



Down East meets deluxe in Camden, Maine

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On a crisp October day, [Camden, Maine](#), looks like it sprang out of a [Norman Rockwell](#) painting. Not surprisingly, it has become a mecca for travelers who love [New England](#) but want to go beyond the crowds of [Cape Cod](#) and other popular spots when the leaves start to turn.

If you're looking for a spectacular fall getaway, Camden has it all: It's a lovely coastal town with breathtaking vistas, easy hikes, good restaurants and shopping and recreation for the whole family.



The Penobscot Bay and town, as seen from a bedroom in the Camden Harbour Inn.

For leaf-peepers, the season runs through Oct. 15. Hike or drive from [Camden Town](#) Landing to the top of nearby Mount Battie, where you'll see a stunning blend of blazing foliage and the shimmering blue waters of [Penobscot Bay](#). Minutes away from the center of town is beautiful Lake Megunticook, with equally stunning scenery.

For those who make the 393-mile drive (about six hours) from [New York](#), Camden offers a respite from city life and a vacation to suit most pocketbooks. The charming little village perched above a picturesque harbor offers the best of [Maine](#), old and new: You can savor the soft morning fog on a quiet walk through town, feast on fresh lobster for lunch, sail Penobscot Bay on the 57-foot windjammer Surprise with Captain Jack and [Barbara Moore](#), hike to the summits of nearby mountains and shop in a cornucopia of clothing, book and craft stores - all in one day.

But perhaps most surprising, this little town north of [Kennebunkport](#) now offers a high-end inn that ranks with the finest boutique hotels in New York.

The newly renovated Camden Harbour Inn - owned by Dutch émigrés [Raymond Brunyanszki](#) and [Oscar Verest](#) - blends the coziness of a traditional bed-and-breakfast with the service, decor and luxury of an upscale hotel. Sitting on a hill overlooking the bay, the white-clapboard inn, built in 1874, features a wraparound porch and 18 eclectically decorated rooms and suites with views of the water. They all have flat-screen TVs and DVD players, as well as dreamy bed linens and other designer touches. Four of the rooms have balconies, and seven have working fireplaces.

Best of all, the inn - expertly run by Patty and [Joerg Ross](#) - offers a sense of privacy. Forget those bed-and-breakfast nightmares where you've been crammed at a table or in a living room with 15 other guests, forced to make awkward conversation.

At the Camden Harbour Inn, serenity and comfort are the hallmarks; the owners spent \$2 million to refurbish the building, and from the minute you step inside it feels like a touch of SoHo or [South Beach](#) in southern Maine. There's also a first-class restaurant, Natalie's, that offers modern French cuisine (and a great burger!). The executive chef, [Lawrence Klang](#), won the Maine Lobster Chef People's Choice Award 2008. Both the inn and the restaurant have been awarded AAA four-diamond status - the only lodging place and restaurant in Camden with this rating.

And for those suffering from "[Manhattan](#) shoulders," there's even a spa with two masseuses on call.

Some visitors may recall that the town was the setting for the steamy movie "Peyton Place" many years ago. But as co-owner Verest notes with a wink: "What happens in Camden, stays in Camden."

The Camden Harbour Inn is at 83 Bayview St. For reservations, call (207) 236-4200 or 1-800-236-4266, or go to www.camdenharbourinn.com.

For more information about what's happening in Camden this fall, contact the Chamber of Commerce at 1-800-223-5459 or www.visitcamden.com.

For a list of other Camden inns, check out www.camdeninns.com.