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Windjamming Page 1

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## **Windjamming on the Schooner *French***

**By Robert A. Hall**

“All ready on the throat! All ready on the peak! Haul away together!” Captain Dan Pease sings out the commands and you haul on the mainsail lines. As she has for 125 years, the schooner *Lewis R. French* is putting into Penobscot Bay. Behind you lies Camden Harbor, television, telephones, and the demands of the 20th century. Ahead lies a week of wind and wave, sun and stars, rest and rejuvenation.

The *French* is a fast boat, regular winner of the coaster class (schooners built before the First World War) in the annual Great Schooner Race. She makes nine knots in a good wind, and a wind is needed, because the *French* doesn't have an engine. In harbor, or on a windless day, she is pushed by her yawl boat.

The wind determines your destination as well. The Maine windjammer fleet sails from Camden, Rockland and Rockport, touring the island-clad waters of the Gulf of Maine. Each night they put into a sheltered harbor, sometimes at a small village, sometimes in a deserted cove with only seals for company.

Passengers can help sail the boat or just relax. Currently there are at least fourteen Maine Windjammers carrying overnight passengers, with others doing short day cruises. Windjammer vacations are available to fit any budget and schedule, with the fleet providing two to six day

cruises from May until October. A six day cruise, meals included, will cost from \$650 to \$700 per person in July or August. Shorter cruises or those in the early or late season are less expensive.

Accommodations are Spartan, cabins cozy and entertainment provided by the passengers, the crew, the sea and the beautiful Maine coast. While some schooners offer family cruises, the *French* is an adults-only boat. The Maine coast is alive with sea birds, seals and porpoise, but the highlight of the cruise comes if Capt. Dan can locate a whale. On our cruise, he found a rare-for-these-waters humpback. The whale breached several times and then vanished with a thrilling flip of its flukes.

### Romance

Nothing is more romantic than the gentle rocking of a schooner on a starlit Maine night. You can even be married at sea. Every year, Captain Dan performs weddings for couples who want an unusual start. The guests will be your fellow passengers. Once there were two weddings on the same cruise, with the first groom lending the second his tux.

The *French* carries only twenty-two passengers, so your chances of meeting your true love are somewhat slim. It does happen, however. In 1988, a young woman from Wisconsin sailed on the *French*. A month later the captain called to offer her the job of messmate. Today Kathy Pease is half-owner and business manager of a historic schooner, mother of the captain's sons--and still obviously in love with her bearded captain.

### An historic landmark

The *Lewis R. French* has been declared an historic landmark, and her antiquity is part of her appeal. The only survivor of thousands of Maine-built coasters launched in the 19th century, she hauled cargo--fish, coal and even Christmas trees--for over a hundred years. Launched on April 28, 1871, she was built in Christmas Cove, Maine, and has earned her living in these waters ever since. She survived storms and, harshest of all, the industrial revolution. In 1976 she was rebuilt as a passenger vessel.

### The lobster bake

No cruise would be complete without an all-you-can-eat lobster bake. One night on each cruise, passengers and crew row to a deserted island, where lobster, clams and corn are steamed in seaweed over a wood fire.

The other meals are prepared on a woodstove by Samantha, the cook, and Erica, the messmate. Coffee and fresh baked muffins are served at seven, with breakfast at eight. Lunch usually consists of homemade soup, salad and fresh baked bread. Dinner might be chicken, fish, or ham, usually with a desert also baked in the woodstove. Sam is an excellent cook, and the food is wholesome and plentiful.

#### What to take

Windjamming is a casual and relaxing affair. You won't, for example, need a watch. You will want casual clothing suitable for layering. One minute you're becalmed behind a spruce and rock-bound island, with passengers sunning themselves in skimpy suits, and moments later you're in the open sea, the bow biting the waves, with all hands in sweaters and windbreakers. Raingear is essential, as there is a fair chance of at least one day of fog and mist.

The *French* is a non-smoking boat, and portable phones or radios are not permitted. Take that novel you've been meaning to read, your sketch pad, or a musical instrument. There is an ice box if you want to bring beer, soda or wine. Cameras are a must. Take a bathing suit, but remember that Maine waters are cold. You'll also want sunglasses and sunblock and rubber-soled shoes are needed for safety.

#### Speaking of safety

Captain Dan cannot recall a windjammer ever losing a passenger, and he doesn't want to be the first. No fire is allowed aboard except in the woodstove and ship's lanterns. Everyone is briefed on safety procedures and life jacket locations. For passengers' protection, the *French* carries radar and a marine radio, her only concession to the modern world.

#### Getting there

Camden, Rockport and Rockland are located on US Route 1 north of Portland. It's about a four-hour drive from Boston or you can fly into Portland or Rockland and have limo service to the dock. Camden is just what you'd design for a charming Maine coastal village and the area has

many excellent restaurants and quaint inns to complete your vacation. Information about the area may be had by calling 800/223-5459. A brochure on the *Lewis R. French* is available by calling Kathy Pease at 800/469-4635.

Go windjamming

You won't have a more relaxing vacation than a cruise on the *French*. When friends tell you they've been on a luxury cruise, smile politely, tug your *Lewis R. French* caps down a bit and squint off in the distance. You can't, after all, be impressed by a cruise on an ocean liner. You're a schooner sailor!

SIDEBAR--Approximately 118 words.

### **Maine Windjammer Information**

A brochure on the *Lewis R. French* is available by calling Kathy Pease at 800/469-4635.

In addition to the *French*, other schooners belonging to the Maine Windjammer Association are *Angelique*, *Grace Bailey*, *J & E Riggin*, *Mary Day*, *Mercantile*, *Nathaniel Bowditch*, *Roseway*, *Timberwind* and *Victory Chimes*. The association may be reached at 800/807-9463.

For information about *American Eagle*, *Isaac H. Evans* and *Heritage*, call 800/648-4544.

For information about the *Stephen Taber*, call 800/999-7352.

The *Wendameen* does one night cruises. Call 207/236-3472.

Windjammers doing short day trips are *Surprise* (207/236-4687) and *Olad* (207/236-2323)

For information about the area, call the Chamber of Commerce at 800/223-5459.

SIDEBAR--approximately 351 words

### **Cooking on a Windjammer**

So you think you're a good cook? How about preparing a meal for 26 people? No problem? Suppose you and one helper have to prepare three meals a day, six days a week, for four months? Suppose you have to cook and serve your guests in a triangular-shaped kitchen/dinning room that's 19 feet on the longest side, has a stairway in the middle, is in constant motion--and you have to cook and bake on a woodstove?!

If you still think you're up to the task, maybe you're ready to spend a summer as the cook on the *Lewis R. French* or another Maine Windjammer. Samantha Donnelly, the French's cook for the 1995 season, was gathering intensive experience for a culinary career. A native of South Africa, Sam passed on some woodstove cooking tips. Each woodstove is different, with its own personality and hot spots, which you must learn. There are no temperature settings, so the rule is "cook until done." Lastly, remember to rotate the food frequently for even cooking.

### Maine Crazy Pudding

Sam made this wonderful desert one night. She said that the recipe is used on many Maine windjammers. Yields one 9 X 13 pan.

1 cup sugar  
2 tbs. soft butter  
2 cups flour  
1 tsp. salt  
2 tsp. baking powder  
1 tsp. nutmeg  
1 cup milk  
1 cup raisins  
2 cups boiling water  
2 cups brown sugar  
2 large pieces of butter  
heavy cream

Cream sugar and butter. Add flour, salt, baking powder and nutmeg. Mix well. Add milk and beat well. Scatter raisins dry in the pan. Spread batter over them. Combine boiling water, brown sugar and pieces of butter. Pour over batter and bake immediately at 350 for 25 minutes (regular stove) or until golden on top (woodstove). Serve with cream.

If you're interested in more recipes, you might want to purchase a copy of *Windjammer Cooking: Recipes From the Fleet*, compiled by Jeffrey V. Slack. Published by Outerbridge Books, 74 Pascal Avenue, Rockport, Maine 04856. This slim volume combines histories of several windjammers with favorite recipes contributed by the ships' cooks.

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**Slides Available:**

1. *Lewis R. French* under sail. © Captain Dan Pease, PO Box 992, Camden, ME 04843. Permission granted to use with this article.

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2. Samantha preparing lunch on the woodstove 3. The whale waves goodbye 4. Schooner *Victory Chimes* off the *French's* starboard bow 5. Sunset off the fantail 6. Bill (L), Joe and Capt. Dan prepare the lobsters 7. Schooner *Angelique* in the fog 8. Capt. Dan at the helm 9. Lunch on the French, 10. *Angelique* and *Heritage* in the fog, 11. roasting marshmallows after the lobster bake, 12. The French at anchor off Sheep Island, 13. Furling the sails, 14. Looking aft on a sunny day, 15. Group photo, passenger and crew, 16. Oars Up! ready to row ashore, 17. A forest of masts in the evening, 18. *Angelique*, *Lewis R. French* and *Mary Day* docked in Camden Harbor, 19. Schooners under sail