

Off-season Kennebunkport

BY ALEXANDRA PECCI



Vacationing in Kennebunkport is associated with summertime, and rightly so. The pretty nearby beaches, easily walkable town center, and outdoor dining options ranging from seafood shacks to high-end eateries make Kennebunkport a summertime hotspot that attracts everyone from weekenders and daytrippers to American royalty like the Bush family, which famously has a sprawling, ocean-side estate there.

But those who love Kennebunkport are in on a little secret: One of the best times to visit isn't high summer, when the streets are clogged with traffic and the restaurants have impossibly long waits. Winter and early spring visitors will find the many of the town's shops, restaurants, and hotels open for business, minus the crowds and with the added perk of off-season rates and specials. At less than 90 minutes from the North Shore, Kennebunkport is perfect for a quick getaway that trades the cold-weather doldrums for a bit of luxury.

STAY

Guests are greeted at check-in with a glass of bubbly, blueberry-spiked champagne at the lovely **Cape Arundel Inn and Resort**, a 30-guestroom B&B located at the edge of Ocean Avenue. On a chilly night, settling into one of its luxe, gorgeously appointed rooms overlooking the rocky Maine coast is a warm and cozy treat. Antique furnishings and ocean-inspired accents meet a clean, white color palette that is both modern and historic, which is fitting for the circa-1895 building. Glimpse from your four-poster bed a bright moon hanging over the ocean as you fall asleep, and the next morning, wrap up in a blanket, sip some coffee, and sit on your private porch to watch the sun make its glittering debut over the water. Then, head downstairs to choose from a full breakfast menu that's included in your stay.



Cape Arundel Inn and Resort

EAT

Ocean, the restaurant at Cape Arundel Inn and Resort, is a gastronome's dream, but even locals say it's hard to get a table here in the summer. According to the restaurant's staff, Ocean is a favorite of the Bush family, who dined there about a dozen times last year; Barbara Bush even celebrated her birthday there. In winter and early spring, though, diners at Ocean not only get to experience Chef Pierre Gignac's French-inspired cooking without the crowds, but also can land a spot at special events like Pierre's Table, a special multi-course prix fixe event that runs every Friday night through Easter week. The event begins with champagne and passed hors d'oeuvres before moving to the dining room for a family-style sit-down dinner with dishes like celery root and lobster bisque, flounder dugleré, and dark chocolate gâteau.



Ocean at Cape Arundel Inn and Resort

SHOP

The bright, charming **Beach Grass** offers home décor, jewelry, vintage-inspired maps, and other treasures in an endless summer kind of atmosphere that recalls a breezy beach cottage. **Abacus Gallery** is a sprawling shop at Dock Square that houses an eclectic range of wares, from baskets crafted from recycled chopsticks to handmade jewelry to upcycled metal sculptures. **Sea Glass Jewelry Studio** in Perkins Cove captures the beauty of the ocean in jewelry made from found sea glass, freshwater pearls, precious gemstones, and sterling silver.