

Eight ships, countless events!

By **BILL BURKE**

During the coming season, the Maine Windjammer Association and its fleet of eight ships will be sailing a series of special events and themed cruises. Here's a look at the upcoming calendar:

June 9, Schooner Gam: A gathering of the entire Windjammer fleet, including an evening raft-up, music and festivities. Guests are given an opportunity to tour all the ships.

June 23, Windjammer Days: A weeklong cruise with a grand sail parade through Boothbay Harbor, with extra time ashore

to enjoy concerts, crafts, a street parade, music and fireworks.

July 4, Great Schooner Race: North America's largest annual gathering of tall ships. More than two dozen schooners race from Isleboro to Rockland.

July 11, Maine Windjammer Parade: From 2 to 4 p.m., the entire fleet participates in an afternoon parade past the milelong Rockland Breakwater.

Aug. 29, Camden Windjammer Festival: Take part in a parade of sail, a maritime heritage fair, contra dance, fireworks, lobster crate race, free concerts and more.

Sept. 9, WoodenBoat Sail-In: A

gathering of the fleet in Brooklin, the headquarters of WoodenBoat Magazine and WoodenBoat School. The gathering will include live music, local refreshments and tours.

Aside from the scheduled special events, the ships of the Maine Windjammer Association will be hosting themed cruises based around such topics as pirate adventures, chocolate-tasting, puffin-scouting, a craft of ale sail, seamanship, Acadia National Park, Down East Beyond Mt. Desert and full moon/night sailing, among others. For a complete list of themed cruises, go to sailmainecoast.com.

What is a windjammer?

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Windjammer cruises are quite different from cruise ship vacations, and it all starts with the ships themselves. A clear departure from the massive vessels that crisscross the oceans, the windjammers in the Maine Windjammer Association's fleet — there are eight in all — are wooden, masted ships between 65 and 132 feet in length, which means the capacity, and what they can offer, is vastly different.

The fleet has ships like the Lewis R. French, which is celebrating its 143rd birthday, and has been homeported in Maine its entire life; the American Eagle, launched in 1930 and the last fishing schoo-

ner of its kind built in Gloucester; and the largest of the fleet, the tall ship Victory Chimes, with 132 feet of deck space.

Each windjammer is unique and offers a different feel: The older vessels that were built for carrying fish and granite have a design that's authentic, while the newer boats that were built specifically for passengers — like the Angelique, built in 1980 — have a little more head room.

Perhaps best of all is the ships' genuine maritime feel. Most of the vessels in the Maine Windjammer Association fleet have been designated National Historic Landmarks. For a closer look at each ship, go to sailmainecoast.com.

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