



Brewhaha #14: Bar Harbor Brewing Company, Bar Harbor ME

It was about 10:30 a.m. on a smoking hot August Monday, when I meandered into the BHBC. It was not the brewery *per se*, but kind of an outlet store: a place where you could buy the brews, peruse the various brew-associated goodies, and, best of all for me, taste the brews.

Now, normally, I'm not even outa bed at 10:30 on a vaykayday, let alone belling up to a bar. But this was no ordinary day; it had already been a really full morning.

The alarm went off at 5:00 a.m. Yes, f-i-v-e 5. This wasn't a mistake. I deliberately did this to myself. One of the most famous attractions of Acadia National Park is Cadillac Mountain, where the rays of the morning sun first touch ground in North America. Being atop that hill and being able to say, *ha, I saw the sun before anyone e/se* seemed like a cool enough reason to get up in darkness.

When I had arrived at the Wonder View a day or so ago – wait, no, it was less than 12 hours before, wow – I chatted with the maintenance guy and asked about this sunrise thing. He said he never did it, but you just drive right up, no park fee twaddle to deal with, and lots of WV's guests do it. He concluded by saying, "It's definitely worth it ... I mean, y'know, I never did, but it's definitely worth it." I think he realized how stupid his comment was because he just kinda nodded and chattered off in his golf cart.

In the pre-dawn dark, I nudged C-Note awake and drove to the Mountain Road. At the bottom end of the road, two white 15-passenger vans were parked, with two guys in athletic looking duds chatting beside them. They looked like they were getting ready to remount and ride up. I chuckled and said, *I wonderrrrr....*

Then about halfway up the 3.5-mile ascent road, there they were in my headlights: a couple of young skinny stragglers first, faces down and puffing up the incline, then the pack of about 15 more high school runners with a couple of mid-20's coachly looking dudes in the mix, and finally, two tall, lean strong-striding young dudes up ahead, making the break for the long summit push. I gave them several honks of the horn and multiple fist pumps.

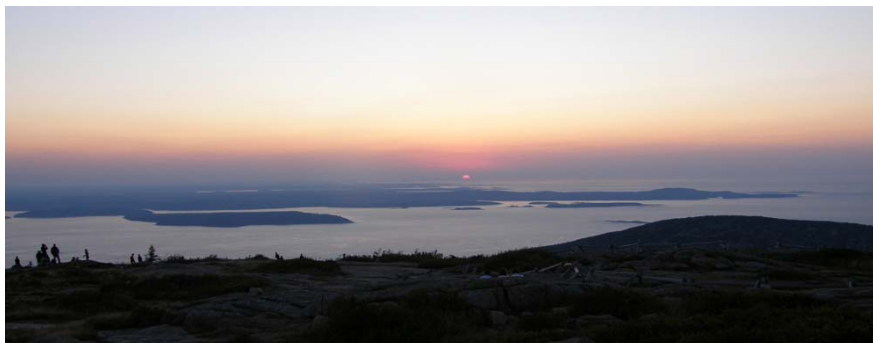
Ahh, memories.

Anyway, Cadillac Mountain got balder and balder as I drove higher. Trees became bushes became scraggly grass. By the time I snaked my way to the hilltop parking lot, it was mostly rock and large patches of lichen.

This was one big parking lot, and it was filling up fast. Close to a hundred vehicles were already there and others were streaming in behind me. There was little time left before the 5:50 sunrise. The horizon had a dark pink glow above a gray line of

thick atmosphere. I grabbed the cameras and got out to catch my coveted first rays.

It was chillilly! Just a modest 59° or so, but the unchecked wind was howling off the Atlantic water at 35 MPH or more. It was





sweatshirt-and-jacket time after all.

By the time I got to the summit marker, the sun was making its appearance: a tiny pink half-disk peeking through the gray. There had to be close to 300 people scattered around the rocky top by now.

The cross country kids had begun arriving just a few minutes before. The stragglers may have just missed it, though I suspect the vans scooped them up on the way so the whole team could be there for

sunrise. Many of the kids were shirtless and heated up from their run. It was kind of funny to watch their bare-chested bravado turn into arms-folded-across-chest, and then shirts-back-on as they cooled off. They posed for a team pic, and I queried one of the adults about their identity. South Burlington (VT) High School they were, and proud of it. They aspired to “top two” in States this year, and this was their final run of a five-day camp at Acadia. What a great place for a camp: trails and hills galore, a coach’s dream.



Turns out that SBHS is kind of a rival of Essex HS, where Fatman Nate, a former Key West harrier, is on the coaching staff. When I told Nate about the encounter, he spoke highly of them, but when the dust would settle 10 weeks later, SX would take third place over SoBurl’s fifth (www.lancertiming.com/results/fall10/vtb1.htm). Nice job, Fats!

I lingered for quite a while and relished the brightening (and warming) of the day. Most people had saddled up and rolled on back down to Bar Harbor or wherever, most likely for breakfast or to go back to bed. There was only one other car in the lot when I moseyed on, but *my* appetite was for scenery, not food.

When NEBPT was conceived, Acadia NP was a focal point. The fact that a few good brewhahas happened to crouch close by was convenient, but not required. I was pumped for some good National Park photography! My last NP, basically, was in 2006 (ahhh, Yosemite), and I was feeling way overdue.

To be fair, my Dry Tortugas NP trip this past May has to count, but the calm water and deserted fort photos just can’t stand tall against mountains, forests, lakes, and dramatic seashore.

ANP was not virgin ground. Dash and I had done a quick drive-thru here in the late 80’s on the way to a whirlwind tour of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. But the weather here (and in NS) was gloomy: overcast, bursts of rain, and cool summer

temps. We took a few photos here and there, but nothing really looked all that good. All I could think of was, *I bet this looks awesome on a clear summer day.*

Well, this was a *brilliantly* clear summer morning, and much of the best scenery was on the east side of Mount Desert Island (which Acadia dominates) where the sun was now beaming brightly. Thither I would sally forthwith, dude!

Shunning breakfast as being “for pussies,” I took the turn onto Park Loop Road, and began the clockwise, shore-hugging route. I could drone on and on and on about beautiful scenes, rugged rocky coast, surging surf, great hikes along the various cliffside trails, how Mr. Smith should be running this country, and how many languages Enoch Powell can speak, but I’d get pretty redundant. The eastern coast had several turnouts and each was pretty much all of the above ... except for the foolish Monty Python quote. And, after all, this is treatise is about beer, not scenic splendor.

So, I’ll replace a few thousand words with a few of the best of 100+ photos from the morning drive (check out the full slide show in the gallery):



Views near, and of, Schooner Point. Nice views from inside those houses, too, I bet!



The rocks and surf at rocky Sand Beach





Looking south from Thunder Hole



Looking north from Otter Point

The driving and hiking and sitting-and-savoring took me up to about ten o'clock. It was a solid three hours of total scenic overload, and I had to put the camera down to let it stop smoking.

I took C-Note outa ANP, tooled over to downtown Bar Harbor, and grabbed a parking spot along the town common. My plan was to find a bike rental place, and secure myself a 2-wheeler for an afternoon tour of the famed Carriage Roads that web throughout Acadia. I knew there would be a few such bikeries here and there around town so I began to scan the storefronts for ... heelllooooo, what have we here? A sign right across the street said Bar Harbor Brewing Company! Well, I'll be damned. Since I'm here....

So here I was, back on page one, and heading into a brewhaha. It was a really nice little shop. Beer stuff was all around. I felt so in my element.

A young dark-haired woman was behind the glass display case, attending to her day-opening duties. I greeted her with good cheer and cut right to the chase: "Hey, what's the scoop about the tasting sessions? How can I get in on one?"

Lea (she looked like a Lea to me, but not like a Leah) looked at the clock and then back at me, with a smile that said, *Kinda early for that, isn't it, you lush?* My return smile said, *Nope, it's not.*

"Well," she began, "we don't usually do tastings for just one person..."

Before she could say "but", a short bearded man and his short unbearded wife, both a few years older than me, and both quite nicely dressed, entered the shop. "I bet they'd like a taste or two," I suggested to Lea. As I spoke, the man perked up: "We get to taste some?!" he grinned. His wife stifled a delighted little laugh at his zeal. I had me some drinkin' buddies!

Lea led us into the eastern half of the divided room. Light wooden paneling gave the room a bright look, as well as accentuating the framed prints of various labels and awards that BHBC had produced or received.

She took her position behind the taps and began her well-practiced presentation.

As the saying goes, *Free Beer Is Good Beer*, and this was both *free* and *good*. I only wish there was more of it. The tastes were only that;

about 2 ounces – barely more than a good shot – and there was no double-tasting allowed. Sip it or slug it, that was your only taste of that brew.

Lea did relent a little bit as both Charles (the older guy) and Annette (his wife) egged her on for larger samples too. Annette wasn't drinking, but Charles suggested that Lea pour her some tastes as well so that both he and I could split them. I'm sure Lea expected that out of me, but not out of this dapper gentleman.

So we had True Blue Blueberry Wheat Ale, Harbor Lighthouse Ale, Thunder Hole Ale, Cadillac Mountain Stout, and, from a freshly opened bottle, Sea Smoke Smoked Brandywine Ale, a 10% offering in their special Manly Men Beer Club line. I liked the Thunder Hole best, and thought about buying a 6-pack for The Road, but then I remembered that The Road wasn't imbibing on this go-round.

It would have been easy to scratch the afternoon Plan and just start a Bar Harbor Bar Hop, but there would be plenty of evening hours for that, and Acadia's marrow had not been suitably sucked yet.

I went and rented me a bike, trunked it in C-Note, and drove back into ANP. Yes, it was a wussy thing to do, thanks for noticing, especially since it was only about a 3-mile paved ride to the part of the park I'd be exploring.

Acadia NP was established over 100 years ago, when the largest landowners on Mount Desert Island – wealthy and prominent northeasterners like the John D. Rockefeller and his esteemed ilk – got together

and donated all their *summer home* properties to the still-young National Park Service. Rockefeller's own donation was 11,000 acres.



Rockefeller also had cut more than 50 miles of “carriage roads” over the hills, along the lakes, and through the forest, to make it easier to pop in on friends and neighbors who lived miles away on this good-sized island.

The carriage roads are well-maintained, mostly crushed gravel, and open only to bikes, hikers, and an occasional park-run, horse-drawn tour carriage. So it is nice and Nature-Quiet out there. Those SBHS XC boys must have loved these roads for their runs. Most of them are wide, level, rolling tunnels through leafy forest, with lake views and babbling brooks.

They are also hilly as hell, as my Florida-flat fitness level found out the hard way. Between those long grinding climbs and the mid-90’s midday temps, this pleasure cruise turned into a mother of a workout.

The downhills were rockin’, though!

Four hours of this -- scenically-satisfying and soul-soothing though it was -- was enough. At 3:00 or so, I called off the dogs, and bent my mindset back from natural sights to natural ingredients, like hops and barley, etc.

Atlantic Brewery was “just outside town,” according to Jill McCleavage, so after a refreshingly cool shower and quick tidy-up at the WV, C-Note and I zoomed off to sniff out more yum Maine brewskies.

