

# Country Roads: Maine B&B is over the moon about gay marriage

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE NOVEMBER 23, 2012



"From a business perspective, we are thrilled that legalized marriage has opened the door for gay folks to be even more comfortable visiting Maine," Moon Over Maine B&B co-owner Rick Barber says.

**Photograph by:** Rochelle Lash

The beach towns along Maine's Atlantic coast have been popular gay destinations for nearly a century, but the scene got a big boost this month when the New England state approved same-sex marriage.

"Personally, I think it's about time," said Rick Barber, who owns the gay-friendly Moon Over Maine Bed & Breakfast in Ogunquit with his partner, Mark Renaud, whose grandparents hailed from Quebec City. "We are very pleased that the majority of our friends and neighbours support our having the same rights and opportunities as they do.

"From a business perspective, we are thrilled that legalized marriage has opened the door for gay folks to be even more comfortable visiting Maine," Barber said.

"We are Moon Over Maine and soon we'll be doing Honeymoons Over Maine," he said. "We look forward to celebrating gay weddings and all that goes with."

The B&B is at the centre of town, a half- block from U.S. 1, the main street that runs through Ogunquit. It's a comfy 1830s, grey Cape-style-cottage, a vintage home with modern interiors. Its seven guest rooms have private bathrooms, televisions with cable and DVD players, mini-refrigerators and air conditioning. Barber mans the kitchen, and his pride and joy are his home-baked scones, everything from traditional blueberry and apple to inventive flavours like Oreo.

For honeymooners, Barber recommends the Neptune or Venus rooms, because they are larger, more secluded and have private decks. Although it is gay-friendly, the B&B welcomes, and encourages, women.

"Decades ago, straight people would peek into gay businesses like the Front Porch's piano bar and think they didn't belong there," Barber said. "But society has changed so much that people just want to have a good time. So there are virtually no more men-only or gay-only places. Everyone goes everywhere."

A lot of Moon Over Maine's clients — and just about everyone in Ogunquit who wants to party — frequent the MaineStreet Nightclub, a hot dance club and all-around hub for cabaret, drag shows, pool tournaments, karaoke and tea dances. MaineStreet doesn't want to let anyone down, so it is open nightly all year and from 3 p.m. in summer. Owner Normand Paquin (another New Englander with Quebec ancestry) is hot off the mark with MaineStreet's new pavilion that will open in 2013 for receptions and weddings.

"MaineStreet is becoming an entertainment complex as much as a dance club and we'll be ready for all parties, including same-sex weddings."

Ogunquit holds several annual events that are mostly for gays and lesbians:

You'll want to go shoe-shopping for the annual High Heel Dash, a fundraiser for the Frannie Peabody Center, an AIDS support group that also dispenses condoms. The Dash (Oct. 6, 2013) is part of the October Ogunquit Fest and it's open to everyone, but it attracts mostly men.

Contestants need to hit the gym to work on pecs, abs and gluts for the rollicking Mr. Gay Ogunquit Pageant (Aug. 31, 2013), known locally as the Speedo contest. Well-oiled and perfectly-tanned, the glamour boys are judged on their looks, physiques and personalities with extra categories for "best basket and best legs."

The seventh annual Women's Weekend, to be held Sept. 26-29, 2013, will attract about 450 gay women for a four-day fest of concerts, tea dances, beachfront grills, a jazz brunch, a pool party at the Admiral's Inn, folksingers, art shows and comedy performances. This extravaganza whooshes through Ogunquit's top spots with a welcome party at the popular piano bar Front Porch, a singles'-mingle at Tapas on the Square, fine dining at Clay Hill Farm, breakfast at Amore Café and clubbing at the infamous MaineStreet. Impresario and DJ Jodi Duston organizes gay women's events throughout New England.

“I’ve been doing lesbian weddings in Maine for years, but I am delighted that they now are recognized officially,” Duston said.

Ogunquit draws its gay visitors mostly in summer. They’re attracted by the anything-goes beach scene and also by the vibrant arts community that goes back more than 100 years.

The Woodbury Art School was founded in the 1880s, inspired by the evocative seaside light, the moody Atlantic and the picturesque fishing neighbourhood of Perkins Cove.

In the 1950s, Henry Strater, a friend of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway, founded the Ogunquit Museum of American Art, which still has a prestigious collection of paintings and sculpture.

Show tunes are always a good draw for both gay and straight visitors. In the 1930s, Walter Hartwig, a veteran of Hollywood and Broadway, opened the Ogunquit Playhouse, a summer theatre that is now called John Lane’s Ogunquit Playhouse. Some of the hits during 2012 were The Buddy Holly Story, Damn Yankees and South Pacific.

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IF YOU GO

Moon Over Maine B & B: 207-646-MOON (6666), [www.MoonOverMaine.com](http://www.MoonOverMaine.com); 22 Berwick Rd., Ogunquit, Me. Open Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays until March 1. Open daily March 1-Nov. 1.

Price: until June 14, 2013, it’s \$99 U.S. for two, including continental breakfast, hot tub and parking. From June 15 to Labour Day, it’s \$179-199 U.S. for two.

MaineStreet Nightclub: 207-646-5101, [www.mainestreetogunquit.com](http://www.mainestreetogunquit.com); 195 Main St., (Route 1) Ogunquit, Me.

More info: Gay Travel: (NO TEL. NUMBER FOR THE FIRST WEB SITE) [www.gayogunquit.com](http://www.gayogunquit.com); Women’s Weekend, Sept. 2013, 603-674-5187, [www.djjodi.com](http://www.djjodi.com). Ogunquit Chamber of Commerce: 207-646-2939, [www.ogunquit.org](http://www.ogunquit.org); Maine Tourism: 888-624-6345, [visitmaine.com](http://visitmaine.com).

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