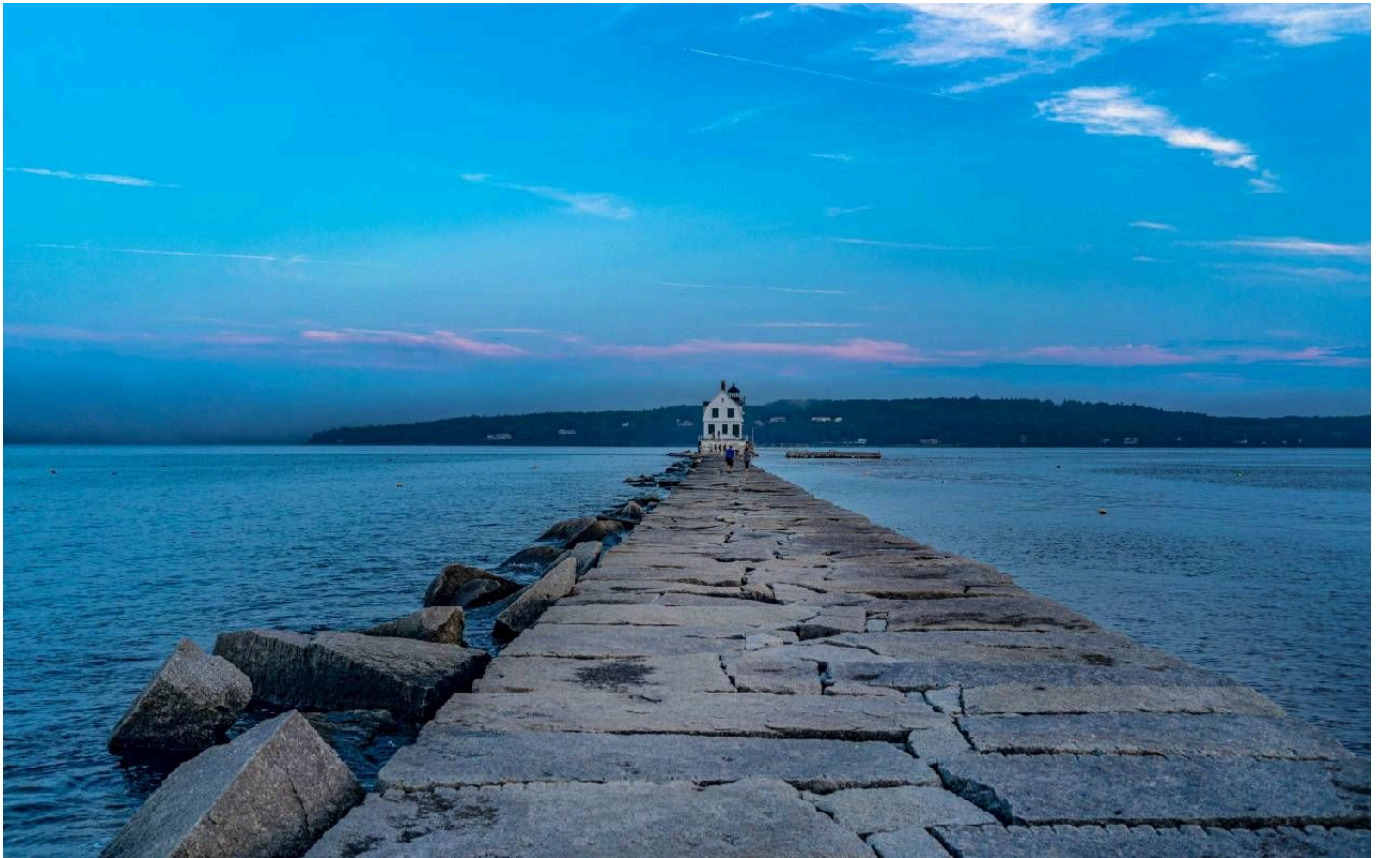


Epic Escapes for Art Lovers

These destinations are under-the-radar spots for art lovers

By [Jenny Wisniewski](#) | July 17, 2024 | [Travel and Adventures](#)

Have a thirst for art exploration this summer? The Art Institute of Chicago or Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York may be on your radar. Journeying instead to an understated destination can provide a window to the world without the parking hassles, crowds and expense of a big city.



Rockland Breakwater Lighthouse, Rockland, Maine | Credit: Benjamin R.

The following destinations are under-the-radar spots for art lovers. Located in smaller communities, each provides the opportunity for a taste of regional culture. Each offers additional unique attractions and recreational opportunities. Several are former homes of famous American artists, with

collections you will not find in big-city museums. And did I mention that all are coastal destinations?

Recommended

Jessica Fletcher's Cabot Cove

The author's father wrote many 'Murder, She Wrote' tie-in novels and knew the importance of place to storytelling. Even a fictional place like Cabot Cove.

Rockland, Maine

Rockland, Maine wears a mottled veneer. Beyond its working harbor, the village's houses and shops sit windswept and weathered. While some have been renovated to a pristine condition, others stand oblivious to their facades rubbed raw, leaving the town with a feeling imperfect, comfortable, and authentic. For decades, artists have been drawn to the charm of this Midcoast Maine harbor town as well as the natural beauty surrounding it.

Molly Mugler is one of them. She exhibits her watercolors and oils at Art Space Gallery, a co-op of 16 local artists. Rockland is a vibrant artist community for good reason, she believes.

**"It's monochromatic,
but it's gorgeous."**

"It's got the ocean, the sea, the boats.

It's got boat buildings, fishing and lobstering. It's got mountains and meadows and so many islands and inlets and coves and bays," Mugler

said. "It has a short summer season, but it's got its iconic lupines, and the winter is just gorgeous. You know, it's monochromatic, but it's gorgeous."

Art Space Gallery sits shoulder to shoulder with over 20 other galleries, most along Rockland's Main Street. Hard to believe that a town of only about 7,000 year-round residents would have any space left for restaurants,

but Rockland offers stellar dining options too. This includes both James Beard winners like Primo and casual spots like The Claw, an order-at-the-window quintessential lobster shack overlooking the harbor.



Main Street Rockland, Maine | Credit: Jenny Wisniewski

Rockland is not just a twenty-first-century mecca for contemporary artists. It has long appealed to creatives, one of whom is legendary. Andrew Wyeth, twentieth-century realist painter, drew much of his inspiration from the Maine landscapes he viewed while vacationing as a child and later residing as an adult.

Today the permanent collection at Rockland's Farnsworth Art Museum and Wyeth Center holds works from three generations of Wyeths including Andrew. The museum also holds thousands of works created by American artists like Edward Hopper and Georgia O'Keefe. And it isn't Rockland's only art museum. Within walking distance is a second notable collection: the Center for Maine Contemporary Art.

Additionally, Rockland offers several other points of interest including The Maine Lighthouse Museum and 18 lighthouses within a 40-mile radius of the

town. Rockland is also home to a half dozen Maine Windjammers, historic schooners originally used for commerce and now employed for recreation. Multi-day trips are available aboard the wooden vessels, which cruise around the uninhabited islands and quiet fishing villages of Penobscot Bay.

Ludington, Michigan

Much like Rockland, Ludington lays claim to a renowned American artist. Perched on the eastern shore of Lake Michigan, Ludington is located about halfway up the pinky side of the state shaped like a mitten. Known for its picturesque sand dunes and lighthouses, it is easy to understand why the adult Manierre Dawson, considered the pioneer of America's abstract art, settled at a Ludington fruit farm next to his childhood vacation home.

Today, Manierre's cubist-style artwork can be viewed in prestigious, big-city museums. It can also be viewed at Ludington's West Shore Community College. In fact, the school's Manierre Dawson Gallery holds 10 of his works — one of the few to hold multiple pieces.

In addition to painting, Dawson was also a sculptor, and a nine-foot bronze replica of one of his pieces is the newest addition to the Mason County Sculpture Trail. It is one of 20 large-scale, bronze sculptures that illustrate the area's history and culture. Nine stand at Waterfront Sculpture Park, a peninsula park sandwiched between two marinas. To make an afternoon or evening of it, tasty picnic fixings (and bike and paddleboard rentals) are available at nearby Pier to Pier Picnics. Trails End Baking Company is another convenient option.

A second art trail opened in 2023 — the cARTier Trail. (This one is on a literal trail.) The mile-long path meanders through the woods, and its paved surface makes it wheelchair accessible. The large-scale exhibits are reproductions of paintings created by local artists.

When ready to head indoors, downtown Ludington is home to several galleries, most notably one featuring outdoor photography created by a

"I think as a community we really embrace the full definition of art."

father-and-son team (Todd & Brad Reed Photography) and a second featuring work from nationally known artists working in a variety of mediums (Art by Mary Case Gallery & Studio.)

Want to take some time to dabble yourself while in Ludington? Mary Case offers classes in clay and wheel throwing. The Ludington Area Center for the Arts, located in an old church, offers a changing schedule of workshops in addition to exhibits and musical performances.

"I think as a community we really embrace the full definition of art. There's a lot of free public art installations with the sculpture park and murals throughout the community. Also very popular are [fine arts fairs](#) and live music," said Brandy Miller, Executive Director for the Ludington Area Convention & Visitors Bureau.

While in Ludington leave yourself enough time to enjoy the area's outdoor pleasures. Michigan is known for its sand dunes, the largest collection of dunes on a freshwater coast in the world. Ludington State Park is a great place to experience some of them. Also of note in Ludington is the S.S. Badger, a steamship that ferries passengers across the lake to the port city of Manitowoc, Wisconsin.

Most Popular

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- 2. Downsizing a Tiny House | Money & Policy**
- 3. Declutter Your Parent's Home While They Can Join In | History and Memories**

4. The Impact of My Troubled Brother's Life and Death | **Grief and Loss**

The Outer Banks, North Carolina

A siren call to artists, the Outer Banks are known for their large parks, wildlife refuges, and 120 miles of seashore. In fact, towards the southern end of these barrier islands lies Cape Hatteras National Seashore, identified as the United States' first National Seashore in 1937. Nearby Frisco, a tiny village on Hatteras Island, captures the island's natural beauty within art galleries like Red Drum Pottery and Painting, owned by Rhonda Bates and Wes Lassiter, a husband and wife team who have been creating art in Frisco for over 25 years.

The town of Nags Head, about 60 miles north of Hatteras Island, is another hub of artistic activity. Visitors love to browse Gallery Row Arts District, home to popular spots like Seaside Art Gallery, one of the largest private galleries in the Southeast. Seagreen Gallery, similar in name but quite different in its collection, specializes in art created from recycled objects of just about any kind — antique furniture, farm objects, sweaters, barn wood, bottles, windows and much more.

Less than 10 miles from Nags Head, Manteo is home to Dare Arts Council, a nonprofit organization that encourages the arts in Dare County. Inside the space, located in a historic courthouse, the organization exhibits the work of over 100 juried artists in a variety of mediums. The council also offers workshops, classes and art festivals.

Manteo is known for its performing arts,

Manteo is known for its performing arts, too. "The Lost Colony" tells the story of over 100 English men, women and children who founded one of America's first colonies in 1585 before

too.

mysteriously vanishing. The play is performed under the stars in an outdoor theater and includes drama,

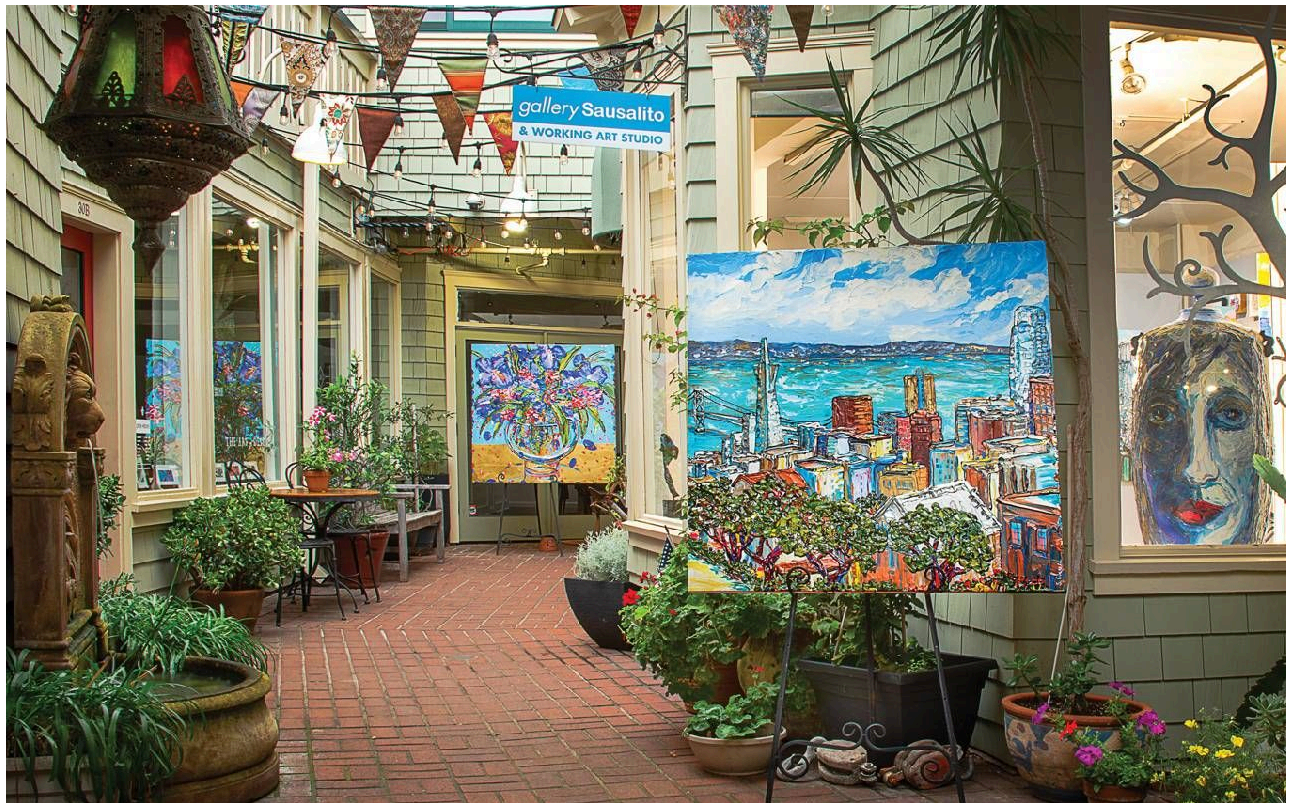
music and dancing. First performed in 1937, it is the country's longest running symphonic drama.

Leave time while in Manteo for a walk through The Elizabethan Gardens, which honor Roanoke Island's fascinating history with living color, fine-tuned horticultural collections, and statues.

Finally, head to Corolla Island on the northern end of the Outer Banks for a different sort of beauty. Spanish mustangs, left behind on the beaches in the 1500s by European explorers, continue to run wild and free. A variety of guided tours allow visitors to get an up-close view of the [horses](#).

Sausalito, California

Sausalito has a vibe all its own. A ferry ride away from San Francisco, it blends a small-town feel with an urban aesthetic. Well known as an artist colony, it draws international visitors who come to see its hillside haunts overlooking the bay, one-of-a-kind houseboats, and galleries filled with pieces from trailblazing artists.



Gallery Sausalito | Credit: Sue Averell

One of those artists is Sue Averell, who creates textural artwork (called impasto) of urban landscapes and botanicals. Averell's studio space is on-site at Gallery Sausalito, the gallery she owns and where she exhibits the work of 18 other artists. Inviting visitors to observe her creative process transforms a transaction into an experience, she believes.

At nearby Hanson Gallery of Fine Art, you will see works of various styles: French-Impressionist style oil paintings, quirky pieces created from bits of U.S. license plates, Jackson Pollock-inspired pieces, and radiant, large-scale poured canvases.

For artistry found in unexpected objects, visit Scrimshaw Gallery. The nautical-inspired pieces include knives, pens, money clips and wooden collectibles. It also offers antique maps and sculptures.

The streets are winding, and the

And when your stomach growls, you will have plenty of restaurant options. If it is breakfast you crave, Lighthouse Cafe is a great stop. This unassuming

views of San Francisco Bay and Golden Gate Bridge, spectacular.

little diner has likely fueled many artists with its tasty omelets and pancakes the size of frisbees.

During your visit be sure to take a drive north of town to see the storied houseboats and upwards through Sausalito's elevated neighborhoods,

many of the homes flat-roofed and set into the hillside surrounding the downtown. The streets are winding, and the views of San Francisco Bay and Golden Gate Bridge, spectacular.

"It's a quaint, European-style town with fantastic views of the bay and cool fresh breezes — a perfect summer getaway," said Averell.



Jenny Wisniewski is a freelance writer based in Milwaukee. She writes about elder care, the environment and travel. More of her work can be found at jennywisniewski.com and on [LinkedIn](#). [Read More](#)

Editors Recommendations

Photography: Part of the Big Picture at the Detroit Institute of Arts

‘I Just Think a World in Art Is Where I’m the Happiest’



San Francisco Museum of Modern Art to Showcase Works by Artists With Disabilities



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