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## Fisheries & Tourism Fact Sheet Series: What Makes a Great Tour?

Maine Sea Grant

Lobster Institute

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# FISHERIES & TOURISM

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## FACT SHEET SERIES

### What makes a great tour?

Happy, satisfied customers will return, and they will tell their friends about your business. They are your best marketing tool. Below are “tried and true” methods of running tours that lead to happy customers.

#### **Know your customers and deliver at least what they expect.**

The key to running a great tour is giving customers what they want and expect. At the very least, deliver what you said you would deliver (truth in advertising). Your guests want to know you are committed to their safety and comfort. They want to see that your operation causes no environmental harm, and that you follow relevant codes of ethics or regulations, such as maintaining required distances from wildlife.

#### **Get personal.**

Your target customers are buying much more than a seat on a boat for a few hours. They are paying for an experience, an interaction with the sea and the coast of Maine, and above all, you. They are buying your knowledge, your stories, your skills, your humor, your connections, your conversation, and your love of this place. They enjoy learning in the outdoors, and they want to connect with people who live and work here. Your customers expect you to talk to them a lot! This is important to consider in your decision to start running tours. Without plenty of interaction with your customers, you will fall short on the vast majority of their expectations, and lose their business.

#### **Provide good interpretation.**

Talking is only part of the art of engaging people in a learning experience using all their senses. Give meaning to the facts. Tell stories that personalize what guests see; make it relevant to their lives. Use props and objects they can touch, food they can taste. Surprise them, provoke them; ask questions that make them think and talk to each other and to you. Be positive. If they learned or felt or saw just one new thing, they are more likely to recommend you. The National Association for Interpretation provides training in the art of good interpretation.



Dana Morse

#### **Elevate the customer service.**

As a tour operator, you and your staff are in the service industry. Tourism research shows that good customer service makes customers come back. Be professional, courteous, and informative at every step of the way. Be clear about trip details (fees and cancellation policy, trip timing, safety, etc.). Your passengers likely have been on other boat tours before yours, and they expect certain industry standards: a clean head, a place to get out of the elements, food and drinks (in addition to the interpretation discussed above). Be prepared to answer questions about any-

thing and everything, from where to eat that night to what species of bird just flew by. Remember the old Maine Guide joke: “How old is a deer when it becomes a moose?” You will get these questions. Have fun, be polite, and answer in a way that makes people want to come back for more and specifically with you.

The University of Maine offers *Welcome ME*, an on-line customer service training for people who work directly with Maine’s visitors, [umaine.edu/centro/welcome-me-quality-service-training-home/](http://umaine.edu/centro/welcome-me-quality-service-training-home/). ■



Catherine Schmitt

*This fact sheet is part of a series intended to provide resources for fishermen and aquaculture farmers who seek to augment their earnings through tourism. More information, including the legal research upon which these fact sheets are based, can be found at [seagrant.umaine.edu/fisheries-tourism](http://seagrant.umaine.edu/fisheries-tourism).*

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