

Observers congregate to see North America's largest urban bat colony take flight.



*Continued from previous page*

### **GO BATTY IN AUSTIN**

The bats at Congress Avenue Bridge, Austin

Every evening at dusk from mid-March to November, nature puts on an unforgettable show in Austin. A huge swarm of Mexican free-tailed bats from North America's largest urban bat colony — estimated at 1.5 million! — takes flight from beneath the city's Congress Avenue Bridge and blankets the sky. The nightly food run has become a cherished performance in a town known for its quirkiness, with aficionados saying August's hot, dry nights produce the best flights. If getting up close to a massive cloud of creatures associated with haunted houses and vampires sounds a little batty, consider this: The animals consume 10,000 to 20,000 pounds of insects nightly. The Caped Crusader himself can't touch that record of public service.

### **RIDE THE WAVES**

Old Orchard Beach, Maine Outlet shopping near Old Orchard Beach — Burberry, Polo Ralph Lauren, J.Crew — may come at a cost, but there's still no charge for the attraction that made the southern Maine seaside resort famous — a wide, 7-mile-long stretch of Atlantic sand. Anchored by an amusement-lined pier that juts 500 feet into the ocean, the bustling village knows how to keep people smiling through a downturn. During the Depression, tourists danced their cares away to the big bands that performed at the old Pier Casino. Recession-busting fun these days includes weekly fireworks shows from the pier, free concerts all summer long, and, of course, plenty of sun, sand and surf. **W**



Old Orchard Beach's pier is lined with amusements.