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Climb Me. The Great State of Maine Mountaineering

Maine Department of Economic Development

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Big mountains - rock routes and trails - long ridges and sheer faces - alpine conditions on summits above treeline - easy access and expedition-type trips - summer and winter.

Maine's great mountains are not tall by altitude measure, but big because of the low base levels. Fifty mountains provide climbs of 2,000 or more vertical feet. Mount Katahdin rises 4,874 feet from its lowest level - an outstanding climb of the northeast. Fifty mountains have elevations of 3,400 or more feet above level. Twelve peaks are on the famed New England's 4,000 Footer's list, with Mount Katahdin being 5,267 feet. (These peaks must rise a clean 200 feet above the low point of the connecting ridge with a 4,000 foot neighbor.)

The northern extension of the Appalachian Mountain chain - called the Longfellow Mountains - in a long arc: from the Maine-New Hampshire border to Baxter State Park includes the tallest mountains. Many other areas have good mountaineering mountains, from Cadillac Mountain at Mt. Desert, to Mount Megunticook at Camden Hills, and East Royce Mountain in the Evans Notch area. Only some of the widely spread mountains are located in state parks with summer season camping facilities. The mountaineers will have to provide for themselves in other areas and seasons. Mount Desert Island and Acadia National Park, Camden Hills State Park, Baxter State Park, Mount Blue State Park and Rangeley State Park have general camping in season in mountaineering areas. See the appropriate Vacation Planners on State Parks and Camping.

Mountains in the great wilderness area of Baxter State Park, all in the shadow of majestic Mount Katahdin, are the most alpine in Maine. The area of massive barren summits jutting skyward gives to the mountaineer the freedom in his climbs. The steep glacial cirque faces will give technical climbing teams the most challenging routes. Some of the routes have only been eyed with speculation.

Technical climbers on Maine mountains will find rock to challenge every technique, easy grade three and grade four ridges to absorbing grade five and grade six faces. Some are only a pitch or two while others go for four or five leads and some routes press onto open alpine summits. The challenge of seamless granite to bucket holds on steep faces will be found on most climbs.

Safety in the mountains is a foremost interest in Maine. Good planning, good equipment and training, experienced leadership and the wisdom to turn down a trail from the summit in the face of bad weather or other great difficulties will prevent accidents.

As a precaution against a possible mishap, three things are indispensable: a good compass, matches or fire-making material, and something in the nature of emergency food. In the course of proper planning these will, of course, be included along with a thorough study of a map of the area you plan to climb. A compass is useless if you have no idea where you are trying to go. Above all, do not travel alone.

Mountains do not forgive mistakes. Your brain is your best survival gear. Seek good mountaineering training before you start your climb and be sure you know what to do if you get lost.
For many years, mountain climbers believed it was necessary to cross the ocean to the Alps to fully enjoy their sport. It has become increasingly more evident in recent years, however, that our own mountains here in the United States yield to none in their desirability. With this awareness came a great revival of interest in mountain climbing.

Nowhere is this rekindled enthusiasm more apparent or pronounced than in Maine where climbs are available to challenge the most experienced climber. Mt. Katahdin, for example, is conceded to be one of the most desirable mountains in the world from the climber's point of view.

Mountain climbing is symbolic of man's natural inclinations to climb ever upward, to surmount whatever obstacles are in his path. On attaining the summit one has achieved a victory—and the view is his reward.

Climbing offers the utmost opportunity for physical exercise with every muscle in the body coming into play. The cool, clean air that washes the mountain side contributes to the climber's supreme sense of well-being when the day's climb is over.

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