

KATAHDIN

Baxter State Park



Know Before You Go

Tips for preparing to visit 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 were secondary. A continuing effort to live up to this important resource-first and people-second requirement is the guiding philosophy of Park management today. People are responsible for their own safety in Baxter’s wilderness.

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 includes active 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

www.baxterstatepark.org

Visitor Center at Togue Pond Gate

Please visit the Park website for
maps and more information.

When to Go

The summer camping season is generally from May 15 to October 15, weather permitting, but extends to October 22 at select locations. If you are planning an early or late season visit, it is best to check first with Park Headquarters. A winter season from December 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 the Park 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 to climb Katahdin may begin and end in the dark, and is only possible for persons in very good physical condition.

Park gates close at night, and there are recommended cutoff times for starting out on specific trails, both of which vary by season. Check at Park Headquarters, the Visitor Center, or a gatehouse to avoid the disappointment of arriving too late.

Where to Go

Camping in the Park is allowed only on authorized sites. A variety of options are available:

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, South Branch Pond, Nesowadnehunk, and Trout Brook campgrounds are drive-in facilities offering lean-tos, tenting, and in most cases bunkhouses.

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

Group facilities are available at Bear Brook, Trout Brook, Foster Field, Nesowadnehunk, and North Branch Camps.

Katahdin Lake Wilderness Camps lie within the Park but are managed privately. Visit their website for reservations and fees at: www.katahdinlakewildernesscamps.com.

Facilities within the Park are rustic and without electricity. There is no potable water in the Park. Plan to bring either potable water or a means to purify water from local sources. Use of any soap or detergent or the disposal of food scraps in Park waters is prohibited. All trash must be carried out; human waste only in outhouses, please.

Sites at campgrounds accessible by car have a fire pit and picnic table. Firewood is available for sale in the Park. Do not bring firewood into the Park as it can harbor unwelcome critters and diseases. There are no stores within the Park to purchase gas and other supplies. All sites require a reservation prior to camping.

Bicycling: Bicyclists may ride on maintained roads, as well as the Dwelley Pond Trail. Bicyclists may also ride on the Abol Stream Trail from December 1 to April 1.

Thru-Hiking: Special rules apply for long-distance hikers. Appalachian Trail thru-hikers must obtain a free permit in person prior to hiking the Hunt Trail to or from Baxter Peak. A limited number of permits are available each year. Please visit the Park website for details.



What to Do

Hiking: The Park offers more than 200 miles of trails, ranging from gentle paths through lowlands to challenging scrambles on narrow granite routes high above treeline. Hikers are responsible for their own safety. Remember that your real destination is your safe return to camp at the end of the day. Excellent trail maps 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 hp or less are permitted on Upper and Lower Togue ponds. Most streams and ponds have good to excellent brook trout fishing. Special rules apply within the Park - be sure to check Maine Open Water Fishing Regulations for details. A fishing rule book is available at www.mefishwildlife.com or from license sources.

Bird Watching: Birds range from the citized robin to rarer species such as the northern three-toed woodpecker. Pick up a checklist of Park birds at Headquarters or the Visitor Center.

Rock Climbing: Many fine alpine and wall climbs can be found on Katahdin and adjacent peaks, especially in the steep-walled cirques known as “basins.” For remote climbs, such as in North Basin, early starts with the anticipation of long days are required. A good flashlight and spare batteries are as important as your climbing gear. Climbing parties must check in with the ranger at the nearest trailhead: Roaring Brook, Chimney Pond, Katahdin Stream, or Abol.

Photography: There are exciting opportunities for picture-taking, including wildlife 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 the Park website.

Boating: Persons using motorboats must register for day use. Motorboats are limited to just a few lakes (see “Fishing”), 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.

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

Botany: Pick up a copy of *The Plants of Baxter State Park* field guide to discover the unique and diverse flora of the Park. Sketching or photographing plants is fine; collecting of specimens is prohibited. Avoid introducing invasive species by cleaning your boots, fishing gear, and camping gear before entering the Park.

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 the Park website for details.

Making a Summer Camping Reservation

Rolling Reservations System: A reservation may be made by mail, phone, online, or in person at Park Headquarters up to four months in advance. For example, the earliest you could make a reservation for July 15th would be March 15th. Site availability can be viewed on the Park website. Reservations can be made for up to seven days for any single site, and up to 14 days total duration for a single visit to the Park. Some backcountry sites, and all bunkhouse, group, and accessible sites cannot be reserved online. Please reserve these sites by mail, phone, or in person at Park Headquarters.

Day Use Parking Reservations: If you want to climb Katahdin, you can make a Day Use Parking Reservation (DUPR) for trailheads at Roaring Brook, Abol, or Katahdin Stream. The cost is \$5. Call Park Headquarters at (207) 723-5140 or make a DUPR online at www.baxterstatepark.org.

More Information: To obtain a reservation form, view campsite availability, or learn more about reservation procedures, visit the Park website. When planning a trip for tomorrow, call the Hiker Information Line at (207) 723-4636.

What to Bring

Day Trip: Your daypack should include a first-aid kit, insect repellent, warm clothing (even in summer), map, compass, flashlight, rain gear, drinking water, food, sunblock, and sunglasses. Park regulations require all hikers to carry a working flashlight. You might want to include a camera, guidebooks, and sketch pad as well.

Extended Trips: For car camping, your choices of what to bring are limited only by your imagination or the capacity of your vehicle. Fresh water or a means to purify it is a must. If your goal is a hike-in campground or backcountry site, 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 with firm soles— broken in before your trip — offer both comfort and protection.

Camping Gear: If you stay in a lean-to, bunkhouse, or cabin, your gear needs will likely be centered on eating and sleeping. With a lean-to or tentsite, you can cook over a wood fire (except at Chimney Pond and Davis Pond), but a camp stove offers greater flexibility. At a bunkhouse or cabin, a stove and extra fuel is a necessity. You must supply all pots, pans, dishes, utensils, and a means of water purification. Sleeping bags, pads, or mattresses are needed except at Kidney and Daicey 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 rain 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 waste must be carried out. Keep garbage to a minimum, and store it in your car or hanging from a bear line. Bear canisters are available for a refundable deposit at Togue Pond Gatehouse and Katahdin Lake Wilderness Camps.

What Not to Bring

Pets: Pets or domestic animals are not allowed.

Firearms: Firearms, pistols, air guns, bows, and slingshots are not allowed except in limited circumstances.

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.

Drones: Unmanned aerial vehicles, also known as drones, may not take off or land in the Park, and are prohibited on Park trails, ponds, and waterways.

Firewood: Bringing firewood into Baxter State Park is prohibited. Firewood is available for purchase in the Park.

Backcountry Hazards

Hypothermia: Hypothermia, the “progressive physical collapse and reduced mental capacity resulting from the chilling of the inner core of the human body,” can occur 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: Wet rocks in or near streams may be extremely slippery. Backcountry stream crossings do not have bridges. Wading or rock-hopping is often required. The water level in streams can rise rapidly in storms, making crossings difficult or impossible.

Solo Travel: Group travel in the backcountry is safer, but not required. If you plan to go solo, use the hiking register and let someone — preferably a ranger — know your plans and expected time of return. Check in when you do return. 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. Mosquitoes show up by June, slacking off toward autumn. In deep summer, green deer flies and larger black moose flies happily chew on unprotected skin. Some 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. Remove metal frame packs. Do not lie down. Below treeline, move to shelter or, if in the woods with no other option, take shelter under shorter trees. Stay away from water.

How to Get Around in the Park

Vehicles: Roads are unpaved and narrow. The speed limit is 20 mph or as posted. 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. No gas is available in the Park. An electric vehicle charging station is available at Park Headquarters.

Bicycles: Bicycles may be used on roads and the Dwelley Pond Trail, and on the Abol Stream Trail in winter.

On Foot: Hikers should wear appropriate footwear and clothing and must 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 adult for every five minors. The maximum size of hiking groups is 12 persons. Affiliated groups on the same trail separated by less than one mile are considered one group.

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 above treeline. Downpours can quickly flood brooks and streams. Hail, sleet, and snow can occur year-round. Be prepared for the unexpected, especially when climbing above treeline.

Animals: The Park is populated by a wide variety of animals. It is not uncommon to see white-tailed deer, moose, beaver, porcupines, raccoons, red squirrels, and chipmunks. Less common, but occasionally seen by sharp eyes, are red fox, mink, weasel, pine marten, muskrat, fisher, and black bear. Some of these species are expert moochers and highly skilled in opening food containers. If you wish to see wildlife, hike quietly. Park rules prohibit feeding animals. Keeping wildlife wild will help them survive.

Geology: Barren mountains show off their pasts. Katahdin's several cirques (basins) were carved by glaciers. The glacier in South Basin cut all the way to the south side of the mountain, creating the famous Knife Edge. While Katahdin is mainly granite, some of the northern Park mountains are of volcanic origin. The South Branch of Trout Brook even cut through a hill that shows layers of coal. *A Guide to the Geology of Baxter State Park and Katahdin*, available at Park Headquarters, is an excellent resource to learn more.

Artifacts: The Park has a long history of human use by Native Americans, hunters, lumbermen, and others. Items they left behind exist in many places. Per BSP regulations, leave historical items where you find them so that future visitors can enjoy them too.



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We hope you enjoy your visit to the Park!
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