

48 Hours In...Freeport



Nov/Dec 2009

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More than big Indians, big boots, and big-name outlets

As legend has it, Freeport, Maine, got its name from Sir Andrew Freeport, a fictional merchant of great eminence and defatigable industry who first appeared in London's *The Spectator*. Not bad for a town that earned its reputation and livelihood first from the sea and later from shopping. Freeport seceded from North Yarmouth in 1789 and established itself as a seaport and shipbuilding center. Industry gave way to leisure—a grand hotel and amusement park were built near Casco Bay at the turn of the century. From Winslow Park, you can still see the hotel's remains—a stone castle tower peeking above the treeline.

In 1912, around the time Leon Leonwood Bean started sewing leather and rubber boots, leisure gave way to retail. Today, leisure and retail coexist.

The town is a haven for bargain-seekers from around the world. And while nobody can deny the allure of high-end labels at discount prices, there's more to Freeport than outlets—like galleries, a phenomenal wine and cheese shop, great restaurants, independently owned boutiques, and an organic farm overlooking the ocean. It's a perfect holiday shopping destination. But it's so much more than that.

friday

Skip out of work early—or skip work entirely—and when you arrive in town, head straight to Jacqueline's Tea Room. You'll feel like you're in a dollhouse as you eat a leisurely four-course lunch prepared by Jacqueline Soley. Choose from 72 varieties of loose-leaf tea, served with scones and Devon cream, finger sandwiches, and decadent desserts. Be sure to call ahead to reserve a table.

This is the perfect opportunity to explore the blocks north of L.L. Bean, which get a little less foot traffic than the heart of the village. Discover elegant furniture at Thos. Moser, take in a bit of fine art at The Wonderful Gallery, peruse unique, artisanmade jewelry at Earrings & Co., or tour the workshop of Brown Goldsmiths.

Where to stay? Depends on what you're looking for. As Freeport has grown in popularity as a more-than-shopping destination, so have the lodging options. The town is home to charming B&Bs, hotel chains, and traditional motor inns. At the gracious Harraseeket Inn, you can stay in style—with an in-room fireplace—within walking distance of town. Though it's elegant year-round, the Harraseeket really sparkles during the holidays. Dog lovers and those who prefer Pottery Barn to potpourri and Ralph Lauren linens to antique doilies should check into the pet-friendly Applewood Inn. Across the street is the family-friendly James Place Inn.

For dinner, head to Azure Café, where chef Christopher Bassett uses Maine's best ingredients to prepare flavorful, creative Italian cuisine. Try the mussels al fresco, which taste like summer special. The cocktails here are to die for, but Azure Café also has received Wine Spectator's Award of Excellence for four straight years. So sip away—no matter how late you stay, L.L. Bean will still be open, and it's truly a special place in the wee hours.

saturday

Regardless of where you stay in Freeport, chances are breakfast is included, so eat up, because shopping requires serious energy. If you didn't hit L.L. Bean last night, it's a must—even more so when Alex Carleton's signature line debuts in spring 2010—and so is Bean's home store, which opened in September. Freeport Village Station, an open-air outlet mall, opened in the spring, and it's home to the L.L. Bean Factory Store and The Maine Dog, a veterinarian-owned shop that caters to the canine set.



Wander down to Mexicali Blues, a funky import shop, for chunky silver and gemstone jewelry. Looking for something made a little closer to home? Don't miss the new Sea Bags boutique, home to Maine-made totes crafted from recycled sails. Check out the raincoat canvas bags and slickers at Maine's own Accessories Unlimited. Browse textiles, jewelry, and rocks—yes rocks—at Maine Artisans & Minerals.

For one-of-a-kind gifts, you can't miss at Abacus Gallery, or if you're feeling crafty, stock up on jewelry supplies at Beadin' Path, arguably Maine's best bead store. Head next door for drastically discounted boutique and designer clothing for women—halfprice Anthropologie, anyone?—at Co/Op. Designer labels abound at Suite 9B, a tiny shop that specializes in high-end denim, T-shirts, and hoodies.

By now, you've worked up an appetite, and while you may generally shy away from buffets, the luncheon spread at Harraseeket Inn's Broad Arrow Tavern is an exception. The selection of salads, seafood, meats, cheeses, and nibbles changes daily, but one thing is constant: the food, much of which is grown or raised on local farms, is fantastic.

After lunch, hop into your car and follow Route 1 south for another delicious adventure. In town, check out artisan loaves at When Pigs Fly Bakery, a York-based bakery chain, and Wicked Whoopies, run by Gardiner-based Isamax Snacks.

Wilbur's of Maine Chocolate Confections is a sweet tooth's paradise. You can buy a chocolate L.L. Bean Boot here and watch it— or some other sweet treat—being made in the adjacent factory. Simply Divine Brownies recently opened an emporium inside Wilbur's, and across the parking lot, you'll find the small but well-stocked Freeport Cheese & Wine. It's clear from the selection that owner Eric Fullagar is passionate about what he does, and you'll be able to stock up on gifts for the foodies on your list. Nearby, find dining room inspiration at Chilton Furniture, or upgrade your cutlery at Freeport Knife Co.



Keep heading south, just a hair past the turnoff for I-95, and you'll find Freeport Wine Outlet, which sells closeout wines at discount prices. It's like a little slice of New Hampshire in Maine. To truly get into the holiday spirit, or spirits, as the case may be, take a tour of Cold River Vodka's distillery, where the award-winning potato vodka is made. That—and a tasting—are just what you need to keep shopping, and there's plenty of that on the south side of Freeport.



Ornithologists and amateurs flock to Wild Bird Supply for seed, feeders, and free bird-watching tours. Bookworms will love the Freeport Book Shoppe—flip through a leather-bound collection of the complete works of the Brontë sisters, every Stephen King title, and many local histories, along with contemporary paperbacks and popular fiction. Annie's Book Stop is another favorite for new and used books. The friendly, knowledgeable staff at Grace Robinson & Co. will have you in stitches— this luxurious little yarn shop is a haven for knitters and needlepointers. And speaking of luxury, Cuddledown of Maine is the only place I've seen a down comforter for \$13,000—on sale. Prices at the factory store, however, are a bit less jaw-dropping. Either way, super-posh bed linens, pajamas, and down comforters are all available for far less than retail.

After all this shopping, you and your wallet are probably wiped out. Recharge with a full-bodied shiraz, crab cakes, or a martini at Conundrum Wine Bistro, where owner Vincent Migliaccio pairs a creative menu with a mind-boggling selection of wines. Or, if you're craving dinner Southern-style, fill up on ribs, pulled pork, slaw, and great cornbread at Buck's Naked BBQ.

sunday

If you wake up and your feet are killing you, you need better shoes. If you wake up and your feet aren't killing you, you still need better shoes. And after all this shopping, why not treat yourself to a pair at Cole Haan's newly renovated shoetique. The company does call Maine home, and the California Modernist store design is as stunning as the footwear. If you didn't manage to cross everyone off your list,

there's still time to shop. But at lunchtime, take a break with a goat cheese panini and a glass of sangria at Petrillo's, a tiny bistro run by chef-owner Dom Petrillo. He trained in France, but his roots are Italian, and you may find tongue and Gorgonzola panini on the specials board along with pizzas and salads.

Afterward, head down Bow Street toward Wolfe's Neck Farm, a 632-acre farm open every day of the year. Nuzzle a goat kid, feed the sheep, and feel free to take home any free-range eggs you happen to find. The chickens here go where they please, and the whole experience is enough to make you go all "Green Acres." Though it's officially closed this time of year, Wolfe's Neck Woods State Park is nearby, and it's a quiet, out-of-the-way place for a stroll or an easy snowshoe where Casco Bay meets the Harraseeket River.

It's only a 10-minute drive from downtown, but it feels worlds away. And by the time you're finished wandering around Wolfe's Neck, you'll may just forget all that shopping. Until the credit card bill arrives.

Holiday events in Freeport

Visit freeportusa.com for a full list of events

Girlfriends' Getaway:

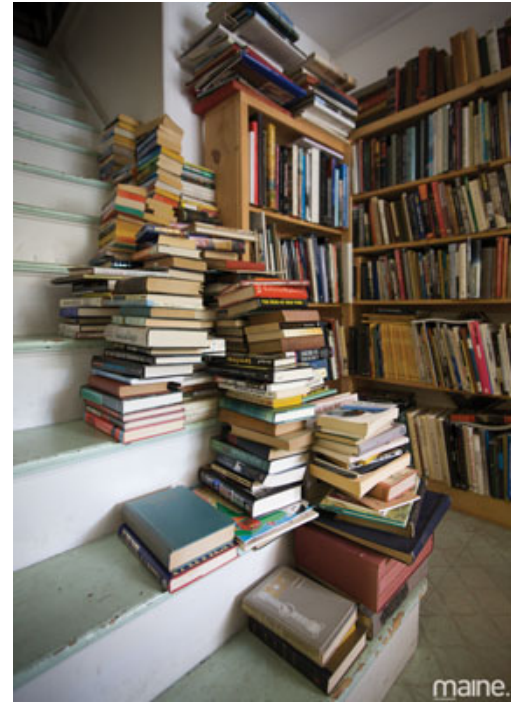
Nov. 13-15, lodging specials, a fashion show, outdoor recreation, and classes tailored to women.

Moonlight Madness:

Starting at midnight Nov. 27, shopping discounts and a celebration.

Sparkle Weekend:

Dec. 4-6, parade, lighting contest, art exhibits, and sales.



Freeport has many pet-friendly retailers and cafes. For overnight stays, check in to the Applewood Inn.

8 Holbrook St. | applewoodusa.com

Sea Bags is just one of many local retailers with Maine-made wares in the village center.

6 Bow St. | seabags.com

For the foodie on the list, stop at Cold River Vodka, Simply Divine Brownies, and Wilbur's of Maine Chocolate Confections

174 Lower Main St. | wilburs.com

Freeport and farming, really? In addition to Wolfe's Neck, Mitchell Ledge, and Laughing Stock farms, there's excellent farmstead cheeses at Freeport Cheese & Wine.

178 Lower Main St. | freeportwine.net

Headed south on Route 1? Browse the quirky book sections, like "Exaggerations," and don't miss the extensive postcard collection at the Freeport Book Shoppe.

176 Rte. 1 | freeportbookshoppe.com

Don't forget beer and wine at the Freeport Wine Outlet.

178 Lower Main St. | 207.865.0777

Or, for more immediate gratification, grab a barstool and a cocktail at Conundrum.

117 Route 1 | 207.865.0303

At Tripping Gnome Farm, the Munros raise over 70 huacaya alpacas a couple miles outside the village center.

64 Lupine Ln. | Freeport | trippinggnomefarm.com