
Letters From New England

October 6, 2009

The View From Acadia National Park



Looking South from atop Cadillac Mountain.

Acadia National Park

Today we awoke in *Northeast Harbor*. Brilliant sunshine streamed through our wall-sized window as we drew open the curtains. Where to go? Behind us lay *Acadia National Park*, enticing us with mountain forests of fir, spruce and hemlock interspersed with hardwoods aglow in their fall plumage. In front of us lay the Atlantic Ocean: blue, vast, teeming with shore life: offering us an even more intimate view from the *Cranberry Islands*.

We checked the weather forecast. Today: mostly sunshine, high of 63, calm. Tomorrow: 100% chance of rain, in the low 50s, winds gusting to 25 mph. No brainer.

The view from the top of Cadillac Mountain is like the view from the top of any mountain – ineffably beautiful, awe-inspiring, and humbling. Words fail, pictures fail, you need to stand in the wind and sunshine and simply take in the 180 degree view that we as human beings are capable of experiencing. Nothing, absolutely nothing on earth is higher than you at that moment. I can't imagine



why people do drugs; they need to get on top of a mountain; this is as high as it gets.

We climbed around the rim near the top taking in the view from all directions. Clouds drove down from the North and headed out to sea, covering the sky above us in what seemed like a matter of minutes. The temperature dropped into the 40s and the wind picked up. We put on another layer and stayed out to watch the show. And what a show: the picture on the first page is just a sample.

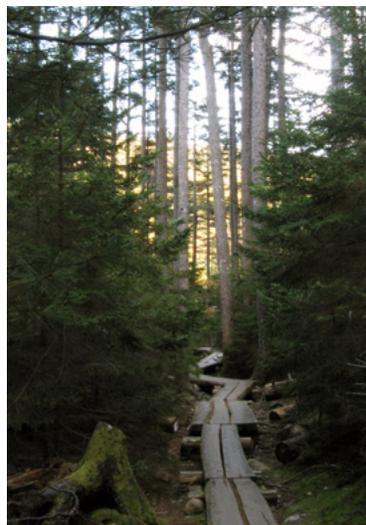
We scrambled up and down the rough granite like kids; our boots held even where the surface was wet from runoff: such is the nature of this rock. Rock born miles below the surface as magma – that fiery viscous liquid you see flowing out of active volcanoes in those great National Geographic photos – and cooling well below the surface, pushed up by unimaginable forces to make mountains like the one we were standing on – intrusive igneous rock – granite. Then covered by glaciers thousands of feet thick, melting and dragging tons of stone across this sur-

face – long gouges beneath our feet attested to the battle of stone against stone. All in our favor as we passed one foot in front of another testing the coefficient of friction: how steep could we go? We were bugs on the wall; tree frogs on a limb; giddy with our new-found capabilities.

It was hard to give this up and return to the valley below – but we did, ending up at a glacial lake called Jordan Pond. We were hungry – we knew about the famous popovers at the Jordan House – a fifteen to twenty minute wait you say? – we could come back in an hour or two when there would be no line – you stop serving at 5:30? – why it's only 3:30 – we could do the three mile hike around Jordan Pond in less than an hour!



So many pictures, so little time! It was the longest three miles of our lives. At every step the changing scenery demanded a picture. We acquiesced. And the trail changed from well-founded gravel to a rockfall to a swamp covered with 4000 feet of half-log planks – 4000 plank feet. Nearly 5 o'clock and a mile to go! We walked



a plank, then another and another. We raced the planks. Sometimes they were barely off the ground; at other times they spanned creeks flowing down off the mountain – these were a little hairy to navigate. Ann claims that skiing has helped her balance. Seems I haven't benefited as much from the experience. We walked onto solid earth at the end

of the last plank. And raced up the hill. It was shortly after five when we were seated: each of us savoring a cup of chowder and two beautiful popovers hot from the oven.

Garrett (with Ann)