



### Explore Maine's Coastal Wildlands At Cobscook Shores

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PHOTOS: Chris Shane and Dana Beach, courtesy of Cobscook Shores

The northernmost North American state of Maine is known for its rocky coastline, lighthouses, maritime heritage, and world-famous lobsters. It is also a popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts, who come here to explore the granite and spruce islands of Acadia National Park, or go camping at Baxter State Park. And as of last May, nature lovers and adventure seekers could add another great reason to visit this beautiful state — a brand new park.

On Memorial Day weekend in 2021, a new parkland was opened to the public, providing visitors with access to some of Maine's most stunning coastlines and pristine marine ecosystems. Located close to the historic fishing town of Lubec, Cobscook Shores is composed of 15 waterfront parks connected via a series of walking trails, bicycling paths, and waterways. Here, visitors can take in islands, estuaries, dramatic bluffs, and peaceful beaches as they kayak, paddleboard, birdwatch, enjoy leisurely picnics, or set up camp for the night. The park includes 22km of shoreline, 13km of walking trails, manicured picnic spots, camping sites, boat launch areas, wooden screened picnic pavilions, and public restrooms, so visitors can enjoy Maine's coastal wilderness while still having easy access to practical amenities.

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#### THE BAYS ECOSYSTEM

The parkland was developed and is managed by the Butler Conservation Fund (BCF), a non-governmental organisation founded by 83-year-old New York philanthropist Gilbert Butler. Growing up, Butler, who has been an avid outdoorsman all his life, spent many summers in Maine, and as someone who cares deeply about the environment, he's been funding conservation projects along the Maine Coast for 35 years.

"In 2015, Butler began to actively expand his commitment to land conservation into a broader effort, which included purchasing the exquisite wilderness lands of Cobscook Shores and equipping them with hiking, walking, biking, and cross-country ski trails, welcome centres, warming huts, boat launches, and vault toilets with running water," says BCF's spokesperson Beta Stohart.



Cobscook Bay — the waters surrounding the parkland — is a world-class coastal gem of vast proportions, with 7m tides, abundant terrestrial and aquatic wildlife, and miles of undeveloped shoreline. This bay system creates a Northern Arctic Ocean habitat with rich rockweeds, grasses, and nutrients that make the site attractive to bald eagles, ospreys, seals, porpoises, as well as minke whales, pilot whales, finback whales, and even endangered North Atlantic right whales.

"Because the bay sticks out so far into the Atlantic Ocean and is in fact the farthest eastern point in the United States, you get this amazing occurrence of birds that you don't see anywhere else in the United States, including shearwaters, gannets, puffins, razorbills, and murres," says Stohart.



Begin your explorations at Old Farm Point Shorefront Park, where the carpark, entry point to the park, and visitor's centre are located. From here, follow Hay Field Trail which winds along the southern shoreline and take in sweeping views of Johnson Bay and downtown Lubec. You may even spot a few seals resting on the shore's rocky ledges at low tide. Birdwatchers should head to Red Point Nature Preserve where they can spot rare birds. Here, you can also picnic in screened pavilions or see one of the oldest apple trees in the state of Maine.

#### NATURE'S WONDERS

Not to be missed is Race Point, where you can hike up to the Mowes Mountain lookout point or catch the reversing falls from the shore. "Cobscook Shores has one of the highest tides in the world. And from this location, if you come during the high and low tide, you can see something called a reversing fall," says Stohart. When the tide is coming in, the water from the Atlantic pours into the bay, creating a waterfall in one direction. When the tide goes out, it pours out and makes a fall in the other direction.



"It's an incredibly stunning thing to see because it's pretty rare to see that kind of movement of water. We're talking thousands of gallons of ocean pouring in and out twice a day in this location. And because this is a narrow spot, there's a lot of water moving into a very small area, so you see this phenomenon of the reversing fall, and it's really unique and beautiful. And you can see it safely from the shore," she says.

If you're up for a swim or a few hours of lounging in the sun, head to Huckins Beach, a long, wild stretch of soft sandy beach with a camping area and paddle boarding launch areas. "Our hope is that visitors will come to the town of Lubec to enjoy the incredible recreational opportunities, and while they're here they might recognise that Cobscook Shores is a great alternative to already popular outdoor destinations like Acadia National Park," says Stohart.

"Our vision is conservation through public access," says Carl Carlson, director of parklands for the BCF. "We want to see people coming out and falling in love with the land, because no one is going to care about it if they don't have access to it."

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