

# 2010 Flotilla Cancelled

Fundy Flotilla 2010, which had been scheduled to cruise to New Brunswick (Grand Manan, the St. John River and St. Andrews), has been cancelled, and all registration fees have been returned.

This is just the second time since Points East started the Flotilla program in 1999 that a Fundy Flotilla has had to be cancelled. The reason was the same in both cases: Not enough registrations to make the cruise financially viable for the magazine. The earlier cruise – the 2005 Fundy Flotilla -- had been scheduled to go to the Fundy Shore of Nova Scotia.

Generally a Fundy Flotilla will have 30 boats signed up by May, plus another half-dozen on a waiting list. (We had only half that number this spring.) A few registered boats will generally resign for one reason or another prior to the mid-August start of the flotilla. But most Fundy Flotillas will depart Northeast Harbor with 25-30 boats.

As all of the 650+ members of our Flotilla newsletter list are aware, we have three different itineraries that we use for our Fundy Flotillas. There is the New Brunswick/St. John River route, the Nova Scotia/Fundy Shore route, and the Nova Scotia/South Shore route. Over the years, the New Brunswick/St. John River route has been the most popular, and we have offered that route more frequently than either of the Nova Scotia routes. Possibly we had satisfied most of the demand for that itinerary.

Is that the reason we had so few boats sign up for this summer's Fundy Flotilla? Maybe. Or maybe it was the economy. Or maybe memories of last summer's rainy weather. Whatever was the cause (or causes) – and I'd love to hear your opinions – skippers were clearly not interested in joining a cruise heading for the St. John River and other New Brunswick ports of call, plus Cutler and Eastport in Maine.

What's next, then, for the Fundy Flotilla program? In 2005, we simply waited a year and offered the same itinerary the following year and had a full complement of boats that headed off on the very same route that had garnered such weak support the year before. Go figure. So is that what we should plan for next year, or have we really gone to the well too often with the St. John River itinerary? Your opinions please.

My own opinion is that it may be time for a brand new Fundy Flotilla itinerary. A couple of suggestions have already been put forward. One is to extend the Nova Scotia South Shore route all the way to Halifax. The route would involve an overnight cruise at the start, from Northeast Harbor, Maine, to Shelburne, N.S. We wouldn't visit all the ports we normally do on a South Shore cruise, but we'd have a good sampling, including popular ports like Brooklyn, LaHave River, Lunenburg and Mahone Bay ... visiting a couple on the way to Halifax, and a couple on the way back from Halifax.

Another suggestion is to stay within the confines of the U.S. but get up near Fundy. This suggested itinerary would start in Penobscot Bay (maybe Tenants Harbor or Rockland)

and go as far as Cutler, stopping at a number of interesting ports on the way up and on the way back. For those who relish foreign travel, it would be a relatively simple matter to cruise across to Grand Manan from Cutler for a quick visit.

What are your suggestions for new itineraries for the Fundy Flotilla? Keep in mind the itinerary would have to be of sufficient general interest to attract at least 20 boats. That's our minimum number for a Fundy Flotilla.

However, we also have conducted smaller cruises closer in home waters. To distinguish them from our Fundy Flotilla program, we generally call them rallies or simply cruises. We've done cruises from Massachusetts to Maine a couple of times, and we've conducted a cruise of six Maine rivers one time. These have been interesting cruises but have not attracted enough support from boaters to make them cruises that we would offer on a regular basis. Also, because many yacht clubs and boat manufacturers plan annual cruises along the New England coast, there are numerous opportunities for the skipper who wants to cruise with an organized group to do so in other ways than joining one of our cruises.

What distinguishes the Fundy Flotilla program from any other program is that 1) we cruise to Canada; and 2) we focus on experiencing the culture and meeting the people moreso than just hanging out together at various ports. When we conduct our coastal cruises we aim for the same sort of quality, setting up visits at boatbuilding yards, maritime museums, and historic sites, as well as having interesting speakers at our cruise banquets.

So to sum up: I'd very much appreciate your views on how we can freshen up our flotilla program (if you think it needs freshening up) with new itineraries ... or in other ways. And I'd also appreciate your views on whether we should try to develop a number of coastal cruises along the New England coast and promote them as much as we do our Fundy Flotilla. If we select your itinerary to offer to the boating public, you'll receive an autographed copy of the revised edition of Peter Loveridge's "Cruising Guide to Nova Scotia." (No, it's not available yet, but Dr. Loveridge says he's almost ready to send it to the printer.) And if you're not interested in the Nova Scotia guide, we'll send you a copy of the latest edition of the Duncan & Ware, "Cruising Guide to the New England Coast," as updated by the late-Roger Duncan's grandson.

Finally, if you're one of the hundreds of skippers who enjoy reading these newsletters and dreaming of joining a cruise, but who hasn't yet joined one of our cruises, how come? And what would it take for you to join the hundreds of flotilla veterans who do take advantage of the Flotilla program?

I look forward to hearing from you. Sorry we couldn't accommodate those of you who wanted to cruise to the St. John River with the Fundy Flotilla this summer. But I do hope we'll help get you there in the future. In the meantime, have a great summer on the water.

*Bernie Wideman*