

Maine Story Ideas and News for 2024

OUTDOOR CAPITAL OF THE EAST

The new visitor contact center at [Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument](#) will tell the story of the region through the eyes of Native Americans. The center is now under construction and slated to open summer of 2024 is named “Tekəkapimk” from the Penobscot Indian language meaning “as far as one can see.”

The [Appalachian Mountain Club](#) (AMC) has partnered with The Conservation Fund to purchase and permanently protect nearly 29,000 acres of forestland in Piscataquis County known as Barnard Forest. AMC will bring its fish habitat restoration efforts that benefit threatened species such as native brook trout and endangered Atlantic salmon. Since 2003, AMC's Maine Woods Initiative has permanently protected over 100,000 contiguous acres of forest and fish habitat in Maine's famed 100-Mile Wilderness.

The [Appalachian Mountain Club](#) (AMC) will be unveiling a [Gravel Adventure Field Guide](#). The handy guide will offer cyclists new routes in a pristine section of Maine east of the Moosehead Lake region. Copies are available at many bike shops in New England and at AMC.

[DoryWoman Rowing](#), is offering special themed rows. These unique experiences include a sunset oyster row, a yoga row and more. Trips are led by an experienced Maine Guide and use a traditional-style wooden dory in Belfast Bay.

The Skowhegan River Park (also known as [Run of River](#)) will redevelop an industrial downtown river corridor into an accessible outdoor recreation asset with an expanded trail network and enhanced whitewater activities. The river park will improve river access and free recreation opportunities, and bolster the regional economy by attracting visitors, businesses, and new residents.

The [Nature Conservancy](#) has acquired approximately 13,500 acres of forested land north of Tunk Mountain in Hancock County. The land, which will continue to be open for birding, hunting and fishing, abuts an existing preserve to the north of Tunk Mountain and the northwest corner of the state's Donnell Pond Public Land. The acquisition will expand The Nature Conservancy's 9,700-acre Spring River Preserve.

The largest protected forested area in Southern Maine recently became official with the conservation of 700 acres in Windham. The new [East Windham Conservation Area](#) opened late 2023 with five miles of trails, access to Little Duck Pond and views of the western mountains. It connects to a 1,300-acre protected area in Falmouth.

Ski News:

Saddleback has a new mid-mountain restaurant – [Saddleback's Mid Mountain Lodge](#) is located in Bicknell's Thrush habitat and project leaders have collaborated with the Maine Audubon Society to pay close attention to the needs of that habitat. The lodge features a unique triangular structure with a ski-up food and beverage service kiosk and space for indoor and outdoor immersive dining. The newest dining experience is the [The Nest](#), perched atop the Rangeley Quad side of the mountain.

Sunday River Recently unveiled, the [Barker 6](#) that revolutionizes the Barker base area as one of the fastest 6-person lifts in North America.

Sugarloaf announced “[Dutchman Woods](#),” the largest real estate development at an eastern ski resort since the 1970s. Bucksaw Express is the new high-speed quad that services Sugarloaf's [West Mountain expansion](#). The 450-

acre expansion is opened late during the 2024 season. The quad will span 6,574 feet with a vertical rise of 1,433 feet. The lift will move 2,400 skiers per hour up West Mountain with a ride time of seven minutes.

Maine's Dark Skies

A National Monument, A Dark Sky Sanctuary

The [Katahdin Woods & Waters National Monument](#) is known for its hiking, paddling and all-around epic outdoor recreation. And now, [The International Dark-Sky Association](#), the world's recognized authority on combatting light pollution, has designated the monument as an [International Dark Sky Sanctuary](#). Only 13 exist throughout the entire world. And in the United States, there's only one east of the Mississippi.

CULTURAL NEWS

The [Abbe Museum](#) has announced its Dawnland Festival of Arts and Ideas (DFAI) premiere on July 12-14 at the College of the Atlantic (COA). This unique, multi-day event is an evolution of the popular Indian Market and Native American Festival that featured invitation-only Native art markets and performances. Also included are conversations by Wabanaki and other Indigenous leaders on some of the biggest questions of our time, including climate, democracy, and food systems.

[Johnson Hall](#) will soon unveil its new, state-of-the-art theater and renovations. The renovation of Maine's oldest opera house, located in downtown Gardiner, will offer an accessible 400-seat theater for live performances, space for meetings and small conferences, and will attract world-class talent to Maine's Kennebec Valley region.

[Creative Portland](#) has launched a new cultural app to increase access to the arts through a user-friendly mobile application. Free to download, the app promotes the cultural life of Portland and some artistic highlights throughout the state. The app will give users access to Augmented Reality (AR) experiences through their phones.

[The Oceanarium](#) in Bar Harbor has reopened after a five-year hiatus with upgraded exhibits and a refurbished interior. The three buildings include a visitor's center and gift shop, a former lobster hatchery hosting marine-related exhibits and an Aquaria building with indoor tanks of live sea creatures from the Gulf of Maine.

GASTRONOMY HIGHLIGHTS

A new food truck park is coming to Route 1 in Freeport in June, adjacent to [Athena's Cantina](#). A rotating slate of five food trucks operating seven days a week is planned. The park will also feature live music, movie and karaoke nights and craft vendors.

[Catface Café](#) recently opened in downtown Biddeford, adding to the city's burgeoning food scene. Krista Cole of Portland's Sur Lie is a partner of the new café which will be open for breakfast and lunch.

[Buttermilk Kitchen at Murriner's](#) is the latest breakfast and lunch spot to open in Camden. Suzanne Vizethann, chef-owner of Buttermilk Kitchen in Atlanta treats customers to southern-inspired dishes like fried chicken biscuits, chicken and grits, and biscuits and Maine sausage gravy as well as Maine favorites including lobster rolls and chowder.

[Nezinscot Farm](#) in Turner was named the Northeast Regional winner of the "American Classics" category by the James Beard Foundation. Known as the state's first organic dairy farm, Nezinscot Farm is family run and includes the farm, cafe, bakery, fromagerie, and charcuterie business.

[The Good Table](#) in Cape Elizabeth has reopened with Executive Chef Matt Ginn of EVO and Chebeague Island Inn at the helm.

[Oysters Raw Bar & Bubbly](#) is a new seasonal raw bar situated on the banks of the Kennebec River in historic downtown Bath. Oysters specializes in hand-farmed oysters, lobster rolls, sparkling wine, mimosa flights and non-alcoholic bubbly drinks.

[Maine Day Ventures](#) has added a food and history tour in Biddeford. The 2.5-hour walking tour takes you along revitalized Main Street and through town where textile mills and a thriving theatre and opera scene once took place. Food stops include a family bakeshop, pizza from Maine's original pizza maker and local ice cream.

Portland Food News:

- [Bissell Brothers](#) is launching a second restaurant on Thompson's Point. Called **The Garden**, the new 58-seat restaurant will operate adjacent to their current space.
- A new brunch spot has opened in Portland's West End. [Ocotillo](#) is inspired by its sister spot, Terlingua, and features indoor and outdoor dining spaces, a beautiful full-bar and custom-built booths.
- [Wine Wise](#) is adding more of their popular [Wine Sails](#) to their schedule. Enjoy sailing in Casco Bay while tasting some of the finest wines in the world. The additional sails mean more Wine Sails, Wine & Oysters Sails, and Chef Series Wine & Food Sails.

For the latest on Portland restaurant openings, check out [Portland Food Map](#).

NEW LODGING

After a \$10 million renovation, the [Dunes on the Waterfront](#) in Ogunquit will open their new cottages for the 2024 season. The property consists of 24 cottages overlooking Ogunquit Beach. [Atlantic Hospitality](#) acquired the property in 2023 and spent the off season renovating the interior, exterior, lobby, décor, grounds, and pool.

[The Pathmaker Hotel](#) is Bar Harbor's newest boutique hotel opening in 2024 and located just two blocks from the sand bar to Bar Island and downtown. An onsite restaurant is also planned.

[Hotel Ursa](#) has opened in the center of University of Maine campus in Orono with 95 guest rooms. It was developed through the historic rehab of two original buildings and joined by a new building offering contemporary guestrooms. The hotel also offers MajorMinor, a cafe and bar where the university community and guests can enjoy locally roasted coffees, baked goods, snacks, and evening beverages.

[The Longfellow Hotel](#) recently opened as a wellness-themed hotel in a five-story, ground-up building located in Portland's West End neighborhood. The lobby has a communal lounge with casual seating and an intimate bar, handcrafted by local millworkers. The property has 48 rooms, and several have French balconies or bay windows.

The [Rockport Harbor Hotel](#), part of the Bayview Collection, is a new 20-room year-round hotel with two dining venues, a lobby-level bar and restaurant called [Oak Room](#) and top-floor venue called the Atrium with a retractable skylight, sliding glass doors and a view of Rockport Harbor.

In the Moosehead Lake region, [Northeast Whitewater](#) offers glamping yurts at their outpost near Greenville. After a day on the water, guests can enjoy a comfortable night's stay with nearby fire pits. The yurts sleep 1-2 guests. The larger bunk-bed yurts are ideal for the kids, a group of friends or the entire family – up to 6 guests.

[Acadia Wilderness Lodge](#) will open glamping tents and oceanfront yurts during the summer of 2024. The property offers a glamping experience with all the amenities close to Acadia National Park.

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