

Chesapeake Paddler



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Maine Under A Roof

By Ralph Heimlich



Our "camp" in Maine photo by Beth Heimlich

While I lead a lot of CPA camping trips in the Chesapeake Bay, I'm not totally opposed to sleeping under a roof, especially when my wife Beth is along. With that luxurious end in mind, ten of us who mainly paddle at Pier 7 got together and rented a fabulous house on Greenlaw Cove on the northern shores of Deer Isle, Maine for the middle of September. Beth and I had stayed at the house back in 2007 when Dale Murphy organized a similar trip, and, as the only one in the group who had paddled in Maine before, I elected to manage the rental and help organize our stay.

September is one of the best times of the year to visit the Maine coast. Several kinds of pests are gone, including blackflies and school-age children, but the water is as warm as it ever gets, and the weather is usually pretty mild. The bustle at the height of the tourist season is over, but there is still a lot going on.

We started arriving at 4 PM on Saturday, when our lease began, and soon the house was ringing with greetings and the aroma of Beth's crab and fish chowder was wafting from the stove to top off everyone's tanks. The house had a large, high-ceilinged dining room and living area with walls of windows looking out through the spruce to the cove, a large well-equipped kitchen, two bedrooms and a bath on the main level, one large bedroom and bath in the loft, two single bedrooms with a bath and laundry room in the basement, and a garage loft with its own tiny bathroom.

On Sunday morning, after a leisurely breakfast, we organized ourselves into paddlers (Marla Aron and Maryrose Whelley, Sue and Rich Stevens, Judy Billage and Dave Isbell, and Bob Pullman and I) and non-paddlers (Beth and Laurie Steele, recovering from an injury). Because of water temps in the high 50's and air temps about 60 to 70 (degrees F), we donned drysuits for our paddle and launched off the rocks at the cove. There is a 10 foot tidal difference in these waters, so you have to be careful of launch and landing times. Our destination was the Wooden Boat School at Brooklin, Maine, across the Eggmoggin Reach from our house. The sky was bright, and the water very clear and salty as we wove between the islands to our lunch landing spot.

We had seen several newly built wherries on cartops heading away from the area driving to the island, and the WBS was quiet and wrapping up after a week's class, but I asked a gentleman on the shore for permission to land and have lunch. He introduced himself as Michael O'Brien, emeritus editor of the magazine and instructor for the "Kayaking Over 40" class that had just concluded, and offered to give us a tour of the facilities. We accepted eagerly, especially Judy and Dave who had subscribed to **Wooden Boat** for years, and we got a tour of the 1916-era mansion that serves as the magazine's editorial offices and research library, the grounds, and the shops that occupy former stables. We saw hand-built

wooden boats in various stages of completion and Mike showed us his

Tell Us About Your Summer

Trips—The Chesapeake Paddler publishes first-person trip reports from members. Tell us where you paddled this Summer, or any time of year. Ralph Heimlich, Editor



Launch from the rocks on Greenlaw Cove photo by Beth Heimlich

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kayak and described his somewhat unorthodox philosophy about bulkheads (doesn't like them) and his pre-rigged foam-float-and-canoe-paddle rescue method. He invited us back for the Maine Windjammers festival later in the week and we thanked him for the tour, had lunch, and resumed our paddle.

Although we understood what a 10 foot tide difference meant cerebrally, we were still surprised when we cut across the back channel between islands and ran out of water! The last ten feet required towing our boats through sticky mud to get to what remained of the channel, then a slog over muddy flats to get back to the rocks where we had launched in the morning. Tidal awareness was now thoroughly ingrained, along with the slate-gray mud ingrained in our paddling gear.



8.5 knot (9.8 mph) current in the reversing falls photo by Dave Isbell

Monday, we sought a more sheltered paddling venue since the wind had kicked up to 15 knots or so. We drove off Deer Isle to South Blue Hill and launched at Sand Point, amidst the working lobster boats busily fueling at the dock. One of the other challenging features of the Maine coast is a phenomena known as "reversing falls" where rocky constrictions create depth differences when the tide comes in, and again on the outgoing tide. These tide races can create swift currents (over 8 knots) and standing waves. We paddled by one of these features where Salt Pond enters Blue Hill Bay under a lovely stone bridge, and were careful not to get sucked into the pond, where we would have stayed until slack tide released us. We paddled on into the inner harbor at Blue Hill and landed at a wonderful new ramp and parking lot just off the main street in this picturesque New England town. On the way back to our launch, Dave, Bob, and Rich tried the now-discharging reversing falls and snuck around the tidal flow. On the way out, Dave tried to ride the flow and capsized, but rolled right up.

Bracing in the turbulent flow was not as easy as he thought!

Tuesday, we awoke to thick fog on the cove and took a day off of paddling to drive back to Blue Hill to climb the eponymous height behind the town (934 feet), maintained by the Blue Hill Heritage Trust. We climbed steadily through the spruce, pine, and birch woods and emerged on a rocky summit with fabulous views of Deer Isle and the Penobscot Bay to south and west, and Mount Desert and Acadia to the north. We were greeted by a pack of gamboling dogs, out for their daily walks with various owners, who crowded eagerly around as we lunched. On the way down, we ran into Birgit, a sturdy-looking but elegant trail worker who was constructing rock pavement erosion protection on this stretch, which also served as the access road for maintaining the cell tower near Blue Hill's summit. She described how she'd become active in preserving the hill, and confronted the manager of the proposed tower, who'd agreed that they should fund trail and restoration on the site.

In the afternoon, we returned to the Wooden Boat School for the Windjammer Festival and walked down to the pier, still wrapped in fog. Just as we arrived at the pier, the fog parted revealing a sight worthy of the 19th century as more than a dozen tall schooners, some still coming to moorings under sail, were revealed in the cove. These tall ships, some dating from the 1870s and some built in the 1990s, are a tourist fleet these days, operating out of Camden and Rockland, Maine, and hauling eager neophyte sailors Down East to Deer Isle, Acadia, and other ports. Beth and I had sailed on one in 1983, and were happy to see them spreading their sails again.



On Blue Hill's summit photo by Dave Isbell

Wednesday, we returned to paddling and drove over to the Holbrook Island sanctuary on Cape Rosier, on the west side of the peninsula. We launched at Indian Bar, where the Native Americans portaged to Eggemoggin Reach, into Smith Cove and out to Castine Harbor. Paddling across from the busy waterfront, around Nautilus Island (where blockading American forces sited a battery to harass British Fort George in 1779), and down the west side of Holbrook Island. We raised several of the Windjammer fleet that had

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sailed from WBS to Castine, and landed on the east side of Holbrook for lunch, having the entire island to ourselves. After lunch, we paddled out to Castine again, coasting along the waterfront and posing at the stern of the State of Maine, the Maine Maritime Academy's training vessel, before returning to Smith Cove. Just as we entered the cove, two graceful schooners tacked about in tandem and crossed in front of us under sail, a thrilling sight.



Two Windjammers in Smith Cove, near Castine photo by Dave Isbell

Thursday, SE winds brought heavy fog, but we wanted one more day on the water. We launched at Mariner Park, just down the road from the house, and paddled on the sheltered waters of Long Cove and Pickering Cove. We ghosted through the thinning fog and paddled right up to the driveway of our house. Thursday evening was set aside for our Lobster Fest, and the non-paddling members (Laurie and Beth) stopped at the coop and got us 10 "sheddas" which we boiled to a lovely lobster red along with corn on the cob in its own husks, salad, bread, and blueberry pie with blueberry ice cream. We'd had lobster out a few nights, but nothing tasted as good as the ones we boiled up ourselves.

A front blew through on Thursday night, and the wind kicked up to 20 knots, gusting to 25, so on our last day, 8 of us drove up to Mount Desert, while Judy and Dave sat and hiked some local trails at Barred Island and the Old Quarry. Mount Desert is home to Acadia National Park, Cadillac Mountain, and the touristy mecca of Bar Harbor. We drove to the windy mountain top to get a 360 degree view, stopped at Sand Beach, Thunder Hole, and Seal Harbor and drove along the fiord of Somes Sound. A few hours prowling the gift shops and galleries of Bar Harbor and we headed for home.

On Saturday, we cleaned up and headed out, some opting for a straight through drive, some for a more leisurely tour of the Maine Coast or Strawberry Banke in Portsmouth, NH. We all appreciated our "under roof" vacation, and were making plans for returning to the Maine coast next year.

Our pics at <https://picasaweb.google.com/102459087707170525949/Maine2011>

<https://picasaweb.google.com/101178211036772879744/2011SeptMaine?authkey=Gv1sRgCLa4x-CIjoLA9gE&feat=email>

If you go (with thanks to Dale Murphy):

A Better View Vacation Rentals <http://www.abetterviewrental.com/index.html>

Guide to Sea Kayaking in Maine : The Best Day Trips and Tours from Casco Bay to Machias http://www.amazon.com/Guide-Sea-Kayaking-Maine-Machias/dp/0762707461/ref=sr_1_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1305642519&sr=1-4 by Shelley Johnson and Vaughan Smith (Apr 1, 2001)

Kayaking the Maine Coast: A Paddler's Guide to Day Trips from Kittery to Cobscook. 2nd Edition http://www.amazon.com/Kayaking-Maine-Coast-Paddlers-Cobscook/dp/0881507059/ref=dp_ob_image_bk by Dorcas Miller (2006)

Quiet Water Maine, 2nd: Canoe and Kayak Guide (AMC Quiet Water Series) http://www.amazon.com/Quiet-Water-Maine-2nd-Canoe/dp/1929173652/ref=sr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1305642519&sr=1-3 by Alex Wilson and John Hayes (Jun 1, 2005)

Sea Kayaking along the New England Coast, 2nd - Paperback (June 1, 2004) by Tamsin Venn http://www.amazon.com/Tamsin-Venn/e/B001K7U9QW/ref=sr_ntt_srch_lnk_1?encoding=UTF8&qid=1305643266&sr=1-1

Hot Showers!: Maine Coast Lodgings for Kayakers and Sailors - Paperback (May 18, 2000) by Lee Bumsted http://www.amazon.com/Lee-Bumsted/e/B001K8BZNV/ref=sr_ntt_srch_lnk_1?encoding=UTF8&qid=1305642948&sr=1-1-fkmr0

and a good cookbook - filled with Maine stories is:

Lobster Rolls and Blueberry Pie: Three Generations of Recipes and Stories from Summers on the Coast of Maine http://www.amazon.com/Lobster-Rolls-Blueberry-Pie-Generations/dp/006051583X/ref=sr_1_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1305643621&sr=1-4 by Rebecca Charlesand Deborah Di Clementi (Mar 28, 2006)

Blue Hill Heritage Trust <http://www.bluehillheritagetrust.org/>

Island Heritage Trust <http://www.islandheritagetrust.org/>

Maine Island Trail Association (MITA) <http://www.mita.org/>

Wooden Boat School <http://www.thewoodenboatschool.com/>

A novel about the abortive 1779 Revolutionary War invasion of Castine is The Fort, by Bernard Cornwall <http://www.bernardcornwell.net/index.cfm?page=2&BookId=51>

Inside our September 2011 issue:

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CPA Paddlers (Rich Stevens, Ralph Heimlich, Marla Aron, Bob Pullman, Sue Stevens) framed by granite at Deer Isle, Maine *photo by Dave Isbell*

The Chesapeake Paddler

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