

On Location: Fall Foliage on the Maine Coast

by Photographer Raymond Klass

The Maine coast is a truly inspiring place to be during the peak of autumn foliage season. This fall I spent a week in the Bar Harbor area before leading a week-long workshop there. It was a refreshing time to be there simply to capture the changing of the season.

Bar Harbor is by far the largest town within close proximity to Acadia National Park, which occupies much of Mount Desert Island. As for lodging and amenities, most anything you would need, from a grocery store to a lifetime supply of blueberry pancakes can be found in Bar Harbor. For those who don't fancy camping, Bar Harbor is also a good choice for lodging. There are hotels, motels, and B&Bs scattered throughout the area.



If you're interested in camping, the park offers two main campgrounds – Seawall and Blackwoods. I've stayed at both, and enjoyed them both. Seawall is a bit smaller, and it's located off of Mount Desert Island – it's a quieter experience, but also a further drive from the main park loop. Blackwoods on the other hand is a larger campground, and is the only one open during the foliage season. Both have nearby amenities, like hot coin-operated showers and laundry facilities.

The park is open year round, but during the winter many local restaurants and shops close down for the season. I would recommend visiting during the late spring (May – June) for spring flowers, or during the middle to end of October for fall foliage. The summer can be quite crazy, as almost 3 million people visit the park annually.

The coastal temperatures are quite moderate most of the time, though both the spring and fall seasons can range from balmy to quite chilly. While we were there, we saw lows in the 40s and occasionally in the 30s, with highs between the 50s and upper 60s. As long as you're prepared with an extra layer – especially one that stops the wind, you'll be just fine.

If you only have one day at the park, the place to start is the loop road. From start to finish, it's a short (distance) drive that'll take you almost an entire day with stops. The road explores some of the park's most prominent features, like Cadillac Mountain, Sand Beach, Jordan Pond, and others. It weaves through beautiful coastal scenes and alongside amazing inland lakes.





For sunrise, there are some great locations along the Eastern coast of Mount Desert Island. Here you can get some beautiful reflected light on the rocks and mountains of the park. There are several pull-offs near the Otter Cliffs parking area. These lead you to a trail alongside the coast, with nearly continuous views of both the ocean and the mountains of the Mount Desert Island. Make sure you get here at least a half hour before sunrise, as the display of color can start quite early.

One of the amazing things about the area is the diversity of photographic opportunities available to visitors. Just across Mount Desert Island from the Otter Cliffs, which are known for their sheer granite ledges, are Jordan Pond, and Eagle Lake. These two inland lakes are separated by Bubble Rock – a rounded-over mountain top that rises a little over 500 above the lakes. Both lakes provide great views of the rock, and if the water is still, they both can provide amazing reflection, especially during fall foliage season.

Lastly, there's one place not exactly in the park – it's more of a local park loaned to residents by the Rockefeller family. Located just outside the Stanley Brook Park entrance on route 3, is a small park called Little Long Pond. It's a popular dog-walking area, but also has amazing views of the mountains of the park, along with a picturesque boat house and crystal clear inland lake.

The Maine coast is an amazing place to explore. From sheer cliffs and granite rock, to Cadillac Mountain, where the sun first rises on the East Coast, and deep blue inland lakes, there is a tremendous range of subjects to explore. Whether you fancy hiking a carriage road, mountain path, or simply stepping out of your car onto a sand beach – Acadia National Park is a place with something for everyone, and somewhere that should be on every photographer's list of places to visit.

