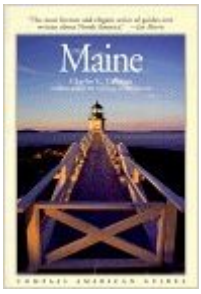
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Compass American Guides : Maine



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Synopsis

Created by local writers and photographers, Compass American Guides are the ultimate insider's guides, providing in-depth coverage of the history, culture and character of America's most spectacular destinations. Covering everything there is to see and do as well as choice lodging and dining, these gorgeous full-color guides are perfect for new and longtime residents as well as vacationers who want a deep understanding of the region they're visiting.Outstanding color photography, plus a wealth of archival imagesTopical essays and literary extractsDetailed color mapsGreat ideas for things to see and doCapsule reviews of hotels and restaurants

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Customer Reviews

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The Four SeasonsWINTERIt is a glorious season. The snow comes in dramatic bursts. Anyone who can possibly avoid traveling stays close to home. But once the storm passes, the landscape comes alive: children learning to skate or slide, older kids playing hockey on the frozen pond, ice fishermen

socializing in their little huts, the most intrepid birdwatchers up early in search of tree sparrows, cedar waxwings, hawk owls. The harbors -- full of mallards, harlequin ducks, and eiders amid the lobster boats -- never completely freeze. In the distance, clouds of sea smoke wrap themselves around the islands. Cross-country skiers, noisy snowmobiles, and daring youths who slide their four-wheel-drive trucks in circles on the ice now animate the winter woods, where Currier & Ives scenes of horse-drawn sleds have yet to fade from living memory. At night the quiet returns. Dark comes by 4 p.m. Now and then icy slush cascades off the roof. On the very coldest nights, when the countryside seems of an unearthly quiet, the bare trees make cracking noises in the dark. In the clear air the Milky Way turns out to have so many stars that it really does look like spilled milk. On certain auspicious nights, the aurora borealis flickers so coolly and elusively across the sky, you wonder if you are really seeing it. Back indoors, you read the seed catalogues around the wood stove and await the next season. SPRINGSometime in April, you will hear the ice crack. The breaking up of river or creek ice is a more certain sign of spring than any daffodil. As the surface crust breaks up, and the snow in the distant hills begins to melt, modest streams become torrents. In the old days -- but again within memory -- the spring freshet marked the beginning of the season when logs crowded the rivers. After a winter of cutting in the forest, during spring the new timber would have been floated down river, collected in huge booms where the white water had ceased and the rivers widened, then parceled out to the sawmills. Almost all of this is mechanized now, and the heroic age of forestry replaced by a more corporate endeavor. But in the mind’s eye of everyone who knows Maine’s story is the image, when the waters churn over the falls again, of a forest economy feeding into the rivers. Then one day in May, depending how far you are from the moderating touch of the sea, color washes over the drab countryside. Actually, the transformation takes a week or two, perhaps more in truculent years, but it always seems an overnight sensation. A few warmish days will bring out the maples and birches, then the oaks, as a band of color marches up the brown and gray hillsides in a reverse image of fall. SUMMER"Where are you are going this summer?" someone will inevitably ask. "Who wants to go anywhere?" is the triumphal reply. "We’re in Maine!" Suddenly the long wait proves to have been worth it. Forgotten are the chilblains, the fuel bills, the cars skidding on black ice. It is time to sit in the sun and smell the balsam sap rise from the woods or the sweet stench of the rockweed the tide has left exposed on the shore. The fiddleheads of June give way to the peas and raspberries of July, and then to the tiny wild blueberries of August. At night, while most of the rest of the country swelters or turns up the air-conditioning, it’s time to build a log fire. The cool breeze off the ocean or out of the hills lets you wear wool and go barefoot at the same time. FALLOn the coast, the light begins to do remarkable things. In the early morning

fog, the trunks of the paper birches, normally white or gray, appear a yellow-green, and distant objects turn insubstantial. The sound of a boat's horn seems more palpable than the fuzzy rocks on the shore. By midmorning, however, the sun has burned through the fog, and that Fairfield Porter look of vacation weather has returned: flawless blue skies, shimmering water, dark green spruces and firs. In late afternoon, Fitz Hugh Lane returns to his easel. The low golden light, the mood of utter stillness, the feeling of ripeness that fills his views of Somes Sound or Camden Harbor is repeated at a hundred coves and inlets from Kittery to Calais. Inland has its autumn charms, too, especially in a state with 2,200 lakes. But the mood is sharper. On the coast, you can lull yourself into feeling that October will last forever. Away from the sea, however, by late August there are already signs of approaching winter. It is more a matter of fading light than cooler weather, but the note of warning is unmistakable. By September the nights are decidedly nippier. By October there is a smell of Arctic air pushing down from Canada. But what a show the land makes. There is no putting it in words. It must have been one of the most remarkable sights to confront the earliest settlers, accustomed to the brownness of the European autumn. Whether you are a "leaf peeper" on a chartered bus tour or a child running and leaping into a pile of leaves, the setting, for a few short weeks, is the stuff of alchemy. And then, with one strong storm, it is all gone. The hills are left bare, and everyone goes inside again.

All of the Compass American Guides are excellent and differ greatly from those travel guides that list hundreds of motels and restaurants. Like other Compass American Guides, the focus is on history, geography, natural sites, museums, and the life of the people. Throughout the book are short excerpts from noted authors about Maine. The photography is excellent. The book is organized around nine chapters which cover the entire geography of Maine. Because our trip was to the Penobscot Bay and River region and Mount Desert Island, this is the portions of the book we found most useful and on which I can compare the book to the actual sites mentioned or not mentioned.Penobscot Bay is sweeping with its many islands and small towns along the coastline. In Rockland is the Farnsworth Museum. The guide book does not really prepare you for the fact that this museum is actually concentrated on the Wyeth family of artists. Paintings by the Wyeth family fill most of the galleries. There is section devoted to Maine native Louise Nevelson. It contains several large pieces of her sculpture, around 12 of her paintings, and a display of her small sculptural models for larger pieces. The paintings convince the viewer that she was a much better sculptor than a painter. The small models were excellent, tiny black jewels of tight intense composition. The museum houses the collection of the Wyeth family, including wonderful works by

George Bellows and Eastman Johnson. It is the museum book store that is most revealing that this museum is focused primarily on the Wyeth family. The vast majority of books on sale were about the Wyeth family's art careers. Camden is a beautiful town with outstanding views from the hills overlooking the harbor. We took a schooner out for two hours into the bay which was outstanding. The Penobscot Marine museum at Searsport was a very good museum and many displays were especially oriented to children. Mount Desert Island is wonderful. There is no other way to describe the hiking trails that cross the entire massive collection of islands and lakes. The town of Bar Harbor was extremely crowded with tourists, which makes sense considering that the town is situated in such close proximity to the park and its many attractions. The Saint George Peninsula is outstanding with the Owl's Head Transportation Museum and the wonderful town of Port Clyde where famous astronomer Russell Porter once lived.There are a few shortcomings of the book. Whereas there are maps, they do not contain sufficient detail to serve as both a guide book and map book. A good map of Maine from a gas station should supplement this book when going beyond main roads. Covering the entire state of Maine is a major task but I still found the subject matter rather limited in scope. Overall the book gets 4 out of 5 stars and I would recommend it for Maine visitors.

Charles Calhoun's MAINE is a departure from most travel guides. Rather than just pages and pages of lists of motels, restaurants, and things to see, Calhoun focuses on the state's people (past and present), natural history, and state-of-mind. Instead of simply an address and phone number for the famous L. L. Bean's (outdoor outfitters, for example, Calhoun gives us several pages, including the story of the founder of the company.The book opens with a chapter entitled "Learning Maine" and is organized geographically into nine main sections which cover the entire state. The final chapter, "Practical Information" gives all the usual, plus "A Dozen Fun Places to Eat" and antiquarian booksellers. Scattered throughout the book are literary excerpts and topical essays by authors such as May Sarton, John McPhee, and Longfellow. There are maps, reproductions of period art, and plenty of gorgeous color photos. Whether the reader is planning a trip to Maine or merely wishes an intriguing armchair journey, this guide is a must.Kimberly Borrowdale, Under the Covers Book Reviews

An excellent book to take along with you during your travels to Maine. The photos in this book are simply beautiful! The photographer, Thomas Mark Szelog actually lives in the lighthouse on the cover!! I was lucky enough to meet him and he was kind enough to show me some of his

photgraphs. Absolutely beautiful work. This is a great book and I highly recommend it when you travel down east!

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