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It doesn't take much to turn a Casco Bay Line ferry ride into a party.

Find a fresh perspective on summer-offshore.

BY MICHELLE TWOMEY

Drink, dine, or snack—it's all different on a boat. All your senses are awake, the ride and the view engage your imagination, and the air is outrageously fresh. Even a ride on a Casco Bay Lines ferry is a party if you have the right attitude. There are also organized harbor, lighthouse, educational, and party cruise boats running regular schedules all along the coast. Remember, it's all about the voyage—you don't need a destination.



Unwind on an evening wine cruise aboard the 74' topsail sloop *Frances* in Casco Bay.

Casablanca Music Cruises

18 Custom House Wharf, Portland, 831-1324, casablancamaine.com

"The *Casablanca* is usually a privately chartered boat," says Beth Poitras. "We do have

a variety of concert cruises available to the public. Most Sundays 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. with a 1:30 p.m. boarding time on the 85-foot vessel, which has a capacity for 149 passengers. We have some concert cruises on Thursday nights as well as some Saturday days. "Con-

cert cruise tickets are usually between \$15 and \$20, and get you on the boat with live music. We have two fully stocked bars on board accepting cash or credit.

"Casco Bay is beautiful always. We're very lucky. I especially love sunsets, seals, and rainbows, the various islands and lighthouses. Portland Head Light is always a great attraction. Folks love seeing the seals."



Cheers for the band: North of Nashville wins approval from revelers on a Casablanca Music Cruise.

Maine Sailing Adventures

The *Frances* Project
Maine State Pier, Portland, 749-9169,
mainesailingadventures.net

"*Frances* differs from other cruises," says owner/captain Megan Jones. "I grew up sailing, and I built *Frances* with an old friend. Now I like to share it with others. We're a small business. I captain *Frances* myself and keep a small crew, so we all know the boat very well.

"We offer day sails and sunset sails that leave our dock in Portland for a two-hour sail around Casco Bay. We host an Acoustic Sunset Series, with local musicians performing on evening sails once a week. Portland is home to many talented people; it's wonderful to have some of

them join us on the water.

/// **T**he wine cruises are fantastic. These are two hours long every Saturday and Sunday evening through the summer. Erica Archer, our sommelier, is informative and fun, and the events are themed and paired with seasonal fare. The oyster wine sail is a must-do. Some couples join us three or four times a season for different wine sails, like the wines of Napa Valley or the Piedmont region of Italy, or sparkling wines.

“We have four-hour Yoga Sails, with one hour of yoga at anchor incorporated into an afternoon sailing on the bay.

“Each cruise is unique, so it depends where your interests lie. The Acoustic Sunset Series is truly special. Tickets start at \$38 per person. We have beer and wine at a cash bar on board. It’s a bring-your-own-picnic kind of an affair. For private charter, we can arrange catering through the West End’s Aurora Provisions.

“The historic forts are great to see, and some date back to 1812. They’re fantastic, beautiful in all sorts of different light. The photographer in me has a wonderful time out here. Fort Gorges is hands-down my favorite sight in Portland.”

Casco Bay Lines

Maine State, 56 Commercial St., Portland,
774-7871 cascobaylines.com

These are Portland’s beautiful workhorse island ferries, a great and economical way to see the sights—the islands, the summer cottages, lighthouses, and forts of Casco Bay.

The Mailboat Run to Little Diamond,

The oyster wine sail is a must-do. Some couples join us three or four times a season for different wine sails, like the wines of Napa Valley or the Piedmont region of Italy, or sparkling wines.

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WATERFRONT

Sunrise and Sunset runs depart daily at 5:05 a.m., and 5:45 p.m., respectively; there's also Moonlight run through Sept. 7 at 9:30 p.m.

The Bailey Island Cruise is a captain-narrated history ride past lighthouses and forts; the six-hour, \$26 day cruise includes a two-hour stop at Cook's Lobster House for lunch.

Live music cruises are scheduled July 10 and 17 and August 28, 7:30 to 10 p.m.; these are over-21, with cash bar.

Portsmouth Harbor Cruises

64 Ceres St., Portsmouth, 603-436-8084, portsmouthharbor.com

"One of the best sights out on the water is Whaleback Lighthouse," says Mindy Puckett. "Also, there is a story the captain tells about the jail on the Naval Base, but you'll have to come on a trip to find out what it is!"

Monday, we offer harbor cruises at 10 a.m., noon, and 3 p.m.; a 5:45 p.m. evening cruise, and a 7 p.m. sunset cruise. "Tuesday through Friday, we have 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. harbor cruises, a noon Isles of Shoals cruise, the 5:45 evening cruise, and the 7 p.m. sunset cruise. Weekends, there are harbor cruises at 10 a.m. and noon; 1:30, 3, and 4:30 p.m.; the 5:45 p.m. evening cruise; and the 7 p.m. sunset cruise. Friday and Saturday nights also have an 8:30 p.m. Harbor Lights tour. All cruises have a cash bar available, along with snacks, chowder, and Moe's sandwiches.

"During the summer, we do tend to sell out the majority of our trips; we suggest reservations in advance. The 3 p.m. harbor tour is the first to sell out."

Downeast Windjammer

19 Cottage St., Bar Harbor, 546-2927, 288-4585, downeastwindjammer.com

"The Windjammer cruises are at 2 p.m. Sunset cruises sail at 6:30 p.m. until August 16, when we begin backing up departure by 30 minutes," says Colleen Foss. "The sunset cruises are the most popular. The Lobster Sloop cruises are at 1, 3, and 6:15 p.m.

"The Windjammer cruises all come with an invitation to help hoist the sails and hear a narration about wildlife and geographic points of interest. Our 2 p.m. trip features an Acadia National Park ranger. Sunset trips include a musician aboard. Lobster Sloop

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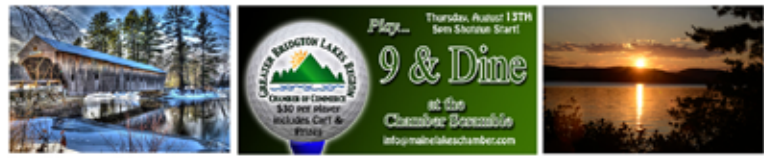


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Photo by Jack McCabe



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WATERFRONT



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"The view of Acadia National Park from the bay and the eagles' nests are always great sights to point out."

Camden Harbor Cruises

Camden Public Landing, 236-6672 camden-harborcruises.com

These one-hour cruises run from late morning to the 6:45 p.m. cruise through September 15 and include a lobstering, lighthouse, and harbor tour; wildlife and eco-tour cruises; and a three-hour Sunday lighthouse tour. Adult tickets are \$28.

Hardy Boat Cruises

132 State Rte. 32, New Harbor, 677-2026, hardyboat.com

The Puffin Watch cruise to Eastern Egg Rock lasts an hour and a half and shimmers with three lighthouses, Monhegan Island, and a chance to look at over 140 pairs of nesting puffins on the Rock. Departure is at 5:30 p.m.; adult tickets are \$28. Other cruises include a fall (September 9 to October 12) evening cruise full of island magic, hot cider, and stunning autumn light.

Balmy Days Cruises

42 Commercial St., Boothbay Harbor, 633-2284, balmydayscruises.com

Cruise to Monhegan Island on the *Balmy Days II*, sail the Friendship Sloop *Bay Lady*, take a short tour of Boothbay Harbor, or cruise to Burnt Island Lighthouse and tour it, inside and out. ■

COURTESY PHOTO

MANNY'S

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