

Penobscot Bay Sailing Trip – FAQs



1. How many young sailors will be able to go?

Only three. We wish we could take more.

2. How many adults will be on board?

Three – the captain, a professional chef and Boat Museum sailing instructor.

3. Are there any costs involved?

No. The captain is a Boat Museum member and he is donating the entire trip to support the Museum's Youth Sailing Program.

4. How seaworthy is the Amel 53?

Extremely seaworthy. Several hundred have been built. They have an excellent safety record. Many owners have used them to circumnavigate the world. This particular boat has crossed the Atlantic three times, crossed the Mediterranean Sea three times, and sailed from Maine to the Virgin Islands and back many times.

The boat is equipped with a powerful diesel engine and a diesel generator. We tow a 10 foot inflatable dinghy that has a rigid fiberglass hull and a 15 HP motor.

We have state-of-the-art RADAR, GPS navigation, Automatic Traffic Identification System (ATIS), digital VHF radio, single sideband radio, four electronic chart displays that are fully integrated with the GPS and RADAR systems, all sorts of alarms and sensors to warn us if something needs attention, automatic fire extinguisher in the engine room, USCG approved life vests, safety harnesses, first aid kit, and variety of other safety equipment on board.

The Amel 53 is perfect for cruising in Maine because it has a large, sheltered cockpit. Because the cockpit is sheltered, we can easily get out of the sun if we wish, and we are protected from rain and fog. We rarely need rain gear.

The boat has heat, air conditioning (rarely used), and lots of capacity for making hot water for bathing and washing. The galley (kitchen) has a gas stove, oven, microwave oven, refrigerator and refrigerator/freezer.

5. What will it be like to sail in the Penobscot Region?

This is typical summer sailing in Penobscot Bay:



Our sailing area for this trip extends from Rockport, ME to Mount Desert Island. Our area includes Penobscot Bay, Jerrico Bay, and several other large bays. The town of Stonington, ME on Deer Island lies in about the middle of our sailing range. We may visit Matinicus Island, which lies about 10 miles south in the open ocean.

We will be sailing through an area that looks much like Lake Winnepesaukee – except it is much larger. There are some open stretches of water, and hundreds of islands. Many of the islands are held in conservation trusts and are uninhabited. Many islands have hiking trails accessible to us, although we may have to walk through some tidal mud to get there.

While we may venture into the open ocean if the weather is nice, we will do most of our sailing in protected waters. Like Lake Winnepesaukee, a strong wind can kick up some sizeable waves, but that is a rare occurrence. Also, we don't usually experience the sort of rolling swells that are prevalent in the open ocean. If we don't like what the weather is doing, we are never more than a few miles from very comfortable shelter.



One of the many great things about Penobscot Bay is the fleet of classic sailing schooners. We frequently see them, and sometimes get to sail alongside one or more of them. We raced this one for several hours – and won!

6. What will a typical day be like?

A typical day will start at about 7 am when our chef begins preparing breakfast for the whole crew. We will enjoy a hearty breakfast on deck in the cockpit if the weather is nice. Otherwise, we dine in the main cabin.

After breakfast, we clean up and get organized for a walk or hike. We use the dinghy to get ashore. The dinghy is large and stable, so we can all fit in one trip. We may hike for an hour or longer. If we visit Acadia National Park, we may spend several hours hiking over rugged granite ledges and climb a small mountain to enjoy the view of the Bay.

The summer breezes usually kick in around mid-morning. Upon returning to the boat, we haul the anchor. It can take quite a few minutes to do this if we happen to anchor in mud. We have to rinse all the mud off the chain as we haul it.

We sail from mid-morning to late afternoon. We avoid setting a destination. We simply go sailing and head in whichever way the wind takes us. The object is to have fun sailing, not to cover a lot of distance. If there is no wind, we may use the engine, but we try to use the engine as little as possible. Some days we stop for lunch. Most days we eat lunch while sailing.

Toward the end of the day, we look for a quiet place to spend the night. We may be all by ourselves, or we may end up in a harbor with other boats. We may take another hike or walk before dinner. By 9 pm, most of the crew is in their bunks.

7. What do you do about meals?

All of our meals will be prepared by a professional chef and served on board.

8. What are the living accommodations on board?

There are four sleeping areas and two marine toilets. The marine toilets have large sinks and showers. The main cabin has the dining area, galley (kitchen), and navigation station. The image below shows the interior layout.



9. Do you sail at night?

Rarely. We do not expect any night sailing on this trip. However, the boat is fully equipped for 24 hour sailing.

If for some reason we decide we must to be underway at night, we only need two people on deck. Anyone on deck would be required to wear a life jacket and safety harness. The point of the safety harness is to physically attach a person to a safety line that runs from the bow to the stern so if they fall overboard they are still connected to the boat. For night sailing we use the boat's life jackets. Each is equipped with a powerful flashing light to help us locate someone who has fallen overboard in the dark.

10. How do you handle bad weather?

Our primary strategy for bad weather is to avoid it, if we can. If we cannot avoid it, we prepare for it and sail conservatively. The boat is fully equipped for bad weather of any kind.

Example: During a recent trip, there was a day when the forecast indicated a risk of strong thunderstorms during the afternoon. We decided to get going earlier than usual and get our sailing in before the storms arrived. We had a lovely sail for about five hours and then sought shelter in a small cove we have used many times. We were the only boat there. From experience, we knew that the holding ground for the anchor was excellent and we were very well protected from any direction. The severe storms passed around us without touching us, but we would have been well-prepared if they had come our way.

11. How experienced is the captain?

He has been sailing since he was a small child. He has over 40 years of experience in command of sailing vessels in the Penobscot Bay area, and he has 20 years of experience with this particular Amel 53. He taught sailing for many years while he was in high school and college. On Lake Winnepesaukee you may see him sailing his iFly 15, which is for now the only one of its kind in North America.



12. Will I be able to communicate with my child during the week?

Only if your child calls you. Cell phone signals in our sailing area are weak. We turn cell phones off to conserve their batteries. If a phone is left on, the battery will go dead quickly because it will spend its energy searching for a signal. There are likely to be at least a few days when there will be no signal at all – and therefore no calls from your child. If we need to reach the outside world, we have four radios on board that can do that.

13. How do I get my child to Rockport, Maine?

Rockport, ME is about a three hour drive from Wolfeboro, assuming you don't get stuck in summer traffic on the coast. The best route is inland to avoid the coastal traffic. We will provide detailed directions for the lucky few who are selected for this trip.