

Maine: Acadia National Park

Tour-Only Itinerary

Journey along rocky coastlines, ascend mountain trails, and delight in quaint seaside towns on an Acadia National Park hiking tour where you'll discover the towering summit of Cadillac Mountain and the charming town of Bar Harbor. Follow century-old carriage roads built by John D. Rockefeller Jr. to the tidal pools and mountaintop tarns of Acadia National Park. The bustling docks of coastal towns exude New England charm, while delectable east coast cuisine abounds – fresh chowders, lobster, and blueberry pie. At the end of the day, relax in comfort at a historic inn or plush oceanfront resort. This Maine walking tour offers you a chance to discover the heart of Maine's natural beauty, along with the traditional New England way of life.

Highlights

Travel to Little Cranberry Island by boat and meet with a local lobsterwoman for a window into authentic Maine coastal life

Follow the rugged Maine coastline past the roiling Thunder Hole as you trek the highest ocean-edge cliffs in Acadia National Park

Gain a deeper understanding of the region's flora, fauna, and dramatic glacial history with veteran wilderness guides

Learn about the region's fascinating flora and fauna as well as its dramatic glacial history, from veteran wilderness guides

Activity Level

This tour is one of our Guided - Flex Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate, walking an average of 2 to 8 miles daily with options on most days. The ascents on this tour are short, with the longest being no more than 45 minutes with a maximum elevation gain and loss of up to 540 feet. The walks take you along tidal pools, rocky shores, and wooded trails, so the terrain can be sandy and rocky; or well-worn forested paths and gravel carriage trails. Not all trails have level footing, and you may encounter exposed roots and rocks. Classic coastal Maine sights and flavors are enhanced by the history of Acadia National Park and its tradition of elegant summer vacationing. As one of our Guided - Flex tours, some days offer options for self-exploration, cultural visits, or free time to relax on your own.

DAY 1

Arrival in Bangor

Paradise Hill - Witch Hole Pond Loop; 2-3 miles, easy. Sieur de Monts Spring area, Jessup Path, Hemlock Loop, and the Tarn; 4 miles, easy to moderate. Lower Hadlock Pond Loop; 2 miles, easy

Your guide(s), wearing Country Walkers' shirts, will meet you at the Four Points by Sheraton at 9 a.m. in the lobby. Please be dressed for walking.

Upon meeting your guides at the hotel, you depart immediately for the one-hour drive to Acadia National Park, and proceed directly to the park's visitor center. An introductory walk along one of the park's many carriage roads leads to Witch Hole Pond, and provides views of Frenchman Bay and Hull's Cove to the northeast, as well as the distant mountains to the north. In the first half of the 20th century, John D. Rockefeller Jr. not only donated about one-third of the park's land, but he also conceived of and oversaw the construction of the extraordinary network of carriage roads that wind throughout the park, graced with subtle landscaping and handcrafted stone bridges.

After lunch at a seaside restaurant, an afternoon walk in the Sieur de Monts Spring area takes you, via the Jessup Path, to a mountain pond known as the Tarn. A series of plank bridges skirt the open marsh and provide views of Huguenot Head, Champlain Mountain, and Dorr Mountain. You connect to the Hemlock Loop, which dates back one hundred years to when the walking paths connected downtown Bar Harbor to Acadia National Park. The well-graded paths and log and plank bridges provide good footing in this area.

After a short drive to Lower Hadlock Pond for an enjoyable loop walk, you arrive on foot to your home for the next two nights, where there is time to linger in the manicured grounds and perfectly situated Adirondack chairs, or perhaps take a dip in the ocean-side swimming pool, in the late afternoon sunlight. Tonight you enjoy a traditional boiled lobster dinner with all the fixings.

Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Asticou Inn, Northeast Harbor

DAY 2

Flying Mountain Trail

1-2 miles, easy to moderate. Beech Mt. North Ridge Trail; 2 miles, moderate, or Ship Harbor Trail; 1-2 miles, easy

Today's walks take place on the "quiet side" of the Island, the western less-traveled side of Mount Desert Island. This morning, you hike Flying Mountain, which rises 284 feet and gives extraordinary views of Somes Sound from above. Enjoy free time in Southwest Harbor before lunch on your own, where you might enjoy a lobster roll. After visiting the Bass Harbor lighthouse, one of the most-photographed lighthouses in Maine, your guide presents you two options for this afternoon. For those who want a more challenging option, a walk on Beech Mountain gives an excellent overview of the region. The trail gradually ascends the western flank with views of Long Pond and Blue Hill across the sparkling waters of Blue Hill Bay to the west.

At the summit, near a closed fire tower, you look over the towns of Southwest Harbor and Northeast Harbor, the entrance to Somes Sound, and the Cranberry Isles lying offshore to the south. The trail descends some rocky ledge before looping back to the trailhead in Somesville. If you prefer a more relaxed walk, Ship Harbor Trail offers a view of quintessential Maine coastal scenery, the easy figure-eight trail leads right to the tranquil shoreline of Ship Harbor, and exits through a cool forest of spruce and cedar trees.

This evening, you dine at your hotel restaurant while taking in the view of the beautiful Northeast Harbor.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Asticou Inn, Northeast Harbor

DAY 3

Little Cranberry Island. Independent exploration of Bar Harbor

3-4 miles, easy to moderate

After walking in the island's interior and rocky shore, today you discover one of the secluded islands off Mount Desert's southern coast. After breakfast overlooking the sound, you catch a chartered fishing boat out of Southwest Harbor for the hour-long crossing to Little Cranberry Island. The five Cranberry Isles—Great Cranberry, Little Cranberry (or Isleford), Bear, Baker, and Sutton—are from one to five miles offshore and are named after the low-bush wild cranberries that grow profusely throughout their terrain. The islands' year-round residents, mainly lobstermen and boat builders, are joined each summer by visitors, some of whom have been returning for generations.

The ferry docks at the island's main village provide a true glimpse of authentic Maine coastal life from another era; piers and wooden buildings are clustered in a sheltered cove. A quiet road leads up to a grassy bluff and continues through groves of tall firs, passing white clapboard cottages. A picnic is unpacked at a perfect spot overlooking glimmering water and a pebbled beach, with distant sailboats skimming the ocean's surface. After looping back to the village dock, you board your boat in the afternoon for the return trip to Southwest Harbor.

After a short drive to bustling and quaint Bar Harbor, the island's largest community, you settle into an in-town resort hotel with a water's edge marina overlooking Frenchman Bay and the open ocean. For dinner on your own in Bar Harbor, consider fresh steamed lobster or littleneck clams.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: Bar Harbor Inn, Bar Harbor

DAY 4

Great Head Loop. Independent exploration of Bar Harbor

2 miles, easy to moderate. Ocean Path; 2 miles, easy, or Gorham Mountain Trail; 2 miles, easy to moderate, 500-ft. elevation gain and loss

The morning's walks are devoted to the ocean side of Mount Desert Island, starting at sheltered Sand Beach, a gorgeous 300-yard long beach nestled between Great Head and Newport Cove. Enticing yet chilly, the constant Atlantic surf has created its unique pastel sand, composed of tiny pulverized shell fragments. Departing from Sand Beach, the Ocean Drive Trail is justifiably one of the park's most popular trails—dramatic views stretch along the oceanfront from Sand Beach to Otter Point. In the middle the level gravel trail drops to Thunder Hole, named for the sound of the water crashing into a narrow channel in the coastal ledge. The historic trail, which was part of the original trail network dating from the late 19th century, was completely restored and resurfaced about 10 years ago, and rises to Otter Cliffs, the highest ocean-edge cliffs in the park. Baker's Island is in full view to the south, and a slice of Little Cranberry Island can be seen to its west.

The Great Head loop departs from the eastern end of Sand Beach and follows the peninsula's headland, with views south back to the beach, the Ocean Path, and Otter Cliffs. As you climb through windblown grass to its highest point of 145 feet, waves crash below; offshore, pleasure and fishing boats ply the eight miles of open water framed by the Schoodic Peninsula to the east. Returning to the trailhead on a bog walk, you are ready to enjoy your picnic lunch.

This afternoon you have two walks to choose from. The first option is a hike along the Gorham Mountain Trail, which provides sweeping views of the morning's walks along the Ocean Path, Sand Beach, and Great Head. The gradual ascent up open ledges features ridge-top panoramic views as your trail follows the ridge that runs north to Champlain Mountain, part of the chain of mountains closest to the ocean. The second option is to follow the Ocean Path along a beautiful and dramatic stretch of coastline between Sand Beach and Otter Point. Returning to Bar Harbor in the mid- to late-afternoon, you can take full advantage of the resort amenities at the hotel, such as the seaside heated pool and Jacuzzi, and then continue the evening at your own pace by strolling into Bar Harbor for dinner on your own.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: Bar Harbor Inn, Bar Harbor

DAY 5

Jordan Pond

Bubbles Loop; 3-5 miles, easy to moderate

After a hearty breakfast, you set off for the day's walk at Jordan Pond, a serene freshwater pond in the park's interior. The trail circles the pond, winding through blueberry bushes, clusters of white birch and shady spruce. At the pond's northern end are two symmetrical hills called the Bubbles, North and South, over 700 and 800 feet high, respectively. Reflected in the pond's pristine waters, the peaks are also in view throughout the walk. Along the water's edge you may see a great blue heron, or a pair of black-and-white common loons.

A longer and more challenging option leads to the summits of both Bubbles, where you are rewarded with views of Eagle Lake, another freshwater pond lying just to the north, as well as Conner's Nubble and Frenchman Bay. Looping back to Jordan Pond, you are ready for a satisfying lunch on your own at the Jordan Pond House Restaurant, a historic teahouse-style restaurant dating from the late 19th century and serving a range of soups and chowders, salads, sandwiches, and its signature popovers. You have the rest of the afternoon to relax before you celebrate your Acadian adventure at an elegant restaurant, toasting your exploration of this stunning region over creative gourmet cuisine.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Bar Harbor Inn, Bar Harbor

DAY 6

Cadillac Mountain and North Ridge. Your *Maine: Acadia National Park* tour concludes

1-2 miles, moderate

No visit to Acadia is complete without a trip to the top of Cadillac Mountain. Not only is it the highest point in the park at 1,530 feet, but Cadillac Mountain also has the distinction of being the highest point on the entire North American Atlantic coastline. This morning you drive to a point where the North Ridge Trail intersects the access road and hike the final mile to the treeless summit, which offers breathtaking views over Bar Harbor, Frenchman Bay, and the open ocean spread before you. Named after Sieur de Cadillac, a 17th-century French explorer, the mountain offers evidence why Cadillac's compatriot and contemporary, Samuel de Champlain, called the entire island "Mont Desert"—for its bare and, when viewed from the ocean, apparently "desert-like" mountaintops.

After stopping for lunch, you arrive at the Bangor Airport by mid-afternoon for your onward travels.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

What's Included

Tour Only

Exceptional boutique accommodations

12 on-tour meals: 5 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 3 dinners

Local guides with you throughout tour

Entrance fees and special events as noted in the
itinerary

Emergency travel assistance hotline available 24/7