Acadia

Acadia National Park

Maine

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

Crown Jewel of the North Atlantic Coast

Acadia National Park protects the natural beauty of the highest rocky headlands along the US Atlantic coastline. The park features an abundance of habitats with high biodiversity, clean air and water, and a rich cultural heritage. Interlaced with picturesque communities, Acadia preserves about 38,000 acres with another 12,500 acres of conservation easements. The park includes 65 miles of rugged coastline on Mount Desert Island, Isle au Haut, Schoodic Peninsula, and 17 other coastal islands.

Spanning lakes, ponds, meadows, and mixed coniferous and deciduous forest, the landscape rises abruptly from sea level to 1,530 feet with eight mountains above 1,000 feet. About 50 mammal and 300 bird species inhabit the area. Harbor seals and porpoise, lobster, sea stars, and other diverse fish and marine animals populate the surrounding waters.

First set aside in 1916 as Sieur de Monts National Monument, it became Lafayette National Park in 1919 and Acadia National Park in 1929. Early park amenities grew to include 33 miles of scenic motor roads, 158 miles of hiking trails, and 45 miles of historic carriage roads with 16 stone bridges.

Jordan Pond and The Bubbles

Protect Acadia

Acadia consistently ranks among the most-visited parks in the United States. During peak season, typically May through October, it can be a challenge to experience some of the park’s more popular attractions without it feeling a bit crowded.

Low-Impact Transportation Options

Always visit Acadia with a back-up plan. If a parking lot or area is full when you arrive, pick a new destination and protect the park by not adding to congestion. • Avoid long lines by buying your entrance pass online and printing a copy prior to your arrival. • Leave your car behind. Walk on a village connector trail, ride your bike, or take the fare-free Island Explorer bus into Acadia. • Enjoy a car-free biking experience by using Acadia’s carriage roads. Wear a helmet and watch your speed for a safer ride. • Enjoy a summit view by hiking one of Acadia’s historic trails. Stay on established trails and wear sturdy, enclosed hiking shoes for a safer hike.

Experience Special Places in New Ways

Don’t miss Acadia at night. Seek out a moonrise over a beach, shooting stars over a mountain, or owl calls echoing into the stillness of a forest trail. • Avoid Cadillac Mountain crowds at sunrise and sunset by picking a new place or new way to experience these magical moments. Watch a sunrise along Ocean Drive or take a sunset boat ride. • Do your favorite things at new times of the day. Visit Acadia early morning or late afternoon to find less-crowded experiences. • Visit in winter, spring, or late fall to experience Acadia at its most peaceful. • See Acadia in new ways, like from a boat or at a place that is new to you.

Make It a Maine Experience

Make Maine your destination, not only Acadia. Find the experiences and meet the people that make this place uniquely Maine. • Spend the middle of the day, the park’s busiest time, exploring activities around Acadia in museums, libraries, historical societies, gardens, galleries, gift shops, and other local venues. • Find a park ranger in Acadia and ask about their favorite Maine experience. • Extend your Maine adventure by bringing your passport to explore national parks in Canada.

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. These deposits metamorphosed into distinct layers from increasing pressure and high temperatures deep in the Earth. The formation called Ellsworth Schist is the oldest rock exposed on Mount Desert Island.

Cadillac Mountain Granite

This rock began as 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.

Cadillac Mountain Granite

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. Protect this landscape. Please do not collect or stack cobbles.

“Shaping the Land,” left to right: Ellsworth Schist was a product of the earliest forces that created Isle au Haut. Glacial action scooped out the Long Pond basin. Waves pounding its rocky shore still shape Mount Desert Island.

People of Acadia

“[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

Native American peoples have inhabited the land we now call Maine for 12,000 years. Today four distinct tribes—the Maliseet, Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot—are known collectively as the Wabanaki, or “People of the Dawnland.”

Long before Europeans arrived, the Wabanaki traveled here in seaworthy birchbark canoes. Setting up temporary camps near places like Somes Sound, they hunted, fished, gathered berries, harvested clams, and traded with each other.

In 1604, while mapping the North Atlantic coastline, French explorer Samuel Champlain recorded his observations of Mount Desert Island. For the next 150 years the French and British fought for control of this disputed territory. In 1761 the English established the first permanent European settlement here. Island settlers fished, farmed, quarried granite, and engaged in shipping.

In the mid-1800s tourism offered a new income source. Landscape painters of the Hudson River School inspired city dwellers to seek out Mount Desert Island. Enormous wooden hotels and extravagant “cottages” built by wealthy summer residents soon transformed quiet farming and fishing villages.

Beginning in 1901, Harvard University president Charles William Eliot, George Bucknam Dorr, and other conservation- minded philanthropists worked with the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations to acquire and present 5,000 acres of donated land to the federal government.

In 1916 President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed the area Sieur de Monts National Monument. As more land donations expanded the monument, Congress in 1919 designated it the first eastern national park. Dorr, the “Father of Acadia,” was the first superintendent.

“People of Acadia,” left to right: Wabanaki birchbark carving. Beech Cliff near Echo Lake Beach, as popular a hike in 1922 as today. Bass Harbor Head Lighthouse.

Early park crusaders George Dorr (left) and Charles Eliot at Jordan Pond.

Diversity of Life

Sea meets land at Acadia—and life thrives from shore to summit. The arctic black crowberry grows beside the more temperate bunchberry. Songs of wood warblers fill the forest. 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.

Tide Pools

Pockets in the rocky shore trap pools of water as the tide recedes. Amazing plants and creatures, including sea stars (left), survive in the inhospitable world between the tides. Step carefully. Do not disturb the creatures. Watch for rising 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. New and varied growth after the fire attracted new wildlife, like the red fox (left).

Lakes and Ponds

Glacially carved valleys cradle freshwater lakes and ponds in Acadia’s interior. Waterfowl, amphibians, reptiles, and numerous invertebrates thrive.

Mountains

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

Explore Acadia’s Natural Beauty

Maps

Acadia National Park

Isle au Haut

Schoodic Peninsula: Horses are prohibited on the bike paths on Schoodic Peninsula.

Mount Desert Island: Do not use this map for hiking or carriage road navigation. Buy maps at visitor center. Some lands within and adjoining the park remain private property; respect the owners’ rights and posted regulations. Warning: Low-clearance bridges (see map) make advance route planning necessary for RVs and tall vehicles. Road to Cadillac Mountain: Vehicle reservations required (seasonal); no RVs; no public bus service. Carriage roads outside the park closed to bicyclists. Bear Island is closed to the public. No swimming at Long Pond boat launch.

Getting Here

By Car: Take ME 3 to Mount Desert Island. Reach Schoodic Peninsula by ME 186.

By Air: Hancock County-Bar Harbor Airport is 10 miles from the park. Bangor International Airport is 50 miles away.

By Ferry: Bar Harbor connects with Yarmouth, Nova Scotia.

Island Explorer Bus Shuttles

Late June through mid-October, fare-free buses link the park with surrounding communities. Visit www.exploreacadia.com.

Park Entrance Passes

Buy and print your pass in advance or purchase it at Thompson Island Information Center, Hulls Cove Visitor Center, Sand Beach Entrance Station, campgrounds, or Village Green Information Center. See the park website for information.

Visitor Center

Open seasonally, Hulls Cove Visitor Center offers information, activity schedules, and a park store.

Ferries

Seasonal passenger ferries operate between Bar Harbor (Mount Desert Island) and Winter Harbor (Schoodic Peninsula), Northeast Harbor (Mount Desert Island) and Islesford (Little Cranberry Island), and Stonington (Deer Isle) and Isle au Haut.

Scenic Drives

Park Loop Road (27 miles) connects Acadia’s lakes, mountains, and seashore.

Hiking

From lowland paths to mountain routes, Acadia’s many historic trails suit casual walkers or avid hikers. Trips and falls are the number one safety hazard in the park. Granite surfaces are extremely slick when wet. Plan ahead and be prepared. Know the trail difficulty level and your physical abilities and limitations. Dress for variable weather. Wear sturdy hiking shoes. Carry water. Trails are for day hiking only. There is no backcountry camping.

Carriage Roads

Forty-five miles of historic gravel roads offer opportunities for recreational use like walking, biking, and equestrian use in designated locations. The speed limit for all is 20 mph. Bicyclists must use caution around horses and yield to all other users. Motorized vehicles and Class 2 and 3 e-bikes are prohibited.

Bicycling

In addition to park roads and carriage roads on Mount Desert Island, eight miles of gravel paths are available to bicyclists on the Schoodic Peninsula. Bicycles are prohibited off-road and on hiking trails. Stay to the right, and watch your speed.

Swimming

Echo Lake Beach (fresh water) and Sand Beach (salt water) are popular swimming areas. Most lakes and ponds on Mount Desert Island supply public drinking water and are closed to swimming and wading.

Winter Visits

Most park facilities and services are closed in winter, including all but about two miles of Park Loop Road. Visitors enjoy hiking, snowshoeing, and crosscountry skiing as conditions allow. Snowmobiles are allowed on designated roads only.

Campgrounds

Advanced online reservations are recommended at www.recreation.gov. Blackwoods, Seawall, and Schoodic Woods campgrounds are open seasonally. Store and dispose of food appropriately at all campgrounds. Do not bring firewood into the park from outside the area. Private campgrounds and lodging are available in nearby towns. Backcountry camping in the park is prohibited.

Accessibility

We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. See the park website for a list of accessible services and facilities, captioned and audio-described videos, accessible ranger-led programs, and carriage rides.

Weather

Be prepared for changeable weather and chilly summer nights. Typical seasonal temperatures are 80°F in summer, 60°F in spring and fall, 0–40°F in winter. Annual snowfall averages 60 inches.

Safety

Use caution near cliff edges; dangerous footing can cause serious trips and falls. Wet trails and shoreline are slippery. Waves can knock you down and sweep you out to sea.

Tick-borne diseases are a public health concern. Prevention and timely detection of a tick bite is essential for humans and pets. To limit exposure, walk in the middle of trails away from tall vegetation, wear light-colored clothing so ticks are easier to spot, tuck pants into socks, spray shoes and clothing with repellent, and check yourself after walks.

Protect the Park

Pets must be attended and on a six-foot leash at all times. • Parking, camping, and fires are permitted only in designated areas. • To protect scenic, natural, and cultural features, carry out anything you carried in and dispose of waste properly. • Federal law prohibits removing or disturbing plants, animals, rocks, and other natural or historic features. • Do not build or remove rock cairns. • Observe wildlife at a distance. Do not feed wildlife, including birds and squirrels. • Stay on designated hiking trails. Walk and rest on durable surfaces, like rock, when possible. • Using remotely piloted aircraft like drones is prohibited. • For a complete list of regulations, including firearms information, visit the park website.

More Information

Acadia National Park

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www.nps.gov/acad

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