

Acadia National Park

Acadia National Park is spread out over three regions: Mount Desert Island, Schoodic Peninsula, and Isle au Haut. (*This is a work in progress – I have many miles of hiking in the park yet to do!*)

*Also, check out my page on **Mount Desert Island**. Outside of the park, you can explore several lovely preserves on the island. (I've added a few of the best non-park trails below, however.)

. **Isle au Haut**

A beautiful island, six miles long and two miles wide, with a small year-round community. The national park covers more than half the island, or approximately 2,700 acres, and has 18 miles of trails. There are even more town trails outside the park. Lots to explore here on foot or bike. (Although biking is only allowed on the roads—most of which are unpaved on the island—and not the footpaths.) The ferry from Stonington takes approximately 45 minutes.

. **Schoodic Peninsula**

The national park on Schoodic Peninsula is a little sibling of sorts to Acadia National Park on Mount Desert Island. While Schoodic is popular, it's far less crowded than Mount Desert. It's not quite as dramatic as the island, but still beautiful. It has about 18 miles of walking and biking trails.

. **Mt. Desert Island**

I have two main pieces of advice for hiking in Acadia: it always pays to walk toward the sea when you're hiking along the park's long north-to-south mountain ridge trails. And two, try to get to any trailhead before 9:30 am during the high season (roughly June through October). That seems to be the magic cut-off between being able to find a parking spot and not!

It's amazing how many beautiful trails are packed into this famous oceanside park. You can walk for days, and the views of lakes and hills, intricate coves and ocean inlets are always breathtaking (that is, when it's not foggy, a common phenomenon here). The only possible downside is the popularity of the park and the crowds you'll encounter everywhere if you visit in the summer. If possible, visit the park in the shoulder season—spring or fall. But wintertime is also wonderful, too, with miles of cross-country ski trails (on the carriage roads), and great hiking on quiet trails (as long as you have good micro-spikes to pass over treacherous ice sheets).

The trails in Acadia can also be very steep and dangerous (climbing rungs and ladders up cliff faces, for instance). If this is not your thing at all, pay close attention to the parks' trail levels—easy, moderate, and advanced. Also, leashed dogs are allowed in the park, but not on the most challenging and dangerous trails. You can see a list of those no-dog trails here.

Western Acadia:

Easy:

- Wonderland Trail— An easy 1.5-mile flat hike along an old gravel road to a beach and quiet spots along Bennett Cove.
- Ship Harbor Trail – Close to Wonderland Trail, Ship

Harbor Trail offers slightly more dramatic scenery than Wonderland and so is a bit more popular. It's a flat and easy 1.5-mile trail.

- Blue Horizons – The attractions of this Maine Coast Heritage Trust preserve are more subtle than many walks in the national park, but the views of Clark Cove and the Narrows from the wide cobblestone beach are wonderful.
- Indian Point Blagden Preserve (The Nature Conservancy)– A walk through the forest brings you to an old apple orchard (the apples are yummy) and to a varied and pretty seashore.
- Long Pond trail – You can stroll along Long Pond for about two miles, on its western shore, before the trail swing into the woods and up Western Mountain. The path is flat and made of packed gravel, but is not wheelchair accessible the whole way.

Moderate to challenging:

- Western Mountain– Comprising Bernard and Mansell Mountains, this offers a slightly less crowded hiking experience in the summer, and also slightly less spectacular views. That being said, the trails up Mansell Mountain (also also Western Ridge Trail?) still have great views, or “view windows,” in the parlance of hiking guides. Bernard Mountain's summit is wooded. I also recommend taking the long route along Long Pond, then swinging up and over Mansell Mountain (~7.5 miles).
- Beech Mountain – Beech Mountain rises up between Long Pond and Echo Lake, with fabulous views of both. There's an old fire tower (you can't ascend it) on the open summit. The best views, however, are from the Beech Cliff Loop.
- Acadia, St. Sauveur, and Flying Mountain – You can do a number of great, short, impressive loops in this little mountain area. While St. Sauveur has no views from its

summit, you'll probably hike over it on a loop, which absolutely must incorporate Valley Peak Trail, with wonderful views.

Eastern Acadia

Easy

- Jordan Pond Loop – The 3.3-mile trail around the pond is mostly easy, with the exception of a short stretch where you walk around fallen boulders. There is a long and fun boardwalk on the eastern side of the pond. This trail also forms the base of some great hikes up mountains.
- Great Meadows, Jesup, and Hemlock paths – You can walk along birch-lined paths, through boggy forest, and along a lovely, long boardwalk on this flat and partially wheelchair-accessible path. It also forms the base of hikes up nearby Kebo, Dorr, Cadillac, and Champlain Mountains.
- Land & Garden Preserve (Little Long Pond and Hunters Cliffs areas) – The 1,400-acre preserve to the south of Acadia is fun to explore for its clear, cold streams, swimmable pond, open meadows, and quiet forests. There is a mix of easy, gravel carriage roads (no bikes allowed) and moderately easy footpaths. You can also charge up the small Eliot Mountain for a nice (albeit not-Acadia-level-dramatic) view!
- Shore Path – Stroll along the edge of the sea with expansive views of the Narrows, alongside stately “cottages” and a couple of small town parks. The path is wide and made of gravel.
- Compass Harbor Trail – A 0.8-mile loop around the ruins of Dorr’s old cottage and gardens, with views of the harbor. The path is easy; some of it is wheelchair accessible.
- Ocean Path – An incredible—and very popular—2.2-mile

packed gravel path that follows the granite coastline from Sand Beach to Otter Point. There are many side paths where you can explore the cliffs, blocky ledges, and cobblestone beaches.

- Breakneck Road – For those who want to stray from the crowds, Breckneck Road offers a quieter walk—three miles one way—through mixed forest along an old road crumbling into an easy walking path. (There are some more eroded sections, though.) The ponds offer a nice place to pause.
- Schooner Head Path – A roughly 2.5-mile trail one way connects Compass Harbor Trail with the Schooner Head overlook. The path is wheelchair accessible and sticks close to Schooner Head Road. There's an interesting, unmarked side trail along the road that is worth checking out.

Moderate

- Eliot Mountain – The 456-foot Eliot Mountain is nestled in the middle of the 1,400-acre Land & Garden Preserve, just south of the park. It is a quick and easy climb, about 1.2 miles from the Harbor Brook trailhead. Or you could do a 1.8-mile loop to the summit if you start at the trailhead below Thuya Garden, off Route 3. (This trail is not technically in Acadia, it's in the adjacent Land & Garden Preserve.)
- Hunters Cliff Trail – A gorgeous 1.3-mile there-and-back trail along the cliffs on the south side of the island. You'll visit a cobblestone beach and walk along high ledge with great views. (This is also not technically in the park; it's part of the Land & Garden Preserve.)
- Great Head – A stunningly gorgeous loop, about 2.5 miles or less, around a rocky promontory, with views of the ocean, Newport Cove, Sand Beach, and the knobby peaks of the park.

Moderate to challenging

- Kebo Mountain – A 2.5-mile round trip (or thereabouts) brings you to the pitch-pine forest summit of Kebo. There are no views from the official summit, but I found a view slightly off the summit. Many people combine Kebo with nearby Dorr Mountain.
- Norumbega Mountain – A 3.3-mile loop, with one steep path (the Goat Trail) to a summit ridge and decent views.
- The six peaks: Parkman, Bald Peak, Sargent, Penobscot, Gilmore Peak, and Cedar Swamp – Between Route 3 and Jordan Pond is an area that offers some of the best hiking in the park. You can choose your loop to accomplish as many of the summits as you want. I particularly enjoyed Sargent and Penobscot Mountains for their exposed summits and long ridges with panoramic views. The hardest path in this region is the Giant Slide – but it could also be considered the most fun (at one point you have to crawl through a cave that retains its ice well into spring!).
- The Beehive and Gorham Mountain – For a dramatic 3.5-mile loop, hike up The Beehive (which includes scaling a few iron rungs on cliffs!), over to Gorham Mountain, and back along the heavenly gravel Ocean Path.