

COASTAL MAINE HIKING

"Where the Mountains Meet the Sea"

The coast of Maine is renowned for its beautiful rocky coast and offshore islands, its lighthouses and lobsters, quiet white-steepled churches tucked in small villages and scenery galore. This is familiar territory for us, and we are excited to be offering this 8-day trip so close to home.

Time on Monhegan Island, laced with 17 miles of walking trails and home to artists and fishing families alike, will give us a taste of Maine island life. Tucked beneath the high bluffs of the Camden Hills and hugging its well-protected harbor, the quintessential New England village of Camden will offer us vista-rich trails and shop-lined streets to explore.

With its bold granite shores, sparkling lakes, high peaks, quiet harbors and old stately inns, Mount Desert Island captures the essence of coastal Maine landscapes. Fittingly, we will spend our last few days walking the graceful carriage trails and rugged mountain paths of Acadia National Park.

This year we are once again very fortunate to be joined by a Maine wildlife biologist. Ron Joseph retired in 2010 after a 33-year career as a Maine wildlife biologist. Ron specializes in leading birding, moose-watching, and tree-identification trips. He knows and loves his native state as much as anyone we know. And best of all, he's extremely personable and enthusiastic about sharing his outdoor knowledge.



Itinerary

Location: Monhegan Island, Camden, Bar Harbor, Maine

Length: 8 Days

Accommodations: Inns with private bathrooms

Grade: Moderate

Group Size: 6 - 10

Day 1: Portland, Maine to Monhegan Island

Morning pick-up at Portland's International Jetport. After gathering as a group, a two-hour scenic drive up the coast will bring us to the fishing village of Port Clyde. We'll stop for lunch at a wharf side diner, the Dip Net, before catching the ferry out to Monhegan. Once on the island, we'll have time to settle into our accommodations, take a walk around the village or just relax on the porch and enjoy the evening.

Of the more than 1,200 islands along Maine's coast, Monhegan Island is considered especially captivating. Located 11 miles offshore, 1½ -miles long and a ½ -mile wide, Monhegan rises like a whale out of the ocean. Monhegan's current year-round population of around 75 is a mix of artist and fishing families. In the summer, the population swells to almost 1,200 as the island attracts vacationers, bird watchers and anyone looking to experience the peaceful setting created by island life. There are more than 17 miles of hiking trails on the island, some passing through woods and some following along high cliff tops dramatically rising 160 feet above the shore.

Day 2: Day Hike on Monhegan

With 17 miles of hiking trails, there are a variety of options from which to choose. Our hike today will take us to the southern tip of the island and Lobster Cove. The trail along the Cove hugs the rocky coast, where a shipwreck still lies on the shore. During a southerly storm, the surf is spectacular here as it pounds against the rocks. This is also an excellent place for bird watching, which is a very popular activity on the island.

Artist Studios

Many of Monhegan's resident artists open their studios to the visiting public. It's possible to spend a couple of delightful hours wandering from studio to studio, talking with artists and looking at their work. In town, The Fern Gallery also has a nice representation of local work.

Day 3: Monhegan Island to Camden, Maine

After a morning ferry ride and transfer to Camden, we'll have the option of an afternoon hike in the Camden Hills. A short hike up Mount Battie will give us a bird's-eye view of Camden and Rockport Harbors, as well as the islands and coastline from Owls Head to Cadillac Mountain, in Acadia National Park.

Day 4: Day Hike in the Camden Area

There are many great hiking and walking options in and around Camden. Camden Hills State Park, with over 30 miles of hiking trails, offers a great variety of hikes with ocean views, thick forests, lakeside cliffs and open summits covered in wild blueberries.

Starting in the State Park, near the town of Lincolnville, the Bald Rock trail leads us to its summit's rocky ledges, with stunning views of the island of Islesboro and the mountains of Blue Hill and Cadillac in the distance. Looping back and joining the Cameron Mountain trail, where the wild

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blueberries are still harvested from the summit, it is possible to descend on a recently built trail to the Cellardoor Winery.

Cellardoor Winery, the only vineyard in Maine that produces handcrafted wines from cool-weather grapes, is situated on 68 acres at the foot of the Camden Hills. The views across the vineyard from the 18th-century barn have been described as almost “Tuscan-like.” We are invited to tour the vineyard, taste the wines and picnic in the garden.

Other hiking options include a walk around Beauchamp Point, called “the most beautiful walk in the world” by Yankee Magazine, and a visit to Merryspring Nature Center. Here walking trails meander through 66 acres of woods and open meadows. Another option is a walk through Fernald’s Neck Preserve on the shores of Lake Megunticook, with an optional afternoon swim.

Other activities may include:

A visit to Camden would not be complete without getting out on the water. We will take a sail on one of its famous schooners, Schooner Olad. Built in 1927, this 47-foot schooner has been sailing the waters off Camden since 1985. Owner and skipper Captain Aaron Lincoln, a local Mainer, will talk to us about the history of the area and the schooner trade as we sail through one of the corners of the world he loves the best. Out on the Schooner Olad, you will have the opportunity to breathe that fresh sea air, cruise Penobscot Bay and experience the beautiful coast of Maine from the water.

For art lovers, there is always the opportunity to visit the Farnsworth Museum. The Farnsworth Art Museum offers a nationally recognized collection of American art. The museum’s permanent collection, entitled Maine in America, displays works of many well-known 18th-and 19th-century artists. Four new galleries now showcase contemporary art. The Museum houses the nation’s second-largest collection of works by premier 20th-century sculptor Louise Nevelson, as well as the Wyeth Center, exclusively featuring works by N.C., Andrew, and Jamie Wyeth – America’s first family of art.

Day 5: Camden to Mount Desert Island

We will begin the day with a drive to Mount Desert Island, leaving after breakfast and traveling “downeast” along the coast. We will arrive by lunchtime, with plenty of time for an easy afternoon hike.

One option is to walk around Jordan Pond to South Bubble and Bubble Rock, which offer outstanding views of Jordan Pond to the south, Eagle Lake to the north, many of the surrounding mountains and, of course, the Atlantic Ocean. It is a nice combination of easy walking alongside Jordan Pond and climbing steep granite steps leading to the open summit of South Bubble, where we’ll see the precariously set Bubble Rock.

Another option is a walk through the Asticou Azalea Garden. Inspired by native plant species and Japanese garden design, this is a “wonderful blend of East and West.” From here, a path climbs up through the Asticou Terraces, with viewpoints to enjoy along the way. The path leads to Thuya Garden, a 140-acre preserve, and the former home of Joseph Henry Curtis, a landscape architect from Massachusetts who summered here. The natural beauty and design of these gardens are awe inspiring. From here it is possible to continue to the summit of Eliot Mountain, overlooking the quaint village of Northeast Harbor.

Days 6 & 7: Hikes in Acadia National Park

Options include:

One of prettiest hikes on the island is Gorham Mountain and the Bowl Loop. This route offers great vistas, ancient sea caves and a refreshing pond to swimming along the way.

A more classic hike in the Acadia National Park is to Penobscot and Sargent mountains. It’s a challenging route over two of the higher summits, as well as along the rocky shores of Jordan Pond. Ending at the Jordan Pond House, we may indulge in the famous Jordan Pond popovers with tea as we sit on the lawn overlooking the Pond.

Another scenic route is to the summit of Mount Desert’s highest mountain, Cadillac (1,525'), along the South Ridge Trail. Beginning in a dense forest, the route climbs to the open granite ridges that lead to the top of Cadillac Mountain. During fall and winter, this is where the first sunlight shines on the east coast of the United States. With a road to the top, it can be quite busy when we reach the summit with its panoramic views. On a clear day it’s possible to see Mount Katahdin to the north and Nova Scotia to the east.

The stonework that went into the building of the trail on Mansell Mountain is amazing. Built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930’s, and located in a less-visited area of the Park, this route offers a challenging climb, ascending a spiral staircase of hundreds of moss-covered granite steps. At the top we’ll enjoy the magnificent views and peacefulness of the western peninsular of Mount Desert Island.
Farewell Dinner.

Day 8: Acadia National Park to Portland

After breakfast, we will depart for Portland’s International Jetport, about a 3-hour drive.

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What to Expect

Accommodations: All nights will be in comfortable country inns with private baths.

Meals: A full breakfast is provided at the inns. For lunches, we will have the opportunity to shop locally for ingredients for trailside picnics. The inns will also offer bag lunches for purchase, and some days we may have the opportunity to eat at a local cafe, restaurant or wharf-side diner. Dinners will be either at the inns or a local restaurant, usually at around 6:30 p.m.–7:00 p.m. The meals will be delicious New England fare. Vegetarian options are not a problem.

Typical Day: One of the nice things about hiking, and staying in comfortable inns, is there is really no such thing as a “typical day.” Although many factors may influence a day, including itinerary, weather and length of the hike, there will be some basic routines. At some point during each day we will describe the hikes and activities and discuss hiking options (if any).

When appropriate, we will begin at around 9:00 am. A hearty breakfast can take a while! Some days we will start earlier. This gives us time to linger on the trail and stop at points of interest. It also allows us to cover the majority of the distance while we are still fresh, and gives us time at the end of the day to relax and explore. We will try to pace the day so arrive at our accommodations by 4:00 or 5:00 pm. Dinners are usually around 7:00 pm.

Hiking Grades: Coastal Maine Hiking is graded moderate. The hiking trails are generally well graded, with some rocky sections, and well-defined, which makes for great hiking. Any hiking trip requires a certain amount of effort and proper fitness training will enhance your enjoyment. Time and elevation gain or loss, as opposed to distance, tend to be the determining factors when defining hiking grades or level of difficulty. We have done our best to grade our trips consistently. Please call us for further clarification. We are happy to connect you with past participants.

- **Easy:** Hike 3 to 4 hours daily carrying a day pack on generally gentle terrain. Distances from 4 to 8 miles. Elevation gain and loss 500' to 1,500'.
- **Moderate:** Hike an average of 4 to 5 hours daily on varied terrain. Distances from 5 to 9 miles. Elevation gains and losses generally 1,500' to 2,500' or about 2 hours.
- **Strenuous:** Hike 5 to 7 hours daily on varied terrain, with consistent ascents and descents of 2 to 3 or more hours, generally 2,500'-3,500'. Distances from 6 to 11 miles. There are some steep uphill and downhill sections.
- **Strenuous Plus:** Hike from 5 to 8 hours daily on rocky, challenging terrain with consistent steep ascents and descents of 2 to 3 or more hours generally 3,000' to 5,000'. Distances from 6 to 15 miles. Though each day is not strenuous plus, there are some sections that include rough terrain and open and exposed trails.

Luggage: This trip is van supported. Our luggage will be transported along with us between accommodations. The advantages to this are you will only need to carry a daypack during our hikes. Nonetheless, we encourage you to pack as lightly and as practically as possible, and only bring what you can easily and comfortably carry yourself. Most accommodations do not have elevators, and hallways can be narrow and winding. Keep in mind you will be packing and unpacking your bag and moving it in and out of the inns every couple of days. Each participant will be limited to one medium-sized piece of luggage.

Laundry: A few of the accommodations offer self-serve laundry facilities en-route, but it is still best to plan on hand washing as needed.

Connectivity: The inns on Monhegan and in Camden both have free wifi available, however cellphone coverage on Monhegan Island is spotty at best. Hotels may experience computer problems or service interruptions, so it is best to expect that you may not have access to the internet throughout the entire trip.

Travel: The trip will start and end with a pickup and drop off at Portland International Jetport. It is also possible to fly into Boston's Logan Airport. There is bus service from Logan to Portland, as well as train service from Boston's North Station in Boston's city center. Buses and trains arrive into the same terminal in Portland, which is only a short taxi ride from the airport.