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Portland Beckons

MAINE LGBT-FRIENDLY CITY IS A TRAVEL DESTINATION FOR ALL SEASONS

Portland, Maine's largest city, is a picturesque and very progressive enclave within the larger Pine Tree State. And as winter yields to spring, it's the perfect time to explore the seaside locale in full, fabulous bloom. Here's a quickie primer on lodging, dining and activities that are new, noteworthy or simply great picks for the LGBT traveler.

Where To Stay: Fellow fruits, check in to the Pomegranate Inn, a funky B&B from the folks behind Lark Hotels, a fast-growing collection of New England properties that bring urbane style to smaller destinations like Stowe, Vermont and Newport, Rhode Island. The eight-room Pomegranate, filled with gallery-worthy art by Maine artists, features a tapas-focused breakfast program and fireplace-equipped guestrooms outfitted in the shabby-chic style of that favorite aunt who "always knew you were different."

Also consider The Chadwick Bed & Breakfast, a charming property owned by husbands Scot and Jason Fuller-Beatty. The intimate, eco-friendly inn has only four thoughtfully decorated guestrooms, all filled with sumptuous linens, and works with fellow Portland-area business owners—like century-old Haven's Candies and contemporary floral shop Fiddleheads—to craft indulgent amenities. Clearly these hubby hosts take pride in keeping things personal.

Where To Eat: Portland consistently nabs national notice for its food scene, which is fueled by a strong farm-to-table ethos. Book early to score a seat at Central Provisions, a savvy New American eatery recently

nominated for the country's best new restaurant by the James Beard Foundation, the Oscars of food. Eventide Oyster Co., especially its brown butter lobster roll, is another favorite among in-the-know foodies. The fin fare-focused joint is opening a Boston location near Fenway this year, so it's worth sailing by the original to see what all the fuss is about.

If you're looking to support some LGBT folks with your dining dollars, grab lunch at Wild Burritos, a popular gay-owned joint offering cheap and tasty Mexican grub. Not only can they sling a taco, they can pitch quite a parade: The team here has won "best of" awards for its Pride Portland float the last three consecutive years. For something sweet, head to Walter's in the historic Old Port neighborhood. The eclectic dinner menu, which culls inspiration largely from Asian and Mediterranean traditions, is capped by desserts from buzz-worthy out pastry chef Gabrielle Michaud. Not only does she prepare creative Walter's plates like mocha molasses donuts with maple ice cream and ginger crème brûlée, but she also runs a side pastry business, A Lil Suga, that turns out customized cakes, cookies and other treats.

Where To Play: Like most New England cities, Portland's gay-specific scene has dwindled in recent years as LGBT assimilation becomes more widespread. Progress is great for equal rights, but a realummer for gay bars. Still, Blackstone's perseveres. Portland's last true-blue gay bar, which was always one of its oldest, is a lo-fi den of



[OPPOSITE] "Camp" Camp summer camp for adults

[TOP] Eventide's lobster rolls

[ABOVE] Pomegranate Inn

cheap beer and dodgy glances, a throwback to more cruise-y days of yore. We like it that way. It's not exclusively gay, but Bubba's Sulky Lounge is a similarly endearing dive bar filled with vintage bric-a-brac, a glowing neon dance floor, pool table and lots of '60s-era kitsch. It's cool (the hipsters go there) and a little camp. And on Fridays, commit yourself to the Asylum. Below the upstairs sports bar is a subterranean nightclub which hosts the weekly party "Plague," billed as Maine's only Gothic-Industrial dance party. Naturally, you'll find some kinky queers among the black leather-clad revelers.

Where To Wander: Portland is home base for the team behind "Camp" Camp, a weeklong summer camp for LGBT adults that attracts over 200 diverse LGBT people annually. The campsite itself is located in the woods southwest of the city, and has all the activities you did as a kid: like adventure courses, hikes, canoeing, tie dying and pottery. Camp's cabins are even named for famous LGBT people, so after a day of swimming you may dry off in Greg Louganis—or you could hit the hay in Ellen Degeneres after wowing the talent show audience. Throw in evening campfire parties, a barn dance and even a sanctioned skinny-dipping outing, and it equals a perfect summer vacation. Get more info and sign up now at campcamp.com. [X]