

Canoe the Allagash, Maine

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The Allagash Wilderness Waterway is a 92-mile (148-kilometer) stretch of lakes, ponds, and the Allagash River flowing north through the northern Maine wilderness.

Photograph by Carl D. Walsh, Aurora Photos

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By Kate Siber

Maine's North Woods are so far removed from the rest of the bustling Northeast, they've changed little since the 19th century. That's why canoeing the Allagash River, a state-protected wilderness waterway, is a little like time travel. Over 92 river miles (148 kilometers), canoeists notice few signs of civilization, save for a few dusty bridges, a historic lumber camp, and the occasional distant rumble of a logging truck.

Though paddlers frequent the river between May and October, spring is arguably the best time to go: the crowds are few and the spring meltwater makes a longer trip possible. Enlist the help of Allagash Canoe Trips, a guide service established in 1953 and run by three consecutive generations of Cochranes. The consummate trip will take at least nine days, following the narrow, trout-packed Allagash Stream; serene, motorless Allagash Lake; and finally the storied river itself. Along the way, canoeists run Class I and II rapids, see a 45-foot (14-meter) cascading waterfall, and hike up nearby mountains to spot views of Mount Katahdin. But it's arguably the moments when you're least busy—gliding silently through the glassy water, observing a moose or an eagle standing sentinel over a nest—that you fall into a peaceful trance impossible anywhere else but this still-wild land.

Need to Know: Allagash Canoe Trips (www.allagashcanoetrips.com), a guide service, runs small, private trips. A nine-day, 100-mile (161-kilometer) trip along the Allagash Stream, Allagash Lake, and Allagash River costs about \$1,225.