

# Beachside Writers Retreat

By Peggy Newland

The poet, John Masefield, wrote, “I must go down to the seas again...to the lonely sea and the sky...” and I can’t think of a better reason to take a retreat to the sea, especially if I am in seaside cottage in Ogunquit, Maine. Add in a bicycle ride to the Ogunquit Playhouse for a matinee, an afternoon visit to the Ogunquit Museum of American Art, and multiple days on the beach, and you have an ideal writerly getaway in an idyllic location.

If you have time to write. The Dunes on the Waterfront is a charming beachside gem located in a nook of Ogunquit, that is secluded, but walkable, to all adventures “in-town.” Think white-washed cottages, picket fences holding back seaside flowers, screened porches, personalized firepits, and nautically elegant interiors that urge you to recline and relax by gaslit fireplaces. My cottage is named “Lookout”, and it looks east over a marsh toward “the quiet part” of Footbridge Beach.

“Take a kayak or stand-up board across the river inlet at high tide and you’ll basically have part of the beach to yourself,” Lynn, one of the friendly staff, informs me, as she hands me a glass of welcome champagne.

I pack a picnic from my “cute as a button” kitchenette, and take a kayak over the tidal river, beaching the boat, and hiking up a boardwalk path to a wide beach full of white sand. It’s quiet, with seagulls my only companions. No crowds, no radios blaring. Just me and “the white clouds flying... the flung spray, the blown spume...running tide...” and the yellow and white striped Dunes chair, picnic basket, and extra-large towel. I bring my notebook for writing.

I spend the afternoon dipping in and out of the sea and staring at the notebook before napping in the sun. Then, I kayak along the Ogunquit River past crowded Footbridge Beach and into the inlets near Moody/Wells. (Note: Watch the tides here as there’s a limited window of opportunity for paddling.) I come upon some wading egrets and herons, watch a hawk glide, and see a couple of deer leaping through marsh grasses, before I take the tide back to the Dunes. That night, I dine on take-out burritos by the firepit and stare up at stars. Complimentary s’mores are offered and so I load up on chocolate and marshmallows before bed.

The next morning, after enjoying a “left on my screen porch in a picnic basket” continental breakfast of homemade blueberry muffins and strong coffee, I join in on lawn-side yoga behind the pool. Afterward, I jump into the pool and enjoy another cup of coffee on a sunbed underneath a shade umbrella. I open the notebook and write at the serene pool.

That afternoon, I grab a complimentary bicycle and head into town for a matinee at the Ogunquit Playhouse. One of the last remaining “summer stock” theaters in the nation, this classic beauty with garden party appeal is on the National Register for Historic Places. Intimate and comfortable, I luck out with day-of tickets for “High Society” and enjoy the musical with plenty of happy theater lovers. With 21 weeks of shows, May through October, there’s room for everyone. The garden bar is a highlight before the zip home on the bicycle for another dinner by the firepit.

The next morning, I wake with the sunrise and take a walk over the sandy riverbed to the beach. Low tide allows for gallivanting along the coves and up through the dunes for a private swim in the Atlantic. A seal glides past. The sky is pink, and the waves roll and afterward, I enjoy my thermos of coffee and another muffin as I watch seagulls standing like sentinels. I ride back to the cottage on the Dunes pontoon boat at high tide and order a picnic from the front desk for an artful afternoon at Ogunquit Museum of American Art. The 3-acre sculpture park is lush with summer flowers and sitting nooks overlooking Perkins Cove. With over 18 named gardens, I pick my favorite—Ocean View Garden—for the picnic and some pen on paper creativity. Then, I spend time inside the museum, with a favorite—Henry Strater’s Ogunquit and open my gaze to work from Gisela McDaniel.



Go down to the “lonely sea and sky,” and find your “quiet sleep and a sweet dream” at the Dunes on the Water-

front. A personal getaway of art, theater, bicycling, exploring, writing, and sunrise swims with seals.

## if you go

The Dunes on the Waterfront. 518 Main Street, Ogunquit.  
[www.dunesonthewaterfront.com](http://www.dunesonthewaterfront.com).

Unique cottages, elegantly outfitted with seaside calm. “Savor & Save” Fall specials include breakfast, and all amenities for outdoor fun and quiet contemplation. Champagne upon check in.

