

maine.

✦ June 2018

THE PERFECT SUMMER
40+ ACTIVITIES AND DESTINATIONS



Easy Summer Camp

For a getaway in the Kennebunks, we're camping—this time in a big bed with luxury linens and soft pillows. Our home base is one of the new, safari-style tents at Sandy Pines.



by Sandy Lang // Photography by Peter Frank Edwards

Opposite: With a feel that's both classic and modern, Sandy Pines Campground opened last summer in Kennebunkport, about a mile from Goose Rocks Beach.





“Would You Rather”

is the game we're playing with the people we just met. It's the kind of thing you do around a campfire, and that's where we are tonight, at Sandy Pines Campground near Goose Rocks Beach in Kennebunkport.

It's midsummer, and I'm wearing pajamas and a sweater and holding a stick that's pierced through a marshmallow. The fire is crackling, and the sky has gone a deep blue in the day's-end darkness just above the pine and spruce trees.

A man named Bobby, who has driven up from Massachusetts to celebrate his birthday with friends in the Kennebunks, poses the next question. “If you had all the technical gear (for safety and comfort), would you rather go camping the next time in the hot desert or in frozen Antarctica?”

Each of us simmers on this question and answers in turn, and not everyone agrees. There's discussion, and the couple from New Hampshire are split on their choices. We roast more marshmallows to press between graham crackers and keep the game going.

Campers are generally kindred spirits, and eventually, everyone answers unanimously on one question. “How about tonight? Would you rather be camping, or glamping?”

Now, this one is an obvious choice. We're all guests in the campground's safari-style “glamping” tents that are arranged around a landscaped courtyard. Campground staff stack the firewood and build a nightly fire in this section. And none of us had to pack any camping gear at all.



Opposite: The “glamping” tents at Sandy Pines are equipped with electricity, wooden floors, big beds, and Wi-Fi.

Designer Inside

In the middle of the night all's still, and I hear the ocean. That's how close we are to Goose Rocks Beach. Only white canvas is between us and the outside, and we've got the blankets piled on. Each of these dozen new tents is furnished by a different interior designer, and the one we booked, the "Nomad," was decorated by Beverly Bangs of Antiques on Nine in Kennebunk. There's a heater (and AC) plugged in if we need it—along with a refrigerator, furniture, lamps, rugs on the wooden plank flooring, and pillows galore.

This is far different from bringing our own gear and setting up a pup tent—sometimes by flashlight—and then crawling inside to inflate mattresses that are about one inch thick when full. That's what we often do for a summertime campout. But in this section of Sandy Pines, electricity, privacy, and Wi-Fi are included. And we're still close to the outdoors, and to a shared, modern restroom building just down the path. We are still camping, after all.

Birdsong wakes us by 5 a.m. Photographer Peter Frank Edwards and I have brought our bicycles. Soon, we're up and ready to pedal out and explore.



Yes, that's a chandelier inside one of the tents in the Glamp Tent Village at Sandy Pines. Each is decorated differently by local interior designers, and this one was designed by Antiques on Nine.

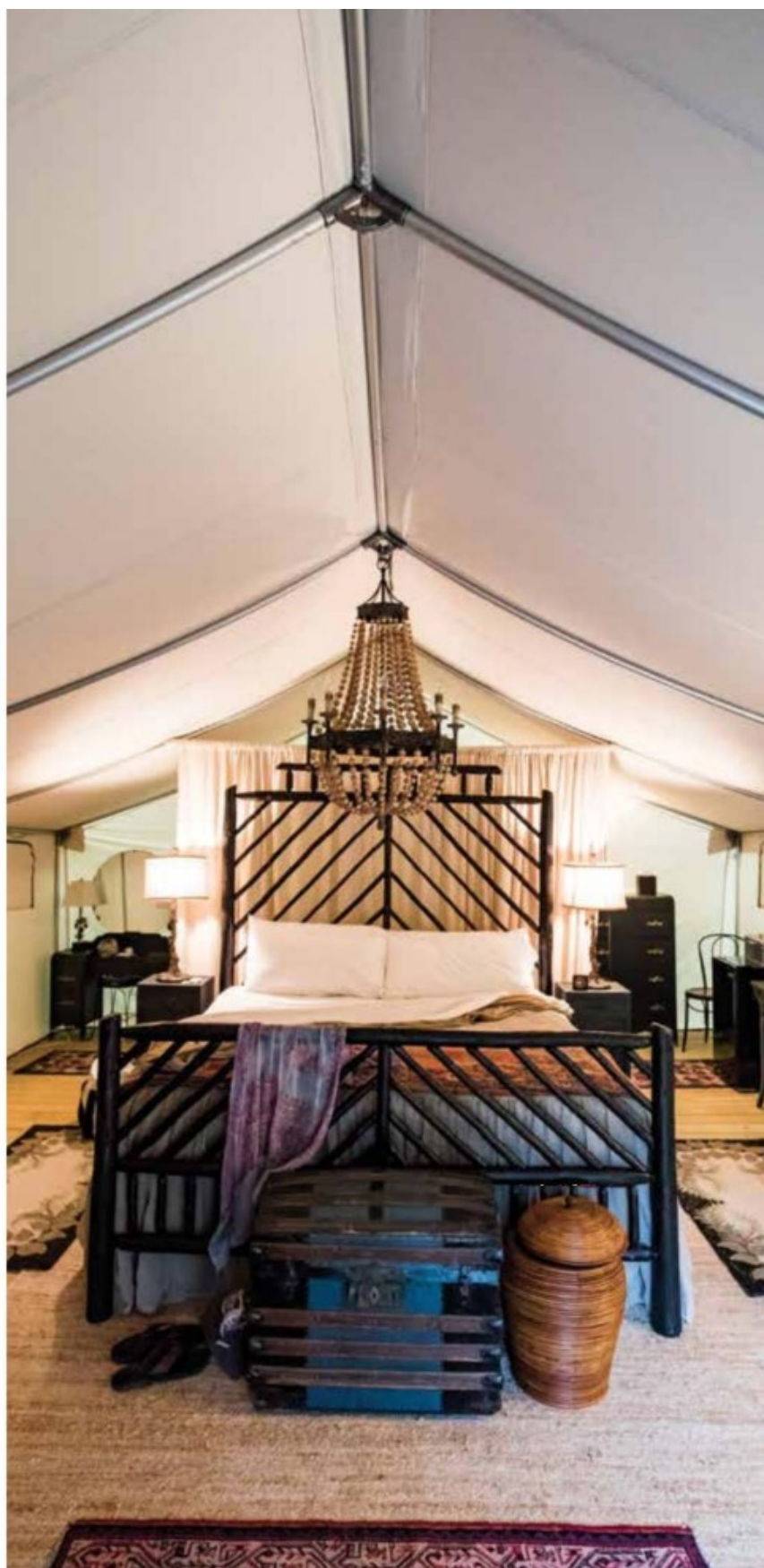
Opposite: A snack in the afternoon sun on the tents covered porch.

SECOND-YEAR SANDY

Reopened in 2017 by the same Kennebunkport hoteliers who created Hidden Pond, Tides Beach Club, and Bathhouse Waterfront Hotel, the campground had previously been operated for decades as Salty Acres.

For its second season this summer, Sandy Pines Campground is offering several new camping options. There is a series of Camp Carriages—custom-built tiny houses on wheels—and camping guests may also stay in new, modern A-frame structures called Hideaway Huts.

Both options are outfitted with beds, refrigerators, electricity/AC, and fire pits. And the collection of 12 glamping tents—which was booked solid many nights last summer—is being expanded with 4 new tents this year, these designed by Louise Hurlbutt of Hurlbutt Designs in Kennebunk.





Goose and Porpoise

On the way to the beach we stop for a first coffee at the handsome camp lodge, then continue on to Goose Rocks Beach General Store for one of the giant house-made muffins with tops spilling over the paper. The woman behind the counter tells us they sold 336 yesterday, and that lemon-poppy seed is the most popular lately. I order one in a vanilla flavor with crumble on top like coffee cake, and it's so plump I can barely hold it in one hand.

Down on the shore we follow the east-west road past beach cottages with flower boxes and American flags. We head first down to the West End Plover Protection Area to walk on the wide spits of sand where there are few other people around and look out toward the tidal Batson River. Heading back eastward, we stop and follow the beach path through the dune grass in front of the Tides Beach Club. Staff are setting up the yellow beach chairs and umbrellas, and later there will be a lunch and cocktail crowd in sunglasses on the porch and in the yard out front. (We were in that sun-loving crowd last night, when we stopped in for a glass of wine before sunset.)

We make our way to the sandy pathway lined with shoes and flip-flops left there while their owners walk out to the curving beach at Timber Point. Pink salt-spray rose (*Rosa rugosa*) grows wild at the edges of the path. We walk out along the beach and see the people and boats making their way to Timber Island. It's just a day or two before the start of August, and everyone on the beach seems to have a carefree lightness—it's a perfect beach day.



From top: On the beach path at sandy Goose Rocks Beach. Cyclists stopping at Longford Road Lobster and Fish House in Cape Porpoise, where fishing boats unload at the dock out back.

Opposite: Midsummer swimming at Goose Rocks Beach.







After a while, we decide to pedal on to Cape Porpoise, and we follow Langsford Road down to the old wooden fishhouse with a dock on the rear for fishing boats to pull up and unload. Langsford Road Lobster and Fish House sells fresh seafood to take home and cook and has a menu of prepared food to go or to eat at one of the three tables on the dock out back. (The view across the water is toward the Ramp Bar and Grill, another favorite stop.) I notice a serve-yourself pot of hot chowder on the counter, and we have the chance to meet owner John Green when paying for a cup. He smiles and says, “It’s a

funny thing—the hotter the day, the more chowder we sell.”

Just down Langsford Road we park the bikes again to check out a tall red barn that’s home to Farm and Table, a boutique for home goods. This is a good one, with plenty of interesting linens, tableware, and artisan-made cutting boards, along with vanilla caramels, honey, soap, and jam. Inspired by the great bed linens in the glamping tent, I buy a striped linen towel big enough for the beach and tuck it into my backpack for the return ride.



From left: A massive red barn on Langsford Road in Cape Porpoise houses Farm and Table. Inside the barn, shopping for linens, cutting boards, and confections. **Opposite:** The Tides Beach Club, just across the road from the beach paths at Goose Rocks Beach.





SUP to Lobster

Back at the campground, families are still lounging around the saltwater pool in the afternoon sun. We stop by our glamping tent to stow our bikes, then walk in the hilly woods to some of the other 320 campsites on the flatter land closest to the Batson River and the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge is just next door to Sandy Pines.

Along the way, we end up talking with campers Michel and Manon Doyon, who have bicycles at their campsite also and say they've just returned from a third day of cycling around Kennebunkport. He's a chef in Quebec and says, when the couple returns each day to Sandy Pines, they like to do some campsite cooking of local seafood, including tuna steaks and lobsters.

Other campers are lighting camp grills, setting up tents, or arranging their gear around pop-up trailers and RVs. There's every style of camping here. We are short-timers, only staying for two nights, but some guests stay a week or two. Others stay all summer in the Park Model RVs, which are as large as small cottages and are available to buy and improve with decks and glassed-in porches. The variety of sites is like a showcase of what's possible in both classic and modern camping. As we wander along the campground trails, sometimes we hear the motors of air conditioners or of air pumps inflating mattresses. We see campsites hung with drying beach towels, and I notice dragonflies, songbirds, and patches of blueberries and wildflowers.

Our walk to the water's edge is to meet Stefan Kuenzel, a guide and owner of Kayak Excursions for 19 years. He's bringing stand-up paddleboards for us to paddle out during a high tide just before dinnertime. Kuenzel fits us with life jackets and describes wildlife we may see, including seals, herons, egrets, and plovers. The water is remarkably clear, and we watch for striped bass, too. From the campground's edge, we step onto SUP boards in a short canal lined with marsh grass and make our way out into the saltwater estuary.



Opposite: Another tent in the Glamp Tent Village, which is arranged around garden plantings, pathways, and a large shared fire pit that's lit nightly by camp staff.

This page, from top: Michel and Manon Doyon from Quebec just after a 20-mile bicycle ride. Traditional campsites are also available at Sandy Pines, including this sunny campsite near the tidal Batson River.





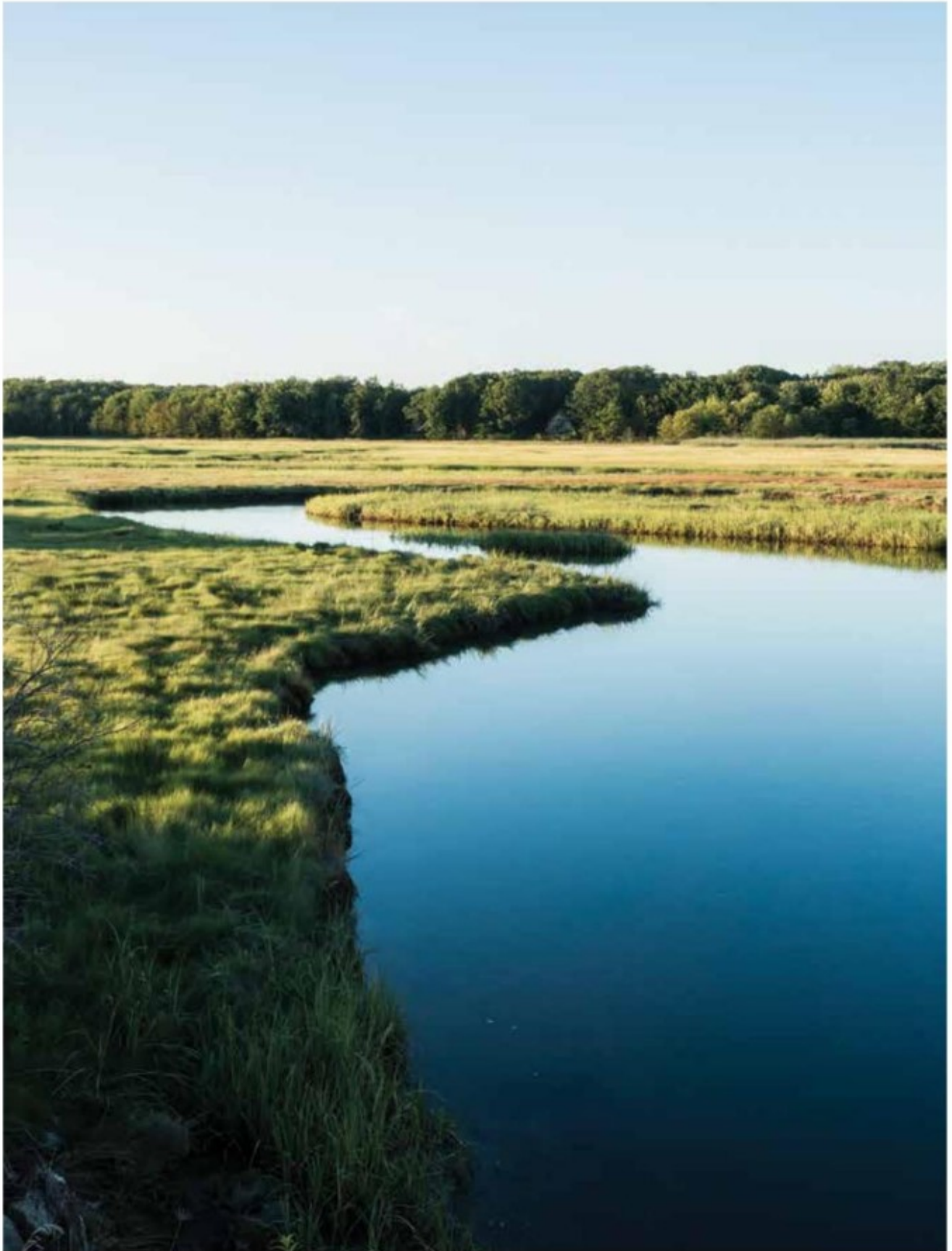
It's a beautiful and calm passage toward the back side of Goose Rocks Beach, by a water route this time. A great blue heron flies past almost as if it's following us, and I see green crabs in the water and Canada geese flying in a line overhead. When the sky starts to darken as a summer rain is building, we make our way back to the campground, and that's when we do see a striped bass. It's a big one, more than two feet, being pulled in by a young father and son who are fishing on the mudbank along the shore.

We paddle in for a closer look and again are led by the smell of camp grills. Peter Frank and I have a grilling plan

too. Sandy Pines coordinates deliveries of steamed lobster for pickup at the campground store, and we grab ours and head to the grills nearest the glamping tents. The lobster is already cooked and ready to eat, but we want to get some charcoal going and do a little surf and turf. Earlier, we stopped at Bradbury Bros. Market in Cape Porpoise and bought a "Cape Porpoise Delight" for the grill, which is steak rolled up with cheese and spinach. We cook it over the coals and add lobsters, clams, and ears of corn (from Langsford Road Lobster) just long enough for a little heat and charred flavor.



From left: After launching directly from Sandy Pines Campground into the tidal creeks and Batson River. A couple of happy campers from Canada who caught a striped bass. **Opposite:** Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge in the glow of a summer sunset.







Ice Cream Linger

After another overnight in glamping comforts, we finish our getaway days of sunshine and easy beach going with one more must-do: a scoop of coconut-almond ice cream at Goose Rocks Dairy. A crowd is gathering at cars and benches for dozens of flavors, from peppermint stick to Grape Nut. We talk of the days' good times as we sit in a sunny spot and I try to finish the huge scoop before it melts. Peter Frank points out that by using bicycles we avoided most parking logistics and fees. And we muse about the great mix of wading into the ocean at sandy Goose Rocks Beach during the warmest July hours and then sleeping in a plush bed in the coolness of the night air.

Maybe best of all, though, were the evenings around the fire pit, when the campfire conversations at this reinvigorated saltwater campground just kept coming, in easygoing waves. +



Opposite: A twin lobster dinner delivered, along with corn, clams, and cups of wine—all at day's end at Sandy Pines.

This page: Before leaving town, a big scoop of coconut-almond ice cream (chocolate in there, too) on a cone from Goose Rocks Dairy.