

155 WESTERN PROMENADE



Live in a Legend Portland meets London.

Architectural gem 155 Western Promenade, designed in 1920 by internationally acclaimed William Lawrence Bottomley—commissioned by legendary families of Manhattan; the Hamptons; and Richmond, Virginia; as well as the family of Walter Davis, Jr. of Portland—is now offered for sale.

This incomparable home features a vaulted solarium; library with a priceless Zuber mural; marble master bath en suite with huge master closet; Edwardian kitchen and butler's pantry with a Kohler Cooksink, two dishwashers and ovens, six-burner range, Thermador refrigerator, and separate beverage center; a dining room that graciously accommodates twelve or more with gorgeous sunset views; and a 32-foot paneled living room with Grand Tour inset paintings. Lovingly restored, № 155 is located front and center on the Western Promenade, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Price on request.



To take the tour, go to www.portlandmagazine.com/manderley
To schedule a showing, call

JOHN HATCHER › WWW.JOHNHATCHER.US › 775-2121

Maine to Go



The Asticou Inn in Northeast Harbor
★★★★★ expedia.com

See Maine as others see us, flipping through the travel guide books & internet ratings. We can help you read between the lines. BY CLAIRE Z. CRAMER

We Mainers can't resist playing tour guide for visiting friends from away. Is it because we're fascinated with the strangers in ourselves? With feigned detachment, we count the stars that rate the finest hotels and inns around us on the Maine Coast.

Here's a look at some of these top destination attractions as the outside press is touting them:

SUPERCAMP

Kennebunkport's **Hidden**

Pond Resort is on *Travel & Leisure's* Top 20 Resorts in the Northeast list and rates near the top of *Conde Nast Traveler's* Reader's Choice Best Resorts Northeast. The latter publication raves: "On 60 acres...outside preppy Kennebunkport, Hidden Pond has a fantasy summer camp feel, with hand-painted wood signs pointing to a garden where you can pick vegetables or to a bike shed where you can borrow a retro cruiser for the mile ride to Goose Rocks Beach. Cottages...range from the playful Periwinkle (in sunshiny primary



ROAD WARRIORS

colors) to the classic Thank You (embroidered lobster pillows and an airy seafoam and powder blue New England aesthetic)... A central lodge functions as the official clubhouse, with a simple rectangular pool and a fire pit where there's a nightly bonfire (singing optional)."

Hidden Pond's James Beard Award-winner Ken Oringer is on the premises, rolling out fresh pasta; wood-grilling pizzas and native seafood; and composing gemlike, just-picked organic salads at Earth restaurant. Fancy camp has its rewards.

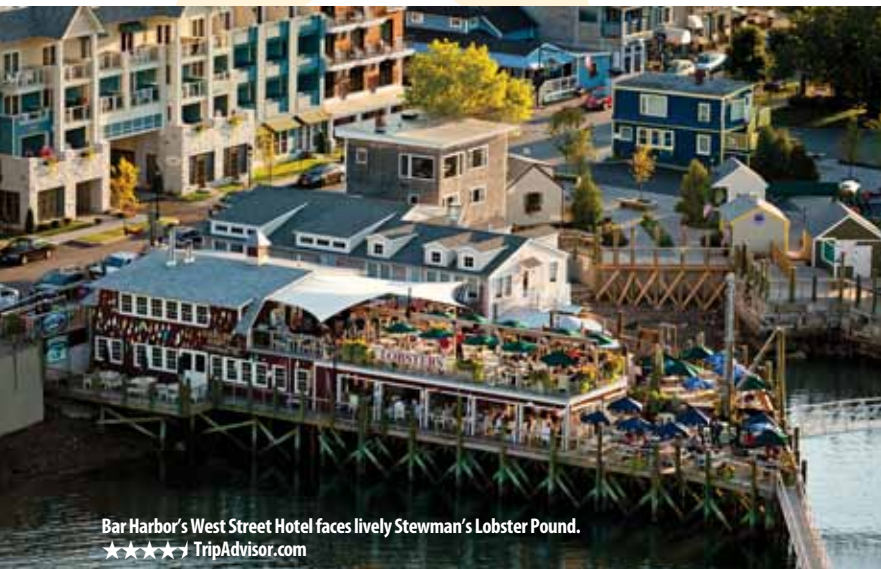
But BTW, if it's an ocean view you crave without having to take a one-mile complimentary retro Schwinn bike ride to get there, no matter how charming, and you'd rather

rooms and suites...one of the state's best restaurant's, Seaglass...a fantastic beach... secluded yet just a 10-minute drive from Portland's historic waterfront." Olmsted may not have stayed long—he was completely dazzled by a "unique lobster program where guests can go out on a working boat and catch their own, followed by a 5-course gourmet lobster dinner." These Maine resorts—what will they think of next?

Frommer's applies a more white-glove, persnickety-Yankee standard. **The Claremont Hotel** in Southwest Harbor makes the cut among their Best Country Inns because "this waterside lodge has

include an enormous veranda with inviting wicker rockers, scenic 18-hole golf course, and the nearby Cliff Walk, a rocky one-mile trail where Winslow Homer liked to take in the seascapes..."

Nostalgia for old-fashioned, no-nonsense Yankee values clings like a gauzy illusion to the national press's perception of Maine. *Boston Magazine's New England Travel Guide* series hails the time-warp charm of the **Asticou Inn** in Northeast Har-



Bar Harbor's West Street Hotel faces lively Stewman's Lobster Pound. ★★★★★ TripAdvisor.com



The Spruce Point Inn Resort & Spa, Boothbay Harbor
★★★ Frommers



Spruce Point Inn, Boothbay Harbor

wear earrings and heels when you gaze out at the crashing surf, *Travel & Leisure's* Colleen Clark notes in her Best Affordable Beach Resorts list that the **Tides Beach Club** is "a renovated pink Victorian on Goose Rocks Beach...showing off a new preppy-glam look...with...the occasional zebra rug. A jewel-box bar serves oysters and bubbly and lobster service at fish-stick prices."

RATINGS SENSE & SENSIBILITY

ForbesTravelGuides.com became a formidable player in travel writing and rating after taking over *Mobil Travel Guides'* long-running book series in 2011. Writer Larry Olmsted names Cape Elizabeth's **Inn by the Sea** to *Forbes's* Hotels of the Year 2013 list, asserting, "Everyone loves the Maine coast as a tourist destination, and the Inn By The Sea is the best place to stay here. It has great

everything a Victorian resort should, including sparsely decorated rooms, creaky floorboards in the halls, great views of the water and mountains, and a croquet pitch."

Kennebunk's **White Barn Inn** makes the same list because among other things it offers guests a buffer from, well, Mainers. "Much of the...staff hails from Europe, and they treat guests graciously."

Travel & Leisure is hung up on uptight, too. Their take on the **Black Point Inn**: "...an old-fashioned grandeur still infuses the lodge's 25 rooms and suites, and etiquette is still taken seriously here; jackets are required for men in the formal dining room at dinner (which often includes regional standbys like New England clam chowder or butter-poached lobster). The inn's outdoor assets are even more captivating—they

bor: "Located far from the riffraff of Bar Harbor, this classic resort is a throwback to a time when summer was a verb. Dating to 1883, it's surrounded by formal English- and Japanese-style flowerbeds against a backdrop of craggy granite." No wonder the "riffraff" among us have been known, lovingly, to call it Asti-cuckoo.

The **Camden Harbour Inn** is given "the antidote to overly cutesy New England style" award: "Overstuffed wingbacks and Laura Ashley, begone. The...inn swaps the antiques and bric-a-brac for a northern European, contemporary approach to décor." As in all the rich people's homes in *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo* movie?

The *Lonely Planet* guides still swear by a

5-star hotel rating system, but sometimes it's sworn at. All the hotels on Portland's peninsula are given 3 stars (although the new Westin is not yet included). Only Kennebunk's **White Barn Inn** and the **Holiday Inn Regency** in Bar Harbor make it to four stars.

Fodor's Travel online labels a handful of Maine hotels "Fodor's Choice," including the **Blair Hill Inn** in Greenville, the **Bar Harbor Inn**; the midcoast **Norumbega Inn, Samoset Resort, Sebasco Harbor Resort**; and the **Captain Lord Mansion**, and **Colony Hotel** further south. These are discerning choices of undeniably fine accommodations. But

ishly bestowed and stars bitterly withheld on the net, the distilled median opinions of uncredentialed, unknown Yelp/Tripadvisor/Expedia know-it-alls.

Type **Portland Westin Harborview** into your search box and behold the star skirmish among the raters. Five stars from Expedia, but only 3 from Google Reviews. Who, or should I say whom, do you trust?

TRAVELER VS. TOURIST

Stars bring up another issue about hotel ratings. "It's really what you're

four-diamond **Portland Harbor Hotel**. How many tons, exactly?

Not too long ago, if you were visiting Portland and you learned from your trusted guidebook about a hotel bar called the Top of the East—the highest roof bar north of Boston, so high it offered a view of the entire city—you'd go check out that glittering skyline yourself. You wouldn't consult your smartphone first for opinions about the service and drink prices.



Tides Beach Club, Goose Rocks Beach, Kennebunkport, on *Travel & Leisure's* Best Affordable Beach Resorts list.



Inn by the Sea, Cape Elizabeth
★★★★★ jetsetter.com
★★ viamichelin.com

the *Fodor's* of 2014 may be just a bit too "awesome," as it provides little opinion or nuance beyond the predictable "fabulous views" and praise of room and bath size. Why have their descriptions become auto-tuned and robotic? An explanation of the *Fodor's* Choice ranking reveals that input from readers figures in the equation. And they've added something separate called "Fodorite Reviews," which are just comments from anyone with an opinion and a need to share it.

Not to single out *Fodor's* for depending on random contributions, though, since ratings of hotels and restaurants online have all been forever changed (infected? corrupted?) by the internet. You can find stars lav-

used to," says Cindy Cosmos at AAA Northern New England's Portland office. "It's a case-by-case scenario." In other words, after a night at a Motel 6 in Schenectady on your way here, the **Holiday Inn by the Bay** will feel like the Taj Mahal. Isn't that why we travel? Triple A (American Automobile Association) guidebooks use a five-diamond rating system, but if you don't

see a hotel on a list, it doesn't indicate unworthiness; it just means Triple-A hasn't been there. Triple-A is pretty much just-the-facts: Restaurant on the premises? Pets OK? Room service? Phones in the rooms? A/C? But once in a while, they rave: You'll find "luxurious guest rooms and tons of amenities" at the

And speaking of opinions, shouldn't the raters actually *know* the territory before dealing out the stars? Michelin, once the cultural arbiter of travel—the publisher of precise, concise, skinny red-and-green guidebooks and attendant street maps for all of Europe and beyond—has posted some eye-opening opinions about Portland. On the *viamichelin.com* website, the perfectly respectable **Residence Inn** in Scarborough is awarded the highest three-star rating, but the Inn by the Sea with its beautiful beach setting and excellent restaurant, is given just two. On the *travel.michelin.com* website, the Old Port is given two stars, but "downtown" is dismissed with just one: "The central downtown area is bounded by the Willamette River on the east and the curve of I-405 on the other sides..." Sounds like someone took a wrong turn and ended up in Portland, Oregon. How was the pinot noir, guys? ■

Where to stay, according to folks from away. But is the internet subverting the star system?