

An expert's guide to hiking Eastern Massachusetts

Writer Madeline Bilis shares her wisdom from the trails.
MATT JUUL

Eastern Massachusetts isn't exactly known for being a hiker's paradise, but Madeline Bilis wants to dispel that myth.

In her new book, "50 Hikes in Eastern Massachusetts," the former Boston magazine writer and current Travel + Leisure editor showcases a cornucopia of amazing trails in the region. The Dudley native spent months researching and hiking around the Bay State, often hitting up to five trails over the course of a weekend, discovering some of the most beautiful locales in the process.

Ahead of her appearances at the Brookline Booksmith on Thursday night and L.L. Bean in the Seaport on Friday, we caught up with Bilis to chat about the book, her favorite trails and more.



PHOTO BY MADELINE BILIS.

What went into putting this guide together?
I spent all of last year researching and hiking for it, which was a lot of fun and the hikes were amazing, but part of it was also exploring towns in Massachusetts I've never been to before—which was kind of crazy as a Massachusetts native and former Boston magazine employee. It's going to be a fun way and get out there and explore some

really beautiful, natural environments and towns, shops and restaurants that maybe you wouldn't have seen otherwise.

What was your hardest trail?
That's a tough one. I would say that zero hikes in the book could be considered tough for the average hiker. There are some that are a little bit challenging, but Eastern Massachusetts

isn't exactly known for its really difficult hiking. I will say Mount Watatic in Ashburnham, that one was a little bit challenging because that was one of the only mountains in the book. That one is very steep and goes uphill quite a bit. Mount Wachusett is the other mountain in the book. That is relatively difficult but not challenging. One of the most taxing - and my most favorite hike - is

the Great Island Trail in Wellfleet. It's about a 7-mile walk through sand dunes, which is harder than it sounds because you're in direct sunlight most of the time. But you can take a dip in the ocean midway, which helps. I love that one.

What are some scenic trails you'd recommend to hike during the fall?
The last hike I did was the Noanet Woodlands in Dover. That was also one of my favorites, and a really beautiful hike to see foliage. When I was there, the trees were erupting in orange, red and yellow. There's a rock ledge you can stand on and see foliage across greater Boston and the skyline. That's really neat. The Blue Hills are obviously a popular one, there is stunning foliage there, especially from the view at the Wright's Tower, which is at the summit. I also really enjoyed a sort of out of the way one called F. Gilbert Hills state park in

Foxboro. That one, every single tree was golden, beautiful and amazing. The sun was streaming through and it blew my mind.

What was your biggest takeaway after this experience of hiking across Eastern Massachusetts?
Before I started this book, I didn't realize how significant it was to hike for hours at a time with someone, in the woods, without anything else to distract you. Of course, I was taking notes and paying attention to the trails, but I hadn't ever hiked with my mom, for example. I hadn't spent three hours hiking for almost seven miles with my new co-worker. It was refreshing to immerse yourself in nature, but I had to do it so many times that it cemented for me that if you want to clear your head and have a real, meaningful conversation with someone, just take them on a hike.

BILL BLUMENREICH PRESENTS

THE WILBUR

HOT TUNA
AUG 21

LESLIE JONES
AUG 31
LIL DUVAL
SEPT 6
CHRISTINA P
SEPT 7

JEREMY PIVEN
AUG 24

DOUGHBOYS PODCAST LIVE
SEPT 7 & 8
ANJELAH JOHNSON
SEPT 12
JEN KIRKMAN
SEPT 13

MATT BELLASSAI
AUG 24

NOT ANOTHER D+D PODCAST
SEPT 13
PABLO FRANCISCO
SEPT 14
CRIMINAL PODCAST
SEPT 17

BOSTON FOR TICKETS AND INFO VISIT THEWILBUR.COM

REGGIE WATTS
AUG 25

THE WATERBOYS
SEPT 18
ERIC B & RAKIM
SEPT 19
KEVIN JAMES
SEPT 20-21

CHEVALIER

MEDFORD SQUARE FOR TICKETS AND INFO VISIT CHEVALIERTHEATRE.COM

COMEDY BANG! BANG!
AUG 21

KEVIN JAMES
SEPT 21
MJ LIVE
SEPT 22
WYNONNA
SEPT 28

JETHRO TULL
SEPT 11

SCRIBBLE SHOWDOWN
OCT 1
RACHEL BLOOM
OCT 12

ANDREW DICE CLAY
SEPT 13

RICHARD MARX AND RICK SPRINGFIELD
OCT 20
NEIL DEGRASSE TYSON
OCT 21

GIPSY KINGS
SEPT 17

NICK OFFERMAN
OCT 23-24
GEORGE LOPEZ
OCT 25
LITTLE STEVEN & THE DISCIPLES OF SOUL
NOV 2

Lowell SUMMER MUSIC SERIES

CELEBRATING 30 SEASONS

PETER YARROW & NOEL PAUL STOOKEY

FRIDAY, AUGUST 23

BIG HEAD TODD & THE MONSTERS
&
TOAD THE WET SPROCKET

SATURDAY, AUGUST 24

THE MAVERICKS

FRIDAY, AUGUST 30

THE FOOLS AND THE STOMPERS

SATURDAY, AUGUST 31

LowellSummerMusic.org
NO TICKET FEES