

SUMMER FUN & TRAVEL

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Nature's Beauty

Off the beaten paths of Acadia National Park

By PEGGY NEWLAND
Special to The Sunday Telegraph

We drive past a field of sunflowers in Eden, Maine, on the way to Acadia, and it's as if the name of this town predicts the present moment. Bluffs filled with spruce, the careen of seagulls following breezes through Mt. Desert Narrows, and the light on a pale blue harbor makes picture postcard memories even before a hike or bike ride. With Maine open for folks from New Hampshire and Vermont, my husband and I take advantage of some midweek days and a bed and breakfast special at Harborside Hotel, and make sure to pack enough for all- things-outdoors.

After dumping our suitcases at Harborside Hotel and refraining from sitting on the outside deck overlooking Bar, Goat, and Sheep Islands and the tranquil marina, we head for the hills. Our favorite trail – Dorr Mountain – just off Otter Creek Road, is empty. The mountain is only one range away from the more popular and drivable Cadillac Mountain, but it is a world away of excitement, especially if you take the Ladder Trail. Up we go on the series of iron ladders skirting up and over cliffs through narrow breaks of granite. It stays steep, up rock-hewn stairs, and connects to Schiff Path, and soon we are in thick forest on planked walkways over streambeds. When we reach the summit at 1,270 feet, we spy a sailboat regatta in Frenchmen Bay, and watch as fog rises along the Cranberry Islands. After a quick snack, we barrel down boulders and rock ledges and find a moss garden meant for gnomes and elves. We finally make it back to the car at dusk and pick up some to-go dinners and Fogtown lagers at Lompoc Café. We watch the night sky, and the stars seems closer from the deck.

The next morning, after a breakfast sent to the room of fresh berries, homemade granola, and hearty breakfast sandwiches of egg, fresh tomato, arugula, and farmstead goat cheese, we are off early to bicycle the Park Loop Road. We zip through town and take Schooner Head Road to the start of the “beauty ride.” We glide past Sand Beach Overlook and head toward the iconic Thunder Hole. The sounds of pounding surf are all around us and each wave makes a louder howl, even without a Nor’easter brewing. Every turn and rolling hill on the Loop Road is breathtaking, so we pull over to walk along Otter Cliffs and over to Boulder Beach. This is iconic Maine coast, with spruce growing into the sea along tight ledges of granite, lupine growing wild in meadows, and the perpetual sound of foghorn. We continue to the Western Point and down to Hunters Beach, one of my favorite places in the world.





Photo by PEGGY NEWLAND

Acadia National Park in Maine offers some of the most breathtaking views in all of New England.

ACADIA

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A pocket cove with cobble-tumbled stones smoothed by tide, and a babbling brook, it is the place for a long lunch on a smooth slab of granite after a quick dip in the sea.

Not wanting to finish the ride on the busier, two-way Jordan Pond Road, we hoof up Day Mountain carriage trail and follow it over to Bubble Pond, a beautiful, mountain-enclosed slip of clear water.

“Should we bicycle up Cadillac?” my husband asks, once we are back on the trails.

“Sure,” I say, knowing that the elevation is 1,530, and we will have to ride all the hairpin curves to get to the top.

“Highest peak on the East Coast,” he adds, as we start uphill.

It is a long slog, but each turn gets us higher and higher. A falcon follows us for one U-turn, and then another, and the wind is cooler the further we ride up. We stop at a turn-off for views of Porcupine

Islands and continue to another glide-by of Blue Hill Peninsula. When we reach the flat-away on top of Cadillac, a racer/biker gives us a thumb’s up as he zooms down. We take some celebratory photos at the peak, and then zip down the mountain, all the way to town, at a more leisurely pace.

Upon return, we get some “much deserved” Sea Dog lagers from the bar and walk over to the Bar Harbor Club (included in a stay at Harborside Hotel) for a dip in the hot tub and

lounge chair for sunset.

That night, we treat ourselves to pick-up seafood dinners from La Bella Vita, the hotel’s in-house restaurant. We start with wild mushroom risotto and hand-crafted gnocchi, and then dig into lobster rolls, with home-made chips. For dessert, two wild Maine blueberry pie slices, followed with to-go brandies. Sitting in Adirondack chairs on the deck, we listen as the docked sailboats creak

and bob, hear a distant buoy clang, and lean our feet deep into railing, enjoying the nighttime view of shadowed islands.

The next morning, after more in-room breakfasts, we make a day of it, bicycling the carriage trails: first from Duck Brook, with a loop to Paradise Hill (so easy compared to Cadillac Mountain!), and then head around Aunt Betty Pond to Hadlock Pond, and around Parkman Mountain. We’ve got

plans to go swimming in Echo Pond in the afternoon, and the day has just begun.

Harborside Hotel and Spa. 55 West Street. Bar Harbor. www.theharborsidehotel.com. 866-258-7253. Ask for the online/mid-week: 50% off Sunday-Thursday, after two nights.

Acadia National Park. www.acdiamagic.com. Hiking and biking maps. Lodging and food details, in and outside the park.

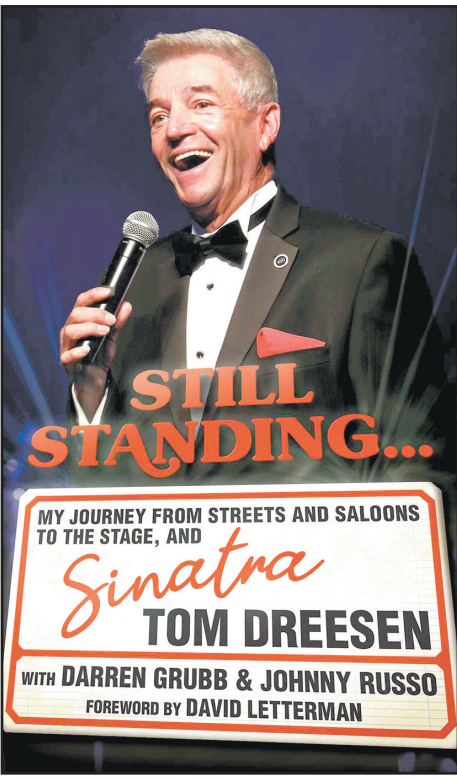
Dreesen to talk about his new book

Toadstool Books and the Nashua Public Library will host comedian Tom Dreesen for a virtual event at 7 p.m. Aug. 6.

Dreesen has made more than 500 appearances on national television as a stand-up comedian, including more than 60 appearances on “The Tonight Show.” He was a favorite guest of David Letterman and frequently hosted the show in Letterman’s absence. For 13 years, he toured cross-country and opened for Frank Sinatra and has appeared countless times in Las Vegas, Tahoe, Reno and Atlantic City with artists like Smokey Robinson, Liza Minnelli, Natalie Cole and Sammy Davis Jr.

He has acted in numerous television shows – from “Columbo” to “Murder She Wrote” – and appeared in motion pictures including “Man on the Moon” and “Spaceballs.”

Join him as he talks about his new book, “Still Standing: My Journey from Streets and Saloons to the Stage, and Sinatra.” Registration is required to receive information about connecting to the virtual event. Register at tinyurl.com/npllectures.



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