



Gay Ogunquit

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Ogunquit, whose name means “Beautiful Place by the Sea,” is a perfect getaway haven for the discriminating traveler. Settled in the 1620’s, Ogunquit thrived on fishing and shipping for centuries until it was discovered by New York artists. For the last century, Ogunquit has become a prominent art colony, popular with tourists because of its pristine beach and spellbinding Marginal Way, the public walkway along the rugged Maine shoreline. Ogunquit has long had a year-round gay population, welcomed gay travelers, and embraced all people; we are proud that ‘gay’ isn’t just who we welcome, it’s who we are.

USA Today rates Ogunquit Beach the #4 best beach for gays and lesbians, stating, “Popular with gay Bostonians and Quebecois during the summer months, the white-sand beach is hot but the Atlantic is not. Show how cool you are by jumping directly in, resist the urge to run right out, and stride gracefully back to shore.”

Ogunquit is essentially a tranquil, small village where one can enjoy the simple pleasures at a peaceful pace, no matter how crowded it may become at times. While Ogunquit is the year-round home to only 1,200 citizens, it offers almost everything to almost everyone as perhaps nowhere else in the country can: the finest stretch of pristine beach whose glistening white sand flows wide and long; one of the most picturesque small harbors, with its fishing and pleasure boats moving easily at their quiet moorings and crowned by a unique draw-footbridge; the quaint New England flavor of the Village Center with its countless restaurants and lounges, art galleries, gift shops, inns, hotels and guesthouses; awesome views of high waves crashing against rocks, and soothing views of gentle waters easing up onto clean white sand; the Ogunquit Playhouse which yearly attracts star names to its casts of players; movie theaters and small repertory companies; boat rides, either for the viewing or for trapping Maine’s famous lobster or for fishing in the deep dark sea; river and sea kayaking; the exceptionally stirring and exhilarating Marginal Way footpath which winds along a craggy promontory shadowing the vast Atlantic for a sandpiper’s view of the famed rocky coast of Maine.

Over the past 100 years, this attractive seaside village has evolved from a flyspeck of a fishing hamlet with dirt roads and weathered shacks to a major vacation resort without losing a bit of its charisma or endearing quaintness.

Getting Here and Getting Around

Ogunquit is approximately halfway between Boston, MA and Maine’s largest city, Portland, and is easily accessible from both. Traveling interstate 95 from the north, Ogunquit is less than an hour from Portland, and Boston is a mere 1 ¼ hour to the south.

Visitors from away can fly into Boston's Logan International Airport, Portland International Jetport, or the Manchester Boston Regional Airport in Manchester, NH, and be in Ogunquit in less than 1 ½ hours. Visitors can also ride the Amtrak Downeaster from Boston or Portland and disembark in Wells, the town north of Ogunquit. Taxis are available for hire, or hop on a trolley for a special ride. During the summer months, C&J Bus Lines delivers guests from New York City directly to the Ogunquit Welcome Center.

While visitors are in Ogunquit, the Ogunquit Trolley provides comfortable and convenient service to all of the popular locations in town, with connections to the Shoreline Explorer in Wells and the Shore Road Shuttle to York Beach. Ogunquit is also easily walkable, as it consists of only three main streets and four square miles.

Where to Stay: Gay Friendly Lodging

Ogunquit is home to a large population of gay and lesbian innkeepers. Almost half of all of Ogunquit's inns and bed & breakfasts are gay owned, and all of the lodging properties are gay-friendly. With a wide variety of accommodations ranging from upscale resorts and cozy B&Bs with personalized service and sweeping views of the Atlantic Ocean to basic accommodations for the budget-conscious traveler, Ogunquit offers the perfect getaway for any visitor. Most accommodations are conveniently located on the Trolley Route, and no farther than ½ mile from the beach or the Marginal Way.

Where to go

Ogunquit has several outstanding venues for art, including the renowned Ogunquit Playhouse and the Ogunquit Museum of American Art. John Lane's Ogunquit Playhouse, one of Southern Maine's most important cultural landmarks, brings Broadway to the Beach each season. Opening in 1933, the work and vision of Walter and Maude Hartwig brought an outstanding, star-studded performing arts company to Ogunquit. Continuing this tradition even today, they seek to provide his audience with the finest professional theatre in our region.

Called "the most beautiful little museum in the world" by Frances Henry Taylor, Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Ogunquit Museum of American Art houses a 1,600 piece permanent collection in its 7,500 square foot building. Upon entering the Museum, visitors look directly through the glass wall of its main gallery to the dramatic coast, the ocean, and the far horizon. Visitors are invited to enjoy the Museum grounds, three acres of landscaped gardens, lawn and oceanfront ledge. The grounds include numerous large sculptures, a reflecting pool, and secluded benches for quiet contemplation.

For local history, visit the Ogunquit Heritage Museum. Located on the edge of Ogunquit's largest park, the museum is housed in one of Ogunquit's oldest buildings, the c.1780 Captain Winn House, a traditional Maine cape on the National Register of Historic Places. The Museum has four main focuses: the art colony, maritime history, Ogunquit history, and Ogunquit's architecture. Each year a new exhibit features a new aspect of those four focuses.

Ogunquit also features a Fire Museum, hidden in plain sight next to the Fire Station. This free unusual museum houses Ogunquit fire memorabilia including an old steamer engine. There are no public

entrances to the building; instead, visitors stand outside and view the displays from large picture windows.

Ogunquit's most popular places to visit are the three mile long pristine white beach running from the center of town north to Wells and the 1 ¼ mile long Marginal Way along the cliffs running from the center of town south to Perkins Cove. At the portion of the beach between the family-populated main entrances, is an area popularly known as the "G- section", where spontaneous games of volleyball and other beach sports can be found. Perkins Cove is a quaint quiet working harbor, crowned by the little pedestrian operated drawbridge which allows the fishing and touring boats to slide out of their moorings and farm the sea of lobsters and tuna, while providing unparalleled scenic and educational excursions to the many visitors.

Events and Nightlife

Ogunquit has a well-rounded event schedule with activities for families of all types.

April brings Patriots' Day, a holiday celebrating the battles of Lexington and Concord, and commemorated only in Massachusetts and Maine. Ogunquit goes back to its colonial roots, with historical re-enactments, activities and concerts, while blending in the more modern craft show, hay rides, and restaurant tastings. The Ogunquit Playhouse also gets involved with backstage tours of the theater, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The people and businesses of Ogunquit work closely with our local AIDS service organization, and include fundraisers in existing town-wide events. For years, we have hosted the Southern Maine AIDS Walk/Run in early May. In fact, during the weekend, this miniscule community had the distinction of raising more money for AIDS than any other community in Maine, including the largest cities. Memorial Day brings the NAMES Project Memorial Quilt to our Town Hall for a three-day display.

Art prevails in August, with several fundraising art auctions and the annual Sidewalk Art Show and Sale punctuating the weekends. The Ogunquit Performing Arts Committee continues the artistic theme with their two week long Capriccio Celebration of the Arts. With "All Things Art" included, this celebration includes concerts, museum showings, poetry readings, book signings, architectural tours, an antique show, theatre performances, a kite festival and much more.

For those who feel that the perfect vacation includes beach, bars, and boys, the Labor Day Weekend Mr. Ogunquit Competition is the epitome of a great time. Favorite drag queens host the Speedo contest on the beach, and after the sun goes down, the party moves inside to one of the local hot spots.

Ogunquit celebrates October with OgunquitFest, a harvest and Halloween themed event. Crowds throng to the Waiter Race and the High Heel Dash in between enjoying a bevy of children's entertainment and activities, craft shows and more. The High Heel Dash is used to raise money for Frannie Peabody Center, the area AIDS service organization.

In December, Ogunquit celebrates the season with a traditional Christmas by the Sea. This event includes a bonfire, tree lightings and caroling, concerts, and the renowned Taste the Season. Retailers

throughout Ogunquit enhance the experience with tremendous sales, as they celebrate the end to the busier season. Many of Ogunquit's shops are gay-owned and operated, and offer everything from high-end art glass and sculpture to gay-themed humor and decor to t-shirts and tourist trinkets.

In between these major events are several minor events, and a variety of entertainment at Ogunquit's gay-owned clubs, MaineStreet and the Front Porch. MaineStreet features a regular women's tea dance, a pool tournament, karaoke, dancing, and a variety of drag entertainment. The Front Porch features a nightly piano bar and live performances.

Dining

Ogunquit is home to a wide assortment of restaurants catering to the discriminating palate. Lobster and other seafood are purchased fresh from Perkins Cove and other area harbors, and several restaurants grow and serve their own herbs and vegetables. All of Ogunquit's restaurants are independently owned and offer unique culinary experiences. Many are gay-owned and operated and attract a large, but not exclusive, gay clientele. Whether fine dining with a partner or family dining with the kids, visitors can find a variety of excellent options in Ogunquit. Several restaurants also feature nightly entertainment, including bands, comedians, and ballroom dancing.

For Visitor Information

The Ogunquit Chamber of Commerce Welcome Center is located at 36 Main Street, and is open to the public daily during the summer and five days a week in winter. Bulletin boards, brochures and information specialists can answer any questions about Ogunquit and its establishments and entertainment. The Chamber of Commerce website, www.ogunquit.org serves as a clearinghouse for extensive information about the town and its businesses, while www.visitogunquit.org contains detailed descriptions of Ogunquit many events. www.gayogunquit.com is an excellent resource for information on the local scene.