



SNOWSHOE MAGAZINE FEATURED ARTICLE:

Snowshoe Magic: Acadia National Park



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Where else can you snowshoe the pristine wilderness of a winter forest, yet take another route and have a panoramic view of the ocean? Doesn't sound like Colorado or Idaho now, does it? Acadia is unique; once you visit this part of the Maine coast, you'll be hooked for life.

While most of the Park Loop Road is closed in winter, you can still access it in two areas. You will be bug-eyed at the splendor of ocean surf below. You share the open sections of the Loop Road with skiers and sometimes snowmobilers. Be sure to stay in the unplowed lane. If you are up for it you can trek all the way up Cadillac Mountain on this road and enjoy the spectacular view of Frenchman Bay.



Photo courtesy of Aimee Beal-Church

You can also snowshoe on unplowed park roads, but be aware they you will share these routes with snowmobiles. Ditto the unplowed fire roads. It is best to avoid the hiking trails if you are on snowshoes, as they can be dangerous, with frozen falls and icy patches.

If you want the solitude and beauty of the woods, Acadia's system of carriage paths offers more than 40 miles of groomed surface winding through the eastern side of the park. These gravel paths were built by original land owners to keep out automobiles and remain that way, so all you'll see are other snowshoers and cross-country skiers. No snow mobiles on the carriage roads.

There are many groomed sections of carriage roads, maintained by volunteers from The Friends of Acadia (FOA) and these are open to those on snowshoes. You are only asked to stay off of the set ski tracks, which may be set in some areas once snowfall exceeds four inches. Be aware that grooming can take place at any time of day, as all

work is done by volunteer members of the Friends of Acadia: www.friendsofacadia.org.

Thinking about a day snowshoeing on the scenic one-way ocean section of the Loop Road? About one mile south of downtown Bar Harbor on Route 3 is the Schooner Head access road that will take you to a two-mile stretch right along the coast that is open in winter. Stay in the left lane along with cross-country skiers and the few snowmobiles that choose this area. You can exit this section via Otter Cliff Road back to Route 3, but you can also go back the way you came.

A trek through the woods and on the carriage paths can begin via Jordan Pond Road just north of downtown Seal Harbor. This road joins the Park Loop Road, which is plowed to the south end of the pond. About 2/3 of the carriage roads are groomed, 1/3 left ungroomed, and they are accessible from the Jordan Pond area.

Obtain a trail map <http://www.nps.gov/acad/planyourvisit/winteractivities.htm> to see the system of paths, their layout and how they intersect. Carriage road maps are also available at park headquarters. This link will also give you up-to-date information on trail conditions, weather and state of grooming.

When snowfall exceeds four inches, cross-country ski tracks may be set around the loops at Upper Hadlock Pond, the Amphitheater, Jordan Pond/Cobblestone Bridge, as well as upper and lower Around Mountain, Aunt Betty Pond and Eagle Lake's west side. Stay out of the set ski tracks and if Bowser is along, keep him out too.

Flattest sections on the carriage roads are the connector between Eagle Lake and Witch Hole Pond, and along the west side of Eagle Lake. Upper Hadlock and Witch



Photo courtesy of Friends of Acadia

Hole Loops are a little hilly. Add in Paradise Hill for another hill on the Witch Hole Loop. From Parkman Mountain to Aunt Betty Pond is a long gentle downhill route, so uphill on the way back. The Amphitheater Loop will take you over two of the historic stone bridges on the carriage roads and has lovely views. Head north along this route for the easier trek; going south is both longer and more arduous.

Restrooms are available at parking areas for Brown Mountain, Parkman Mountain and Sand Beach; Eagle Lake boat ramp and carriage road; Jordan Pong boat ramp; Fabbri Picnic area. Weather at Acadia can change rapidly so bring layers. Temperatures in Acadia National Park generally run warmer than inland in Maine, but storms do occur. Temperatures can run from below 0F to the mid-40s. Average snowfall is 61 inches, mostly December through March.

Snowshoes can be rented in Bar Harbor. So hit the trails!

For more information on Friends of Acadia, call 207-288-3340 or info@friendsofacadia.org. You can also visit their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofAcadia>.



Photo courtesy of Friends of Acadia

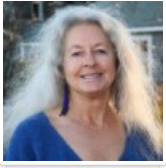
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About Sherry Hanson

Sherry enjoys the outdoors, running, biking and kayaking, traveling, the mountains and the beach. She has published more than 450 articles, taking on anything that interests her these days. Visit her website for more information and a selection of published articles, a few photos, a mention of my poetry: <http://www.sherryhanson.com>. After 21 years on the Maine Coast, Sherry relocated to Portland Oregon in 2013.

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A promotional banner for Backcountry. On the left is the Backcountry logo, which consists of a white silhouette of a mountain goat head on a black background, followed by the word "backcountry" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. To the right of the logo is a photograph of two people in winter gear (ski jackets, helmets) standing in a snowy mountain landscape. Overlaid on the right side of the banner is the text "SEMI ANNUAL SALE" in large, bold, black, uppercase letters. Below this, in smaller black uppercase letters, is the text "Up To 50% On Skis, Bikes, Clothing, & Much More".