BIRDING TOUR USA: MAINE – FROM MOUNTAIN FORESTS TO SPARKLING SHORES

02–10 JUNE 2027
02–10 JUNE 2028
01–09 JUNE 2029



*We hope to get great views of **Atlantic Puffin** on the Machias Seal Island trip.*

Overview

Maine (and the northeast region of the United States in general) offers a great mixed bag of birding through its diverse habitats and high latitude location. Many migrant species call this area their home in the summer as they stake out territories and breed. The overlap between the more southern breeders and northern breeders is rarely seen elsewhere, meaning Maine offers a unique chance of some fantastic birding generating some good lists. The habitats on display range from coastal saltwater marshes to sandy-plains grasslands, high altitude mountain tops of the Appalachians, expansive boreal forests, and unique clusters of offshore islands inhabited by puffins and other charismatic wildlife. Each habitat contains its own picturesque beauty along with key bird species to see. This nine-day tour explores the best this region has to offer. On this tour, we focus on Maine, but also foray into New Hampshire and time-permitting into Vermont.



*The striking **Saltmarsh Sparrow** is always a real treat to see.*

The trip will begin by exploring Scarborough Marsh, a massive saltwater estuary home to a large population of both **Saltmarsh** and **Nelson's Sparrows**. From here we will continue along to the Kennebunk Plains and into the White Mountains National Forest of New Hampshire for our first taste of boreal forest birding. One of the best locations for breeding **Bicknell's Thrush** is near the top of Mount Washington (from roadside pull-offs, so no need for a strenuous hike), the highest peak in the northeast (6,200 feet, almost 2,000 meters). We will continue our boreal birding experience scoring a myriad of thrush, warbler, and flycatcher species, all of which will be on their established breeding grounds by June. **Black-backed Woodpecker**, **Canada** (Grey) **Jay**, **Spruce Grouse**, **Boreal Chickadee**, **Red Crossbill**, and other charismatic birds of the taiga forests, are all possibilities. Eventually we will make it back to Maine's coastline and begin our exploration of the ocean. With two pelagic boat trips planned, we will hopefully experience up-close-and-

personal views of **Atlantic Puffin**, **Razorbill**, **Common Murre**, **Black Guillemot**, **Arctic Tern** and more as we visit the numerous offshore islands. Finally, the trip concludes with a journey through the jaw-droppingly beautiful Acadia National Park, full of scenic viewpoints and great breeding birds. This New England birding and wildlife holiday might also generate some non-avian finds, such as **Ocean Sunfish**, **Grey Seal**, **Humpback**, **Fin** and **Common Minke Whales**, **American Beaver**, **North American Porcupine**, **American Black Bear** and **Moose**.



*The adorable **Canada Jay** is one of the boreal species we hope to encounter.*

Date-wise, this Maine and New Hampshire birdwatching tour is combinable with our Alaska birding tour and extension (and sometimes with other USA birding tours of ours) but if you combine with Alaska you're in for a long flight across North America – a similar distance to flying from London to Maine.

*The boat departure to Machias Seal Island featured on Day 6 of this tour is sometimes replaced with a different pelagic trip to Seal Island National Wildlife Refuge. This refuge and series of islands are located in more southern waters of Maine and features a restored seabird colony full of **Atlantic Puffins**, **Razorbills**, and **Arctic** and **Common Terns**. Additionally, this area features the largest colony of **Great Cormorants** found in Maine. With any luck, there is also the potential for a surprise star bird nicknamed "Troppy", a **Red-billed Tropicbird** that has amazingly called these islands home for over 15 summers in a row! We never know until about early to mid May each year if this rather out of place, beautiful tropical seabird returns. Please note that in years we make this itinerary change, we also reverse the order of the itinerary because the alternate boat trip is further south, making logistics work better this way.*

Detailed Itinerary (9 days/8 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Portland, Maine

The tour begins in Portland, Maine with arrival at the Portland International Jetport (PWM). From here, we'll transfer to our hotel and head to dinner to prepare for our upcoming tour as well as get to know each other better. If time and daylight allow, we may head to the coast to get our first breaths of the sea air and hopefully see a few species such as **Common Tern** and **Common Eider**.

Overnight: Portland, Maine

Day 2. Scarborough Marsh and Portland area

This morning we will begin at Maine's largest saltwater marsh, Scarborough Marsh. This expansive estuary plays host to numerous breeding birds and is one of the best places to see both **Saltmarsh** and **Nelson's Sparrows**. The shallow waters and rich habitat also prove to be a haven for wading birds like **Little Blue Heron** and **Snowy Egret**. After a productive morning of exploring the marsh, we will venture out to a few coastal sites for a chance at some great birds including **Roseate Tern** and **Piping Plover**.

Overnight: Portland, Maine

Day 3. White Mountains National Park

Today we head into New Hampshire and the White Mountains National Forest, but first, we will plan a stop at the Kennebunk Plains along the way. This huge grassland area will provide us with a great opportunity to see some specials such as **Grasshopper** and **Vesper Sparrows**, and **Upland Sandpiper**. Unfortunately, some of these birds have become quite scare and local in the northeast as these sand-plains have greatly dwindled. After a great morning of birding the grasslands, we will head up into the mountains. It is here in the higher altitudes and forests that we will have a chance at boreal species like **Black-backed Woodpecker**, **Boreal Chickadee**, and even a shot at **Spruce Grouse**. We'll finish near the small town of Gorham for the evening and prepare for the next day.

Overnight: Gorham, New Hampshire

Day 4. Mount Washington and boreal birds.

This morning we will begin to properly explore the White Mountains a bit further with a start on the Mount Washington Auto Road. Luckily, this 7.6-mile (12 kilometer) road allows us to gain sufficient altitude with relative ease in hopes of scoring our big target for the day, **Bicknell's Thrush**. These sneaky birds typically only nest at high elevations of 3,000 feet (1,000 meters) or higher. Luckily, there are a few pull-offs along the road which allow for searching. In addition to the thrush, we hope to encounter other nice bird species such as **Canada Jay**, **Dark-eyed Junco** and the unusual **Blackpoll Warbler**.

From here, depending on how we've faired so far, we may even dip into Vermont for a bit, in hopes of encountering **Spruce Grouse** and **Two-barred** (White-winged) **Crossbill**. Plus, it is

always fun to tick a few birds for a new state life list. From here we will continue along through the scenic spruce and firs of the boreal forest before eventually settling into Rangeley for the night.

Overnight: Rangeley, Maine



*The delightful **Cape May Warbler**.*

Day 5. Mountains and back to the coast

Today, our goal is to make it back to the coast of Maine in Machias, but of course there is plenty of birding to do along the way. First up is the Rangeley area, birding along the roadsides of the forest. This is a great area to pick up more superb bird species including **Yellow-bellied**, **Olive-sided** and **Alder Flycatchers**, **Boreal Chickadee**, **Blue-headed Vireo**, **Veery**, **Winter Wren** and a variety of breeding warblers.

We will then continue our journey towards the ocean in the afternoon, with a stop at Messalonskee Lake en route. This narrow lake hosts both **Black Tern** and **Purple Martin** colonies in addition to the other more common lake species like **Common Loon** and **Western Osprey**. We'll make it to our hotel in Machias and get some rest in preparation for our boat trip the following morning.

Overnight: Machias, Maine

Day 6. Machias Seal Island

We depart Cutler Harbor at 7:00 a.m. and set sail for Machias Seal Island, home to an incredible seabird colony. We should see nesting **Atlantic Puffin**, **Razorbill**, **Common Murre**, and **Arctic Tern**, all at point-blank range. Weather permitting, we will be able to land on the island which makes for great photographic opportunities. **Grey Seals** are likely at North Rock, while **Harbor**

Seals are common. During the morning boat ride, we will look for pelagic species such as **Northern Fulmar**, **Great Shearwater**, and **Wilson's Storm Petrel**. After lunch we'll drive to Quoddy Head State Park that juts out into the Grand Manan Channel, which offers great opportunities for seabirds and shorebirds. Boreal species may include **Lincoln's Sparrow** and **Palm Warbler**. After dinner, we will journey along the coast until we reach Bar Harbor where we will stay for the next two nights.

Overnight: Bar Harbor, Maine



*We aim to see **Razorbill** on our visit to the seabird colonies.*

Day 7. Petit Manan boat trip and Bar Harbor

We'll have a few hours in the morning to begin our exploration of Mount Desert Island, the largest island off the coast of Maine. Around mid-morning we'll head for the dock at Bar Harbor and prepare for a half-day boat excursion to visit Petit Manan Island National Wildlife Refuge. This series of many offshore islands plays host to loads of seabirds including **Atlantic Puffin**, **Razorbill**, and **Common Murre** plus the potential for a shearwater or storm petrel. **Humpback Whale** is likely, with several other species of cetaceams also possible. This short boat trip also serves as a great back-up to Machias Seal Island if the weather was poor on the previous day. After arriving back on land, we will continue our birding of Mount Desert Island and its spruce and fir forests hoping for nice birds such as **Magnolia**, **Blackpoll** and **Cape May Warblers**.

Overnight: Bar Harbor, Maine

Day 8. Acadia National Park and back to Portland

This morning and into the afternoon, we will get a chance to explore and bird the beauty of Acadia National Park. Taking up a large chunk of Mount Desert Island, Acadia has a great vastness and

is rich in biodiversity. We should hear the echoing songs of **Wood Thrush** throughout our visit along with other amazing species like **Blackburnian** and **Black-throated Green Warblers**, **Ovenbird**, **Cedar Waxwing**, and more. After a great morning and afternoon inside the park, we will do one final scan along the coast for any potential species we are missing, and it is also a great location for **Great Cormorant**. Finally, we will head back to Portland for our final evening of the trip.

Overnight: Portland, Maine



Black-throated Green Warbler *is one of many wood warblers we should see on this tour.*

Day 9. Departure from Portland

Today concludes what was surely a fantastic tour full of many highlights. If time permits, there may be a chance for a brief morning birding session at Scarborough Marsh or another nearby location before checking out of the hotel and transferring to the Portland airport.

Please note that the itinerary cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides, and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling or other factors.

Tour Details

Duration:	9 days
Group size:	4–8
Dates:	02–10 June 2027 02–10 June 2028 01–09 June 2029
Start:	Portland, Maine
End:	Portland, Maine
Prices:	US$ 5,268 per person sharing (2027) US$ 5,490 per person sharing (2028) US$ 5,860 per person sharing (2029)
Single supplements:	US$ 922 (2027) US$ 940 (2028) US$ 990 (2029)

Price includes:

Meals/water
Accommodation
Transport
Guiding fees
Boat rides
Entrance fees

Price excludes:

Flights
Personal insurance
Alcoholic beverages
Gratuities (please see our tipping guidelines blog)
Laundry service
Personal expenses such as gifts