



PHOTO/ DENNIS WELSH

Sailboats rest in Somes Sound in Acadia National Park near Bar Harbor, Maine. The park is the second most visited national park in the nation.

## THE FOREST AND THE TREES

*Although residents of Bangor and Maine are struggling with questions of forestry management and economic development, they relish their refreshingly simple way of life.*

*By Bett Coffman*

Maine is the stereotypical escape destination. People migrate here from hectic cities around New England and the country, planning for years to make it their home. The ocean, the woods, the mountains, good schools, and low crime all contribute to Maine's rich ambience.

Yet this idyllic state is not without its problems.

Mainers have traditionally relied on the land for their living. Fishing and lobstering are significant sources of income

for residents along the coast. Bangor, once the lumber capital of the world, still relies heavily on the paper industry, as does the rest of the state. Yet tourism is also a major industry here. Visitors come from all over the country, Europe, and Canada to bask in the unspoiled wilderness of woods, coast, and mountains, and the interests of paper and fishing have not always been compatible with tourism.

Early in November, Mainers voted whether to increase regulations on clearcutting forests in Maine. The

measure failed, and failed to decide a hotly-debated issue that has raged in Maine for years. A referendum last November to ban clear cutting was also narrowly defeated.

Although organizations on both sides of the issue—the paper companies and some preservationists—favored the referendum this time around, other preservationist groups opposed it, saying it did not go far enough to protect the forest. In addition, some small landowners felt it was intrusive.

The dual approval seemed to bode

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well for the measure. The paper industry, which uses the forests, is the biggest money maker in a state which lacks a strong manufacturing economy. Tourism is second.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the trend in Maine was strongly preservationist. Now, with the development of environmentally friendly businesses, Mainers seem to lean toward economic growth and sensible management of resources.

"Somebody said a long time ago, you can't eat the scenery," says Donald Krause, MD, a Bangor internist. "I think the emphasis is now becoming, 'How do you make a stable job environment? How do you invite new businesses to come in that are environment friendly?'"

"You have to balance growth with the environment. I think Maine is very keen about that," says Krause.

### **A city in the country**

In the center of the state and tangent to all the elements of conflict and prosperity in Maine is Bangor, a city of 33,000 located midway between the coastal and woodland regions. The city is where citizens from the central, eastern, and northern parts of the state converge to find medical care, legal services, do their banking, and shop. Bangor is 'the city' for nearly 400,000 people of Maine.

"It looks like a little city of 30,000 yet it has a medical center with 430 beds and an open-heart surgery program. That contrast is really a metaphor for what this city serves in many ways," says Erik Steele, DO.

Yet Bangor retains the character of a small city. "We're the referral area for 400,000 people but you don't have to live with them," says internist Frank Bragg, MD. "I call it a city in the country."

Residents relish the freedom to allow their children to play in the neighborhoods. They don't need home alarms or auto security systems—some don't even

lock their cars.

"I live in a community where I'm not afraid to have my children walk on the streets or to go trick-or-treating," says Steele. "But on the other hand it has a symphony orchestra and an active theater group."

"It doesn't mean we don't have crime," Steele adds. "Every once in a while something happens here that makes us all gasp. But the fact that it makes us all gasp is a testimony that it is not an everyday occurrence."

The novels of Stephen King, a 17-year resident of Bangor, probably generate more gasps than local crimes. Bangor averages only 71 violent crimes per year per 100,000 persons. The national average is 408. Maine, as a state, ranks 47th in its violent crime rate with 130 violent crimes per 100,000 population.

The University of Maine in Orono, 15 miles northeast of Bangor, lends an academic tone to Bangor. "It is a very community-focused university so that it is easy to use it, easy to access it. That has a huge impact on the community," says Krause.

The commitment to education in Maine is one of its assets as a place to raise children. The school systems throughout the state are strong and produce highly qualified graduates. Every year, a number of graduates of the Bangor high schools go on to such prestigious universities as Amherst, MIT, and Tufts.

Once they graduate, however, the job market for these young workers is less than optimal.

"There is a big brain drain because kids come out of high school very well educated," says Krause. "They can go to technical college and get a job here as a tradesman but if they want to go on to college, the jobs available for college-educated people are very few, so the best and brightest move out of state to get their jobs."

These educated graduates may be Maine's emerging vital resource. Bragg, a native of Bangor, says that as long as a business does not have to be near large infrastructures and can rely on electronic technology, businesses are attracted to the labor market in Maine. "People like Mainers—they have a good work ethic."

John Vanadia, DO says the people of Bangor are important to the quality of life, too. "People within the community are overwhelmingly helpful. Just always willing to give a part of themselves to help a friend or a neighbor. We live in a little development that kind of reminds me of the old days of community and having a bunch of kids running around and playing baseball and hide and seek. That just doesn't happen in urban areas anymore."

### **A sense of place**

Maine's spectacular, rocky coastline and dramatic woods are familiar images. Residents are free to take advantage of large tracts of woods, much of which is owned by large paper companies as well as state parks.

Acadia National Park, the most visited coastal area of Maine, is an hour's drive south of Bangor. The park and the town of Bar Harbor are well known vacation spots where the wealthy and not-so-wealthy go boating, fishing, and kayaking among the seals.

Although some young people leave the state to start their careers elsewhere, Baby Boomer couples in their 30s and 40s come to Maine to escape the stresses, crime, and crowding of larger cities. Many of these educated Baby Boomers start their own businesses or are qualified for higher paying jobs such as those in medicine. They attribute their desire to move to Maine to the recreational opportunities, the sense of community, and the natural beauty of the surroundings.

Philip Hunter, MD says that before

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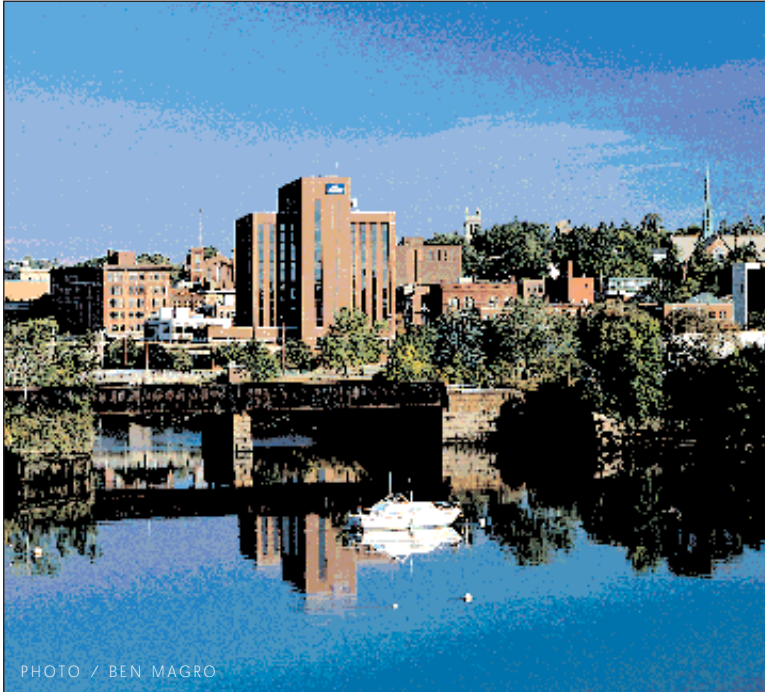


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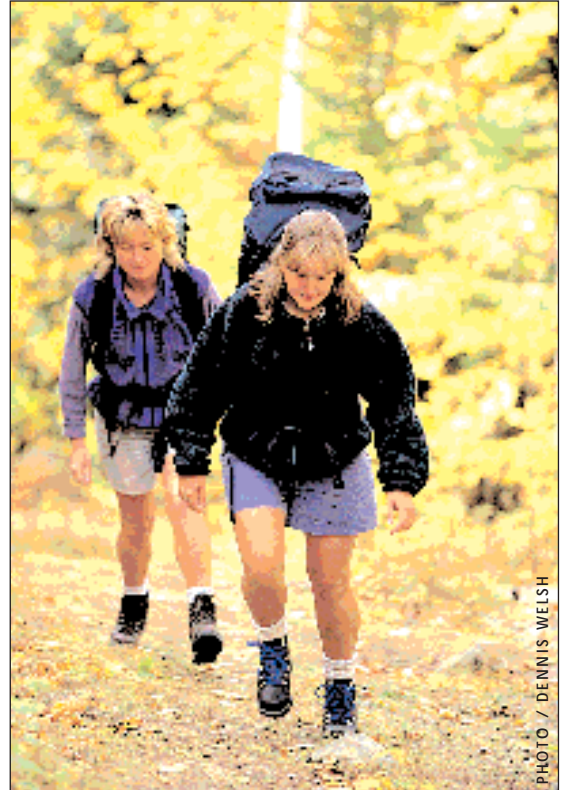


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Bangor sits on the Penobscot River and is accessible by boat from Penobscot Bay. Above, hikers along the Appalachian Trail near Sugarloaf ski area. The trail terminates at Mount Katahdin in Baxter State Park. Left, a vacation camp on Moosehead Lake, northwest of Bangor.

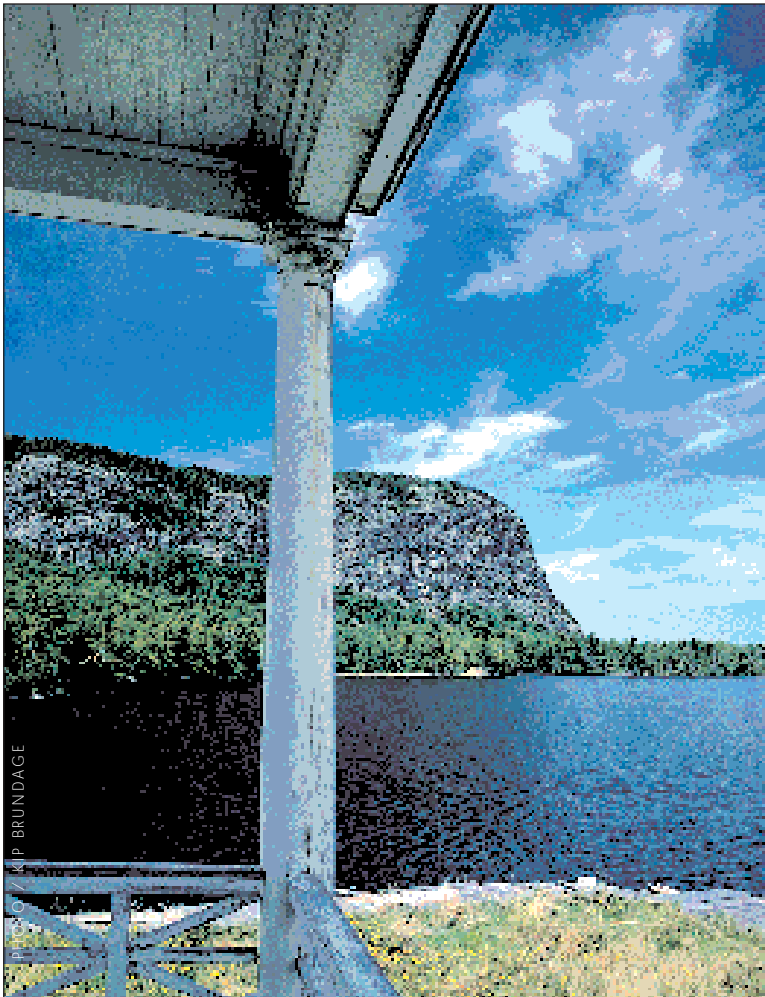


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he finished his residency in New England he knew he was heading to Maine. "I knew already I wanted to live in Maine because of the lifestyle and opportunities for things other than medicine."

People with sometimes tenuous ties to the area are often drawn back. A childhood vacation, a summer camp, a grandparent's home. Any of these introductions can lead one to be drawn "from away" to Maine.

Krause tries to put into words the reasons why he likes living here. "I'm sitting here looking out my window at the spectacular foliage with the hills and the colors and the bright blue sky. It's a visual of this quiet kind of unpretentious beauty. I don't know how to put that in words. That's a large reason why we live here."

Krause says the town is small enough that citizens have the kind of atmosphere where residents

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know each other in a number of different roles. “The relationships you build both from the doctor-patient standpoint and from the colleague standpoint are very solid, long-term relationships,” Krause says. “The patients know us not only as doctors but as people. We know their families. People need each other. You don’t just call a plumber, there is one plumber you call and you know him, you know his family. You relate to each other in a very different way than in the urban centers.”

Bangor may be a quiet place because it looks like the end of the road.

“We don’t live at the edge of the world, but you can see where it ends,” Krause laughs. Yet, he says, that is an illusion. On the far side of the city are inspiring Canadian metropolises. “I think Bangor being the cul-de-sac is more of a mind set than reality. We look for our urban connectedness not only to Boston but to Montreal and Quebec.”

Steele says he was a little unsure when he brought his family to Bangor 10 years ago: “We came to Bangor thinking we were going to fall right off the face of the earth.”

Not only did they not fall off the earth, they have put down roots and have no plans to leave. Like Hunter, Steele came here expressly for the Maine lifestyle. He appreciates the change of seasons, access to the cities of New England, and the social amenities. “The schools and the community in which to raise children were our number one priority in selecting where we wanted to live,” he says.

### **Down to earth**

“People want a quality of life up here and are not that worried about what color their car is,” says Vanadia.

“They’re more interested in the quality of life for themselves and their families. I think it is reflective of the environment and the physical attributes of

what we have around us.”

Steele agrees. “People come in with kayaks on top of their cars and as soon as they can, they get out and enjoy the outdoors. We expect and accept a balance of work and play. It’s part of why we’re here,” he says.

The climate may seem daunting, with long, cold, snowy winters, but many people find it invigorating. To accommodate the rather long Maine winters, residents employ snowmobiles, snowshoes, ice skates, and skis.

“You’ve got to like winter sports if you’re going to live in Maine,” says Hunter. “Most of us like to ski. Whether it’s snowmobiling or getting out in snowshoes, using the winter as a recreational opportunity is what we try to look forward to.”

Cabin fever can also be alleviated with visits to the Bangor Symphony Orchestra, the oldest community orchestra in the nation, Penobscot Theater Company, or the library, considered by many Bangor residents to be the best in New England.

The summer brings relief with warm days and cool nights. Many people do not have air conditioning in their homes because they simply don’t need it. A fan in the window will do for cooling.

Bragg, like many Mainers, has a vacation home, locally referred to as a “camp.” His is on a lake 10 miles outside of Bangor. Close enough that he is able to make his residence there during the warmer months. “I wake up in the morning and listen to the loons and then drive in to work.”

These summer homes, usually not as rustic as one might envision a camp, are enjoyed by people of all socioeconomic levels. This may be because the land is inexpensive and the costs of building a simple summer house are not great.

Vanadia says he found in Bangor a better quality of life than he found in other New York and New England cities he con-

sidered. The airport is a great asset for him since he often travels for family visits in Boston. “The airport is a mile from my house and you wouldn’t know it’s there. It’s quiet. You don’t wait on lines. You get there five minutes ahead of time and you board the plane.”

The international airport, converted from a decommissioned Air Force base, hosts daily flights from all parts of Europe and an occasional visit from the Concorde. The runway is so long and wide that it is, in fact, suitable for landing the space shuttle.

### **A cultivated center**

Like the image of the space shuttle in a small New England town, the Eastern Maine Medical Center seems a little out of place. It has not always been the subspecialty service facility that it is now, however. Bragg, who was born and brought up in Bangor, left to attend Amherst College and Columbia Medical School in the 1960s. When he left, the hospital was known as Bangor General Hospital. He never imagined he would someday return to practice at a sophisticated referral center in his hometown.

As Bragg was undergoing the transformation into a physician, Bangor’s medical facilities were also being transformed. By 1972, when Bragg was ready to enter practice, the hospital had changed its name to the Eastern Maine Medical Center (EMMC) and recruited a host of specialists to join the staff.

“I could see what it was going to look like,” says Bragg, and it looked like a place he wanted to practice.

Hunter, a gastroenterologist, began his quest for a Maine home in 1971. When he analyzed the market, he found there were only five gastroenterologists in the state: three in Portland and two at the veterans’ hospital in Togus. “I thought I could be of better service out somewhere rather than being the fourth GI in Port-

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land,” he says. “Bangor appeared to be an up-and-coming medical center. I wanted to move to Maine but I didn’t want to give up first-quality medicine. Bangor was just embarking on a new building program and was starting to attract subspecialists, and I envisioned Bangor as a medical center for the state.”

That year, he and 18 other subspecialists arrived in Bangor with the same idea. Since then, the medical staff has grown from 70 to nearly 300. “It has evolved just as I anticipated that it would,” says Hunter. “Once the specialties were in place, the opportunity for referral from other parts of the state took off.”

Saint Joseph Hospital, although a smaller facility, has its own place in the community. Most physicians in Bangor have privileges at both hospitals, and Vanadia, a surgeon, believes it is good for medicine here to have two hospitals. The hospital places a strong emphasis on women’s services and occupational health care and is affiliated with the Maine Center for Osteoporosis Research and Education.

That combination has created an environment in which medical professionals are proud to practice. “You can practice first-class medicine and yet have a laid back lifestyle,” says Hunter.

The University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine in Biddeford, near Portland, is the closest medical school. And EMMC has a family practice residency program which generates a supply of primary-care physicians for the area and enables primary-care physicians in Bangor to teach.

Providing health care to the distant populations served by Bangor is a constant challenge. Eastern Maine Medical Center recently applied for a federal grant to establish a telemedicine center linking Lubec, on the eastern tip of the state, with the medical



A snowy twilight near Union, Maine. The town is southwest of Bangor near Camden.

center. The state will soon have a helicopter transport service, badly needed by the far-flung, often medically underserved population.

Some patients coming from the rural parts of the state are uninsured, which does have an impact on physicians. “Sometimes patients will bring in baked goods or something like that. One patient brought me in moose meat,” says Vanadia. “Although it doesn’t pay the bills, it does make life more interesting.”

They accept these tokens with good humor. None of these physicians came to Maine with visions of a high income, Hunter attests. “Being on the water, sailing, fishing, boating, these are things we all do. No one is here because we expect to get rich. The way of life and the recreational opportunities is really what we are here for.”

The debate over how best to use the north woods is important to Maine residents because they value the resources on a personal level. They recognize the need for economic progress, but they also want to preserve their place. Main-

### POPULATION:

Bangor: 33,181  
MSA (Penobscot County): 144,989

### CLIMATE:

Annual Precipitation: 41", Annual Snowfall: 76"  
Average High/Low Temperatures:  
January - 26°/8°, July - 78°/59°  
Days of sunshine: 205

### TRANSPORTATION:

Airports - Bangor International Airport  
Interstates - I-95 south to Portland (132 miles) and Boston (238 miles). Quebec City is 224 miles; Montreal is 286.

### COST OF LIVING:

Average Household Adjusted Gross Income: \$30,493  
Median Home Price: \$74,300

ers are prepared to make sacrifices to find the best solution. “We are a little stoic. We’ll put up with a lot and make do,” says Bragg. ■

*Bett Coffman is the associate editor of UO.*