

The Insider's Guide to Travel, Food and Wine

Portland, Maine—Today, Its Ship Has Really Come In

For some years, as lobster fishing stabilized and other industries deteriorated, Portland's fortunes deteriorated along with them. The area along its downtown coastal streets was considered quite unsafe after dark. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, a son of Portland, may have turned over in his proverbial grave.

146 readers
BY FEEDBURNER

Google Translate

Select Language

+ Google Gadgets powered by Google

Google™ Custom Search

[Home](#) > [Chronological](#) > [Portland, Maine—Today, Its Ship Has Really...](#)

Search

[Home](#) [Destinations](#) [Hotels & Resorts](#) [Cruises](#) [Food](#) [Wines & Spirits](#) [Writers' Tips](#) [IFWTWA Trips](#)

Portland, Maine—Today, Its Ship Has Really Come In

Story by [Norman E. Hill](#) and [Maralyn D. Hill](#)

Photos by [Maralyn D. Hill](#)

In a very brief time interval, our IFWTWA group experienced first hand the inspiring resurgence of Maine's largest city.

For some years, as lobster fishing stabilized and other industries deteriorated, Portland's fortunes deteriorated along with them. The area along its downtown coastal streets was considered quite unsafe after dark. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, a son of Portland, may have turned over in his proverbial grave.



[Subscribe to Global-Writes by Email](#)
[Subscribe to Global-Writes by RSS](#)

SHARE

Chronological



[Portland, Maine—Today, Its Ship Has Really Come In](#)
by Norman E. Hill Maralyn D. Hill

[Visiting Temecula](#)



Pomegranate Inn Parlor for afternoon treats

Today, tourism has become the biggest industry in the state. Portland's downtown area has enjoyed a renaissance, as old buildings have been gutted, refurbished, and repainted. Streets are bustling with visitors.

Inns

Some of us who arrived on Saturday, June 5, stayed at the Pomegranate Inn. In the original renovation, a designer used a whimsical approach with a selection of artwork throughout. Each room is different. When current owner Kim Swan purchased the Pomegranate Inn, she retained the original décor. Kim owns two other B and B's where our group stayed, The Danforth and the West End Inn. The Danforth and West End have also been renovated and are more traditional in design. All of us were pleased with our accommodations, the service, and the great food.

Activities

From the Pomegranate, our taxi took us to a microbrewery; the driver pointed out several well-



by Tom Plant



Kashmir's Paradise, Redefined

by Elizabeth Willoughby



The Life of a Cruise Ship Doctor: It's No Day at the Beach

by Si Liberman



Astoria, Oregon—This City at the mouth of the Columbia River is planning a Bicentennial celebration...

by Joe Hilbers

1 to 5 of 149 ▶



Our trolley awaits for our Maine Foodie Tour

known Portland sites. One was Brian Boru's, a scenic Irish pub. The driver himself was a playwright. He got in a plug for his current musical show, playing in Portland, "Jesus and the Pirates." He hopes this play can make it some day to the brutally competitive Broadway scene, so who knows?

We were fortunate to take part in the first Maine Foodie Tour of the season. John Hickson was our knowledgeable guide on this two-and-a-half hour downtown trolley trip.



Matt James of Standard Baking passing out bread

The tour started with our tasting some Dungeness crabs brought to the bus. Next, we stopped and toured the Standard Baking Company, where we were impressed by its twelve-ton French deck oven. Matt James, the owner, provided three types of breads for us to taste: brioche; French baguettes; and a form of sourdough bread. Standard Baking Company was voted Portland's Best Bakery. It is known for its artisanal European breads, as well as its pastries.

At the Shipyard Brewery, the biggest in Maine, we saw that it carried 27 different types of beers. We were treated to a short video on beer tasting. Our knowledge was enhanced by several points about the brew:



A display of some of Shipyard Brewery selections

- Dark beer is actually low in carbs.
- The color of any beer is strictly related to its malt.
- Differences in temperature *per se* do not affect beer.
- Hops are vines and have to be harvested like grapes.
- Founded in 1994, Shipyard carries more than a dozen English-style ales.

Next stop was Rosemont Market. This local gourmet market has everything from fresh seasonal produce, fine cheeses, and meats to homemade pesto.



Maine Mead Works processing honey wine

We really enjoyed our stop at Maine Mead Works, where wine is made from the finest Maine wildflower



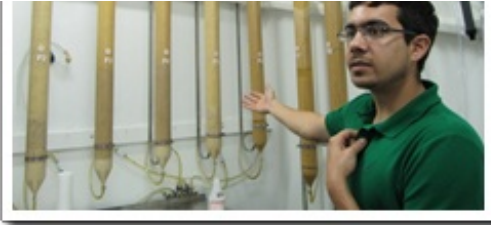
Our taste of local Dungeness crab



Pam, owner of Maine Foodie Tour shares a taste of Rosemont



DiMillo's Floating Restaurant



where wine is made from the insect Maine produces honey. With production at 30 cases weekly, this amounts to about 14,000 batches per year. Different varieties of honey wine, including blueberry, are available. Our group sampled several tasty varieties. The alcohol content of honey wine is about 12.5%, compared to other wines that may vary from 12% to 18%. Mead boasts about its continual fermentation process.

Our tour provided statistics about the lobster industry, still vital to Maine's economic health. In 1888, about 22 million pounds of lobsters were harvested. One hundred years later, in 1988, the figure for Maine was almost exactly the same, 22 million pounds.

Next, we experienced The Farmer's Table, where organic farmer/chef Jeff Landry is true to the establishment's name. He presents the freshest fare possible. We enjoyed a taste of his fresh haddock chowder—delicious.

As part of our tour, we visited sites like the Portland Maritime Observatory, not a lighthouse. We viewed the Casco Bay Promenade, where trees and walks were designed by Frederick Law Olmstead, who had also designed layouts for Central Park in New York City and the Biltmore Estate in Ashville, North Carolina.

Our Foodie Tour trolley route ended back almost where we started, at DeMillo's Floating Restaurant. DeMillo's played a critical role in Portland's revitalization. It was the first of many establishments to establish a foothold. The senior Mr. DeMillo took the risk, bought waterfront property cheap, and set up shop. However, his visionary coup involved also buying an old automobile ferry. He decided to tie it to shore, use it as the restaurant, and retain the shorefront as parking space.

Today, DeMillo's is furnished in a welcoming fashion, and is one of the most prominent sites along Portland's reborn downtown area. It is a landmark, as it began Portland's active downtown waterfront restaurant scene.

This tour squeezed a lot into 2.5 hours and we highly recommend it.

Due to time constraints, we didn't visit a Portland Civil War museum. We were told it features prominently the exploits of favorite son Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, the hero of Little Round Top during the second day of the Battle of Gettysburg. After the war, Chamberlain, a Congressional Medal of Honor winner, served several terms as Maine's governor and later became President of Bowdoin College. This museum will be high on our list during a return Portland visit.

I'd encourage you to visit the Greater Portland Convention & Visitors Bureau for a list of activities – from boat tours, trolley, museums and much more than we had time to explore, Portland has a wealth of activities.

Portland has also become a popular cruise ship destination. Its harbor is large enough to accommodate modern giant vessels. In 2009, approximately 30 cruise ships stopped; approximately 60 or 70 are scheduled for 2010. This offers a tremendous boost to the economy.

Dining

We can't begin to do this justice, as we could only consume a limited amount of food in 24 hours, but Portland is certainly a Foodie city.

Birmingham Coupons

1 huge daily deal on the best stuff to do in Birmingham! Official site.

www.Groupon.com/Birmingham

October 21-23, they will be hosting the 2010 event, **Harvest on the Harbor**. *Bon Appétit* magazine named Portland “America's Foodiest Small Town” for 2009. The draw is the expertise of its chefs and the pure and sustainable ingredients produced and harvested by local farmers, food artisans, and fishermen. This event brings in nationally recognized chefs. There is a Grand Tasting Event, Maine Lobster Chef of the Year Competition, the Culinary Marketplace, and Harvest Uncorked. What a great time to visit!

We lunched at Gritty McDuff's Brewing Co, a well-known Portland microbrewery. Its lunch menu was eclectic, featuring heavy to light selections, including turkey burgers. We wanted to try several mouth-watering selections, but we knew we were headed for the Foodie Tour. Restraint was indeed a challenge.

Close to the Standard Baking Company, the Fore Street Restaurant is a top rated establishment under Chef Sam Hayworth.

DeMillo's provides scenic dining on its ferry along the shore. We were told that on occasion, there may be gentle rocking on the ferry/restaurant, but nothing to interfere with a pleasant dining experience.

Vignola's features casual elegant dining. Its walls are natural brick, with fascinating light fixtures. We started our evening with an appetizer of ribs and an unbelievable cheese platter with a lovely glass of wine. Vignola's is known for Italian selections, seafood and pizza. The same owners have Cirque Terre right around the corner in the same building. They share the same Executive Chef/Co-Owner, Lee Skawinski, and kitchen staff, and the arrangement works very well.



Cinque Terre Italian Restaurant

At Cinque Terre, the architecture is contemporary and restful. The restaurant's walls are soft green. Background music includes soft jazz and some vocal standards. The dress code for the guests was still casual, but a bit more formal in feeling. The service at both establishments was outstanding. Lee says, “We're just passing along to guests the lessons that we've been lucky enough to learn over the years from skilled Italian farmers, growers, chefs, and vintners. Sticking with tried-and-true formulas from generations of Italians is something that really seems to strike a chord with our guests.”

Our group members experienced different dining experiences, so we would see how much is happening in Portland. It is happening indeed!

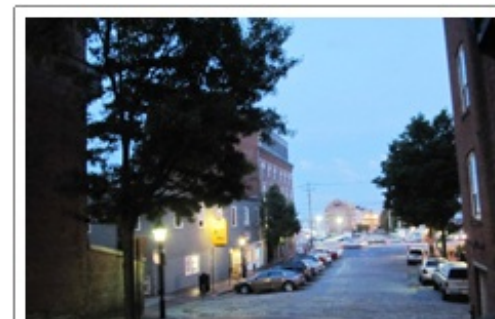
Summary

Our IFWTWA group saw enough of Portland, Maine to resolve to return and make a more detailed tour of its many attractions.

Restaurants abound in Portland

References:

[Greater Portland Convention & Visitors Bureau](#)
[Harvest on the Harbor](#)
[Pomegranate Inn](#)
[The Danforth](#)
[West End Inn](#)



[Maine Foodie Tours](#)
[Fore Street Restaurant](#)
[Gritty McDuff's Brewing Co](#)
[Vignola's](#)
[Cinque Terre](#)

© Story by [Norman E. Hill](#) and [Maralyn D. Hill](#)
Photos by [Maralyn D. Hill](#), 2010

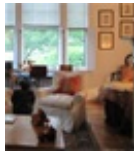


GROUPON Get the Best of Birmingham
The Best Dining & Events at up to **90% OFF** [GET TODAY'S DEAL](#)

www.Groupon.com/Birmingham

Ads by Google

Chronological



[Portland, Maine—Today, Its Ship Has Really Come In](#)
by Norman E. Hill Maralyn D. Hill



[Visiting Temecula](#)
by Tom Plant



[Kashmir's Paradise, Redefined](#)
by Elizabeth Willoughby



[The Life of a Cruise Ship Doctor: It's No Day at the Beach](#)
by Si Liberman



[Astoria, Oregon—This City at the mouth of the Columbia River is planning a Bicentennial celebration...](#)
by Joe Hilbers

1 to 5 of 149 ▶



The official magazine of:

[International Food Wine & Travel Writers Association \(IFWTWA\)](#)

© 2007 International Food Wine and Travel Writers Association

CharlotteCountyWebsites.com