



## Adapted Travel by Mike Cohen

*My family recently spent two weeks in various parts of New Hampshire and Maine.*

### PORTLAND, MAINE

Portland ([www.portlandmaine.com](http://www.portlandmaine.com)) is the ideal base when visiting the popular towns on the Maine beaches. This is Maine's business, financial and retail capital and the largest city in the state. Seascapes and cityscapes blend harmoniously in Portland, perched on a peninsula, jutting out into island-studded Casco Bay. The metropolitan hub of Maine's south coast region, Portland is a progressive, lively city incorporating the character of yesteryear into a modern urban environment. Historic architecture blends gracefully with the new as you stroll along her working waterfront or the cobblestone streets of the restored Old Port section of the city.

With a metro population of 230,000, the Greater Portland area is home to almost one quarter of Maine's total population..

**WHERE TO STAY:** The Embassy Suites Portland, Maine hotel ([www.portland.embassysuites.com](http://www.portland.embassysuites.com)) is centrally located and right next to the Portland Jetport. It is close to the famed Old Port, the large Maine

Mall, Crescent and Scarborough public beaches and scenic walking, hiking, and biking destinations.

All accommodations feature two flat screen televisions, a refrigerator, microwave oven and coffee maker, complimentary wireless high-speed Internet access, two telephones and a comfortable work area with a desk. There are 119 suites in the hotel. Only five are of the two-bedroom variety, so book those early.

You can start your day here with a complimentary cooked-to-order breakfast, including omelettes and pancakes. Grab a bagel and coffee on your way to a business event or to Portland's attractions. In the evening, the atrium lobby is the site for the complimentary Manager's Reception. Here you can sip a cocktail or refreshing beverage and enjoy a variety of snacks. You also have the option of savouring fresh local seafood and American cuisine at Café Stroudwater, their casual restaurant.

There is also a fitness center, indoor pool, business center and free parking. The hotel is located at 1050 Westbrook Street. For more information, call 207-775-2200 or 1-800-Embassy. There are a generous number of handicapped parking spots right near the entrance and easy wheelchair access from the sidewalks to the front door.

Even the front desk includes a cut out to make it easier for customers in wheelchairs. There are nine wheelchair accessible suites, each of which is closer to the elevators, have smaller counters, lower peep holes and larger bathrooms, some with roll-in showers.

There are TTY Text Telephones, a device that lets people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech-impaired use the telephone to communicate, by allowing them to type messages back and forth to one another instead of talking and listening. A TTY is required at both ends of the conversation in order to communicate.

Hotel general manager Stacy O'Reilly believes in assisting special needs organizations. She did so recently for the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) via a neat program whereby participants were jokingly being sent to jail and needed to raise bail to help children and adults with muscle disease in the community. She was even picked up at the hotel in a police car, but ended up raising the necessary funds to go free and help a worthy cause. "The Embassy Suites philosophy is to make a difference," she remarked.

**DINING:** Greater Portland offers a robust selection of restaurants, specialty foods and brewpubs, totalling over 200 dining choices. We were directed towards David's Restaurant ([www.david'srestaurant.com](http://www.david'srestaurant.com)), located at 22 Monument Square in the Arts District.

David's has a pretty extensive menu, from an array of soups, salads and appetizers to meat, seafood and pasta dishes. There are also daily specials. One member of our party chose the open faced lobster "ravioli" which included Maine lobster, day boat scallops, Gulf shrimp, herbed ricotta and sherried lobster cream. Given the fact that the other two individuals at the table were having a very difficult time making any selections, we were offered a tasting menu. This was indeed a treat. It started off with some greens (arugula, spiced pecans, blue cheese, shaved red onion and black currant vinaigrette). I actually substituted that portion for a delicious blend of David's clam chowder, containing thyme, brown sugar and bacon. A sampling of lobster was next, butter poached, with chanterelle risotto cake, citrus truffle and micro salad. This was followed by tuna (pepper crusted sushi rare, sesame peanut soba noodles, Szechuan citrus sauce and asparagus), sorbet (honeydew with cucumber vodka), ravioli (forest mushrooms, leeks, shallots, oven dried tomatoes, goat cheese, arugula and Madeira truffle sauce), duck (crispy skin, garlic, ginger and soy with sesame spinach and mushroom risotto) and finally some ice cream (sea salt and caramel, chocolate

sauce and crumbled chocolate cookies). If you are looking for an interesting dining experience, then make a reservation at David's at 207-773-4340. The restaurant is handicapped accessible via the street and all of the tables are on the same level.

### OLD ORCHARD BEACH, MAINE

A mere 25 minute drive from Portland is Old Orchard Beach and Palace Playland ([www.palaceplayland.com](http://www.palaceplayland.com)), New England's only beachfront amusement park. It features a giant arcade, beautiful carousel, a kiddieland, a new ferris wheel and the galaxi coaster. It is open Memorial Day to Labor Day and features fireworks every Thursday night by the Pier. What's great about this place is that you do not have to pay for admission, just for the rides. This can be done by buying tickets or a wrist band for unlimited access. There is no particular entrance or exit, so you can take a break anytime you want and explore the Old Orchard beach strip of shops and restaurants or take a walk on the Pier.

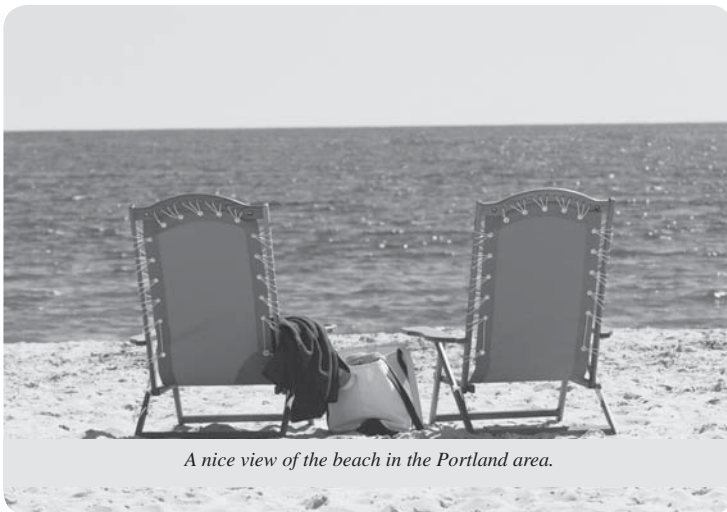
Every effort is made to accommodate special needs patrons. The park itself is easy to navigate in a wheelchair. Individuals with a physical handicap will be given special access to rides when possible. The carousel has a handicap accessible ramp and seat. This year the park added two brand new rides, Riptide and an upgraded kiddie Frog Hopper. Another new addition for the kids is called Dizzy Dragon. It was previously operated at an indoor entertainment center. The new ferris wheel offers a spectacular light show.

### PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

For years I have heard people speak glowingly about Portsmouth, New Hampshire (<http://www.portsmouthnh.com>), a city of roughly 21,000 people that sits near the mouth of the Piscataqua River, which divides New Hampshire and Maine. Settled in 1623, Portsmouth claims to be the nation's third-oldest city. It served as a focal point on the Eastern seaboard until the late 1800s when rail travel did in the shipping industry. John Paul Jones' ship The Ranger was built in Portsmouth, and the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard (which lies across the river in Maine) was established in 1800 as the country's first of its kind.

A trip to Portsmouth during the summer months is certainly not complete without visiting Water Country ([www.watercountry.com](http://www.watercountry.com)). This is New England's largest water park, featuring signature thrill rides for a full day of fun for the entire family. Situated at 2300 Lafayette Road, daily admission is \$37 for those 48 inches or taller and \$24.99 for those under that height and seniors. Children two years old and under enter free.

Water Country is one of the few amusement parks in the US to allow and encourage its guests to bring picnic lunches into the park.



*A nice view of the beach in the Portland area.*



The Homewood Suites in Dover, NH

A number of large picnic areas are available for free at various points throughout the park so guests can eat without having to leave. Owned by Palace Entertainment, Water Country tests the limits on Double Geronimo or Thunder Falls and allows one to take a break in the relaxing Adventure River. There are over 26 acres of fun here. We went on a busy Sunday, opting for the preferred parking option (\$15). This represented a very short walk to the front entrance. We rented a locker, which had plenty of room for the three of us to store all of our gear. The wait in line for different slides was not exceptionally long. Staff here are on the ball and take all safety precautions necessary.

The park does pay close attention to guests with special needs. I saw many people in wheelchairs the day of our visit. Pathways leading to every part of the venue are very much wheelchair accessible.

Says Marketing Manager Danielle Barry: "We've had guests with physical limitations who were unable to enjoy certain attractions in the park with our standard ride tubes, so for these guests we allow them to use a 'double tube' to comfortably accommodate their needs where safely permissible to do so such as the Wavepool, Adventure River and the Whirlpool. We have some pools with a sloped entrance that will allow a guest in a wheelchair to enter the water axel deep – at that point they are submerged enough that they can easily transition from their chair to a tube."

You can rent cabanas here, available for up to eight people. Guests with special needs may contact Guest Relations at (603) 427-1112 for information regarding admission, locker accessibility, and wheelchair usage.

**SEACOAST REPERTORY:** We were fortunate to be in town when the musical Chicago was playing at the Seacoast Repertory Theatre ([www.seacoastrep.org](http://www.seacoastrep.org)),

located 125 Bow Street and better known as the Rep.

The Rep is a not-for-profit arts and educational institution and has been in business since 1988. Until the 1970s the facility actually served as the warehouse for the Portsmouth Brewing Company. This is the Seacoast's only professional, year-round live theater. It is dedicated to enlightening and entertaining the broadest possible audience through professional Main Stage productions and programs that expose all ages to the experience of live theatre. The Rep's Main Stage season selections blend musical and drama, the familiar and the classic-to-be, the thought provoking and the just plain fun. In addition to this, The Rep supports engagement at all age levels through hands-on programming and performances designed to entertain the very young.

The presentation of Chicago was first class, featuring an excellent cast, great sound and terrific use of a small stage space. I loved the cozy layout of this oval theatre. There is truly not a bad seat in the house. Artistic Director Craig Faulkner opened the show with some words of welcome. He even sold snacks at intermission, interacting with the audience. There are clearly many regulars here, but this is also a popular spot for tourists.

**THE OAR HOUSE:** With more than 40 restaurants in downtown alone, Portsmouth is one of the eating capitals of New England. The perfect spot for a pre-show dinner turned out to be the Portsmouth Oar House ([www.portsmouthoarhouse.com](http://www.portsmouthoarhouse.com)), located at 55 Ceres Street in the historic Merchant's Row building at the edge of Portsmouth's old harbor. This spot serves fine food in a setting filled with mementos of the city's long and proud maritime heritage and features live music inside on Thursdays through Saturdays. The waterfront deck is open in summer and there is on-site valet parking. This turned out to be

a real bonus for us. We were able to leave our car there for the evening and walk a few minutes down the street to the Rep. Both the deck and the first floor of the restaurant are wheelchair accessible. We were thrilled to see one of our favorite New England dishes, the Lazy Man's Lobster Pie, on the menu. The seven ounce Maine lobster, completely cut up, featured sherry butter and seasoned crumbs. The Lobster Bisque turned out to be a delicious appetizer as did the Caesar and Caprese salads. As for the homemade desserts, do not leave without trying the key lime pie.

#### DOVER, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Well this was a new stop for our family. While we originally looked at staying in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, getting a booking there was no easy task. Most of the rooms were already spoken for by government personnel attached to the Naval Shipyard and these individuals tend to stay there for extended periods of time. Always a fan of the Homewood Suites chain, I found one in the suburb of Dover ([www.dovernh.homewoodsuites.com](http://www.dovernh.homewoodsuites.com)). This is part of the LaFrance Hospitality Group ([www.lafrancehospitality.com](http://www.lafrancehospitality.com)), which also owns a Comfort Inn and Suites and a Hampton Inn nearby.

Dover ([www.dovernh.org](http://www.dovernh.org)) is about 15 minutes from Portsmouth and 25 from beautiful Rye Beach. You are also only a 30 minute drive from the Maine beaches. Dover is easily accessible from all directions. Take the I-95 to Route 16 and use Exits 6 through 9 (8E is recommended for access to downtown).

**WHERE TO STAY:** I have always enjoyed my stays at The Homewood Suites. In Dover this was no different. Located in the heart of the business district, at 21 Members Way, this hotel is just minutes

from downtown Dover and many fine restaurants and shops. It is the perfect place for short and extended stay accommodations. We were there for five days and it proved to be a great base for our activities. Their sister properties, the Comfort Inn and Suites and the Hampton Inn, also have solid reputations.

This Homewood Suites Dover only opened in 2008 and still looks spanking new. It offers all of this on a complimentary basis: a daily Suite Star hot breakfast buffet; dinner and beverages Monday through Thursday evenings at a Welcome Home Reception; parking; high-speed internet access; shuttle service providing transportation to the surrounding area, including downtown Portsmouth; a business center, with print, photocopy, and fax capabilities; Neutrogena bath products; a fitness center, indoor heated pool, whirlpool and outdoor patio. There is also a 24-hour Suite Shop convenience store.

With its spacious suites, fully equipped kitchens, and separate living and sleeping areas, this hotel is perfect for families who need some space and naturally a good choice for the corporate field and travellers looking to remain productive while on the road.

We really appreciated the fully equipped kitchen in our one-bedroom suite, complete with full-size refrigerator, microwave oven, two-burner stove top, and coffee maker. There were two televisions with a video player, two telephones with data ports, an iron, ironing board and hair dryer. Pets are allowed here (maximum 50 pounds) for a fee of \$50 a night. The third floor of the hotel is reserved for this. Just up the street are a number of restaurants, grocery stores, a Target, Walmart, TJ Maxx and more.

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Hampton Inn & Suites waterslide





(Continued from page 37)

Few area hotels cater to the special needs of guests like the Homewood Suites in Dover. They have designed their accessible suites for ease of mobility and comfort. Some accessible rooms feature roll-in showers, secure grab bars, and kitchens built to lower scale. Also accessible are the parking spaces, the public entrance, the registration desk and the swimming pool. There is closed captioning on the televisions. Service animals are welcome.

**WHERE TO DINE:** The Orchard Street Chop Shop ([www.orchardstreetchopshop.com](http://www.orchardstreetchopshop.com)) gets my vote for the top dining option in Dover. The magnificent dining room is one of the most elegant on the seacoast. It seats more than 200 people over two floors and a patio and features floor-to-ceiling stone fireplace, oversized booths, Brazilian Cherry wood floors, bronze chandeliers, and wines scattered around the open-grill dining room. This room can be separated for private dining rooms or the entire room can be booked for any special occasion. The first floor and the seasonal terrace are both wheelchair accessible.

Open Monday through Saturdays at 5 p.m. for dinner, The Orchard Street Chop Shop is housed in the original Dover Firehouse. The restaurant offers the finest selections of meats and seafood, skillfully prepared with a stunning assortment of traditional steakhouse sides and sumptuous desserts - all house made. We started off our dinner with some salads (wild field green and Tuscan caprese). Two members of our party chose the eight ounce petit filet mignon while I opted for the 14-ounce Delmonico steak. Each main item comes with your choice of two sides. The smashed potatoes won us over.

**SHOPPING:** Fox Run Mall is a one level enclosed regional shopping center located in Newington, 15 minutes from Dover. It is the only regional shopping center within a 40-mile radius and features national tenants including Macys, JC Penny, LOFT, Abercrombie & Fitch, PacSun, Express, Victoria's Secret, Bath & Body Works, Gap, Men's Wearhouse, American Eagle Outfitters, Pandora and Hollister Co. New Hampshire does not have a sales tax which draws shoppers from neighboring states of Maine and Massachusetts.

**ACCESSIBILITY:** The State of New Hampshire and businesses and organizations throughout the state have made an effort to make New Hampshire accessible to all. If you are using the [www.visitnh.gov](http://www.visitnh.gov) website to locate lodging properties or attractions that are accessible for people with disabilities, go to the Advanced Search option from any of the search pages. You can then select « Accessible » as an option to narrow your search.

The New Hampshire Governor's Commission on Disability is an excellent resource for information on the many services, laws, and regulations that affect citizens or visitors with disabilities. They also keep a list of recreation resources in New Hampshire that people with disabilities may be able to enjoy alone or with their families and friends. For winter sports, the Commission on Disability also maintains a list of New Hampshire ski resorts offering adaptive ski programs.

### NORTH CONWAY, NEW HAMPSHIRE

If you like to shop, then North Conway, New Hampshire's ([www.northconwaynh.com](http://www.northconwaynh.com)) multiple outlets will keep you hopping. This is also a great spot for skiing,

outdoor activities and attractions like Santa's Village and Storyland.

**WHERE TO STAY:** One of North Conway New Hampshire's newest hotels, the Hampton Inn and Suites ([www.hamptoninnnorthconway.com](http://www.hamptoninnnorthconway.com)), boasts a four-story, attached, indoor water parks as well as an onsite fitness center! The hotel only opened in 2006, yet it still looks spanking new. When you check in, there is a large plate of soft chocolate chip cookies to welcome you.

There are 97 rooms and suites here. Our family decided to get connecting rooms, which translated into a very nice suite-like atmosphere. One room had a king size bed and a large walk-in shower; the other two queen beds. We requested a small fridge for the room. A few doors down was an on-site laundry machine, with plenty of machines. People tend to come here for extended stays to enjoy all of the attractions in the area, so having such an option can be a real bonus.

The hotel has complimentary wireless high-speed Internet access, a hot breakfast buffet served until 10 a.m. each day, "on the run" breakfast bags for folks on the go, an onsite fitness center, a business center with computers and a printer, an onsite suite shop convenience store and even a babysitting service.

Hampton's new Cloud Nine bedding boasts pillow top mattresses and all white duvets. I really appreciated the small portable cushioned laptop tables, which makes typing while sitting in bed or in a chair a real breeze. There is no extra charge here to bring your pet. Ditto for cribs or rollaways.

The hotel plans different activities, such as movie nights and BINGO games.

Rates here include unlimited use of the indoor water park, home to Fernando the Frog, a six-foot amphibian, with a mini waterslide connected to a heated pool. The water park features dozens of interactive water activities and slides, twisting flumes, a raining umbrella, and more! I must have gone down the opened yellow slide more than a dozen times, lying flat on my back and plunging at a rapid speed. It was a blast. Afterwards I decompressed in the nice and warm jacuzzi. There is nothing quite like having access to such a facility and being able to go back and forth to your room in the same building.

Water parks have been known to be popular activities for children with autism.

"For the water park, I would suggest this only for a child who would not be over stimulated by the environment," says Tania Piperni, an Autism Spectrum Disorder consultant at the English Montreal School Board. "If planning to go to an indoor water park, I would suggest parents try going to a local water park first, in order to see what reactions are elicited and it would

help them prepare for a future visit.

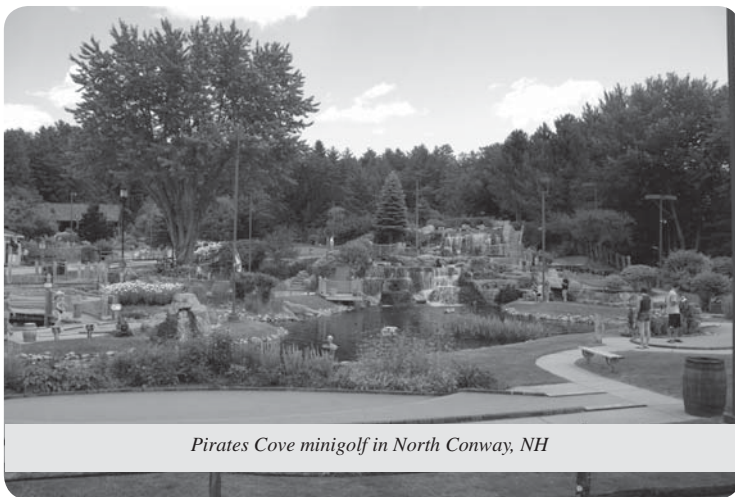
The hotel itself has a number of handicapped accessible rooms.

**MINI GOLF:** Whenever our family goes on summer vacation, we always seek out a good spot for miniature golf. The much respected Pirates Cove Adventure Golf ([www.piratescove.net](http://www.piratescove.net)) chain is present here in North Conway at 2001 White Mountain Highway with not one, but two 18 hole courses. Some people do both of them back to back. Our plan was to do so over two evenings. We started off on what was considered the more challenging course, featuring a neat mountain cave, cascading waterfalls and some tricky holes. It was a great deal of fun. The course itself was nicely arranged and the pirate theme was present throughout. If you are headed to North Conway with a group and wish to arrange a mini-golf tournament, call ahead to Josh Power at 603-356-8807. Oh yes, regrettably it rained the second evening we were there so we will just have to head back to this impressive course on our next trip. This was the first time I played mini golf in two years and I was excited to sink two holes-in-one. There are nine holes on the front course that are accessible and can be played twice.

**DINING:** Closer to the Hampton Inn and Suites is Merlino's Steakhouse ([www.merlinosteakhouse.com](http://www.merlinosteakhouse.com)), independently owned and operated by the Luciano family since 1967. There is handicapped access at the first level. Merlino's features only Certified Angus Beef, which assures customers the finest quality beef available. They also serve some of the finest Italian food, using time tested family recipes, chops and ribs, fish and poultry.

Merlino's has a great children's menu, featuring ziti with jumbo meatballs, kids smoothies, hot dogs, cheeseburgers, chicken fingers and pizza. You can even get a kids smoothie. There is a generous assortment of appetizers, soups and salads. I strongly recommend the Prime Rib, which comes in six, 12 and 18 ounce portions. The garlic mashed potatoes on the side are delicious. If Caesar salad is to your liking, a large bowl will be brought to the table for everyone to share. They even serve lobster, in the shell or a lazy man style (all cut up). The lobster macaroni and cheese is a new creation. I had the 14-ounce Delmonico steak and it was tender and juicy. Our server Dan, recognizing that we were from Quebec, brushed up on some of the French he learned in high school and gave us a nice "Bonjour" upon taking our orders and even a "Merci." The two-floor facility was busy on the evening we came, including a spirited engagement party just across the room from us.

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Pirates Cove minigolf in North Conway, NH