



BIDDEFORD, MAINE

Just 18 miles south of Portland, this Maine mill town is weaving a new reputation as a gourmet getaway. **By Madeline Billis**

OVER THE PAST DECADE, Portland, Maine, has cemented itself as one of the foodie capitals of America. But it's only recently that its neighbor to the south, Biddeford, has blossomed into a destination in its own right. Towering brick buildings once home to busy mills now house award-winning bars, restaurants, breweries, and distilleries. Throw in a hip new hotel, and you've got yourself a delicious treat in the form of a weekend getaway.

EAT

With such a long list of new restaurant openings, it'll behoove you to start at the beginning: breakfast. Sit down to map out your plans with some Scandinavian pastries

A view of the lively Biddeford RiverWalk.

and a Time & Tide Coffee pour-over at **Jackrabbit Café**. Go early to get a warm *tebirkes*, a Danish coated in poppy seeds with almond filling. It'll hold you over as you wait for a stool at **Palace Diner's** 15-seat counter, a Biddeford mainstay that was renovated in 2021. Housed inside one of the last two Polard boxcars in the country, it has both the charm and menu of a bygone era: Go for the old-fashioned tuna sandwich on griddled challah, and you'll have no regrets.

The languid hours between brunch and dinner necessitate a drink. Arrive thirsty to the Pepperell Mill Campus, home to two prime spots to wet your whistle. First, try a gin and tonic flight (including one with Bittermilk's artisanal charred grapefruit and sea-salt tonic) at **Round Turn Distilling**. Then head down the hall to **Banded Brewing Co.**, Biddeford's first brewery, for a pint—perhaps a sour ale with black currant, cherry, and cranberry. For dinner, make reservations at **Elda**,



where you can tuck into a seasonally inspired tasting menu from James Beard–nominated chef Bowman Brown that changes every night. Looking for something a bit lighter? Call ahead for a table at **Magnus on Water**, a cocktail bar with small plates that opened in 2020. After a Strawberry Moon negroni and some scallop *crudo*, close out with a sampling of amaro.

SHOP

You can't walk a few hundred feet in Biddeford without having the option to grab a beer, a coffee, or both. This is certainly the case at **Elements**, a cozy bookstore, coffee shop, and bar stocking used books and Maine-themed titles. Continue the thoughtful browsing at

GETTING THERE

Biddeford is a quick hop, skip, and jump up I-95: It'll take you an hour and a half to get there from downtown Boston.



From top, a fresh oyster from Elda; the chic accommodations at the Lincoln Hotel; Woooven's storefront; coffee from the Jackrabbit Café.

Biddeford Vintage Market, a spacious spot on Main Street packed with antiques, quirky art, and other one-of-a-kind objects. Nearby **Woooven** offers handwoven bags, scarves, wraps, pillows, and more, all made from recycled textiles sourced from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. And keep the foodie party going long after you've left Biddeford by making a take-home basket for yourself filled with Maine cheeses from **Nibblesford**; natural wine from **Lorne Wine**; and a pre-packed pint from **Sweet-cream Dairy**.

PLAY

Biddeford's mill-town roots are evident everywhere you look. Take a leisurely stroll along the **Biddeford RiverWalk** at Mechanics Park to hear water whooshing over the Saco River's dam, which once powered the bordering factories. You can get a better sense of the town's history at the **Biddeford Mills Museum**; it reflects the lives of the people who powered the local textile industry. For a dose of natural beauty, take a short ride to **East Point Audubon Sanctuary**, a scenic wildlife refuge at the end of a large tidal pool. A short loop trail offers views of the rocky coastline, the water, and plenty of shorebirds.

STAY

Flitting from bar to restaurant to bar is tiring—squeeze in a few hours of shuteye at the ultra-stylish **Lincoln Hotel**. Another buzzy establishment housed inside a former mill, its 33 rooms debuted in September. But before hitting the hay, head downstairs to **Batson River Brewing & Distilling**, the brand's newest outpost, for craft beers, craft cocktails, and elevated pub fare. In the morning, wake up with a few quick laps in the rooftop pool.