

COASTING ALONG MAINE

Perkins Cove,
Ogunquit, Maine
COURTESY OF MAINE OFFICE
OF TOURISM

The historic resort community of Ogunquit is a trove of seaside beauty, relaxing pastimes and, natch, some of the region's best lobster.

By Rich Warren

As legend has it, the word "Ogunquit" in the language of the Abenaki tribe that flourished in New England prior to European settlement means "beautiful place by the sea." In the case of the town in southeastern Maine that now carries that name, the Abenakis couldn't have gotten it more right. A popular resort community since the late 1800s, Ogunquit lies just north of the New Hampshire border and is only about an hour from Boston. Along with its prime location, Ogunquit's major appeal is that, at once, it's both typical and atypical of the astounding coastal beauty of the Maine shoreline.

Maine conjures up images of long stretches of rugged and rocky coastline with huge pine forests abutting the shore and lonely lighthouses scattered here and there. Portions of the shoreline in Ogunquit feature this familiar topography, with the principal place to experience it being the Marginal Way, a coastal walk along Ogunquit's seafront, so called because it passes along the margin between the land and the sea.

BY A WIDE MARGIN

A leisurely walk along 1.25-mile Marginal Way amply demonstrates why it's not to be missed. Passing along the top of a cliff, its easily walkable paved surface features plentiful benches where you can linger and bask in the surrounding beauty.

The Marginal Way's winding path has no rocks to clamber over—unless you want to. It's a simple matter to find places to descend those cliffs to get right down beside the sea—or into it. Or just follow the main route, enjoying the vistas of the wild Atlantic with its ever-churning water and

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Ogunquit Beach
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occasional powerful waves, sea breezes and gulls circling overhead. There's a kitschy little lighthouse not much taller than the people strolling past it that's clearly just for show, but mostly, this is a place to revel in the natural coastal beauty.

The Marginal Way is also a good place to observe how the Ogunquit shoreline is not typical of coastal Maine; that is, there's a wide sandy beach stretching three miles back to the main part of the village and



even beyond it, an organic feature not found in many places in Maine. In the summertime, surfers and sunbathers frolic here, especially in the area that's within easy walking distance from the center of town, and the ever-present wind makes the beach ideal for flying kites. Swimmers need to be hardy to brave the cold waters. Even in July and August, just a step into the surf with bare feet can be bone-chilling. In the grassy dunes behind the beach, summertime visitors might spot nesting piping plovers.

To get a stunning bird's-eye view of the shoreline, go to Mount Agamenticus, a 15-minute drive southwest from Ogunquit. At less than 700 feet high, it's not much of a mountain, but it's possible to drive directly to the top and climb lookout towers to get even higher. On a sunny day, you'll see the coast of Maine stretching 75 miles north to Portland and the entire Presidential Range, including Mount Washington, of the White Mountains in New Hampshire. Those with keen eyes might even spot the skyscrapers of downtown Boston 90 miles to the south.

BEYOND THE VIEWS

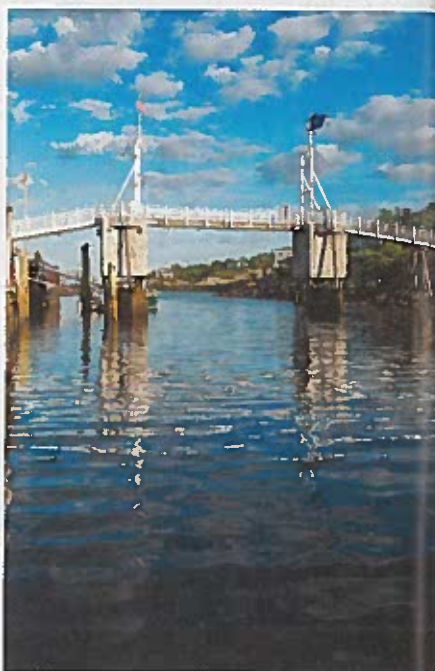
Ogunquit has much more to offer than natural beauty, however. Most visitors spend time strolling through its compact downtown, stopping in its art galleries, fudge shops, large toy store, gift shops and boutiques. In addition to what's offered downtown, the Perkins Cove area at the far end of the Marginal Way (or at its beginning, depending on your point of view) has a cluster of shopping and dining opportunities.

The long inlet found at Perkins Cove is still an active port for local fishermen, and it's possible to watch their boats



coming and going under a high wooden pedestrian drawbridge. And if you're so inclined, it's also possible to ride along, too; several operators offer family-friendly excursions to watch lobstering up close.

Perkins Cove has long been one of the most painted spots in Maine. Since the 1880s, a thriving artists' colony has existed in Ogunquit, pulled by the magnetic beauty of both Perkins

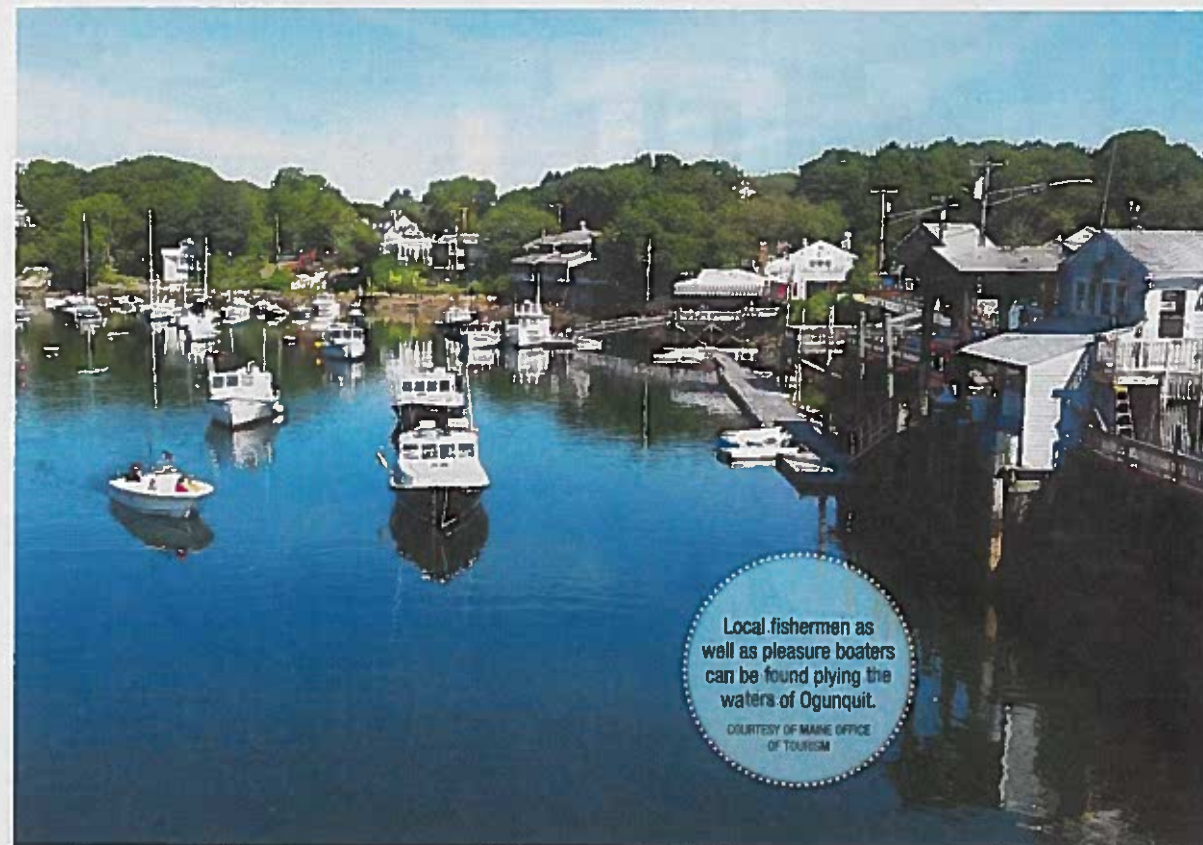


Clockwise from top left:

Artworks in the Ogunquit Museum of American Art include many representing coastal Maine.
COURTESY OF OGUNQUIT MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Ogunquit's wooden drawbridge is for pedestrians only.

A variety of sculptures adorns the grounds of the Ogunquit Museum of American Art.
COURTESY OF OGUNQUIT MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART



Local fishermen as well as pleasure boaters can be found plying the waters of Ogunquit.

COURTESY OF MAINE OFFICE OF TOURISM



The restaurant with the best view is MC Perkins Cove, just one of the many places offering testament that you are, indeed, visiting "a beautiful place by the sea."

Cove and the entire coastline. Their work features prominently in the Ogunquit Museum of American Art, easily reached by climbing the little hill beyond the drawbridge. It's the only museum in Maine devoted exclusively to American artists, with works on display by such artists as Marsden Hartley, Rockwell Kent and Charles Burchfield. Don't miss the lovely garden outside filled with unusual sculptures, including life-size abstract beasts carved from wood.

From Perkins Cove, it's an easy trolley ride back to the center of town, where evenings can be spent enjoying musical theater classics such as *Cabaret* and *42nd Street* at the historic Ogunquit Playhouse or taking part in the rousing sing-alongs in the piano bar upstairs at The Front Porch. It's such a rollicking good time that many visitors go back night after night.

And, of course, there's the matter of where to get lobster—because who would be so foolish as to visit Maine and not partake in lobster? Locals swear the best lobster roll in town can be found at the Lobster Shack in Perkins Cove, which, as its name denotes, was once an actual fishermen's shack used to store traps, rope and buoys but is now simply adorned with knotty pine benches and tables filled with happy diners. For an insanely good lobster stew, go to the Cape Neddick Lobster Pound and Harborside Restaurant. Or enjoy lobster pizza at La Pizzeria or a breakfast of lobster benedict at The Greenery. And as for consuming the actual crustacean in its shell, the restaurant with the best view is MC Perkins Cove, just one of the many places offering testament that you are, indeed, visiting "a beautiful place by the sea."