

# Guidelines for Boating the Bold Coast

**Do your homework.** Extensive trip planning is more important here than other sections of coast. Seek out multiple sources of information. Consider scouting areas by land before going out on the water, being sure to respect private property.

**Know what you're getting into.** Tides range from 15-20 feet on average and can be larger during Spring tides. The associated currents are strong and surprisingly unpredictable. For non-motorized vessels, traveling against the tide is difficult at best. When near to shore and traveling in the direction of the flooding or ebbing tide it is common to encounter strong back eddies or currents opposite the overall tidal direction. These conditions can change depending on the height of the tide. Boaters should have a clear understanding of tides and currents, and be familiar with how they interact. Larger vessels should note that there are few protected anchorages along the Bold Coast.

**Go only when conditions are favorable.** No matter how tempting, do not force a trip along the Bold Coast. Even with a forecast for light winds and small seas, challenging boating conditions can develop quickly and unexpectedly here. Have the wisdom to stay ashore and consider alternatives such as hiking, biking or calm water paddling if the conditions are not suitable for an open water trip.

**Respect your limits.** This is no place for the inexperienced. Only boaters comfortable in moving water and dynamic environments and proficient in self rescue techniques should venture out on the Bold Coast. Boating with other experienced and properly equipped individuals can increase safety and assist with rescues.

**Plan your escape.** Of the many small pocket beaches dotting the Bold Coast, most are exposed to open ocean making landing a challenge even in calm conditions. Moose Cove, Haycock Harbor and Baileys Mistake offer reasonable protection in rough conditions, but even getting into these places requires some skill. It is important to identify several bailout options along your route and be prepared to seek shelter, perhaps for extended periods. At high water, emergency egress to a road may be possible in several coves between Machias Bay and Quoddy Head but will require crossing private property to reach the road. Please be respectful of private landowners and in all community interactions.

**Ensure you are properly equipped.** With substantially colder water and exposed landings, boaters should be prepared with proper attire for prolonged immersion. A drysuit is highly recommended for paddling here. Cell phone reception is unreliable in the region. Redundant VHF radios, emergency beacons and GPS units are critical safety items. Coast Guard response time may be longer than other areas of the coast, and there is little commercial or recreational boating activity to rely on in emergency situations.

**A note to thru-paddlers:** while it is not advisable, when the conditions are right there are some who may attempt to kayak the entire Bold Coast in one tide cycle. This requires exceptional paddling fitness, a favorable weather window and timing the tides for assistance from the strong currents that may be found as much as a mile offshore. It can take a seasoned paddler more than five hours to travel between Cutler and Lubec, which leaves little room for error in potentially exposed conditions. Although less exposed, the Lubec Channel from West Quoddy Head to the town of Lubec also sports strong currents that lag tide stages by several hours and produce whirlpools and strong eddy lines. Consider instead a less-exposed, nearshore experience, though note that the interaction of strong currents with the topography of the shoreline and the sea floor can lead to back eddies, wave refraction and confused seas. Paddlers traveling in this area should be comfortable with current and eddy lines and well-versed in reading the water. The safer approach would be to undertake shorter, out-and-back day paddles or to stick to coves that offer some protection such as Baileys Mistake, Haycock Harbor and Moose Cove.