



For Immediate Release
June 18, 2009

Contact: Bruce Hazard, Mountain Counties Heritage
207-446-4140 or bhazard@mainemountains.org

Tourism Providers Launch Nature-Based Vacation Packages

AUGUSTA, Maine – A group of Maine tourism businesses that typically compete for the same customers have collaborated to create a set of nature-based vacation packages for travelers visiting a section of inland Maine from Bethel to Millinocket.

Maine Woods Discovery was launched Thursday at the statehouse at a gathering attended by program participants, Governor John Baldacci, Maine Office of Tourism Director Pat Eltman, state legislators and representatives of regional tourism councils.

The program, believed to be the first of its kind in the state, brings together four-season recreation resorts Sunday River, Sugarloaf and Saddleback Maine; the Appalachian Mountain Club, Maine Huts & Trails, and rafting and recreation outfitters Northern Outdoors, and New England Outdoor Center.

Summer and fall vacation package activities – from geo-caching, to fly fishing, hiking, and touring a mineral mine or submerged village – have been organized by these Maine Woods Discovery host properties, along with partners including the Northern Forest Canoe Trail, Bethel Outdoor Adventure and the Maine Crafts Association.

The aim of the program is to offer visitors consistently high quality opportunities to experience the natural destinations of the Rangeley Lakes, Katahdin, High Peaks, Bethel, Upper Kennebec and Moosehead Lake regions, while learning about local history or meeting local craftsmen.

“We are really excited about the collaborative aspect of this program,” noted Bruce Hazard, director of Mountain Counties Heritage and one of the program organizers. “These providers are brought together by their love for the region and their common interest in attracting new customers, and they see greater potential for doing this by working together – setting new standards for customer service and raising the profile

of the Maine Woods as a whole.”

Seven packages ranging from one to three days combine overnight accommodations with daily core activities, some meals, and special gifts. Packages begin at \$75 per person and each has optional add-on activities like a guided ATV or paddling tour, or whitewater rafting.

“It’s important to upgrade the quality of our service to match the unparalleled beauty of our natural environment,” said Warren Cook, CEO and general manager of Saddleback Maine. “People will expect a concierge-type of service to help connect the dots between activities, destinations and the guides who will help them find their way in the outdoors. This network of service providers keeps our focus on the visitor experience and helps us compete with other destinations around the world.”

The program plans to offer other seasonal travel packages for fall and winter, and host properties from other regions of the state might also be added.

”Through our work across the Northern Forest Region, we have opportunities to participate in and learn about a variety of approaches to rural tourism development,” said Kate Williams, executive director of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail. “The level of collaboration within the Maine Woods Discovery is truly distinctive, and creates a new standard for the creation and delivery of excellent regional tourism experiences.”

The Maine Woods Discovery packages:

Intro to Geocaching Adventure, 2 days/2 nights. Logdominium accommodations at Northern Outdoors Forks Resort Center on the Kennebec River. Learn the outdoor treasure hunt adventure of geocaching with a GPS device. Search for hidden caches on the Northern Outdoors grounds, and do more hunting along the Old Canada Road National Scenic Byway. Complementary Old Canada Road historical audio CD. \$108 per adult, \$95 per child.

Outdoor Sporting Heritage, 3 days/3 nights. Stay at the Appalachian Mountain Club’s Little Lyford Lodge and Camps or Medawisla Wilderness Lodge within the 100 Mile Wilderness area of the Appalachian Trail. Complementary use of canoes, kayaks and fly fishing gear. Hike to Gulf Hagas gorge on the West Branch of the Penobscot River. Includes all meals and tickets for the Katahdin Steamship tour on Moosehead Lake. \$318 per person.

Legendary Fly Fishing, 2 days/2 nights. Accommodations at a Saddleback Maine mountain-side condominium. Three-hour fly fishing lesson and use of a canoe to cast a line on the Rangeley region's famous waterways. One complementary lunch, a Northern Forest Canoe Trail map of the Rangeley Lakes area, and a copy of "Paddling Through Time: The Story of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail" included. \$530 per couple.

The Valley Below, 3 days/2nights. Accommodations at the Maine Huts & Trails Flagstaff Lake Hut. Pontoon boat tour on the lake to learn about the submerged townships of Flagstaff, Bigelow and Dead River. Explore the lakeside loop trails, or tackle the 4,000-foot peaks of the Bigelow Mountain Range. Includes all meals, the Valley Below brochure, a Northern Forest Canoe Trail map of Flagstaff Lake, and a copy of "Paddling Through Time: The Story of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail." \$265 per person.

Maine Rocks!, 1 day/1 night. Accommodations at Sunday River's Grand Summit or Jordan Grand Hotel in Newry. Guided geology tour, talk and digging opportunity at the Bumpus Mine, one of the oldest and most famous mineral mines in the northeast. Includes breakfast. Extend the package with an Androscoggin River trip or ATV tour. \$75 per person.

View From the Top, 1 day/1 night. Make the Sugarloaf Mountain Hotel your base for hiking or mountain biking. Complementary hiking and nature trail maps for the Longfellow Mountain Range. Guided hikes can be arranged. Breakfast and box lunch included. \$75 per person.

Making it By Hand, 3 days/2 nights. The New England Outdoor Center's Twin Pine Camps in Millinocket is the setting for a series of fall Craft Weekends. Sessions on making art from wood, sculpting with clay, and quarrying and polishing gemstones include instructive lectures, guided trips to learn about and gather raw materials, and hands on crafting. Includes all breakfasts, one lunch, one dinner and use of canoes. \$232.50 per person.

Learn more about the Maine Woods Discovery packages online at www.mainewoodsdiscovery.com.

Package Host Contacts

Russell Walters, Northern Outdoors, 207-663-4466 or Russell@northernoutdoors.com
Bryan Wentzell, Appalachian Mountain Club, 800-372-1758 or bwentzell@outdoors.org
Warren Cook, Saddleback Maine, 207-864-5671 or wcook@saddlebackmaine.com
David Herring, Maine Huts & Trails, 207-265-2400 or dherring@mainehuts.org
Matt Polstein, New England Outdoor Center, 207-723-5438 or mpolstein@hotmail.com
Jim Costello, Sugarloaf and Sunday River, 207-824-3000 or jcostello@sundayriver.com

- END -