**Mount Desert Island Vacation Tips for PYC Land Cruisers**

**Eastern Side of Mt. Desert**

1. **Bar Harbor** - The tourist town. Great shopping, eating places, and views of the Harbor. Bar Harbor once rivaled Newport, Rhode Island for grand summer cottages belonging to the unfathomably wealthy. A disastrous fire destroyed almost all of the cottages in 1947 and changed the town forever. Bar Harbor has a fascinating history which would be referred to in many brochures you may see. At the dock, there is a grand old hotel called the Bar Harbor Motor Inn. A walkway along the shore starts here. It’s only about half a mile or less, but such a pleasant walk with beautiful views on one side and grand houses on the other.

2. **Really Good Restaurants in Bar Harbor** - the Bar Harbor Motor Inn, Getty’s, and Gaylin’s. They are on either side of the town green which overlooks the harbor.

3. **Cadillac Mountain** - The sun touches the United States first at the top of this mountain.

The views are spectacular. It is one of the most popular things to see on the island. A reservation

with the park service is needed now. There may be a shuttle to the top.

4. **Jordan Pond House** - This used to be an old building from the 1890’s where people went with their horses and carriages for tea and popovers on the lawn overlooking the pond and mountains. The inside was papered with birch bark. Unfortunately, that rustic building burned down spectacularly a few years ago. Now there is a modern building there. The atmosphere is great and they have a good menu. This is a popular tourist place and would be crowded this time of year. There is a wonderful walk around the pond which starts at the Jordan Pond House. You can walk part way and turn around, or go the distance around the pond. It is in Acadia National Park, so you may need a pass.

5. **Wildwoods Stables** - Near the Jordan Pond house is a stable where you can join a group for horseback riding or take a very fun horse and carriage ride. Highly recommended. This is very popular and fun. If you think you might do this, call for a reservation as soon as you can.

6. **Boat Rides** - You will see many types of boat rides from whale watching to cruises on schooners. Views of mountains and islands are incredibly gorgeous from a boat. My recommended boat rides are the Nature Cruise out of Bass Harbor and the Islesford Ferry, listed below for things to do on the Western side of the island.

**Recommended day trip**

**Spectacular Drive** - Starting near Bar Harbor, get on Park Loop Road at the entrance to Ocean Drive near the Jackson Lab beyond Bar Harbor. There will be a booth (to pay or show your National Park pass) in a couple of miles. After this spectacular drive, you can continue to the Jordan Pond House or take the horse and carriage ride at the Wildwood Stables.

OR

To continue the drive, take a left at the sign for Seal Harbor, then take a right at the harbor and continue to Northeast Harbor. Along the road to the harbor are two spectacular gardens. Look to the right for Thulya Drive. Up this little road about half a mile is the most beautiful garden. There is no fee to see the gardens. Further down the road to the harbor is the Asticou Inn with its gardens just beyond on the right. Take a right for the entrance; there is no fee to see the garden.

To continue the drive, take a left into Northeast Harbor. Take a left just before town to go down to the harbor. Then, when leaving the harbor, stay left and find Sargent Drive. This goes along the coast by gorgeous summer homes, then along Somes Sound, which is a fjord. Take a left at the end of Sargent Drive. If you are staying in Bar Harbor, take a right on Route 233 to go back to Bar Harbor. If you are staying in Southwest Harbor, continue straight until you come to traffic lights in Somesville, then take a left. There is a beautiful art gallery in Somesville.

**This would be one of the most beautiful things you could do on the island. The complete drive would take about an hour. It is the most spectacular way to see the park and the eastern side of the island. Most of the coastline you would see was donated to the park by John D. Rockefeller, who also built the 57 miles of carriage paths and Ocean Drive during the 1930’s.**

8. I highly recommend the Asticou Inn in Northeast Harbor for lunch or dinner. The Asticou is an old hotel from the 1800’s and still has that old, graceful atmosphere.

9. There is an elegant gift shop in Northeast Harbor called The Kimball Shop.

10. **Biking and Hiking** - There will be many maps of trails. Over 57 miles of carriage trails were built by John D. Rockefeller and donated to the park. These are wonderful for biking or walking. Choose one where you will get a view of the water. There will be many maps which include the paths. There are bike rental places in Bar Harbor.

There are even more miles of hiking trails. The views from these are sometimes more spectacular than the carriage paths because some of them go up mountains. You will see many booklets and maps with descriptions of the paths and trails in book stores and gift shops. Maps will indicate whether the hiking is easy, moderate, or difficult.

A very interesting and easy hike is along Ocean Drive from Sand Beach. A trail called The Precipice is near there if you want a serious challenge. You have to want to spend the whole day on a difficult climb to do the Precipice. You would get the same view as going by shuttle or car up Cadillac Mountain (ha ha).

**Western Side of Mt. Desert**

11. The western side of Mt. Desert has WAY fewer tourists. Southwest Harbor is a natural, working community with a Coast Guard station. Tourists who stay here have all amenities and choices for things to do. The ride to Bar Harbor is 40 minutes from Southwest Harbor. Bass Harbor is also a beautiful working harbor.

12. Recommended restaurants on the Western side of the island are

Red Sky in Southwest Harbor for dinner

Seafood Ketch in Bass Harbor for lunch or dinner - incredible view – watch the sun set and have the best escargot anywhere.

13. Beautiful walks include:

13a. Valley Cove, with wonderful views of Somes Sound and the fjord. Park and walk about 1 mile on an easy dirt road to the water’s edge.

13b. Wonderview and Ship Harbor. These are about 2 miles from Seawall Motel. They are

part of Acadia National Park and include walks through balsam-scented woods and along

the water. Ship Harbor is gorgeous even on a foggy day.

13c. Long Pond is the local reservoir, so is mostly undeveloped and is within Acadia National

Park. Many mountain trails come to the pond. If you would like a beautiful, relatively easy walk, go to the left at the parking area and walk along the shoreline of the pond. A challenging hike is the Perpendicular Trail. This is a hike up Mansell Mountain which includes over 720 stairs made of granite and set by hand by the Civilian Conservation Corp in the 1930’s. The workmanship is astonishing. The hike also includes areas of beautiful woods and an ocean overlook.

13d. A 360 degree view of ocean and mountains is available for a short walk up Beech

Mountain, where there is a fire tower at the top. This is also part of Acadia National

Park. From Southwest Harbor, drive to Somesville and take a left just before town. Take another left at a sign for Beech Mountain. It is several miles to the parking area.

At the parking area, begin the walk to the mountain by staying to the right. This path

takes you along the side of the mountain with views of distant mountains and Long Pond

below. This is not a hike . . . just a walk. More difficult hikes begin from the parking lot also, for those who want more of a challenge.

Also, opposite the parking lot is a very easy and short walk to Beech Cliff, where there is a gorgeous view of ponds, mountains, and the ocean. It is a short, very easy walk with a gorgeous view.

14. The Causeway Club in Southwest Harbor is a public, 9-hole golf course with spectacular views. It

is a lot of fun. This property was a pig farm in the old days.

15. The Wendell Gilley Museum in Southwest Harbor is a fun rainy day thing to do. Wendell Gilley was a local bird carver with profound talent. Some of his work was displayed in the White House. Many of his works are here, along with works by others. A beautiful and unique place to see.

16. The Islesford Ferry leaves from Southwest Harbor by Hinkley Boat and takes people to Cranberry Island, then Little Cranberry Island. Here, there is a very casual, wharf restaurant where you can have delicious food while you watch boats and the view of the mountains that make up Mount Desert. The restaurant is not open after Labor Day, but a good option is to get off the ferry, walk around, and visit the museum on the waterfront. You can take the ferry the next time it stops there, which will be in about an hour.

17. Just around the corner from the Seawall Motel is a small park named Seawall Point. It is part of

the National Park and has a beautiful open ocean view.

18. Bass Harbor Light is one of the most photographed lighthouses in the country. You can park and walk through the property to the shoreline here. It is a great vantage point for viewing lobster boats and yachts coming into Southwest Harbor.

19. In Seal Cove, there is the Seal Cove Auto Museum, which houses an amazing private collection of antique automobiles. For a small entry fee, you can see the history of automobiles on Mt. Desert Island.

20. **BEST THING TO DO ON THE ISLAND** - There is a fabulous, narrated nature cruise out of Bass Harbor. The boat owner will narrate, explain sights along the way, and pull a lobster trap. The cruise is visible in the center of Bass Harbor. Look for a very long pier and a small building with a sign.

21. Just a note . . . On Tuesdays, schooners arrive in Southwest Harbor. They stay the night and leave on Wednesdays. These schooners have traveled from Camden and Rockport and have vacationers onboard.

Notes for Scenic Views

1. **Cable Road in Southwest Harbor** – the most private and best place to sit and paint. Gorgeous view of the harbor, sound, and mountains.

2. **Seawall Point** – Take a right on the main road when leaving Seawall Motel.. Go about one mile to a left onto Seawall Point (there is an entrance to a campground on the right). There would be several views here – you might find the best is to the right where there is a turnaround and picnic tables.

3. **Bass Harbor Lighthouse** – a very photographed lighthouse. From Southwest Harbor, drive to Seawall Point and keep going past Wonderview and Ship’s Harbor Drive. Instead of making a right turn to Bass Harbor, make a sharp left turn to go to the lighthouse. At the far end of the parking lot, there is a path to steps going to the rocky shore with views back toward the lighthouse and islands beyond.

4. **Southwest Harbor town docks** – there are two, one on each side of the harbor, both with great views.

One town dock is on Shore Road. The famous Hinkley Company (boatbuilders) and the ferry ride to Islesboro (Cranberry Islands) are on this road. You will easily see the large town dock.

The other town dock is on Clark Point Road. The famous Claremont Hotel is off this road, and the Coast Guard Station is at the end of the road.

5. **Valley Cove** – This is in the national park and the view is gorgeous. Go through Southwest Harbor until you see the golf course. Take a right. Go about 2 miles to a parking area on the left. Walk about 2 miles to the shore. It’s beautiful. The fjord is visible on the left.

6. **Long Pond** – Long view of a lake with swift rising mountains on both sides. Sandy beach also. Go through Southwest Harbor to Seal Cove Road on the left. Take the first right at the top of the hill. Drive about another mile. The road will go down quickly to the end of the lake. There is parking there. There wouldn’t be many people here.

7. **Charlotte Rhodes Butterfly Garden** – A magical place developed a local with plants to attract butterflies. The property has ample parking and stretches to the water. It is on the main road going through Southwest Harbor.

8. There is a brand new miniature golf course in Southwest Harbor which is great fun. It’s visible on the way into town and is called “Golf of Maine”. We tried it and loved it.