

The Maine Coast



by Bed & Breakfast

by Mark Palmer

Last year, Alice and I decided to fulfill a dream and visit Maine. We wanted to tour Maine and stop at B&Bs along the way. We wanted to add kayaks to the trip somehow too, so we went through *Sea Kayaker* looking for trips. We found an ad for Maine Coast Experience in Brooklin that advertised a 4 day trip around Deere Isle, with stops at Bed and Breakfasts each night. We called MCE right away. They were only running this trip once, in June and we figured it would fill up fast.

We flew into Boston on a Saturday afternoon and ran smack into the teeth of the worst rain and flooding in 300 years. It took us forever to get out of Boston and north to our first stop, Ogonquit. Despite the setback, it was fun to stay the night in an old Colonial home on the coast while the rain came down and the waves crashed against the shore.

The next four days were filled with rain and wind. Everytime we saw the Atlantic it was either storm tossed or fog-bound. We were beginning to worry a bit..

Finally, on Wednesday night, we arrived in Brooklin at the Maine Coast lodge, a new log edifice overlooking Eggmoggin Reach. It was drizzly and foggy but the worst of the weather seemed to be behind us. We checked in and met our companions for the trip: Betty Robbe and Carol Moore, older women from Cape Cod who liked to do "exotic" trips together. Our guide would be Steve Titcomb and his wife Terri. That was the whole crew! Apparently our fears of a crowded trip were unfounded.

Steve got out his coastal chart and briefed us on the trip. Then we went to the

boathouse to pick out our boats. Steve was unsure of Betty and Carol's experience, so they settled for a NW Kayaks double. It was big and heavy but B & C seemed to enjoy it. We nicknamed it the "War Canoe". Alice and I picked out NW Kayak singles. All of the boats were in excellent condition; brand new from earlier that year. Steve issued us the rest of our gear – PFDs, dry bags, paddles. We'd brought our wet suits from Colorado. Alice and I spent the rest of the evening stuffing stuff into our dry bags.

The next morning we had an huge breakfast at the lodge and then loaded up the boats. It was the nicest day so far. No wind, fog that limited visibility to a mile or so, temperature in the 50s. The water was dead calm. Steve and Terri were wearing dry suits in deference to the Atlantic waters. Alice and I had our wet suits. Steve and Terri were paddling Betsy Bays. Steve had his own hand made, Greenland style paddle.

We started down the coast and went a few miles, stopping in Centre harbor to see some of the beautiful wooden sailboats, and the Wooden Boat School. Just past the school we turned and cut across Eggmoggin Reach. Steve had warned us to stay together the night before; the Reach could be tricky and the fog added another complication – lobster boats. It was the beginning of lobster season and we could hear (but not see) the lobster boats as they sped full throttle from pot to pot. We kept a careful eye out. Steve had a homemade radar reflector mounted on the rear of his kayak, something the lobster folks and the

Coast Guard are urging on kayakers now.

We crossed the Reach without incident and stopped on one of the myriad of small islands for a break. Then we paddled for another hour or so and stopped for lunch on Potato Island (MCE had packed our lunch that morning). We found out just how heavy the double was; it usually took the six of us to move it in and out of the water.

After lunch, we set off again through the islands and arrived at Oceanville Seaside Bed and Breakfast about mid afternoon. We had covered about ten miles, the longest leg of the trip. We pulled ashore and unloaded the boats and then Steve and I took to the water again. On the trip over we had been discussing that I'd never really done a paddle float rescue. There was no better time than now, so with Steve spotting, I rolled the boat, waited a few moments and then exited.

The Atlantic, I discovered, is a very cold body of water. Once beside the boat I proceeded to fumble with the paddle float, getting it inflated, installed and getting up on the deck, sliding in and then pumping it out. It was fun to have the experience. I'm sure trying that with three foot seas would be a different story. The entire episode took about twenty minutes and was great amusement to Alice and the other women on shore.

Oceanville B&B is open to kayakers and sailors. Although you can get there by road, it's obvious charm is coming in from the sea. The house itself was built in the late 1800s by the grandfather of the current owner, Tim Emerson. His wife Kathy met

us, Tim being out of town. It's a wonderfully cozy house and the dining and living areas have a wonderful view of the Reach. Kathy made us feel very much at home. Dinner that night was seafood lasagna.

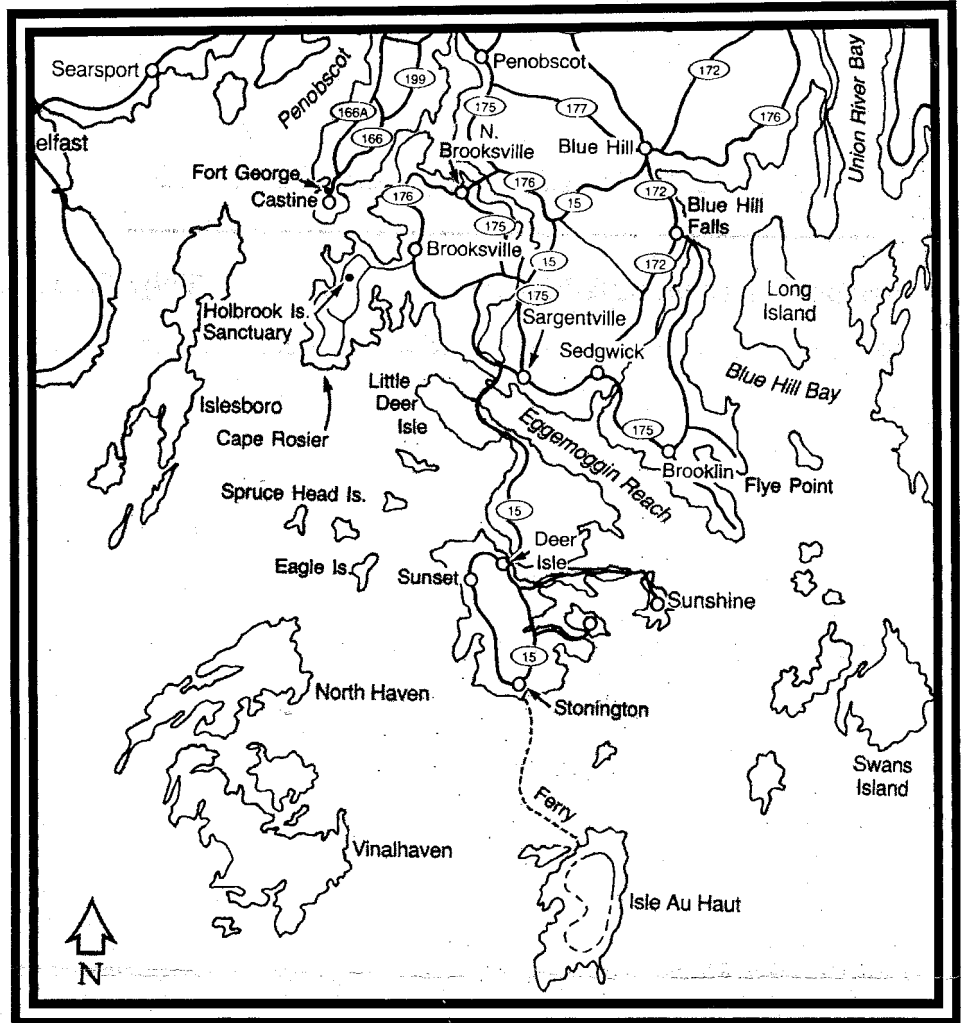
Up early the next morning to a wonderful breakfast and then back to the water. Today's jaunt was billed at seven miles but seemed much longer. We took our time and wandered through the islands, stopping for a break and then later for lunch on Hell's Half Acre. After lunch we paddled into Stonington, an old rough-and-tumble seaside town. We parked the boats on the shore by the main landing and then spent a couple of hours shopping and seeing the sights. The sun broke through at one point and the town became postcard perfect.

Late afternoon we left Stonington and headed around Deer Isle for our next stop, Goose Cove Lodge. As we rounded the coast, the fog moved in and the visibility went down to about 100 yards. We could hear the fog horns and the sounds of the lobster boats. We grouped together and Terri led us on this leg. For the next hour we paddled through the fog. Terri would consult her compass and watch and occasionally make a minor adjustment to our course. At the end of the hour we came gliding out of the fog and onto the beach right in front of the Lodge! It was a very impressive navigational performance.

Goose Cove Lodge is more upscale than a B&B, but we enjoyed it nevertheless. It was nice to have a room and bath to ourselves and a nice warm fireplace. The food was excellent. The next morning Steve and Terri were going to be late, so Alice and I hiked through the forest nearby. There are a lot of trees in Maine. We hadn't seen such lush growth in a long time. We had a hard time getting used to so much green after living in Colorado.

Our third day was spent retracing our strokes, taking a slightly different course swinging a bit further out and bypassing Stonington. We stopped for lunch near Crotch Island (where much of the granite for buildings in Washington was quarried). The sun started to peek out and we passed several small islands full of seals. Steve noted that the seals were making a big comeback now that they were protected. Maybe too protected as the fear was that sharks were going to start appearing in large numbers. The seals were pretty shy, diving off the rocks when we were a couple of hundred yards away. One did pop up right next to my kayak, giving me a start!

Late afternoon we arrived back at Oceanville B&B. Kathy's husband Tim was there this time, bringing fresh lobster. We had a huge feast that night - mussels,



The Myriad of Islands Around Deer Isle

lobster, potatoes, corn. Alice and I learned the fine art of mussel and lobster eating (being the flatlanders, it was a new experience for us). Dessert was fresh strawberry and rhubarb pie. We sat and talked deep into the night—old friends bound by the sea.

The last day, we left Oceanville with a wave to Tim and Kathy and paddled down the coast a few miles to Tennis Preserve. No, not a country club, but a park. We beached and hiked through the forest and visited an old graveyard with headstones dating from the 1700s. Back on the water, our last leg took us up an inlet for a few miles. We met the truck about noonish at the takeout. We enjoyed one last spectacular lunch courtesy of Kathy at Oceanville. Then we loaded up and headed back to the MCE lodge. By mid afternoon we were on our way home. We stopped on the way out at Steve and Terri's. Steve wanted to show us his Greenland kayak made from plans in *Sea Kayaker* and the Aleut baidarka he was building. Their sixteen year old daughter showed us her lapstrake dory she was building. Now here's a family that

loves the sea!

As you can tell, we had a wonderful time. The weather was ideal, and the Atlantic never bothered us at all. The people were friendly and the group size was just right. We would heartily recommend that anyone kayaking the Maine Island Trail stop for a night at Oceanville. You can't go wrong.

Maine Resources

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