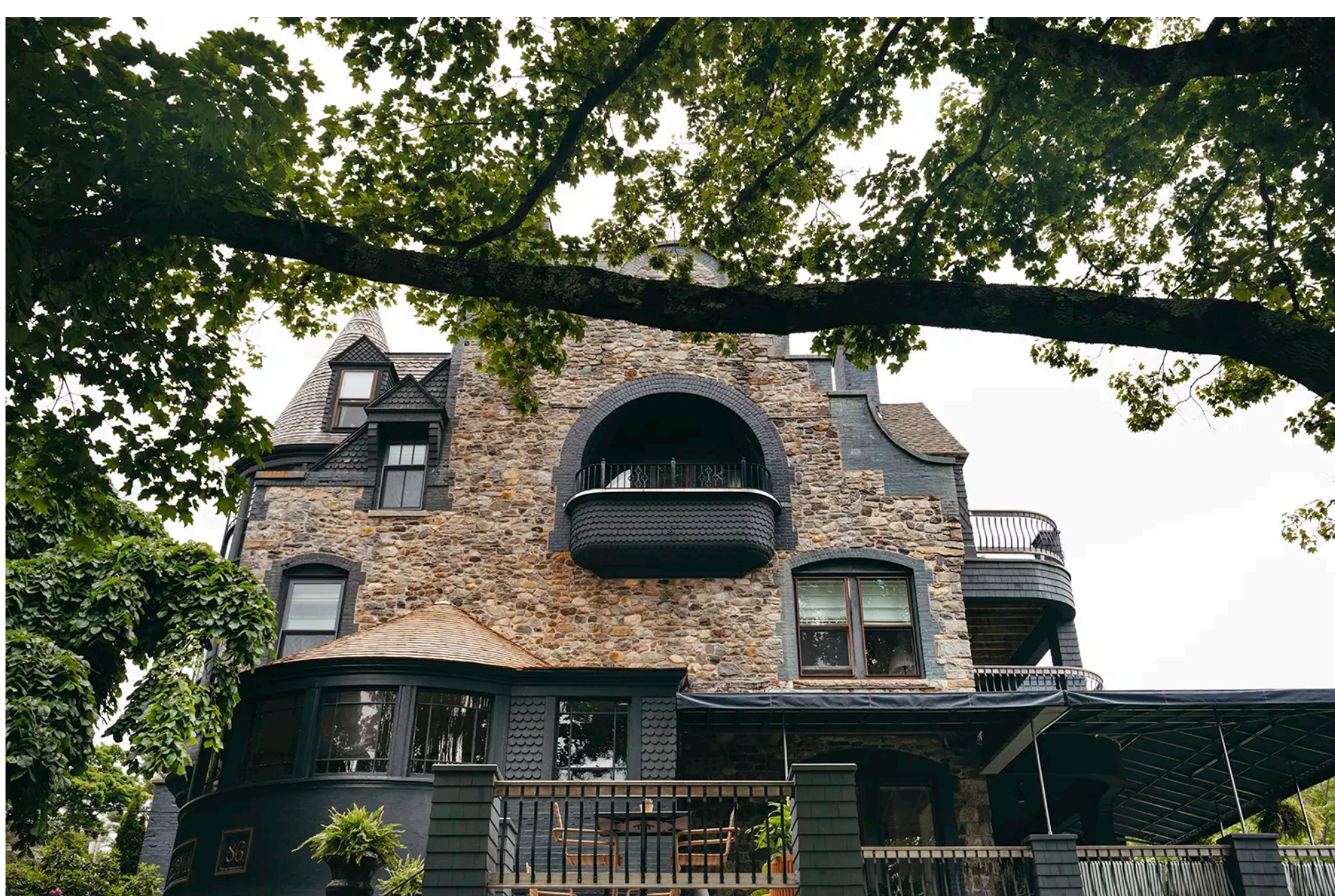


A Design Field Trip on the Midcoast: 36 Hours of Art, Food, and Places to Stay

A design-forward weekend itinerary from Camden to Lincolnville, packed with bookish coffee shops, upscale American eats, and hours of gallery hopping

March, 2026 | By: Danielle Devine



The stone facade of the Norumbega Inn in Camden

FRIDAY

6 p.m.

Driving up from Portland, it takes us just under two hours to get to the Norumbega Inn, just off U.S. Route 1 overlooking Penobscot Bay. We're staying in one of the 11 rooms at what is known as the Castle by the Sea for the night. Built in 1886 by Gilded Age entrepreneur Joseph Barker Stearns and designed by New York architect Arthur Bates Jennings, the inn was later purchased and renovated by architect William Tims and his partner Brett Haynie.

Our room is thoughtfully designed and cozy, with its own fireplace. After dropping off our things, we head downstairs for a pre-dinner cocktail. On the way, I notice a sweet little window seat that would be a dreamy place to sneak away and read. In the lounge, we take in the original carved oak millwork, a Murano glass petal chandelier overhead, and a mix of contemporary and traditional decorative and fine art.



The Center for Maine Contemporary Art and its courtyard, designed by Toshiko Mori in 2016

7 p.m.

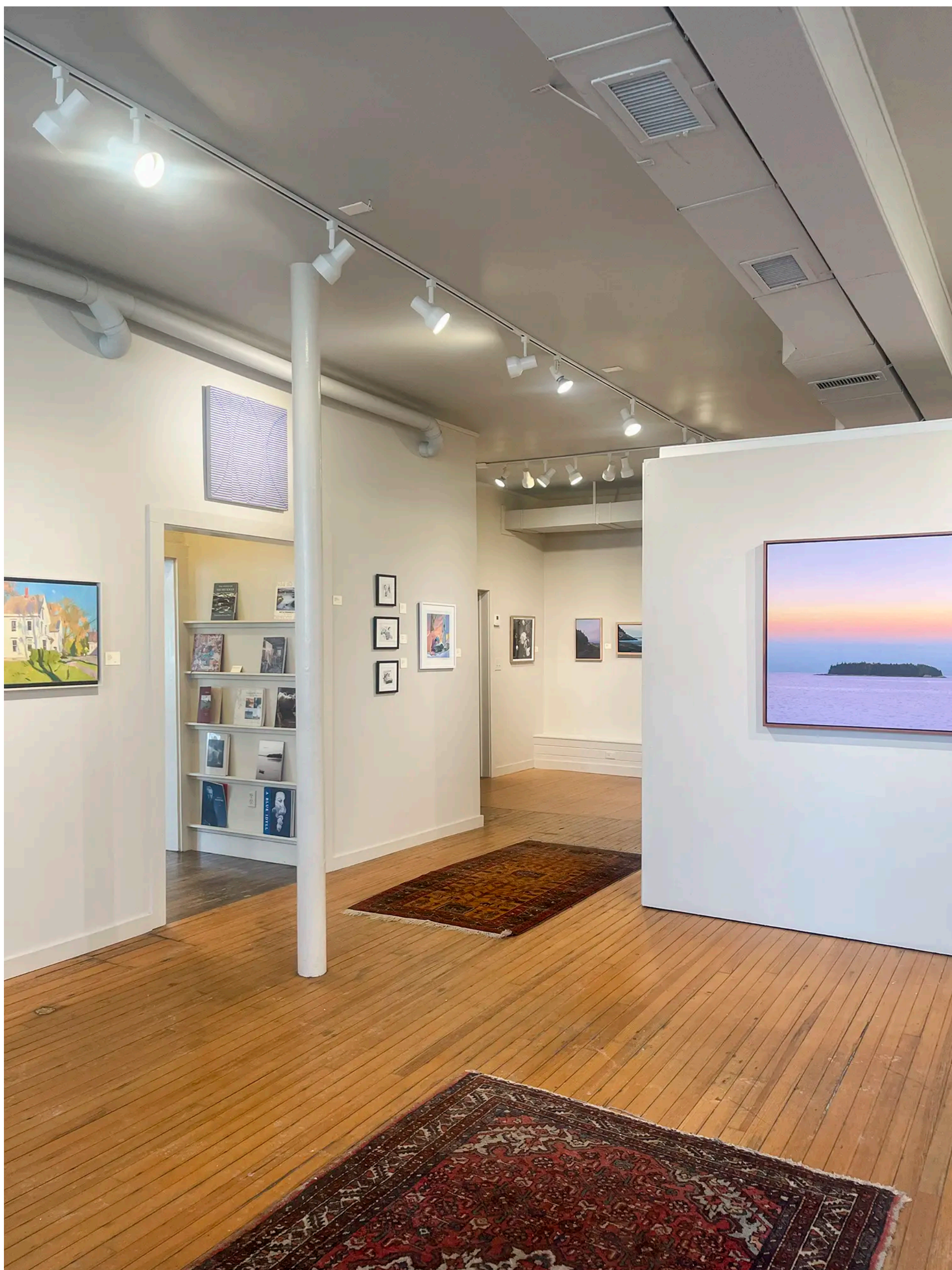
Tonight, we're headed to Sammy's Deluxe in Rockland, recently included in *the New York Times*' 2025 list of the "50 best restaurants in America right now." Chef Sam Richman opened the spot in 2016 after working at haute culinary mainstays like Jean-Georges in New York and the Fat Duck in London. We're seated at a small tile-topped table with mismatched chairs near the window, surrounded by flea-market finds on bookshelves, plants, and provisions like big tins of tomato sauce and boxes of kosher salt.

Richman's goal, as stated on the restaurant's website, is to create "not-fussy, very straightforward, extremely high-value, exceptionally delicious food in the style of what your grandmother might have cooked if she were an excellent cook who used lots of seasonal ingredients and had a soft spot for Americana." Start with the deviled scallops on toast and pickled beets, order the crab enchiladas suizas for your entrée, and finish with rice pudding topped with poached cranberries.

SATURDAY

10 a.m.

After breakfast at Norumbega, included with every stay, we walk around downtown Camden. Our first stop is Liberty Graphics, recently in the news after Taylor Swift was spotted wearing one of their sea otter T-shirts from the 1990s, triggering the company's largest order in its 47-year history.



Inside PAGE Gallery

Next, we pop into Page Gallery, opened in 2019 by artist Colin Page and recently included in the Center for Maine Contemporary Art (CMCA) Biennial. Their roster includes Camden native Chris Van Dusen, Sal Taylor Kydd, Siri Beckman, and Tom Curry.

Just around the corner, we caffeinate at Owl and Turtle Bookshop Café and spend too long browsing new titles.

Noon

Rockland is a quick 15-minute drive. We meet Robert Wolterstorff, executive director of the CMCA, for a tour of the Biennial before it closes. CMCA's Toshiko Mori-designed building reflects the institution's mission to continually present new work, with a courtyard entry framing a two-story glass facade. Inside, we run into artist Sarah Lee, who tells us that a new mural by Will Sears will be painted in the entry the following week.

Afterward, we head to Caldbeck Gallery on Elm Street, where owner Cynthia Hyde shows us works by Lois Dodd, Katherine Bradford, and John Walker alongside emerging contemporary artists like Dan Dowd. Down the street at Dowling Walsh Gallery, we spot porcelain by Dominique Ostuni and, in back, a full installation by Ostuni paired with work by photographer and writer Cig Harvey.

2 p.m.

We grab a late lunch at North Beacon Oyster, where a red octopus mural fills the back brick wall. We order the gochujang shrimp layered with cucumber and shiitake on crispy rice, and it's perfect.

After lunch, we continue along Main Street to Blue Raven Gallery. My husband gravitates toward Rebecca Aldernet's portraits, while I keep returning to Robert Dowling Jr.'s *Waiting for Christina*.

On our way to the Farnsworth Museum of Art, we slip into the newly opened 365 Gallery and Design Store to catch an exhibition with a piece by artist, illustrator, and *MHD* contributor Lucky Platt.

3:50 p.m.

Arriving just before closing, forgetting that the museum closes at 4 p.m. this time of year, I make a quick pass through the Andrew Wyeth exhibitions on the main floor. The Farnsworth holds one of the largest collections of works by N.C. and Andrew Wyeth. When this issue hits newsstands, *MAINE: A Force Within American Art* (1890–2026) will be on view.

4 p.m.

With shops closing and daylight fading, we drive north to Lincolnville, where the mountains meet the sea, and check in at Camp DeForest, a renovated midcentury motor lodge tucked into the woods. Entering the main lodge feels like arriving at camp, complete with cozy, nostalgic touches and a warm welcome from our host, Mac, who hands us the keys to our cabin.



The interior of the Spruce Cabin at Camp DeForest

We're staying in Spruce Cabin, a little over 400 square feet with all the comforts of home, including a tiny mudroom. Inside we find a carefully curated collection of memorabilia, including flags, posters, needlepoint pillows, old copies of *the Hardy Boys*, and even a fire-engine-red mini Frigidaire that we can fill with the snacks and beverages we picked up along the way. There's also an antique typewriter if inspiration strikes, but we opt for a couple rounds of cards and a cocktail instead before heading down to the lodge to enjoy a campy dinner.

SUNDAY

We wake to the soft sound of reveille from the lodge, signaling that breakfast is ready. The spread includes bagels, muffins, and homemade banana bread baked by the manager, Ben, along with coffee from nearby Green Tree Coffee and Tea.

There's one last stop to make before we head home: A Little Moore from Margo Moore Interiors in Camden. Over the years I've built a small collection of John Robshaw bedding with guidance from owner and interior designer Megan van der Kieft, and I want to see what's new. They're taking advantage of the quiet season to spruce up some things, so I know I'll be back again soon.

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