

**[HOME TURF] DISCOVERING PORTLAND, MAINE**

Patrick Dempsey of *Grey's Anatomy* tells why Portland has become his favorite place.

Coming off the success of his latest Hollywood release, “Made of Honor”, Patrick Dempsey, star of “Grey’s Anatomy” and other blockbusters such as “Sweet Home Alabama” and “Freedom Writers”, talks openly about his love of his “home turf”, Portland, Maine. Raised near Portland, Patrick has watched as the city declined and then “renewed” itself. Feeling it is important to remember always from whence you came, Patrick tries to get back to Portland as often as he is able. Because of the historical preservation taking place in and around the city, Portland has become one of his favorite places to visit, when taking a break from his racing and acting careers.

**You grew up near Portland and watched it go through many changes. What changes have you seen and what do you think of today’s Portland?**

“I think Portland has changed profoundly and it’s become much more family friendly since the 1970’s and certainly the early 80’s when I was growing up in Maine. It has become more quaint and a city that’s really respected; its downtown, its heritage and its preservation of its buildings, which I’m glad to see, you know. I think I am who I am because of where I come from. I like walking the streets, I really love the architecture. I love the cobblestone streets of downtown, the Old Port, the historical part of town. Something that makes Portland personal for me is that locals, not chains, own the shops. When you buy something there, it’s from a friend.”

**If you knew someone was visiting Portland for the first time, where would you recommend they go?**

“I would take them down to the Old Port and have them explore that area. To learn about the history of Portland, I’d recommend they take the Old Port Walking Tour (<http://portlandlandmarks.org/events-tours/Walking.php>). This gives a wonderful history of the town and allows visitors to sort of step back in time and see what Portland was like a hundred years ago. To take the time to go and explore all the shops; to sit and watch the people is always great fun. I think to walk around Old Port to think about, to understand and to see the history of Portland - that’s what I really love. I’d also recommend they take one of the land and sea tours given by a couple places there. Portland is the sea and it should be an integral part of any visit to the area (<http://www.portlanddiscovery.com/>). Also, people should see the Portland Observatory (<http://portlandlandmarks.org/observatory/>). It’s not just a great museum but it gives a beautiful view of Casco Bay.” (<http://www.visitportland.com/>)

**What is your favorite part of Portland?**

“I love “Old Port”. It’s an amazing coming together of the old and the new. The warehouses have been restored and there are shops, restaurants and pubs there now. The influences of many cultures are in Portland. It has a strong Irish showing but it also has the strong French Canadian influence that had come down as well and this is all in Old Port. There’s that going on, but there’s a great combination of all different kinds of influences and cultures. There’s a pub there, the Old Port Tavern (<http://oldportavern.com/>), in the Mariners Church Building that’s one of the older buildings in the city that seems to hang onto the history of the city and serves good food.”

**Speaking of restaurants, what's your favorite place to eat when you're in Portland?**

“My favorite restaurant isn't a restaurant but a market on Merrill's Wharf in Old Port called Browne Trading Company (<http://www.brownetrading.com/>) which is kind of a gourmet place. A lot of the restaurants in Portland, and around the world, serve seafood from Browne's but I like to go there to get some caviar, crab and lobster. I'll take my snacks and sit in one of the parks nearby to watch the bay or the people as they walk past. Portland has some beautiful parks and I love to “people watch”. It's fun to get little snacks there and it's sort of a holiday retreat for us when we go there to do that. ”

**It sounds like you really love Portland?**

“The people of Maine are incredibly hardy and “Persevere” is one of their key words- and they are salty as well. The thing is, if there's a crisis, at any moment, they're right there for you. Your neighbors are strong, they give you the privacy you need, but they're there and they're watchful. I can't run away from who I am. I bought a farm in Maine, which was a promise I made many years ago to my mother, that I was going to become rich and famous and buy a big house in Maine. I did buy a house there, next to my mother's. It's not a big house but it's on the coast in Harpswell. By embracing where I came from, I found myself again. I found that I didn't need to be successful, I just needed to be okay with myself. I think when you're in Los Angeles, there's a real downside that it just reminds you of everything you're not and you forget who you are. Maine brings me back to my family and it reminds me of how much I need to get my family back there and allow my boys and my daughter to experience the land and the people.“