Maine Story Ideas and News for 2026

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

In Maine, every path, paddle, and place is *Forged by Nature*, shaped by the landscapes and people who bring the outdoors to life in every season. From rugged mountains and remote lakes to scenic coastlines and winding rivers, opportunities abound for hiking, paddling, fishing, biking, and winter adventures. For those seeking expert insight or a deeper connection to Maine's unique places, the state's professional network of guides and outfitters provides exceptional experiences. Members of Maine Outdoor Brands, the Maine Wilderness Guides Organization, and the Maine Professional Guides Association offer everything from guided backcountry expeditions and wildlife tours to fishing trips and paddling excursions, ensuring visitors of all skill levels can safely and meaningfully experience the landscapes that have truly been forged by nature.

Maine's beauty shapes every experience and every story shared here. The same natural and cultural landscapes that inspire adventure also call for care. Through the Look Out for ME initiative, visitors and residents alike are encouraged to travel thoughtfully by staying on marked trails, packing out what they bring in, supporting local businesses, and respecting the traditions and communities that make Maine unique. By exploring with care and consideration, each of us helps ensure that Maine remains the extraordinary place we love, today and for generations to come.

The Maine Gear Library Network (MGLN), a first-of-its-kind statewide alliance of gear libraries, has officially launched, providing affordable access to high-quality outdoor equipment. From bikes and kayaks to tents and camp stoves, the network is a community-driven gear lending program committed to equitable access to outdoor recreation for residents and visitors alike. MGLN is actively supporting new gear libraries through technical assistance, equipment sharing, and public education. Its new website offers a statewide directory and information on the benefits of a gear library. Currently, the Maine Gear Library Network includes:

- Maine GearShare – Brunswick
- Old Town-Orono Gear Library – Old Town
- Kindling Collective – Portland
- Katahdin Gear Library – Millinocket and surrounding region
- Appalachian Mountain Club – offers gear rental from their three lodges located within Maine's 100-Mile Wilderness
- Skowhegan Outdoors – Skowhegan

Sports lovers are in for a treat now that professional soccer has come to Portland. The wildly popular Portland Hearts of Pine is part of the USL League One and fans watch them in action at their home field, Fitzpatrick Stadium. The team has brought an unprecedented level of excitement and engagement to the state just in time as fans around the world gear up for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Maine Inland Fisheries & Wildlife unveiled the new ME Outdoors mobile app. From purchasing licenses and permits to discovering new places to hunt, fish, and explore, the new app makes navigating Maine's woods and waters easy. Available now on the Apple App Store and Google Play. Search "ME Outdoors" to get started.

The Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) has unveiled a Gravel Adventure Field Guide. The handy guide offers 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.

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 in central Maine.

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. In the United States, there's only one east of the Mississippi.

Established ski mountain Sugarloaf has opened the Sugarloaf Bike Park, New England's newest gravity-fed bike park with unlimited access Friday through Sunday, with zero blackout dates. Bikers can choose from single-day lift tickets, full season passes, or as an add-on option for 2025/26 pass holders whose home mountain is Sugarloaf.

CULTURAL GEMS

Tekαkαpimək Contact Station, opened summer 2025, sits atop Lookout Mountain and was created to welcome the global public to Katahdin Woods National Monument. Tekαkαpimək is Penobscot for as far as one can see - pronounced de gah-gah bee mook. The architecture, landscape and cultural exhibits are the result of an extensive process with representatives of the Houlton Band of Maliseet, Mi'kmaq Nation, Passamaquoddy Tribe, and Penobscot Nation.

In Maine, works of art spring from its lands and waters—granite shaped by tides, timbers marked by time and even ice born from winter's chill. These raw materials are storytellers, carrying the history of Maine's landscapes, industries and communities. In the hands of artists they also become works of enduring beauty. The latest collection of outdoor art can be found along the Union River Sculpture Trail, extending the existing quarter-mile Riverwalk in Ellsworth into a 0.75-mile pedestrian loop connecting downtown Ellsworth, Knowlton Park, and U.S. Route 1. The trail features sculptures on loan from Maine-based artists, blending public art with outdoor recreation.

Nine museums, 80,000 pieces of artwork, and a scenic drive through Maine: The Maine Art Museum Trail brings visitors on a journey to many of the state's best collections of art. Artists have endeavored to capture Maine's beauty for centuries and the trail guides you to artist colonies like Monhegan Island and Ogunquit, as well as esteemed colleges and beloved cities to experience these nine leading art museums, many open year-round.

Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens, in partnership with Indigo Arts Alliance, commissioned two new major works by Indigenous artists Shane Perley-Dutcher from the Neqotkuk Wolasqiyik (Tobique First Nation) and Anna Tsouhlarakis, an enrolled citizen of the Navajo Nation and Muscogee Creek, to create permanent public art pieces that amplify Indigenous wisdom, artistry, and presence.

GASTRONOMY HIGHLIGHTS

In Maine, every taste is *Forged by Nature,* from the harvest of land and sea to the creative hands that bring it to the table. Already famous for its fresh and plentiful lobster, the Maine Oyster Trail and the Maine Beer Trail, Maine has earned a well-deserved reputation as a culinary destination in creative settings. A leading producer of blueberries, potatoes, apples, and maple syrup – foods that are featured prominently in many traditional and modern Maine recipes – Maine offers visitors a chance to discover a culinary landscape as authentic and

abundant as the state itself. To learn more about Maine's food culture, sign up to receive the Maine Office of Tourism seasonal food journal, Bountiful.

En-Noble offers immersive cultural experiences through specialty food tours and live cooking demonstrations led by cultural Ambassadors from around the world and hosting weekly specialty store tour experiences, tastings and live cooking demos.

LB. Kitchen, a mainstay in Portland, as a café and mini-mart known for its innovative, functional, healthy food and drinks menu has opened the first of a new brand of convenience stores called LB. Mini-Mart. This is the first location for LB. Mini-Mart, with other locations throughout the Portland area to be announced later this year.

Recent restaurant openings:

- Abbiocco, Portland
- Gill's, Portland
- Douro, Portland
- Allagash Bungalow, in partnership with Bite Into Maine, Scarborough
- Dry Dock, Portland
- Elevenses, Brunswick
- Pomelia, Brunswick
- Table Salt, Bar Harbor

For the latest Portland restaurant openings, check out Portland Food Map. And from Eat Drink Lucky, here is the 2025 Must-Eat List.

NEW LODGING

Residence Inn/Moxy Hotel by Marriott. Opening in 2026, this will be the first hotel to be built at Thompson's Point, Portland's pre-eminent entertainment venue for concerts, events, and seasonal ice skating. Neighbors include the Children's Museum & Theatre of Maine, Bissell Brothers Brewing and Stroudwater Distillery.

Breakwater Inn, one of Kennebunkport's historic and most beloved ocean view hotels, reopened in July 2025, following the sale of the property and complete renovation of its harborside guest rooms and the debut of a brand-new restaurant and bars.

In 2025, The Trident Inn in Ogunquit was completely transformed and is the town's newest boutique hotel. Formerly the 2 Village Square Inn and Ogunquit's oldest inn property, The Trident Inn has been reimagined for today's traveler while honoring the inn's rich past. The inn includes their new on-property restaurant, Coastal Alchemist.

The Nevada is the completely renovated 70-year-old landmark on Long Sands Beach in York. The building style remains as a classic motel with a sleek new look, larger rooms, some with private terraces, and an onsite restaurant called Lulu's.

In early 2025, The Viewpoint Hotel in York unveiled The Spa House, featuring massages, facials, foot soaks, and more, inspired by the natural therapy of Maine's coast and using organically grown products. The Spa House comes on the heels of the fall 2024 opening of The Baths, offering a Canadian cedar sauna, hot tub, outdoor shower, and outdoor fireplace for all hotel guests. A cold plunge will be added soon.

The Skowhegan by Kasa opened spring of 2025 in the Kennebec Valley town of Skowhegan as part of an overall redevelopment of the old Spinning Mill, a textile mill and manufacturing site along the Kennebec River. Kasa is known for its tech-enabled hospitality.

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