framed by pleasing mountains, fueled by fresh air and surrounded by colorful plant life and a well-made dock perfect for viewing, the quest for a peaceful retreat is right at your vacation doorstep in this nice, little town. Beautifully situated on the eastern shores of Lake Winnepesaukee, Wolfeboro's greatest asset is not where the crowds go to find souvenirs, dining and other tourist attractions. While that is fine, and the town is infinitely less spoiled than so many nearby overdeveloped areas on the other side of Lake Winnepesaukee, the real attraction is right at the lake. It is as close to what one might envision New Hampshire looking like as any place in the state.

England spring vacation. Not as "touristy" as some other areas of Vermont, North Country bursts with mountain scenery (Mt Pigsah), aquatic beauty (Lake Willoughby), winding country roads and charming small towns and cities (Lyndonville, St. Johnsbury) that offer a pure New England feel without much hype. The spring is particularly nice, perhaps partly due to the good weather following extreme winter misery.

Bristol, R.I. Newport may have the glory (and crowds), but Bristol, to many, is one of the top choices to visit when in Rhode Island. With a seaside salt-air scent and one of the most pleasant, historically preserved small downtowns in New England, Bristol attracts many visitors in the spring with its laid back, walkable community, great little shops, and nearby [Colt State Park](#) -- one of New England's treasures. One walk alongside the beautiful Narragansett Bay at Colt State Park (or a bike ride along the scenic 14-mile [East Bay Bike Path](#), extending to Providence, R.I.), and you'll be checking out the Bristol real estate ads in no time -- this location lends a lavation of any stresses with its wonderful open-ended views of seaside New England.

Putnam, Conn. has gone in a few short years from a near ghost town to one of New England's premier antiques shopping center. The downtown is now neat looking, offering antique shops everywhere you look, nice places to eat, and a small town feel where it feels safe to sit on a bench and take in the slow pace. Putnam is surrounded by some of the most scenic towns in New England like Pomfret (home of the wonderful [Vanilla Bean Cafe](#) for breakfast, lunch and dinner) and Woodstock (a stay at quaint and cozy [Inn at Woodstock Hill](#) is always nice!). Spring is a particularly good time to visit Putnam as the warmer weather provides a great opportunity to explore the antiques shop scene and get to know the wonderful countryside.

Cape Cod, Mass., is a great place, but sometimes the summers can be truly annoying with the awful traffic leading to the Sagamore and Bourne Bridges, the case-of-beer slovenly weekend warriors or the tense, ruin-it-for-everyone Joe Pocket-Protector types, the overcrowded beaches and too many precious candle shops with equally precious people. The spring is a different story, as the crowds are more sparse making Cape Cod seem like you have the area all to yourself. The spring blossoms with abundant plant life, the sweet salt-air smell and a truly relaxed feel. Walking the desolate beaches, having dinner in less crowded and more relaxed restaurants, and strolling through the small, lovely villages without Joe Sixpack and his loud car stereo ruining the mood results in what one would expect from Cape Cod. A great place to start is along the "real Cape Cod" along charming Route 6A. Towns like Yarmouthport, Sandwich and Barnstable offer a true Cape Cod state of mind, with a top lodging and dining pick being the [Daniel Webster Inn](#). Another town representative of the "real Cape Cod," is the beloved, charming old-fashioned community of [Chatham](#) -- designated in 2007 by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as one of America's Dozen Distinctive Destinations!



A Castle Fit for a Tourist

Gillette Castle offers stunning architectural design and sweeping river views in south central Connecticut

Article and photo by Eric H.

Much like the Griswolds in Chevy Chase's 1983 classic comedy "Vacation," we drove a great distance five years ago to find a national landmark closed for repair. In "Vacation," the Griswolds went through many cross-country trials and tribulations to find their beloved "Wallyworld" amusement park closed. For us, it was the Gillette Castle, an authentic but then "under renovation" medieval fortress-looking piece of architecture overlooking the beautiful Connecticut River at Gillette State Park.

I found it amusing and ironic that we ended up eating at the Griswold Inn, a charming old structure in beautiful [Essex](#) serving very good food in a tavern-like atmosphere. Still, having the Gillette Castle closed made for a frustrating few hours, as expectations were high in seeing the inside of the castle.

File that one under "Do your homework first before driving any significant distances."

Years later, however, we returned to a fully operational and quite stunning Gillette Castle, with its majestic three story interior (no walk-up attic needed here) -- 24 rooms, 47 doors (each one different), white oak woodwork and carvings, stone stairways, built-in couches, a moveable table on tracks, an inside porch fountain, sweeping views of the Connecticut River, and most importantly for the children, ice cream in the nearby refreshment shop.

Some of the fussbudgets on HGTV might have demanded an interior change of the too-large rooms or re-positioning of the couches (all to accommodate a husband's need for a 52-inch flat screen television in a castle, of course) or to alter the Connecticut River for more curb appeal, but to the normal eye, the Gillette Castle makes for true architectural splendor. It is amazing that there were

no Cinderellas, Belles or Princess Fionas ever living in the castle. Rather, William Hooker Gillette (1853-1936), a famous actor, director and playwright, best known for his portray of Sherlock Holmes, designed the castle and most of its contents personally, high atop the the most southerly hill in a chain known as the Seven Sisters -- periodically checking every phase of their construction, according to Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) literature. This was to be his semi-retirement home, purchased for \$1 million dollars, a hefty sum in the early 1900s, but now fairly commonplace for a three bedroom ranch in Weston, Mass. It took 20 men five years to build the castle. Hopefully, Mr. Gillette let them play with the moveable table as a reward.

The outside is no less spectacular with, as the DEP states, where, "trails often follow, over trestle and through tunnel, the actor's three mile long narrow gauge railroad. Gillette's own walking paths were constructed with near-vertical steps, stone-arch bridges, and wooded trestles spanning up to forty feet. Other outdoor attractions include a vegetable cellar, the railroad station (Grand Central), and Gillette's goldfish pond." In 1943, the State of Connecticut purchased the property, following up on Gillette's request many years earlier to not allow the property to, according to DEP literature, fall into the hands "of some blithering saphead who has no conception of where he is or with what surrounded."

For those who appreciate detail and who are not sapheads, visiting the Gillette Castle makes for a glorious day whether it be for architectural appreciation, learning about an eccentric and excessive piece of history, enjoying a New England scenic highlight in viewing the Connecticut River from a higher elevation, or spending a day at the castle (there are also ample opportunities for picnicking, hiking and camping on the premises) and nearby [Essex](#) -- which, arguably, exemplifies the "small town" feeling perhaps better than any other town in New England. From Deep River near Essex, the castle is approachable by a pleasing three-minute ferry ride across the Connecticut River, or by car from the castle side (the ferry is more fun).

But please, call the Gillette Castle personnel first before possibly becoming another Clark Griswold or Eric H.

Editor's note: The Castle opens for the season on Memorial Day Weekend!

[Gillette Castle State Park](#), 67 River Road, East Haddam, CT 06423. Tel. (860) 526-2336

More Than a Marginal Walk

Marginal Way in Ogunquit, Maine, offers an unforgettable stroll alongside the classic rocky Maine Coast



Article and photo by Eric H.

Marginal Way in Ogunquit, Maine, stands as one of New England's most popular summer coastal walks, but it's even better in the spring if fewer crowds is your cup of tea. Walking the 1 1/4-mile paved walking path alongside the rocky cliffs and views of the majestic Atlantic Ocean, Marginal Way *feels like Maine and looks like Maine* in its highest quintessential form. With salt-sea air intact to cleanse the soul, a plethora of stores and seafood restaurants at Perkins Cove on one side, and the spectacular stretch of sand and water at Ogunquit Beach on the other side, Marginal Way is Maine's version of the Oreo cookie: just as delicious on the inside (the walk) as it is on the outside (Perkins Cove, Ogunquit Beach).

With vibrant flowers along the way to enhance to overall experience), Marginal Way is truly a wonderfully refreshing spring New England spot to stroll.

For more information on Ogunquit travel and many of its attractions, we recommend reading [Lina R.'s wonderful article on Ogunquit, Maine](#). To view several Ogunquit hotels, compare rates and book online, please check out our [Ogunquit Hotels page](#).

FLOWER POWER!

The colorful Bridge of Flowers in Shelburne Falls, Mass.



Article and
photo by Eric H.

The Bridge of Flowers in Shelburne Falls, Mass., near the Mohawk Trail in the Berkshire foothills, affords visitors views from just about every perspective. Four hundred feet of more than 500

varieties of flowers, shrubs and vines and a splendid view of picturesque Shelburne Falls results in a virtual horticultural and naturalist paradise just outside one of New England's most quaint downtown villages. Starting just off the Norman Rockwell-like street main street of Shelburne Falls and ending up in revitalized Buckland -- with a food coop, restaurants, an ice cream shop, street musicians and more -- the Bridge of Flowers is a one-of-a-kind attraction. This former trolley bridge is solely dependent on the donations of from the public and the work of local volunteers, with colorful displays spanning from April to October.

Key Events to Remember...

Boston Marathon, Mon., April 19, 2010

This famous 26-mile running event starts in Hopkinton, Mass., and finishes in Boston!

Lexington and Concord Patriot's Day Parade, April 17-19, 2010 -- What better place to see a Patriot's Day parade than where it all started -- Lexington and Concord, Mass., the birthplaces of the Revolutionary War? Be prepared to witness authentic reenactments and colorful "Colonial period" groups marching the parade.

Do you have an event that you'd like to see published on VisitingNewEngland.com? If so, [drop us a line](#) and we'll consider it for publication.

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Book a Hotel Online at Discount Rates

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[Maine Hotels](#)

[Massachusetts Hotels](#)

[New Hampshire Hotels](#)

[Rhode Island Hotels](#)

[Vermont Hotels](#)

Vacation Packages - Save money by booking your hotel, flight and car rental into one package!

Editor's note: For every hotel reservation made through VisitingNewEngland.com, we will donate five percent of our commissions to Brookview House, a homeless shelter for families located in Dorchester, Massachusetts. The Brookview House mission is to assist homeless families in the development of skills necessary to break the cycle of poverty.

Dining

[Save Money at Boston Restaurants and Other New England Dining Spots](#)

THREE ESSENTIAL NEW ENGLAND TRAVEL BOOKS

1. **[Frommer's New England \(Frommer's Complete\)](#)** The master of travel writing has a knack for covering all the bases in trip planning, and his New England guide is no exception.

2. **[Fodor's New England, 28th Edition \(Fodor's Gold Guides\)](#)** - Paying close attention to budgets, interests, and tastes, this New England trip guide is like a mini-encyclopedia of New England travel planning.

3. **[New England \(Eyewitness Travel Guides\)](#)** - Easy-to-read, very well written guide, jam-packed with interesting New England attractions.

