

# Still time to enjoy summer pleasures

**Travel** | Take a swim in Kennebunkport hotel's saltwater pool, White Mountain Hotel's hot tub.

By PEGGY NEWLAND  
Correspondent

It's always a wistful thing when the cicadas call out in September. There's a chill late in the day, one that brings out the sweaters or the need for

## ONE-TANK TRIP

for one last fling with summer before you're married again to winter. I've found two places that prolong the taste of summer and leave you relaxed and ready for a change of seasons. One by the sea and another in the mountains.

### By the sea

"It's like we're floating sea-horses," my daughter says as we bob around in the salt water pool at the Colony Resort in Kennebunkport, Maine.

Crystal-clear blue skies match the warm waters of the pool, and it's September perfect. No humidity, no crowds, sea breezes and a pool that allows - even encourages - laziness. You simply float.

Established in 1653, Kennebunkport was historically a shipbuilding and fishing village. Kennebunk, a Native American word meaning "long cut bank," describes the jagged ledges and promontories jutting straight into the sea. With Mousam and Kennebunk Rivers flowing directly to the Gulf of Maine, Kennebunkport was ideally located to make maritime history in the early 19th century.

According to the Kennebunkport Historical Society, there were more than 100 vessels built in the Kennebunk River Yards per year. Due to shipbuilding success during this time period, Kennebunkport became the second richest community in the state. Many of the mansions, owned by ship captains, owners and builders, can be seen today close to the town center, aptly named Dock Square.

Wrapped in towels and lying on cushioned lawn chairs, my daughter and I feel the luxury of view and history. The Colony is situated on the Kennebunk River and the tip of St. Ann's Point and has constant southwesterly breezes. That early afternoon, the sea breeze blows warm, and St. Ann's Point is dotted with bright sailboats and lobster buoys. The sound of crashing surf and smell of sea rose is mesmerizing.

Summer homes and seaside resorts became popular in the 1870s along the coast of Maine. City dwellers came to soak up the fresh air and salt water as a tonic for good health and relaxation. The Colony is one such resort and is on the National

Register of Historic Places. Decked out in white and bright red, it sits on its promontory in sun-splashed elegance.

After our swim, it makes sense to sit on the expansive, wraparound veranda. Wicker is abundant. Floral prints, soft cushions, pillows, views of organic gardens, meandering paths and a putting green filled with children in sailor suits gives us instant vacation. I feel as if I'm living "The Great Gatsby." The architecture and ambience is beach-washed. Open mid-May through late October, there's a sense of effortless relaxation. With no televisions and game room filled with Parcheesi and Cribbage, it's a walk back in time.

From The Colony, it's an easy stroll to downtown Kennebunkport.

Kennebunkport is the "summer Whitehouse" of two past presidents: George Herbert Walker and George W. Bush. Haley and I first stroll along the coast on Ocean Avenue. We pass the gorgeous stone spires of St. Ann's Episcopal Church and the famous "Dark Shadows" house on our way to Walker's Point, where the Bush compound sits almost on top of the ocean. Tourists take photos of the famous "cigarette boat" and wait, binoculars in hand, for a long distance view of any one political on the grounds. We only see gulls flying overhead, and, on our way past, we wave at the security guard.

Dock Square bursts with flowers and people walking dogs. Everyone seems to have an ice cream cone. There's a seaside district of shops, art galleries, seafood restaurants, ice cream stands and chowder houses.

That evening, with dusk turning the sea pink, dinner is served by open windows.

"No mess," Haley tells me, when the Lazy Lobster (steamed lobster out of its shell) arrives. "No bib."

I dig into a Wild Salmon Martini, two pan-seared filets drenched in white wine, olive, vermouth veloute and sauteed baby spinach.

"Three more days until school starts," I say.

"Don't remind me," she says. So we clink our water glasses to the late summer night and watch light turn to stars.

### Up in the mountains

This year is already spectacular in the mountains. A wet July, combining with a sunny August, and there's a perfect recipe for color.

North Conway is smack dab in the middle of leaf peeping and activities. There's the usual shopping outlets but also golf, climbing, kayaking, fly fishing, biking and, of course, hiking.

We choose the White

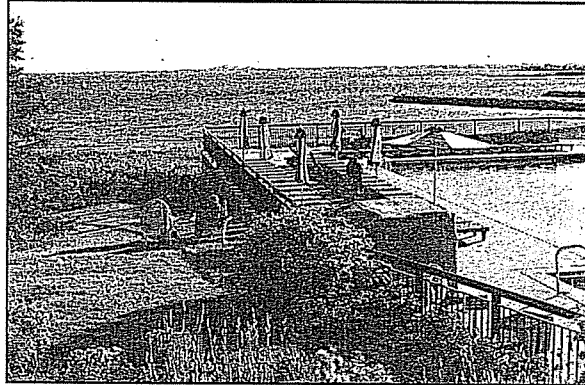


Photo courtesy of THE COLONY HOTEL

Guests enjoy the view at The Colony Hotel in Kennebunkport.

Mountain Hotel because it is adjacent to the White Mountain National Forest, and its view is one of the best in town. There's also a heated outdoor pool with expansive views toward Cranmore, Peaked and Hurricane mountains.

"This is great," my daughter says, jumping directly into the pool.

There's a hot tub bubbling nearby that has my name on it. Tullamore Tavern serves light sandwiches and cocktails if you choose the view over swimming. If I were an artist, it would make perfect sense to bring sketchbooks, water colors and an easel.

In fact, North Conway's rugged terrain became popular in the 19th century with more than 400 artists who painted exclusively in the White Mountains. They came for the wild rivers, the hidden streams, the weathered peaks and wide valleys. Known collectively as "White Mountain Art," these paintings can be seen at the Currier Museum and Museum of Fine Arts.

Benjamin Champney, a New Hampshire native, moved to North Conway in 1853 and spent his life painting Mount Washington Valley. According to Champney's writings about the area and his love of the area, North Conway became "the pet valley of landscape painters. There (were) always a dozen or more here during the sketching season, and you can hardly glance over the meadows, in any direction, without seeing one of their white umbrellas shining in the sun."

By the 1850s, North Conway had arguably become the first artist colony the United States. Now it is the mecca for climbers.

Climbers come for the world renown ledges that rise in jagged peaks around the town. White Horse Ledge sits directly above the resort like a craggy sentinel wanting some company. Cathedral Ledge is down the road next to Echo Lake State Park.

The 500-foot Cathedral cliff overlooks Echo Lake and the village. It can also be seen from downtown Conway Village. For the less adventuresome,

Cathedral Ledge has a road to the summit. You don't have to put on gear to clamber up granite, you simply have to turn the ignition key.

The view from the White Mountain Resort's pool deck is grand, so we forget to move. We'll save the hiking and exploring for the next day and relax.

That evening, we view the town of Conway as light loosens the leaves. Leaves fly in multi-colored array as we dine at the Ledges Dining Room.

I'm finally letting go of summer. Allowing myself to head toward the late fall and long winter.

"When do you think ski season will start?" Haley asks.