

Ogunquit, Maine: Where the Quaint and the Queer Meet

By Alan Bennett Ilagan

When the commercial excess of Provincetown gets to be too much and the ports of South Beach and San Francisco are too far away, there's a place where the quaint and the queer happily merge ~ the enchanted land of Ogunquit, Maine. It is a spot where each person truly matters ~ every one an integral character of the storyline and a vital component of what makes the town tick. There is drama and the occasional hometown political bickering intrinsic to any place where the inhabitants care passionately, but a powerful thread of unity weaves throughout the population, with nary a glimpse of uppity New England coldness in evidence.

A sense of calm and community imbues the salty sea air as the rocky Maine coastline winds its gorgeous path along the Marginal Way, and no one passes by without a friendly greeting or a nod of the head. The town has a well-earned reputation for welcoming strangers ~ as one of the bars claims, "Everyone is a local." At this overpopulated time of technological speed and vacuous superficiality, Ogunquit remains a place of simple goodness, where neon has been beautifully banished and friendly folk form the unjaded majority.

For lesbian and gay travelers, Ogunquit is an open and accepting town that is no longer a second-cousin to Provincetown and Fire Island, but a grand destination in its own right. The past few years have seen it coming fully into its own, wisely managing to steer clear of the encroaching commercialism that has insidiously invaded other, more-popular gay hot spots. Ogunquit offers beautiful beaches (one of theirs was voted one of the country's ten best) on a breathtaking coastline, and at a mere hour and fifteen minutes from Boston it is a convenient car-ride away for much of New England. (It's also only four and a half hours from New York City, which makes it closer than Provincetown.) The charm of Maine country living is exemplified by the many guest houses available to travelers. A pleasant throwback to the days of amenable New England Inns with personal touches, individual care and one-of-a-kind rooms, each bed-and-breakfast is unique, and all of the owners are overwhelmingly hospitable. These inn-keepers aren't just businessmen and women – they live here, their lives and futures are invested here, and such commitment can't be faked. The care they exhibit for their guests is genuine, because most guests become friends by the end of their stay. To truly experience the local flavor, and get a little inside gossip as to the goings-on of the town, one's best bet is to indulge in these reasonable guest houses.

No matter where one stays, the magic of Ogunquit is always on hand. Whether one is looking for a quiet weekend get-away of leisurely strolling and antiquing, or a raucous vacation week of bar-hopping and beach-sunning, Ogunquit has something for everyone.