Headline: Kennebunkport charms guests upon arrival

Deckhead: Quaint Maine beach town exudes beauty, tranquility

Harboring political royalty is synonymous with Kennebunkport. The intimate Maine town plucked from a Norman Rockwell painting conjures images of former President George H.W. Bush.

Walker Point Estate is where the 41st president spent much of his childhood. He also visited his family’s compound for summer retreats during his time in the Oval Office. The complex flexes its muscles into the Atlantic Ocean and is a symbol in a coastal city that sits in the southeast corner of the state.

The compound is guarded by secret service agents and is best viewed from a distance. It’s closed to the public but photos will capture its indelible ambiance.

Kennebunkport, meanwhile, is more than a haven for former U.S. presidents. Sea-centric bliss is abundant. Extravagant summer homes and sailboats populate a rugged shoreline to create the ideal north Atlantic setting.

Local fishermen and lobstermen deliver the morning’s catch to open-air cafes and restaurants. The scent of fresh seafood wafts through the air.

Local artists claim their spots on the piers of Dock Square – Kennebunkport’s hub of entertainment. Nestled in the center of town, the neighborhood is comprised of boutiques and art galleries. Patio cafes offer the best people-watching perches, as well as mouthwatering lobster rolls and other fresh catches.

Artists have spent years creating masterful works, using canvases to describe a New England town blessed with breathtaking surroundings. It’s a beach town that offers more than pristine sand and sunshine. It’s a backdrop to the Atlantic Ocean, offering a hallmark setting few northeastern towns can match.

The best time to visit Kennebunkport is between June and October. Average temperatures climb into the high 70s during the summer months, providing a warm yet comfortable climate. Beach bums can snuggle up to a new book with the soothing sounds of waves breaking onto the shore.

Cape Porpoise is a fishing village a few miles from Dock Square. Visitors can watch fishermen hauling in traps and entering and exiting the harbor from their boats at Cape Porpoise Pier. A handful of shops, galleries and seafood shacks are worth browsing, and Goat Island Light, one of Maine’s oldest lighthouses, also is nearby.

There is no better way to view Kennebunkport than from the water. The sights are magnificent, whether it’s by kayak or paddleboard, or by sailboat or lobster-boat tours. The different perspective enhances the town’s setting.

Seashore Trolley Museum, founded in 1939, has amassed more than 250 trolleys, buses and subway cars from around the globe. Visitors can learn about the history of public transportation and take rides in select cars.

Built in 1887, St. Ann’s Church overlooks the ocean and Kennebunk River. It’s a Kennebunkport historic site that is lauded for its stone façade, stained-glass windows and surrounding gardens. Guests won’t need to spend much time there to capture its grace. It’s a must-see spot, nonetheless.

Kennebunkport could be considered an overlooked coastal destination that deserves presidential respect.

It’s certainly first in its class.

Cutline: SHOW THE WAY – A lighthouse watches over the Atlantic Ocean off the shore of Kennebunkport. Image: Claire. Adobe Stock.