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Dream Islands

For sale this summer: 29 private islands in Maine. Heart shape optional.

BY MICHAEL BARRY

Ever dream of escaping it all, of skipping the exit to work and driving until a sign signals paradise is up ahead? It's an intriguing idea, one that can't be true. Paradise is nothing more than a mirage. But what if it could be more? What if those two weeks of summer escape from the daily grind could be more than just a rental on the coast?

As you start searching for a relaxing vacation spot this summer, try taking a detour from the usual beachfront cottages to search for a more exclusive hangout: your own.

For as little as \$39,999 you could be lounging on your own private island, forever separated from the rest of the world by water.

There are as many as 29 island oases for sale this year, just awaiting your arrival.

Buy one, hold it, cherish it, rename it if you like. From that five-figure bargain option to a family compound for \$6.5 million, all of these island getaways call Maine home, sparkling with beaches, greenery, and wildlife galore. With so many to choose from, which will be yours?

HARBOR ISLAND

Bucks Harbor, Brooksville, \$3.85M

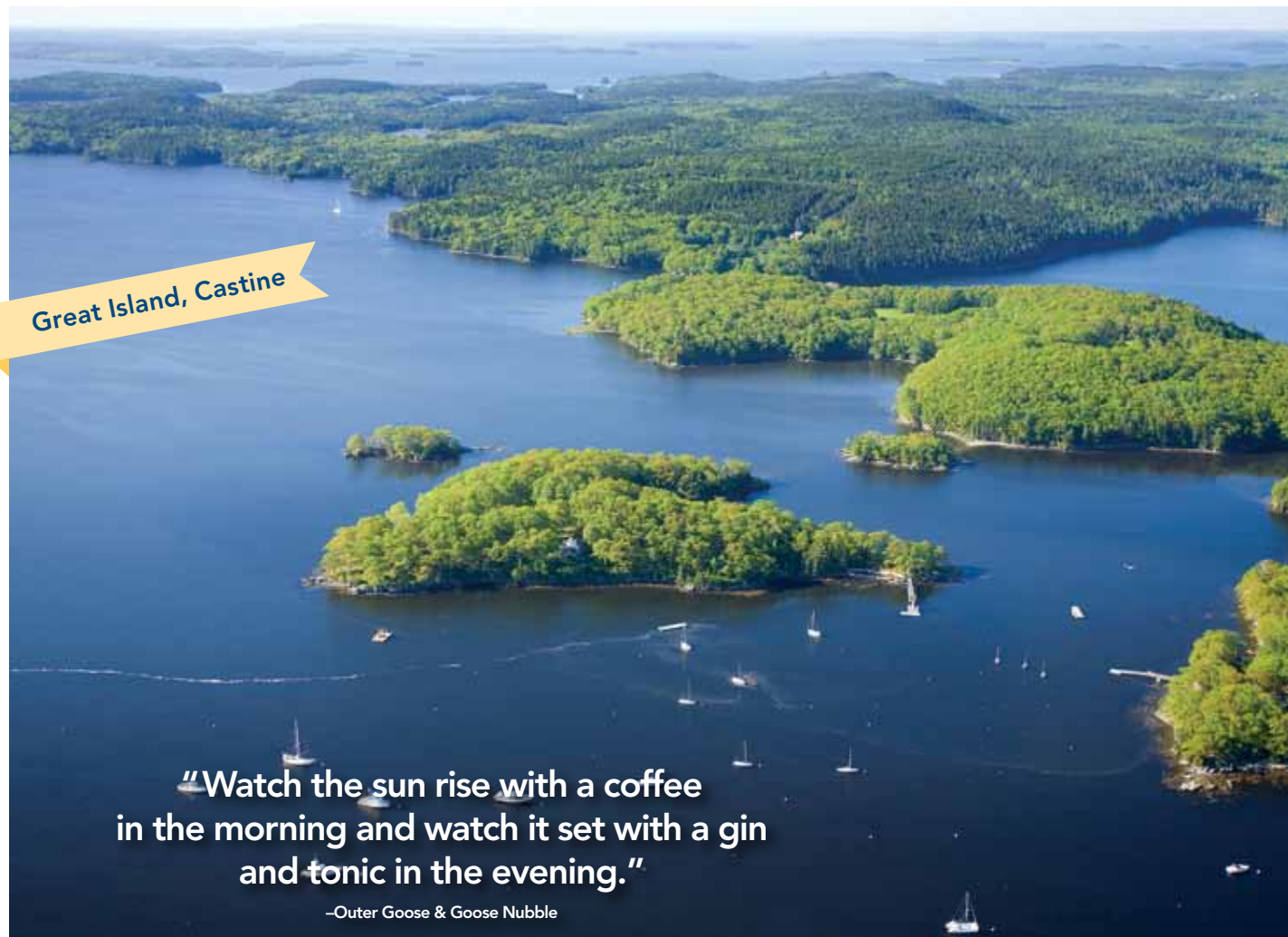
This heart-shaped gem doesn't just sound lovely—nature marked it as such. Heart-

stoppingly, these 25 acres in Brooksville at the entrance to Bucks Harbor just bounced back on the market—after a lightning strike last summer smote the rustic cottage on this island into a black hole.

"It was biblical," says Richard Knox of Maine Coast Heritage Trust. "The house was a large structure, and it attracted the lightning strike during the huge storm. The local fire department responded. When our crews got there and saw what happened, we were shocked. *Really? This can't be true.* We'd been working to conserve the island for a number of years."

If you become the new owner, a new cottage can be rebuilt following certain guidelines in the public interest. "The conservation easement will find a balance with nature





Great Island, Castine

“Watch the sun rise with a coffee in the morning and watch it set with a gin and tonic in the evening.”

—Outer Goose & Goose Nubble

and add further setback from the shore.”

With a deepwater dock and float already in place on the harbor side, you have the option of setting off on a seaward adventure or staying home to lounge in the sun on one of the island’s pebble beaches. Where better to live the New England fairytale?

Taxes \$9,351; 25 acres

BLAKE ISLAND
Messalonskee Lake, Oakland,
\$295,000

This serene island of seven acres would be hidden in Messalonskee Lake if it weren’t for its highly visible owner, former State Treasurer Bruce Poliquin. Poliquin, who recently secured the Republican nomination to Maine’s 2nd Congressional District seat, spent his childhood here. Deeper in the past, “The rumor from old guys around here is that not only was there a boys’ camp on the island back in the early 1900s, but a hotel, too,” says realtor Shawn Marquis. These are long gone, but the island is ready for the

electricity to be turned on, and there are two building sites and septic systems in place. Two thousand, five hundred feet of lake frontage are spectacular in their own right.

Taxes \$4,169; 7 acres

JOHN’S ISLAND
Bristol, \$3.75M

When roughing it isn’t your objective, John’s Island could be the perfect answer to your island inquiries. After all, according to Vladi Private Islands, “Once the home to boxing heavyweight champion Gene Tunney, this stunning residence was also visited by John F. Kennedy. With its classic setting and its coveted location close to the quaint Christmas Cove community, it’s no wonder this property has such pulling power.” With such a pedigree, this sanctuary could let history speak for itself. Then again, why do that when the present can say as much? That present includes a six-bedroom residence, guesthouse, even a bunkhouse for the kids.

Add in the solar power and freshwater well and you’ve got yourself a high-class, personal Camp David. Just tell Mr. President where to dock his yacht.

Taxes \$17,908; 28 acres

OUTER GOOSE & GOOSE NUBBLE
Wohoa Bay, Addison, \$499,000

For seafood or bird watching, Outer Goose and Goose Nubble Islands at the western end of Moosabec Reach in Wohoa Bay may be screeching your name. “From our wharf, we look directly at an eagle’s nest,” says owner Gary Chard. “With a cocktail, we watch baby eagles take their first flight.” The 36-foot Beal lobster boat and mooring that come with the property will be handy as you work your five recreational traps, too. “Watch the sun rise with coffee in the morning and watch it set with a gin and tonic in the evening.” The islands form a cove and gravel beach on the western shore. Dig some clams and take your haul up to your recently renovated two-bedroom cottage for din-



ner, butter and bibs as needed.

Taxes \$2,390; 2.9 acres

GREAT ISLAND
Brooksville, \$985,000

“It’s just a short hop over to Castine Harbor from here,” says Joseph Sortwell at Land-Vest’s Camden office. “Here we have lots of hardwood trees and a lovely main building. Maine Maritime Academy’s campus is right here, so there’s always activity on the water and all kinds of boats.” Great Island offers 2,300 square feet of living space between a main house with fieldstone fireplace and wraparound deck and a second small cabin. A dock house and floating docks are ready for your boat. “The current owner calls Castine and orders a pizza.

He hops in his boat, zips over, and picks it up on the dock.”

Taxes \$6,452; 11.5 acres

CHANCE ISLAND
Machiasport, \$975,000

In the middle of Machias Bay, these 44 acres of Chance tranquility feel like Maine’s answer to Winnie-the-Pooh’s Hundred Acre Wood. Two-thirds of the island is woodland, with the remainder occupied by rolling meadows. That unique terrain is echoed by Steve Shelton of The Island Agency. “Beautiful sand beaches on the north side and then a huge, ledgy hillside mountain on the southern side.” Hike up to unbelievable views. Side-by-side houses along the beach impress with floor-to-ceiling windows that carry the natural beauty inside with you.

Taxes \$4,955; 44 acres

SCABBY ISLAND CHAIN
Machiasport, \$499,000

There aren’t many places left to unplug and completely disconnect from society. The Scabby Island Chain in Starboard Cove is one of them, an ode to a simpler time. Even the name, gruff and uninviting to some, was given to the chain

by sailors long ago. Those men of the sea camped on the larger island, preferring it to the mainland. Today, the three islands in the Scabby Chain offer the same pristine views, completely uninhabited. While all three are connected during low tide, should you choose to develop, it’s the main island, Petrel, that’s ready and waiting for the challenge. Jeff Allen of Downeast Properties says, “A number of years ago the seller had a permit to build a certain size structure. So, yes, you can get a permit. And with its proximity to the point of Maine, the views are incredible.” Developed or not, the Scabby Island Chain offers remoteness, privacy, and exceptional wilderness.

Taxes \$3,890; 18 Acres

THRUMCAP ISLAND
John’s Bay, South Bristol, \$1M

On nearly 15 acres in John’s Bay sits the remote, oddly named Thrumcap, or wool cap, as French sailors in the 1600s decided. “Thrumcap is one of the few islands that’s out in open ocean yet accessible.” says Kathy Leeman of Legacy Properties. The French sailors are long departed, but the island offers many options to put your feet up or get them wet. At different points in the tide you can swim in secluded, sheltered spots,

OBSESSIONS



Thrumcap, John's Bay



and there are ledges that make great snorkeling launches. After daytime excursions, the five-bedroom, 2,500-square-foot house is more than enough for entertaining or unwinding, whether on the deck or in front of the large fireplace. "Whether you're enjoying a climb over the rocks or tucked into the house, you can't help but bask in the beauty of the ocean, the birds, the surrounding islands, and the boats going by," says Leeman. "You are surrounded by the power and immensity of nature. What better place could there be to replenish your energy?" One thing Thrumcap has in spades: options.

Taxes \$ 4,012; 15 acres

SCOTT ISLAND Stonington, \$595,000

"There's a nice granite pier—it's an old granite quarry," says Joseph Sortwell of Land-Vest. "It's definitely cute. An adventurous type would be all set to build a cottage because there's a building site, and the soil's been tested." Gaze off to Vinalhaven and North Haven to the west and Jericho Bay to the east. There's a sheltered anchorage on

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the east side of the island. "Stonington's got its own little niche—there's a busy arts scene. You're only a quarter- or half-mile away."

Taxes \$2,737; 4.5 acres

OAK ISLAND

North Haven, \$1.795M

Simple beauty is what comes up when Oak Island comes into conversation. At first glance, the unassuming one-room cabin and accompanying deck looking out onto Penobscot Bay seem small in comparison to some of the oceanside monstrosities popping up along the coast. Look deeper, though—perhaps through the cabin, with as many windows as a home twice its size—and you'll see it's got 360-degree views. According to Vladi Private Islands, "Stunning scenery and natural beauty lurk around every corner on this incredible island—a rural escape."

Taxes \$5,153; 17 acres

NARROWS ISLAND & BAR ISLAND

Harrington, \$827,000

If Maine had a time machine, it would likely transport people to present day Narrows and Bar islands. These two islands—a package deal that comes with a floating dock on .79 acres at nearby Ripley Point—are a throwback to a simpler time. The main cottage, with its open floor plan and brick fireplace, is instantly inviting, while the two smaller cottages are nestled above one of the island's three protected sand beaches. All of this living comfort is *sans* electricity. Inland, an extensive trail system winds through 14 acres of spruce trees. At low tide, walk across to neighboring Bar Island for three more secluded acres of scenery and unhindered views of the Atlantic. "It's sitting on the end of the point. It's a beautiful spot. What else can I tell you?" says Ron Gallant of Drop Anchor Realty. That might just be enough.

Taxes \$7,614; 17 island acres and .79 mainland acres

MUMFORD & BULL ISLAND

Aroostook River, Presque Isle, \$525,000

There is a moment when you say you need to escape and really mean it. For that time, one place in particular has been waiting for you just outside the city of Presque Isle—far enough away from the hustle and bustle that Canada is only a seven-mile shout from your shores. On 167 acres of wildlife roam all the business partners that can't schedule

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Scott Island, Stonington



your day away in boardrooms. These new colleagues are moose, deer, and bear. They roam free with red and silver foxes. Hawks and eagles fly over their land-loving counterparts, duck and turkey. Even an indigenous butterfly flutters through the collection of trees from spruce and fir to birch and aspen. According to Private Islands Online, “the Appalachian trail passes at the tip of the northern part of the island, which is an area that has groomed snow trails throughout winter... If you like snowmobiling, this is the place.”

Taxes \$1,300; 167 acres

BROWN ISLAND
Nicatous Lake, \$749,000

Only 60 miles to the north and east of Bangor on a stretch of Nicatous Lake lies Brown Island—five acres of wildlife plus a nearly 3,000-square-foot family compound. Says John Colannino of ERA Dawson-Bradford, “It’s serene. It’s private, a get-away-from-it-all, and yet you do have modern conveniences. It’s rustic, but it’s not totally off the grid.” The collection of small cottages and main house offer fully furnished, modern

comfort, complete with a fieldstone fire-place, a wraparound deck, and many toys. These include an 18-foot speedboat, an antique canoe, and a paddleboat. Dangle your feet off one of two docks or take a swim on the mile-long private beach. For lazy days and rainy afternoons, a 5,000-book library might take you on a different adventure. On Nicatous Lake there are plenty of those.

Taxes \$900; 5 acres

WHITE’S ISLAND
Big Lake, Washington County,
\$2.195M

With nearly 350,000 acres of forest in conservation, the land around White’s is destined to stay as pristine as it has ever been. The island’s 143 acres come with over 12,000 feet of water frontage that includes both sand and gravel beaches. Delve deeper into the island and you’ll find miles of hiking to tire you out before a beachside nap. On the shores of Big Lake a year-round cottage is home. On the island, according to Vladi Private Islands, “is an ‘ice shack’ that will accommodate frequent getaways year-round... There is also a diesel-powered

landing craft for transporting cargo and building materials to the island.” Everything is in place to relax the days away while you plan the compound of your dreams.

Taxes \$1,509; 143 acres

LOWER BIRCH ISLANDS

Addison, 1.595M

One of the most beautiful buy-one-get-one-free deals on the East Coast is ready for you this summer. The Lower Birch Islands offer 28 acres of beauty between them, with another three on the mainland. “The island was featured on HGTV’s *Island Hunters*,” Glenn Jackson of Glenn Jackson Realty says. “When they put the house on it they set it properly so it looks south upon the open ocean. There are quite a few islands for sale on the coast, but this has about the nicest setting of any of them.” About 20 minutes from the town dock in Milbridge, Lower Birch offers seclusion in the way of spruce, fir, pine, and white birch trees that extend down to rocky shores and deep water. There’s even a small beach on the larger island. A sand dune connects larger and smaller Birch when the tide dips down, and a permit is in place to build a four-bedroom house on those 4.4 smaller island acres. Back on the larger Birch there is an 1,872-square-foot, two-story structure, built 30 years ago. Both the deck, and—hopefully—you, are positioned facing south to enjoy sunshine from morning till dusk. Just tell the office you’re working from home.

Taxes \$7,410; 23.6 and 4.4 island acres, 3 mainland acres

POND COVE ISLAND

Great Cove, \$1.275M

About 1,400 feet west of the boat ramp in Roque Bluff State Park, the rocky frontage and beaches of Pond Cove Island are waiting. As far as beaches go, you have your choice of sand or gravel. A little farther inland sits a 960-square-foot cottage with southwesterly views. The two-story home offers island living complete with the sounds of the surf. The bedrooms are upstairs, and an open-concept, woodstove-heated living area is below. Two smaller outbuildings offer additional lodging or storage depending on whom or what you bring with you. Either way, you’ll have other friends on the island, according to Glenn Jackson of Glenn Jackson Realty. “The deer come over and have their babies and then



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OBSESSIONS

take them back to the mainland. It's safer for them." And be sure to say hi to your other roommate, a majestic osprey who isn't known to share his daily catch.

Taxes \$1,802; 58 acres



RAM ISLAND

Mouth of Machias Bay, \$425,000

Ram Island is 16 acres of wildlife, on island and off. An hour and a half from Bar Harbor, Ram's big selling point is seclusion. According to SuiteHome Properties & Investment Holdings, "Even though you can see other islands and the mainland, you are alone. There are no other dwellings visible in any direction." Whether you spend the day on any of the long stone beaches or dream of building a cottage to escape to, you are alone on Ram. Even the lighthouse on nearby Libby Island is unmanned as it brushes a light across Ram at night. Aside from a tent platform, everything around you is all-natural. Whole Foods has nothing on Ram Island.

Taxes \$3,300; 16 acres

PINE ISLAND

Meddybemps Lake, Alexander Township, \$250,000

In the midst of vast Meddybemps Lake in northeastern Maine sits Pine Island. Like the name says, Pine's 12 acres are stocked with trees: pine, spruce, birch, even a few blueberry bushes are in the mix. Lucky for you, for all the greenery the view isn't affected. Neither are the amenities, according to Lesley Tranchel of Legacy Properties. "It's got everything, all the conveniences of living on the mainland. Reverse osmosis. You name it, it has it. It's the quintessential Maine cottage that's been completely updated."

Add in deep blue water and the absence of ambient night light and you've found a stargazing experience for the ages. Only 15 miles from the Canadian border, Pine enjoys its remote existence. Fast food is at least 20 miles away, but fresh fish are right out-

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OBSESSIONS



Birch Island, Stonington



side the door to your two-bedroom cabin. You can feast as the sun sets on your westerly facing porch.

Taxes \$1,871; 12 acres

FOSTER ISLAND

**Narraguagus Bay, Harrington,
\$1.65M**

It isn't exactly Rockefeller Center, or maybe it's just a different type. Over 300 acres of nearly untouched wilderness were purchased by the Rockefeller family in the '60s. You could join the family, so to speak, in Narraguagus Bay. Foster Island is zoned for up to five houses, though you'll currently be spending your time indoors in the comfort of a small homestead. Once outside, though, the options are endless. Fields, trails, and forests of pine and birch cover the landscape. Closer to shore you'll have your pick

of shorefront locales from rocky and pebble to a sandy beach. From Private Islands Online, "Just off the eastern side of the Island as the tide recedes, one can see the seals rest upon exposed ledge and warm themselves in the sun as osprey and eagle fly overhead." Take off from the southeast pier, pass those lounging seals, and make your way back to the mainland in Harrington to change your last name.

Taxes \$7,518; 300 acres

GREER ISLAND

**Penobscot Bay, Vinalhaven,
\$550,000**

Some islands offer the best of both worlds. Greer happens to be one of those. High tide creates the private island you've been dreaming about. But let the tide recede and you have the option to stroll across a sand-

bar back to Vinalhaven's sand beach. "It's wonderful for picnics and things like that, and there's a quaint fisherman's cottage," says Lesley Tranchel of Legacy Properties. "It's a great place for fishing and swimming. Great views." While the fisherman's cottage is ready to be renovated into whatever studio space you desire, the island is zoned for a vacation home and has deep-water anchorage. In the meantime, take in the view of Penobscot Bay to the east while you walk past balsam trees to pick wild strawberries. Wilderness just doesn't taste this sweet anywhere else.

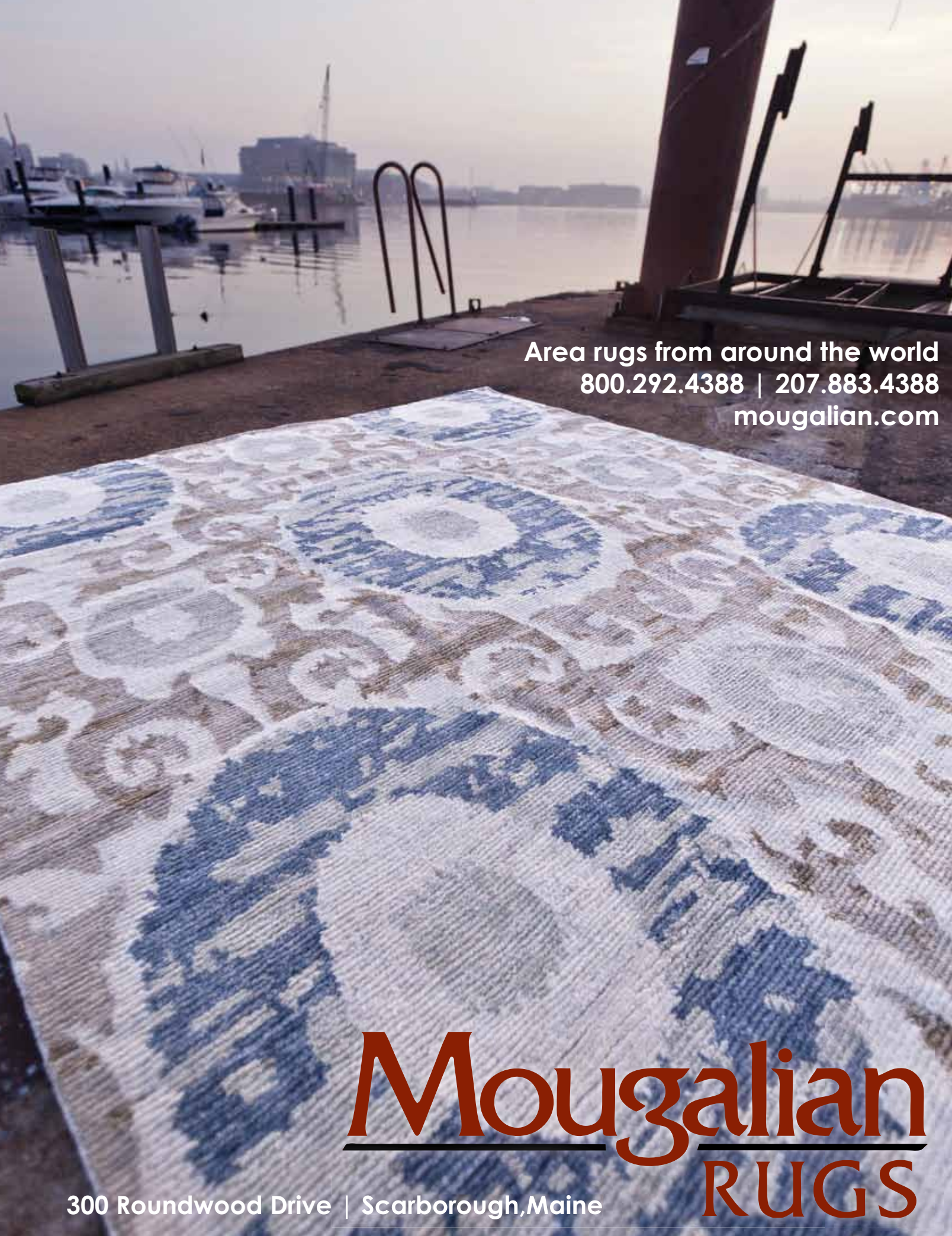
Taxes \$1,900; 5 acres

GREEN ISLAND

Blue Hill Bay, Brooklin, \$850,000

If you're looking for the pure Maine experience,

(Continued on page 206)



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OBSESSIONS



Greer Island, Vinalhaven

Dream Islands (continued from page 112)

rience, Green Island in Brooklin should find its way to the top of your list. You'll be lounging next to Blue Hill Lighthouse, a historic landmark. Says Steve Shelton of The Island Agency, "Tip of Flye Point. It doesn't get any dreamier than that. Watch boats come within yards of your house." Add in a sand beach and solar-powered, two-story, cape-style light-keeper's house in your very own vacationland.

Taxes \$2,400; 1 acre

RAM ISLAND

Saco Bay, \$450,000

If a writing escape is what you're looking for, Ram Island offers more than just an escape, it has writing history in its bones, or cottage to be exact. Ian Fleming famously escaped to Jamaica to write James Bond. But, if you're looking for a waterfront escape closer to home, follow Walter B. Gibson's footsteps a mile offshore into Saco Bay. It was on Ram that the prolific author penned *Crime Over Casco*. Gibson's work was inspired by his fondness for Maine. Find your own voice on Ram. In the meantime, pick up one of Gibson's books to read by the stone fireplace in your three-room summer cottage. You'll find him under the pen name

Maxwell Grant. Who is he today? Only The Shadow knows. Start thinking of your own pen name while you pack.

Taxes \$3,956; 1 acre

MIDDLE HARDWOOD ISLAND

Jonesport, \$1.45M

Off the charming fishing village of Jonesport, Middle Hardwood Island offers the finishing touches of home in the midst of natural beauty. Three cottages stand comfortably in the center of the island, each connected by a raised cedar walkway, making even an evening dash a scenic adventure. Views continue from the modern cottages through the blackberry bushes to the pink granite bluffs on the shore. Along with atmosphere, well water, solar power with generator backup, and a deep-water wharf add another layer of homey comfort to Middle Hardwood.

Taxes \$6,410; 8 acres

BRAMBLE ISLAND

Mooselookmeguntic Lake, Rangeley, \$1.399M

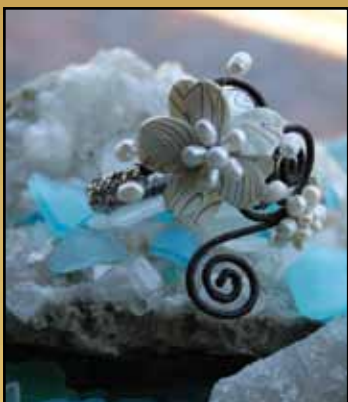
On the eastern shore of Mooselookmeguntic Lake, Bramble Island includes both a two-bedroom seasonal cottage and a larger mainland lake house. The combination pro-

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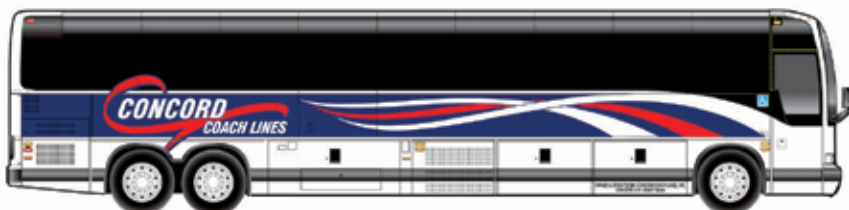
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Bramble Island, Mooslookmeguntic

vides enough lodging that at least one guest will stumble over the lake's unique name. The setup provides options: Rough it on the island with a propane water heater and covered porch, or head to shore for a night in the modern, back-home feel of the year-round abode on three acres.

Taxes \$10,473; 3 acres

CHASE ISLAND

Wadleigh Pond, Lyman, \$449,000

If close but far away is your mantra, Chasse Island fits the bill. Less than a half hour from Biddeford and Saco, it's hard to believe anything could be more secluded. Private roads surrounding the pristine nature on Chasse keep it psychologically far from civilization. That isn't such a bad thing with the quality of fishing and sailing on Wadleigh. If a place to settle down is still on your to-do list, Chasse has that covered; the island is permitted and can accommodate a three-season home. The next item on that list should be finding three seasons off to enjoy it.

Taxes \$950; 2 acres

NARROWS ISLAND

Gardner & Second Lakes, Washington County, \$298,000

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OBSESSIONS



land makes six acres feel like 60. Plush forests create the illusion of isolation despite the fact that Narrows is only a few minutes from the mainland town of Marion. Unlike the evergreen forests in much of Maine, the deciduous trees on Narrows make it ideal for leaf-peeping season. Add in the potential for a cottage and you're ready for many years of secluded relaxation just around the corner from civilization.

Taxes \$556; 6 acres

NORTON ISLAND

Pleasant Bay, South Addison, \$3.25M

Fly overhead and you'll see thickets of spruce, fir, and birch trees open up to sprawling meadows. The shoreline alone is breathtaking, including two sandy beaches, a boathouse, and dock. Venture into the island and you'll find two houses, both offering seclusion from not just the mainland but from each other. Electricity runs to each house from a hidden power shed, solar panels, and backup generator. In addition to on-island amenities, according to Private Islands Online, "The island is sold with a 5-acre shore lot that has 300-foot frontage and a mooring at Eastern Harbor—about 15 minutes from the island." Back on the island, the main house has all the amenities you'd expect at

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OBSESSIONS

home and some you wouldn't, like a giant Rumford fireplace. Imagine for a moment waking up in the master bedroom and shuffling to the attached bath to freshen up before heading up to the second floor for a 360-degree panorama.

Taxes \$13,001; 60 acres

CHANDLER ISLAND

Wohoa Bay, \$39,999

To some, owning your own island is for the elite, part of the lifestyle that comes with a private Gulfstream. At least one island takes the exclusivity out of the equation. Chandler Island, in Wohoa Bay, 30 miles east of Acadia National Park, is quaint. It's supposed to be. The compound, if you call it that, is a gazebo at the highest part of the island. At just over an acre—or just under when the tide is high—Chandler offers everything you need for a private camping excursion of your own doing, complete with scenic views and a clear sightline to open waters all for a relatively blue-light-special price.

Taxes \$15; 1 acre

JOE'S ISLAND

Friendship, \$549,000

These tranquil 2.4 acres come complete with a cozy three-bedroom cottage that lets in light and views of Muscongus Bay. A hop, skip, and jump from neighboring Cranberry Island or short boat ride to Friendship Harbor keep entertainment close by. But



you could just as easily spend the day picking blueberries, blackberries, or raspberries. They all grow wild in your private natural garden.

Taxes \$2,195; 2.4 acres ■

Michael Barry is a writer who lives in Boston. He received a BA from St. Anselm College and an MFA in creative writing from the Stonecoast Program at the University of Southern Maine.

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