

**As** the 24 passengers settled in for orientation prior to the ship's departure, Capt. Doug Lee made a startling claim.

"I don't know where we're headed," he said.

Concerned looks were exchanged among the group. This is not what one expects to hear before heading out on a three-day sailing excursion through Penobscot Bay, off the coast of central Maine. "You don't know where we're going?" a guest asked.

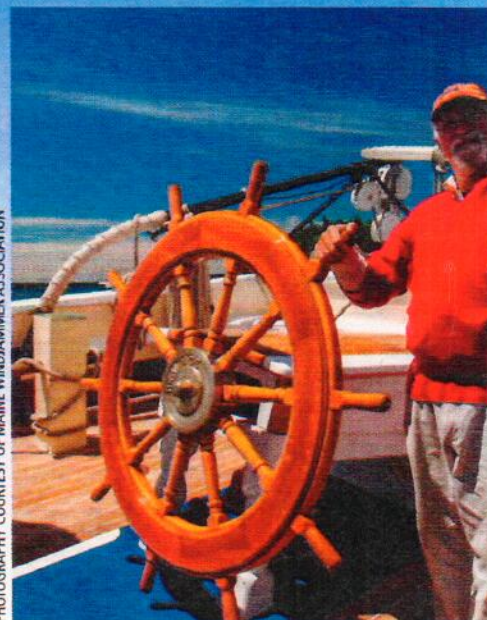
"We're headed where the wind, sea and tide will take us," Doug replied with a wry smile. "And that's my favorite part."

The message was clear: While much of modern life is prescribed, planned and

predictable, our itinerary would not be. Rather, it would be dictated, at least in part, by the whims of Mother Nature. This lent the excursion an added air of adventure.

Doug and his wife, Linda, are co-owners and cocaptains of *Heritage*, a gorgeous 95-foot schooner. In the spirit of large sailing vessels, or windjammers as they're called, that a century ago transported cargo such as coal and timber, *Heritage's* cargo is people. The couple, aided by a crew of five, takes guests who hail from all over the country—indeed, the world—on multiday trips throughout the sailing season (June through October).

Some voyages have a theme, such as visiting lighthouses or attending a summer festival; others may be planned around the



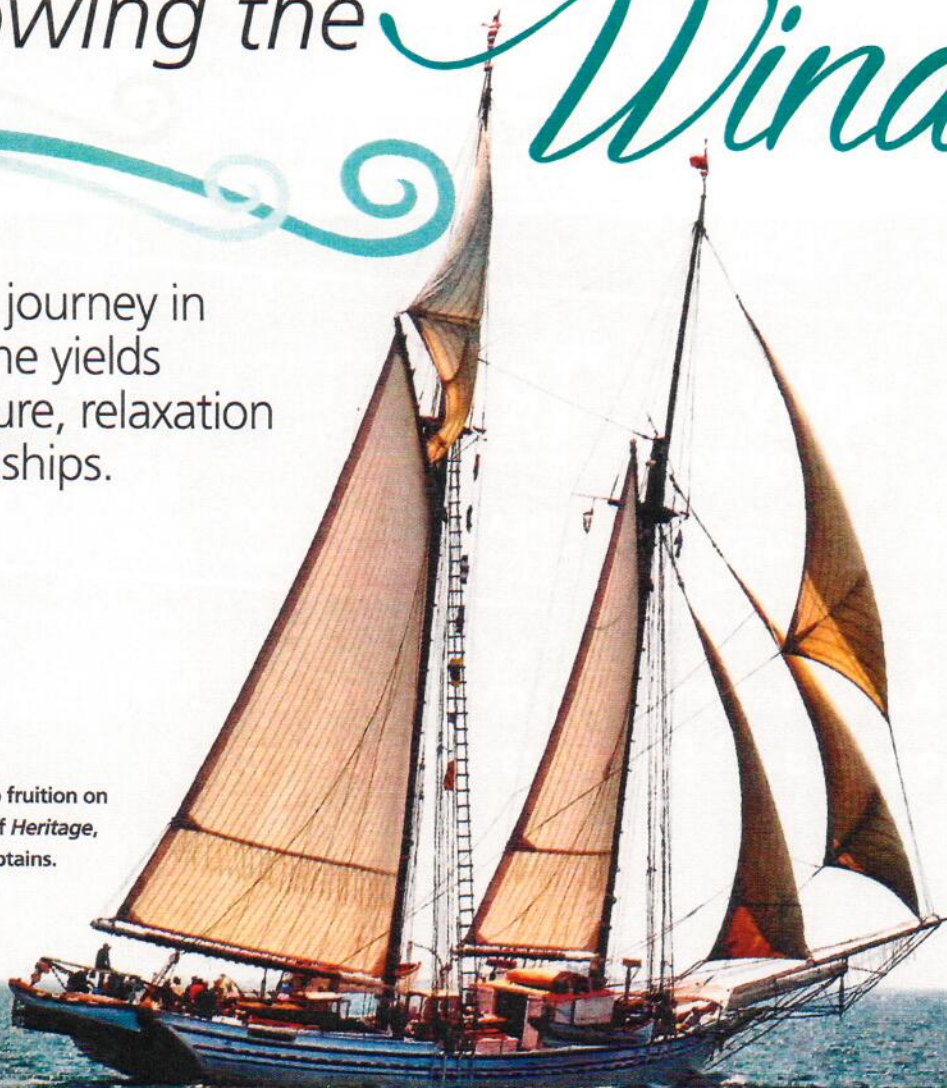
PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF MAINE WINDJAMMER ASSOCIATION

## Following the Wind

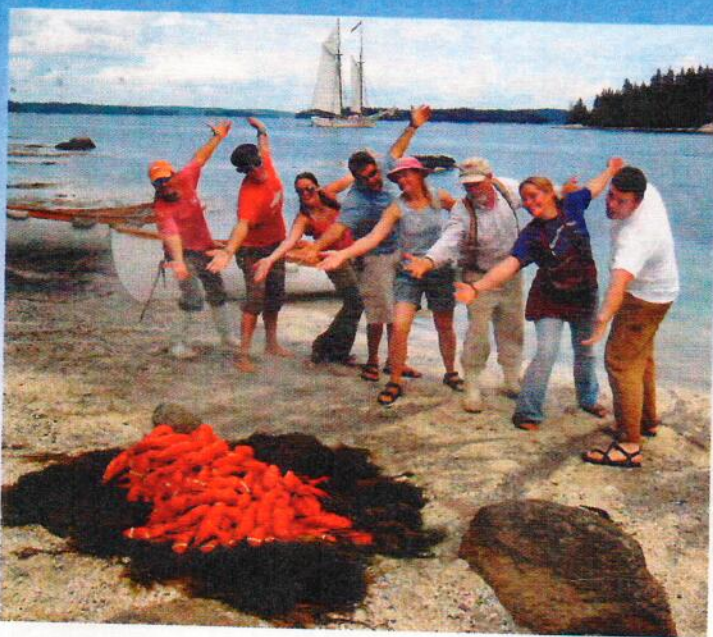
A windjammer journey in Downeast Maine yields rugged adventure, relaxation and new friendships.

BY SEAN CONNEELY

A five-year labor of love came to fruition on April 16, 1983, with the launch of *Heritage*, designed and built by its two captains.







Capt. Doug (far left) has sailed Maine's waters for 50 years and now puts that experience to use taking passengers on voyages to view wildlife, spy scenic coastlines and enjoy lobster bakes (left).

romance of a full moon. But regardless of the trip, every guest who climbs aboard *Heritage* can expect enchanting scenery, scrumptious fare and, best of all, serenity.

### Islands in the Bay

As the schooner slipped into Penobscot Bay, Doug regaled the guests with the region's history. Thousands of years before the first European set eyes on Maine's coast, American Indians inhabited the area. Most recently, the Penobscot Abenaki hunted and fished bay islands such as North Haven and Vinalhaven. Today, these islands are home to modest year-round villages, while also serving as quiet summer-getaway destinations.

Penobscot Bay's more than 200 islands range from tiny rock outcroppings to more expansive land masses such as picturesque Butter Island, which a century ago boasted a small community with a hotel that accommodated 100 guests. Today, like many of the islands dotting the bay, Butter Island is privately owned.

Later that afternoon, as a wonderful reminder that humans are not the only species to call the bay home, Doug pointed out a few harbor seals sunning themselves on a rocky outpost known as Spoon Ledge. Porpoises and whales can also be spotted plying these waters. The ship's deck serves as a great vantage point for bird-watchers as well. Raptors such as eagles and ospreys patrol the skies, while cormorants and puffins,

with their scarlet beaks, waddle among the low-lying rocks.

### Lobsters and Leisure Time

An important tradition on all *Heritage* excursions is the lobster bake, typically enjoyed on an isolated beach. Pickering Island, with its inviting crescent-shaped harbor and large beach set against a dense forest backdrop, provided a perfect setting to drop anchor. In a galvanized-steel tub, 50 soft-shelled crustaceans, topped with a layer of seaweed, were steamed to perfection and served with all the trimmings. Gazing out at the tranquil bay while devouring each tasty morsel made it hard to imagine a more beautiful location.

All the other meals on *Heritage*, whether eaten family-style in the galley or on deck, were memorable, too. Creating culinary magic with the ship's wood-burning stove, Linda prepared dishes rivaling those served in fine restaurants. Whether it was freshly baked oatmeal bread, gooey chocolate-chip cookies or a sumptuous chicken dinner, the fare more than satisfied the most discerning palate.

On board, guests passed the time chatting, playing board games or quietly admiring the scenery, captivated by the rocky shorelines so distinctive of the Maine coast. Those who wanted could lend a hand with the many chores: hoisting the sails, chopping vegetables in the galley or even taking a turn at the helm.

And after days filled with wind and waves, passengers adjourned to their

rustic and snug cabins. The berths have built-in bunk beds, a Hobbit-sized sink and not much else in the way of amenities.

### The Thrill of Sailing

On the second day, the winds stirred up. With a few alterations to the mainsail, the 165-ton vessel began to angle slightly to starboard and pick up speed.

"We're sailing now!" Doug exclaimed.

Anything not nailed down—teacups, books, sunglasses and the like—began a slow descent toward the deck. The boat sliced confidently through the water, reaching a speed of nearly 8 knots, twice the speed achieved the day before. One thing became instantly clear to first-time sailors: To watch a vessel under full sail from shore is enchanting; to be on board is exhilarating.

The next day, as Doug navigated *Heritage* through Rockland Harbor back to the dock, passengers exchanged e-mail addresses and planned their next nautical adventure.

### Planning Your Trip

For more information on booking a trip aboard *Heritage*, call (800) 648-4544 or (800) 807-9463 and visit [www.schoonerheritage.com](http://www.schoonerheritage.com) or [www.sailmainecoast.com](http://www.sailmainecoast.com). For vacation-planning assistance, contact your AAA Travel agent or log on to [AAA.com/travel](http://AAA.com/travel).

H&A

Sean Conneely is a freelance writer who lives in Newton, Mass.