



The deluxe glamping tents at Sandy Pines Campground at Goose Rocks Beach, Maine, have fancy furnishings and air-conditioning. DOUGLAS MERRIAM

CHECKING IN

THESE MAINE RESORTS OFFER THE BEST OF TWO WORLDS

Hidden Pond and Sandy Pines reflect state's 'beauty, charm and sense of community'



ROCHELLE LASH

It's summer in Goose Rocks Beach, Maine, and a sojourn is proposed in glorious, pastoral lodging. Designer decor, family ambience, a chance to reconnect with nature — I'm in. But here's the hard part. Two outstanding establishments, two kilometres apart, fit the description. Their roots are the same, but they're totally different. Hidden Pond is a luxurious resort village of private cottages with gourmet dining at Earth, restorative treatments at the Tree Spa and two heated swimming pools, one reserved for adults. You are immersed in nature in the most refined and cossetting way imaginable. At the new Sandy Pines Campground, options range from RV sites to the truly fabulous Glamping Tents. You are immersed in nature, with a sense of light

adventure plus resort-style, kid-friendly activities. "We want to reflect Maine's beauty, charm and sense of community, especially for families," said Tim Harrington, co-developer with Debra Lennon of the two remarkable resorts. "Hidden Pond and Sandy Pines each express those ideas in their own way." **Hidden Pond:** This top-rated luxury resort flourishes amid luxuriant landscaping and heavy forests. It's so authentic that all the buildings are tucked into thickets of natural foliage and wild rose bushes, there is no asphalt and the lampposts are tree trunks. Hidden Pond is a first-class getaway cleverly designed to look like a posh summer camp, with elements of both. The wonderful, woodsy resort was conceived so that children could play and roam freely while grown-ups indulge in a cushy, blissed-out vacation. Outdoors, you can enjoy your suite's open-air showers, lounge on your screened porch or tootle along walking paths. There are bikes and s'mores at the fire pit

for families, plus more sophisticated happenings: yoga by the pool, massages at Tree Spa, art classes and garden tours. Indoors, guests are spoiled with gorgeous country-chic decor and fine hotel amenities like Frette linens. Families favour the 16 cottages, two-bedroom hideaways with full kitchens and a kid-friendly pool. Couples are in heaven in the 20 bungalows, which are secluded, romantic, king-sized suites with fireplaces and access to the tranquil, heated, adults-only pool. Hidden Pond's restaurant Earth brings the outdoors inside, to a spectacular barn with rustic-chic decor, a towering wall of liquor and an open kitchen. Earth serves modern American cuisine, with such comfort-inspired delicacies as lobster pizza and lobster mac 'n' cheese, plus lots more Maine seafood, braised lamb, short ribs, porterhouse steaks, black cod and organic veggies from Hidden Pond's own garden. **Sandy Pines:** Sandy Pines Campground, one mile from pristine Goose Rocks Beach on the Atlantic Ocean, is home to 300 individual lodgings of all styles: traditional tents, RV sites, plus three distinctive types of glamping: Hideaway Hut A-frames, Camp Carriages on wheels and the truly fabulous safari-style

tents. Each cluster of lodging has its own bathhouse, for showers, sinks and loos, so it's a short walk to indoor plumbing. That's part of all camping, but Sandy Pines is camping with a difference. True, you're in the woods, and but you can spend hot summer days in the heated salt-water pool. And Sandy Pines has a back-to-your-childhood vibe with retro features like the Icicle Tricycle, s'mores at sunset and the Kids' Kamp where youngsters can craft dream catchers or a teepee. Everyone gets together at Thursday movie nights, Saturday night Burger Bashes and Sunday bingo games and ice cream buffet. I opted for one of 16 ultra-luxe glamping tents and I was wowed. These spacious safari-style tents are equipped with Wi-Fi, remote-control lighting, king-size beds, air-conditioning, mini-fridges and outlets for mobile devices. They're as attractively decorated as a deluxe hotel room, with kilim rugs, chandeliers, and antique dressers and desks. Here's an appealing option: Parents can take a full-sized glamping tent and tuck two kids into an adjacent child-size tent. That means privacy for the adults and independence and lots of giggles for the youngsters. Many campers cook "in," but Sandy Pines' General Store stocks baked goods and grab-and-go salads and sandwiches. You can also order a lobster dinner — freshly steamed, with all the trimmings. To celebrate the fall equinox, Sandy Pines will present the Great Maine Camp Out, Sept. 22, with an astronomy class, campfire cooking and fire-side storytelling. rochelle@rochellelash.com twitter.com/rochellelash

IF YOU GO

Goose Rocks Beach/Kennebunkport is a five-and-a-half-hour drive from Montreal. **Hidden Pond, Earth Restaurant, Tree Spa:** 888-967-9050, 207-967-9050; www.hiddenpondmaine.com, earthathiddenpond.com; 354 Goose Rocks Rd., Kennebunkport, Maine. One-bedroom bungalow for two, from US\$599 per night; two-bedroom cottages for four, from US\$1,699 per night. Rates include beach access/transport, morning coffee delivered, afternoon tea, evening bonfires, two swimming pools, walking trails, yoga and tai chi, bicycles, gym, art classes, organic gardens. Spa treatments available. In August, there is a four-night minimum. **Sandy Pines Campground:** 207-967-2483; sandypinescamping.com; 277 Mills Rd., Kennebunkport, Maine. Tents start at US\$35 per night, glamp tents at US\$179 per night, including linens, towels, bath amenities. All guests have access to Wi-Fi, pool, Kids' Kamp, lawn games (some activities have a fee), Thursday movie nights. Extra: bike, paddle board, kayak rentals; grills for rent for \$25. **Maine Tourism:** 888-624-6345, visitmaine.com.

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