

COVID-19 Response

Following guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state and local public health authorities, park operations continue to adapt to changing conditions while maintaining public access, particularly outdoor spaces. Before visiting a park, please check the [park website](#) to determine its operating status. Updates about the overall NPS response to COVID-19, including safety information, are posted on www.nps.gov/coronavirus. Please [recreate responsibly](#).

National Park Service

Acadia

National Park
Maine

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The Wabanaki: People of the Dawnland

Native American peoples have inhabited the land we now call Maine for 12,000 years. Today four distinct tribes—the Maliseet, Micmac, Passamaquoddy and Penobscot—are known collectively as the [Wabanaki](#), or “People of the Dawnland.”

Mount Desert Island and Acadia National Park have remained in the center of Wabanaki traditional homelands for thousands of years. Long before Europeans arrived, the Wabanaki traveled here in seaworthy birchbark canoes. Setting up temporary camps near places like Somes Sound, they hunted, fished, gathered berries, harvested clams, and traded with other Wabanaki. Some called Mount Desert Island “Pemetic,” meaning “range of mountains.”

In the nineteenth century, Wabanaki people came to sell their handmade ash and birchbark baskets to wealthy travelers, and to harvest precious basket-making resources like sweetgrass. Summer tourists and summer residents alike were entertained by elaborate Wabanaki dance performances at venues such as Sieur de Monts and the town of Bar Harbor. Led by Wabanaki guides, canoe trips around Frenchman Bay and the Cranberry Islands were a convenient and pleasurable way for visitors to reach the outer islands.

Today, each tribe has a reservation and government headquarters located within their territories throughout Maine. Still, Wabanaki people have a unique and spiritual relationship with this land, from the first rays of dawn seen from Cadillac Mountain to the last light of dusk slipping behind Bar Island. Many Wabanaki people today come for much the same reasons as others—to hike the mountain trails and enjoy the striking scenery. Yet some still come to gather precious sweetgrass, sell handmade baskets, and to show respect for this sacred landscape, as their ancestors did for thousands of years.

Learn More

The [Abbe Museum](#), in Bar Harbor, Maine is a museum of Wabanaki art, history, and culture. In partnership with the Smithsonian Institution, the museum holds the largest and best documented collection of Maine Indian basketry and has built an extensive contemporary collection, documenting the continuing Wabanaki craft tradition in Maine.

Learn more about the Wabanaki's long history and diverse culture in *Ethnography: Asticou's Island Domain: Wabanaki Peoples at Mount Desert Island*, [Volume 1](#) and [Volume 2](#).

Cultural Connections in Acadia National Park

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DURATION: 4 minutes, 8 seconds

Though Acadia is well known for its landscapes and natural history, it also has many rich layers of significant cultural history. Wabanaki people have lived here for as long as 10,000 years, and many continue to call this place home, or feel connected to it from afar. In partnership with the Abbe Museum, Acadia National Park, and sponsored by Dawnland, LLC, the Cultural Connections in the Park program hosts free public events every Wednesday from late June through September.



Abbe Museum

Visit the Abbe Museum at Sieur de Monts or downtown Bar Harbor to learn more about the history and living culture of Wabanaki people.



History & Culture

Learn about the people and places that make up our past, present, and future.

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