

One mom waxes nostalgic about the starry nights, fresh air and summer camp days of her favorite state.

By Danielle Feigenbaum

Why Summers & Camp Belong in Maine

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When I close my eyes I can smell the pine trees, feel the pine needles under my feet, see the mountains reflecting off the lake, taste the fresh blueberries and hear the camp songs ringing in my ear. Overnight camp in Maine - if only I could go back. Luckily, soon I can live vicariously through my daughter who can go to the camp where my mom, aunt and cousin all went as well. It's tradition and there's nothing that compares to summertime in Maine. I loved it so much I go back to vacation there and you have to drag me home. Once you visit the amazing summer camps in Maine, it will get into your blood. Here are the top ten reasons why you'll be hooked...

● **The trips!** There is nothing like sleeping under the crystal clear starry night sky in the forests of Maine. Cooking our own food and roasting s'mores around the campfire and of course telling spooky stories and singing lots of campfire songs. Learning how to survive in the wilderness is a lifelong skill that stays with you. Besides all the amazing camping trips, we took some phenomenal non-camping trips as well. Whale watching was always a favorite! The whales literally jump out of the water right next to the boat, it's spectacular! As we got older at camp we went to Bar Harbor, Old Orchard Beach, Ogunquit and when we were the oldest campers we went to Quebec, Canada for four days! You definitely can't do that from New York or Pennsylvania.

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● **Lots of Lakes.** Maine has 2,200 lakes perfect for canoeing and kayaking not to mention amazing white water rafting adventures. My most memorable canoe trip was down the Saco River and one of my favorite camp activities was water skiing around our large lake. The Maine coastline is amazing and I can remember trips to the beach and swimming in the Atlantic Ocean!

● **Mountains galore.** There are over 60 mountains to hike and climb in Maine. As someone who had a fear of climbing mountains, to reach the peak of Mount Katahdin (one of the highest peaks in New England) it was a life changing accomplishment I will never forget.

● **Peace.** A recent study by the Institute for Economics and Peace finds that Maine is the most peaceful state in the country. During the year, our children are over programmed and deserve some peace over the summer. Maine offers

the perfect prescription!

● **Food glorious food!** Fresh lobster dinner? Check! Pick your own juicy blueberries and/or enjoy scrumptious blueberry pie? Check! Delicious ice cream? Oh yeah. The best ice cream in Maine is Ben & Bills in Bar Harbor. They make their own ice cream.

● **Easy to get to, hard to leave.** Maine is an easy drive or a quick flight from most places in the Northeast. The best thing to do is make a vacation out of your visiting day! With hundreds of Bed and Breakfasts to choose from and tons of summer events going on, you will be counting down to the summer right along with your child!

● **Acadia National Park.** Spend a day or a week - there are so many fun things to do! Do not miss watching the sunset on Cadillac Mountain. Another must in Acadia National Park - listen to the Waves at Thunder Hole - where the water crashes

into rocks made of granite and the sound that erupts bears a striking resemblance to thunder - hence the name.

● **The Staff.** I kept in touch with long after camp ended. Maine has the highest return rate for staff due to the amazing facilities and appeal of spending the summer in Maine. The counselors you start off with your first summer may return again and again throughout your camp experience.

● **Shop 'till you drop.** Freeport Maine is home to the original and largest L.L. Bean store and fabulous outlet shopping. Parents and campers love to go there and explore the area. There are always fun events to attend, like L.L. Bean's Summer in the Park Series for kids and families. You can check out all the great summer events [here](#).

● **The bond that never breaks.** The friends you make at camp in Maine are special, they are friends for life. Families from all over the country (and all over the world!) send their children to camp in Maine—my close friends were from Florida, Ohio, Arizona and my cousin went to Maine from California. We know the camps are timeless; they have amazing traditions that surpass generations. When you find another person who went to camp in Maine or sends a child to camp in Maine, there is a knowing smile and an automatic bond. You both know that you are in on an incredible secret!

That's why summers and camp belong in Maine... ■

Maine Camp Directors' Top Picks

Camp Directors and owners of overnight camps in Maine are special. They eat, breathe and live for camp and spending the summer in Maine. Here are a few of the Directors' favorite spots and activities in Maine...

Acadia National Park - climbing Mt. Cadillac to see the sunrise, first spot in United States to view it.

Allagash Wilderness Waterway - spend a week on the river camping, canoeing, seeing moose.

Whitewater rafting on the Kennebec River.

Devil's Den - our own private mountain top, from which we can see Mt. Washington to the Ocean, the ponds, forest and farms of south Maine. Spectacular, and worth the climb every time. A campfire at sunset is pure perfection.

Kettle Cove State Park - a gem of a beach, tucked in close to Portland. Star gazing. We can still lay out at night and count falling stars.

Crystal Clear lakes - where I can see unreal sunsets every night and the loon calls sing me to sleep. Trip day: I can surf at old Old Orchard Beach one week, climb a mountain the next, paddle on a white water river the next. Limitless outdoor opportunities.

Ogunquit - we bring the older campers to this quaint New England town and they just love going there and feeling/acting like tourists. They love the trolleys. It gives them a true appreciation for New England living.

Sebago Lake - being out on the lake sailing with campers - no better place to be.

