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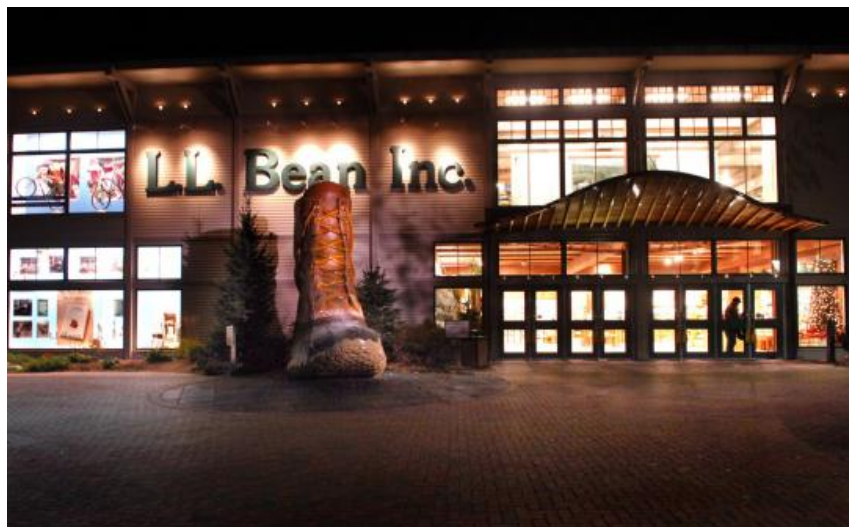


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A TANK AWAY | FREEPORT, MAINE

The Boston Globe

There's more to explore than the sale racks



L.L. Bean's flagship store in Freeport is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, as this shopper found out at 3 a.m. (Fred Field for The Boston Globe/File 2006)

By Hilary Nangle

Globe Correspondent / December 16, 2009

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Freeport is synonymous with shopping, thanks to mega-outdoor and lifestyle retailer L.L. Bean, which is based there. More than 120 outlet stores fan out from that epicenter. But shopping isn't the only reason to visit. Freeport manages to exude small-town charm. Escape the downtown frenzy by moseying the back streets, where handsome homes and historical buildings, many dating from the town's days as a shipbuilding center, are gaily decorated for the holidays.

Stay

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The **Harraseeket Inn** (162 Main St., 800-342-6423, www.harraseeketinn.com) is a full-service hotel, with two restaurants and an indoor pool, but it has a boutique inn vibe that mixes New England hospitality with a bit of elegance. Rooms are Colonial in décor, with one notable exception. The Thomas Moser Room, decorated with pieces by the noted furniture designer, gives you a sleek, contemporary feel. Seasonal rates, including a hot breakfast buffet and afternoon tea with serious treats, begin at \$125. For country antiques and quilts, drop your bags in Arctic

explorer Admiral Donald MacMillan's former home, the **White Cedar Inn** (178 Main St., 800-853-1269, www.whitecedarinn.com), a comfy bed-and-breakfast. December rates begin about \$125 midweek, \$155 weekend. Both inns currently

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offer discounted package deals. A couple of miles south of town, the **Casco Bay Inn** (107 Route 1, 800-570-4970, www.cascobayinn.com, \$69-\$99) is a bit fancier than most motels with nice amenities, including free Internet and local calls, wide-screen TVs, and a BYOB lounge, with fireplace. Rates include a light breakfast.

Dine

Craving something ethnic? Just steps from L.L. Bean, discover the **Mediterranean Grill** (10 School St., 207-865-1688, www.mediterraneangrill.biz, \$9-\$11 lunch, \$15-\$25 dinner), serving Middle Eastern fare, including kebabs, moussaka, and spanakopita. Traditional English-brewed ales, top-notch pub grub, and a family friendly atmosphere make **Gritty McDuff's** (187 Lower Main St., 207-865-4321, www.grittys.com, \$8-\$15), a brew pub south of town, a perennial favorite. Also south of town there is a find for wine aficionados. **Conundrum** (117 US Route 1, 207-865-0303, \$7-\$27) lists nearly 60 wines by the glass and close to 500 by the bottle. Pair one of them with a mix of lighter plates or splurge on the quail.

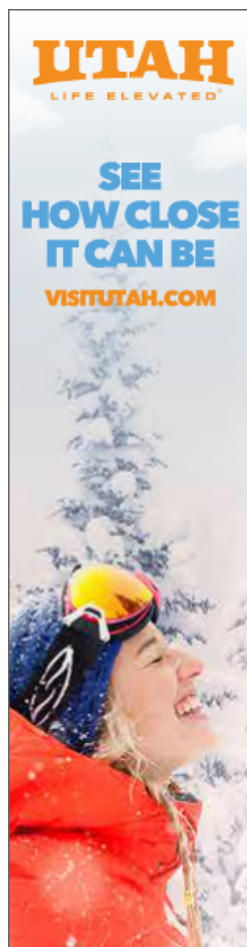
During the day

Make parking easy by taking advantage of Bean's **free valet holiday parking** (follow signs to the Fox Parking lot). Plot shopping strategy with a map from the **Freeport Merchants Association** (23 Depot St., 207-865-1212, www.freeportusa.com), then have at it. Start with the obvious, **L.L. Bean** (95 Main St., 800-441-5713, www.llbean.com), and don't miss the outlet store in the Freeport Village Station across the street. Nose around the neighborhood to find shops carrying everything from designer clothing to British specialties, earrings to furniture (and here's a hint: Always ask where the sale room is). Not a shopper? Bean's holiday **Northern Lights** program (L.L. Bean, 877-755-2326, www.llbean.com/events) offers plenty. Take a horse-drawn carriage ride on Saturdays and Sundays, between 1 and 7 p.m., then sip hot chocolate by the campfire in Discovery Park. Learn about snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, fly-tying, and other pursuits at free workshops on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Once there's snow on the ground, L.L. Bean will commence its 2 1/2-hour Walk-On Adventures programs. The \$15 fee includes equipment and instruction for snowshoeing and cross-country skiing programs. If a little outdoor quality time is your thing, get in a walk or snowshoe, depending upon conditions, at **Wolfe's Neck Woods State Park** (Wolfe's Neck Road, 207-865-4465, www.maine.gov/doc/parks; off-season rates are \$1.50 adult, ages 5-11 free, honor system), 233 acres on a peninsula dividing the Harraseeket River from Casco Bay northeast of downtown, or **Mast Landing Audubon Sanctuary** (Upper Mast Landing Road, 207-781-2330, www.maineaudubon.org, free). Feeling peckish after your walk? Indulge in a proper British tea at **Jacqueline's Tea Room** (201 Main St., 207-865-2123, www.jacquelinestearoom.com, \$25.50, reservations required). Sip from a selection of 72 teas, savor soup, nibble on finger sandwiches, and satisfy your sweet tooth with a dessert.

After dark

Blues, klezmer, rock, and comedy are all weekend possibilities at **Venue Music Bar** (5 Depot St., 207-865-1780, www.venuemusicbar.com). The Tony Boffa Trio plays at the **Hilton Garden Inn** (5 Park St., 207-865-1433, www.hiltongardeninn.com) on Tuesdays from 7-10 p.m. Or shop around the clock. Bean's flagship store, hunting and fishing store, and bike, boat, and ski store are open 24/7.

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