

# We have good news and bad news

Now that we're officially into spring, we can start planning for the summer cruising season. And for those who have signed up for this summer's Fundy Flotilla, planning will intensify for that Aug. 14-28 cruise to New Brunswick. Those of you who have registered for that flotilla have recently received the day-by-day schedule for the cruise.

That's the good news.

The bad news is that we only have 14 boats signed up for the Flotilla thus far. That's a big change from what has been the norm. Usually by the start of spring we've already filled our self-imposed limit of 30 boats and are putting would-be flotillians on a waiting list.

The bottom line is that we can't hold the flotilla with any fewer than 20 boats. Only once have we had fewer than 20 boats register. That was in 2005, and we cancelled the cruise that year. Other than that one cancellation, we have conducted these flotillas every year since 1999, generally alternating the itineraries between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

Why registrations are lagging this year is anyone's guess. The Wall Street Journal had statistics a couple weeks ago that showed a general slowdown in tourism in the U.S. this year. Possibly the Flotilla registrations are another example of this slowdown. Possibly we've simply offered the St. John River itinerary too many times. After all, it is our most popular route. Possibly we've exhausted all the demand for this itinerary.

If any of you have any thoughts on the dearth of registrations for this summer's Fundy Flotilla, I'd be interested in hearing your analysis.

For those of you who have asked to receive this newsletter but who haven't ever signed up for the St. John River cruise, here's your chance to do so. But you'll need to act fast. If we don't get a minimum of 20 boats registered for the cruise by mid-April, we'll be forced to cancel the cruise. Those of you who've been on one of our flotillas know that it takes time and effort to organize the cruise, plus time and effort to keep it organized during the two weeks of the cruise. The registration fees pay for the organizing work. They also pay for the free T-shirts, free pennants, meeting rooms, tour buses, weather router, dockside party libation etc. And they also pay transportation and per diem expenses for the leader of the cruise, which is usually traveling by car and ferry in order to stay ahead of the fleet at each port of call. We don't worry if we simply break even on the event – which is generally the case. But we can't hold the event if it will mean going in the red.

So if you've been thinking of joining, please act quickly. You can register at the Points East website, [www.pointseast.com](http://www.pointseast.com). Just go to the Flotilla section. You have only till mid-April to act. And please let your friends know about the impending deadline.

Here's what Roger Duncan, whose New England cruising guide we all have on our boats, has to say about the cruise to the St. John River:

*"Lots of American yachtsmen talk about going to Saint John, and many have been there; but no great number actually make it in any one year, so the hospitality of the Saint John*

*yachting community is not abused and their eagerness is so far undimmed. Besides, anyone who will bring a yacht from Massachusetts or Connecticut through the tortuous channels of Maine and by the tide-scoured, fog-ridden coast of New Brunswick in the sure knowledge that he will probably have to beat all the way back again – such a man will represent the best of New England Yachtsmen and will be welcome wherever he goes.”* (This was written many years ago. For contemporary readers, the only thing I would change is the same applies to “yachtswomen” as well as “yachtsmen.” Both will be enthusiastically welcomed in New Brunswick ... and in Nova Scotia, as well, during our flotillas in that direction.)

## **FAQ, FAQ, FAQ**

*Do we need operator licenses in order to be allowed to use VHF in Canada?* No. Canadian and American boaters are granted reciprocal privileges to use shipboard VHF radios without any licenses, the same as would be the case in their own countries.

*Do we need Customs “decals” to get back into the U.S.?* No, but it doesn’t hurt to purchase one on the Customs and Immigration website. And it only costs \$27.50. It’s basically just a user fee. The CBP (Customs and Border Patrol) agent clearing you back into the U.S. can require you to purchase a decal on the spot if you don’t have one. Of course it goes without saying that you’ll need a passport to get into Canada and to get back into the U.S.

*How much booze can a pleasure boat bring into Canada?* 1.5 litres of wine, or 1.14 litres of liquor, or 24 x 355 ml cans or bottles (8.5 litres) of beer or ale. If you have more than that on your boat, don’t worry. Just tell the Canadian Customs official exactly how much you have aboard, and that it’s for personal use of the crew and the unused amount will be taken back to the U.S. Normally you’ll be told “OK.” If you fudge the truth, and they inspect your boat and discover that you fudged the truth (that is, “lied”) things can go downhill very quickly. Be completely honest about this. Also, if you have a gun aboard, be prepared to surrender it. If you have a pet or pets on board, be sure to have a current shot record. A note from your vet isn’t a bad idea either.

*How bad are the currents in Passamaquoddy Bay?* They can be bad, especially in the two or three hours leading up to high tide, as the Bay of Fundy pushes into the St. Croix River. Take advantage of the currents rather than trying to buck them, especially the flooding current.

*How’s cellphone coverage in New Brunswick?* About as good as in Maine. But check to see if you’ll be hit with roaming charges. If so, consider changing your plan from U.S. to U.S. plus Canada.

*Is there a place to park cars in Northeast Harbor for the duration of the Flotilla?* The Police Department offers safe parking in their lot for \$10/day. Flotillians in the past have also found cheaper alternatives by asking around. In the P.D. lot, your car is available to you 24/7.

## **Photos, photos, photos**

Check out the photos from the last St. John River cruise (2008) at [picasaweb.google.com/fundyflotilla](http://picasaweb.google.com/fundyflotilla). Also, check out the photos at [www.pointseast.com/gallery/g.php/9](http://www.pointseast.com/gallery/g.php/9), which will show you the entrance to Saint John Harbor, the city and waterfront of Saint John, the Reversing Falls as seen from the river (looking toward the harbor), the town and marina at Gagetown (during a spring flood), and Grand Lake (off the St. John River), which is home to the Fredericton Y.C. during the summer. The club has invited the Flotilla to spend a day (or day and night) on the way from the RKYC to Gagetown. (A donation for mooring use will be appreciated, I'm sure.)

## **The next newsletter**

If you are registered for the Flotilla, you'll receive word in mid-April as to whether the cruise will actually be held. I hope we can register at least another six boats in the couple of weeks remaining till then.

Till then, fair winds.

Bernie