

Maine



Blessed with one of America's most magnificent coastlines, Maine looms large over New England. Countless islands, deep-water harbors, and wild, glacier-carved bays create the dramatic beauty of Maine's rocky shores – which, if smoothed from end to end, would stretch more than 3500 miles. Planted along this seascape are fishing villages, summer resorts and picture-book colonial towns, with a thickly settled southern coast and wilder untouched scenery to the northeast. A suitable introduction to Maine is the old city of Portland, whose atmospheric downtown boasts a growing restaurant and gallery scene. East of there, the Midcoast offers a mix of old shipbuilding villages, academic settlements and pretty harbor towns. Further east lies Acadia National Park, a spectacular island of mountains, lakes, fjord-like estuaries and coves. Beyond it stretch the little-visited peninsulas and jagged cliffs running east to Canada.

While the coast is the fame of Maine, inland travel offers ample reward. This is, after all, 'the pine state' with forests covering 90% of the land. Thousands of lakes and ponds fill the vast wilderness, with moose and bald eagles far outnumbering humans. Maine's own stretch of White Mountains provide alpine appeal, luring snow-seekers to slopes near Bethel and Rangeley, while further east lies the cloud-piercing summit of Mt Katahdin.

Adventure comes in many forms in Maine, from racing white-water rapids to kayaking tranquil coves along the coast; there's hiking, bird-watching, mountain-biking and rock-climbing, with plenty of bucolic B&Bs in which to recover after the day is done. Perhaps best of all are the wondrous fruits of the sea. The lobsters fished from Maine waters have no equal anywhere on earth: other attractions aside, a lobster feast is reason enough to linger here.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Exploring the galleries, restaurants and bars on the atmospheric back streets of Portland's **Old Port District** (p474)
- Hiking up Cadillac Mountain, followed by a dip in Echo Lake in **Acadia National Park** (p508)
- Photographing the cliffs of **Monhegan Island** (p493), whose dramatic scenery has inspired countless artists
- Strolling the peaceful, historic lanes of **Castine** (p498), a marvelous colonial village on the sea
- Seeing the sun rise over the magnificent cliffs of **Quoddy Head State Park** (p512, the eastern-most point in America)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 207

■ POPULATION: 1.3 MILLION

■ AREA: 35,387 SQ MILES

Orientation & Information

Maine is the northernmost state in the continental United States, and the behemoth of New England, roughly equal in size to the other five states combined. To the north and west, Maine borders Canada and to the southwest New Hampshire (NH), with whom it shares a portion (53,000 acres) of the White Mountains.

Good sources of information include the following:

DeLorme's Maine Atlas & Gazetteer (www.delorme.com) The best map of the state, bar none.

Maine Office of Tourism (☎ 207-287-5711, 888-624-6345; www.visitmaine.com; 59 State House Station, Augusta) These folks maintain information centers on the principal routes into the state – Calais, Fryeburg, Hampden, Houlton, Kittery and Yarmouth. Each facility is open 9am to 5pm, with extended hours in the summer.

Maine Tourism Association (www.mainetourism.com) Links all Chamber of Commerce offices in Maine.

Maine Website (www.maine.gov) The state's official website.

Portland Press Herald (www.pressherald.mainetoday.com)

History

Maine's first inhabitants were descendants of Ice Age hunters, a hardy lot comprising dozens of tribes before the arrival of Europeans. They were collectively known as the Wabanaki ('people of the dawn'), and numbered perhaps 20,000 in Maine when the English set up Popham colony at the tip of the Phippsburg peninsula in 1607. Unlike Jamestown (Virginia), which was founded in the same year, the early Maine settlement failed and dispersed.

Over the next several generations, other English settlements sprang up in the Province of Maine, though settlers there faced enormous hardship from harsh winters and attacks by Native Americans. Adding insult to injury, Maine lost its sovereignty when Massachusetts took over the failing colony in 1692.

Bloody battles raged for many generations, destroying entire villages in Maine, with settlers facing attacks from Native Americans, the French and later the British. This didn't end until after the War of 1812, when the British finally withdrew from Maine. After ridding itself of the royal yoke, Maine focused on freeing itself from its Boston rulers, and in 1820 it gained its independence, becoming the 23rd state in the union.

The 19th century was one of tremendous growth for the new state, with the emergence of new industries. Timber brought wealth to the interior, with Bangor becoming the lumber capital of the world in the 1830s. Fishing, shipbuilding, granite quarrying and farming were also boom industries, alongside manufacturing, with textile and paper mills employing large swaths of the population.

Unfortunately, the boom days were short-lived, with a collapse on land (sawmills couldn't compete with larger, more accessible forests out west) and on sea (brought on by devastating overfishing) as nearly every major industry in Maine foundered. By the turn of the century, population growth stagnated and Maine became a backwater.

Ironically, Maine's rustic, undeveloped landscape would later become part of its great appeal to would-be visitors. Maine soon emerged as a summer cottage destination around the time the slogan 'Vacationland' (which still adorns Maine license plates) was coined in the 1890s. Today, tourism accounts for 15% of the state's economy (compared to the 6% average elsewhere in New England).

The Culture

Mainers are a tough breed. Their ancestors experienced many years of hardship, while today's generation continues to endure some of New England's fiercest winters and some of its least optimistic economic prospects. Among other things, this has led to a tenacious pride in being a 'native' – which means not only being born (and spending one's entire life) in Maine, but coming from a family that lived here at least a generation prior to one's birth. It's also set up a bit of antagonism with growing numbers of folk 'from away' who have summer homes in Maine, and are often blamed (rightly, it turns out) for driving up the price of real estate, which in turn has forced natives off their land.

Mainers trace their stock back to various waves of immigration, with large groups of Irish arriving during the potato famines of the 1840s. Significant numbers of Scots, Finns, Swedes and French Canadians have also planted their roots in the northern state. Meanwhile, the real Maine natives were mostly wiped out during the colonial days, with only five tribes remaining today – the Abenaki (southwest), Penobscot (south-central),