

Maine’s Rugged Beauty Inspires Creative Expression through the Arts

From the crashing waves on its rocky coast to the deep serenity of the North Woods, Maine’s unspoiled natural beauty has served as a wellspring for artistic imagination and creativity for centuries. This legacy is apparent in the abundance of venues where world-class musical performances, dance, theater, and visual art can be experienced and appreciated in Maine.

VISUAL ARTS

The works of acclaimed Maine artists and other notable artists who traveled here for creative inspiration are on display in galleries and museums statewide.

Maine Art Museum Trail

- **The Portland Museum of Art** is highly regarded for its Winslow Homer collection, as well as an extensive collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist works, and exhibitions of work by leading contemporary Maine artists. The museum continues to grow and has been enhanced by the opening of the Winslow Homer Studio on Prouts Neck, the installation of long-time Maine resident Robert Indiana’s monumental “Seven” sculpture installed in the museum plaza at 7 Congress Square, the opening the David E. Shaw & Family Sculpture Park, and the multi-year project called *Your Museum, Reimagined*, which includes new participatory space and new interpretive and educational materials, self-guided tours and multimedia stations.
- **The Farnsworth Museum** in downtown Rockland houses an extensive collection of works by great names in American art from the 18th century through the present, including the nation’s second-largest collection of works by 20th-century sculptor Louise Nevelson. The Wyeth Center on the museum campus is one of only two centers in the country dedicated to all three generations of Wyeths—N.C., Andrew and James—and museum holdings include the Olsen House in Cushing made famous by the painting “Christina’s World.”
- **The Ogunquit Museum of American Art** overlooking the rocky Atlantic coast houses a permanent collection of important artwork from the late 1800s through the present, and was dubbed the “most beautiful little museum in the world” by Francis Henry Taylor of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- **The Colby College Museum of Art** in Waterville showcases important American art from the 18th century to the present and displays a significant collection of works by contemporary artist Alex Katz. The Alford-Lunder Family Pavilion, a 26,000-square-foot addition, accommodates a growing permanent collection, as well as an education and outreach program and art studios
- **The Bowdoin College Museum of Art** on the college’s Brunswick campus has a permanent collection of more than 20,000 objects that range in scope from the art of antiquity to the present day. Its [collections](#) of decorative arts, paintings, sculpture, and works on paper are among the most comprehensive of any college museum in the country. The museum is open to the public free of charge.
- **The Bates College Museum of Art** holdings include the Marsden Hartley Memorial Collection. Early on the collection focused on acquiring works by Maine artists and artists of national and international significance working in Maine. The collection has grown and evolved to collect more expansively and in ways that support curriculum across disciplines, including samples of

contemporary Chinese art, pre-Columbian art, Japanese woodblock prints, and African art, to name a few areas.

- **Zillman Art Museum** is located in the historic Norumbega Hall in downtown Bangor. Exhibits are designed to promote the arts with a particular focus on the modern and the contemporary. Works by artists with significant ties to Maine include Berenice Abbott, Richard Estes, Winslow Homer, Alex Katz, John Marin, Emily Muir, Neil Welliver and Andrew Wyeth.
- **Monhegan Museum of Art and History** is dedicated to preserving, documenting and exhibiting material that conveys the unique and appealing life of Monhegan Island. It is the most recent addition to the Maine Art Museum Trail. The island has been inspiration to generations of artists, including Edward Hopper, Rockwell Kent and Jamie Wyeth. The museum is housed in the historic Monhegan Light Station.

Arts Centers

- **Maine Center for Contemporary Art** in downtown Rockland is dedicated to advancing contemporary art in Maine through exhibits and educational programs.
- **The Tides Institute and Museum of Art** promotes the arts and artists in Eastport with exhibits and educational programs that advance the community as an innovative and creative hub.
- **The Langlais Sculpture Preserve** sits on the 90-acre homestead of renowned Maine artist Bernard Langlais in Cushing. He created more than 3,000 indoor and outdoor works of art during his lifetime and 12 large wooden sculptures were restored on site.

Artist Colonies

Maine has served and continues to serve as a home or home away from home to many celebrated artists:

- **Monhegan Island** is home to a 150-year-old art colony that has inspired works by George Bellows, Edward Hopper, Rockwell Kent, Jamie Wyeth and others.
- **Perkins Cove** in Ogunquit was once considered one of America's most distinguished summer art colonies thanks to painter Charles H. Woodbury and the many artists who traveled here for more than 30 summers to attend his art school.

Native American Art

- Native American art in Maine, including exceptional basketry, is the state's oldest art form dating back thousands of years. The tradition is kept alive today by the **Maine Indian Basket Makers Alliance** and can be seen at the **Abbe Museum** (Maine's only Smithsonian Affiliate) and at many marketplaces that take place throughout the year, including the Annual Native American Festival in Bar Harbor, **Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village**, Common Ground Country Fair and Annual Maine Indian Basketmakers Sale at the Hudson Museum. Prior to COVID-19, the Abbe Museum held an annual Indian Market, a three-day, juried Indian arts show drawing artists from around the country, as well as featuring Maine Wabanaki artists. In 2021, the event was hosted virtually.

PERFORMING ARTS

Dance

- **The Bates Dance Festival** at Bates College in Lewiston, which brings together an international community of choreographers, dancers, and performing arts students during its month-long performance series each summer.

Music

Maine's two symphony orchestras are well regarded in New England and beyond. During the summer months, they take the performances outdoors:

- **The Bangor Symphony Orchestra**, founded in 1896, is one of the oldest community orchestras in the nation. Performances are held at the Collins Center for the Arts at University of Maine, Orono. The orchestra hosts an annual summer pops concert in historic Kingfield.
- **The Portland Symphony Orchestra** is an 85-member orchestra that offers a variety of performances, from pops to Mozart. Its home base is the 1,900-seat Merrill Auditorium in Portland's historic City Hall, but the orchestra also hosts a series of outdoor pops concerts in the summertime. Among the most popular performances are the orchestra's Independence Day "Patriotic Pops" on the Portland waterfront, and the annual "Magic of Christmas."

Maine also has a longstanding tradition of world-class summer chamber music festivals:

- **The Bowdoin International Music Festival** at Bowdoin College in Brunswick draws renowned classical musicians from around the world for six weeks of instruction and performance.
- The historic Rockport Opera House in Rockport is host to **Bay Chamber Concerts**, founded by musician brothers Andrew and Thomas Wolf.
- In Blue Hill, **The Kneisel Hall Chamber Music Festival** offers a 10-week series of public concerts presented by world-renowned faculty and guest artists in the historic Franz Kneisel Concert Hall.
- The **Ossipee Valley Music Festival** is held each July in the foothills of the White Mountains. This family-friendly festival includes four days of children's activities, farm-to-table food, yoga, craft beer, swimming, camping, and music across several genres.
- During the **Portland Bach Experience**, hear the world's finest artists perform musical gems of the Baroque era in the picturesque stone chapel of the Episcopal Church of Saint Mary in Falmouth and intimate locations throughout Portland.

Summer Theater

Maine has long been a popular retreat for urbanites looking to escape the summer heat. These visitors have needed a way to entertain themselves on summer evenings. Summer stock theater became the answer and still entertains today.

- **Acadia Repertory Theatre**: This 148-seat intimate performance space showcases a diverse range of shows, from Shakespeare to Neil Simon.
- **Carousel Music Theatre**: This venue combines comedic performances with a delicious dining experience.
- **The Deertrees Theatre & Cultural Center** in Harrison, founded in the 1930s by noted opera coach Enrica Clay Dillon, presents three theater productions and dozens of concerts during the season.
- **Hackmatack Playhouse**: This former farmhouse has an intriguing history (involving two brothers, one of whom decided to saw the house in two) and a just-as-interesting present, with a selection of shows and bison farm on-site.
- Operating since 1901, Madison's **Lakewood Theater** is the oldest summer theater in America.

Professional Theater

Maine's long-standing tradition of theater has moved beyond summer, with many professional theater companies performing year-round across the state. Some, like the Maine State Music Theatre, specialize in musicals. Others, like the Theater at Monmouth, are renowned for Shakespeare.

- **The Ogunquit Playhouse**, founded by Broadway showman Walter Hartwig and his wife Maude in 1933, bills itself as "America's Foremost Summer Theatre." It has grown from a 10-week summer theater to a regional theater producing between five and seven musicals annually.
- **Penobscot Theatre Company**: The only year-round professional regional theater in northern Maine, this venue has a rich 47-year history that continues today with classic and modern performances, as well as education for children, teens and adults. It owns and operates the historic **Bangor Opera House**, the last remaining opera house in what was once deemed the "Little Broadway of the North."

- **Maine State Music Theatre** (seasonal): Named Theatre of the Decade and numerous other award titles, MSMT was ambitiously opened in the 1950s by founder Victoria Crandall during a time when the field was dominated by men. Since then, it has grown far beyond its mid-coast roots, attracting Broadway and off-Broadway actors and producers to Maine. The extraordinary in-house production team transforms the stage into new and thrilling worlds.
- **Public Theatre**: Voted Maine’s best theatre by Down East Magazine seven years in a row, this theater performs contemporary Broadway plays and more, featuring professional actors from New York to Los Angeles.
- **Theater at Monmouth** (seasonal): Cumston Hall, a National Register-listed building, houses this innovative theater. With its contemporary approach to Shakespeare and other classic plays, you’ll see the classics in a new light. Fifty seasons and more than 350 productions are in its three-month summer repertory season (in addition to fall and spring tours), all aiming to forge modern-day connections with, and appreciation for, great literature.
- **Good Theater**: Alive with entertainment almost every night of the week, the Good Theater allows you to experience live music, theater, dance, comedy, cabaret, performance art and more.
- **Portland Stage**: Maine’s largest fully professional, nonprofit theater features a mainstage of seven shows that play to over 50,000 people annually, an experimental studio theater, new works and affiliate artist events.
- **Mad Horse Theatre Company**: This intimate 50-seat black box theater has a reputation for innovative interpretations of cutting-edge contemporary plays and dramatic classics.

FILM

Maine film festivals include opportunities for theater goers to see some exciting new work being produced by Maine directors or in Maine locations, while enjoying time in Maine’s “vacationland” themselves. Starting in 2020, many of these festivals had virtual opportunities for viewing, as well. Here are a few:

- **Maine International Film Festival** takes place each July in Waterville.
- **Camden International Film Festival** takes place each September in Camden.
- **Maine Jewish Film Festival** takes place each April in Portland.

ARTS EDUCATION

Maine’s world-class centers for learning include Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, Celebration Barn Theater, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Watershed Center for Ceramic Arts, Maine Media Workshop, the Center for Furniture Craftmanship and Wooden Boat School. Each of these places has deeply influenced the arts landscape that makes Maine what is today and is a very important part of our art story as a state. Each place has public programming and, in most cases, opportunities for learning vacations.

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Media Contact:
 Charlene Williams
cwilliams@marshallpr.com