BOSTONIANS HAVE AN INNATE AFFINITY for historic oceanfront cities that feel more like small towns, full of both familiar charms and unknowns to explore, which makes Portsmouth, New Hampshire, a natural and convenient choice for a quick getaway, despite it being 60 miles closer to the Arctic.

Warm up to a friendly face at Row 34. Skip Bennett and co. brought the Fort Point oyster joint up north this summer. Diners will find the same quality raw bar selection, and OG beer director Megan Parker-Gray once again spearheaded the brew list—though there’s plenty to sample that you won’t find back home. Melt-in-your-mouth hand-rolled pasta with lobster, butternut squash and escarole is a must, and brown butter scallops with risotto, pomegranate and pine nuts doesn’t disappoint either. Then there’s the Sunday brunch menu (which one hopes will trickle down to Boston), but for something you really can’t find at the flagship, see the just-launched guest chef series.

Beginning this month, Jeremy Sewall is inviting fellow chefs to showcase their culinary flair at his N.H. outpost on Tuesday nights, where Boston’s own Jamie Bissonnette will make an appearance, as will toques like Sam Ostrow of Portsmouth’s Block Six and Gary Kim of Maine’s Anju.

On deck for March 8 is Brett Cavanna, executive chef of new Portsmouth restaurant Louie’s. He returned to his native New Hampshire this summer for the opening of the rustic Italian spot, conceptualized by No. 9 Park alum James Woodhouse and the team from York Beach’s Gigi. Two reasons this is a must-visit: Pasta is made in-house every day, and there are table-side cheese and amaro carts. A custom-built wine room houses red wines at an exacting 65 degrees, whites at 49. Saddle up to the 14-seat bar, lined with dim lamps that add to the sexy library atmosphere. Manhattan drinkers will appreciate the popular Inside Job cocktail (bourbon, Luxardo maraschino and Cynar) and delight over the extensive vermouth menu.
As for where to rest your head, the Hotel Portsmouth offers midweek deals for winter getaways. Guests can score a late checkout and a special rate when booking a second night Sunday through Thursday (with an even deeper discount for staying a third). Built by ship merchant John E. Sise, the 135-year-old historic mansion joined the ranks of Lark Hotels in 2014, reopening after a six-month renovation. Not far from bustling Market Square, its 32 rooms are decked out with a mix of modern furniture and retro quirks like bright rotary phones and funky wallpaper—bonus points for the in-room bottle opener and complimentary breakfast. Hunker down in the gentlemanly study, outfitted with Chesterfield leather couches, tartan fabric, antlers and nautical whimsy, where you can do some light reading on striped bass fishing, challenge someone to a round of backgammon or use the Random House Crossword Puzzle Dictionary for a little help with your morning mental workout.

Less than a 10-minute walk away waits a little nook that’ll spice up your mini getaway. Harborside Stock + Spice offers artisanal goods like peach habanero jam and summer squash relishes, plus handmade kitchen tools and even unique cocktail bitters. But the real find is the spices, blends of fresh herbs that have been toasted and ground by husband-and-wife team Denise and Evan Mallett, who can even dream up a custom mix for you. Many of these ingredients are used next door at Black Trumpet Bistro, the restaurant helmed by Evan—a three-time James Beard semifinalist—and named for a 'shroom found while foraging.

Head 500 feet inland to get your hands on more than 50 gourmet finishing salts, courtesy of another spouse team, Don and Judit Tydeman of the Salt Cellar. Among the flavors lining the shelves: Sriracha, ghost pepper, matcha, black truffle, ginger, lime citrus and merlot wine (which pairs fantastically with a steak). For those concerned about hypertension, there are also Dead Sea salt scrubs, body butters, mud wraps and other skin care products.

Just another couple minutes by foot, across from the North Church, sits a small mail aficionado’s paradise. Named after two pups, Gus & Ruby Letterpress is home to design darlings Samantha Finigan and Whitney Swaffield. After the pair met while working for an ad agency, they opened a storefront boutique and design studio, printing their handwork on an antique Chandler & Price press that once belonged to Swaffield’s grandfather. You can also browse other enticing treasures: cheeky napkins, gift wrap far too cute to tear open and Compartés Chocolatier treats—edible souvenirs from a getaway that’ll bring you back to Boston refreshed and well-fed. ♦

Gus & Ruby Letterpress 29 Congress St. Portsmouth (603-371-1717) gusandruby.com; The Hotel Portsmouth 40 Court St. (603-433-1200) thehotelportsmouth.com; Louie’s 85 Pleasant St. (603-294-9989) louiesportsmouth.com; Row 34 S Portwalk Place (603-375-5011) row34nh.com; Salt Cellar 7 Commercial Alley (603-766-1616) salt-cellar.com; Stock + Spice 25 Ceres St. (603-766-3388) stockandspice.com