

**DESTINATION**  
PORTLAND, ME

# COASTING

Sierra HD Denali visits Maine

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Portland lures visitors to Maine's craggy coastline with promises of lobster and lighthouses, surprises them with the range and quality of dining choices, and then delights them with many vibrant arts and recreational opportunities.

Portland tops a peninsula shaped by river and sea and spills over onto a handful of ferry-connected islands. The compact size, small population (approx. 65,000) and lone 16-story skyscraper combine to make Maine's largest city feel more like a small town. Don't be fooled. There's far more here than first meets the eye, especially when taken in concert with surrounding towns. Within 20 minutes of the city center are sand beaches and farmlands, shopping venues and lighthouses.



**MY KIND OF TOWN:** The Sierra 2500HD Denali looks right at home on the Maine coast with the Portland Head Light in the background (right). From boating to cuisine and outdoor activities, the water and the surrounding landscape shape life in this beautiful city with the small-town feel.



## DESTINATION PORTLAND, MA

Portland's march to coolness began in the 1970s, when artists began renovating the Victorian buildings lining Exchange Street. Restaurateurs and shopkeepers followed, and today, not only do the Old Port and adjoining Waterfront neighborhoods thrive, but the restorations and gentrification have expanded to the East End and along Congress Street to the Arts District and West End. Former warehouses and brick commercial buildings house boutiques and specialty shops, coffee bars and restaurants. Along the waterfront, excursion boats and island ferries dock cheek-by-jowl with lobster boats and fishing trawlers.

Stay downtown, and the best of Portland is within easy reach. Located in Old Port, the stylish Portland Harbor Hotel, built around a central courtyard, is an independent, full-service boutique hotel. For a more intimate experience, book a room at The Danforth, an elegant bed-and-breakfast, on the edge of the Arts District. If you prefer a beachfront hotel, with spa, the Inn by the Sea, on Crescent Beach in Cape Elizabeth, is less than 20 minutes from downtown but a world away. Twenty minutes north of the city in Freeport is the Harraseeket Inn, a country inn with indoor pool that's within package-dropping distance of the shopping outlets.

### ENJOY THE ARTS

Portland's arts centers, diverse museums, theaters, festivals, professional orchestra, and vibrant indie music scene have earned it status as Maine's cultural hub. A great way to get your finger on the pulse of the arts scene is by participating in a First Friday Art Walk, held on the first Friday evening of each month. These social happenings draw hundreds of people downtown for gallery openings and exhibits, and many museums also stay open late to accommodate the crowds.

Centerpiece of the Arts District is the Portland Museum of Art, comprising three architecturally significant buildings. The modern Charles Shipman Payson building (1983) is connected to two, fully restored historic buildings: the McLellan House (1801), a National Historic Landmark and preeminent example of Federal-era architecture; and the Lorenzo de Medici (L.D.M.) Sweat Memorial Galleries (1911), a series of sky-lit Beaux-Arts galleries. On view inside are works by American and European masters, as well as a few Maine masters. This fall, the museum began offering tours to Winslow Homer's meticulously restored oceanfront studio on Prouts Neck, a treat for art lovers.

To read more about the Sierra 2500HD Denali featured in this article and the entire Sierra HD lineup, turn to page 24 and visit GMC.com.



**CHOOSE YOUR STYLE:** The Sierra 2500HD Denali goes out on the town at Old Port (top) before checking out the accommodations. Will it be the elegance of The Danforth (center left), the beachfront Inn by the Sea (center right), or perhaps the country feel of the Harraseeket Inn (bottom left)? No matter where you stay, be sure to visit the ornate Victoria Mansion (bottom right).



In an architecturally rich city peppered with 18th- through 21st-century Mansard, Greek Revival, Federal, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Romanesque Revival and Colonial buildings, the Victoria Mansion is a standout. The Italianate-style National Historic Landmark is considered the most magnificently ornamented dwelling of its period remaining in the country. The interior drips with Victoriana: frescoed walls and ceilings, ornate mantels, original furnishings, a free-standing mahogany staircase, gilded gas chandeliers and a six- by 25-foot stained-glass ceiling window. It's even more spectacular during the holidays, when area decorators adorn it in seasonal finery.

Far less ornate, but a prize among literature fans, is the Wadsworth-Longfellow House. The poet's restored boyhood home is adjacent to the Maine History Gallery, where the Maine Historical Society presents exhibits.

Three offbeat museums draw fans and the curious. The vest-pocket Museum of African Culture houses a small but significant collection of sub-Saharan African artifacts, including Nigerian tribal masks and Benin lost-wax bronzes. The International Cryptozoology Museum, offers an intriguing and eclectic collection of artifacts and items related to the like of Bigfoot, the Loch Ness Monster, and the Abominable Snowman. Even more unique is the seasonal Umbrella Cover Museum, on Peaks Island, where every tour ends with the museum owner singing "Let a Smile Be Your Umbrella."

Live entertainment is plentiful too. Merrill Auditorium, in City Hall, is home to the Portland Symphony Orchestra, PCA Great Performances, and PORTopera; it hosts touring artists and theatrical productions as well. There are many other live music venues you'll discover as you wander along the streets.

### SHOPPING AND OUTDOOR FUN

Portland residents have a locavore mentality that extends beyond farm-to-table fare. Sure there are the familiar coffeehouses you can find almost anywhere, but there's also Coffee By Design, a locally owned roaster that supports local artists and causes; and locally owned specialty shops far outnumber name-brand stores. Many Maine designers who've earned national recognition maintain shops in Portland.

After you've exhausted the shopping possibilities in the Old Port and Waterfront, walk up Congress Street on Munjoy Hill to find eclectic delights. There are working studios and shops filled with creations, including jewelry



**LIFE IS GOOD:** As you wander this scenic city be sure to visit Bug Light Park (top left) and take part in some of the many outdoor activities such as kayaking (bottom left). Once you've worked up an appetite, your choices include: Duckfat (near left) Fore Street (top right and bottom) and Five-Fifty-Five (center). Bon Appetite!



and screen printed and letterpress papers, as well as unique T-shirts, vintage clothing, intriguing stained glass pieces and other finds.

Swing north to Freeport to find outdoor retailer L.L.Bean's campus. Browse the main store, check out the trout pond, stick your head into the aquarium bubble window, mosey through the outlying specialty stores and over to the outlet store for bona fide bargains. L.L.Bean's offers Walk-On Adventures year-round. Depending upon the season, you might be able to try snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, skeet shooting, or sea kayaking for a fee that includes equipment and instruction. When you've exhausted L.L.Bean's, fan out to the 100 or so other outlets and specialty stores lining Freeport's main and side streets.

Portland Trails maps and maintains a 40-mile trail network for walking, running, biking, skiing and snowshoeing in Greater Portland. The Eastern Prom Trail follows an old rail corridor along the ocean's edge, providing excellent views of the island-salted harbor. It connects with the Harborwalk Trail, which crosses the Casco Bay Bridge and continues to Bug Light Park, home to the Greek Revival-influenced Portland Breakwater Light, constructed in 1875.

### LOBSTER AND LIGHTHOUSES

A fine way to view lighthouses is aboard a seasonal excursion boat or by hopping the year-round ferry to Peaks Island – but if you want to get up close and personal with a beacon, loop out to Fort Williams Park in Cape Elizabeth. Portland Head Light, commissioned by George Washington

and first lit in 1791, is a calendar icon. If you're visiting during the summer months, continue out to Two Lights. There's even a place to enjoy a roll-up-the-shirtsleeves lobster feed, if you're so inclined.

Lobster, in some form, is on the menu of practically every restaurant in Portland, so it's easy to get your fill. It's just another aspect of that locavore mentality. Farm-to-table is the mantra at almost every Portland restaurant, from pizza joints to nationally renowned restaurants. Chef Sam Hayward, of Fore Street, put Portland on the map as a foodie destination when he earned a James Beard Award for Best Chef Northeast. Rob Evans, of Duckfat (the fries!) won the same a few years later. Steve Corry has earned national kudos for his restaurants Five-Fifty-Five and Petite Jacqueline. On a chilly day, you can't miss with Corry's truffled lobster mac-and-cheese.

Portland's not only a food town, it's also a beer town, with an ever-expanding number of brew pubs and breweries for beer devotees. Several breweries offer tours and samples, for the beer aficionado in you.

Thanks to Portland's compact size, it's possible to pack lobster, lighthouses, a bit of shopping and art into one day.

To learn more about Portland, go to [visitportland.com](http://visitportland.com). ■

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