

Hike and Sail Your Way up the Maine Coast



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Courtesy photo

Peggy staked out on her favorite perch at the stern and holds on tight as they angle hard, catching air, almost lifting off Penobscot Bay.

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Courtesy photo

Captain Tyler King on the Schooner American Eagle

By Peggy Newland

“Hey, there’s a fender in my bed,” Nate, the mate, says to Captain Tyler King on the Schooner American Eagle. He holds up a boat “bumper” from his berth below and hands it to Kate, the first mate, and I giggle as he slides out of the space in a brightly colored apron. Nate and Chef Marty are in charge of all things good and wonderful in the galley, and our fellow sailors and I have been well provisioned with three course meals for sunset each night. Plus, three course breakfasts and lunches as well! We’ve all become good friends on this five-day “hike and sail” schooner cruise from Rockland to tiny, uninhab-

ited “land trust” islands that fill Penobscot Bay.

“Everything has a place,” Kate says.

“On my bed,” Nate laughs.

Each day, Captain Tyler finds us nooks and crannies to explore. Last night, we had a lobster boil on Pond Island after a full circle hike over the ledges and through spruce groves. The sunset glowed as we sat on granite rocks, sharing wine, and eating “all-you-can-eat” lobsters and corn-on-the-cob on a quiet beach. That night, we anchored in Bucks Harbor, overlooking Lems Cove and Condon Point, as the tide rocked us all to sleep in our bunk rooms.

Schooner American Eagle is bespoke elegance. Initially launched as An-

drew & Rosalie in 1930, this vessel had a “hard fishing” history for 53 years. It was revamped from 1984-1986 by five schooner captains and renamed American Eagle, and in 1991 was designated as a National Historic Landmark. Beautifully paneled and sporting two “heads” or toilets, plus a hot water shower, below deck is cozy in the best way, especially with a book lined galley and separate living room spaces. But who wants to be below, when you can be riding high on the deck, with spruce-lined forests and islands on either side? I hang out on the stern (aft), with full sails and bowsprit views, front and center, and watch the action—a hoist of a mainsail, a boom “coming around,” jibs “flying,” and bowsprit “spiking.” All this action makes me hungry, even as I’m just sitting back, relaxing between hikes.

“Where are we heading today?” I ask Captain Tyler.

“Wherever the wind blows,” he says. “No set itinerary.”

After a lunch of fish chowder, wood fired cheesy biscuits, fresh salad, and “can’t eat just one” homemade cookies and cake bars, we zip through Deer Island Thoroughfare with Ram Island and Ewe Island in the distance and anchor off Isle au Haut. Rowing to islands and getting shuttled to shallow coves, it’s like discovering personal hush zones. Especially on this foggy afternoon with dew-covered fir lining the inlets off Marshall and Moxie Islands. Brian and I are dropped off at the empty town dock. Isle au Haut is a little-visited part of Acadia National Park, and we feel like we’re on a private island after we grab a map from

the park ranger. Heading toward Goss Beach and Deep Cove, we scramble up ledges, and through a moss-lined forest. Seals swim, their dark heads lifted, as we pass driftwood strewn shoreline. A bald eagle glides to a dead tree dipped toward Moore’s Head. After three hours of rambling, Captain Tyler retrieves us, and takes us back to American Eagle, where the happy hour is in full swing. Lanterns are lit and the moon rises over the schooner as we enjoy roasted halibut, grilled vegetables, and extra helpings of homemade bread, followed by “can’t choose just one” dessert bar.

I rise early in the morning, with a cup of coffee and a scone, and watch the sky flare open to pink sunrise. There’s a clanging of buoy, squawking of seagull, and the slap of tide against the hull, and it all combines into a rhythm of calm. By eight o’clock, Nate calls, “Good morning, everyone. It’s time for breakfast.” Steel cut oats, blueberry muffins, and fresh fruit—perfection for the day’s exploration of Burnt Island, before a storm blows in, making for a rollicking good time on deck, protected by tarps, with glasses of wine raised to the busy day.

On our last day, we head to North Haven’s harbor for the morning, to check out the art galleries, local farmer markets, and country lanes. Brian and I rent some bicycles for a quick spin “around island” before the dash back to the American Eagle.

“Wind is up,” Captain Tyler says, smiling, that afternoon, as we head through the Fox Island Thoroughfare past Telegraph Point and Browns Head Light Station. I stake out my now favorite perch



Courtesy photo

A lobster boil on Pond Island.

at the stern and hold on tight as we angle hard, catching air, almost lifting off Penobscot Bay. Better than a front row seat on a rollercoaster, as we zip and zag, “come about” and tack. With windblown, exhilarated faces, we anchor near the ledged and lovely Owls Head Lighthouse and some of us take a dory over to nearby Monroe Island

for a short stroll before dinner. Captain Tyler serenades us with sea shanties after another delicious three course dinner and then reads us local lore and poetry by lantern.

Brian and I doze on deck cushions that night, snuggled warm in sleeping bags, as starlight covers us. The buoys call out their final songs to summer.

if you go

Schooner American Eagle.

www.schooneramericaneagle.com

Come aboard and discover the “real” Maine coast. Spring and fall special rates which include three courses for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. BYOB—you’ll want to toast every sunset and full sailing day!