

ROUTE 1 Road Trip

Heading north from Key West, Route 1 wends its way across 15 East Coast states — but we're confident Maine has the best of it. Let's hit the road.

ILLUSTRATION BY GWEN KERAVAL

ADMIT IT, YOU DON'T remember the first time you drove on Interstate 95, do you? It's a fine road, of course — wide, smooth, leads to some of our favorite places. We could do without the tolls, but hey, we're not here to speak ill about the Turnpike. It's just that the thing has no character. No complexity.

Now U.S. Route 1 in Maine? That's our kind of interstate. It has history — in fact, it was the country's very first interstate highway. It has grandeur — Federal-style mansions, the Camden Hills, Aroostook County farmland with great, yawning skies. It has contradictions — folks tend to call it Coastal Route 1, though more than a third of its 527 miles are profoundly landlocked. It has a cast of characters. It has a sense of humor. It has pie.

You have distinct memories of trips along Route 1. Heck, you have whole stories about it. Parts of the road

today are more commercialized than when you made those memories, sure. But you've paid a visit to a few of those outlet stores, to that nice new taproom in what used to be the hay barn. And the places that matter most to you? That one weird B&B, that diner with the blueberry pancakes, that trail to the cove? They're all still around, and some of them look eerily identical to how they looked 10 or 30 or 50 years back. That's Maine's Route 1 for you: old curiosities and new eyesores, speed up and slow down, stasis and change.

The last time we did a Route 1 issue, we traced the journey north to south, beginning in Fort Kent and ending in Kittery. We've flipped it this time, just for the heck of it, and we've woven in a few detours, since a lot of Route 1's charm has to do with where you end up once you turn off of it. Buckle up, friends, and enjoy the drive.





MILE 15

MILE 1-32 KITTERY TO ARUNDEL

Roughly a quarter of Maine's annual visitors – all 35 million of them – focus their trips on these first few miles along the southern coast – where there's plenty of culture, road-side oddities, and tasty chow to go around.

BY BRIDGET M. BURNS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY MOLLY HALEY



The seats are 94 years old. The coming attraction is 43. Cinema scion Max Clayton is 32 – and making over Ogunquit's storied Leavitt Theatre.

Jo Johnson, keeper of her late husband's vast trove of historical relics.



MILE 23

Leavitt Better Than You Found It

IN OGUNQUIT, A 1924 THEATER GETS A 21ST-CENTURY SPIFF-UP.

Max Clayton was literally raised in Ogunquit's Leavitt Theatre. His dad, Peter, owned the place, and when Max was small, the family lived in an upstairs apartment where Peter had drilled a hole in the kitchen wall, covered by a curtain, through which he could peek to make sure things were running smoothly in the adjacent darkened theater. Some of Max's earliest memories, he says, are of staring through the hole, eating Cheerios and watching movies.

The family moved out when he was 4. Now, after taking over the theater for his retiring father last year, Max is 32 and living in the Leavitt once more. The peephole's gone, but at a glance, the place looks a lot like it did in 1976. In many ways, actually, it looks a lot like it did in 1924, when a pair of Sanford entrepreneurs built the theater, with its high, false-front facade and distinctive arched entrance. But inside, Max and his de facto general manager (and also his girlfriend), Emily Knight, are getting creative.

For starters, they've cleared seating from the back of the theater and put in the Leavitt Lounge, a craft-cocktail and snack bar with couches and high-top tables, where moviegoers can nosh cheese plates and sip negronis while catching a flick. And the bar keeps hopping after the credits roll, with a late-night food menu until 12:30 A.M. The renovation dinged the theater's

capacity by almost 100 seats, but Max and Emily took pains to preserve the building's historic layout and left some of the original 1920s wooden seats in the new bar.

"When they built this theater, it was a sensation to see a moving picture — people came from all around, so they put in more than 600 seats." Max says. "Now, everyone's got a motion picture in their pocket. So the bar is a way for this business to survive in this town, this economy, and this culture."

Naturally, you can still catch summer blockbusters. But Max, a Massachusetts College of Art and Design grad, and Emily, who teaches high school art, are hoping to grow the theater's cred as a destination for live concerts and readings, arthouse films, silent films with piano accompaniment, and retro movie classics (they just wrapped a month of *Jaws* screenings). Max is still tearing tickets, like he did as a teenager, but he's also building a sort of art installation out of the theater's historic projectors, and he wrought the new bar's metal railings himself. Before he stepped in at the Leavitt, he was fabricating metal sculptures for public art installations.

"My dad was like, 'Why do you want to take over? It's going to be a huge struggle, you're successful doing artwork,'" Max says. "But it's undeniably cool. He gets that."

► On September 1, catch the doo-wop revival group *The Platters*. On September 12, pianist *Jeff Rapsis* scores the 1925 silent film *Her Sister* from Paris. 259 Main St., Ogunquit. 207-646-3123. levitttheatre.com

The Long Renovation of a Quirky Landmark

A Wells ophthalmologist honors her husband's memory by reviving the beloved Johnson Hall Museum.

If, in the last few years, you've driven past the Johnson Hall Museum — a curious little compound that includes an old-timey gas station, a train caboose, a 19th-century schoolhouse and jail, and various other anachronistic structures — you've likely seen the sign out front: CLOSED FOR RENOVATIONS. Jo Johnson hung it after her husband, Bill, died unexpectedly in 2014, and prepping to reopen southern Maine's most multifarious museum has been slow going.

Bill was an auctioneer and a world-class collector of timeworn artifacts. Jo was skeptical when he first invited her up to his Boston apartment in the '70s. "He said, 'Oh, come up and see my antiques and let's play the piano,'" she recalls. "I said, 'Oh yeah, I've heard that before.'"

The couple eventually moved to Maine, and in the '80s, they bought Elsie Libby's Colonial Tea Room, a once-posh, many-columned former restaurant now on the National Register of Historic Places. Over the years, Bill filled the 15 acres surrounding it with his various building acquisitions, filled those with antiques and curios, and, in the '90s, started giving tours for \$5 donations. (Jo, meanwhile, set up her ophthalmology practice right in the tea room.)

Last year, Johnson reopened the 1923 Tea Room to host weddings and events (she revamped a former train station to accommodate bridal-party prep and ran electricity outside to service tent parties). Soon, she plans to host a few public functions — high teas, concerts — so folks can get reacquainted with her late husband's sprawling collection. She's giving herself two more years to restart tours (she plans to bring someone on for the job). In the meantime, drivers can still admire the eclectic grounds from Route 1 — and none of the historic melange will disappear.

"The décor isn't changing," Johnson assures. "This is in honor of Bill."

► 2713 Post Rd., Wells. 207-985-0015. johnsonhallmuseum.com





“These women sign these bras. They come back and they want to show their friends. I don’t know how it originated; it just started.”

Bring Your Helmet

Arundel’s Bentley’s Saloon has welcomed bikers, classic-car nuts, and others since race-car driver Bentley Warren opened it in 2004. Managing partner Lisa Zatalava dishes on the, ahem, freewheeling scene.

“So Bentley’s now 77. And he’s legendary here in New England for racing supermodified cars. He’s raced the Indy twice, and he’s done other races all over the country, so he already had this fanbase of motorsports people that loved him. But he’s been a biker his whole life. And back in the ‘60s and ‘70s, there were a lot of places that didn’t welcome bikers. So he said, if I ever have a bar, I want everyone to feel welcome.

We got this life-size metal hog on the table for \$50. Now, everybody wants to come to Bentley’s and have their picture taken up on that hog. I make jokes about it. I call it our \$10,000 hog now because of the insurance factor.

The first time that Barbara Bush came here, she was with George and their daughter, Doro. And we’re having lunch in the back bar, and Barbara looks at Bentley and she says, ‘Bentley, may I ask, how did the brassieres get in the rafters?’

These women sign these bras — it’s their bragging rights. They come back and they want to show their friends. I don’t know how it originated; it just started.

On the weekends there are a lot of bikers. But there are a lot of people that come here in cars. A lot of them think, ‘I can’t come to Bentley’s because I don’t have a bike.’ It’s like, no, you can come. And once they get over that and realize they can, they do.

We just had a group in here from England. We’ve gotten people from New Zealand. Italy. Poland. Canada, of course, that’s a given — they’re always here. The diversity still amazes me. So in my mind, he accomplished what he wanted to do, to make everybody feel welcome and have a good time.”

MILE 28



Bentley’s Saloon: founded by a race car driver, often necessitates designated drivers.

► *Cruisin’ Night welcomes a fleet of classic and antique cars, Tuesday evenings through September 18. 1601 Portland Rd., Arundel. 207-985-8966. bentleysaloon.com*

MILE 19



Get fried: Deadhead-themed taters are among the Congdon’s After Dark offerings.

Keep On Truckin’

You can’t go wrong with these picks from Congdon’s new food truck rally in Wells.

Since 1955, the same family has run Congdon’s Doughnuts in Wells. It’s a throwback kind of place, so last summer’s launch of Congdon’s After Dark, a “food truck park” in an adjacent lot, surprised some fans. Its runaway popularity surprised even the Congdon’s team, with as many as 1,000 people turning up nightly to enjoy up to 10 food trucks and a beer garden. “It’s been like running a marathon while you’re still learning to walk,” says Congdon’s After Dark director Adam Leech. Below, some of our favorite grub. (Call or check the web to confirm the nightly line-up.)

► 4 P.M. 1100 Post Rd., Wells. 207-646-4219. cadfoodtrucks.com

Pulled Pork Mac & Cheese, \$10
Fahrenheit 225. Sun.–Wed. fahrenheit225bbq.com

Tender, slow-cooked pork butt mixes perfectly with creamy mac. Top with Sweet Heat, Fahrenheit 225’s take on a Memphis-style (tangy and brown-sugary) barbecue sauce.

Little Red Rooster, \$12
Knew Potato Caboose. Daily. knewpotatocaboose.com
Can hand-cut fries be an entrée? For sure, brah, if they’re topped with grilled chicken, barbecue sauce, bacon, ranch, and scallions. This Grateful Dead-themed french-fry-mobile will cure your munchies.

Reuben, \$11.50
What-A-Wrap. Daily.
Behold, a reuben that doesn’t ooze dressing all over your hands. That’s the beauty of a wrap — and of using homemade corned beef hash instead of

brisket. Get the jalapeño-cheddar wrap for extra kick.

Honey-Dipped Blonde Ale, \$7
Barreled Souls Brewing with Congdon’s Doughnuts. Daily. barreledsouls.com
Chris Schofield’s mom once worked at Congdon’s, and the Barreled Souls head brewer still remembers stopping by to help fold doughnut boxes. Each barrel of this light, malty brew is soaked on 10 pounds of doughnuts for a week. Served all classy, with a honey-dipped doughnut hole on the rim.

Blueberry Cheesecake Ice Cream, \$4
Arundel Ice Cream Shop. Fri.–Sat. arundelicecreamshop.com
Wild Maine bluebs, a dairy mix from Windham’s Baker Brook Farm, and no corn syrup. Yum.

WHOLE LOTTA YUMMY

The floor-to-ceiling sweets displays at Kittery’s Yummies Candy & Nuts (384 Rte. 1; 877-498-6643; yummys.com) have been enticing candy freaks for 32 years. Out front, the bold red sign announces 10,000 pounds of goodies on the shelves inside. Turns out, that’s out of date. Second-generation owner Matt Brodsky brought us up to speed on the booming bonbon biz.

MILE 3

23

flavors of saltwater taffy in stock

40,000

pounds of candy on display (Says Brodsky, “Unlike McDonald’s, we don’t change our sign.”)

1,200

pounds of showcase chocolates sold during the summer season

500

pounds of candy sold daily, at minimum

6,000

packages of Caramel Creams (aka, bull’s eyes) sold each year — the store’s top seller, by units

45

varieties of Jelly Belly jelly beans sold in bulk

30,000

shoppers between Memorial Day and Labor Day



MILE 53

MILE 33-85 BIDDEFORD TO BATH

A sixth of Maine's population lives in the 12 towns traversed by this, the most developed (and, dare we say, urban) segment of Route 1 – which doesn't make it any less weird and wonderful a stretch of road.

BY MARY POLS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY MOLLY HALEY

Order up: Miss Portland diner is among metro Portland's great old-school eateries.



In Praise of Palace, Miss Portland, and More

Greater Portland is a diner diner's delight.

When Biddeford's Palace Diner (18 Franklin St.; 207-284-0015; palacedinerme.com) opened in 2014 (well, reopened – the state's oldest dining car launched its first iteration in 1927), downtown Biddeford was still, as they say, revital-

izing. It's pretty vital these days, with some of the state's most fun places to eat (Elda, Biscuits & Company) and hang out (Elements bookstore, Engine gallery and creative space), just blocks off Route 1. And there in the middle is Palace Diner, cash only, with 15 stools and huge, fluffy-egged breakfast sandwiches and exquisite tuna melts. Everything from the caramelized grapefruit to the potatoes (baked, smashed, fried) is pure magic and worth the (inevitable) wait. Palace executes diner food at cheffy-chef levels, without turning the timeless space around it into a gimmick.

Or you might pull up a stool at:

Rudy's Diner. Serving the basics with just the right amount of griddle grease – good burgers, eggs with big slabs of country ham – since late founder Rudy Ferrante opened it in an old caboose in 1975. ▶ *Cash only.* 449 Main St., South Portland. 207-775-1990.

Miss Portland. A 1949 dining car from the Worcester Lunch Car Company, with shiny blue-painted porcelain everywhere and a knack for comfort food and treats like malted milkshakes. ▶ 140 Marginal Way, Portland. 207-210-6673. missportlanddiner.com

Sunrise Café. Not much to look at in its strip-mall digs, but boy do they nail the home fries. And they'll get them out with toast, two eggs, and coffee inside of five minutes. ▶ 475 Rte. 1, Freeport. 207-865-6115.

Brunswick Diner. Another old lunch car, circa 1946, and the rare Route 1 diner with dinner hours. Boldly boasts out front of the "Best Lobster Roll in Maine"; wisely includes "probably" in the fine print. It's unexpectedly tasty, actually, none too mayo-heavy and best with a side of lightly battered onion rings. ▶ *Cash only.* 101 Pleasant St. 207-721-1134.

MILE 67

Dan Kleban says Freeport is barrels of fun.



Maine Beer Company's Flight to Suds-burbia

Why did one of the hottest breweries to come out of Portland's craft beer boom pull up stakes for Freeport's Route 1 budget-motel district? Cofounder Dan Kleban tells us why – and why he's so happy about it.

In 2007, Route 1 shrunk a little when its course was redrawn off of city streets in Portland and merged with I-295.

"Our initial instinct was: we are a Portland brewery, we want to stay in Portland. But by 2012, we were occupying five different units in our Industrial Way space. This wasn't a long-term solution. A good friend is kind of a lifelong Freeport resident and a builder, and he'd gotten word that a dilapidated motel right on Route 1 was going out of business, so he purchased it for pennies on the dollar. We were just chatting with him socially, and he said, 'Maybe I could build you a brewery up there?'"

We thought, moving up to Freeport, are we going to try to attract the same kind of foot traffic? We did say to ourselves, 'Okay, this is right off Route 1 – if there is anywhere in this state that attracts as many people as Portland, it's Freeport.' People will come in and buy cases and cases of beer. They'll leave the car running with the family in it, and then they're on their way – off, up the coast. And not only do they stop again on the way back down, they tell people about us when they get home.

Then there are a lot of people who've shopped all day, and it's late afternoon, and they are just ready for a beer.

It's proven to be a very wise move for us. We've probably grown six or seven times, all told, in the amount of beer we're selling. We've maxed out the footprint. I wish I was smart enough to claim that we knew all this was going to happen."

▶ *Maine Beer Company recently wrapped a 23,000-square-foot expansion of their production space. Phase II, to be completed next spring, will see a substantially enlarged taproom.* 525 Rte. 1, Freeport. 207-221-5711. mainebeercompany.com





For nearly a year, the head sat by itself, perplexing travelers and plenty of Brunswickians, who knew it simply as That Big Wooden Head.

MILE 77



Lying down on the job: artist Matt Barter's eye-catching Brunswick head.

Why Is There a Big Wooden Head by the Side of the Road in Brunswick?

ARTIST MATT BARTER IS NOGGIN-AH KEEP US WONDERING.

In May of last year, Matt Barter started rolling his giant cranial ambassador down a steep hill outside his Brunswick home. He wanted his artwork to face northbound drivers as they round the curve that follows the Androscoggin River. He was prepping to open an art gallery behind his house, which sits on a long, narrow lot fronting Route 1 at one of those notorious slowdown spots. The head was to be an enigmatic lure.

Barter's head is heavy, maybe 250 pounds. He moved it with a pair of dollies — “all the while hoping it didn't get away from me,” he says. It's made of wood, including the laths he likes to dig out of demolition jobs, and its interior armature looks like that of a boat, a sort of homage to his family's boatbuilding heritage in Boothbay Harbor.

The head lies on its left cheek, its expression basically

blank, but if you catch it from the right angle it can seem slightly plaintive — like someone waiting. This is intentional. When Barter and his wife, Rebecca, bought their house four years ago, he did some research on the area and learned the spot had been a major portage for Native American tribes using the river. No one thinks much about that history when rounding the corner northbound, he reckoned. “They just keep driving. I thought, wouldn't it be great to make a head lying on its side, looking upriver, almost like he's waiting for the canoes?”

For nearly a year, while Barter worked on the carriage-house gallery he now calls the Barter Art House, the head sat by itself, perplexing travelers and plenty of Brunswickians, who knew it simply as That Big Wooden Head. This spring, a sign finally went up, directing people to the entrance, and Barter says the

stratagem seems to be paying dividends. “A lot of people say, ‘I've been driving by for a year and I had to stop and find out, what's the deal with the head?’”

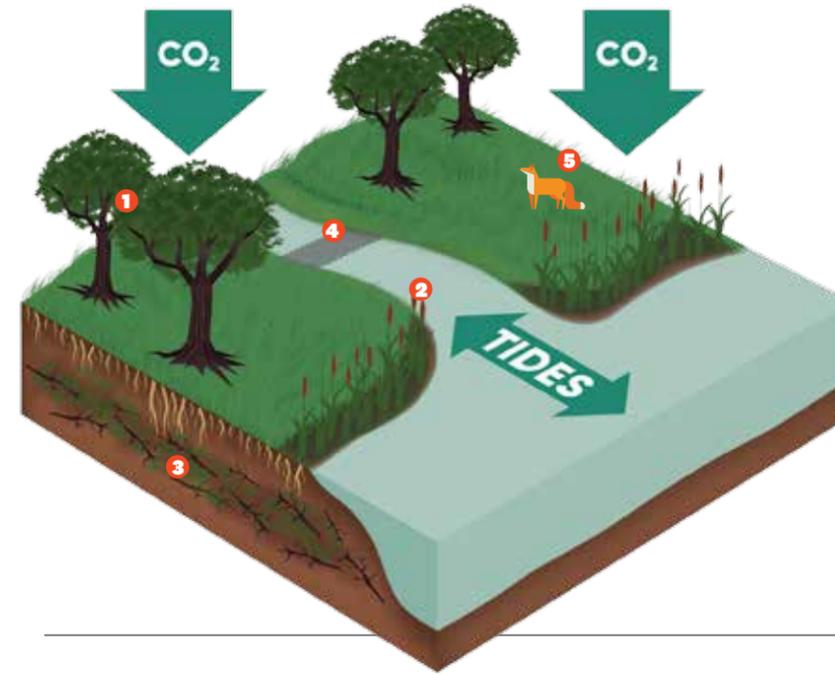
That Big Wooden Head is not Barter's first head. In his studio, he keeps a wearable model. He's a tall man, and when he puts it on, it swallows him to the shoulders, turning him into one of Maurice Sendak's wild things. He has a hand too, fashioned out of more laths. “I have this obsession with heads and hands,” he says, “because it's what makes us human — our thoughts and our actions, what we can do.”

Now hanging at Barter Art House: a joint show of Barter and his dad, Sullivan artist Philip Barter, paying tribute to Maine master Marsden Hartley. Take a right at That Big Wooden Head.

► Father and Son Tribute to Hartley, through October 1. 68 Cumberland St., Brunswick. 207-460-1453. thebarterarthouse.com

Be Aware: the Tides of Marsh MILE 43

Scarborough Marsh, Maine's largest salt marsh, is pretty to look at. It's also, says Bates College geology professor Beverly Johnson, three to ten times more efficient than a similarly sized forest at grabbing and storing carbon dioxide, a major contributor to climate change. Scientists estimate that Maine's tidal marshes (you'll pass another nice one at the Cousins River in Freeport) sequester some 73,000 tons of CO₂ each year — the equivalent of annual emissions from 15,000 cars. Here's how they work.



- 1 Trees, shrubs, and grasses absorb atmospheric CO₂ and store much of it in roots and rhizomes. Scarborough Marsh has lots of cordgrasses and pitch pine.
- 2 Salt water inundates the marsh twice daily, and the saturated soil has low oxygen concentrations.
- 3 In the wet soil, organic matter decomposes slowly, for lack of oxygen-loving bacteria. Sulfate ions in seawater suppress other bacteria that create the greenhouse gas methane.
- 4 Old ditches and berms prevent tidal flow. Restoration efforts focus on removing them.
- 5 Foxes don't help sequester carbon, but they are cool. Scarborough Marsh wildlife includes red foxes, whitetail deer, minks, otters, and tons of waterfowl, waders, shorebirds, and grassland songbirds.

In Bath, Route 1 moved 100 or so feet north in 2000, when the highway was transferred off the old Carlton Bridge over the Kennebec River and onto the newly constructed Sagadahoc Bridge.

Roadside History: Danish Village

In the early heyday of Vacationland, the motels were sometimes . . . eccentric.

Why was there a Danish-themed motel on Route 1 in Scarborough?

Because the architect was Danish and apparently super proud of it. When Peter Holderson built the landmark Eastland Hotel for Portland hotelier Henry Rines in the mid-1920s, he talked his boss into adding a Danish Tearoom, modeled on one in the Old World town of Ribe. When Rines wanted to build a motorist-friendly, colonial-style motel in Scarborough in 1928, Holderson convinced him instead to stick with Ribe. The themed complex replicated the Danish town's stucco-and-red-tile architecture, with 100 tiny cottages surrounding a town hall and fountain.

Did anyone famous ever stay?

Eleanor Roosevelt spotted the place on her way to her summer home on Campobello Island. “It looked attractive, and I thought it would be fun to try it,” she later wrote. She noted that she and her companions had some “perfectly good Maine lobster” in a dining room decorated with wooden shoes and staffed by Mainers in period Danish costumes.

What's left of it?

Not much! The Danish Village closed by mid-century, housed shipyard workers in World War II and recovering alcoholics in the 1960s, then was demolished in 1976. But stop at Scarborough's Memorial Park, just off Route 1 on Sawyer Road, and you'll see the old brick archway (with restored red tiles) that once welcomed wanna-be Danes. It's Scarborough's lone tribute to the bygone motel, moved in 2015 from a vacant lot a mile south on Route 1, where the fantastical Danish Village once stood.

MILE 45



Eat your heart out, Epcot: the Danish Village in Scarborough, in its prime.





MILE 125

MILE 86-172 WOOLWICH TO PROSPECT

Sure, Route 1 on the midcoast can be a stop-and-start affair, but the drive leads through Maine's loveliest coastal villages and accesses sybian peninsulas far from the crowds. Anyway, a few tourist traps never really hurt anybody.

BY WILL GRUNEWALD
PHOTOGRAPHED BY CODY BARRY
AND BENJAMIN WILLIAMSON

Carved from basswood and inspired by a painting, this sculpture took an inmate 1,500 hours to complete.



Cool Hand Crafts

THE HUSTLE BEHIND THE WARES AT THE MAINE STATE PRISON SHOWROOM.

In the 1800s, Maine State Prison inmates worked in quarries. Later, they made horse-drawn carriages and sleighs. By the 1930s, they had a new niche: furniture and souvenirs. Today, the prison's showroom in Thomaston offers an intricate model of the U.S.S. *Constitution*, priced at \$1,795, as well as toaster tongs going for \$1.50. In between, the inventory includes some 750 products, from toy lobsterboats to acorn-shaped birdhouses to Shaker-style bureaus.

"We've become a real destination," prison industries manager Ken Lindsey said. "A lot of customers come back year after year. But just seeing the store, people don't get a sense for everything that goes on behind the scenes."

At the prison, a few miles away, in Warren, Lindsey walked past the entry desk, through a metal detector, and over to a station where visitors get emergency pagers, then through a series of locking doors. "I call it a controlled chaos," Lindsey said, taking in the smell of sawdust, the whining of table saws, the echoing thwacks of hammers.

There are 8,000 tools here, including a chainsaw. "This is a maximum-security prison, and the security officers really frown on the idea of misplacing tools," Lindsey explained. "How many prison movies have you seen where they have a chainsaw in the shop? Probably none, right?"

Some 140 men work under his supervision, earning \$1 to \$3 per hour. "It can be anybody — we probably just walked by 10 murderers," he noted, settling into his desk chair. A number of his crew are on life sentences. Most will eventually get out. "Are they all going to be woodworkers after this? Probably not," he said. "But they're going to have skills — people skills and job skills. You come to prison because you did something wrong, and we work on getting you so that you don't reoffend."

Lindsey started working at the prison 30 years ago, fresh off studying criminal justice at UMaine. "I enjoy coming here every day," he said. "I mean, it's definitely a challenge. Inmates don't want to be in prison. But we try to be a positive in a negative environment."

He sometimes runs into former wards, like one who approached him at the Fryeburg Fair to show off pictures of his wife and kid. He had a construction job, using some of the know-how he'd picked up in prison. "A guy like that, with a family and an income, he's not coming back," Lindsey said. "That's what we hope for."

The showroom brings in more than \$1 million a year — enough to cover program costs. In peak season, it's a constant bustle. "I wish I could have the inmates out to the store to hear all the good comments about their work," Lindsey said, a door clicking shut behind him on the way back to the entry. Even at max capacity, the workshop can't always keep pace with demand. Those pricey *Constitution* models, for instance? A crew makes six a year, and they reliably sell out.

► The Maine State Prison Showroom is open daily. 358 Main St., Thomaston. 207-354-9237. maine.gov/corrections/industries

MILE 87



His name is Larry, and he is the crimson lord of Route 1.

Route 1 takes on 59 different names in Maine, including Camden Street in Rockland, Belfast Road in Camden, and Searsport Avenue in Belfast. It is Main Street in 14 different towns, but never Maine Street.

One Big Bug

There's a seriously enormous lobster on the roof of Woolwich's Taste of Maine restaurant. Owner Candy Gregory explains how it got there.

"We're family-run and have been for 40 years. That's why Larry's here: My daughter said to me, 'Mom, what do you want to do for the 40th anniversary? It's got to be something big.' In the late '80s, early '90s, my brother had a big inflatable crab on the roof — Buster the Crab — that you could lease for six months at a time. But my daughter looked into it, and he doesn't exist anymore. I said, 'Well, how about a lobster?' She and my brother found this company in LA that could make one, and the next thing you know, it's on the roof. I actually had the company come out and put him up there, because we weren't really sure how to do it. We had to have a crane. He's 700 pounds, 70 feet long, and 12 feet high, and he has two

blowers going 24/7. I named him Larry, after my brother.

I've been here since day one and took over in '95, but my brother built the restaurant and taught me everything I know. I don't even dare tell you how much this lobster cost. People would probably think I'm insane. But he's worth it — Larry's doing a hell of a job, and it's been an amazing summer for us. We're hoping to put him back up every year, as long as the town agrees to it, because we did have to get a building permit. So far, so good — no mishaps or anything. One time, Buster the Crab flew right off and went in the water. Larry has 100 tethers on him. He's not going anywhere."

► 161 Main St., Woolwich. 207-443-4554. tasteofmaine.com





MILE ∞



Up and down the midcoast's many peninsulas, a patchwork of small nature preserves and public lands offers serene woodland trails.

Day-Trip Detours

Route 1 on the midcoast is great for what it is and even better for what it leads to: lighthouses, sunny beaches, and winding trails along the many-fingered coast.

LIGHTHOUSES

Pemaquid Point Light (3115 Bristol Rd., Bristol; 207-563-1800) is such a dramatic sight, perched on cliffs at the tip of its namesake peninsula, that the U.S. Mint etched its visage on the Maine State Quarter. It's also just a stone's throw from the white sands of Pemaquid Beach and impressive Fort William Henry. Movie buffs, meanwhile, make pilgrimages to **Marshall Point Light** (Marshall Point Rd., Port Clyde; 207-372-6450), where Forrest Gump's coast-to-coast jog dead-ended at the Atlantic Ocean.

BEACHES

Swimming beaches get scarce north of Portland, but **Popham Beach** (10 Perkins Farm Ln., Phippsburg; 207-389-1335) helps make up for the sand deficit elsewhere on the midcoast. Its parking lot can get jammed on weekends, but the beach is so sweeping that it never feels crowded. Farther up the coast, you can lay a beach blanket between the rocky outcrops at tiny **Drift Inn Beach** (23 Drift Inn Rd., St. George), where, if you get hungry, you can always stroll up the road to Drift Inn Canteen for a superlative lobster roll.

HIKES

Up and down the peninsulas, a patchwork of small nature preserves and public lands offers serene woodland trails. For a striking view without too much sweat, head out on the **Cliff Trail** (263 Mountain Rd., Harpswell; hhlmaine.org), a 2.3-mile loop that tops out on a 150-foot bluff. **Linekin Preserve & Burley Loop** (Rte. 96 in East Boothbay, 3.7 miles after turnoff from Rte. 27; bbrlt.org) offers a quiet reprieve from the bustle of Boothbay Harbor, with miles of paths meandering past ponds, through birch and pine groves, and out to the bank of the Damariscotta River.

The Rockland Renaissance

Thirty years ago, Rockland's identity was tied up in industry and fishing. Now, it's a bustling tourism hub, chock full of smart hotels, renowned arts venues, and chef-driven restaurants. What changed? These six moments were key to the city's turnaround.



The **SeaPro** fish-waste rendering plant closed, which turned out to be addition by subtraction. In the short term, the city lost jobs, but it also lost the pervasive odor of rotten herring bits.

Tom O'Donovan moving his **Harbor Square Gallery** from downtown Camden to down-market Rockland seemed like a head-scratcher at the time. Ultimately, it presaged a wave of new gallery openings that transformed the town's Main Street.



Cafe Miranda, In Good Company, and Suzuki's Sushi Bar all helped put Rockland on the culinary map. But when **Primo** owner Melissa Kelly won a James Beard Award for best chef in the Northeast, it locked in the city's rep as a dining destination.



The previous summer's **Maine Lobster Festival** lost money, and organizers decided the 42-year-old event had run its course. But locals rallied to save it, and the festival has since grown into an even bigger draw.



The new **Center for Maine Contemporary Art**, with its eclectic exhibitions and installations, arrived to complement the realism and regionalism of the Farnsworth's Wyeth-centric collection. Rocklanders now justifiably call their city the "arts capital of Maine."



The new **Center for Maine Contemporary Art**, with its eclectic exhibitions and installations, arrived to complement the realism and regionalism of the Farnsworth's Wyeth-centric collection. Rocklanders now justifiably call their city the "arts capital of Maine."

Beat of a Different Drum

Togolese cooking marches into Searsport.

Jordan Messan Benissan brought a whole new range of cuisine to Searsport when he opened Mé Lon Togo last summer: sweet potatoes and plantains tossed in apple-cider vinegar; chicken in peanut sauce made with tomato, onion, garlic, ginger, anise seed, and cayenne; tapioca pudding cooked in lemongrass broth.

A member of the Ewe people, Benissan hails from Togo, where he trained in traditional drumming. He came to the U.S. to study French literature but instead wound up traveling the country doing African drumming demos. Since 1999, he's been a music instructor at Colby College. In Waterville, he started experimenting in the kitchen. "I realized that I really missed food from home," he says. "I tried to cook what I'd learned from my mother, and after a while, I started to think wow, this really tastes good."

The food at Mé Lon Togo (translation: I Love Togo) is modern West African, the product of Italian, German, and French colonialism. "We adopted some cooking techniques from Europe, but we kept our ingredients," Benissan explains. Although the menu features a few European dishes, like monkfish ossobuco and a duck de Provence, the most exciting options are the ones Benissan grew up with, including his personal favorite, gumbo: fluffy white rice buried under a mountain of crab, chicken, beef, onion, peppers, and okra, cooked and spiced until the flavors meld into a rich, complex whole.

The cozy 1800s space has low-beamed ceilings, hardwood floors, and a soft glow from flickering candles. The look is pretty classic midcoast, but Benissan accented the dining room with a few African flourishes: a mask hanging here, a shield there, and in the corner, of course, the drums that he still occasionally finds time to play.

▶ 375 East Main St., Searsport. 207-872-9146.

MILE 165

West African gumbo at Mé Lon Togo (it's as good as it looks).



ART: PETER DECAMP HAINES - PULL TOY, BRONZE, 12"X17"X6", \$4,600, COURTESY OF HARBOR SQUARE GALLERY

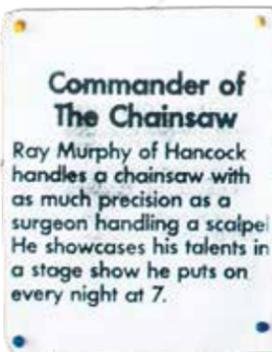


MILE 199

MILE 173-317 VERONA ISLAND TO CALAIS

Traffic thins out beyond the Penobscot Narrows Bridge, and past the turnoff for Mount Desert Island, the services get sparser and the air gets saltier. This is the real Down East coast: rugged, briny, and a little off-center.

BY JOYCE KRYSZAK
PHOTOGRAPHED BY GRETA RYBUS



We're choking up: Chainsaw artist Ray Murphy hosts his final shows this summer.



A Life in Chains

MAINE SAYS GOODBYE TO A ROUTE 1 ORIGINAL.
(WE'RE NOT CRYING, WE HAVE SAWDUST IN OUR EYE.)

On the Fourth of July, as fireworks cracked and screamed in the sky behind him, 75-year-old Ray Murphy was bent over his workbench at his Route 1 studio in Hancock. It was the end of another 14-hour-day, his fourth that week, with three more to go. After that, the wild-haired, gray-bearded Murphy figured to lean into another seven-day week, and then another, and then another. But come the end of this month, Murphy says, no more. After September, the self-proclaimed original Chainsaw Sawyer Artist® is hitting the kill switch, at least for his nightly live shows, a Down East tradition going back 30 years.

Squealing here and there at the distant fireworks, Murphy paused his work long enough to tell me about the show that has largely defined him — in Maine, anyway — and his pending retirement. Garrulous and wry, Murphy sprints from topic to topic, from a catalog of his works, all rendered with a chainsaw (some 78,000 sculptures, a 20-foot totem pole, 20 numbers etched onto a pencil, a dozen ladybugs so small they all fit on a dime), to an indictment of the “inept scribblers” who inaccurately call him a woodcarver (he uses only chainsaws, no carving tools). Even on the somber subject of why he’s packing it in, he shows an impish humor.

“I had a heart attack in 2016 and was dead for two minutes — that’ll get your attention,” Murphy says with a titter. “No bright lights, though. I guess they forgot to pay the electric bill.”

A whole lot of Irish and one-quarter Shoshone, Murphy grew up on a Wyoming reservation, went to college on a scholarship, then careened through a litany of vocations and avocations

— football all-star, law student, forester, sawyer, jiu-jitsu master, ironworker — before settling in Maine and devoting himself to his true passion: chainsaw art. Murphy claims he was the first to pursue it, and there’s no disputing his renown. His work is found on all seven continents.

More recently, I pulled up to Murphy’s cavernous warehouse-cum-performance-space on Route 1 (you can’t miss the huge screaming eagle painted on its side, a chainsaw in each talon). I was a few minutes early for the nightly show and found Murphy alone outside, hunched over and covered in sawdust, dwarfed by the 400-seat auditorium behind him. He pulled up a chair and invited me to wait with him, but the audience never showed. They’ve been “fickle” the last three or four years, Murphy says — another reason he’s bringing down the curtain. He’s considering a move to Arizona with his longtime “sweetheart,” Cathy. The cold makes it hard for him to saw now that he needs blood thinners for his heart.

Watching the traffic whiz by, we talked at length, Murphy intermittently animated and pensive. “I’ve always prided myself on going at 110 percent, and I’m just not at that level anymore,” he says. He’s resigned himself to more than one cancelled performance this summer but resolved to make his remaining shows count. Once he’s through, there may be nowhere left to see a chainsaw artist hew a chair out of a solid log in 10 seconds or inscribe a name onto a belt buckle while its owner is wearing it.

“I’ve always been my only competition,” Murphy says. It’s not a brag, just a fact. “There’s nobody else like me.”

▶ Catch Murphy’s final shows this month. Nightly, 7 P.M. \$10. 742 Rte. 1, Hancock. 207-460-5905. thechainsawsawyerartist.com

MILE 176



Roll Into Crosby’s

And don’t skip these other six essential Down East seafood shacks.

When Elton “Fat” Crosby and his wife, Margaret, opened their Bucksport seafood shack, just off Route 1, in 1938, the place was a squat white building with fewer than a dozen menu items and a walk-up window. But over the years, says Crosby’s manager Alex Pappas (whose great-uncle bought the place from Fat Crosby), the restaurant’s popularity nudged it into a bigger building next door, which has since “Frankensteined” with multiple additions. Now 80 years in, Crosby’s Drive-In (30 Rte. 46, Bucksport; 207-469-3640; crosbysdrivein.com) stretches along the roadside like a little strip mall, and the menu (which includes standout crab and lobster rolls and perfectly fried clams using the original 1938 batter recipe) spreads out across five long boards. “Yeah, it’s pretty crazy, we’re always busy,” Pappas says. “And word-of-mouth is the only advertising we’ve ever needed.”

Before U.S. Route 1 was officially designated in November 1926, much of the route in Maine was known as the Atlantic Highway, with Calais as its northern terminus.

A few other favorites along this stretch of road:

Union River Lobster Pot. Can’t beat the big ol’ screen porch in bug season, and the clam chowder has racked up awards. ▶ 8 South St., Ellsworth. 207-667-5077. lobsterpot.com

Tracey’s Lobsters and Clams. Lobster cooked over a fire pit out back, big scoops of Gifford’s ice cream, and a Friday fish-fry that includes a trip back to the counter for seconds. ▶ 2719 Rte. 1, Sullivan. 207-422-9072.

The Meadow’s Take-Out. Just your average Portuguese-influenced Down East lobster shack. Try the Portuguese baked stuffed clams, simmered first in a chorizo, coriander, and cumin broth by chef Ryan Roderick. ▶ 1000 Rte. 1, Steuben. 207-546-3434.

Bayview Takeout. An 11-mile detour off Route 1, but it’d be worth a longer drive for the paper cartons so full of fried clams, shrimp, haddock, and scallops, you can barely close them. The thin, crispy onion rings are perfect. ▶ 42 Bayview Dr., Beals. 207-497-3301.

Riverside Take-Out. Festooned with fishing nets, flags, and other colorful bric-a-brac, a busy little stand with a massive haddock sandwich. Free treats for dogs! ▶ 275 Main St., Machias. 207-263-7676.

New Friendly Restaurant. More diner than stand, but locals line up for a lobster roll that overflows its bun. ▶ 1014 Rte. 1, Perry. 207-853-6610.





Gorgeous tin walls and ceilings speak to the history at Mill Stream Antiques.



MILE 207

Roadside History: Mill Stream Antiques

There's more to this handsome antique shop than meets the eye.

What is Mill Stream Antiques?

Antique dealer Jeff Harden runs this shop (2141 Rte. 1, Sullivan; 207-422-3155), with owners Bob and Judie Phillips, who bought the house in 1983, taken by its Greek Revival architecture.

What's interesting about it?

Locally, the 2½-story building has long been known as the Cascade House. It was built no later than 1824, and while it looks handsome from the road, step in to admire tin ceilings and walls stained a greenish-gold patina, plus timeworn, wide-plank floors.

What was it originally?

Housing for workers who ran the lumber mill that operated on the stream out back.

What's it been since?

What hasn't it been? Cascade House has hosted a clock repair shop, a post office, a stable and blacksmith shop, a boarding house and tavern, a barber shop, a gas station, an ice cream store, a feed and grain company, and a grocery market. Until Mill Stream Antiques opened, it spent most of the last few decades abandoned and decaying. The Phillipses spent two years and \$80,000 fixing the place up.

Have I heard of Mill Stream before?

Are you a centenarian and/or fan of barbershop music? Local legend has it that a turn-of-the-century barber named Frank Carleton, who lived and cut hair in the Cascade House, wrote the standard "Down by the Old Mill Stream" in 1908, then sold it for \$60 (the equivalent of \$1,500 today) to a vacationing vaudevillian named Tell Taylor. Taylor later claimed to have written the song and is credited with its authorship. The roguish Ohioan built a career off "Down by the Old Mill Stream," which was recorded by Bing Crosby and has sold millions of copies of sheet music.

Obadiah's in Machias: a great place to grab a coffee and scone while feeling like you're invading someone's crazy cluttered attic.



MILE 257

Castaway Collector

Obadiah's Bohemian Café and Trading Post is strewn with flotsam. Shipwreck-obsessed proprietor Susan Wright tells us why.

"The house was built around 1887 and abandoned for years before I bought it. I named the place after one of the previous owners. He's buried in a pickle barrel on Deadman's Island. I feel protected and comforted by Obadiah's former occupants. An old dress I found in the attic fit me perfectly, and a photo I found under the floorboards sits in a place of honor on the bar.

I was going for kind of a shipwreck vibe with the place — you know, castoffs — and for my café menu, I try to make it what you might eat if you were in a shipwreck and had to use food from the cargo. We have fun at the bar and on the outdoor stage. We keep it all kind of casual, but we can trick it out nice too.

I'm also the Washington County archivist, so I'm into history, and I find some pretty cool stuff, like invoices from the old ship manifests. That's how I kind of got obsessed with them. Maine was connected to the world by trade even in the 1800s, and all kinds of expensive cargo was brought here: rum, spices. There was some exotic cargo, like molasses and brandy. I once found an invoice for mummy cloth. They used it to make paper — cloth makes a better-quality paper — but I think it was disrespectful of the dead.

A lot of times, the crew took their families along on the ships, so women and children died in shipwrecks too. There were lots of shipwrecks around here then, sometimes three a week. It was a dangerous profession. It still is."

► Obadiah's hosts outdoor open mics every Friday night through September. 35 Harwood St., Machias. 207-263-3999. facebook.com/sleemanrose

Down East Landmark Gravitas Matrix

Just how seriously should you approach the various statues, tributes, and extraordinary edifices found along the Down East coast? Let our handy chart help decode eight of our favorite Route 1 monuments.

Fort Knox State Historic Site and Penobscot Narrows Bridge
Formidable 1844 military fort and imposing 420-foot towers. 740 Fort Knox Rd., Prospect. fortknox.maine.guide.com



MAJESTIC

St. Croix Island Historical Site sculptures
Bronze sculptures depicting the interaction between the Passamaquoddy tribe and the first French settlers, 1604–1605. 84 St. Croix Dr., Calais. nps.gov/sacr/index.htm

Big Chicken Barn
A 30,000-square-foot chicken barn with 150,000 books and a gazillion antiques and oddities. 1768 Bucksport Rd., Ellsworth. bigchickenbarn.com



Wild Blueberry Land
Gargantuan berry-shaped dome full of Maine-made wild blueberry jams, syrups, pies, pottery, and more. 1067 Rte. 1, Columbia Falls. wildblueberryland.com

HYSTERICAL



Big Jim
Forty-foot-tall cutout of a New England fisherman in oil gear. Held a sardine can when he went up in the '60s, replaced with a lobster trap after the canneries all closed. 200 Main St., Prospect Harbor.



Wilbur the Lobster
Eleven-foot fiberglass crustacean leaned up outside Ruth & Wimpy's Restaurant. 792 Rte. 1, Hancock. ruthandwimpys.com

Hansom House
Self-proclaimed "most absurd bar in the world," chock full of Pez dispensers, weird statues, and other tchotchke, built in the woodshed of a 1787 homestead. 45 Main St., Dennysville.

Linwood's
An outdoor stage literally in someone's front yard, with a 1947 International Harvester perched on the roof, a Ferris wheel, Sunday-night open-mic hoote-nannies all summer. Rte. 1, ¼-mile north of Robbins Point Rd., Gouldsboro.

DOMESTIC



MILE 375

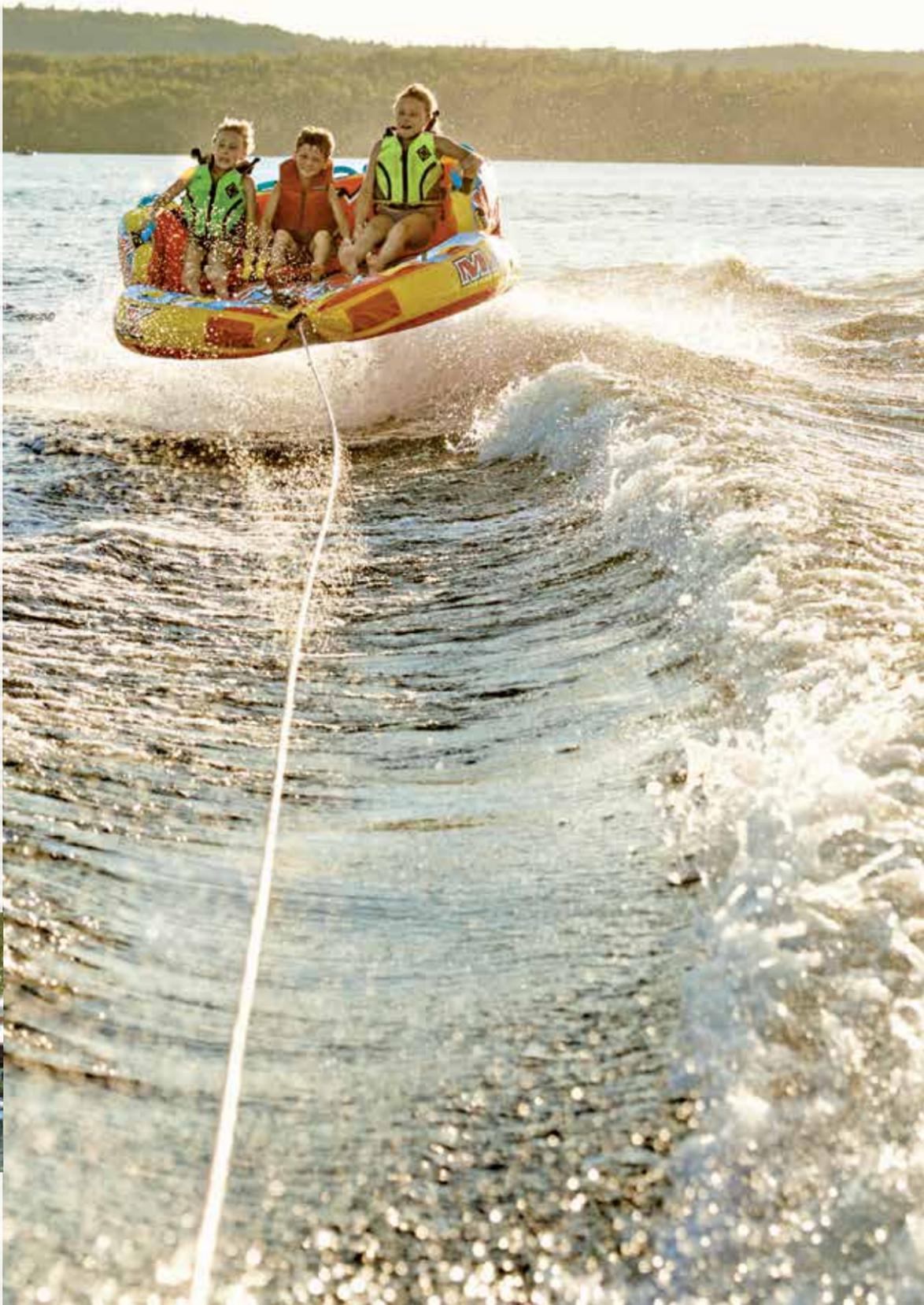
MILE 318-466 BARING TO CARIBOU

It ain't all coastal, folks, and there are surprises along this little-visited stretch, where the quiet lakes and tumbledown villages of the northeast woods give way to Aroostook farm country.

BY BRIAN KEVIN
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
MICHAEL D. WILSON



East Grand Lake is an undersung family vacation spot par excellence.



Ain't Life Grand

DEEP IN THE HEART OF TOMAH COUNTRY, EAST GRAND LAKE IS THE SEBAGO OF THE NORTH.

Don't mistake East Grand Lake for another sleepy pond up north: a scatter of anglers and canoes; a dense, backcountry shoreline; a long, rutted jeep trail for access. As generations of northern Mainers can tell you, the 16,000-acre lake (Maine's eighth largest) comes alive in the summer with pleasure boaters and island hoppers, swimmers and water skiers (and yeah, plenty of fishermen). Together with neighboring Spednic Lake (our sixth largest), East Grand is the heart of what locals call Tomah Country, a woolly playground of logging trails, low ridges, and St. Croix headwaters along the Canadian border.

But whereas accessing Spednic can mean a dozen-mile drive along narrow dirt roads, the western shore of East Grand is rarely more than a couple of miles from Route 1, with four public boat launches and a mess of rental cabins within minutes of the highway. For families, **Greenland Cove Campground** (Greenland Cove Rd., Danforth; 207-448-2863; greenlandcove.com) is a classic summertime RV village, full of suntanned kids leaping off

docks and strangers-turned-friends tossing horseshoes and sharing campfire beers. There's a heated pool and arcade, plus a couple of narrow beaches, with loons and mallards swimming nearby.

Prefer a cottage? **Cowgers' Lakefront Cabins** (26 Cowgers Ln., Danforth; 207-448-2455; cowgerscabins.com) and **Rideout's Lakeside Lodge** (6 Waterfront Dr., Weston; 207-448-2440; rideouts.com) both offer rustic cabins and motorboat, canoe, and kayak rentals. Cowgers' rates start at \$350 per week (find that deal on Sebago), and Rideout's is open to non-guests for family-style dinners of thick rib eyes or big slabs of ham.

Just passing through? Catch a sweeping (and surprisingly undulating) panorama of East Grand and Tomah Country at the **Million Dollar View Scenic Overlook**. It's two overlooks, really: Across from the clean and modern **First Settlers Lodge** (341 Rte. 1; Weston; 207-448-3000; firstsettlerslodge.com) find a west-facing view of distant Katahdin and interpretive displays on local history. The money shot, though, is 3 miles north, where a dramatic east-facing lookout takes in the lake's many coves and the gentle hills on the New Brunswick side.

We All Scream For What Now?

A helpful Houlton Farms Dairy Bar primer.

The world's largest scale model of the solar system stretches 40 miles from the marble-size scale replica of Pluto, outside Houlton, to the multi-story sun at UMaine at Presque Isle's Northern Maine Museum of Science.

An Aroostook County institution, Houlton Farms Dairy started pasteurizing and delivering milk 80 years ago, but the milestone to celebrate (as far as we're concerned) came in 1983, when Houlton Farms opened its Presque Isle dairy bar. Houlton and Caribou locations soon followed, and today, the legacy dairy is as known for its sprawling menu of elaborate sundaes, ice-cream sodas, and frappes as for its rich, high-butterfat hard serve (and butter, milk, and cream), made with help from Aroostook cows. A concise explainer on some of the more esoteric offerings:

Awful Awful Hard on Top. An Awful Awful is Houlton Farms' thickest milkshake designation (made with soft serve and only a splash of milk). Add a scoop of hard serve on top, and you're definitely going to need a spoon.

Cruise. As in, through the Caribbean. Made with your choice of hard or soft serve, a Cruise is a specialty sundae topped with pineapple and coconut, plus whipped cream, nuts, and a cherry.

Lyman Pizazz. Lemon-lime flavoring, soda water, and sherbet, mixed up and topped with whipped cream and a cherry. Super refreshing and doesn't have anything do with Lyman, Maine.

Star City/Shiretown/County Cooler. Like a Lyman Pizazz, but with orange soda instead of lemon-lime. The name changes depending on whether you're ordering it in Presque Isle, Houlton, or Caribou.

► 792 Main St., Presque Isle; 207-764-6200. 131 Military St., Houlton; 207-532-2628. 98 Bennett Dr., Caribou; 207-498-8911. houltonfarmsdairy.com

M I L L I O N
6 4 4 4



Fancy a Lyman Pizazz? How about an Awful Awful Hard on Top?



"I love this place, I really do. You can leave your keys in your car at night. People help each other."

Waite, Waite, Do Tell Us

Wayne Seidl and Joe Ruff moved to Washington County to farm in 2009 and soon found themselves running the town's 107-year-old general store, selling everything from produce and propane to bongs and camo hunting gear. We talked with Seidl about the quiet life in Waite.

"At the turn of the last century, there were 4,000 people living in town. Six sawmills, a tannery, a furniture factory. Where you see woods, there used to be hundreds of thousands of acres of potatoes and beans. Now, there are 107 people. Most of the names in the cemeteries don't mean anything to the people living here now.

It can be a very quiet community, even though people love their drama, oh my god. I lived in Key West, which is 28,000 full-time residents, on an island a mile-and-a-half wide and 3½ miles long, and out of those, 14,000 are gay. In all the years I lived in Key West, I have never seen the drama that I see in this town of 107 people. 'This one's uncle did this to my cousin 42 years ago.' 'This one is sleeping with my daughter's ex-fiance's mother's boyfriend.' They change beds around here as often as I change socks.

But I love this place, I really do. You can leave your keys in your car at night. People help each other. When we first showed up, we talked to the woman who owned the store, introduced ourselves and told her we were buying the place at the top of the hill. And I said, do you think there'll be any problem in the community? She said, 'That depends. Do you want to change things?' I said no, we're moving up here because we love it just the way it is. She said, 'Welcome to the neighborhood.'

That's the way the whole town has been. We haven't changed the store much at all. People here love variety, but they hate change."

► The Waite General Store hosts the 7th annual Town of Waite BBQ & Yehd Sale on September 1. 455 Houlton Rd., Waite. 207-796-2330.

Wayne Seidl, left, and Joe Ruff run the Waite General Store, est. 1911.



In Calais and Baring, northbound Route 1 drivers travel south, then southwest, for about 6½ miles, following bends in the St. Croix River.



The Moosehorn landscape is a patchwork of woods and meadows.



MILE 317

Take Refuge

Attention, trail junkies: the Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge isn't just for birders.

Hikers and bikers tend to give wildlife refuges short shrift as recreation areas, but Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge offers more than 60 miles of trails and (car-free) dirt roads, crisscrossing some 29,000 acres of pristine habitat for woodcocks, spruce grouse, waterfowl, raptors, and migrating neotropical songbirds (not to mention moose, bears, and other critters). For a quick stretch of the legs on your road trip, try one of our favorite Moosehorn day hikes.

Greg's Pond Trail. Combine this flat, wooded trail near refuge headquarters with the paved Woodcock Interpretive Trail for a 1.3-mile jaunt to an observation blind on a pond noisy with frog song. Watch for the odd muskrat sliding by, and on the paved portion, learn from placards about the long-billed (and threatened) woodcock. ► Trailhead on Headquarters Rd., off Charlotte Rd., 2½ miles south of Rte. 1.

Headquarters Loop. A 3-mile loop from the park's taxidermy-rich headquarters, this bike-friendly route follows old gravel roadways through woods and damp meadows where bald eagles circle overhead. For a longer day, spur trails lead off into the wilderness portion of the refuge (no bikes), including a semi-steep climb to an old fire tower atop the inaccurately named Bald Mountain (it's wooded), which adds about a mile-and-a-half to your day. ► Trailhead at Refuge Headquarters, off Charlotte Rd., 2½ miles south of Rte. 1.

Conic Lake Trail. A short walk on a little-used, somewhat overgrown gravel trail in the refuge's wilderness section leads to lovely Conic Lake, where you may spot wood ducks and black ducks dabbling in the shallows. It's just over a half-mile out and back. ► Trailhead on Rte. 191, 1½ miles south of Rte. 1.

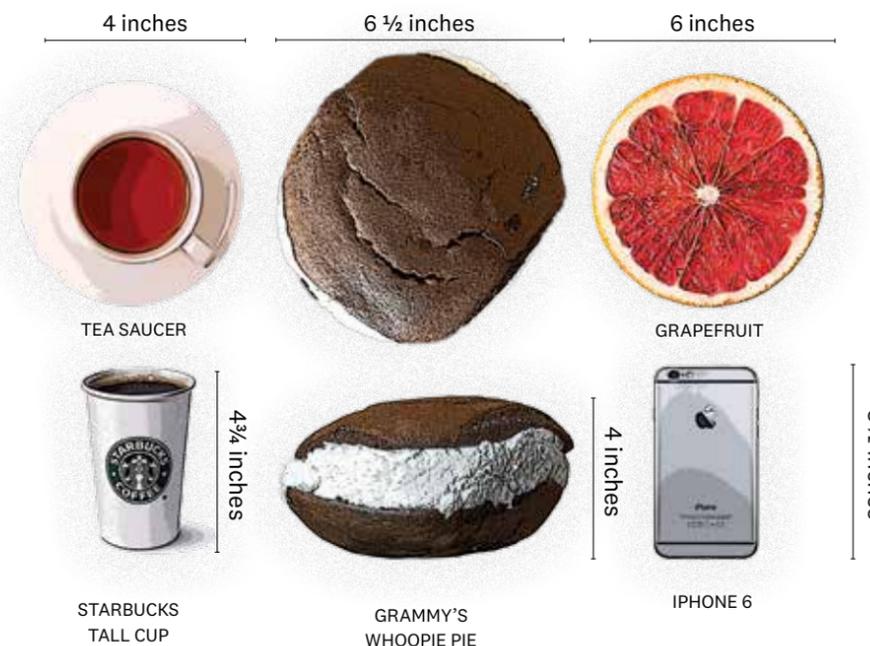


MILE 343

MILE 401

Big Whoop

It's a 6-mile detour to Grammy's Country Inn (1687 Bangor Rd., Linneus; 207-532-7808), legendary for its obscene portion sizes. Here's how their whoopie pie measures up. (Scale is approximate!)





MILE 494

MILE 467-527
ACADIA TO
FORT KENT

Route 1 through the St. John Valley is a pastoral journey into the heart of the state's Acadian country, and it culminates with America's first (or last) mile. Bon voyage!

BY JESSE ELLISON
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
MICHAEL D. WILSON



Thanks to Don Cyr, the 1910 Notre-Dame-du-Mont-Carmel has found new life.



True Believer

A VISIT WITH THE MAN BEHIND GRAND ISLE'S SPECTACULAR MUSÉE CULTUREL DU MONT-CARMELO.

Call it providence: In 1977, when Don Cyr was 29, he was driving to Madawaska with a friend who asked whether there was anyplace he saw himself living permanently. They were in the Grand Isle village of Lille-sur-St-Jean at the time, passing the town's lofty Roman Catholic church, Notre-Dame-du-Mont-Carmel, which the diocese was about to shutter for lack of congregants. "There," Cyr said, pointing to the church rectory. Later, he grabbed a newspaper and saw the space was for rent. Cyr, who just turned 70, has been in Lille ever since.

In those 40 years, the rectory and church have become more than just a home to him. Shortly after moving in, amid talk of the church's demolition, he proposed it become a cultural center dedicated to Acadian history. As a dual American-Canadian national who grew up in Presque Isle, he had a special interest. The bishop agreed and gifted the building and its contents to a newly formed, Cyr-led non-profit, L'Association culturelle et historique du Mont-Carmel.

Since then, Cyr has spearheaded what a state official once joked to him is the longest-running restoration project in Maine — a massive and meticulous effort to rehab the 1910 church and rectory from their foundations up. He insists that every detail be true to early-20th-century specs, going so far as to remove a roof outside that was added to shield the building from the elements. "Of course, they put it there for a reason — it protected

from rain," Cyr admits. "But even if it's something that's going to cause us problems, we have to figure out what to do to keep it as close to the original as possible."

In four decades, Cyr's association has raised and spent some \$4 million, and Cyr estimates he's spent another third of his own salary; he teaches art at the University of Maine at Presque Isle. Sometimes, he says, he's gone without meals in order to afford a piece of Acadian art to add to the vast collection, a tenth of which is on display. Today, the Baroque-ish basilica looks almost as it did the year it was completed.

You can't miss the cathedral coming into town; its scale dwarfs its environs. It's hard to imagine a time that Lille, population 90ish, needed a structure so big. But the town once had 700 people, the parish encompassing both sides of the St. John River, which flows languidly just across the street. Most days, visitors can find Cyr puttering somewhere on site, ready to talk about how he thinks Halley's Comet influenced the painting of the dark-blue sky and gold stars on the sanctuary's ceiling, or how he just discovered a particular magic the light performs on the summer solstice.

Cyr says he plans to keep working on the space for the rest of his life. A recent visit found him standing next to a pile of pews and some scaffolding, pointing towards a spot on the back wall where a patch of pale-blue paint had flecked away. "Today," Cyr said, "I think I'll paint this."

► 993 Main St., Grand Isle. 207-895-3339. museeculturel.org



MILE 507

Hog Haven

Madawaska's Four Corners Park is a (sometimes) quiet tribute to biker culture.

Here's the Four Corners Tour, as it was established by the Southern California Motorcycle Association 35 years ago: You and your ride have just 21 days to visit the four corners of the contiguous United States: Key West, Florida; San Ysidro, California; Blaine, Washington; and, of course, Madawaska on Route 1, the nation's northeasternmost point.

Madawaska's former postmaster was the first local to accomplish this, which is fitting, since bikers used to take photos in front of the post office to prove they'd hit the checkpoint. Then, in 2000, Madawaskans Joe and Diane LaChance did it too — in just 16 days, riding 12 to 14 hours a day — and it gave them an idea: why not build something a little more special than the post office, to welcome bikers to town and encourage them to stay a while?

After some fundraising, they found a plot of land with a fountain, perched on a slope on a commercial stretch of Route 1. Madawaska Four Corners Park opened in 2008, the world's only park dedicated to long-distance motorcycle riding (at least, as far as the LaChances know).

This year, the pair opened a small welcome center and gift shop. They've also raised money by selling the inscribed stones and pavers inlaid around the fountain. Stones are color-coded — only those who've completed the tour can purchase the red ones. For a site next to Tim Horton's, where 1,200cc engines regularly come roaring through, it's a surprisingly lovely little monument: one corner is dedicated to Acadian families, another to fallen bikers, and one stone marks the spot where the parents of a young man killed in a motorcycle accident scattered his ashes. Worth a stop, even if you're not traveling on two wheels.

► 213 Main St., Madawaska. 207-436-7451. madawaskafourcorners.org





“I got a call saying, ‘You lied — you have money in Canada.’ I said, ‘Oh, well okay, if you consider them a foreign country.’”

Borderline Personality

Alan Cyr was born and raised in Van Buren and has worked as a mechanic for the Border Patrol there for a decade. He told us what’s changed along *la frontière*.

“There really is no border here. There is, but there isn’t. I mean, I’ve got aunts and uncles on the Canadian side. We’re all the same.

When I applied for this job, they asked if I had any money in foreign countries. I said no. Then I got a call saying, ‘You lied — you have money in Canada.’ I said, ‘Oh, well okay, if you consider them a foreign country.’

I remember before 9/11, a lot of times the customs people wouldn’t even open the window. They’d recognize us and wave us through. It’s a lot harder now. We only go over for a purpose. It’s definitely hurt the economy, probably going both ways. I used to put 4,000 to 5,000 miles on the snowmobile in the wintertime. I was heavy into the local snowmobile club, and probably 40 percent of our members were Canadians. That’s all stopped. They don’t cross here.

When I was a kid in the

’80s, customs in Van Buren used to have two, maybe three employees there on a daily basis. Now, you go in and there’s probably ten working per shift. Back then, they were part-timers. They had full-time teaching jobs, say, and got these little part-time jobs there. They might have had a firearm. Now, both customs and immigration have firearms, not only short ones but long ones. Is it enough? I don’t know. How secure do you want your borders?

It’s easy to get across. Just swim or walk across the river. And the river divides from just above Fort Kent to Van Buren. The rest is all forest. Around Limestone, the snowmobile trail is on the border. So people from New Jersey or Connecticut come up, they see these trails, and they cross into Canada without even knowing it. That happens all the time. ‘Red snowmobile, blue jacket, heading north.’”

Route 1 follows the St. John River for 45 miles — the truest it stays to any waterway for its entire length, excepting Florida’s Indian River.

MILE 482



The eyes have it: Ployes are an Acadian delicacy.

MILE 508

Hello Dolly’s

Frenchville’s ploye palace and three other spots that dare to ask, what if pancakes were bread?

Ployes (pronounced “ploys”) look a bit like pancakes or crepes, and they’re cooked from batter on a hot griddle, but they’re not traditionally a sweet breakfast dish. The savory pastries are made from buckwheat — a popular rotation crop among Aroostook County potato farmers — and typically just three other ingredients: white flour, salt, and baking powder. They’re never flipped on the griddle, so one side turns golden while the other is pocked with air holes called “eyes.” Dolly’s Restaurant (17 Rte. 1, Frenchville; 207-728-7050), serves ployes as the Acadians have been enjoying them for centuries, as a substitute for bread, alongside a rich chicken-and-dumpling stew and/or spread with creton, a spiced pork pâté.

Try these three other valley stops for the quintessential Acadian treat:

Long Lake Sporting Club. Old school and supper clubby, this lakeside restaurant serves ployes with every meal (with a dipping dish of syrup), churning out 1,200 a day during its busy snowmobile season. ▶ 48 Rte. 162, Sinclair. 207-543-7584. longlakesportingclub.com

Voyageur Lounge. On the third floor of Inn of Acadia, a former convent turned hotel and restaurant, ployes are served made-to-order for breakfast: plain (with butter and syrup) or wrapped, crepe style, around berries or jam. ▶ 384 St. Thomas St., Madawaska. 207-728-3402. innofacadia.com

Bouchard Family Farms. Selling ploye mix saved the family farm during a rough patch in the ’80s. Today, the family grows and mills its own buckwheat and sells an original ploye mix and a whole-wheat version (plus buckwheat flour, for the gluten-free). Every August, at Fort Kent’s Ploye Festival, the Bouchards help fry up a gigantic ploye, 12 feet across. ▶ 3 Strip Rd., Fort Kent. 207-834-3237. ployes.com

MILE 444

Meat Me in Aroostook

John and Mary Freeman, of Westmanland, have been doing the food truck thing since before it was cool. Their Rib Truck’s claim to fame? The pulled-pork parfait, now a concession-stand staple and object of foodie cult cachet.

Barbecue Sauce

The Rib Truck’s sweet and tart sauce has been a guarded secret since 1998, when the Freemans started hauling their mobile open-pit cooker around Aroostook County. “The sauce we don’t talk about much,” John says. “We’re happy to sell it off the back of the truck.”

Pulled Pork

Cooked for 12–14 hours and seasoned simply with salt and pepper. Twenty years ago, the Freemans had to give samples to people who had no idea what pulled pork was. They concocted the parfait gimmick in 2008, a few years before a ballpark vendor in Milwaukee offered a version that went viral and the concept took the barbecue world by storm.

Baked Beans

“People drive 15 miles just for our beans,” John says. He starts with pea beans and adds plenty of molasses and bacon. Other pulled pork parfaits layer in mashed potatoes or even mac and cheese, but the Rib Truck finds beauty in simplicity. “Parfait is a French word, and it means ‘perfect,’” John explains. “It’s the perfect combination of pork and beans and celebrates our French and Acadian heritage.”

▶ The Rib Truck sets up in Fort Kent, Madawaska, Caribou, and Presque Isle. Check facebook.com/ribtruck for a weekly schedule.



IAN ROTHWELL (ILLUSTRATION)

Wide-open country: Locals like Alan Cyr have seen some changes along the border.

