



Autumn on Cadillac Mountain
PHOTOGRAPH: GREGG HIRSCHMAN

An Acadian Afternoon

Your hike begins in the cool shade of the spruce-fir forest. Ribbons of sunlight drop through the canopy to needle-carpeted ground. The rat-a-tat of a pileated woodpecker shatters the hush of the woods, and a red squirrel darting along a tree trunk chitters as you pass by.

The trail rises; tree roots underfoot give way to lichen-spotted granite. Clumps of sheep laurel and low-bush blueberry grow along the trail. Squat, gnarled pitch pines replace the straight spruce and fir below, and the scent of pine resin baking in the sun fills the air. After a rugged scramble over boulders, you pause in a shady spot to sip from your water bottle, noting the goose-foot-shaped leaves of striped maple glowing emerald in the sun. There are birch here and aspen and oak; this is a much different forest than the one you started in.

Could fire have once swept through here, allowing faster-growing, sun-loving plants to dominate in place of shade-loving spruce? Or is some other process at work? What will become of these younger forests as time passes?

Stone steps appear ahead, a slope of loose rock scree magically rearranged. The trail, built over a hundred years ago by a summer resident, is but one of many contributions made by those who sought to preserve parts of the Acadian landscape for others to enjoy.

On a ranger-led walk earlier in the day, you learned to identify the trill of the white-throated sparrow, and now it pierces the air. Like so many other species, the white-throated sparrow visits only for the summer, spending its winters far beyond park borders in

the south. As the trail climbs, the forest shrinks away to stunted, weather-beaten trees and barren granite. You step lightly, and on stone, for life here is already tough for the plants that must survive in the severe climates of mountain tops, without a hiking boot crushing them. Three-toothed cinquefoil clusters behind rocks and sinks its roots into what little soil exists in the joints of granite bedrock. One careless kick of a rock could destroy decades of growth and crucial habitat for summit plants, including some rare subalpine species.

A panorama of shore and sea emerges, revealing the landmarks that define Acadia’s coast—Sand Beach, Thunder Hole, and Otter Point. Across the bay, Schoodic Peninsula juts into the ocean. Visitors in the 1800s once looked out upon a similar scene, but instead of hearing the mutter of lobster boats, they saw the sails of hundreds of fishing sloops dotting the bay.

To the west more mountains rise up. Their shapes suggest the southward movement of glaciers thousands of years ago pushing into the north ridges of the mountains. Scraping down mountain summits, the glaciers sculpted long, sloping north ridges and created steep cliffs on their southern faces.

At the summit you are encircled by the mountainous and oceanic world of Acadia. In only one mile you have hiked from sea level to the solitude of a mountain summit. Now you are faced with decisions: Explore farther on? Return to your starting point?

Beguiled by the cool ocean breezes and the sun beating on your shoulders, maybe you simply sit back and contemplate the sky and sea, and the scudding clouds, and the fine afternoon that brought you here.

Shaping the Land

A variety of geologic processes have shaped Acadia National Park, leaving tangible evidence of the region’s ancient past.



Ellsworth Schist
Five hundred million years ago sedimentary deposits of mud settled on the floor of an ancient sea. High temperatures deep in the Earth and the pressure of burial fused and metamorphosed (transformed) the deposits into distinctive layers. The formation called Ellsworth Schist is the oldest rock exposed on Mount Desert Island.

Cadillac Mountain Granite
This rock began as molten magma that intruded into older, overlying



rock. As it cooled, it hardened and crystallized. It is peppered with flecks of black hornblende and glistens with quartz crystal (right). Pink feldspar gives this granite its pink hue.

Glaciers
From the domed summit of Cadillac Mountain to the U-shaped valley of Bubble Pond, Acadia’s undulating landscape is the product of thousands of years of sculpting by glacial ice. The ice scoured away older rock, revealing the granite



beneath. As the ice melted and retreated, it left behind its burden of boulders and debris, strewn across the landscape.

Shoreline Processes
The geologic processes that began millions of years ago continue today, shaping and reshaping the landscape. Shoreline erosion is an ever-present example of the continuing changes wrought by the forces of the Earth.



Cadillac Mountain granite
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(Far left) Ellsworth Schist, a product of the earliest forces at work in the creation of Mount Desert Island. (Middle) The Bubble Pond basin was scooped out by glacial action. (Left) Waves pounding its rocky shore still shape the island.

(Right) Wabanaki birch bark carving; Beech Cliff (near Echo Lake Beach) was a popular hike in 1922 and remains so today; Bass Harbor Head Lighthouse.

WABANAKI CARVINGS COURTESY OF THE ABBE MUSEUM

People of Mount Desert Island

“[The island] is very high, notched in places, so that there is the appearance to one at sea, as of seven or eight mountains extending along near each other. The summit of most of them is destitute of trees, as there are only rocks on them. The woods consist of pines, firs, and birches only. I name it Isle des Monts Deserts.”

Samuel Champlain, 1604

The earliest indigenous people of Mount Desert Island were hunter-gatherers who plied the sea in dug-out canoes in pursuit of sea mammals and fish. Bits of animal bone, pottery shards, and stone tools, discarded in clam shell heaps, reveal clues about their daily lives. Some artifacts have been carbon dated to 5,000 years of age.

More recently, the Wabanaki lived on the island all year, hunting, gathering, and trading with the European fishermen and explorers.

Explorer Samuel Champlain created the first reliable European record of Mount Desert Island in 1604. There were attempts to settle the island after his visit, but 150 years of war between the French and British made it disputed territory unsafe for habitation until 1761, when English colonists established the first permanent settlement.

Islanders fished, farmed, quarried granite, and engaged in shipping. When the first visitors arrived in the mid-1800s, the tourist trade offered

a new income source. Landscape painters of the Hudson River School inspired droves of city dwellers to seek out Mount Desert Island. Huge wooden hotels and extravagant houses—called “cottages”—built by wealthy summer residents soon transformed the quiet farming and fishing villages.

Amid all the bustle and clamor of socials and lawn parties, there were those who still appreciated the natural beauty of the island. In 1901, Harvard President Charles W.

Eliot formed the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations to help preserve some of the beautiful spots on Mount Desert Island. The Trustees acquired 5,000 acres in donated land and presented it to the federal government. In 1916 President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed the area Sieur de Monts National Monument. As more land donations expanded the national monument, in 1919 Congress redesignated it as a national park—the first to be established east of the Mississippi River.



Early park crusaders George B. Orr (left) and Charles W. Eliot at Jordan Pond.
1915



A Diversity of Life

Sea meets land at Acadia, and life thrives from shore to summit. The arctic black crowberry grows next to the more temperate bunchberry. Songs of wood warblers fill the forest, and a green snake basks in the sun. Mammals, from the little brown bat to white-tailed deer, also add to Acadia’s diversity of life.



Tidepools
Pockets in the rocky shore trap pools of water as the tide recedes. Amazing plants and creatures, including starfish (left), survive in the inhospitable world between the tides.



Woodlands
Spruce-fir forest dominated the park until 1947, when fire burned 10,000 acres. Sun-loving birch, aspen, and oak grew in its wake. The fire brought more variety to both the woodlands and the wildlife the new growth attracted, like the red fox (left).



Lakes
Glacially carved valleys cradle freshwater lakes in Acadia’s interior. Here waterfowl, amphibians, reptiles, and numerous invertebrates thrive—and humans may find reflection.



Mountains
The mountains are not nearly as barren as Samuel Champlain once described. They are home to woodlands and many plant species. Peregrine falcons nest on some precipitous cliff faces.

Visiting Acadia

Getting Here

By Automobile: Follow Maine 3 to Mount Desert Island. Schoodic Peninsula can be reached by Maine 186.

By Air: Airlines serve Hancock County-Bar Harbor Airport, 10 miles from the park, and Bangor International Airport, 45 miles from the park. Seasonal shuttles link airports with Mount Desert Island.

By Bus: Concord Trailways and Vermont Transit provide service between Bar Harbor and Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. Isle au Haut can be reached by ferry from Stonington, Maine.

By Ferry: Bay Ferries offer seasonal car and passenger service between Bar Harbor and Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. Isle au Haut can be reached by ferry from Stonington, Maine.

Exploring Acadia

Island Explorer Shuttles Parking is limited in Acadia National Park. In summer, fare-free Island Explorer shuttles connect lodging and campgrounds with villages, the park, and ferries. Your park entrance fees support the Island Explorer.

Park Entrance Passes Your park entrance fees support many park programs also. You can buy passes at the Hulls Cove Visitor Center, park headquarters, park campgrounds, entrance station north of Sand Beach, and Bar Harbor Village Green.

Visitor Center Begin your visit at Hulls Cove Visitor Center on Maine 3 for information, a captioned audiovisual program, and

publications, and activity schedules. In winter, park headquarters, on Maine 233 west of Bar Harbor, provides information.

Ranger-led Programs Rangers lead programs along the shore, on mountains, in forests, and on boat cruises, interpreting wildlife, history, plants, and geology. See the park newspaper *Beaver Log* for schedules.

Scenic Driving The 27-mile Park Loop Road connects Acadia's lakes, mountains, and seashore. Cadillac Mountain Road offers panoramic views of the coast and island-studded bays. Federal law requires wearing seat belts. Obey all speed limits.

Trails Acadia's many historic trails—from lowland paths to mountain routes—suit the casual walker or avid hiker. Beware of loose stones and poison ivy, stay on trails, wear hiking shoes, and do not hike alone. Trails are for day hiking only; there is no back-country camping in Acadia.

Carriage Roads Acadia's 45 miles of historic carriage roads are among America's finest remaining examples of broken-stone roads. Bicyclists: remember to yield to all pedestrians and equestrians.

Swimming Echo Lake Beach and Sand Beach are lifeguarded in summer. The ocean is cold! Many

lakes supply public drinking water and are closed to swimming and wading.

Bicycling The park has 45 miles of historic carriage roads and over 27 miles of paved roads. Bicycles are prohibited off-road and on hiking trails.

Winter Visits Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing are popular when conditions permit. icy conditions can make winter hiking treacherous.

come, first-served). Do not feed wild animals! Store and dispose of food correctly. Nearby towns offer private campgrounds and lodging.

Accessibility Ask at information centers or park campgrounds for a guidebook of accessible services and facilities. Also ask about captioned and audio description programs and schedules of the accessible ranger-led programs and carriage rides.

Acadia's Seasons Be prepared for changeable weather. Summer highs average 70–80°F, with fog common. Spring and fall highs are 50–60°F. Winter lasts from November to April, and temperatures range from below 0°F to

30°F. Annual snowfall averages 60 inches.

For Your Safety Use caution near cliff edges; dangerous footing can cause serious falls. Trails and rocks may be slippery. Waves can knock you down and sweep you out to sea. *Never turn your back on the ocean.*

Regulations Pets must be attended and leashed at all times. Parking, camping, and fires are permitted only in designated areas. Firearms are prohibited in the park unless cased, broken down, or otherwise packed against use. To protect the park's scenic, natural, and cultural resources, please Leave No Trace (visit www.lnt.org). Removing

plants, animals, rocks, or other natural or historic features is prohibited. Observe wildlife at a distance. Feeding wildlife is prohibited. Carry out anything you carried in. Stay on trails; hike and rest on durable surfaces, like rock, when possible.

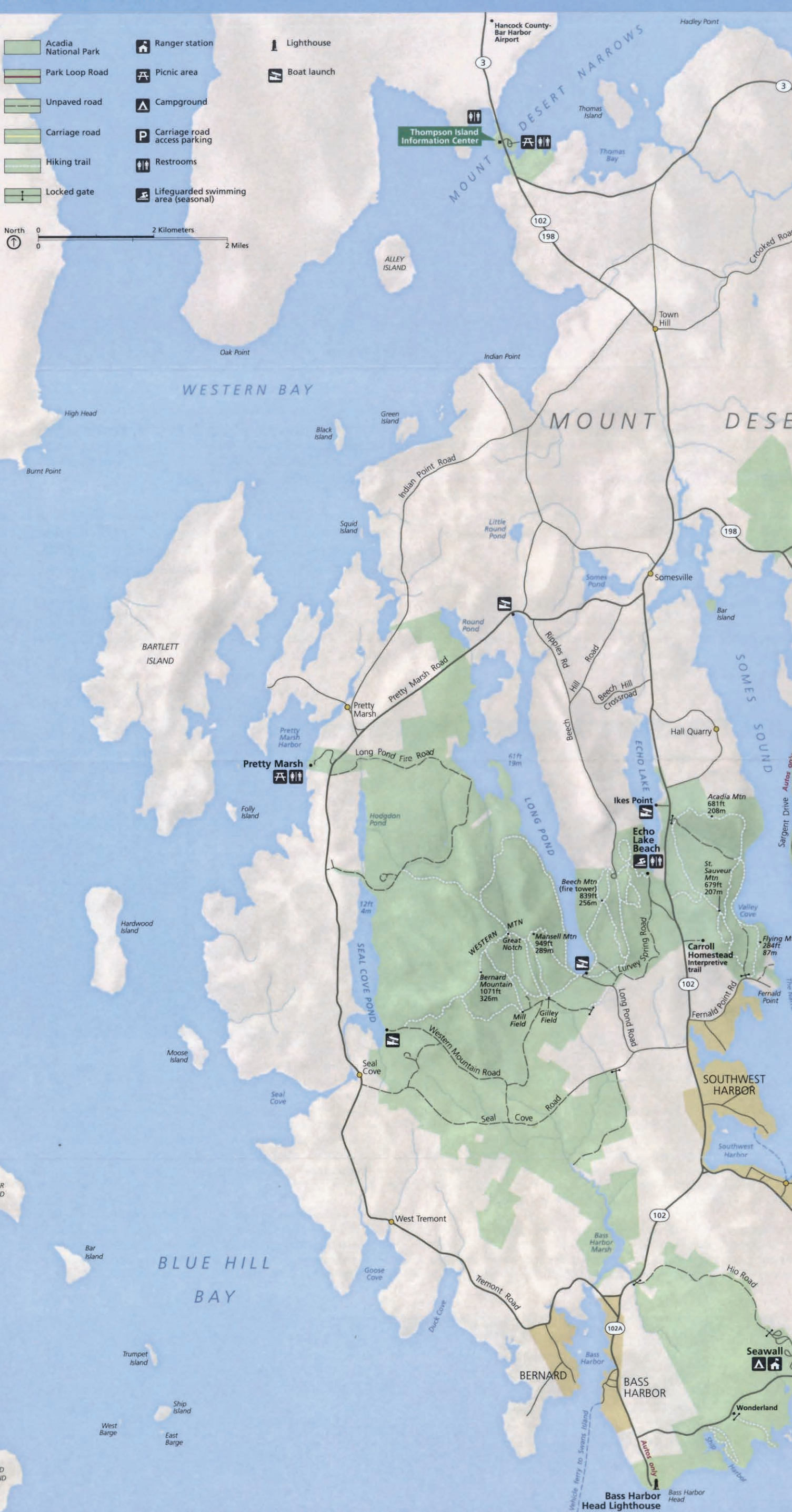
More Information Acadia National Park P.O. Box 177 Bar Harbor, ME 04609-0177 207-288-3338; TTY 207-288-8800 www.nps.gov/acad

Acadia is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about national parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities, please visit www.nps.gov.

Acadia National Park



Mount Desert Island



Isle au Haut



Schoodic Peninsula



Warning—low bridges! Four low-clearance bridges (see map) make advance route planning necessary for RVs and tall vehicles.