

We trailed the Blois through Boothbay Harbor and then came to the swinging bridge that took us to Southport Island; the four short miles to the cottage took us far from Boothbay's busy visitor-packed streets.

As Lil and I followed to the small, heavily wooded peninsula, the turn-of-the-century cottage greeted us with the sun gleaming off its coat of fresh white paint. After a quick tour from John and Ellen, we did our own tour of the Cozy, followed by a stroll on the massive green lawn down to the waterfront.

The smile on my wife's face said it all: I was a travel god! After pulling our kayaks down to the water's edge, we immediately knew that dinner that night was going to be at home. Part of the fun of renting is the ability to make that very choice.

The second factor of my fantasy rental was covered; all supplies and needs were met. Make sure to find out what is included and what isn't: Who wants to lug pots, pans, linen and towels in a jeep filled with kayaking gear?

The cottage had two bedrooms, a kitchen, living room and bathroom. The second bedroom came in handy for visitors.

Be sure what is expected of you as a renter: If Fido isn't allowed, board him. If smoking isn't allowed inside,

don't. There is only so much coast of Maine available, and news of bad renters is shared. Build a relationship with the owners of your summer retreat.

And if you really want to enjoy a rental, know the area. Before you commit, check online to see what is nearby. I wanted a place to kayak without loading the jeep again, and I was happily surprised to find that I had a picturesque harbor a few strokes away. Depending on the tides, I could watch lobstermen gear up or future yachtsmen sail in bathtub-sized crafts.

We also had several other nearby necessities that made those hours of searching pay off. A nature trek within walking distance was on my list; from Cozy it was a two-minute walk to one of Boothbay Harbor's Trust Nature Walk trails.

Better yet was the five-minute stroll to Hendricks Head beach and lighthouse, perfect for hot sunny days. The nearby Southport Country Store had everything needed for any occasion. By far the activity we enjoyed most was just sitting on the massive lawn and watching Cozy Harbor life.

One my favorite activities is kayaking, and one of the best places to do it is the coast of Maine. We had our own kayaks, but if you don't, there are many available for rent in Boothbay. One of the best companies, situated right on the harbor is the East Boothbay Kayak

