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Ultimate Yacht Charters

Get ready for the ride of your life along the Maine coast.

BY KAREN HOFREITER

TERRACES FOR STARGAZING. Gleaming oak woodwork and ornate bronze fixtures. Feasts of fresh oysters and flutes of golden champagne. Private chefs. 360-degree ocean views. It may sound like a deluxe suite in a luxury hotel, but this decadence is served up on the open seas. Sure, the sleeping quarters may be “charming and cozy” (i.e., not for the claustrophobic), but in every other sense, a yachting vacation can be an unparalleled experience, particularly if the yacht is cruising along the stunning Maine coast.

To enjoy the pleasures of yachting is to participate in a seven-centuries-old recreation. When 14th-century Dutch aristocrats began using former pirate—and smuggler—hunting boats for pleasure cruises, the yacht (derived from the Dutch *jachtschip* meaning “ship that goes fast”) in its modern sense was born. Since *Cleopatra's Barge*, one of the first pleasure yachts in the U.S., sailed out of Salem, Massachusetts in 1817, there's been a steady evolution of creature comforts, aided by staggering computer-engineered enhancements those ear-

ly Dutch maritime recreators could hardly have imagined, from temperature-sensing marble showers to iPod docking stations.

Those early leisure *zeilers* might also have boggled at a coastline over four times as long as that of the current-day Netherlands: including islands, Maine has over 5,000 miles of coastline to the Netherlands' 1,200. While the Dutch coast is certainly beautiful, it pales in comparison to Maine's undulating coastal landscape, with its rugged cliffs crowned by evergreens, time-weary drooping

Ladona keeps her passengers entertained with beauty and cuisine.



bluffs, scraggly dunes, placid beaches, and roughly 4,500 islands ranging from the hauntingly desolate to quaintly picturesque. The true luxury of yachting in Maine is the astounding scenery.

WORLD-CLASS SAILING

“The coast of Maine, particularly Penobscot Bay, yields some of the best cruising grounds found anywhere,” says Peter Johanson, president and owner of Rockland-based **Johanson Boatworks**, whose charter clients travel from as far away as Europe and Hong Kong for the experience. “The rocky granite coast is magnificent to view,

and the many unpopulated islands provide hours of exploration and gunkholing.”

Jack Bullock, owner of **Evening Star Yacht Charters**, agrees. “I’ve sailed the entire East Coast, Bahamas, Virgin Islands, and Caribbean. However, Maine is unique, considered by many to be one of the best cruising areas in the world. There’s almost always a 15-20 knot breeze, and the water is relatively flat. And with the endless miles of coastline, one could anchor in a different place every day for decades and never anchor in the same spot twice.”

That’s not to say Maine can’t present daunting challenges for even the most experienced sailor. “It takes strong navigation skills,” Bullock says. “The most challenging routes in Maine are those in areas where there are many uninhabited islands—it can be easy to get confused and lose one’s exact location,” says Johanson. “For example, along the Deer Island Thoro-fare—which is extremely raw and beautiful—it can be tricky maneuvering in and around the islands, especially in times of fog.” However, according to Johanson, the crack-a-beer-and-chill captains who want to take it easy can choose to “hug the coastline where the fog tends to be less, pick up a mooring or dockage each night, and enjoy shoreside amenities by sailing from one harbor town to the next, like Rockland, Camden, Belfast, Castine, and Bucks Harbor. Each of these towns has its own ambience, but what they all share equally are



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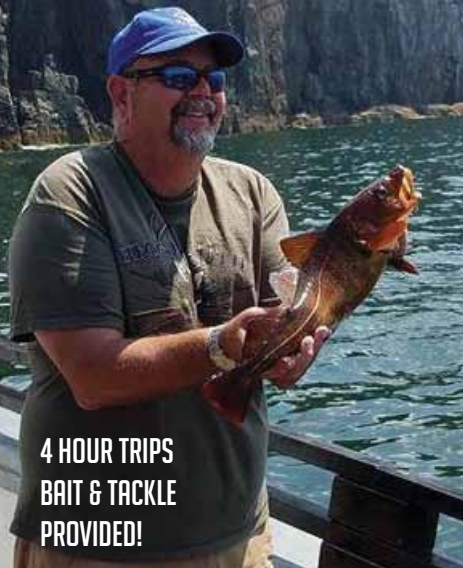
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WATERFRONT



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If you can't stretch your vacation budget to a luxury yacht charter, you can still reap the benefits of Maine's maritime culture on a shoestring. Head to the waterfront on June 22-24 to experience **Portland Schooner Fest and Regatta** in glorious live action. This year, seven large traditional schooners will take to Casco Bay to parade and race over the course of the weekend. The fleet will include some of the most famous schooners in the country, including Gloucester's Schooner *Adventure*, the 131-foot *Harvey Gamage* of Portland, Bailey Island Schooner *Alert*, and Maine Maritime Museum's newly restored *Mary E.* Schooners *Bagheera* and *Wendameen* (above), a familiar sight on Portland's skyline, will also join the fray. Throw yourself into the seafaring spirit and book tickets for a variety of sails aboard the two golden-age vessels through **Portland Schooner Co.**

dockside lobster shacks, five-star restaurants, gourmet delis, and shops selling fine wines and craft beers."

FLOATING HAVENS

How you go about your exploration depends on your budget and tastes. Whether your splurge amount is \$1,500 or \$20,000 a week, whether you prefer homey cabin-style interiors or Old World opulence, there's a range of options for charter yachts.

Johanson Boatworks (Rockland, charters from \$2,800/week, 596-7060) offers a varied cadre of sailing yachts for bareboat (without a crew) charter. The *Fascination* (44-foot sailboat, accommodates six, \$5,200/week) is a classic beauty, featuring a generous main seating area with L-shaped white couches, a galley kitchen, warm wood paneling, and traditional maritime-style décor with clocks, oil lanterns, and bookshelves. Guests have the convenience of having everything on board they may need



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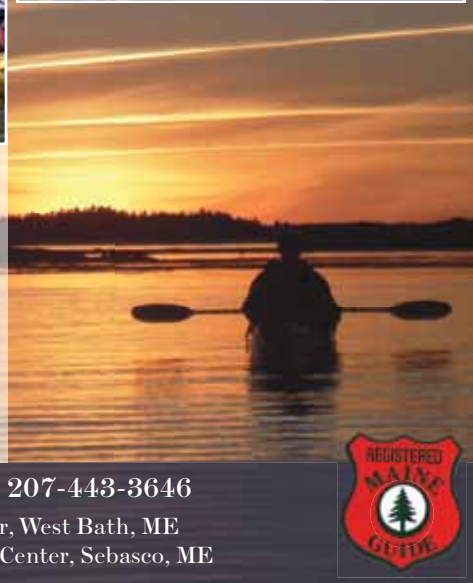
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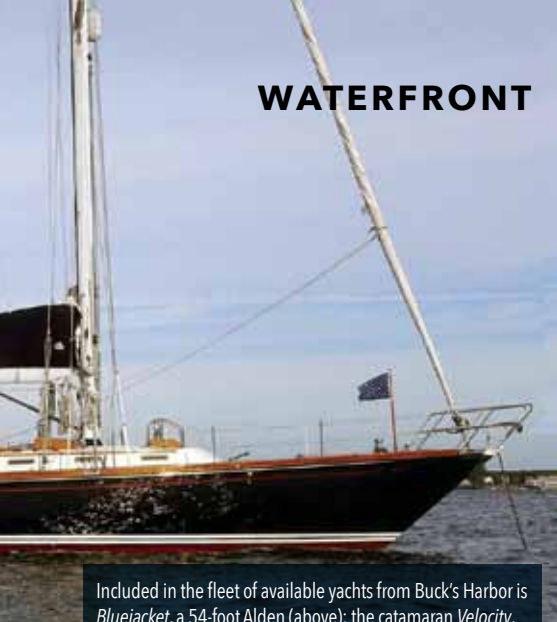
for the trip. Miriah Swan, charter coordinator, touts this as a big plus. “The beauty of chartering is you have the entire boat equipped with a full galley so your lodging and meals are packed into one package.”

Buck's Harbor (South Brooksville, charters from \$1100/week, 326-8839) offers bareboat charters in all types and sizes. If it's celebrity glam you're looking for, then the *Velocity* (44-foot catamaran, accommodates 8-12, \$7,500/week) is your modus transportius. Sleek and modern, she'd look more at home in flashy Miami than sturdy New England. The breezy interior is decorated in neutrals and soft blues and bathed in sunlight from the windows that wrap around the seating area in the main salon, which means dinner is served with a panoramic view. Besides four staterooms with private showers, the open-concept space includes a galley kitchen and cockpit (with mini-bar, of course). The trampoline provides space for sunbathing, and the flybridge is the perfect spot for getting that giddy, cloud-nine feeling. If your style runs a little less ostentatious, the *Maine Idea* (50-foot trawler, accommodates six, \$7,000/week) is your gal. This merry trawler is typecast for a Maine



BUCK'S HARBOR MARINA

WATERFRONT



Included in the fleet of available yachts from Buck's Harbor is *Bluejacket*, a 54-foot Alden (above); the catamaran *Velocity*, below; and *Maine Idea*, a 50-foot trawler, bottom left.

adventure. Large windows and glass doors enclose the airy salon, which features gorgeous oak and fir woodwork with casual furniture upholstered in a cheerful green.

Just like Jack Bullock of **Evening Star Yacht Charters** (Belfast Harbor, 479-5403), you'll fall in love with the *Evening Star* (45-foot yawl, accommodates four, \$4,000/week June, \$4,500 July-September). Built in Holland in 1968, "she's elegant, beautiful, and classic, and exhibits a high standard and quality construction not found in most production boats today," Bullock



says. "She's also extremely well outfitted for sailing in Maine." The interior is varnished teak throughout and includes two staterooms with private bathrooms and a *gemütlich* salon with a Dutch soapstone and bronze fireplace. Sail her into peaceful, wide-open Tenants Harbor or wild and narrow Perry Creek on Vinalhaven, two of Bullock's favorite places.

If lifting a glass of rosé to your lips is the most strenuous activity you want on your vacation, look no further than an all-inclusive cruise on the historic *Schooner Ladona* or *Stephen Taber* (Rockland, 207-594-4723, multi-day specialty and private charters available). Both are owned by Noah and Jane Barnes, who spare no effort or expense to give their guests an unforgettable experience. Meals made fresh on-

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Henry David Thoreau

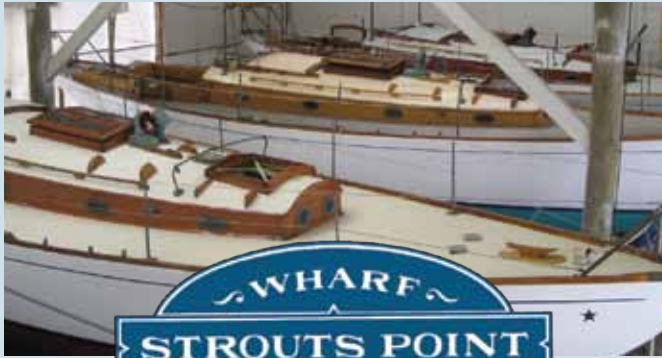


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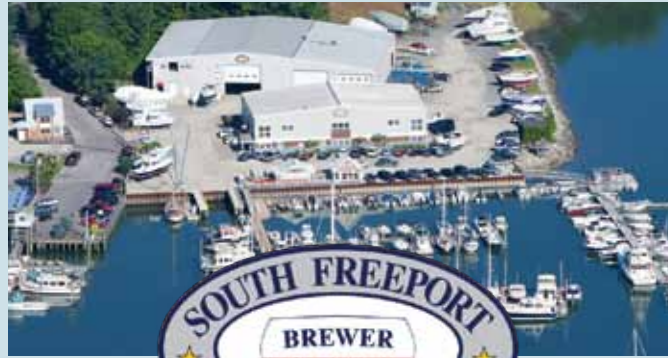
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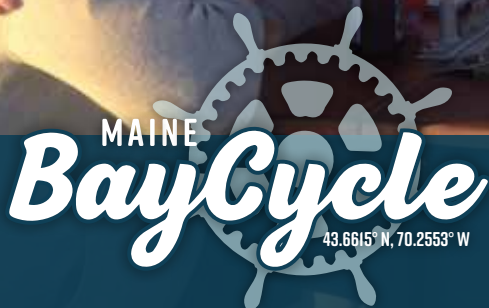
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WATERFRONT

board feature local Maine ingredients, and the multi-course dinners include expert wine pairings. Accommodations and amenities are first class. The **Schooner Ladona** (82-foot schooner, accommodates 17), built in 1922 at the Hodgdon boatyard, showcases an elegant nautical-style décor with ecru wood-plank ceilings and walls, blue-hued textiles, rich wood accents, and lavish bronze fixtures throughout. Each of the nine staterooms has its own private vanity with sink; the showers feature mosaic marble tile and rainshower heads. The spacious galley kitchen flows into the main living area with its custom L-shaped sofa seating and polished wood table. Guests can dine al fresco at the farmhouse-style table on the deck or lounge on one of the pillow-piled daybeds. The **Stephen Taber** (110-foot windjammer, accommodates 22), built in 1871 and a National Historic Landmark, has an American Colonial-meets-Adirondack cabin feel, with wood paneling throughout and Scottish touches like oil lamps and tartan blankets. There's even a tiny library tucked away in a nook. The

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WATERFRONT

sprawling deck features white Colonial-style railings, a dining area, and enough room for a small musical band. Both boats offer activities such as kayaking, skiff rowing, small boat sailing, paddle boarding, navigation instruction, and occasionally evenings of acoustic music, compliments of the crew. Wine, food, and music cruises are offered throughout the summer, and fall color cruises are offered in early autumn. Event cruises include the Great Schooner Race (July 2-7), Rockland Windjammer Parade (July 12-16), Eggemoggin Reach Regatta (August 1-6), and Camden Windjammer Festival (August 28-Sept 1).

Whatever your choice, yachting in Maine is a singular experience. As Johanson perfectly sums it up: “There’s nothing quite like disconnecting from the hectic hustle and bustle of today’s technological world and enjoying the peace and serenity found sailing in Maine. It is an amazing way to decompress, refresh, and recharge.” Can we say “Yachts, a joy!”? ■

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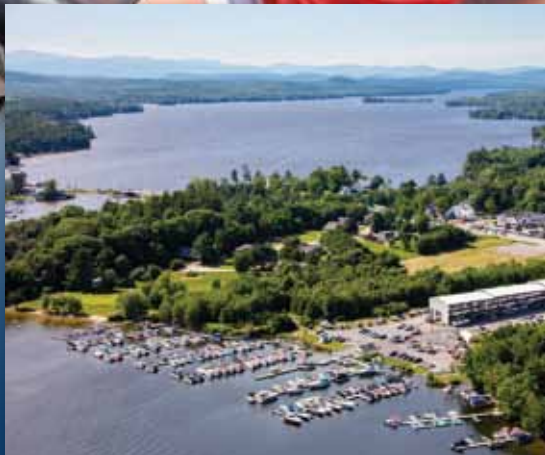
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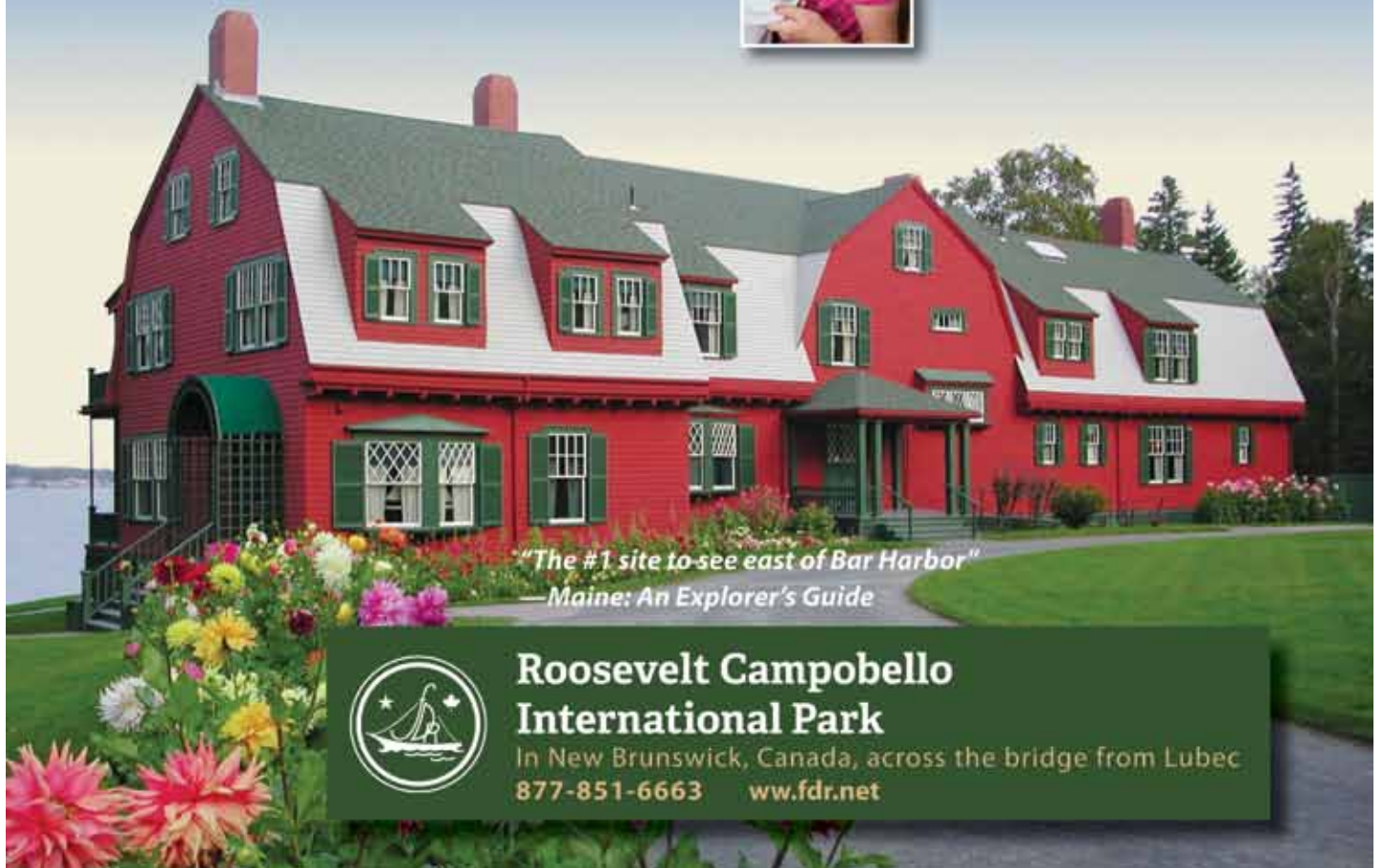
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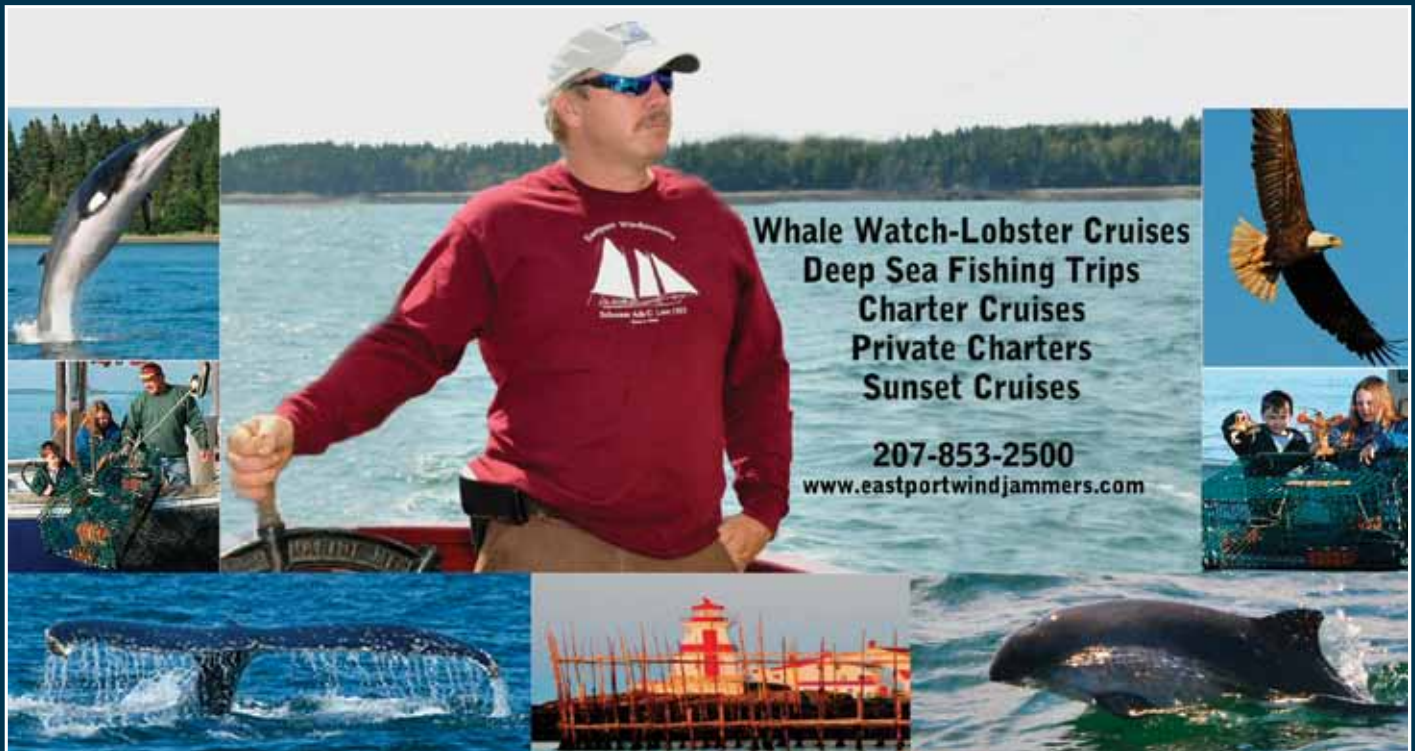


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