

# Wedding bells chime at Maine's coastal inns

With same-sex marriage now legal in the state, special packages are on offer at grand destinations

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE JUNE 5, 2013



The historic Camden Harbour Inn has created a four-night wedding and honeymoon vacation package for guests.

**Photograph by:** Michael E. Bowker

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Let the weddings — gay and straight — begin.

Late last year, Maine legalized same-sex marriage. To celebrate the milestone, wedding packages are springing up at many of Montrealers' favourite Maine stops.

The Camden Harbour Inn, a 90-minute drive north of Portland, Maine, is a luxurious establishment in an impressive Victorian manor house. Owned by two men originally from the Netherlands, Raymond Brunyanszki and Oscar Verest, Camden Harbour is a seriously sophisticated, upscale getaway in a laid-back town. It is decked out with the best of everything. It features 20 stunning rooms and suites decorated in striking classic-contemporary decor, an award-winning mixologist at the sexy red bar and Natalie's, an inventive gourmet restaurant. The inn's concierge will arrange such activities as wine tastings, sailing, hiking, sightseeing in a limousine or even a helicopter tour of the ocean and coast.

Camden Harbour has created a lavish Plunge with Pride package, an indulgent four-night wedding and honeymoon vacation in the superlative Royal Dutch Suite. You'll have views of the Atlantic Ocean, a flat-screen television, a fireplace and a spa bathroom with a sauna and steam shower. The wedding package comes with a "rainbow cake," massages and dinner at Natalie's, where delicacies include waygu beef, lamb shank, veal short ribs, lobster and foie gras.

The inn will make a donation of \$100 from every Plunge with Pride wedding to the Human Rights

Campaign, which features ads by prominent Americans who have supported same-sex marriage.

Further south, Ogunquit, blessed with a marvellous long and wide beach, is probably Maine's most gay-friendly destination.

"We're gay-owned and straight-friendly," said innkeeper Greg Testa, who owns the Ogunquit Beach Inn with his partner, Michael Bush. "We have lots of Canadian guests — franco, anglo and allophone, men and women, all the cool people."

The Ogunquit Beach Inn is a comfy B&B in a 1926 cottage well-situated one block from the town's main intersection and two blocks from the beach. Its four homestyle guest rooms and two-room suite are done in pastel walls with beds draped in white cotton covers, all with air-conditioning, private bathrooms and flat-screen TVs with cable. If privacy is paramount, some rooms have their own entrances from the garden.

"It's simple and dressed-down, but our guests always come back because they want to relive that positive Maine experience.

"It's very refreshing that many of our clients can stay anywhere they want, but they choose to stay at our B&B."

If wedding bells are ringing, the Ogunquit Beach Inn works with a notary, Frances Reed, who is primed to officiate at almost any kind of celebration. She is an expert in Jewish studies, but she isn't Jewish, and she is gay-friendly, but not gay.

Among the marquee LGBT attractions this season are: the Ogunquit Rainbow Film Festival, May 31-June 2; the Mr. Gay Ogunquit Pageant on Labour Day weekend, which has categories for "best basket" and "best legs"; and the Women's Weekend, Sept. 26-29, which will draw nearly 500 visitors to a fest of music and parties.

In another town wildly popular with Montrealers, the hotel group Kennebunkport Resort Collection offers the Maine Marital Bliss Package for both gay and straight couples.

The two-night wedding deal is available at all of KRC's appealing boutique hotels. In Kennebunkport, they are: the Old Fort Inn & Resort, a deluxe, antique-filled B&B in a leafy residential neighbourhood; the lively Kennebunkport Inn, where the chic One Dock dining room has stunning new décor; The Grand Hotel, a luxurious 17-room boutique hotel with a gourmet shop, a spa and a hilltop setting on main street; and the Cottages at Cabot Cove, a cluster of petite, private hideaways. In nearby Goose Rocks Beach on the outskirts of town, KRC properties are: Hidden Pond, an upscale resort with family cottages and romantic private suites with a spa and a gourmet restaurant called Earth; and The Tides Beach Club, a cool oceanfront inn with modern seaside décor and a fun après-beach bistro and bar. Among KRC's new hotels in 2013 are The Lodge on the Cove, a family-oriented boutique resort; Cape Arundel Inn and its gourmet dining room, Ocean; and The Boathouse Hotel & Marina, facing the Kennebunk River harbour.

The happy couple can enjoy Maine Marital Bliss all the way to a celebratory dinner at One Dock, The Tides, Ocean or Earth, depending on their hotel. The deal comes complete with a wedding cake and romantic essentials like Champagne and a horse-and-carriage ride. One of KRC's co-ordinators will take care of the basics: the official, a witness, the marriage certificate and flowers. Couples also receive 20 per cent off of purchases at KRC's Spaces Kennebunkport, a new design and home store.

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#### IF YOU GO:

Camden Harbour Inn: 800-236-4266; camdenharbourinn.com; Camden, Maine; current prices approx. \$235-\$699 U.S. for two, incl. breakfast; rates increase July 12. Plunge with Pride package costs \$2,696-\$3,296 U.S. for two, depending on season, for four nights, incl. Champagne breakfast daily, one dinner for two, massages, wedding ceremony, reception and extras.

Ogunquit Beach Inn: 207-646-1112, ogunquitbeachinn.com; Ogunquit, Maine. Two-night and three-night minimums usually apply. Wedding package, incl. ceremony, lodging, breakfast, cocktails for two, beach chairs, parking, starts at \$229 U.S. per night; regular rates: May 1 — June 20, \$129-\$159 U.S. per night for two people; June 21-Sept. 15, \$159-\$189 U.S. per night. Closed Oct. 31-April 15.

Kennebunkport Resort Collection: 855-573-7186, kennebunkportresortcollection.com. Regular rates at KRC hotels vary, starting at \$79 U.S. for two, usually including breakfast, and during July-Aug., \$189 U.S. The Maine Marital Bliss Package starts at \$1,060 U.S. for two (lodging not included), with ceremony, one dinner and daily breakfast with a minimum two-night stay.

Maine Tourism: 888-624-6345, visitmaine.com. Gay Travel: gayogunquit.com

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