

# Getting Started...

*A Guide to Sailing in Casco Bay*

Summer 2007

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*Everything You Need to Know to  
Start Racing on Casco Bay*



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*Please duplicate, copy and share this document.*

## Getting Started Guide

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**Want to learn to sail?**  
Visit [www.sailmaine.org](http://www.sailmaine.org) for more information on youth and adult learn to sail classes.



## Options on Casco Bay

There are many opportunities to race on Casco Bay and not all require being a member of a yacht club or sailing fleet. You do not even need a boat. Most clubs welcome outside participation and all fleets welcome non-boat owners who want to crew. You can race on Casco Bay nearly every day of the week and you can always be assured a relaxed atmosphere and welcoming group of sailors. First we will take a look at weekday night racing and then have a look at weekend events.

### Weekday Night Racing

We define weekday night racing as any sailboat racing that happens, formally or informally during the week. Start times are usually at 6pm and the racing is over by around 7:30 or 8 pm. All events welcome new sailors and non-club or fleet members.

### Club Open Racing

#### PYC, Falmouth

**The World Famous Portland Yacht Club Thursday Night Race** is a Casco Bay Tradition. This is the granddaddy of them all – and it happens every Thursday at 6pm. The Race is open to anyone who would like to participate, just swing by the race committee boat and pick up a mark list –or- drop by the club the day before and ask the club manager for the Thursday Night Race Instructions.

The start is off Clapboard Island and there are three formal starting groups: Class A – The Spinnaker Class Over 30 Feet, Class B - Spinnakers under 30 feet and Class C - The Cruising Canvas Class. Racing usually last a little more than an hour and the club welcomes visitors to a BBQ on the Club Lawn.

This event is popular with 30 to 100 boats participating on any given night. In August, the warm evenings, light winds, beautiful sunsets and post race BBQ are what helps to make this family oriented event so popular.

Parking is not always available at the club, but paid parking is available at Handy Boat next door or for free at the Holy Martyrs Church on Route 88.

Skill Required – All Levels  
Vibe – Super Mellow  
Who – Everyone is Welcome.

### Club Scored Racing

#### HYC, South Freeport

Harraseeket Yacht Club hosts Wednesday Night Racing offering an open fleet and a one design fleet of Sonars. This is a scored event and prizes are given at the end of the season for the top three boats in each fleet. This event is open to all HYC Members and non-members - thanks to the hospitality of the HYC Race Committee. Starting outside the Harraseeket River at 6pm, the races are run by the Junior Sailing program.

An informal gathering takes place at the club, immediately following races and participants occasionally bring something to throw on the grill. The first start is the Sonar Fleet, a one design class that is 8 to 12 boats strong each week, and the racing class follows. Courses are given verbally, so be sure to swing by the RC boat and get all the information.

This is a relaxed fun loving group who know their way around this section of the bay. Keep a chart handy and stick with the locals. Thanks to the location, the seabreeze stays a little longer making for ideal summer conditions.

Limited parking is available at and along the side streets near the club.

Skill required – All Levels  
Vibe – Fun, Fun, Fun  
Who – everyone is welcome, but you should plan to come back more than once.

### **CYC, South Portland**

Centerboard Yacht Club ([www.centerboard.org](http://www.centerboard.org)) hosts their Wednesday Night Race outside Portland Harbor. This is a bit more formal event, although they do welcome anyone to just show up, and has an organized Dinner following racing. CYC races in multiple classes depending on participants which usually includes a Racing A & B and a Cruising A & B. Some great sailors race out of CYC and expect some fine racing.

Keep an eye out for commercial traffic and do not forget about the dinner. Racing starts at 6pm, but you should be out near the start off Fort Georges with plenty of time to swing by the committee boat for a chat. The race is determined at the club before leaving the Harbor, so showing up dockside is not a bad plan – just watch for depth at low tide along the floats.

After racing, dinner is provided by one of the participants – each boat hosts a night – and sailors can be found discussing the evening's strategy on the club's front lawn. There is ample parking at CYC.

Skill Required – All Levels  
Vibe – Come for the sailing, stay for the food.  
Who – Anyone

### **One Design Racing**

Many boats race one design in Casco Bay on different nights. One design Racing is when boats of the same make and model race against each other without a rating system. Often considered more of a hardcore group sailors than the PHRF or cruising classes, this is hardly the case on weekday nights. Expect a relaxed time and good fun after sailing.

### **J24**

On Wednesday Nights at 6pm the J24 Fleet hosts the weekday night series which is run from Portland Yacht Club in Falmouth. This is formal racing and a boat sponsored dinner follows. All J24s are welcome, and if you do not have a J24, the fleet invites anyone to come for a ride on this popular five person keel boat.

The series is scored for the season and fleet membership is required for J24 owners. If you want to crew on a J24 or just enjoy a ride, the fleet welcomes anyone to come and you are likely to enjoy a fine meal.

Parking is not always available at the club, but paid parking is available at Handy Boat next door or for free at the Holy Martyrs Church for free on Route 88.

Skill Required – All Levels  
Vibe – Competitive Fun Racing  
Who – Anyone

### **Etchells & J/105s**

On Tuesday Nights, the Etchells and J/105 Fleets sail their scored series out of Portland Yacht Club. The Etchells, where 3 to 4 person crews line the rail of these beautiful classic looking race boats, contrast with the modern Racer/Cruiser Style of the J/105s. At 35 feet, the J/105s sail with 5 people, but can take more. Anyone is welcome to sail, but with a limited number of boats and crew positions, coordinating with the fleet is advised. Like most weekday night events, a social gathering follows sailing.

Parking is not always available at the club, but paid parking is available at Handy Boat next door or for free at the Holy Martyrs Church on Route 88.

Skill Required – All Levels  
Vibe – Competitive Racing  
Who – Anyone



## Weekend Racing

There is a full schedule of weekend racing that takes place in Casco Bay. The open events are sponsored by The Gulf of Maine Ocean Racing Association and are scored for a season series. There are many club racing events, but those are not usually open to the public and the schedules are available through the yacht clubs.

**GMORA Events** – For more information visit [www.gmora.org](http://www.gmora.org). Most events that are part of the GMORA Season Series and the Dirigo Bowl for best overall performance, are run in a similar format. The PHRF Racing Classes (A,B,C,D), PHRF Cruising Classes and One Design Classes are all part of the regatta and often start separately, but use the same line. This creates a festival atmosphere and creates a great opportunity for boat watching.

The focus of GMORA is to encourage and support PHRF Racing on the coast of Maine.

***PHRF stands for Performance Handicap Racing Fleet and it is a rating system that allows boats of all types to race against each other - faster boats owe slow boats time for each mile travelled - allowing them to compete as equals.***

Part of GMORA's mission is to score boats for a season series, but GMORA also administers the PHRF Certificate process which is a **very simple and easy way to receive a valid PHRF Rating for your boat.** Through this simple rating system, different boats can compete against each other as equals using a time on distance differential in seconds per mile. A boat that rates 150, for example owes a boat that rates 165 15 seconds per mile. Over a 4 mile race 150, must beat 165 by a minute (15 secs x 4) to save their time and finish ahead of 165. We discuss the PHRF Certificate process later in this document, but it is very easy to receive a valid certificate.

One common theme among all events in GMORA is to deliver a fun sailing experience, both on the water and off. Since these events are club organized, plan to participate in the post-race festivities - this is a great place to meet other sailors, visit the clubs, or just enjoy a cold drink on a warm summers day and share stories about the days racing.



## CYC Regatta

The event is run by Centerboard Yacht Club in South Portland and is usually the first race of the season. This is a single day event that often includes more than one race on the second Saturday in June. Start times are usually around noon, but as always, check the notice of race. The event is preceded by coffee, doughnuts and a skippers meeting and followed by a social event at the club as well as an awards ceremony.

The CYC Regatta welcomes all racers and includes Racing Classes, Cruising Classes and One Design Fleets. Cruising class racers tend to enjoy a more scenic course than other participants – around the beautiful island of Casco Bay.

CYC is an inviting club with full amenities. They have a large lot for on-site parking, launch service, and dockside tie up when available and when water depths permit. At lower tides, there less than 4 feet of water dockside.

The sailing area is near the Portland Ship Channel, keep a chart handy as well as an eye out for commercial traffic.

## Pilot Races

Named after the Hinckley Pilot, a very popular boat is Casco Bay decades ago, the Pilot Races kick off Portland Yacht Club's busy racing season in early June.

Racers are welcomed to PYC Saturday Morning with Coffee and doughnuts and, as with all events, are required to attend the skippers meeting. Pilot is a two day event, that starts around noon and can run as late as 5PM on Saturday, but usually raps up by 3:30 on Sunday. There is usually a party and/or dinner on Saturday Night. Tickets are available during registration.

Portland Yacht Club is one of the oldest clubs in the country, but they are surprisingly welcoming. But, there is no parking at the club for non-members and a limited number of parking passes for visiting yachtsman. You can always park at Handy Boat or Holy Martyrs Church, like on weekdays.

The sailing area is usually between Long Island, Clapboard Island and out Hussey Sound. If you are not familiar with the area, your chart will guide you. This is a great place to sail, with few hazards and is well marked.

While the premiere racing classes will usually race to a mark offshore or "outside" as it is often referred to, the cruising class racers have a great opportunity to enjoy scenic Casco Bay as they compete. Navigation skills are important and the most recent chart a good idea. The one designs race windward leeward races using

inflatable marks and may have 5 or more races in one day, the PHRF racing fleet will likely sail two to races on Saturday and 1 race on Sunday. The Cruising Class usually will do 1 long race per day.

### **HYC Regatta**

This late June pursuit race is a fun and very laid back event. Pursuit format racing adjusts start times based on handicaps. The slowest boat starts first and then each boat will start at a time and signal after the first boat, based on the PHRF rating. The fastest boat will start last. Whoever crosses the line first, wins the race.

Harraseeket typically uses either a long or a short course, both take racers out Broad Sound towards Eagle Island and the Admiral Peary Museum. The race course weaves through beautiful islands and channels in this scenic section of Casco Bay. Keep your chart handy and give plenty of respect to the local lobstermen.

There is a party and awards following the race at this beautiful club house. Since it is on a river, bring some bug spray. There is some parking at the club and on the open side streets. HYC as full amenities, deep water dockage – you can't leave your boat overnight – and a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Take care on your approach to the Harraseeket River and on your way in to the club.

### **PHRF Maine Championships**

Hosting by Portland Yacht Club in July this event offers serious racing as the Premiere 'Round the Buoys event. This is the only event in Casco Bay that breaks up the fleet starting areas. The PHRF Race Fleet races outside in Hussey Sound and the One Design and Cruising Class race in Casco Bay. This event is similar to the Pilot Race, but it attracts a larger fleet and the courses for PHRF Racing are windward/leeward courses using inflatable marks.

The event was organized to mimic the racing at the PHRF New Englands in Marblehead. The New Englands is the premiere PHRF event north of Boston and over 150 boats attend each year. GMORA is always well represented and has produced several class winners in years past.

This Regatta and Saturday Night party are a must attend function for anyone looking to get involved in local PHRF Racing.



### **Monhegan Island Race**

This is the premiere Ocean Racing Overnight Event in Maine and one of the oldest on the East Coast. The Monhegan is run by Portland Yacht Club every August and is a very popular race and the only multi-class overnight race in the area. Last season, nearly 100 boats participated in the Racing, Cruising, Multihull and Doublehanded Classes. There is something for everyone. For more information visit [www.monheganrace.com](http://www.monheganrace.com)

### **MS Regatta**

A charity event is hosted by Handy Boat. This mid-August fundraiser is the single most popular sailing event in Casco Bay. Hundreds of boats help raise thousands for the MS Society each year through corporate sponsorship and donations. Thanks to the large number of participants, helpful staff, and social events – this is the perfect first regatta for anyone starting out. Visit [GMORA.org](http://GMORA.org) for more information and a link to the MS Society events page.

### **Getting Involved**

#### **Through GMORA**

Visit [www.GMORA.org](http://www.GMORA.org) where there is a wealth of information related to participation. GMORA is a laid back organization that exists to promote PHRF Racing on the coast of Maine. The officers are helpful and encouraging to new sailors. Members sail boats from 19 to 60 feet in length and skill levels vary greatly. Any keelboat is welcome and there is a place for old and new, spinnaker or non-spinnaker, skilled or just learning. GMORA scores events for a season series, hosts a large banquet at the end of the year and provides leadership for PHRF Racers.

**New Members are offered a FREE Membership here: <http://gmora.org/pages/membership/new-members.php>**

Regular Membership in GMORA is only \$50 per year and that includes your PHRF racing certificate and scoring/trophies for the season series.

### **Join A Club**

**There are many yacht clubs in the bay.**

[www.cascobaysailing.com](http://www.cascobaysailing.com) has a complete list and up-to-date contact information. Yacht Clubs are a great way to access the water and all have launch service and a Junior sailing program.

### **No Affiliation**

You do not need to be a member of GMORA or a yacht club to participate in sailing in Casco Bay. None of the weekday night events require any membership. With that said, without these organizations this sailing would not exist. These groups support the sport of sailing in our area and are worthy of your support.

## Contacts

GMORA

<http://gmora.org/pages/officer-and-directors.php>

Yacht Clubs

CascoBaySailing.com has a complete list.

<http://cascobaysailing.com/>

## Requirements and Suggestions

There are very few requirements to race on Casco Bay. Basic seamanship, common sense and a love of sailing is all you really need. After all, there are few things more rewarding than spending the day on Casco Bay among friends – new and old.

Sailing in local PHRF and One Design events have few requirements that are in excess of what each sailor should consider before they head out for a Saturday sail.

### Basic Safety and Navigation Skills

It is common sense, but you should have all the USCG required safety equipment on board your vessel whenever you are underway. All local racing fleets and yacht clubs require this along with the USCG and local Harbor Masters. Minimal safety equipment is State Law.

### Respect for Commercial Traffic

Casco Bay is a commercial waterway with lobster boats, ferry traffic and commercial shipping. Show these people the respect they deserve and they will show that respect back to you. Be predictable and courteous.

### General Safety Equipment

ORC Cat 4 – just the normal stuff you already have to meet the USCG requirements and a few others – most boats already have this equipment and most sailors refuse to leave the dock without it. Things like a compass, a first aid kit and flares are included.

### Requirements:

- 2 buckets of 9 liters each
- A non-electric, magnetic compass
- Spare bulbs or parts for all navigation lights
- A softwood plug attached to each thru-hull
- Two fire extinguishers
- 1 anchor
- 1 watertight flashlight with spare batteries and bulb
- First aid manual and first aid kit
- Foghorn
- Radar reflector
- Non-electronic chart(s), light list and plotting tools
- Durable stowage chart showing location of all safety gear
- Echo sounder OR lead line
- Tools and spare parts with a quick way to disconnect or sever rigging
- Lifebuoy with light, reflective tape and drogue OR Lifesling with light and reflective tape
- 4 red handheld, 4 white handheld and 2 orange smoke SOLAS-grade flares
- Heaving line
- Storm trysail OR a mainsail reefable to 40% of normal luff
- Lifejacket with reflective material, whistle, and yacht name for each crew

### Optional PHRF Certification

This is a 1 page application that is **very simple** to fill out. It is really a request for you to disclose the configuration of your boat and your sail plan. With most stock boats no measurement is required and filling out the application is a 15 minute process. If you do not have all your information available, your local sail maker is a good source for much of this information. You may need to have your jib or spinnaker measured for the certificate – just ask your sail maker to do it when they inspect the sail for the upcoming season. They will usually measure the sail as part of the process.

### A minimal understanding of the sailing rules.

There are less than a dozen racing rules that apply in most racing situations. The rules are designed to ensure we all play the same game, and understanding them is important to the racing being fair and safe for everyone.

**The Golden Rule** – avoid other boats and make your intentions known well in advance of another boat.

**When boats meet** – Starboard has right of way over port. A Leeward boat has right of way over a windward boat.

**Getting around a course** – leaving the marks on the required side is part of the race, looking at how others pass the marks can be helpful. If you have any questions when sailing with other boats and you have an opportunity to ask them, you should feel free to do so.

**Starting and Finishing** – The start can be the most intimidating time. You should have a good understanding of the Race Instruction that are provided for the event and review the starting sequence. It is a good idea to know what boats you are sailing with. All the race committees are there to help you have the best time



possible, so do not hesitate to ask them questions.

**The Corinthian Spirit of Yachting** – Yachting is a very social sport and you are likely to sail against the same people time and time again. Use your time on the water to share respect with your competitors and build relationships.

### Minimal navigation skills

**Casco Bay Hazard Areas** – there are several areas on Casco Bay where ledges exist and running aground can occur. This is the Rocky Coast of Maine, after all. Review the waters you are sailing in and keep your chart handy. If you have any doubt about the water, review your chart. Safe boating is no accident.

**Dealing with commercial traffic** – Commercial Traffic has a high priority on our working waterway, so please be courteous and predictable.

### Finding Crew

**Crew Party** – Points East Magazine Sponsors a Crew Match party each May. This is a wonderful social event that kicks off the local sailing season. This is a great way to meet new crew.

**Crew Postings on GMORA.org forum** – you can list your needs once you register and available crew will contact you by posting in the forum.

**Fleet Contacts** – each fleet has a Fleet Captain or in the case of a yacht club, a Race Officer. These people are great help in finding crew and most are very motivated to help you participate.

**Work and Social Groups** – some of the greatest sailors you may never know are people you meet through work, church or other organizations. Someone shared the gift of sailing with you, by inviting someone to crew with you, you are passing that gift on. As sailors, it is our obligation to share the gift.

### Costs

Owning a sailboat can be expensive, but the cost to participate in local sailing events are not. Weekday events are generally free or have a very low annual fee – usually less than \$5 per race, per boat. For weekend events, that usually include coffee and doughnuts, one or two days of racing and a post race social event each day, the cost of a two day regatta is still less than a single day of skiing for you and your crew.

### I Don't Have A Boat?

**Come and Crew!!** In every fleet and at every event you will find someone who would love to have you sail with them. **Getting Involved is easy and won't cost you a nickle!**

**Crew Party** – Points Easy Magazine Sponsors a Crew Match party each May. This is a wonderful social event that kicks off the local sailing season. This is a great

way to meet connect with boat owners and fleet captains.

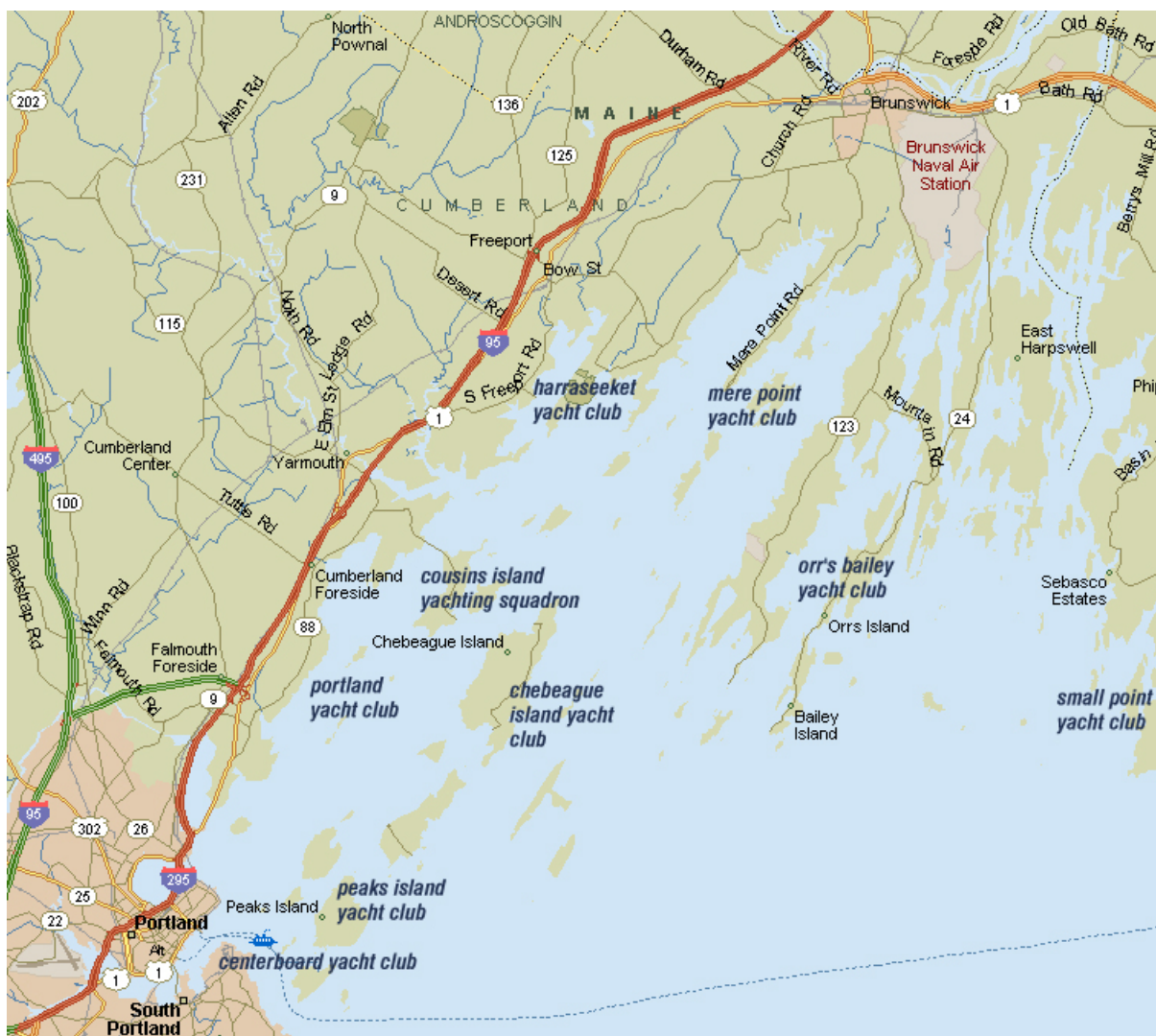
**Crew Postings on GMORA.org forum** – you can list your contact information and wait for the offers to roll in.

**Fleet Contacts** – each fleet has a Fleet Captain or in the case of a yacht club, a Race Officer. These people are great help in finding crew and most are very motivated to help you participate. Visit GMORA.org or Cascobaysailing.com to get connected.

**Post your name at the Club** - stop by any yacht club and leave your name on their bulletin board. Leave your phone or email address and you will likely receive a call.



For **More Information** about sailboat racing in Casco Bay, visit the following websites:  
[www.GMORA.org](http://www.GMORA.org)  
or  
[www.cascobaysailing.com](http://www.cascobaysailing.com)



**Web Resources:**

**Sailing Fleets:**

Gulf of Maine Ocean Racing Association (GMORA): [www.gmora.org](http://www.gmora.org)  
J24 Fleet: [www.j24fleet43.org](http://www.j24fleet43.org)  
Etchells: [www.etchells.org](http://www.etchells.org)  
Youth, High School and Adult Education: [www.sailmaine.org](http://www.sailmaine.org)

**Yacht Clubs:**

Centerboard Yacht Club: [www.centerboard.org](http://www.centerboard.org)  
Portland Yacht Club: [www.portlandyachtclub.com](http://www.portlandyachtclub.com)  
Harraseeket Yacht Club: [www.hyc.cc](http://www.hyc.cc)

**Sailing News and Information:**

Points East Magazine: [www.pointseast.com](http://www.pointseast.com)  
Casco Bay Sailing: [www.cascobaysailing.com](http://www.cascobaysailing.com)

**Want to learn to sail?**  
Visit [www.sailmaine.org](http://www.sailmaine.org) for  
more information on youth  
and adult learn to  
sail classes.