

# Acadia

ACADIA NATIONAL PARK • MAINE

## WHERE THE MOUNTAINS MEET THE SEA

*Have you ever tried doing nothing? Acadia is a good place to begin. First, find a rocky ledge or stony beach; there are many at Schoodic Point, along Ocean Drive, and near Seawall. Then sit down and relax. Things start to happen as your senses awaken to the scene around you. A gull sails up over the ledge with a sea urchin, captured from a tidal pool, in its beak. The urchin is dropped onto the rocks below, where its spiny, shell-like armor smashes; the gull, which has followed it to earth, devours it. Listen carefully for the chuckle of pebbles moving in surf. A wavelet gurgles in a hidden crevice, and, behind you, the breeze sings through a grove of spruce. The salt air smells good, and the sun is warm on your skin. Doing nothing on the shore is an art, a pleasurable experience—anything but a waste of time.*

Look at a map of New England's coast. How much is shown in public ownership, undeveloped, retained in its natural state? Acadia National Park was established to preserve the natural beauty of a part of Maine's rocky coast, coastal mountains, and offshore islands. Its name suggests historical associations that are part of our heritage, for Acadia was French before it was English and American.

You can enjoy Acadia in a world of ways, from a quick spin along Ocean Drive and up Cadillac Mountain to a stay of 2 weeks or more. However long your stay, the quality of your visit depends upon you. We hope this leaflet will encourage you to slow down, to look around, and to listen to Acadia's special message.

The sea is all pervading: it encircles, it thrusts inland, it fogs. In the midday sun, its bright-blue surface is studded with lobster buoys. White boats of lobstermen, trailing plumes of shrieking gulls, toss on shoreward swells in fearless disregard of rocky cliff and ledge.

In fog all is gray and muted. Engines mutter out to sea. The lobster boat is a blurred shape in a formless world. The water's leaden surface heaves and kelp strands stir uneasily in the sucking tide.

At sundown, look out to sea from Cadillac Mountain. The ocean glows in pastel shades of pink, mauve, and gold; gulls wing silently home to distant islands; and, like fireflies, first here then there, the navigational aids on reef, island, and headland flash their silent warnings.

The tidal zone, twice daily exposed to air and drowned by water, is an exciting place to visit. As the water drops away, tidepools brimming with life are exposed, and you can watch marine animals going about the business of living. Blue mussels and barnacles strain microscopic bits of life from cool salt water. Legions of periwinkles feed by scraping algae from rocks and ledges, while other snails fasten death grips on shellfish, drilling holes in their shells and drawing out the flesh. In shadowed crevices flowerlike anemones extend their fleshy tentacles. Under camouflage of shell and weed fragments, spiny sea urchins huddle together awaiting the next tide and safety from the gull's cold eye.

Behind the sea are the forests and mountains of Acadia, made easy for exploring by the 40-mile

system of carriage paths. These broad, smooth, graveled byways encircle Jordan Pond and Eagle Lake and wind around the flanks of Sargent and Penobscot mountains. They offer stunning views of Somes Sound and Frenchman Bay; and they lead you along beaver-dammed brooks. Grades are gentle and vistas long. Here small children run and jump while parents or grandparents stroll. If you prefer, you can ride in the style of earlier days, by horse-drawn carriage. The loop around Eagle Lake is a bicycle path.

Who built these carriage paths? Who had the vision of a national park here? This park was neither carved from public lands nor bought with public funds. Many people loved Mount Desert Island, Schoodic Peninsula, and the nearby islands. Residents of Maine and summer visitors alike donated time and resources to preserve Acadia's beauty. Men such as George B. Dorr and Charles W. Eliot, a former president of Harvard, saw the dangers of development and acted to avoid them. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., played a critical role. He built the many miles of carriage paths and gave more than 11,000 acres (about one-third of the park's area) to Acadia National Park.

An Acadia experience involves more than forest and sea. There were people living on this island when Champlain named it *L'Isle des Monts Deserts* in 1604. The story of those people is told in the Abbe Museum at Sieur de Monts Spring through exhibits and Indian artifacts. Visit Islesford Museum on Little Cranberry Island; ride over and back on the ferry and see the museum's ship models, tools, and pictures, which speak of island life in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Nearby villages testify to the variety of life styles on the island today. Northeast Harbor is a major summer colony whose harbor shelters a host of sailboats, large and small. Bar Harbor caters to tourists; it offers a wide variety of accommodations and amusements. Bass Harbor and Southwest Harbor on the west side of the island and Winter Harbor at Schoodic retain more of the true flavor of Maine coastal villages. The men who earn their living from the sea—lobstermen, fishermen, boat builders, and coastguardsmen—tie up here; canneries, lobster pounds, and boatyards have not yet been replaced by summer homes and motels.

Don't neglect the opportunities for exploring marine environments. On conducted tide-pool walks you'll learn about the plants and animals inhabiting microhabitats between land and sea. On a naturalist-led cruise you may see porpoises, seals, eagles, and nesting colonies of sea birds, or watch an osprey catch a fish and carry it to a nest of hungry youngsters. You can explore an offshore island and reflect upon the lonely life of a lighthouse keeper's family.

This leaflet merely hints at the wonders that are Acadia. The excitement of discovery can be yours and your family's if you take the time. Vacation time is precious and must be spent carefully. Why spend yours driving as far and as fast as you can? Instead, why not spend a few days here? If you have generally traveled the one way, the other may surprise you; it certainly leads to better understanding of nature; and it may lead to better understanding of self.

## ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

*How to get there.* Most of Acadia National Park is on Mount Desert Island, which also includes farmland, the city of Bar Harbor, other resort communities, and fishing villages. The island can be reached by automobile on Maine 3. Schoodic Peninsula, famous for its crashing surf, is accessible via Maine 186; this is the only part of the park on the mainland. The most primitive section of the park, on Isle au Haut, can be reached by taking the mail boat from Stonington on Deer Isle (accessible via Maine 15).

*Park Loop Road.* From this 20-mile scenic drive connecting lakes, mountains, and seashore you can branch off onto Cadillac Mountain Summit Road, which leads to the highest point on our Atlantic coast. The rounded granite peak offers superb panoramas of island-studded Frenchman, Blue Hill, and Penobscot Bays and the rockbound mainland coast. At various points along the loop road you can stop to view glacier-carved valleys and lakes; high, surf-pounded cliffs; and magnificent remnants of the northern coniferous forest that once extended unbroken over the region.

*Boat trips* are available at nearly all the island villages. You have a choice of scheduled sight-seeing voyages or your own cruise by chartered boat.

*Fishing* is permitted in accordance with State laws; no license is required for salt-water angling.

*Swimming.* Lifeguards are on duty in summer at Echo Lake (for fresh-water swimming) and at Sand Beach (for bathing in the icy surf). Other beaches are at Bar Harbor and Seal Harbor.

*Accommodations.* Two campgrounds in the park (Black Woods and Seawall) and numerous private campgrounds outside park boundaries are available. Camping in the park is limited to 14 days. You can find hotels, motels, rooming houses, and restaurants in the villages.

*Trails.* Besides carriage paths, foot trails ranging from easy lowland paths to rugged mountain routes enable you to reach all parts of the park. Carriage paths are open (in part) to bicycles, which can be rented in Bar Harbor, and to horses, which can be hired at Wildwood Stable on the Loop Road. Trail maps are sold at park headquarters.

*Museums* include the Islesford Historical Museum on Little Cranberry Island and the Abbe Museum of Stone Age Antiquities (May 30 to mid-September) at Sieur de Monts Spring. Also at Sieur de Monts Spring is a nature center and wildflower garden (May to mid-October).

*Naturalist program.* Schedules are available at park headquarters and park campgrounds for seashore, woodland, and mountaintop nature walks, boat cruises (at a modest fare), and evening campfire programs.



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### FOR YOUR SAFETY

Be particularly careful on the rugged shores of Acadia. Ledges and rocks below high tide are slippery with algae, so walk carefully to avoid a nasty fall. Watch out for storm waves, particularly in spring and autumn. Occasionally an unusually large one reaches far up on the ledge or beach—it could knock you down and sweep you into the sea.

Watch the trail when hiking, to avoid turning your ankle on loose stones or blundering into a poisonous patch. If you find one trail too steep or precarious, choose another. With more than 100 miles of trail to choose from, why take a chance?

### ADMINISTRATION

Acadia National Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Bar Harbor, ME 04609, is in immediate charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

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