

Decor Maine

ISSUE NO. 5

EXPLORE
150
of MAINE'S
BEST SPOTS
with our
**DEFINITIVE
GUIDE**

COAST,
MOUNTAIN,
CITY,
BEACH—
**OUR
PORTRAITS
OF PLACE**
cover it all

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Beautifully
in Maine

**HOME
TOURS**
*in Sutton Island,
Bernard, &
Kennebunkport*

Plus!
PAPI *brings* PUERTO RICO
to Portland

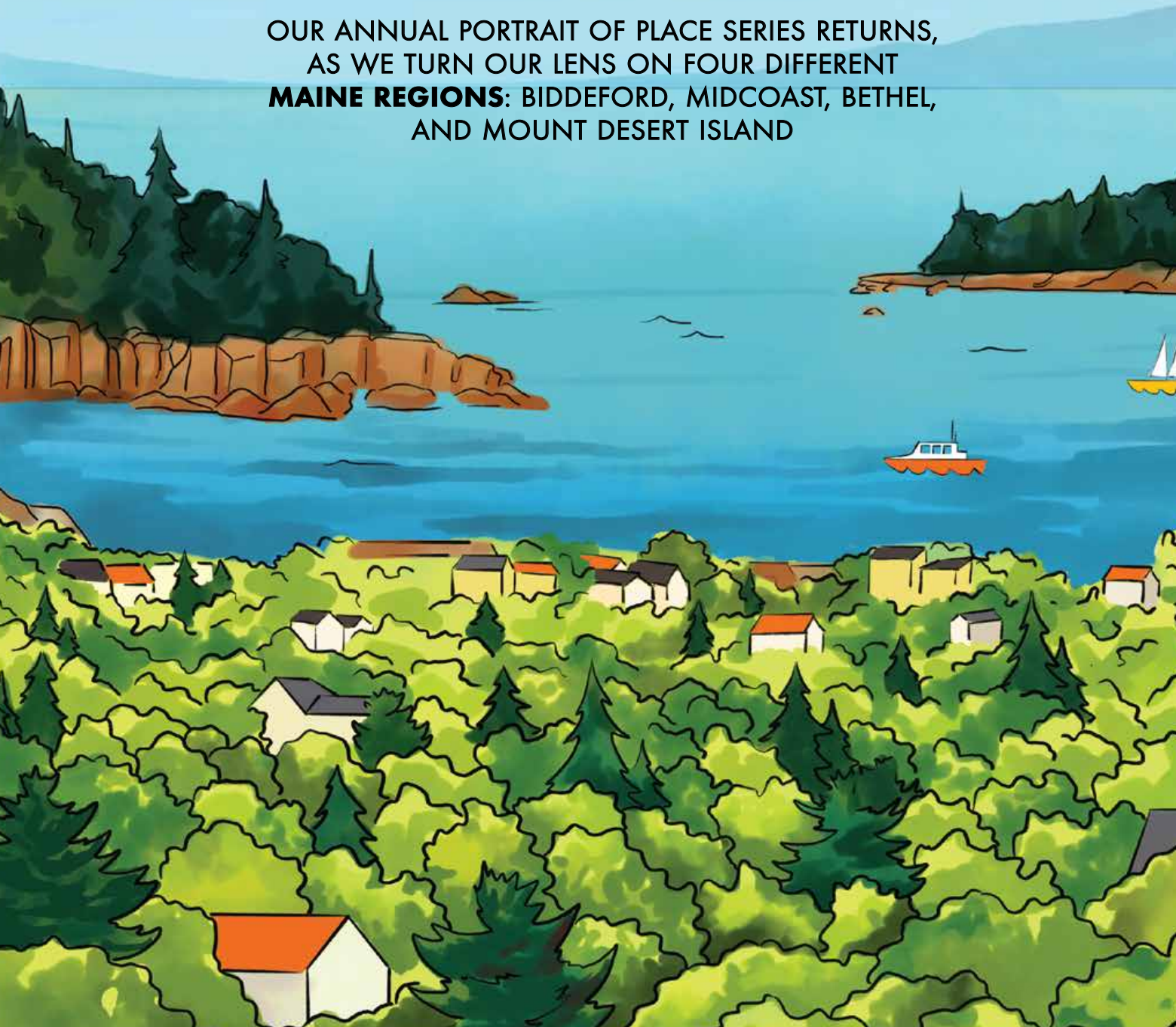


ILLUSTRATION BY **VICTORIA GORDON**

MAINE

Portraits of Place

OUR ANNUAL PORTRAIT OF PLACE SERIES RETURNS,
AS WE TURN OUR LENS ON FOUR DIFFERENT
MAINE REGIONS: BIDDEFORD, MIDCOAST, BETHEL,
AND MOUNT DESERT ISLAND



THE MANY FACES OF MOUNT DESERT ISLAND

According to Erica Brooks, there's more to Maine's
largest island than meets the eye

WRITTEN BY **HEATHER O'DAY**

At sunset, it's easy to see why Bass Harbor Head Light is rumored to be Maine's most photographed lighthouse. Photo by Jon Bilous.

PORTRAIT OF PLACE



photo: Erin Little

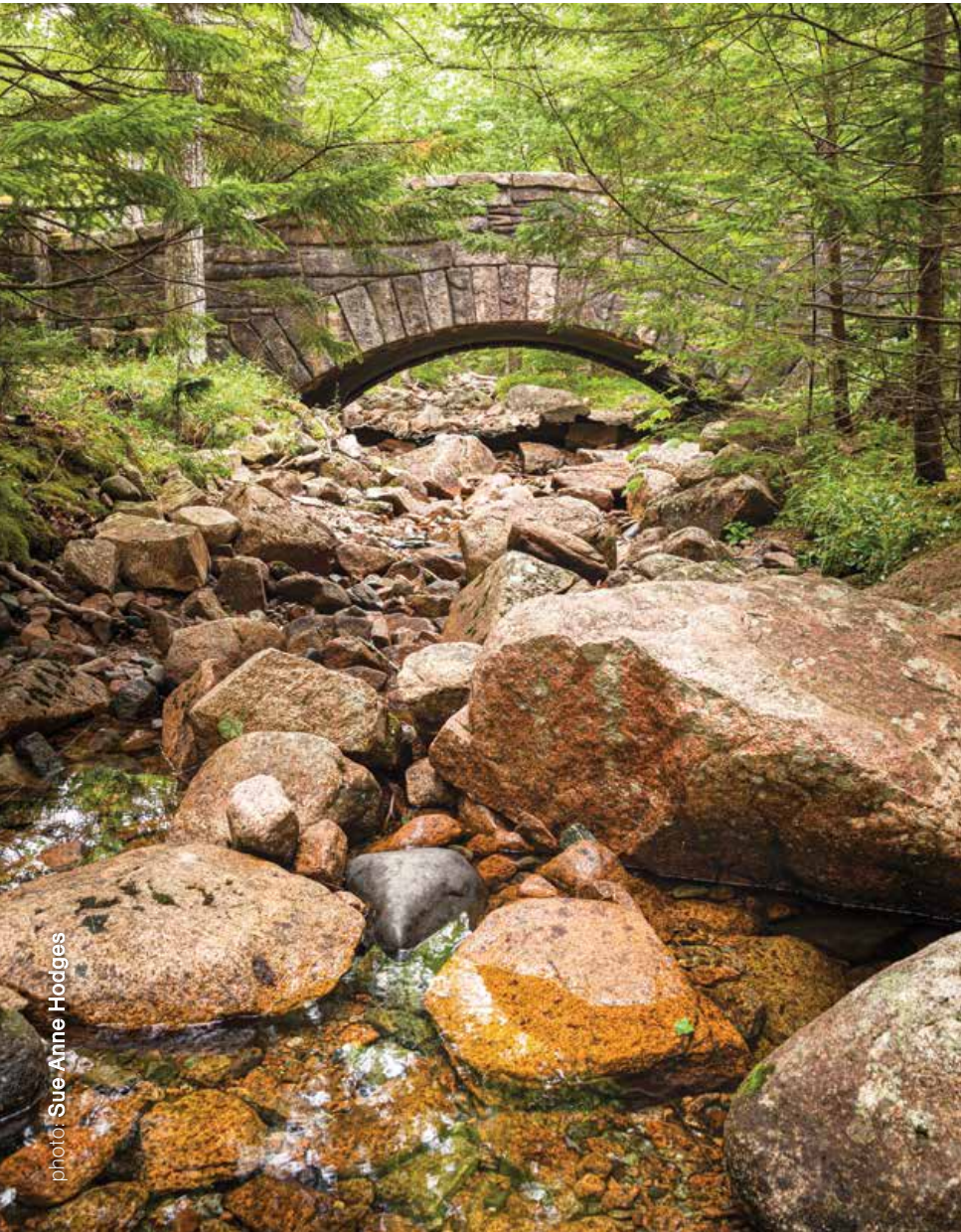


photo: Sue Anne Hodges

“Nature is, hands down, what draws people to Mount Desert Island,” says Erica Brooks, realtor at Swan Agency Real Estate in Bar Harbor. “One can hardly discuss the island’s allure without mentioning **Acadia National Park**.”

The park—which occupies roughly half of Mount Desert Island, as well as portions of additional smaller islands studding Maine’s Atlantic coastline, like Isle au Haut and The Schoodic Peninsula—accommodated nearly four million visitors in 2022; the second highest total ever recorded. “With growth comes responsibility. Accommodation versus preservation is an important balance to strike,” Erica says.

Fortunately, nonprofit organizations like **Friends of Acadia** and the **Maine Coast Heritage Trust** are on a mission to protect the park’s delicate ecosystems and waterways while simultaneously maintaining a positive visitor experience. Thanks to their efforts, swaths of land—like **Marshall Island**, an unspoiled mass of nearly 1,000 acres located between Swan’s Island and Isle au Haut—provide primitive opportunities for both campers and naturalists, while environmentally-friendly transportation alternatives like the **Island Explorer** (a free-of-charge park shuttle service) supply stress-free means to access some of Erica’s favorite trails. “**Homans Path** is one of the best short yet challenging hikes in Acadia. The granite stairs that ascend from a trail near the Wild Gardens of Acadia quickly lead you up some switchbacks that offer incredible views across **Great Meadow**, **Kebo Valley Golf Club** [the oldest and, perhaps, most scenic golf club in Maine], and **Frenchman’s Bay**,” Erica says. “For something a little easier, **Great Meadow Loop** and **Jesup Trail** are equally pristine in all four seasons.”

While Acadia may be the bait, it’s the island’s vibrant and, in many ways, unexpected cultural amenities that ultimately hook visitors. “Because our population (roughly 11,000-year-rounders) inflates to

almost triple that during the summer months, we’re equipped with facilities that aren’t typical of other small, rural communities; things like theater, art and music festivals [like the renowned **Bar Harbor Music Festival**, which recently celebrated its 57th year], and amazing restaurants to name a few,” Erica says.

Somes Sound, dubbed the only fjard (a submerged glaciated valley) on the east coast, neatly splits the island into distinct east and west sides. Bustling **Bar Harbor**—a colorful collection of shake-sided shops, hotels, and restaurants tucked snugly into the crook of Frenchman’s Bay—occupies a portion of the more densely populated east side of the island. Erica says: “I

love breaking up my busy work day by walking over to **The Terrace at the Bar Harbor Inn** for a bite to eat under the iconic canopy of yellow umbrellas; it has postcard-worthy views of the working waterfront and the **Porcupine Islands**.”

Folks pining for a cold, post-hike pint will find respite at **Bar Harbor Beer Works**, one of Erica’s go-to local breweries. “They have a huge selection of taps that are always changing, plus the sunny deck overlooking Main Street is a great place to unwind on a hot summer day.”

While some find these buzzy east-side hot-spots energizing, others come to the island seeking the desolate and awe-inspiring scenes portrayed in

antiquated paintings brushed by the hands of famed Hudson River School romantics: Cobalt waves clapping against the blushing granite coast; glittering horizons punctuated by the snapping linen sails of schooners; turmeric-dipped tips of conifers at sunset. For the folks who take after the original “rusticators,” there’s good news: indeed, there are pockets where the tranquility portrayed in those early, sepia-tinted paintings still reigns.

A cruise around the discrete west-side of the island via US Route 102 presents opportunities aplenty to bask in the hushed beauty of **Seal Cove**, **Hodgdon**

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—Erica Brooks

(OPPOSITE) CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM, LEFT: Crowned by a 20th-century bridge, Little Harbor Brook appears plucked from a fairytale. The Schoodic Peninsula cuts a captivating sea view through the mist (photo by Michael D. Wilson). Sweeping vistas of Somes Sound unfold from the Claremont Hotel’s heated pool. Colorful reminders of the island’s lobstering heritage abound (photo by Hannah Hoggatt). Main Street is a must in Bar Harbor, especially in midsummer (photo by Hannah Hoggatt).



SELECTMEN'S
BUILDING
c.1780



Stretching over the placid waters of Somes Creek, the Somesville Bridge looks pretty as a painting. Photo by Lauryn Hottinger.

PORTRAIT OF PLACE

Pond, and the **Algerine Coast**. “As a realtor, I’m lucky to have the opportunity to travel all over the island to visit some very unique and private places. Recently, I had a few listings on the ‘quiet side’ of the island. If I timed my appointments right, I’d try to get a lobster roll to-go from **Archie’s Lobster** and cruise over to the **Seal Cove picnic area** to enjoy a solitary lunch with gorgeous western-facing views.”

In the aptly named **Pretty Marsh**—a small village clutching the outskirts of the island—a secluded picnic nook features the ethereal mystique of a secret garden. Thick carpets of verdant moss all but swallow the thump of hiking boots, and the weathered tops of wooden tables offer themselves as platters to display produce fetched from nearby farm stands. “The farmstand close to **Bartlett’s Landing** has the best selection of organically-grown flowers,” Erica says.

From the **Trenton Bridge** entry all the way to the **Bass Harbor Head Light Station**, which is perched on

the island’s southernmost tip, MDI has thoroughly worked its magic on Erica, who, some might say, is properly bewitched. Raised just outside of Bangor, her childhood consisted of countless drives to the island in order to scramble up **Cadillac Mountain** or to go for a spin in her grandfather’s sailboat, which was anchored in **Northeast Harbor**. After college, Erica tried Colorado on for size but wound up boomer-angling right back to Bar Harbor in 2005. “I consider myself pretty well-traveled,” Erica says. “Somehow, everywhere else seems to pale in comparison. Maybe it’s the ocean, but I find that the sense of expansiveness—of freedom—here is overwhelming in the best possible way.”

SPREAD: You can almost hear the purr of these lobster boats as they idle in the glittering surf of Frenchman’s Bay. Photo by Jon Bilous.



INSIDE AND OUT

Eateries, experiences, exceptional views—for a petite island, Mount Desert Island packs an all-encompassing punch

WORDS BY HEATHER O'DAY ILLUSTRATION BY VICTORIA GORDON

LULU LOBSTER BOAT RIDE 55 West St., Bar Harbor

This interactive tour of the working waterfront is sure to be a crowd pleaser. Boat rides include live lobstering demonstrations and postcard-perfect views of Mount Desert Island from the sea. Keep your eyes peeled for basking seals.

lululobsterboat.com

BAR HARBOR GHOST TOURS 26 Mt. Desert St., Bar Harbor

Take a spooky tour of downtown Bar Harbor with the only Wabanaki-owned tour company in Maine. Bar Harbor Ghost Tours packs exemplary storytelling and well-researched history into a series of chilling 60-90-minute walks.

barharborghosttours.com
[@barharborghosttours](https://www.instagram.com/barharborghosttours)

ARGOSY GALLERY 6 Mt. Desert St., Bar Harbor

Strolling through Argosy Gallery is akin to a long walk on the beach; gallerist Amy Stapleton Sidman's stirring selection of original traditional- and impressionist-style paintings portray Maine's temperamental coast. The gallery welcomes visitors daily mid-May through October, or by appointment year-round.

argosygallery.com

HAVANA 318 Main St., Bar Harbor

Havana—a Bar Harbor staple restaurant for the past 25 years—is one of only two Maine establishments to boast the Wine Spectator Award of Excellence. The restaurant's robust menu of Latin-infused, all-American meals proudly features local and organic meats, produce, and seafood.

havanamaine.com
[@havanamaine](https://www.instagram.com/havanamaine)

PROJECT SOCIAL KITCHEN & BAR 278 Main St., Bar Harbor

Tuck up under a twinkling covered patio for craft cocktails, small plates, or sweet and savory crepes at Project Social Kitchen & Bar. This hip, beer-garden-meets-soirée-style eatery is open mid-May through October, and features fare the entire family will enjoy.

socialbarharbor.com
[@projectsocialbarharbor](https://www.instagram.com/projectsocialbarharbor)

BASS HARBOR HEAD LIGHT 6 Mt. Desert St., Bar Harbor



CARROLL HOMESTEAD



KIMBALL SHOP + BOUTIQUE



ASTICOU AZALEA GARDEN



JORDAN POND HOUSE



RUSTICATOR

LULU'S LOBSTER BOAT TOURS



BASS HARBOR HEAD LIGHT STATION 116 Lighthouse Rd., Bass Harbor

Bass Harbor Head Light Station—one of the most famous lighthouses in the state—is the perfect place for a seaside picnic. Located on the island's southernmost point, the sunsets are nothing short of spectacular.

nps.gov/acad/planyourvisit/bass-harbor-head-light-station

RUSTICATOR SHOP 10 Main Street, Seal Harbor

Design boutique, or a dear friend's sumptuous living room? At Rusticator Shop, Laura and Vassar Pierce have created a store that feels as cozy and timeless as a Mount Desert Island summer cottage. Peruse custom, heirloom-quality fixtures, furnishings, and more.

rusticatorshop.com
[@rusticatorshop](https://www.instagram.com/rusticatorshop)

CARROLL HOMESTEAD Southwest Harbor

History buffs will relish an excursion to the Carroll Homestead, a well-preserved (nearly 200-year-old) slice of early life on Mount Desert Island. Donated to Acadia National Park in 1982, the homestead housed three generations of the Carroll family over 92 years.

nps.gov/places/carroll-homestead.htm

THE KIMBALL SHOP & BOUTIQUE 135 Main St., Northeast Harbor

This chic, personalized emporium is a department store in disguise. Proudly serving Mount Desert Island since 1935, the shop features fine interior furnishings and tableware, a boutique with luxe clothing, and even an extensive bridal registry.

kimballshop.com
[@kimballshop](https://www.instagram.com/kimballshop)

ASTICOU AZALEA GARDEN 3 Sound Drive, Northeast Harbor

Calling all horticulturalists and landscape designers: this sprawling garden—whose plantings were inspired by classic Japanese design—blooms profusely from mid-May through October. Drink in the sights and smells of dainty cherry blossoms, sweet azaleas, waterlilies, and more.

gardenpreserve.org/asticou-azalea-garden
[@landandgardenpreserve](https://www.instagram.com/landandgardenpreserve)

JORDAN POND HOUSE 2928 Park Loop Rd., Seal Harbor

Take your tea with a view at the idyllic Jordan Pond House. Steeped in tradition, this timeless restaurant has been serving afternoon tea and plump popovers since 1893.

jordanpondhouse.com
[@jordanpondhouse](https://www.instagram.com/jordanpondhouse)