

12 Ways to Recreate Responsibly and Sustainably in Maine

Inspired by a recent [National Geographic](#) story on 12 ways to travel sustainably in the New Year, we'd like to share our Maine-centric list of how to recreate sustainably.

1. Explore the Space Above

An IDA Dark Sky Sanctuary is public or private land that “has an exceptional or distinguished quality of starry nights and a nocturnal environment that is protected for its scientific, natural, or educational value, its cultural heritage and/or public enjoyment.” It’s a short list of places nationally and Maine has one of them, the Katahdin Woods & Waters, which has been designated a [Dark Sky Sanctuary](#) and covers an area of approximately 87,500 acres. But other areas of Maine will celebrate their perfect stargazing environment this year, including the [Acadia Night Sky Festival](#).

2. Embrace Diversity Outdoors

One goal of sustainable travel is to make the world accessible to all, so that travelers are as diverse as the destinations they visit. Maine has several ways to introduce people who are unfamiliar with the outdoors to the Maine way of life. [L.L.Bean Discovery School Programs](#) offers affordable day sessions and multi-day experiences to demystify the outdoor experience and teach real skills. They range from stand-up paddle boarding to snowshoeing, cross country skiing to birdwatching, as well as fishing and kayaking. For those who'd like an even more immersive experience, there are [Maine Registered Guides](#). Guides make it possible for anyone to have an outdoor experience, whatever the season, whatever the sport, even if they haven't spent time outdoors before.

3. Enjoy Public Lands – Responsibly

It's all about respect for the land and for yourself. If you enjoy the outdoors, from hiking and camping to snowshoeing and snowmobiling, you probably think Maine's mountains, waters and forests are just as worthy of respect as we do. Whether you're venturing out into Maine's abundant public or private lands, a state park or [Acadia National Park](#), [Look Out for ME](#) gives you tips on doing your part to conserve the state's natural resources, season after season, and for generations to come.

4. Volunteer for Science

[Maine Audubon](#) has a naturalist and other staff that oversee a robust array of seasonal walks, talks, and trips designed for the diverse interests and schedules of adults, including volunteering. Or consider volunteering at the [Maine Island Trail Association](#), a 375-mile water trail for boaters extending from the New Hampshire border to Canada. This recreational water trail connects over 240 wild islands and mainland sites that are open for day use or overnight camping. The MITA Island Work Projects and Group Service Days are ideal for volunteers.

5. Shop More Ethically

Visit [Maine artisans and makers](#) for an array of goods from Maine and also visit [Maine Made](#), an organization that builds recognition for Maine products and their producers, with recommendations on local food purveyors and those who make crafts, sporting goods, gifts, fiber arts and more.

6. Go on a Heritage Trip

Take a trip back in time on the [Thoreau-Wabanaki Trail](#). Henry David Thoreau made trips to Maine in 1846, 1853 and 1857, following ancient Wabanaki canoe routes through Maine's primitive wilderness. He climbed

up “Ktaadn” in 1846, visited Chesuncook Lake with Penobscot guide Joe Attean in 1853, and reached Eagle Lake in the Allagash with Penobscot guide Joe Polis in 1857 before returning to Indian Island via the East Branch of the Penobscot River. Follow part of Thoreau’s journey with the [New England Outdoor Center](#), which offers two and three-day canoe trips that retrace parts of this route.

7. Tour Your Own Backyard

Even if you’ve traveled to Maine before, or live here, there’s always more to discover. One of the best ways to experience Maine’s outdoors is to take a walk or a hike in one of [Maine’s State Parks](#). They stretch from Camden Hills along the coast to Grafton Notch State Park in the Mahoosuc Range in Western Maine to Bradbury Mountain in Pownal and Androscoggin Riverlands which has 10 miles of trails in Central Maine. There are also [Public Reserved Lands](#), which consist of more than half a million acres of protected wilderness like the Bigelow Range Public Reserved Lands and the oceanfront Cutler Coast Public Lands.

8. Broaden Your Horizons

The best way to enhance a trip to Maine? It’s as simple as [reading about Maine](#) and then planning your visit. Maine authors run the gamut from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow to Stephen King, Tess Gerritsen to Elizabeth Strout. Writers such as Harriet Beecher Stowe and Henry David Thoreau were inspired by their visits here. Then there’s E.B. White, who lived on a farm in North Brooklin, where he was inspired to write *Charlotte’s Web*, among other books. Paul Doiron of Camden is the author of award-winning crime novels featuring a Maine game warden while Bethel poet Richard Blanco became an overnight sensation when he read his poem, “One Today,” at Barack Obama’s inauguration.

9. Go Virtual and Reduce your Carbon Footprint

For those who can’t visit Maine right now, there’s a [virtual shopping experience](#) that can reduce your carbon footprint and still allow you to enjoy the best that the state has to offer. Look for other virtual Maine experiences, such as [a virtual tour](#) of Acadia National Park and a virtual tour of [Maine museums](#).

10. Help Kids Become Explorers

There are so many family adventures in Maine and Visit Maine’s website is a great resource for [hiking with kids](#), [fishing with kids](#), [exploring Acadia](#) and checking out the various [family friendly learning activities](#) around the state.

11. Learn a New Skill

Maine is the ideal place to stretch yourself and explore your potential by learning a new skill. The world famous [Wooden Boat School](#) in Brooklin is where many an amateur boat builder has learned to help construct a 19th century Swampscott Dory or a Sassafras Canoe. Learn basic woodworking at the [Center for Furniture Craftsmanship](#) in Rockport while [The Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts](#) in Newcastle offers residencies for ceramic artists. Go to [Visit Maine](#) for more on honing artistic skills in Maine.

12. Focus on Family

Maine is one of the best family destinations in the country. From tent camping to a lakeside cottage stay, a road trip to a seaside vacation, there are a host of [family activities](#) waiting to be discovered. They include fishing, hiking and watersports in locations ranging from luxury oceanfront resorts to wilderness cabins in Northern Maine. There are [children’s museums](#) and [animal parks](#) scattered throughout the state, not to mention Acadia National Park and a roster of [state parks](#) to explore. At the end of the day, it’s all about spending time with family in the extraordinary settings of Maine.

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