

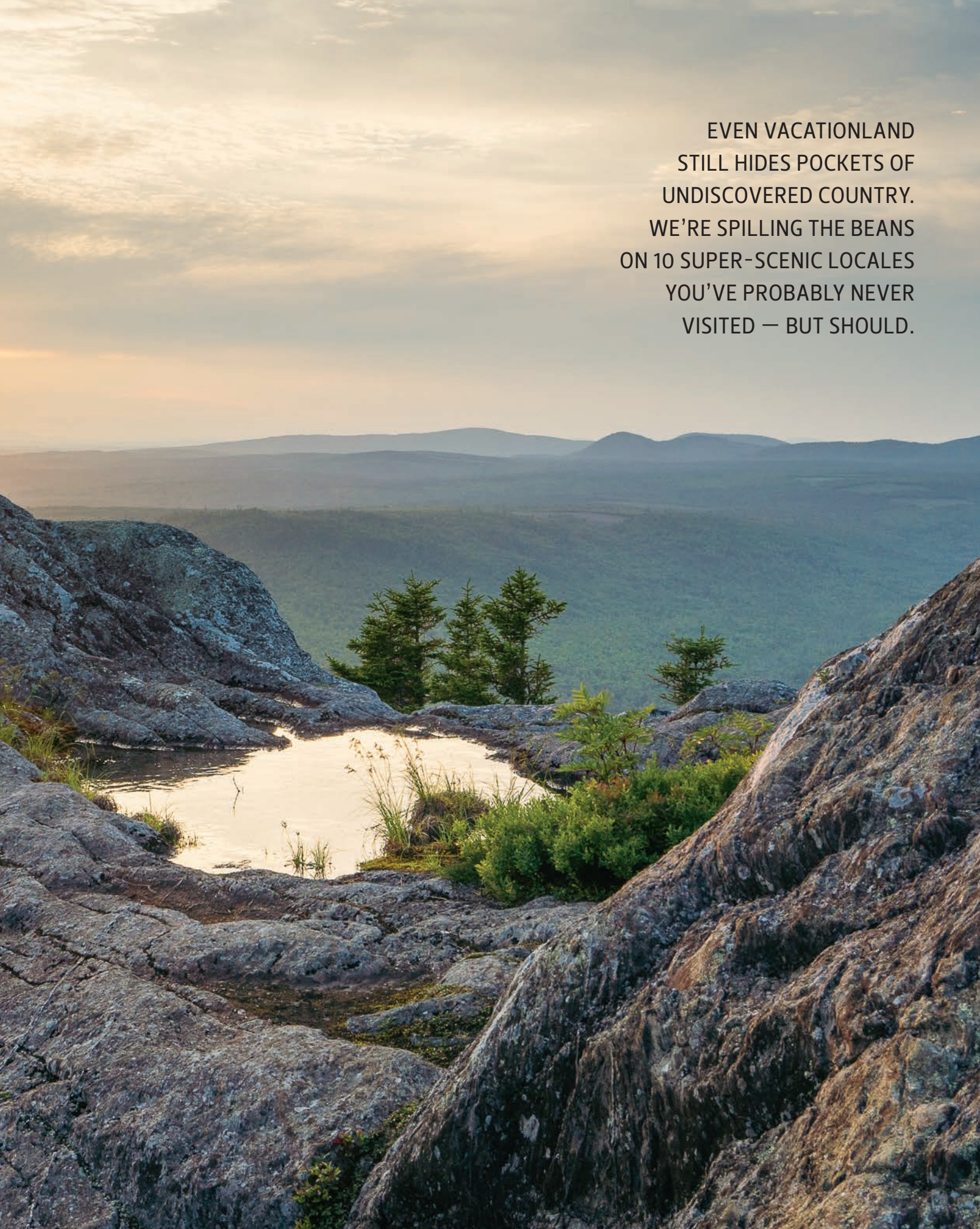
Down East

the best of

TRAVEL

Hidden

MAINE



EVEN VACATIONLAND
STILL HIDES POCKETS OF
UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY.
WE'RE SPILLING THE BEANS
ON 10 SUPER-SCENIC LOCALES
YOU'VE PROBABLY NEVER
VISITED — BUT SHOULD.

Borestone Mountain Audubon Sanctuary

At the southern end of the 100-Mile Wilderness is a rare mature forest, 1,639 acres uncut since the late 19th century, blanketing the slopes of Borestone Mountain. It's the Maine Audubon Society's largest and least-known preserve. Originally the rustic camp of a wealthy California family, the remote property has three stunning alpine ponds and a handful of turn-of-the-century lodges available for rent.

DON'T MISS

Peaks-Kenny State Park (401 State Park Rd., Dover-Foxcroft; 207-564-2003; maine.gov/peakskenney), on Sebec Lake, is known for its sand beach and gorgeous mountain views, as well as excellent salmon and trout fishing. Pitch a tent and spend the night or head over to **The Inn** (5 E. Main St., Dover-Foxcroft; 207-805-8839; dfmill.com), which caters to tenderfoots with six luxurious guest rooms in an elegantly renovated mill complex alongside the Piscataquis River. In the same building is a café serving panini, soups, and Maine craft beers.

▶ Just north of Monson village, turn right onto Elliotsville Rd. After 8 miles, turn left after the bridge onto Bodfish Rd. Parking area is .7 miles on the left, after the railroad tracks. The gate and trailhead are on the right. *Sanctuary*: 207-631-4050, *June–Sept.*; 207-781-2330, *Oct.–May*; maineaudubon.org/find-us/borestone-mountain-sanctuary



Giant's Stairs

Way, way back when the earth was young and restless, it bucked and shook until it cracked, allowing hot magma to burst forth and fill the seam. Over time – okay, several million years – that seam of basalt rock eroded into an oceanside cascade of ledges now known as the Giant's Stairs. Part of the McIntosh Lot Preserve owned by the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust and the town of Harpswell, the Giant's Stairs are at the midway point of a spectacular half-mile cliff-walk trail.

DON'T MISS

Under new ownership as of 2015, the iconic 61-year-old **Cook's Lobster & Ale House** (68 Garrison Cove Rd., Bailey Island; 207-833-2818; cookslobster.com) has greatly expanded its menu, including the ways it serves lobster (we counted 20). In Brunswick, the **Bowdoin College** campus (9500 College St., Brunswick; 207-725-3416; bowdoin.edu) is home to two superb – and very different – museums: Bowdoin College Museum of Art, exhibiting a fine collection of European, American, modern, and contemporary works, and Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum, chronicling the early-20th-century polar explorations of Robert E. Peary and Donald B. MacMillan with historic photos, fascinating taxidermy mounts, expedition gear, and other artifacts.

▶ From Cook's Corner in Brunswick, follow Rte. 24 south for 14.5 miles, crossing the Cribstone Bridge onto Bailey Island. Turn left on Washington Ave. Park at the Episcopal Chapel (except during services) or along the street. Trailheads are found on Ocean St. and Washington Ave. hhlmaine.org

Great Pond Mountain

The centerpiece of the 4,500-acre Great Pond Mountain Wildlands preserve in Orland, Great Pond Mountain is very nearly encircled by waterways. Stretching south are Craig, Heart, and Toddy ponds. To the west is Alamoosook Lake, fed by the Dead River, which wraps around the big hill's northwest corner. Tucked under its eastern slope is little Hothole Pond, and beyond it, Branch Lake and Upper and Lower Patten ponds. All of which make for some breathtaking scenery atop the 1,038-foot rocky summit, a relatively easy 1.2-mile climb.

DON'T MISS

The world's tallest bridge observatory, **Penobscot Narrows Observatory** (711 Fort Knox Rd., Prospect; 207-469-6553; maine.gov/mdot/pnbo) offers a dizzying 360-degree view of the river, mountains, and nearby towns. The observatory is within **Fort Knox State Park**, home to an exceptionally well-preserved (and slightly spooky) 19th-century military fortification that kids love to explore. Speaking of spooky, be sure to check out the mysteriously stained monument to Colonel Jonathan Buck in **Buck Cemetery** (across from Hannaford supermarket, Main St., Bucksport). Legend has it the leg-shaped stain is a curse for Buck's misdeeds, but a plaque in the cemetery tells a different story.

► From Bucksport, drive 6 miles north on Rte. 1. Turn left on Hatchery Rd. and drive 1.5 miles. Turn right onto Nature Trails Rd. and continue to Don Fish Tr. The Great Pond Mountain/Stuart Gross Trail is 1 mile past the Craig Brook National Fish Hatchery. greatpondtrust.org





Little Wilson Falls and Gorge

Just west of Borestone Mountain, Little Wilson Stream tumbles over a mile-long series of falls and pools. At one end is the lower falls, where picnickers settle on the sun-warmed slate ledges and watch their children slide like otters down a moss-lined chute into a pool deep enough for swimming. At the other end is the big attraction – and a favorite stop for Appalachian Trail hikers: the upper falls, which plunge nearly 40 feet into a long, deep, and narrow canyon. Along the way are several small falls and rapids and a few pools where anglers cast for trout.

DON'T MISS

Part natural history museum, part home store, part joke shop, **Kamp Kamp Moosehead Lake Indian Store** (3 Lily Bay Rd., Greenville; 207-695-0789) is the wackiest, most marvelous store in the North Woods. Curiosities include a taxidermy mount of a road-killed doe's stillborn fawn. **Lakeshore House** (9 Tenny Hill Rd., Monson; 207-997-7069; thelakeshorehouse.com), on Lake Hebron in Monson, is an inn and restaurant catering to families, AT thru-hikers, and sportsmen. The living room is stocked with games, puzzles, and toys. The restaurant, which serves yummy pub-style meals, sums up the vibe on its menu: "If you're in a hurry, this is not the place to be."

► Just north of Monson village, turn right onto Elliotsville Rd. and follow it about 7.5 miles. Turn left onto the gravel road opposite the turnout for Big Wilson Falls (also worth a visit) and drive .8 miles to the Maine Forest Service camping area and the lower falls. The access trail to the upper falls begins above the campground.

Seapoint Beach

A 550-yard sandy crescent backed by a salt marsh, Seapoint Beach is a favorite of families who like its gentle surf. But there's a reason this beach is something of a secret: summer parking is restricted to vehicles with valid Kittery dump stickers. Ignore the signs, and you're almost certain to be zinged with a parking ticket. Your choice: park in one of Kittery's villages and bike in or visit Oct. 1–May 14, when parking is unrestricted.

DON'T MISS

Kittery's dining scene has exploded in recent years with options that range from outdoor lobster shacks (**Chauncey Creek Lobster Pier**, 16 Chauncey Creek Rd., Kittery Point; 207-439-1030; chaunceycreek.com) to inventive gastropubs (**Black Birch**, 2 Government St., Kittery; 207-703-2294; theblackbirch.com) to contemporary bistros (**Anneke Jans**, 60 Wallingford Sq., Kittery; 207-439-0001; annekejans.net). Just down the road from Seapoint Beach, **Fort McClary State Park** (Pepperrell Rd., Kittery Point; 207-490-4079; maine.gov/fortmcclary) preserves the blockhouse, granite walls, and earthworks of a 19th-century installation and offers breathtaking views of Portsmouth Harbor.

► From Kittery Foreside, follow Rte. 103 east about 4 miles and turn right onto Cutts Island Ln. Drive 1 mile and turn right onto Seapoint Rd.



Witherle Woods

At the southerly tip of the Castine peninsula, Witherle Woods offers 4.2 miles of wide walking trails that meander through stands of spruce, fir, and hardwood. The crown jewel of the 185-acre preserve, managed by Maine Coast Heritage Trust, is Blockhouse Point, a stretch of steep bluff overlooking Penobscot Bay. Once a hotly contested, strategically significant Revolutionary War outpost, the woods now attracts birders in search of northern parulas and winter wrens, as well as locals and visitors wanting a quiet commune with nature.

DON'T MISS

Continue a little farther past the preserve entrance until you come to **Dice Head Light** (1 Battle Ave.). Stroll the grounds to take in the distinctive conical rubblestone tower built to guide ships at the mouth of the Penobscot River. Then, head back toward downtown



and stop for a short stroll through **Maine Maritime Academy's** scenic campus (1 Pleasant St.). The one-of-a-kind public college teaches all things marine — from engineering to biology to transportation (keep an eye out for midshipmen dressed in uniform). For hearty sandwiches, decadent sweets, and a water-view patio, stop by **Markel's Bakehouse** (26 Water St.; 207-326-9510) down near the town dock.

► From the intersection of Rte. 166 and Main St. in Castine, head south on Battle Ave. for a half-mile to the preserve entrance pullout on the right. Parking is available along the fence.

Swan Island

Just a five-minute boat ride from Richmond's waterfront park lies Maine's only ghost town – the six abandoned Colonial houses of what was once the 18th-century Kennebec River village of Perkins. At its peak, Perkins was home to 100 people, who made their living fishing, farming, building ships, and harvesting ice. Perkins died along with those industries, the final blow coming in 1936 when the Richmond-Dresden Bridge opened and the ferry ceased operations. Managed by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife as the Steve Powell Island Wildlife Management Area, the bucolic, 4-mile-long-by-.75-mile-wide island is today home to white-tailed deer, red foxes, and bald eagles (not to mention an unknown number of human spirits). The IF&W ferries visitors between Richmond and the island, where hikers and mountain bikers are free to explore the 7 miles of dirt roads and hiking trails. Lean-tos in a grassy field overlooking the Kennebec can be reserved for overnights.

DON'T MISS

Located in a restored Victorian mansion, the **Southard House Museum** (75 Main St., Richmond; 207-737-8202; southardhousemuseum.com) was started in the mid-1980s by Wilber Cooper as an end-of-life project after he was diagnosed with terminal cancer – it so reinvigorated him, it's said, that he lived another 21 years. It features exhibits about Richmond's shipbuilding and ice-harvesting past, as well as an extensive collection of antique tools. **Old Goat Pub** (33 Main St., Richmond; 207-737-4628), a handsome tavern that looks like it's been shipped over from England, is Richmond's very own Cheers, with a vast beer selection, excellent pizza, and friendly vibe.

▶ The waterfront park is in Richmond village on Front St. (Rte. 24), just north of its intersection with Main St. Reservations are necessary for all trips to Swan Island except for those accessing the island with their own canoe or kayak for day visits. Call 207-287-5252 or fill out the reservation form at maine.gov/ifw



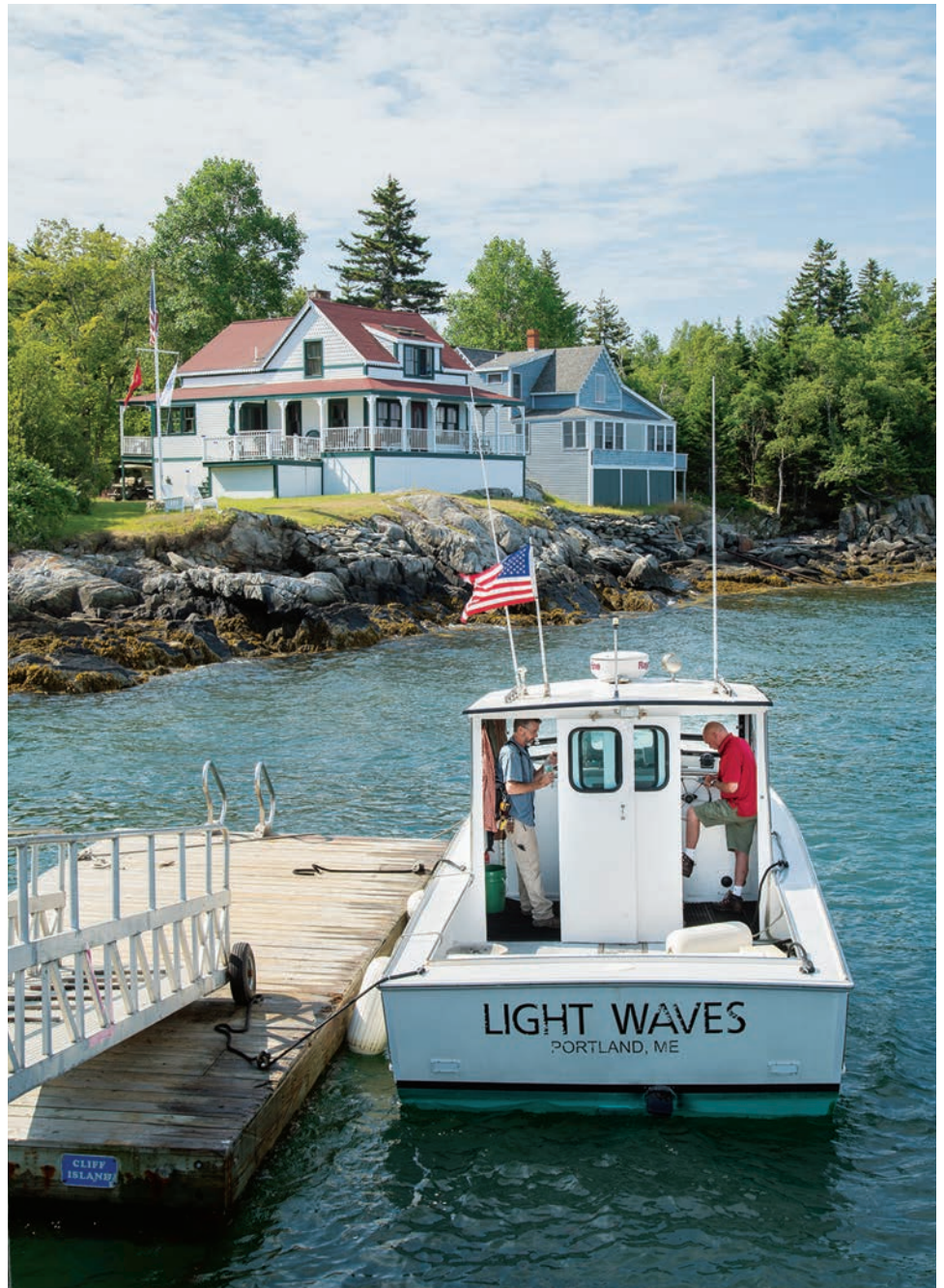
Abbott Mountain

Short and steep, with rewarding views of Square Pond and Mousam Lake, Abbott Mountain in the southwestern Maine town of Shapleigh makes a nice introductory hike for kids. Part of the 1.25-mile route is on a relatively flat (and private) dirt road that's heavily posted with signs banning ATVs, snowmobiles, and other forms of recreation – but hikers are permitted. The trail itself is a scramble to the bald, rocky summit. Abbott Mountain is part of the Vernon S. Walker Wildlife Management Area.

DON'T MISS

In a handsome renovated mill with enormous windows and lots of exposed wood and brick, **Mill 67** (61 Washington St., Ste. 3, Sanford; 207-324-6767) serves Franco-American comfort food like duck poutine and hearty (which is to say, big) pub entrees like burgers and ribs. Located in the former Arundel Barn Playhouse, **Vinegar Hill Music Theatre** (53 Old Post Rd., Arundel; 207-985-5552; vinegarhillmusictheatre.com) is well into an inaugural season that's heavy on nostalgic acts. September brings Johnny Winter, John Waite, and the Bob Seger tribute band Live Bullet, among others.

► From Sanford village, follow Rte. 11 west about 8.5 miles and turn right on Owls Nest Rd. Drive 4.5 miles to Pitts Rd.



Cliff Island

A 70-minute ferry ride from Portland, Cliff Island is Casco Bay's most remote island community and one of only 15 Maine islands supporting a year-round population – about 60 people. The Oceanside Conservation Trust of Casco Bay holds a conservation easement on 18 spectacular acres at The Bluffs, and the public is welcome on the wild headland's paths leading to North and South points.

DON'T MISS

Cheery yellow and red lobster buoys brighten the weathered storefront that houses **Jenn's Store and Cliff Island Café** (11 Wharf Rd.), which serves pizza, sandwiches, ice cream, and – yum! – Belgian waffles. Allow plenty of time before or after your trip for exploring Portland's historic **Old Port** (portlandmaine.com), which is jam-packed with boutiques, galleries, and great places to eat.

► The Casco Bay Lines ferry offers round-trip service between Portland and Cliff Island several times a day (frequency varies with the season). 207-774-7871; cascobaylines.com

Deboullie Public Reserved Land

A carpet of green rolls over 1,981-foot Deboullie Mountain and its equally forested foothills, overlooking sparkling backcountry ponds full of salmon and trout. A paradise for hikers, tent campers, and solitude seekers, these nearly 22,000 acres of rarely visited state land hide ice caves, rock slides, waterfalls, moose, lynx, and black bears.

DON'T MISS

A northern Maine landmark for 70 years, **Dean's Motor Lodge** (15 Main St., Portage; 207-435-3701) has great burgers and breakfasts, strong drinks from the bar, and a chatty staff. Inside Deboullie, **Red River Camps** (Chapman Tote Rd.; 207-435-6000; redrivercamps.com) on Island Pond is an old-school sporting camp that caters to anglers, but welcomes anybody who loves cozy cabins and hearty, family-style meals. At \$75 per person per night, their private island rental (with canoes and kayaks to come and go from your historic cabin and its two-story stone fireplace) is a steal of a luxe Maine vacation.

► From Portage in Aroostook County, take West Rd. to Fish River Rd. and the Fish River checkpoint for North Maine Woods. Turn right on Hewes Brook Rd. and follow it 20 miles to Deboullie. From St. Francis, take Rte. 161 to St. Francis Rd., registering at the checkpoint, and continue 8 miles. North Maine Woods day use and camping fees apply. northmainewoods.org; maine.gov/deboullie



BEST OF THE BEST

Travel

A selection of Editors' Choice winners from the last ten years of *Down East's* Best of Maine

What better place to learn rock climbing than at Acadia's famed Otter Cliff with Atlantic Climbing School?

2008

LAKESIDE ROMANCE

Lodge at Moosehead Lake

368 Lily Bay Rd., Greenville.
207-695-4400. lodgeatmooseheadlake.com

How luxurious is the Lodge at Moosehead Lake? So luxurious there's a fireplace in the bathroom of the Katahdin suite. The other carriage-house suites at this oasis of North Woods elegance are equally regal. And each of the five guest rooms in the main building comes equipped with its own theme illustrated in custom hand-carved furniture. This isn't a place to bring the kids, but for rustic romance (at a price) the Lodge at Moosehead is just the ticket.

SNOWMOBILE TRAIL

Maine Interconnected Trail System (ITS) 83

Aroostook County.
mesnow.com

Snowmobiling is big business in Aroostook County, and for good reason — the snow comes early, gets deep fast, and stays late. ITS 83 is the main drag, the Interstate 95 of snowmobiling in northern Maine, flat, wide, and groomed smoother than the ice on Long Lake. Once the rail bed for the Boston and Maine, the trail passes near or through all the major communities, such as Presque Isle and Caribou, yet shows off plenty of countryside, from wide-open potato fields to deep woods. In fact, don't be surprised to find a hotdog stand out in middle of nowhere, manned by members of the local snowmobile club. Even an Interstate made of snow needs its rest areas.

2009

NORDIC SKI CENTER

Carter's X-C Ski Centers

420 Main St., Oxford (Rte. 26).
207-539-4848.
786 Intervale Rd., Bethel.
207-824-3880.
cartersxcski.com

If 95 bucks for a lift ticket isn't lifting your spirits in winter, we still recommend hitting the trails . . . the flat ones. You know, cross-country trails, the ones requiring you to break a sweat to get anywhere. For our money, the best people to get you trekking are the folks at Carter's X-C Ski Shop, with centers in Bethel and Oxford. A family affair, Carter's has been renting and selling equipment for more than 40 years, and their passionate expertise will set you on the right path, no matter what your skiing savvy or skill. Both centers feature miles of groomed trails to traverse — just you, the skis, and the trees.

ROCK CLIMBING INSTRUCTION

Atlantic Climbing School

67 Main St., Bar Harbor.
207-288-2521.
acadiaclimbing.com

There are not many places around the globe where climbers can practice their vertical gymnastics at the water's edge, and the pink-granite Otter Cliff, in Acadia National Park, has got to be among the most user-friendly. Atlantic Climbing School has been leading visitors to the edge (and over it, actually) of this 60-foot-tall outcropping for more than 30 years, and he'll set a top rope that's right for your physical and emotional level. Classic routes like Rock Lobster (rated 5.9+, or challenging) ascend a giant detached pillar, while others like Riptide (rated 5.11+, very difficult) test even the toughest rock jocks, with tiny holds and overhanging finger cracks.

2010

TRAIL

Maine Island Trail

207-761-8225.
mita.org

Truly great ideas have a way of spreading, which is why it's no surprise that twenty-three years after Dave Getchell, Sr., and a small group of Mainers created the Maine Island Trail, the concept has spread to Florida, Minnesota, and Texas. Who wouldn't want to copy a model that allows kayakers, sailors, and weekend warriors access to 180 public and private islands, beaches, and coves in places as stunning and precious as Penobscot and Casco bays?

SECRET TOUR

Bath Iron Works and Maine Maritime Museum

243 Washington St., Bath.
207-443-1316.
mainemaritimemuseum.org

Especially since 9/11, there have been few places where you can witness the military in the making. But in the City of Ships, the men and women at Bath Iron Works and the Maine Maritime Museum have teamed up to offer one-hour narrated tours that tell you everything you might want to know about how 1,500-ton Aegis destroyers and the new Zumwalt-class destroyers are assembled right here alongside the Kennebec. Most of the tour guides are themselves retired navy sailors or BIW workers (often both!) who keep the tours (passengers are confined to trolleys for security reasons) lively and fun. The \$30 per person tour fee includes two days of admission to the maritime museum.

2011

RUSTIC LAKE RETREAT

Hunter Cove Cabins

33 Hunter Cove Rd., Rangeley.
207-864-3383.
huntercove.com

For many Mainers, three things represent the Triple Crown of success and happiness: A boat, a dog, and a camp. The first two can be had relatively easily, but if you're not ready for property taxes and maintenance bills, you'll do well to book a stay at Hunter Cove Cabins. This cozy six-acre complex has seven board-and-batten one- and two-bedroom cabins. Your boat can tie up at the dock on the lake, and your pup is as welcome in your cabin as you are.

ULTRALIGHT BACKPACK

HyperLite Mountain Gear

North Dam Mill, Biddeford.
1-800-464-9208.
hyperlitemountaingear.com

"Ultralight" equipment is the latest trend in backpacking, so it's no wonder Hyperlite Mountain Gear, a designer, manufacturer and supplier outdoor gear, is attracting attention for its Windrider Ultralight Pack. Made from the high performance sail-making fabric Cuben Fiber, the frameless, waterproof Windrider weighs only 25.5 ounces, yet easily carries thirty-five pounds of gear. Designed for long-distance hiking, we think it makes a great daypack too.

2012

OCEANFRONT CAMPGROUND

Lamoine State Park

Rte. 184, Lamoine.
207-667-4778.
maine.gov/cgi-bin/online/doc/parksearch/index.pl

Love Acadia National Park, but not the crowds? Lamoine State Park offers campers easy access to the park and a quiet place to lay their heads after a day of hiking and biking. Sitting on the shore of Frenchman Bay just east of the Trenton Bridge, the park offers spectacular views of Cadillac Mountain, Acadia's highest peak. Campsites are tucked in a white birch grove (the best are 56 to 61, all tent sites). With a sandy beach, relatively calm water for kayaking, and a picnic area, the park is a fine place to while away the day, too.

SECRET BEACH

South Beach

Long Island.

Unless you're one of the lucky souls with a home or rental on Long Island, a 3-mile long, 1-mile wide haven in Casco Bay, getting to South Beach is, well, no day at the beach. First, you have to catch a ferry at the Casco Bay

Ferry Terminal in Portland (boats leave several times a day in summer and, no, you can't take your car). Then, after a 45-minute ride, you must hoof it, beach gear and all, to the other side of the island, a 20-minute walk. None of this is unpleasant, mind you, but it does require planning. We think it's worth it. This serene largely state-owned beach has fine white sand and views of an island-sheltered cove.

2013

SURF SHOP

Wheels N Waves

365 Post Rd., Wells.
207-646-5774.
wheelsnwaves.com

Located in Maine's surfing capital, Wheels n Waves is the state's oldest surf shop. Don't let its funkiness fool you. Over the course of nearly forty years, owner Vic Brazen has built this Route 1 shop into a haven for both serious surfers and those picking up a board for the first time. Receive surfing and paddleboarding lessons starting at \$40 for two hours.

SPA TREATMENT

Soakology Foot Soak and Tea

511 Congress St., Portland.
207-879-7625.
soakology.com

Experience head-to-toe relaxation through the calming power of tea at Portland's Soakology. Sample from the teahouse's loose-leaf teas, then choose from a selection of more than twenty concoctions of foot soaks under the categories of relaxing, uplifting, curative, or moisturizing. Give your feet the Pine Tree State experience with the "Maine Woods Salts" — a blend of detoxifying sea salts, spruce, and rosemary essential oils.

2014

DAY TRIP

Down East Scenic Railroad

245 Main St., Ellsworth.
866-449-7245.
downeastscenicrail.com

Some 40 volunteers give their time to keep the restored excursion trains running on this historic stretch of the Calais Branch Line. The narrated route passes through woods, a wild-life-rich wetland, and a rail yard where vintage cars and equipment are refurbished. Pack a lunch for the picnic tables in the canopied (and fenced-in) open-air car. Tom Testa, president of the railroad's preservation trust, says passengers range from infants in slings to a retiree who once announced, "The last time I got on a train in Ellsworth, I got shipped overseas to World War II." Today's passengers return to the station after a 90-minute trip (we promise).

WINTER RETREAT

Hidden Valley Nature Center

131 Egypt Rd., Jefferson.
207-389-5150.
midcoastconservancy.org

Two cabins and a yurt are tucked in among nearly 30 miles of wooded trails at this midcoast gem of a nature preserve. Each is accessible by a short hike in summer, but the best time to visit Hidden Valley is in winter, when volunteers groom some ten miles of silent and varied cross-country ski terrain (intrepid skiers break trail throughout the rest of the property). Less than a mile from the parking area, the roomy yurt sleeps six on bunk beds and stays toasty with a wood-stove heating the domed, circular room. It's a perfect base camp for outdoor adventure.

2015

OLD-SCHOOL FUN

Palace Playland

1 Old Orchard St., Old Orchard Beach.
207-934-2001.
palaceplayland.com

Sure, Maine has more glamorous funfairs, but this is the last place in New England to enjoy the classic summer experience of a seaside amusement park. Old Orchard Beach's Palace Playland has been around in one form or another since 1902 and offers a kind of greatest-hits package of honky-tonk: a Ferris wheel and carousel, skeeball and bumper cars, a funhouse and fortunetellers, and (of course) a rollercoaster, offering a unique view of OOB's famous pier. Come on Thursday and stay for the fireworks.

CAMPGROUND UPGRADE

Maine Forest Yurts

430 Auburn-Pownal Rd., Durham.
207-400-5956.
maineforestyurts.com

Survivor winner Bob Crowley used some of his reality-show winnings to open this yurt retreat in 2013. Maine Forest Yurts is a 100-acre property on Runaround Pond with two furnished yurts, each 24 feet in diameter, spacious and modern variations on the round dwellings favored by nomads of the central Asian steppes. Why yurts? "My dad built one for himself out of birch wood and sail cloth," says Page Crowley, who manages the yurts for her parents. "We love the energy and the circular space. They're just magical."

SAUNA

Nurture Through Nature Retreat Center

888-207-7387.
ntnretreats.com

One sign of a good sauna is that you have to walk through the woods to get to it — just one

thing the beautiful cedar-lined sauna at Denmark's Nurture Through Nature Retreat Center (NTN) has going for it. Lined with prayer flags and situated next to a whispering brook (perfect for a post-steam dip), the wood-fired sauna follows the traditional Finnish model, taking hours to heat to 160–200 degrees, when spring water ladled over hot rocks will fill the room with steam. Make an appointment in summertime, when retreat season peaks in NTN's yurts and eco-cabins, or visit from October through April (when you most need a steam bath anyway) on Super Sauna Saturdays, relaxed open-sauna evenings that are a steal at \$15.

2016

DAY HIKE

Old Speck Mountain

Grafton Notch State Park, Bear River Rd., Newry.
207-824-2912

With its cable handrails, iron rungs, and ladders, the Eyebrow Trail on Maine's fourth-highest mountain (4,170 feet) is not for the faint of heart, but it's great fun with amazing rewards. The steep, rugged alternative to the lower part of the Old Speck Trail, the Eyebrow Trail passes along the edge of Eyebrow Cliff, overlooking Grafton Notch. Either trail will take you to the wooded summit, where an open observation tower awaits — and what a view! Before you are the rugged Mahoosucs and the Presidentials, billowing all the way to the horizon.

TRIVIA NIGHT

Paddy Murphy's

26 Main St., Bangor.
207-945-6800.
facebook.com/paddymurphyspub

Trivia nights are a great reason to go out with friends on a midweek evening instead of just plugging into Netflix at home. No need to gum up that elegant simplicity with esoterica or hyper-competition. At Paddy Murphy's easygoing affair, you get some questions right, others wrong, and it doesn't matter anyway because you have fun.

FAMILY MUSEUM

Seashore Trolley Museum

195 Log Cabin Rd., Kennebunkport.
207-967-2800.
trolleyuseum.org

"For the younger people, street cars are a new thing. For the older people, it's memories," says Seashore Trolley Museum volunteer John Middleton, nicely summing up the broad appeal of this sprawling electric-railway museum. Its roots date to 1939, when three railway enthusiasts chipped in to buy a single trolley car for \$150 from the Biddeford and Saco Railroad as the towns were transitioning to buses. The trio restored that car and



moved it onto leased farmland, where they rebuilt a section of railway that once connected Kennebunkport to York Beach. Today, the museum, a nonprofit run by devoted trolley geeks, owns some 250 vintage streetcars and railcars from New England and beyond. Restored vehicles are displayed in huge barns, while others await restoration on tracks spread across the 100-acre property. And yes, you can ride: hop on a car for a scenic, narrated, 20-minute round-trip on 1.5 miles of track.

2017

FESTIVAL

Acadia Night Sky Festival

Sept. 21-24.
Acadia National Park.
207-801-2566.
acadianightskyfestival.com

In 1999, the National Park Service added the protection of natural lightscapes to its mission, calling national parks “some of the last remaining harbors of darkness.” Acadia has since emerged as one of the NPS program’s stars (sorry). Free of the light pollution that obscures all but the brightest celestial bodies for some two-thirds of the world’s population, the park protects the largest expanse of naturally dark sky east of the Mississippi. Now in its ninth year, the Acadia Night Sky Festival celebrates darkness with stellar events like films and workshops, plus star parties at Seawall and Cadillac Mountain, where volunteer astronomers from all over New England set up telescopes and point out constellations and other heavenly features for visitors. Just bring your night-vision flashlight and sense of awe.

CRUISE

Maine BayCycle

Bell Buoy Park on Commercial St., Portland.
207-370-9508.
mainebaycycle.com

When spin classes, craft beer, and urban cycling have all become passé, what’s a Portland hipster to do? Combine all three — on a boat. Like a paddleboat on steroids, Neil Kinner’s 14-seat craft uses bicycle-style passenger pedals to power 90-minute voyages across Casco Bay. Unlike spin class, though, the pressure’s never too high: there’s a back-up motor in case you poop out. And you don’t need to be a hipster to appreciate the BYOB policy and Instagram-friendly views. It’s more booze cruise than exercise, really (though it doesn’t hurt to have pretty ripped quads).

CIVILIZATION ESCAPE

Cutler Coast Public Reserved Land

Off Route 191, Cutler.
207-941-4412.
maine.gov/cutlercoast

This Bold Coast preserve’s 4-mile stretch of soaring, wave-beaten cliffs is spectacularly wild, buffered from the nearest roadway by 1½ miles of forest. Ocean views are ever-present (and other hikers few) as you pass through woods and open meadows and across cobble beaches that sing with the ebb and flow of the waves.