

# L.L. Bean's Maine campus is a magnet for outdoor enthusiasts

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE    MAY 4, 2012



L.L. Bean Co. started as a catalogue company 100 years ago, and then opened a retail store a few years later.

**Photograph by:** L.L. Bean

L.L. Bean, the retail and catalogue giant whose headquarters is in Freeport, Maine, is marking its 100th anniversary with a summer of festivities, 24-hour shopping and courses in outdoor pastimes so that would-be outdoorsmen can try before they buy their first kayak or fishing rod.

L.L. Bean sells sports clothes and accessories, furniture and decor items, but mainly equipment for a world of activities: fishing, kayaking, biking, hiking, hunting and camping. The company takes shopping so seriously that its flagship retail space – called a campus – is open all day and all night, 365 days a year, and embraces four stores: the L.L. Bean Flagship Store, the Hunting and Fishing Store, the Bike, Boat and Ski Store and the newest, the LL. Bean Home Store.

Its mail-order business was founded in 1912 with the so-called duck boot, designed with a rubber sole by Leon L. Bean. The first store opened a few years later.

But this company is much more than retail frenzy. It is an all-out bacchanalia of outdoor activity. The stores surround L.L. Bean's Discovery Park, a venue hopping with non-stop activities, shows and demonstrations in fly-casting, geo-caching or setting up a campsite. The annual Summer in the Park will present music and kids' festivities every Saturday in July and August. To mark the 100th

anniversary of its first catalogue, L.L. Bean will throw a bash from July 4 to 7 with fun races, Freeport's Fourth of July Parade, concerts and fireworks.

If the great outdoors is unfamiliar territory, L.L. Bean invites you to its Outdoor Discovery Schools for short tryout trips and courses in kayaking, fishing, cycling, clay shooting and winter sports.

On a smaller scale, the Discovery Courses are perfect venues for people who want to experiment before buying their first kayak, canoe or fly rod. The lessons are held on the outskirts of Freeport and the sign-up is at the L.L. Bean store. And don't get caught without a paddle.

*L.L. Bean, Freeport, Maine. 877-755-2326, [lbean.com](http://lbean.com). Summer events free; Discovery Courses, \$20, pre-register at 888-552-3261 or [outdoor\\_discovery@lbean.com](mailto:outdoor_discovery@lbean.com).*

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