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Michelle Vale ♥ Become a fan

Creative Director of Michelle Vale Handbags and Co-founder of Soak Slide Sandals... both American made

Building the Lifestyle of Maine into the Soak Brand

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As small business owners, we pride ourselves on delivering a product that is second to none. However, there are many more facets to our brand than product alone. From customer service, visuals, merchandising and beyond, we are building a brand that encompasses all of this and more. In addition, we also want to make a positive impact on the world. We are a women-owned business, that has committed itself to making a vegan and recyclable product, made in Kennebunk, Maine.

Once a thriving shoe industry, Maine has seen much of its shoe manufacturing business move overseas, over the past couple of decades. We want to help reverse that by producing [Soak](#) in Maine and play a role in helping bring jobs back home. The benefits to us are clear. Maine still has a significant manufacturing footprint that provides quality manufacturing facilities and skilled labor. An added bonus for us is that we get to spend time in an amazing state. Maine seems to have a European sensibility with an abundance of incredible farm to table cuisine and it's acute attention to green living. From Portland's cobble stone streets, to the many quaint seaside towns and vast offering of wild and lush forestry, the Maine lifestyle is one I want to continue experiencing in a more deep and meaningful way. It's this essence that we are working hard to incorporate into the Soak brand.

As we continue to build out our Maine manufacturing base, I have had the pleasure of spending significant time between Portland and Kennebunkport. A mix of work and pleasure recently brought me and my family back up the New England coast. We departed NYC on a gorgeous Sunday afternoon and made a quick detour to Newport, RI for dinner. I spent my undergraduate years at the University of Rhode Island and have many fond memories, including plentiful bowls of lobster bisque at the restaurant destination, Brick Alley Pub. I thought it would be fun to start our trip with a little walk down memory lane and share some college memories with my kids before continuing up the coast. As we headed north, It felt as though we were all getting closer and closer to the euphoric mindset and beauty that Maine offers.



I was eagerly anticipating this trip as we were booked at Portland's newest addition, The Press Hotel. A special property with an interesting history serving as the former headquarters for the Portland Press Herald... the same paper that ran Soak's first piece of press on their front cover earlier this year. The essence of the newspaper is still evident throughout the hotel, with the original paper weight scale incorporated in the gym, vintage typewriters suspended on the wall in the lobby and type printed walls and carpeting. After spending several days, I can say with great certainty that I will be a frequent guest for the coming months/years here, while we continue to grow the Soak brand. I have found a home away from home... that is until we plant our roots more firmly here and purchase our own little haven to relish in! A hotel addition, equal in innovation, to it's thriving culinary scene. Portland's current food scene is alone enough of a reason to visit.

Our first few days in Portland consisted of meetings and dining, with small doses of family fun in between, including a boating excursion with Lucky Catch, to score our very own lobsters, in the great Maine tradition. We literally caught them and and once back at the dock, walked with lobsters in hand, 10 feet over to the nearest dining establishment where they were prepared and ready to be enjoyed, a mere 20 minutes later. I have never in my life had something so fresh and simple, yet bursting with flavor. Pure deliciousness.

And our trip would not have been complete without multiple sweet endings at Curlio's Creamery. This small batch ice cream shop, stumbled upon last summer, is in a variety store and it's where I discovered the most wonderful ice cream flavor... Hokey Pokey! It is the best ice cream I have ever had. It is flecked with jewels of honeycomb candy and it makes me dance around like a child upon first lick! I am most certain, once word gets out, that lines will be forming down the block. It is like that unassuming night club, that all the insiders are going to, with great fear others will soon find out!

After 4 delectable days in Portland, it was time to head to Kennebunkport for a little more fun, but more importantly to see our final Soak sandal, before launching into production. Like with any business, we had some interesting moments, including when an employee from the local power company pulled the power on the wrong line and shut all the factory's machinery down, only to turn it back on and blow out the air compressor. Although this has set us back a few days, we are closer than ever to coming to market with a shoe that is poised to take the fashion world by storm.

The next few days were spent at the factory with down time in between, enjoying this quaint seaside town more than expected, due to the sudden mishaps. My family and I enjoyed our time at the Breakwater Inn and Spa. They have a stellar breakfast that we enjoyed daily, which is majestically situated right on the bay where

kids can frolic about the rocky beach, while parents sip coffee in Adirondack chairs on the lawn. One morning boo boos, inflicted by rocks and seashells, were handled abruptly with band-aids and ice cream, brought to my daughter, by Patrick, a stand out employee of the resort, who swept in at just the right time to help alleviate the flooding of tears.

A day poolside at the Nonantum Resort for lunch and swimming, offered the quintessential Kennebunk experience. While the kids swam and enjoyed arts and crafts and sports on the lawn nearby, my husband and I relished in the sun with cocktails in hand. A love affair had begun to transpire, with more than one conversation had throughout the trip, about placing roots here, to enjoy future summer coastal bliss. We left high on the idea of getting to know this place a little more intimately in the coming years.

Until our next trip up, we are left with lovely reminders in the many pictures we took and our continued day to day research of Maine, as we work to create an aspirational lifestyle brand that only a Soak woman will come to desire.