Walk With the One You Love

Some Mainers get into Xtreme Walking the Dog.

BY MELANIE BROOKS

Your backpack is ready, your hiking boots are tied, the trail beckons—what a time to discover Buster’s got to wait in the car!

Novices learn this lesson every day at the gates to Baxter State Park, for example, dramatizing the need to get the inside...er, scoop in advance, especially when there are so many places that do welcome your four-legged best friend.

PORTLAND

Portland Trails’ Isabel Aley’s dogs enjoy Presumpscot River Preserve Trail. “They’re stimulated by the sight and sound of the moving water and Presumpscot Falls,” she says. “Capisic Brook Trail is great for shorter walks closer to downtown Portland.”

Portland Trails now owns Fore River Sanctuary—when Maine Audubon owned it, dogs were not allowed. Most of the trails are open from dawn to dusk year-round and have no time restrictions.

Willard Beach in South Portland and Ferry Beach

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OUTDOORS

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in Saco are open to dogs in the early morning
and evening no matter the season. Ferry
Beach is a favorite of Stephanie Long, owner
doctor-walking and pet-sitting company
Portland’s Paws. “At Ferry Beach, you can
watch incredible sunsets,” she says.

Another tip: “Purchase snowmobile trail
maps from local supermarkets and gas
stations,” she says. “There are some great hikes
in Bridgton at Shawnee Peak and in Camden
on Mount Megunticook, with water at the
base for dogs to cool off in afterwards!”

EASY DAY HIKES

Acadia National Park, Mount Desert Island
The 45-mile carriage road system is
popular with dogs, according to ranger Chris
Wiebusch. They’re open to cycling and
horse-riding, so pets must be on a six-foot
leash at all times—violators are subject to a $75
ticket. “We’re serious about this,” Wiebusch
says. Not to mention, the wilderness is dan-
gerous in and of itself. “At least two or three
times a year, park rangers are called to carry
injured dogs out of the park.”

You can let your dog run off-leash on
Rockefeller property–accessible via carriage
roads or the main access to Little Long Pond.

Red Brook Cascade, Bethel
You’ll love this old railroad bed–easy to keep
your dog on trail, with good swimming
holes. But Red Brook can be difficult to cross
when the water is high.

Harris Mountain, Dixmont
This two-mile hike to see the fall foliage takes
about an hour as you climb to 470 feet, near
Waterville off Route 7 in Dixmont.

Greenville Growler
This 6.8-mile round trip follows the shore of
Nahmankata Lake and up the eastern side of
Nesuntabunt Mountain and features a
swimming hole by Wadleigh Stream—the
last before the summit.

MORE STRENUOUS HIKES

Douglas Mountain, Sebago
Short but tough, with fairly steep slopes,
Woods Trail and Ledges Trail begin on
pavement, while the Eagle Scout Trail is entirely
through the woods. These trails can be slip-
pery for dogs when wet.

Baldpate (from the east side), Andover
An eight-mile hike to 2,800 feet—not for old
or couch-potato dogs. The start of the trail
is easy and next to The Cataracts, a series of
waterfalls and swimming holes. Dunn Brook
Trail is easy to follow, but the descent brings you over some boulders and small ladders. **Meadow Mountain, Brownfield**

Hand-over-hand climbing may be necessary. The second rock bed is a bit slippery, with loose gravel on the trail. Check your dog's paws for small, embedded rocks. Just an hour from Portland, this hike gets your blood pumping. Bring plenty of water.

**Appalachian Trail**

The AT in Maine is open to dogs until you reach Baxter State Park. The ferry service over the Kennebec River is dog-friendly for multi-day hikes. The trail through Mahoosuc Notch, though, is tough for dogs. Called “The Longest Mile,” its stretch of big rocks should be avoided by hikers with dogs—for the dogs’ safety.

**NOT SUITABLE FOR DOGS**

Baxter State Park doesn’t allow dogs at all—more to preserve the wildlife than anything else. Percival Baxter was a dog lover and almost always had an Irish setter.

Because of the iron rungs and ladders on certain trails in Acadia National Park, pets are not allowed on the following steep trails: Precipice, Beehive, Ladder Trail to Dorr Mountain, Beech Cliffs Trail, Perpendicular Trail on Mansell Mountain, and Jordan Cliffs Trail. Dogs are also not allowed on Sand Beach and Echo Lake.

Gulf Hagas in Brownville Junction is a high-risk area. The 400-foot moss-covered cliffs of the Rim Trail are definitely a deterrent. While it’s beautiful here, help is many miles away. I don’t recommend it.

The trail along Cutler Coast is also steep. It’s a 10-mile loop with no fresh water, and half of the trail consists of dramatic cliffs and crashing surf. Hunting and trapping are also allowed in this area, so stay clear.

**I’VE GOT YOU... UNDER MY SKIN**

Hello, Mr. Chips! Vets now inject 1D microchips between the shoulder blades of your pets. The chip lasts throughout the life of your pet and requires no care. If your dog is found, scanning the microchip helps with identification, even if his collar is lost. Chips cost around $45 plus your vet’s office-visit fee. If Rover came from a breeder, most likely he already has a microchip.

Visit The Bureau of Parks and Lands at www.maine.gov/doc/parks. These trails and others can be found online at www.localhikes.com.