

Savoring MAINE

WITH BOTH THE WEATHER AND THE LOBSTER ROLLS RUNNING THE GAMUT, GOLDEN COMPASS'S GUESTS GET A SCRUMPTIOUS TASTE OF MAINE'S REMOTE ANCHORAGES AND CHARMING PORT TOWNS.

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM RAYCROFT



THE SHORTEST DISTANCE BETWEEN TWO POINTS MAY be a straight line but when it comes to cruising a great coastline, the most interesting distance will likely be anything but straight. The general coast of Maine runs about 228 miles as the crow flies, but once the intricacies of Maine's circuitous tidal shoreline are accounted for, the distance jumps to 3,427 miles, edging out California by 49 miles. With new studies now claiming more than 5,000 miles, I knew one thing for sure about Maine: There was more than enough good ol' Down East coastline waiting to be explored by the owners, guest and crew aboard the 151-foot globetrotting motor yacht *Golden Compass*.

Built by the Picchiotti shipyard in 1982, *Golden Compass* underwent an extensive refit when purchased by her current owners in 2009. Determined to realize their dream of cruising the world, the owners had searched for more than two years for a vessel that would meet their extensive requirements for capability, safety and comfort. *Golden Compass* emerged from the refit to carry the owners' family and friends around the world on a two-year, 35,000-mile odyssey of a lifetime. For the owners,

the payoff for realizing their passion came when they won the Voyager's Award at the 2012 World Superyacht Awards. Now they have made the yacht available for charter.

On a warm, clear July day, *Golden Compass* rides easy at anchor off Bug Light Park near the central waterfront of Portland, Maine. They say that Maine has only two seasons, July and winter, so a healthy mix of locals and tourists are making the most of a fine weather day when we arrive. Greeted by a stunning blue sky and the cry of seagulls, the guests board while the chef and crew load provisions, which only serves to further heighten the pre-trip excitement.

With everything stowed, it is anchor up and a great photo-op as we head out the channel between Portland Head Light and Cushing Island. As the temperature and wind drop in the late afternoon, we head east on a glassy calm sea. Past Half Way Rock and Sequin Island, we coast into the quiet beauty of Small Point Harbor for the night. Silence soon replaces the rumble of the anchor chain paying out and of the engines, as a magnificent sunset drops behind the dense line of pine trees that stand guard along the rocky shoreline.



Lobstering is a principal means of income for the small year-round population. **This is a place where working boats still outnumber pleasure boats.**



the harbor the historic Robinson Point Lighthouse station now provides accommodations to the public in the form of a charming B&B. Lobstering is a principal means of income for the small year-round population. This is a place where working boats still outnumber pleasure boats, and many of those pleasure boats are styled after working boats. Much of the island is owned by the Acadia National Park with access available via the mail boat service from Stonington, Maine. A renowned Isle au Haut resident is fisherman/writer Linda Greenlaw, author of *The Hungry Ocean* and *The Lobster Chronicles*, among other works. With a family history on the island, Greenlaw is the real deal—not a celebrity transplant.



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Maine's charm extends to the sea with windjammers like *Margaret Todd* (below with *Golden Compass* in the background) and many lobster boats plying the sea. A national park covers about 60 percent of the Isle au Haut (above and left), whose small town hosts less than 100 residents year-round. Electricity only came to the island in 1970.

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Monhegan Island (top left and right) is a summer artists' haven only accessible by boat. The island has no cars or paved roads, but with miles of winding trails, it is a great place to stretch your legs.

Such a mild evening as this is a rare blessing in Maine. Dinner—a special time on *Golden Compass*—is served on the large table on the open bridge aft deck under a full moon and blanket of stars. The crab cakes with rouille sauce and the roasted halibut that Chef Normand Bouchard created are delectable. The calming effect of our comfortable yacht in this remote anchorage is all that is needed to slip into a sense of true peace and relaxation; welcome to *Golden Compass*, welcome to Maine.

The three-hour run from Small Point to Monhegan Island the next morning has us ashore and scrambling around

the island by nine a.m. The trek up to the highlands provides an up-close view of Monhegan Island Light, with its iconic stone tower, white buildings and jumbled red rooflines, and a good view of *Golden Compass* at anchor below. It is here where we decide to begin an informal weeklong lobster roll-tasting competition with samples from a local café.

A cruise to Isle au Haut wraps up the afternoon with our course taking us between Ragged Island and Matinicus Island and on past Seal Island, a protected habitat for seals, puffins and a variety of sea birds. There have been few other boats in sight until we spy the 1871 schooner *Lewis R. French*, a windjammer hailing from Camden, Maine, and a beautiful sight from another era.

We arrive at Isle au Haut, pronounced "i-la-ho," a couple of hours before sunset and pile into *Golden Compass's* 19-foot Nautica tender for a jaunt into a picture perfect anchorage protected to the west by Kimball Island. At the south end of

Taking full advantage of the continuing fair weather, dinner is again planned for the bridge aft deck where we are witness to another magnificent sunset and some equally magnificent sear-grilled tuna with peppercorn sauce led by a feuilleté of mixed mushrooms served with Porto sauce. A nightcap in the warm Jacuzzi on the sun deck with the cool ocean air delivers a luxurious finish to an active day.

Underway at daybreak, a loud blast of our horns is a wake-up call from sound sleep that the weather was no longer favorable. Up on the bridge I have a front row seat for the action. Through dense fog and heavy rain, Captain Brad Baker is slowly and skillfully maneuvering *Golden Compass* through a minefield of lobster buoys while taking some abuse from a particularly aggressive lobsterman who apparently believes that we are trespassers on his private ocean. With the updated weather forecast we have altered our plan from cruising through Eggemoggin Reach and are now heading directly to Bar Harbor. Our ship's horns are blasting at regular intervals as we move ahead dead slow through the fog, the captain and first mate straining to pick



out the lobster pots appearing ahead. They are so closely spaced that it appeared you could cross the bay stepping from buoy to buoy and never get your feet wet. A lobster boat moving at high speed suddenly appears out of the fog on our starboard side heading directly for us. At the last moment the lobstermen make a right turn and gesture their displeasure with our chosen course.

Arriving at Bar Harbor at 10:30 a.m. we are at ease on the hook and relaxing. It's been a good few hours of slow going and threading the needle to get here, but this is Maine weather and the salty sea air is fresh and clean. This is perfect weather to catch a show at the Acadia Improv. The heavy rain drives us indoors to sample another contender in the search for the perfect lobster roll. Then on to the Cottage Pub and a chat with bartender Tessa over a local brew.

Our captain has arranged a special treat for a rainy afternoon. At three p.m. a lobster boat appears out of the fog. The *Eagle* has landed! A working lobster boat, *Eagle* pulls up alongside *Golden Compass* to supply us with the freshest

Maine lobsters money can buy. Guests are invited aboard to personally select their lobster, which was hauled from the cold waters of Penobscot Bay that morning, and talk with the owner/captain John Young and his crewman Josh Wilber about the lobster trade. A rugged 42-foot Duffy built by the Atlantic Boat Company of Brooklin, Maine, *Eagle* tends about 800 traps, metal cages weighted with bricks and strung together in lines. At the end of the string of pots is a pick-up line tied to a buoy marked with a particular color code. Each lobsterman has his own color code, and you don't mess with another man's lobsters.

That evening we enjoy an amazing dinner of local lobster, family style. "Just dig in and go for it," advises the chef who has cracked the bodies in half leaving plenty of work to be done to get to the delicious lobster meat—all this with salad, wine and good conversation around the big dining table in the main salon.

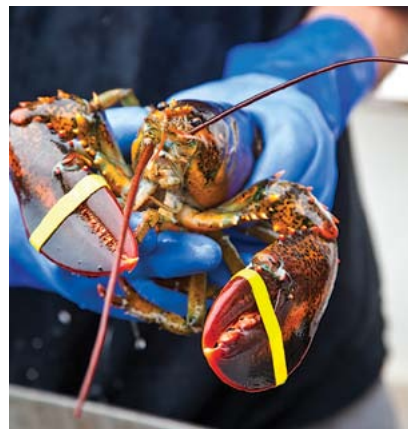
Giving in to the inclement weather, we elect to stay aboard that evening and enjoy *Golden Compass's* entertainment. We have a broad range of ages to please on our charter. The Escient system with DVD, music and movies, Nintendo, Wii, Xbox, Global Wireless Internet as well as satellite TV ensure there is something for everyone, the young and not-so-young.

The morning greets us with fog but no rain. By 7:45 a.m. it is trying to burn off and I catch glimpses of lobstermen pulling

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As fresh as it gets! *Golden Compass* gets treated to lobster plucked from the sea that very morning. Chef Bouchard (bottom center) prepares a lobster feast.



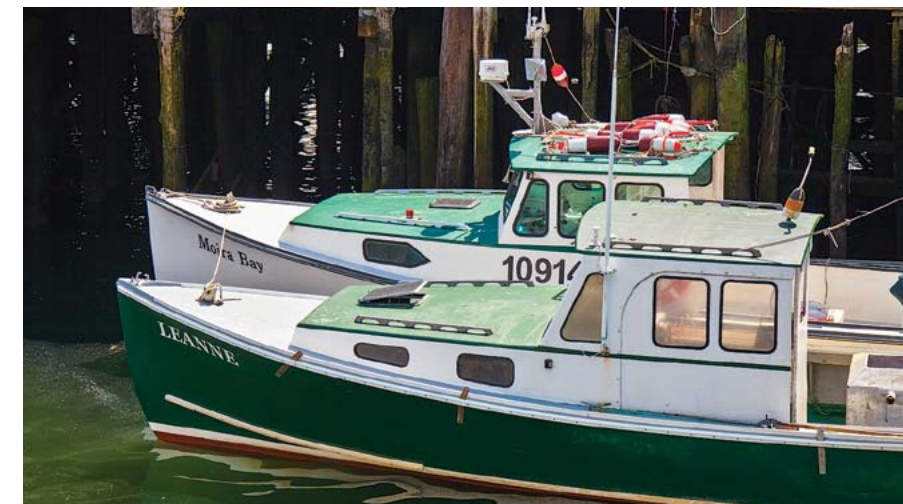
traps between the yachts anchored in Bar Harbor. The fog moves in and out and rises up and down like a theater curtain introducing the next act. After a lazy, late breakfast served on the enclosed aft deck, it is off the boat and on the bus that takes us up to the trailhead at Acadia National Park. The one-and-a-half hour climb is a good workout on a well-marked trail to the 1,529-foot summit of Cadillac Mountain. Our reward for the effort is a spectacular view of the bay and islands with dramatic fog banks rolling through. The youngest in our group, eight-year-old David, is more interested in the ice cream shop than the view, but he slugs out the climb and descent with us like a trooper and earns his treat.

Back in town it's time to collect more candidates for our Best of Maine Lobster Roll competition. We spread out and meet back at the dock, each with an entry purchased from a Bar Harbor establishment. Back aboard, the lobster rolls are divided into bite size hors d'oeuvres. Everyone gets a taste of each lobster roll and grades it by secret ballot, while we up anchor and head for Somes Sound, the U.S.'s only fjord, for the evening. After dinner it's another dip in the steaming Jacuzzi under a big moon and a cool wind before bed.

The next day dawns clear and chilly. At 6:45 a.m. the lobstermen are hard at work hauling their traps. The wind is coming up as we cruise down past Southwest Harbor, around the point at Bass Harbor Head Lighthouse and west to the Eggemoggin Passage. In the galley Chef Bouchard is busy preparing a celebratory breakfast treat, Eggemoggin muffins with bacon, cheese and home fries. The water is calm in the passage so we take an hour to get a workout on the Jet Skis at Orcutt Cove before making the push to Camden. Running south through Penobscot Bay, we approach Mouse and Goose Islands literally awash with seals. The captain eases *Golden Compass* ever so slowly towards the rocks for



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On a mission to discover Maine's very best lobster roll, our intrepid photojournalist Jim Raycroft (left), and the *Golden Compass* guests sampled every one they could from Portland to Bar Harbor. They worked off those calories on a trek to the summit of Cadillac Mountain (above), which delivered dramatic views of the fog banks around Bar Harbor.





MAINE



fact file

a photo op until the seals decide we've gotten close enough and bail into the sea. Arriving at Camden at dusk we find the harbor full of pleasure boats and windjammer schooners. Though the wind has turned cold and the weather has continued to deteriorate all afternoon, our last dinner aboard is a wonderful distraction from the elements as the chef serves sautéed scallop à la meunière and roasted rack of lamb with mint sauce. I do my best to ignore the dessert of sautéed cherries with vanilla ice cream but lose the battle in the end.

The famous little port town of Camden, Maine, contains a charming mix of art galleries, restaurants and unique shops offering many locally made quality items. By noon we are back aboard *Golden Compass* making the 80-mile run to Portland on our last day aboard. As the sea miles pass away we total up the votes for the best lobster roll. There must be several thousand Maine eateries offering this signature delight and a thousand ways to prepare it. Having just scratched the surface, we found quite a variety of taste and appearance. For what it's worth, the clear winner for us was offered up by Tara at Cherrystones restaurant in Bar Harbor.

Warm sun, cold wind, heavy rain and dense fog: we had the full Maine experience, which brings up an important point to consider when choosing a charter yacht. From the outset, the owners of *Golden Compass* intended to enjoy their vessel on a world cruise encountering a wide climate range. As a result of thoughtful planning, the yacht's layout and its amenities, owners and guests can find great comfort in any weather. Our Maine cruise was testament to that.

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WHEN TO GO: Spring and summer

TIME ZONE: UTC-5 hours

CLIMATE: One of Maine's three climatic zones, the Coastal Division is tempered by the ocean, resulting in lower summer and higher winter temperatures than the interior zones. Fog is common. Temperatures average 70°F in the summer and 20°F in the winter. Precipitation is fairly consistent throughout the year.

GETTING THERE: For private aircraft Northeast Air FBO is in Portland and has U.S. Customs on call: www.northeastair.com. For commercial flights, Delta, Southwest, US Airways, United and JetBlue fly into Portland International Jetport.

BERTHING (PORTLAND): DiMillo's Old Port Marina
Tel: (207) 773-7632;
www.dimillosmarina.com

ABOUT GOLDEN COMPASS:
www.goldencompass.biz

CHARTERING GOLDEN COMPASS:
Camper & Nicholson's International;
Tel: (954) 524-4250;
www.camperandnicholsons.com

TOURISM: www.visitmaine.com

ABOUT MONHEGAN ISLAND:
www.monhegandaytrip.com/about-monhegan.htm

ABOUT ISLE AU HAUT:
www.islandinstitute.org/isle_au_haut.php

ABOUT ISLE AU HAUT LIGHTHOUSE:
www.keepershouse.com

TOTAL DISTANCE COVERED:
251 nautical miles

TOTAL NUMBER OF LOBSTERS CONSUMED:
Unknown

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