



Courtesy photo

CAPTAIN MIKE ROGERS at the helm of the Jenny Norman, a two-masted bugeye schooner. The Jenny Norman offers a variety of tours out of Rockland, Maine.

LOBSTERS, LIGHTHOUSES AND LUXURY



DIANE BAIR & PAM WRIGHT
Outdoor Adventures

We hustled up the coastline on a recent Friday afternoon, heading Downeast to Rockland, Maine, looking forward to a weekend of outdoor fun, fine dining (think: just trapped lobsters off the boats!) and historic accommodations. As usual, we were running late and barely had time to drop off our bags at the Berry Manor Inn (a Victorian beauty), before scurrying to the docks for an early evening harbor cruise. We were scheduled to board the Jenny Norman schooner at 5; we were late, arriving breathless, stressed out, and all apologies. "It's no problem," Devri Byrom said, greeting us at

the top of the dock, with a warm smile and outstretched hand. "We were expecting you. C'mon aboard."

And, thus set the tone for our weekend: gracious and relaxed Downeast hospitality amidst picture-perfect scenery. We motored quietly out of the harbor, before setting the sails for the twilight tour. Captains Mike and Julie Rogers are owners and operators of the 49-foot traditional Bugeye schooner. "We found her in Maryland—and she was quite a mess," Mike said. "We had to replace many of the frames, planks, the entire deck, cabin...it took longer than we thought." But, ahhh...she's a beauty today—traditionally

rigged and made entirely of wood. Bugeyes are indigenous to Chesapeake Bay and used for oyster dredging and hauling farm cargo. There are only a few left. The Rogers offer a variety of trips aboard the two-masted schooner, including two-hour harbor tours and a variety of educational sails, when Byrom, also the Education Director at Ocean Classroom Foundation in Rockland, shares her knowledge and passion for the sea. It was a quiet, picturesque evening; boats and buoys bobbed in the harbor, as we headed out toward Owl's Head Light. A harbor seal, as if on cue, popped its head out of the water as

BAIR/WRIGHT, PAGE C10

we passed. To the north, we could see the Rockland Breakwater Light, to the west the rolling hills of the mainland. As the fog rolled

in, we put on a layer of fleece and listened to the easy chatter of our fellow sailors and the not-so-distant boom of the Owl's Head Light horn.

By the end of the two-hour cruise, we were totally depressed and reminded once again of why we love the Maine coastline.

COASTLINE VIEWS FROM ATOP BALD MOUNTAIN

The next morning, we walked to the Maine Lighthouse Museum, just off the waterfront in Rockland. The museum boasts the largest collection of lighthouse lenses, and one of the largest collections of lighthouse artifacts and Coast Guard memorabilia, in the United States. Even if you're not particularly interested in lighthouses, the museum is an interesting stop. Rockland is a great base for a Maine lighthouse tour: 17 lighthouses are within 40 miles of Rockland. We visited Owl's Head (be sure to stop at the Owl's Head General Store for great snacks, sandwiches, soups and burgers!) and the Rockland Breakwater, before we decided it was time to work off some of the fabulous food we'd been eating (Tip: check out the In Good Company wine bistro, the incomparable, not-to-be-missed Café Miranda, and Waterman's Lobster Pound.)

It may not be the White Mountains, but the Rockland area offers some nice hiking opportunities, including the Georges Highland Path. The path includes three major sections: Ragged Mountain, with about 10 miles of trails extending from Bald Mountain in Camden to Meadow Mountain in Warren; Oyster River Bog, a seven-mile path following

ridges and streams through forests in Rockport, Rockland, Warren and Thomaston; and Thomaston Forest, about 3.5 miles of trails and boardwalks through mixed lowland woods in Thomaston. We opted for a short but steep hike up to the summit of Bald Mountain. A quick zig-zag through the woods ended with a moderate climb and then steep scramble to the open summit of Bald Mountain. From the top, we could see across rolling hills and valleys, dotted with pretty lakes, and beyond to Penobscot Bay. A short loop trail took us along the open ridgeline, with more sweeping views, before joining the main trail back to the parking lot. In all, the trail is just over two miles roundtrip; you can pick up a map of the Georges River Land Trust trails, including the Highland Path, from the visitor center, or the land trust offices at 328 Main Street.

We had just enough time left in the day to visit the Farnsworth Art Museum and Wyeth Center, both in downtown Rockland. Among the most renowned art museums in New England, the Farnsworth offers a nationally recognized collection of American art. Its Wyeth Center fea-

tures works of Andrew, N.C. and Jamie Wyeth.

Rockland, we're told, is known as the lobster capitol of the world, not only for its wildly popular lobster festival, held each August, but also for its working harbor, filled with lobster boats and buoys, and roadside, in-town and on-the-water lobster shacks. That evening, we strolled the waterfront park before heading to Café Miranda for dinner. What a place! The tiny, 10-table eatery has one of the most eclectic and largest menus we've ever seen—and not a lobster dish on it! No matter, the food was fabulous. We slept well that night, under a soft pile of crisp linens at the historic LimeRock Inn. Full bellies, fresh sea breezes, salty air, and the music of foghorns and buoys reminded us again of why we love the Maine coast.

HEADING DOWNEAST? HERE ARE THE DETAILS!

Rockland, Maine, offers plenty of outdoor adventure, with hiking, kayaking, sailing, fishing, and more. It's also home to the wonderful Farnsworth Art Museum and Wyeth Center and an up and coming downtown scene, with a handful of restaurants, boutiques and art galleries. But, don't worry—it still maintains its soul! This is still a working harbor and lived-in seaside town.

For accommodations, check out the historic inns of Rockland (877-762-4667; www.historicinnsofrockland.com). The Berry Manor Inn (800-774-5692; www.berrymanorinn.com) features 12 elegant rooms in a turn-of-the-century Victorian, all with private baths and working fireplaces. It's one of only 16 four-diamond properties in Maine. The LimeRock Inn (800-546-3762; www.lime-rockinn.com) is a Queen Anne turreted Victorian mansion, with eight guest rooms. The inn features period details and furnishings, offering what innkeepers, PJ and Frank, like to call, "comfortable elegance." The in-town Captain Lindsey House (800-523-2145; www.lindseyhouse.com) is more boutique hotel than inn, combining elegant furnishings, antiques, and art with modern amenities. A collection of art and artifacts from owners Captains Ken and Ellen Barnes' world travels are scattered throughout the inn.

For information on Jenny Norman sailing excursions, call 207-542-3695, or visit www.sailmainebugeye.com.

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