

# NOAH AND JANE'S Excellent Adventure

## Wine tasting aboard the *Stephen Taber*

BY KALEY NOONAN

IT'S RARE FOR A VACATION TO GO OFF WITHOUT A SINGLE HITCH—the plane is late, the brand new camera gets left in a cab, it's always something. Just off the northeast corner of North Haven aboard the *Stephen Taber*, it's pouring. Driving rain comes out of an angry sky, pelting onto the legs of 22 huddled passengers who've gathered on deck for a special wine tasting cruise. Staring into the dark sky, you can see it all on their faces—they're all thinking, "What is *this*? I didn't go on vacation to stand in the rain."



A tasting of wines on deck after a fantastic day's sail.



Schooner Stephen Taber: 136 years old and going strong.

P.J. WALTER

Then, gradually over the course of 20 minutes, the rain tapers, the clouds become tinged with pearly peach. The sun hovers just above a sawed-off hedge of spruce, casting tinker bell sparkles across the calm cove.

It's almost as if Jane Barnes and her husband, Captain Noah Barnes, hosts of the *Stephen Taber*, knew they were going to see the sunset tonight. But they're not miracle workers, just adept sailors, who know that bad weather typically holds fast to the landmass—and to get away from it, they just had to sail far away from the mainland first.

While the passengers begin to shed their raingear, Jane gets down to business. She squeegees down the cabin top, lays out real stemware and tasting notes, and sets out eight bottles of red and white wine. Every evening aboard the *Taber's* wine tasting cruise, a different country's wines are highlighted with a tasting and discussion of that country's varietals and viticultural history. Tonight is French night and

there's no better way to start the evening than with champagne.

On board, Jane Barnes is a ponytail-and-sweatshirt kind of girl. She's got black hair, fair Irish skin and a giddy enthusiasm for the subject of wines. It's not just that she's traveled to the vineyards of Tuscany, Piedmont, Campania, Chile, Burgundy, the Rhone, Greece and Napa Valley—her entire education has been in wine. As one of eight children from Long Island, she put herself through school in New York City waiting tables, winding up at the Four Seasons. From there, she graduated from college and landed a seat on the board of the International Wine Center. She also worked for Champagne Veuve Clicquot, restaurateur Joseph Bastianich, the American Institute of Wine and Food and did public relations for Paterno Wines International, for which she is currently a consultant.

"The funny thing is that people come to this cruise with precon-

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# MEMBER Directory (continued)

## STORAGE

**Shepard Storage** ⑨  
P.O. Box 605, Route 1  
Rockland, ME 04841  
207-594-2154, 800-287-2154  
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Rockland Map F1 (Note: they are further  
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207-594-4206, 800-698-4206  
surveys@midcoast.com  
www.labbranchelandsurveys.com

## SWIMMING POOLS

### Tapley Pools, Inc.

P.O. Box 6152, Hermon, ME 04402  
207-848-5576, 800-244-5576  
lftapley@adelphia.net; www.tapleypools.com

## TABLE PADS

### Lydon-Bricher Mfg. Co.

15 Merrill Dr., Rockland, ME 04841  
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207-594-2500, 888-594-2500  
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### Mid-Maine Communications

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www.TELDTA.com

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532 Main St., Rockland, ME 04841  
207-594-0844, 800-336-4455; Ryan Tash

## United States Cellular

725 Main St., Rockland, ME 04841  
207-594-1912; fax 207-592-5659  
Dan Riley

## TELEVISION

### GEM Productions

25 South Main St., #3  
Rockland, ME 04841  
207-594-5199 (voice & fax)  
pgmrock@yahoo.com; Paul "Gil" Merriam

### Time Warner Cable

83 Anthony Ave., Augusta, ME 04330  
207-623-3685  
800-891-7961; fax 207-623-3407  
shelley.winchenbach@twcable.com  
www.timewarnercable.com/newengland/

## TELEVISION — BROADCAST

### WCSH-TV

One Congress Square, Portland, ME 04101  
(Local office: 461 Commercial St.,  
Rockport, ME)  
207-828-6666, 800-464-1213  
www.wcsh6.com; Stu Pruzansky

## TENT & PARTY RENTALS

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www.wallacetent.com

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Film Times – 207-594-2100  
Business Office – 207-594-4705  
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P.O. Box 433, 345 Main St.  
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207-593-9099, 207-846-1354  
fax 207-846-1354  
distinctivetiles@aol.com

# STEPHEN TABER

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ceived notions of wine all the time,” says Jane. “They say, ‘I don’t like red wine or I don’t like white wine. I don’t like oaky wine.’ So the tasting for me is fun.” She pours the champagne in flutes. “Some say they don’t like champagne,” she pauses to consider her audience, “because the Tott’s that was served at their cousin’s wedding last year ... sucked.” And she breaks out into a barrel laugh, which will happen time and again. For all of her background on paper, it becomes obvious very quickly to the passengers that there will be nothing remotely stuffy or intimidating about this wine tasting cruise.

Captain Noah Barnes, a curly-haired thirty-something, is as equally passionate about food and wine as Jane—and quick with the wisecrack. “I remember going to Peter Ott’s as a kid, which was the finest dining that all of Midcoast Maine had to offer,” he says with an enunciated delivery. “And it was a cube of steak—a salad bar with iceberg lettuce. And Bac-Os. And that’s the way it was.” In fact, to get him on the subject of cuisine at all is to open a floodgate. “Twenty years ago, good Maine cooking was like fish chowder or lobster on the beach and that’s where it ended,” Noah says. “Cheese came in the E-Z variety, the string variety and the shake variety. There was no Taleggio. There was no aged Morbier. Now we have this idea that good food should be part of your life. We’re just late picking up on it—the Italians and the French have known about this forever.”

Right—captains are supposed to be gruff and crusty. And PR consultants for international wine companies aren’t normally associated with hoisting sails. So how did these two get together and offer what is Midcoast Maine’s only wine-tasting cruise?

Before he took over being captain on the *Taber* from his father Captain Ken Barnes, Noah lived in Hell’s Kitchen, working in public relations and captaining the schooner *Adirondack*, running day sails out of the New York harbor on weekends. On one particular evening, he invited Jane, who he’d just met from his office, to sit out on his apartment roof with him and look out at the stars with a bottle of wine.

“I don’t think he realized my wine knowledge,” Jane recalls, her face trying to suppress what comes next.

“Or the fact that she had fifty cases of wine sitting under her bed,” Noah adds dryly.

“I offered to bring a bottle of wine from my office,” Jane says, “and I don’t think he got it. He ended up buying us an eight dollar bottle of Pinot Grigio.”

At this point, Noah turns his cap sideways, aping the look of a backcountry bumpkin and says in a craggy voice, “Why dontcha come on

ovah. I got some of that real fancy champagne for ya. It’s got a ship on it.”

Jane cracks up. They both love this story.

“And I love wine,” says Noah. “It’s a no brainer. Sailing is a pure aesthetic—there is no reason to do it—you don’t have to get somewhere. But once you get out there and you are making eight and a half knots to windward on a beautiful day up Jericho Bay—you feel like a million bucks. And food is a natural tie-in, so why not take every experience and make it as encompassing as possible? Serve the best food you can serve, make every mouthful an epiphany? For us, it’s like throwing the best dinner party we can throw every night.”

Nearly 22 miles away in Stonington, Maine, far from Rockland, where the *Taber* is docked, there is a little wooden green sign with the name of the *Stephen Taber* above the door of an inn. Christina Shipp, owner of The Inn on the Harbor, explains why it’s there. “My aunt used to own this inn before I took it over,” she says. “And the rooms were all numbered. So I renamed every room to include every schooner that comes into this harbor.

At first, I randomly assigned names to the room and my aunt had a fit. ‘You can’t give the name *Taber* to just any room,’ she recalls her aunt chastising her. ‘The *Taber* stands apart and on its own.’” As a result, she re-appointed a separate cottage adjoining the inn with a private deck facing the harbor. “Because the *Taber*’s a stellar schooner, you see,” she says. “She stands apart and on her own.”

Even those who start yawning at the mere mention of shipbuilding and maritime history take notice when the *Taber*’s history is laid out. This two-masted gaff-rigged coasting schooner really does stand apart from the rest. For she is not just any old working schooner that survived the 1920s and 1930s hauling cordwood, produce and livestock. At 135 years old, she is the oldest documented sailing vessel in the United States still in continuous service. She has spent more time at sea than any other sailboat in America. If she were a pop star in modern times, the *Taber* would be a diva torch singer with sassy curves and a smoky voice, blowing all the young pretty things away.

“There were thousands of schooners like her back then,” Noah says. “They were the 18-wheelers of the day—that is how stuff moved.” Whereas the majority of schooners fell by the wayside or were decommissioned, the *Stephen Taber* stayed functional and never missed a season. “It is because she was loved so fiercely by past captains and owners that she didn’t end up driven up on a mud bank and left to rot,” Noah explains. It is why she is still known as “The Lucky Ship.”

A vintage woodstove sits tucked in the galley—a big, boxy iron Home Clarion, which took the *Taber*’s chef, Jeff Kingman, four weeks

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# MEMBER Directory (continued)

✕=See ad on page

## TOWING SERVICES

### Shorty's Towing Service

384 Old County Rd., Rockland, ME 04841  
207-594-7227, 800-640-7276  
shortystowing@midcoast.com  
Douglass E. Conway, Jr.

## TOWING/SALVAGE/CHARTERS/MOORINGS (MARINE)

### Penobscot Bay Marine Services

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207-596-6138, cell 207-462-7811  
afitch@gwi.net; Capt. Tony Fitch

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### Planet Toys ⑦

318 Main St., Rockland, ME 04841  
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Shani Watmough; Rockland Map F5

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info@cheltedgraphics.com  
www.cheltedgraphics.com  
Glen Cove/Rockport Map D8

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(866-637-2457)  
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www.MaineEasternRailroad.com  
Rockland Map E4

## TRANSPORTATION

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Rockland, ME 04841  
207-594-9300, 866-594-9300  
fax 207-594-0008; trolley@midcoast.com  
www.aatrolley.com; Rockland Map F5

### Coastal Trans, Inc.

46 Summer St., Rockland, ME 04841  
207-596-6605, 800-289-6605  
fax 207-594-2746; lkarker@mchinc.org  
Lee Karker

### Concord Trailways

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207-828-1151, 800-639-3317  
concordtrailways@fcgnetworks.net  
www.concordtrailways.com

### Hit the Road Driver Service

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207-230-0095, cell 207-691-0295  
home 207-354-6454; Barbara Simpson

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74 Mahalas Lane, Owls Head, ME 04854  
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joestaxi@netzero.com

### Mid-Coast Limo ⑧

94B Washington St.  
Camden, ME 04843  
207-236-2424, 800-937-2424  
limo@midcoast.com  
www.midcoastlimo.com

## Paulsen Brothers Transportation, Inc.

925 River Rd., St. George, ME 04860  
207-372-6330; fax 207-354-2019

## Schooner Bay Limo & Taxi, Towing

P.O. Box 392, Rockland, ME 04841  
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www.alldirections.net

## TRAVEL AGENCIES

### Cruise Planners

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Rockport, ME 04856  
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www.portlandpupils.com; Marci Annis

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### Upholstery Unlimited

271 Pleasant St., Rockland, ME 04841  
207-594-4996  
uphlstryman@yahoo.com; Don Day

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855 Rockland St., Rockport, ME 04856  
207-236-8428, 800-287-1643  
maine@aquama.com  
www.aquamaine.com

### Central Maine Power Company

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207-623-3521, 800-565-0121  
fax 207-594-9611; www.cmpco.com

## VETERINARIANS

### Lakeview Veterinary Hospital

129 Lakeview Dr., Rockland, ME 04841  
207-594-2581, 800-288-2581  
Dr. Daniel W. Dowling

### Rockland Animal Hospital, LLP

355 Old County Rd., Rockland, ME 04841  
207-594-5850; fax 207-596-2958  
Philip J. Caron, DVM

## VIDEO PRODUCTION

### Domestic Blend Productions, LLC

6 North Main St., Rockland, ME 04841  
207-596-0327, cell 207-478-7389  
info@domesticblendproductions.com  
www.domesticblendproductions.com

## VIDEO PRODUCTION/MARKETING

### Acadia Marketing, Design & Video

211 South Shore Dr., Owls Head, ME 04854  
207-593-9028; dale@acadiamarketing.com  
www.acadiamarketing.com; Dale Schierholt

# MEMBER Directory (continued)

## VIDEO SERVICES

**SoundOnScreen Video Services**  
21 Elm St., Second Floor, Camden, ME 04843  
207-691-1250; gordon@soundonscreen.com  
www.soundonscreen.com  
Gordon MacLachlan

## WALKING TOURS

**Koko's Guided Walking Tours**  
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207-594-0561; Koko Preston

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Rockland, ME 04841  
207-594-4947, 800-244-4947  
h20guys@aol.com; www.haskellwater.com

## WEB DESIGN

**DiTa Group, LLC**  
59 Ames Dr., Woolwich, ME 04579  
207-443-5373  
dita@ditagroup.com; www.ditagroup.com

## Maine Coast Design

P.O. Box 233, 11 Main Street North  
Searsport, ME 04973  
207-322-3840  
lance@mainecoastdesign.com  
www.mainecoastdesign.com  
Lance Dutson

## Maine Web Design and Development

P.O. Box 7, Thomaston, ME 04861  
207-354-0678; mainewebdesign@aol.com  
www.mainewebdesignanddevelopment.com

## WEB DESIGN/GRAPHIC DESIGN

**PollyArts**  
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wolfgang@pollyarts.com  
www.pollyarts.com  
Wolfgang Busse & Polly McGroary

## WEB DEVELOPERS/ E-COMMERCE PROVIDERS

**Three Islands Press**  
P.O. Box 442, Rockland, ME 04841  
207-596-6768, 877-496-6768  
willson@3ip.com; www.3ip.net

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207-594-9191; fax 207-594-1904  
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## WEDDINGS

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207-563-7311  
info@echohillinc.com  
www.echohillinc.com

## Captain AV Nickels Inn

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207-548-0055; fax 786-524-2674  
captainsguest@verizon.net  
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info@innatoceansedge.com  
www.innatoceansedge.com

## WHOLESALE

### CoreysVending.com

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jojo23m@aol.com; www.coreysvending.com

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## WHOLESALE VACATIONS

### Monarch Travel and Consulting

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207-594-9535; hphynd@aol.com  
www.coastaltravelpackage.com/monarchtravel  
Heather Hynd

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### Summertime Cruises, Inc.

115A So. Main St., Rockland, ME 04841  
800-562-8290  
mail@schoonersummertime.com  
www.schoonersummertime.com

### Schooner Victory Chimes

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207-594-0755, 800-745-5651  
info@victorychimes.com  
www.victorychimes.com

## WINE STORE

### The Wine Seller

15 Tillson Ave., Rockland, ME 04841  
207-594-2621; fax 207-594-2610  
wine@midcoast.com; www.thewineseller.biz

## WINE & SPECIALTY FOODS

### Chartrand Imports

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Rockland, ME 04841  
207-594-7300, 800-473-7307  
info@chartrandimports.com  
www.chartrandimports.com

# STEPHEN TABER

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to master. He closes the dampers down to decrease the draft and sets to lighting it. A chef for 20 years, Jeff gave up a kitchen with modern conveniences to join the crew in 2006 and learned quickly that it wouldn't be easy to put dinner on for almost 30 hard tacking on a 10-degree list with a quirky stove.

The stove is literally the burning heart of the *Taber's* wine tasting cruise. Jeff builds flavor profiles to go with Jane's pick of wines for each sailing cruise. His provisions come from native Maine; he buys from Curtis Meats, gets his seafood from Jess's Seafood, his vegetables from locally grown farms and his herbs from Jane and Noah's garden. Almost everything they make on this schooner is made from scratch, from hand-churned vanilla ice cream to strawberry rhubarb chutneys. While he lays out gruyère cheese puffs, Jane is giving a full class on each wine. Later, after everyone has enjoyed the tasting, the chef will unveil a full-course French menu to complement the wines. And the passengers will pick their favorite wine from the tasting to go along with their rabbit and duck sausage cassoulet.

By the first night, the passengers are comfortable and easily joke about the camping-like conditions of the rustic schooner and the amount of times they've smacked their heads in their bunks. But mostly, they're enjoying the wines and each other's company.

"It usually takes three days for people to warm up to each other on a typical sailing cruise," says Jane. "On a wine tasting cruise, it happens the first night." In the typical style of marrieds who finish one another's sentences—Jane and Noah are like two little kids excited to talk over each other.

"There's something about wine drinkers anyway," Noah jumps in. "If you show up on the *Stephen Taber*, chances are, you're not interested in shuffle board on the Lido deck. You're here because you're interested to begin with."

Jane wrangles the conversation back. "They talk a lot about food, what they cook, about restaurants, memories associated with food, travel..."

Noah adds: "They don't even mention what they do for their jobs. When's the last time you were at a bar and..."

Jane interrupts. "And someone says, what do you do?"

"I hate that question," Noah finishes. "That's why people make things up."

Another day on the wine cruise arrives. The amiable crew is up early, before the passengers. Noah checks his charts, decides where they are going for the day. He does not operate on any itinerary—the wind and tide dictate every day's journey. "On our cruising ground there are 4,000 islands and

we've never repeated a week in 25 years of sailing in the Barnes family," he says. By evening, the *Taber* sets anchor at Isle au Haut, so the passengers can get out and stretch their legs while Jeff sets out appetizers of crudités, watermelon, chutneys and artichoke dip.

Noah is busy ferrying out the passengers to the island on the *Taber's* trusty yawl, *Babe*. The crew brings the deck chairs for the passengers and Jane brings the wine onto the island and begins her lesson. "I have a Greek wine that people just flip out over. It's called Boutari Moschofilero—it's inexpensive and absolutely delicious—and goes so wonderfully with lobster."

Tonight is Lobster Night on the island. As the chef puts soft-shelled lobsters on a simmer to go with native corn and fresh, spicy sausages—Cara Mason, the 17-year-old galley assistant, takes out her fiddle and plays a Scandinavian halling. There's nothing like the echoey bounce of fiddle off a darkening purple island. Noah looks forward to the tasting lesson. "I love hitting them with a Prosecco or something from Gaja—absolutely blowing their mind, a Barbaresco that has more body and taste and firepower than anything they've ever put in their mouth. Of course I can't drink any of them but I can watch their reactions." He adds with typical dryness. "I'll look forward to being able to drink some ... in November."

At that moment, the crew brings out bocce balls. "Hey, let's get a game of American Cross-County Beach Bocce going after dinner," Noah says. The passengers could not be happier at that moment—lobsters on the boil, standing on a rocky island miles from civilization, holding glasses of Moschofilero, a sun setting—it's everything the Barnes' ordered up for the day, even the weather. "After the tasting, we'll give them whatever wine they liked best with dinner," Noah says, watching Jane. "And then we'll finish it up with some more. It goes really well with s'mores."

*KALEY NOONAN is a freelance feature writer whose work has appeared in Maine Times, Village Soup, The Free Press, Face Magazine and various Midcoast publications and websites that foster Maine's creative economy. She can be reached at info@kaleynoonan.com.*

## For More Info

...on the *Stephen Taber*  
call 800-999-7352  
or visit [www.stephentaber.com](http://www.stephentaber.com)

## For More Info

...on the Maine Windjammer Fleet  
call 800-807-WIND  
or visit [www.sailmainecoast.com](http://www.sailmainecoast.com)

# 'Jammin' the Bay...

## FAMILY CRUISES

Windjamming is a wonderful vacation for families of all ages. Meals, activities and accommodations are all taken care of...leaving family members with plenty of quality time to relax and enjoy each other's company. Most cruises have a multi-generational mix of guests: from empty-nesters catching up with their adult children to grandparents vacationing with their grandkids. Windjamming offers something for everyone, both young and old, from hand-cranked ice cream and skipping stones to storytelling and star-gazing.

A number of the windjammers offer cruises for children as young as 5. These trips feature a little more shore time and plenty of kid-friendly meals and hands-on activities.

The majority of the windjammers set an age minimum between 12 and 16 years of age. To figure out which windjammers would be most appropriate for your family, please see pages 91 and 124 of this magazine.

## SPECIAL CRUISES

In addition to the fleet's "regular" cruises that range from weekend getaways to 6-day adventures, there are many "theme" cruises as well. Here's a sample of what some of

the windjammers are offering this season:

- Wine-tasting cruises
- Seamanship Cruises
- Art & Photography Cruises
- Lighthouse Trips
- Whale/Puffin Watching Cruises
- Knitters' Cruises
- Tai Chi Cruise
- Fundy Bay Cruise
- Gloucester Schooner Race Cruise
- Sailing/Hiking cruises
- Cooking cruises
- Naturalist cruises
- Full Moon Night Sailing
- Foliage Cruises

## 2007 GATHERINGS OF THE FLEET:

- Schooner Gam: Week of June 18
- Boothbay Harbor Windjammer Days:  
Week of June 25
- Great Schooner Race: Week of July 2
- Rockland Breakwater Windjammer  
Parade: Friday, July 13
- Music Festival: Friday, August 10
- Windjammer Weekend:  
Labor Day Weekend, August 31-Sept. 1
- WoodenBoat Sail-In:  
Tuesday, September 11



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