

KATAHDIN

Baxter State Park



Know Before You Go

Tips for preparing a visit to Maine's Wilderness

Baxter State Park is unique. Not really a “state” park, it was a gift to the people of Maine from just one person, Percival P. Baxter. The Park covers more than 200,000 acres, encompassing its own mountain range dominated by Katahdin, Maine's highest mountain. It is administered by a special Authority and is independently funded.

To Percival P. Baxter, the resources — the land and the animals — were primary, and people secondary. A continuing effort to live up to this important resource-first and people-second requirement is the guiding philosophy of Park management today.

In his planning, Baxter set aside 30,000 acres in the northern part of the Park for the practice and demonstration of modern commercial forestry methods. Called the Scientific Forest Management Area (SFMA), this section has hiking trails and campsites, is open to hunting in season, and shows evidence of forestry operations and hauling roads. It is a popular fishing area early in the season.

Contact Information for the Park:

Baxter State Park Headquarters
64 Balsam Drive
Millinocket, ME 04462
(207) 723-5140

baxterstateparkauthority.com

Visitor Center at Togue Pond Gate

Go to the Park's website for more information about the Park, including maps.

When to Go

The summer camping season is from May 15 to Oct. 15, depending on weather conditions. If you are planning early or late season visits, best to check first with Park Headquarters.

A winter season from Dec. 1 to March 31 is open to cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and mountaineering. Snowmobiling is permitted on the Park Tote Road. Special rules apply and can be obtained from Park Headquarters or viewed on website.

Single-day visits are common for persons living or staying nearby; but for others, the remoteness may result in a lot of car travel and limited time on the ground. A summer day trip with the intention of climbing Katahdin may begin in, and end in, the dark and is only possible for persons in very good physical condition.

Park gates close at night, and there are trail cut-off times for starting out on specific trails, both of which differ depending on the time of year. Check with Park Headquarters, Visitor Center, Togue Pond or Matagamom Gate to avoid the disappointment of arriving too late to hike.

Where to Go

Although camping in the Park is restricted to authorized sites, there are a variety of camping experiences available to visitors.

Daicey Pond and Kidney Pond campgrounds offer private cabins with beds with mattresses, propane lanterns, and woodstoves. There are no cooking or bathing facilities.

Russell Pond and Chimney Pond campgrounds offer hike-in, backcountry camping in wild settings. Lean-tos, tentsites, and a bunkhouse are available at Russell Pond, while Chimney Pond offers lean-tos and a bunkhouse. Open fires are not allowed at Chimney Pond.

Roaring Brook, Abol, Katahdin Stream, Nesowadnehunk, South Branch, and Trout Brook campgrounds are drive-in facilities offering lean-tos, tenting, and in most cases bunkhouses. A limited number of walk-in and group sites are available at or near these campgrounds.

Backcountry sites are scattered through the Park, allowing individual parties (usually a maximum of four) the opportunity to camp in isolated and primitive areas.



All facilities are rustic and without electricity. Use of any soap or detergent or the disposal of food scraps in the streams or waters of the Park is prohibited. All garbage and trash must be carried out; human waste only in out-houses, please.

Sites at campgrounds accessible by car have a fire pit and picnic table. Firewood is available for sale in the Park. Please do not bring firewood into the Park as it can harbor unwelcome critters and diseases. Plan to bring either potable water or a means to treat or purify water from local sources. There are no stores within the Park, and gas and other supplies are not available. All sites require a reservation prior to camping.

What to Do

Hiking: The Park holds both charm and adventure for the hiker. There are dozens of trails, from gentle paths through lowlands and along brooks and streams to challenging scrambles along narrow granite routes high above timberline. Some are brief walks to scenic spots; others are multi-day rambles through wilderness. Excellent maps of Park trails are available at Park Headquarters, the Visitor Center, and the Park website.

Fishing: Fishing opportunities abound; some are readily accessible while others are remote and require long hikes or boat trips. Motorboats are allowed on Matagamon and Webster lakes. Outboard motors of 10 h.p. or less are permitted on Upper and Lower Togue ponds. Most streams and some brooks have good to excellent brook-trout fishing as do many ponds. Special rules apply within the Park so be sure to check *State of Maine Open Water Fishing Regulations* for details; booklet is available at www.mefishwildlife.com or from license sources.

Bird Watching: Birds range from the citized robin to more rare species such as the northern three-toed woodpecker. You can pick up a list of birds seen in the Park at Headquarters or the Visitor Center.

Rock Climbing: Many fine alpine climbs can be found on Katahdin and adjacent peaks, especially in the steep-walled cirques known as “basins.” Here also are many wall climbs. Because some of the climbs are remote, such as in North Basin, early starts with the anticipation of long days are required—and a good flashlight and spare batteries are as important as your climbing rack. Climbing parties are required to check in with the ranger at the nearest trailhead—Roaring Brook, Chimney Pond, Katahdin Stream, or Abol, and cut-off times for departure vary with location and season.

Swimming: Swimming is permitted in ponds and streams unless otherwise restricted, but there are no life-guards. In most cases the water is cold to very cold.

Photography: There are exciting opportunities for picture-taking, including animal shots and spectacular mountain views. Bring extra batteries. The Park provides guidelines regarding wildlife-watching etiquette since it is important to avoid wildlife harassment.

Hunting: About 25% of the Park is open to hunting in season in designated areas in the northern and southern sections. Special rules apply and can be obtained from Park Headquarters and Park website.

Boating: Persons using motorboats must register for day use. Motorboats are limited to just a few lakes (see “Fishing” above), but canoes and kayaks are permitted on many streams and ponds. Rental canoes are available at pond-side campgrounds and most backcountry sites. If

you are planning to canoe through the Park via Webster Lake and Stream, you must have a reservation.

Winter Sports: Snowmobiling is permitted on the Park Tote Road. Cross-country skiing, mountaineering, and winter camping are possible during the winter season, but remoteness and harsh conditions place heavy responsibility on users to care for themselves. As a result, special regulations are in place for the winter season. Please contact Park Headquarters or visit Park website for details.

Making a Summer Camping Reservation

Rolling Reservations System: A reservation may be made by mail or in person at Park Headquarters up to four months in advance of the day of the desired reservation. For example, to make reservations for July 15th, the earliest you could do so is on March 15th. Reservations are accepted for up to seven days for any one site and any one campground and up to 14 days total duration for one visit to the Park.

Last-Minute Reservations: Phone-in reservations are accepted no earlier than 14 days prior to the first date of the desired reservation. There is a limit of one phone-in reservation per caller per day. Phone-in reservations must be paid by credit card.

Day Use Parking Reservations: If you want to climb Katahdin, you can make a Day Use Parking Reservation (DUPR) for Katahdin trailheads located at Roaring Brook, Abol, or Katahdin Stream Campgrounds. A parking reservation costs \$5. Call DUPR reservation line at (207) 723-3877 or make a reservation online at baxterstateparkauthority.com

More Information: To obtain a printable reservation form, to view available campsites in the Park, or to make a reservation online for a single campsite for up to 7 consecutive days, go to baxterstateparkauthority.com When planning a trip for tomorrow, call Hiker information line (207) 723-INFO or (207) 723-4636.

What to Bring

Day Trip: Your daypack should include a basic first-aid kit, insect repellent, warm clothing (even in summer), map, compass, flashlight, rain gear, water, food, sunblock, sunglasses. You might want to include a camera, guide-books, and sketch pad as well.

Extended Trip: Your automobile will take you to several campgrounds so your choices of what to bring are limited only by your imagination or the carrying capacity of your car. However, if your goal is one of the walk-in campgrounds or remote campsites, weight and utility will dictate careful choices in gear, food, and clothing. If you plan to do any hiking or mountaineering, ankle-high boots or rugged shoes — broken in *before* you come — with firm soles offer both comfort and protection.

Camping Gear: If you stay in a lean-to, bunkhouse, or cabin, your needs will pretty much be centered on eating and sleeping. With a lean-to, you can cook over a wood fire (except at Chimney Pond, Davis Pond, and Wassataquoik Island), but you will have greater flexibility if you have a camp stove. Stoves and extra fuel are a necessity if you are at a bunkhouse or cabin. You must supply all pots, pans, dishes, and utensils. Sleeping bags, pads, or mattresses are needed except at Kidney and Dacey ponds where mattresses are provided. Tentsites near a car or boat allow a wider choice in the size of your tent; tent weight determines the limit when backpacking to remote sites. A big fly or tarp is a welcome shelter over a cooking area during bad weather. The Park does not allow nails in trees or lean-tos.

Leave No Trace: The Park has a carry-in/carry-out policy. All non-burnable waste must be carried out. Keep garbage to a minimum and store it in animal-proof containers in your car or hanging from a bear line.

What Not to Bring

Pets: No pets or other domestic animals are allowed in the Park.

Firearms: No firearms, pistols, air guns, bows and arrows, or slingshots are allowed except in limited circumstances. (See “Hunting” above.)

Power Equipment: Chainsaws, generators, and other power equipment are not allowed.

Electronic Devices: The use of audio or visual media devices in any way that impairs the enjoyment of the Park by others is prohibited.

Back Country Hazards

Hypothermia: Hypothermia, the “progressive physical collapse and reduced mental capacity resulting from the chilling of the inner core of the human body,” can oc

cur even at temperatures above freezing. Temperatures in the Park can drop rapidly. Exposure to frigid bodies of water and sudden mountain storms can turn a pleasant day into a life-threatening experience. Be prepared!

Water Hazards: Particular care is needed where water flows over a ledge since the rock may be extremely slippery. Water level in streams can rise rapidly in storms, making crossings difficult or impossible.

Solo Travel: While it is safer to travel the backcountry in company with another, it is not required. If you do plan to go solo, let someone, preferably a ranger, know your plans and expected time of return — and check in when you do return. Be sure to use the hiking register. Special rules apply to winter solo use.

Insects: Tiny black flies are the first biting flies to appear in the spring, joined quickly by even tinier no-see-ums or midges. Fortunately, black flies quit at sundown; unfortunately, midges do not. By June, mosquitoes show up, slacking off toward autumn. In deep summer, green deer flies and larger black moose flies happily chew on unprotected skin. Most insect repellents also protect against ticks.

Lightning: Lightning is most hazardous above treeline but is dangerous anywhere. If caught in the heights, seek a low spot and squat down, making yourself as small as possible. Groups should spread out to avoid multiple victims. Metal frame packs should be removed. Do not lie down. Below treeline, move to shelter or, if in the woods with no other option, take shelter under the shorter trees. Stay away from water or wet places.

How to Get Around in the Park

Vehicles: Roads are unpaved. Speed limit is 20 m.p.h. or as posted. Permitted vehicle size is limited to 9' high, 7' wide, and 22' long. Entrance permits are provided at the Park gate. Motorcycles, motorized trail bikes, and ATVs are not allowed. Bicycles can be used only on Park roads but not on SFMA roads.

On Foot: Hikers should wear appropriate footwear and clothing and carry a working flashlight. Children under the age of 6 are not allowed above treeline. Groups of minors (under age 16) require supervision of one person 18 years or older for every five minors.

What to Expect on the Trail

Weather: Baxter State Park weather can change very rapidly. Weather forecasts are posted daily at campgrounds. Rain, wind, and lightning spell danger, especially if you are above treeline. Heavy downpours can quickly flood brooks and streams. Year-round there is always the possibility of hail, sleet, and even snow.

Animals: The Park is populated by a wide variety of animals. It is not uncommon to see white-tailed deer, moose, beaver, porcupines, rabbits, raccoons, red squirrels, and chipmunks. Some are expert moochers and highly skilled in opening food containers. Less common but occasionally seen by sharp eyes are the red fox, mink, weasel, pine marten, muskrat, fisher, and black bear. TIP: If you wish to see wildlife during your walks, go quietly. Park regulations say DO NOT FEED THE ANIMALS.

Geology: Barren mountains show off their pasts. Katahdin's several cirques (basins) once held glaciers that chewed their way into the mountain. South Basin actually cut all the way to the south side of the mountain, thus creating the famous Knife Edge. While Katahdin is mainly granite, some of the northern Park mountains are of volcanic origin, and the South Branch of Trout Brook even sliced through a hill that shows layers of coal.

Artifacts: The Park has a long history of human use—Indians, lumbermen, hunters, etc.—and items they left behind exist in many places. Take pictures, but it is against Park rules to collect natural or human-made objects.



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We hope you enjoy your visit to the Park!

