

# TRAVEL & LEISURE

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## Pre-holiday Portland



Photo by PEGGY NEWLAND

The Portland Harbor Hotel lobby dressed up for the season.

By Peggy Newland  
For The Telegraph

There's something wonderful about walking a cobblestone street with twinkling lamplight and lit up holiday windows. Especially if you're bundled up in wool hat and mittens heading along quaint Market Street toward Custom House Wharf. The Portland harbor breeze is brisk, but there's comfort and warmth inside various shops, galleries, pubs, and bookstores along the Old Port.

I pop in Abacus for some lobster themed earrings, and then meander in and out of shops like Fat Face, Gus and Ruby Letterpress, Cool As A Moose, Waterlily and of course, Uncommon Paws for dog treats. Trees are a-glitter in decoration, lit up in deep purple, bright green, red, and clear white, and a huge evergreen seems covered by a thousand stars. A man plays a violin in the corner of Post Office Park and shoppers gather, listening. After a quick espresso at Coffee By Design, I head straight to The Portland Museum of Art. Open and empty, I take my time with Winslow Homer's "Open Window" and then ponder his stunning, collected wood engravings on woven paper. I'm alone with a Jasper Johns, a Renoir, more Winslow Homer watercolors, and the luminous portraits of John Singer Sargent. This museum is the perfect place to find calm in the frenzy of the season.

After all the shopping, and the artwork, it's time to check in for the evening. The Portland Harbor Hotel sits solidly in the center of this

Victorian-era, Old Port town. Decorated and ready for the rush of holiday dinners, weekend shopping sprees, the lobby bar is nautical cozy, with its roaring fireplace and overstuffed chairs facing floor to ceiling windows. Upstairs, it's a suite, with separate seating area, king bed with six feather pillows, deep soaking tub, and wooden crafts-style accents in red and blue.

My friend, Denise, meets me for dinner at Blue Fin, the hotel's locally caught seafood-to-seasonal table restaurant. Candlelight, an active raw bar crowd, and jazz make for an evening away. We start with the Chef's Choice of local cheeses, crostini, and chutney, paired with Old Fashions made with Bulleit Bourbon, bitters, orange peel and cherry. Sharing some appetizers of fennel seed crusted tuna loin, and Maine crab cake cured with lemon and grilled corn tartar, we sit back and watch the action. Denise chooses filet of beef with a Porcini mushroom rub while I head for the seared scallop with creamy cauliflower wild rice and charred, leak pesto. Of course, we finish with key lime pie and a fresh mango sorbet.

The next morning, I wake early so that I can grab one of the complimentary bicycles and ride around the Old Port. Rain is predicted, and the clouds are heavy against a red morning sky. Seagulls follow me as I bounce over cobblestones on the empty side streets of Portland. Lobster boats line Holyoke Wharf as I head past Harbor View Memorial Park toward Danforth Street and the Western Promenade. The "Western Prom" is a bluff-side 18-acre park lined with 19th Century mansions. Developed in 1836, with landscaping by the Olmsted Brothers, the Prom is a perfect place

for a morning ride. I glide past historical homes with stained glass windows, oak doors, wrought iron fences, widow's walks, and balconies. Zipping down Bramhall Street, I circle around Deering Oaks Park and stop at Holy Donut for a chocolate sea salt donut buzz before the long, slog back up State Street to Longfellow Square. It starts to rain just as I make it back to the hotel. I'm quickly soaked.

"You're brave," the concierge says.

"No one else out for a holiday bike ride?" I ask.

"Nope." He hands me a towel.

After a hot shower, a change into dry clothes, the room service breakfast is a welcome treat after the wet tour of Portland. The holiday season is just beginning, and this coastal getaway is a perfect present for a peaceful weekend.



Photo by PEGGY NEWLAND  
Another view of The Portland Harbor Hotel lobby dressed up for the season.

### IF YOU GO

#### PORTLAND HARBOR HOTEL

468 Fore Street, Portland, Maine. [www.portlandharborhotel.com](http://www.portlandharborhotel.com). 888-798-9090. Ask for the "Shopping State of Mind" special rate throughout December: two free cocktails combined with a shopping credit off your bill for up to \$30/night.

#### PORTLAND MUSEUM OF ART

7 Congress Square, Portland, Maine. [www.portlandmuseum.org](http://www.portlandmuseum.org). Winter hours: Wednesday through Sunday. Free on Friday evenings: 4-8 p.m. Upcoming exhibit: December 7- February 17: Richard Avedon Portraits, 1952-1970.

## Popular Christmas markets open again in Germany

HEIDELBERG, Germany (AP) — Germany's popular Christmas markets are back in business, and the Gluehwein is flowing in Heidelberg's old town - under the city's landmark castle.

Spread across several city squares, Heidelberg's Christmas market offers some 140 stalls along with an ice rink and a carousel for children. The market is open well into the evening through Dec. 22.

Christmas markets large and small are a feature of most German cities during Advent. Heidelberg's is one of the most picturesque, with the illuminated castle presiding over the festivities.

Traditional offerings include gingerbread hearts, often emblazoned with Christmas messages.



Photo by MICHAEL PROBST/The Associated Press  
In this Tuesday, Dec. 4, photo people pay a visit to the traditional Christmas market in Heidelberg, Germany. The Christmas market in the Old Town of Heidelberg underneath the famous castle is one of most picturesque Christmas markets in southern Germany.