

Park Loop Road Parking Counts 2017
Acadia National Park Resource Report 2017-13
Charles Jacobi December 2017

Here is a quick summary of our observations of parking on the Park Loop Road and a few other trailheads in July and August 2017.

Methods

We drove the Park Loop Road four times a day at 1000, 1130, 1300, and 1430 hours on July, 2, 3, 20, and 30, and August 1, 9, 15, and 17 (eight days) and made counts at 40 parking sites along the route. The route began on the Paradise Hill Road at the Cadillac/Route 233 entrance to the park, exited at the Otter Cliff Road, and returned via Route 3 and Cromwell Harbor Road. Depending on the site, we counted cars parked in paved parking, gravel pulloffs (or parking areas), on the road shoulders, or in the right lane of the one way Park Loop Road. Sometimes the distinctions between these were a little fuzzy.

Results

We summarize this dataset along the route as driven by posing a few questions and answering them in short paragraphs with data shown in tables only for the right lane parking section of the road. In a few cases we summarize data for several sites together. Text was cut and pasted from text boxes in the Excel spreadsheet.

Collectively, how many cars were parked near the Kebo Brook Trail/bus stop and the beginning of the One Way Road? These are visitors who are hiking the North Ridge Trail, biking the Park Loop Road, picking blueberries, and navigating.

The highest hourly average was ~ 10-12 cars at these five sites, which are designated gravel pulloffs. The peak number of cars counted was 13 to 16 cars about half the time.

What was parking like at the North Ridge Cadillac Trail and Gorge Path?

The North Ridge Cadillac Pulloff capacity is about 15 cars. On average we found it full or close to full most of the time. We frequently observed up to three cars parked in the right lane beyond the pulloff and down the hill, and occasionally observed as many as 10-12 cars parked there. This location is not specifically posted as No Parking but as one starts down the one way road there are No Parking in Right Lane signs.

The Gorge Path parking capacity is 5-8 cars depending on how much of the shoulder you want to designate as OK. On six of eight observation days, parked cars at the Gorge Path were largely contained to the designated pull in parking spaces and a few on the road shoulder. On one day they overflowed on the shoulder with up to 18 cars. On a second day, we found up to 22 cars parked halfway between the North Ridge Cadillac Pulloff and the Gorge Path. We recorded these cars as parked at the Gorge Path but they could have been parked for either or both. This was an unusual place for cars to park.

The next five parking areas--Strath Eden, Before Kebo St., Jesup Trail, Hemlock Path (Road), and Great Meadow--rarely had more than 1-3 cars parked at them.

What was parking like at Sieur de Monts?

The Sieur de Monts parking lot capacity is 41 cars. It was full most of the time except on our 10am circuit, when it was very close to full. Each day we observed cars parked on the shoulder. We counted as many as 27 cars parked on the road shoulder, but more typically it was 10-15 cars. Thus on a busy day there may be 65-70 cars parked for Sieur de Monts. When VHB did their counts from 8/5 - 8/11, 2014 they found the peak use of this lot overflowing to the shoulders every day.

What was parking like at the Precipice Trail before and after opening, and at Schooner Head Overlook and Great Head Parking on Schooner Head Road?

Beaver Dam Pond: The most cars we observed parked here at one time was seven.

North Ridge Champlain: The capacity of this pulloff is about 6-7 cars. We never observed more than seven cars parked here, or more than 1-2 on the shoulder or in the right lane.

Egg Rock Overlook : The parking capacity is about 15 cars. On average it was about half full. At its peak, we observed it completely full a few times.

Orange and Black Path: The most cars we observed parked in the right lane was five. This is quite a few for this obscure trailhead.

Precipice/South Wall Climbing: The capacity of the lot is 20 cars. Before the Precipice opened, we observed seven cars parked in the right lane once, and two cars one other time; three times there were no cars parked in the right lane. Before the Precipice opened, on average we observed 4-6 cars parked in the right lane for the South Wall Climbing Area; the peak number of cars observed there was 11. After the Precipice Trail opened it is not possible to distinguish the cars for those visitors climbing at the South Wall from Precipice Trail hikers. After the Precipice Trail opened, we observed a peak of 63 cars parked in the right lane.

Overlook Road (between Park Loop Road at entrance station and Schooner Head Road intersection) : There is paved parking for about three cars and gravel pulloff parking for about three cars. On average there were 1-3 cars parked here, but on July 2 we counted 15 cars when the Ocean Drive closed for a short period of time.

Schooner Head Overlook: The parking lot capacity is 48 cars. On average this lot was less than half full. On 7/2 and 7/3 we observed peaks of 50 and 30 cars respectively. These were exceptionally busy days throughout the park with a closure of the Ocean Drive on 7/2.

Great Head Trail: The capacity of this lot is 17 cars. On every day we counted, the lot was full (or nearly full) and there were cars parked on the shoulder of the road. The peak number of cars observed on the shoulder was eight.

How much are the Old Soaker and Keyhole lots used?

Old Soaker Parking: The capacity of this lot is 35 cars. Except for the 10am circuit, on average this lot was full, and several cars parked on the shoulders of the entrance and exit. We counted a peak of 53 cars in here once, 44 of them on pavement, if not in a striped space.

Keyhole: The capacity of this lot is 14 cars. On average this lot was half full or more. On five of eight days cars were parked on the shoulder in the lot or entrance/exit to the lot, with peak shoulder parking of 14 cars observed on July 2, 2017.

What's happening in the right lane of the Ocean Drive?

By 1130 hours and until 1430 hours, the average number of cars parked in the right lane on the eight observation days was about 280.

On busy days, cars fill the right lane from the entrance station nearly to the Otter Cliff Road. We counted well over 400 cars along this stretch of road on 7/2 and 7/3. The peak of 458 cars on 7/2 at 1430 hours is representative of the maximum number of cars that can be physically parked on this section of road. We exceeded 300 cars on only one other day, 8/9. Before Thunder Hole and after Gorham Mtn parked cars often thin out a little; more cars park before and after Sand Beach and after Thunder Hole. For example, there can be more than 150 cars parked before the entrance to Sand Beach, and this means cars are parked back to the entrance station.

In the last table below, I added the total number of cars parked in the right lane, the cars parked in the Old Soaker and Keyhole Parking Lots, and 85% of the parking capacities of the Sand Beach, Thunder Hole, Gorham Mountain, and Ledges Parking Lots (we did not enter these lots to count). The resulting number is a point of reference for the number of cars parked in the Ocean Drive corridor. Remember that on the busiest days, like July 2 when the Ocean Drive was closed for a short period of time, there were cars backed up in the left lane from Sand Beach to the entrance station (100-120 cars??), other cars in the left lane of the rest of Ocean Drive, and cars circling/hovering in the Sand Beach Parking Lot and other parking lots (maybe another 50 - 100 cars total).

Ocean Drive Right Lane Tables

The first table describes the average number of cars parked in the right lane for the eight days by section and time with the mean total at the end.

The second table shows the maximum number of cars parked in the right lane over the eight days by section and time. Note that these maximums may have occurred on different days.

The third table shows the total right lane counts by date and time.

In the fourth table below, I added the total number of cars parked in the right lane, the cars parked in the Old Soaker and Keyhole Parking Lots, and 85% of the parking capacities of the Sand Beach, Thunder Hole, Gorham Mountain, and Ledges Parking Lots (we did not enter these lots to count). The resulting number is a point of reference for the number of cars **parked** in the Ocean Drive corridor. Remember that on the busiest days, like July 2 when the Ocean Drive was closed for a short period of time, there were cars backed up in the left lane from Sand Beach to the entrance station (100-120 cars??), other cars in the left lane of the rest of Ocean Drive, and cars circling/hovering in the Sand Beach Parking Lot and other parking lots (maybe another 50 - 100 cars total??).

RIGHT LANE		MEANS	BY TIME	AND SECTION					
	ES to SB	SB to Old Skr	Old Skr-Key	Key-TH	TH-Gor	Gor-OtterClRd	Total		
1000	56	64	19	8	6	7	159		
1130	88	86	40	25	28	18	284		
1300	96	86	36	28	34	16	295		
1430	87	81	33	24	30	12	266		
RIGHT LANE		MAXIMUMS	OVER ALL DAYS	BY TIME		AND SECTION			
	ES to SB	SB to Old Skr	Old Skr-Key	Key-TH	TH-Gor	Gor-OtterClRd			
1000	103	92	44	31	15	17			
1130	135	99	67	36	79	36			
1300	157	112	60	41	67	38			
1430	152	112	65	35	75	22			
RIGHT	LANE	TOTALS	BY DATE						
Time	7/2/2017	7/3/2017	7/20/2017	7/30/2017	8/1/2017	8/9/2017	8/15/2017	8/17/2017	Average
1000	138	250	201	27	145	244	127	136	159
1130	361	425	238	180	255	354	207	253	284
1300	421	427	223	217	253	348	228	240	295
1430	458	373	168	223	220	282	195	210	266
OCEAN	DRIVE*	TOTALS**	BY DATE	PLUS	85%	MISSING	PARKING	CAPACITIES	
Time	7/2/2017	7/3/2017	7/20/2017	7/30/2017	8/1/2017	8/9/2017	8/15/2017	8/17/2017	
1000	Not full	Not full	Not full	Not full	Not full	Not full	Not full	Not full	
1130	607	673	465	415	503	609	441	501	
1300	675	680	444	445	494	607	462	480	
1430	717	618	377	449	454	531	412	431	
* Includes Old Soaker and Keyhole Lots			Plus Other Parking Areas		As Below				
222 Sand Beach, Thunder Hole, Gorham Mtn and Ledges									
189 Take 85% full for 1130, 1300, and 1430									
**	Plus add ~ ?? cars on road or circling in parking lots at one time.								
Think 7/2 when traffic was backed up from Entrance Station to Sand Beach (another 100-120 cars) and crawling along rest of Ocean Drive (another 100??)									

Thunder Hole Right Lane Bus and HCP Parking: There were never more than one coach bus or two concession buses parked.

Here are observations for a few other sites.

Otter Cliff Road: This count was of cars parked in gravel pulloffs or on the shoulder between the Park Loop Road and the entrance to the Fabbri Picnic Area. Combined for these categories we never counted more than two cars.

Fabbri Picnic Area: We did not drive into the picnic area, but as we drove by we took a count of cars parked on the shoulder (not pavement). The average was about one and the maximum observed was eight.

Canon Brook Trail: We counted all cars parked here in the paved pullout and on the shoulder. The average number of cars observed here was 5-6, and the maximums were 13-14.

Ladder Trail: There is no designated parking space or gravel pulloff. We counted all cars parked here on the shoulder. The average number of cars parked here was 7-9. The maximum was 24 on July 2. This is very high for this site.

Tarn: The parking lot capacity is 10 plus one bus. We counted cars in the lot and on the paved shoulder. The average number of cars parked was about 13. The peak number of cars observed was 24, with 14 on the shoulder and the rear of the designated parking area. Cars were parked on the shoulder every day.

Compass Harbor: The capacity of this lot is 5-6 cars. On average there were about five cars parked here. The maximum observed was eight.

Great Meadow Loop/Cemetery: We never saw more than three cars parked here at the gravel pulloff on Cromwell Harbor Road.