



Writing Retreat on the Maine Coast
18 Sol's Cliff Road, Bar Harbor, ME 04609

RETREAT INFORMATION

Welcome to the Gutsy Great Novelist Retreat! We look forward to welcoming you to your retreat house here in Maine. The following information and guidelines should help answer any questions you might have so you can settle nicely into the retreat—enjoy this gift of time to concentrate on what's most important: you and your novel!

Our retreat home is a little over a mile from downtown Bar Harbor; the distance is walkable if you're a walker. There are also trails to explore right out the back door, including heading straight into Acadia National Park via the Schooner Head Path and Compass Harbor. The area is beautiful, and Acadia National Park is right next door, so if you think you'll want the freedom to explore the Maine coast more extensively during the retreat, you might consider driving or renting a car so you can head out when inspiration strikes.

Retreat Host

Joan Dempsey, your host
207-310-0365 (phone or text)
joan@joandempsey.com

Retreat Dates

Saturday, June 7 – Saturday, June 14, 2025

Arrival and Departure

Arrival is on Saturday, June 7: You should plan to arrive at the house around 5:30 PM. We'll let you get settled into your room, explore your house and grounds, and then meet together in the main room for a welcome reception and opening circle at 6:30. Please note that *early arrival is not an option because the cleaning staff will be here and we need to respect their work.*

Departure is on Saturday, June 14: We'll gather to say farewell at 8:00 AM and send you on your way by *no later than 9:30 AM*. Later departure isn't an option because the cleaning crew needs to get in to prepare for the next set of guests and they have a tight turnaround.

Please plan your travel accordingly.

How to Get to the Retreat

By Car

GPS works to get you to the retreat house at 18 Sol's Cliff Road, Bar Harbor, but most online maps take you right through Bar Harbor, which you'll might want to avoid, since

it gets busy in the summer. We'll provide you with more detailed written directions and a map with signposts to make sure you get here with ease.

By Air

Option 1: [Bangor International Airport](#) (BGR) is the closest airport (53 miles) with the least expensive and largest variety of flight options on American, Allegiant, Delta and United. There are [several ground transportation options](#) available to you, including the [Bar Harbor-Bangor Shuttle](#).

Bangor International Airport: <https://flybangor.com/>

Ground Transportation: <https://flybangor.com/airport-information/ground-transportation/>

Bar Harbor-Bangor Shuttle: <https://www.barharborbangorshuttle.com/>

Option 2: [Hancock County-Bar Harbor Airport](#) (BHB) is the closest airport geographically (14 miles), and has limited flight options on Cape Air and JetBlue and usually costs more than flying into Bangor. [Taxi service is available by reservation](#) at the airport.

Hancock County-Bar Harbor Airport: <http://www.bhbairport.com/>

Taxi Service at Airport: <http://www.bhbairport.com/transportation.html>

Option 3: [Portland International Jetport](#) (PWM) is 179 miles from the retreat house, and is served by American, Cape Air, Delta, Elite, Frontier, JetBlue, Southwest, Sun Country and United. You'd need to rent a car if you fly into Portland, and the drive is just over 3 hours.

Portland International Jetport: <https://portlandjetport.org/>

Please note that if you are flying into any of the airports, you will also need to arrange for your own ground transportation to and from the retreat house. We will put you in touch with the other retreat-goers in advance of the retreat so that you can explore the possibility of arranging to carpool or share a taxi.

Orientation

Upon your arrival, Joan and Janet, our retreat assistant (who's also a participant), will greet you and show you to your room so you can get settled in. You'll get an introductory tour of the house, and we'll meet in the main room at 6:30 PM where you'll be treated to hearty nibbles and drinks provided by our personal chef, Chef Paulette Bilsky-Phillips. We'll have our opening circle and go over the schedule, house information and group guidelines, and in general get you set up to be fully comfortable for a peaceful and productive retreat. Time to relax and get to know each other!

The House

The retreat house is *your* home during the retreat—make yourselves fully comfortable!

Kitchen: The kitchen is yours to use as you wish, so make yourself utterly at home; you have free rein, *except* when Chef Paulette and her staff are in there preparing meals. The chef and her staff are super friendly, and it's tempting to hang out and chat with them in the kitchen, but it's better to let them do their work so they can serve our meals on time.

All meals—with the exception of Wednesday, when you have a free day to do as you wish—will be prepared for you by Chef Paulette. She will do her very best to accommodate dietary restrictions and steer clear of allergens. Leftovers, snacks, wine, coffee, tea, and water will always be on hand, and you're welcome to head into Bar Harbor if you wish to stock up on your own favorite foods and drinks. There are two refrigerators, so there's plenty of room if you need something refrigerated.

Main Living Areas: This house is large, with an ample living room, dining room, library, nooks here and there, and a wide terrace overlooking the water. We'll gather in either the living room or dining room for our group gatherings, and eat in the dining room or on the terrace, weather-depending. Please treat the house as if it's your own! You'll find plenty of table space on which to spread out as well as comfy couches on which to sit and look out at the water. While there is a TV in the living room, we want to maintain a peaceful environment, so you're better off streaming something on your laptop in your room (using earbuds, please). We've found that people don't really want to watch TV anyway!

Library: The house library, and various bookshelves throughout the house, contain a lot of old books that once belonged to the original 1914 owner, including novels that he himself wrote. Arthur Train is his name, and you'll see his books on the shelves. Enjoy!

Bedrooms: All linens are provided in your private room and additional bedding is available should you desire it. All have windows that open. Be aware that this is a *very* old house (built in 1914), so it is both drafty and "cottage-like" (musty), so come prepared to keep warm, and if you're prone to dust allergies, bring your allergy meds just in case. If you need something in order to be more comfortable, simply ask Joan.

Bathrooms: You'll be sharing a unisex bath adjacent to your room with one other retreat-goer. Towels will be provided for you in your bedroom. Please bring your own toiletries, including soap.

WiFi and Phone: High speed wireless internet is available throughout the house—you'll receive the password upon arrival. Cell phone coverage is excellent at the house, and Joan will always have her cell phone should you need help making a call.

The grounds: Outside, there's a lovely yard that leads to the edge of Sol's Cliff and overlooks Frenchman Bay and the Porcupine Islands. The estate is on 12 acres, and you can walk right out the door and explore the area trails, including walking right into Acadia National Park via the Schooner Head Path and Compass Harbor. Acadia National Park is literally in the backyard, so you might be interested to learn more about Acadia before you come so you can explore: <https://www.nps.gov/acad/index.htm>.

Writing Space: There are a variety of places where you can settle down to write in this big old place, including in your private room. Please note that the rooms with twin beds are really cozy (aka *tiny!*), and do not have desks; some writers have loved that monk-like environment and have used (provided) lap desks, while others have found private corners in the common areas or out on the terrace to do their work. There's plenty of room, and we have a house rule to not disturb anyone who is clearly engaged in writing.

Smoking: No smoking is allowed anywhere in the house or on the grounds. If you'd like to smoke, please make sure that you're not smoking near someone who might be

bothered by it. As much as possible, please try to keep all smoke odors out of the common areas of house. This might involve entering your private room to change your clothes or bathe before coming into the common areas of the house.

Bar Harbor: Downtown Bar Harbor is roughly a mile from the house and is a major tourist destination, so there are plenty of shops and restaurants as well as a regular supermarket and a natural foods store. <https://www.visitbarharbor.com/>

What to Bring

Bring whatever clothing and personal items you need to be comfortable for 7 nights. All bedding, linens, towels and food are provided. Please bring your own toiletries, including soap, and don't forget to bring any prescription medications if you take them. You'll be able to use a refrigerator if you need to put meds in the fridge.

We'll be super casual, so make sure you bring whatever comfy clothes you like to hang around in. There's nothing formal about Maine, so even when you go out on the town you can be as casual as you wish. Bring the clothing that makes you feel your comfortable best!

Early June in Maine can still be quite chilly, and our house is on a high cliff directly over the water, so bring layers and *plenty of warm clothing for both inside and outside the house*. The retreat house is very old (1914), so expect draftiness and mustiness (that old cottage smell). You might want to bring a warm hat and gloves. In 2023, the weather was rainy and chilly, and we all bundled up inside the house in both warm clothes and blankets; you can't go wrong with too many warm clothes!

You'll want to bring your laptop (if you use one) and whatever materials you think you'll need for working on your novel. There is no printer at the house. If you plan to stream anything on your laptop, tablet or iPhone, please bring earbuds or earphones with you. We'd like to maintain a quiet environment.

The private rooms have windows and doors that can be opened and closed for your comfort.

What to Work on During the Retreat

This retreat is for you, so you get to decide what you most want to work on while you're here! Some of what you work on will depend on what arises at the retreat itself.

You'll probably want to work on your novel, of course, doing whatever makes the most sense to you when you're here. You're welcome to do online research if you need more fact-based information for your novel; there's WiFi throughout the house.

You might want to do some introspective reflection and journaling about whatever mindset issues might still be standing between you and a finished novel. You and Joan can talk through whatever's going on for you, and she might suggest certain books to consult or questions to ponder that could help you noodle through what you need to do.

Group Gatherings

Our group gatherings include the following:

- Shared meals and daily check-ins;

- Craft seminars with Joan and our author-in-residence about the craft of writing and the writing life—Joan will determine our focus based on who attends;
- The Gutsy Great Readings—a secure environment in which you can read a brief excerpt from your novel-in-progress and hear readings by your retreat companions;
- Informal evenings around the fire pit out on the terrace.

While you're not required to read your work during the Gutsy Great Readings, I'll be encouraging you to do so; how often to you get a group of other smart writers in one place, all there to support you in your quest to finish your novel? This is a safe environment for sharing! That said, you're welcome to opt-out, but I'd ask that you bring your best self to the group so that others can benefit from your presence.

There may be other, informally-organized group activities during down time; these will arise (or not) naturally from within the group, and you'll have the option of joining in or opting-out. No peer pressure here!

Cancellation Policy

When you paid your deposit for the Gutsy Great Novelist Retreat, you ticked a checkoff box to indicate your agreement to abide by the following cancellation policy. Here it is again for your reference:

Retreat participants understand that by registering (either by payment-in-full or a payment plan) for the Gutsy Great Novelist Writers Retreat, they are entering a contract with Joan Dempsey and their registration indicates agreement with the following terms and conditions:

Because Joan Dempsey is committing significant time and resources to this retreat, cancellation would result in lost income and lost business opportunities in an amount difficult to precisely calculate. Therefore, the following cancellation limitations will apply:

- If you request cancellation of this contract 120 days or more before the event, you shall receive a full refund of whatever payment you've made;
- If you request cancellation 60-119 days before the event, (50%) of the TOTAL contract will be owed by you to Joan Dempsey, notwithstanding how much you've already paid.
- If you request cancellation up to 59 days in advance of the event, the full (100%) tuition and room fee will be owed by you to Joan Dempsey, notwithstanding how much the Client has already paid.

Joan will make every possible effort to find another participant to take your place, and if a new participant is found, she will reimburse you 100% of what you have paid, minus a \$100 cancellation fee.

If Joan needs to cancel the event for any reason, you will receive a full refund (100%) of all tuition and booking fees already paid for this event. Joan is not responsible for any out-of-pocket expenses you may have spent in connection with this event, including but not limited to travel costs, and you will not be entitled to any reimbursement from Joan for those out-of-pocket expenses.

If you have other questions that are not answered here, please reach out to Joan at joan@joandempsey.com.