



Fleet 77

2010 Cruise Captain Notes

Cruise Captain Notes (Feb 2010):

This is our 13th year for the Northern Gulf Coast Cruise. On past cruises our normal destination for the cruise was Wolf Bay Lodge in Alabama. However, the facility was destroyed by a fire in December, 2008. As of this date the Wolf Bay Lodge site has been cleared but no construction has commenced and the restaurant is now operating in Orange Beach, Alabama. Paul Gallant provided several ideas and escorted us to several possible alternative destination points in the vicinity of the Wolf Bay Lodge. After looking at our options it was decided Bear Point Marina in Orange Beach, Alabama would be our destination. Bear Point Marina was our destination for the 2009 NGCC. Bear Point Marina was a very accommodating and gracious host along with the on site Flippers Restaurant. Dock space is available at the marina. The Dockmaster has agreed to charge their dock slip minimum fee of \$20 and provide as many slips as possible closer in to the facility. Also there are several options for anchor sites close to the marina.

Fleet 77 will again host a welcome picnic for NGCC participants on Friday evening, May 7.

It would probably be advisable to print a copy of these cruise notes and bring them with you. We do not anticipate providing the customary welcome packets with maps, tide schedules, itinerary, etc. on your arrival, so you must bring your own copies.

Cruise participants will be allowed to park both trailers and vehicles on the FWYC grounds for the duration of the cruise.

The cruising fleet will depart the FWYC for our first destination, Spectre Island (aka Spooky Island), early Saturday morning. Our plan is to be under sail/motor not later than 9 AM. This first leg of the cruise is about a five hour sail. Also, with an early departure you should encounter less powerboat and jet ski traffic, which makes for a much more enjoyable sail.

Ideally you should arrive on Friday to launch and load your boat. Or your boat should be rigged and loaded on the trailer ready to launch at daylight on Saturday morning. Remember, it is a single ramp and

usage is first come first served. Ramp launching and trailer/vehicle parking are free. For Friday night, dock space is usually available and the FWYC charges a very reasonable rate (50 cents per foot with a \$10 minimum). This rate is subject to change but keep in mind these rates are a bargain for this area. You can also beach anchor your boat on the club promontory (free) and walk ashore or anchor out and we will ferry you to/from your boat. Last year the FWYC Commodore surprised us with free wet slips. Maybe we will be lucky again this year.

Update on conditions at anchorages, marinas, and possible stops en route:

Spectre Island: Channel Marker # 51 west of Fort Walton Beach. Anchorage is on the south side of the island out of the ICW. Spectre Island continues to be a good anchorage for the cruise. Weekends are busy here since many locals like to anchor out here when the weather warms. We should have Spectre Island to ourselves on our Thursday return voyage. There are no marina/shore services here.

Navarre Bridge: On the SW corner of the Navarre Bridge there is a restaurant/bar (Juana's Beach Bar), however, you may have to beach anchor or dinghy ashore. Just adjacent to Juana's is a public ramp/dock and restrooms and a short distance to a convenience store for fuel, ice and groceries. On the NW corner of the bridge there is a small "T" dock in shallow water that is accessible. Restrooms are available and from here you can walk to the Butter Fly House, or cross Highway 98 for fast food restaurants, grocery store, and shopping center. No nearby source for fuel.

Quietwater Beach: Located southeast of Pensacola Beach Bridge. The large "T" dock can be used by tying up along-side or by Mediterranean anchor. Beach anchoring is also possible north of the "T" dock area where beach picnic tables and beach restrooms are available. Approaching these beaches requires care due to shallows and finger sandbars. Restaurants, bars and shops are open on the boardwalk. The **Market on the Island** marina store/Beach Marina (short walk across the highway to Little Sabine) has fuel, ice, and convenience store items.

Little Sabine: Located southwest of Pensacola Beach Bridge. If the weather is foul at Quietwater Beach, you may want to anchor in the protected cove of Little Sabine.

Beach Marina: Located in Little Sabine. Transient slips, fuel, ice and convenience store items available.

Pensacola Beach Yacht Club: This club, located at Little Sabine, is available to us. For the past few years they have opened their inexpensive bar and free showers to us. And their hospitality has been superb. Showers and restrooms are located adjacent to the Yacht Club.

Fort McRae/Big Lagoon: Anchorage is located just west of Pensacola Pass. While this anchorage does not enjoy the protection of past years, it remains a good anchorage. Expect no marina/shore services here.

Sherman Cove: This limited service Navy marina is available to authorized military/DOD ID cardholders and is located on the north side of the cut between Pensacola Pass and Big Lagoon. This is a small powerboat marina and the cove is extremely shallow. Even though some of our experienced cruisers have utilized this facility and are familiar with shallow waters, some have run aground here. The marina facility offers ice, drinks, and a toilet. It is open Monday when we first arrive at Big Lagoon, but is closed on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Holiday Harbor Marina: This is a favorite stop on the NGCC. It is located about ¼ mile west of the Innerarity Bridge (west end of Big Lagoon) and reached by turning south of buoy #35. Here you will find a very long visitor dock that accommodates many boats. The marina has a small convenience store, showers, toilets, fuel and ice.

Bear Point Marina: This is our destination point. There will be slips available (\$20 slip fee) or you can anchor outside of the marina in several different locations. The dockmaster will try and accommodate as many boats in slips closer to the marina facility. Fuel, ice, water, soft drinks, beer wine, food items, and miscellaneous supplies are available, as well as toilet and shower facilities. The marina restaurant, FLIPPERS, is where we will have our group picture and dinner. We will need to be seated **no later than 5:30 PM** in the upstairs section of the restaurant. There will be a cash bar, they have excellent appetizers, and you can place your dinner order from the Early Bird Menu or their regular Dinner Menu.

Pirates Cove: Pirates Cove's Restaurant is open (Jimmy Buffet Cheeseburgers). Finding a visitor slip at the restaurant may be difficult. However, you can drive your boat bow straight up unto the beach (if you have a swing keel) and set a beach anchor or dinghy ashore.

Campfires: Plans are for three campfires this year (weather permitting) with one at Big Lagoon and the others at Spectre Island. All cruise participants must bring a bundle of firewood to the NGCC – part of the price of participation. Fire starting/tending duties will be assigned to visiting cruisers. **Remember to bring a bundle of firewood for the cruise.**

Outboard Motors: It is imperative your outboard motor must be in peak operating condition for the cruise. We recommend no less than a four horsepower motor for this trip. In 2006, one cruiser dropped out on Day One because of motor issues. If you must be towed to a marina for motor service, you will likely miss the cruise at considerable expense. While we will try to be helpful, you must remember that the NGCC continues on without you.

It is possible to sail the entire cruise without motoring and many will sail most of this cruise if winds are good. But none of us who have made the cruise would choose to do so without a dependable motor. We pass through some narrow ICW channels that are just too demanding if you must tack or there is no wind. Of course bridge channels are especially narrow and present unique current and wind

problems. These are especially troublesome if you must set anchor or visit the shoals to allow a barge to pass. So, please heed the advice and bring a dependable motor, extra shear pins, and an extra spark plug with wrench.

Lodging: Should you require lodging in Fort Walton Beach, website www.destin-fwb.com/lodging/ links you to lodging in the Fort Walton Beach area.

Alternatives for lodging in Ft Walton Beach are to rent a slip, anchor off of the Fort Walton Yacht Club, or sleep on the boat on the trailer. Slips cannot be reserved in advance but are generally available on a first come-first serve basis. Slip rental is very inexpensive - \$11 per night for a 22 foot boat. On arrival check into the club office and inform Sandra, or one of her colleagues, that you are with the Fleet 77's Northern Gulf Coast Cruise and would like to rent a slip. You may also anchor off of the Fort Walton Yacht Club at no cost. In the past we have beach-anchored boats with a bow anchor and the stern anchored to the beach or tied to a tree. This allows you to wade ashore where the club has picnic tables, toilet and shower facilities.

Fort Walton Yacht Club: For driving directions to the Ft Walton Yacht Club (FWYC), where you will launch your boat and store your trailer, go to the FWYC website: www.fwyc.org. Check visitor information for directions and some good pictures of the FWYC. The club gates are locked around 11:00 pm on Friday nights and reopened at 8:00 am on Saturday mornings.

When you enter the club grounds drive past the club into the dry boat storage area. You will see a row of empty trailers on your right side (south) along the sea wall. Our trailer parking is along this row extending to the gazebo. Only your empty trailers should park in this soft ground/grass area and they should be parked very closely (room is limited) and angled such that the tongue does not meet the roadway. The soil and sod here cannot support a vehicle or a loaded trailer.

On the northeast corner of the main club you will find an icebox. The current price for ice is \$1.00 a bag placed in the adjacent honor box. The lock combination is (given to you upon arrival). The small building by the icebox has showers and toilets for your use. The lock combination is (given to you on arrival)

Parking: Trailers and vehicles may park on the FWYC for the duration of the cruise. We will park in a manner that least interferes with normal club operations.

Water Shoes: Wear water shoes in all beach areas of the FWYC and all beaches during the cruise for that matter. Oyster shells and storm debris hidden under the sand could injure bare feet. One of our fleet members took ten stitches in their foot before the start of a previous cruise.

Your Cruise Planning: A sailor's plans are made in sand, so you will not think of everything you need for the cruise nor will your sailing of the NGCC go exactly as planned. Still, spending a little time anticipating and thinking through what you will do and might like to have along for the cruise can make a

big difference. For example, knowing that we will have campfires, a comfortable beach chair and a stick to roast hotdogs or marshmallows might be important. If you are an assigned fire starter, plan on preparing a small bag of kindling to facilitate your task. If you don't have a bimini, consider a small tarp with attachment bungee cords to spread over your boom for shade while at anchor. If you have never slept a full night on your boat, you have not discovered how hard your cushions can be. A foam rubber mattress topper pad found at many retailers could make a real difference in your sleeping comfort and they are easy to cut up to fit above your cushions. Some cruisers always bring along a couple of containers of those moist *handi-wipes* that are great for a quick wash of hands or wiping away perspiration or suntan lotion at the end of the day. How will you dry your towels/wet clothing? Simple clothespins attach them to your lifelines or lines set out while at anchor. Mosquitoes and sand flies may also be part of your welcome to Florida, so consider bringing repellent and netting for a cockpit or pop-top. Little things can make a big difference in your enjoyment of the cruise.

If you are new to the cruise, part of the adventure may be using navigation charts and channel markers for perhaps the first time or giving attention to the tide schedule to keep from humoring the fleet if you find yourself aground upon awakening the morning. Beach anchoring and sailing five hours without changing a sail setting are also uncommon events for many inland sailors. You will get plenty of practice at all of these things and more during the cruise. And, you will do so with others to help and show you along the way. So, if you are new to cruising, do not worry. You aren't the first and certainly won't be the last to sail the NGCC as a first time cruiser.

Visit the C22 National Sailing Association website at www.catalina22.org for ideas for your equipment checklist. This will help you think of things that you should bring on the NGCC.

Anchoring: From experience we have noted that many inland sailors, mostly race and day sailors, have little experience at anchoring. For some this cruise serves as your first school for anchoring. Although we have seen some amusing first feats of anchoring on past cruises, you need not be embarrassed. We have all been there and done that. However, bringing proper anchor gear for the cruise is important, because it is a safety issue. None of us wants to part with our second anchor to lend to someone who brings clothesline for an anchor rode. Yes, that happened one year. Ideally you will bring two anchors with rode. Consider borrowing a second anchor from a friend if you do not have a second anchor.

Most of our anchoring is on a sand bottom in 8 to 15 ft of water. An ideal rode for the cruise would consist of a 150 ft of good quality three-strand nylon line and about 10 ft or more of chain. This will easily give you a scope of 7:1 with a little extra to spare – and more is always better. Most often you can get away comfortably with 5:1 scope (remember to add the height of your bow above the water when calculating scope requirements). Most of our cruise boats use a traditional 13 lb “Danforth” style anchor with good success. While more expensive, some choose “Delta” or “Fortress” anchors, which are very good anchors. There are, however, exceptions to the sand bottoms at a few of our anchorages where you will find grass and/or mud.

The Navarre Bridge (SW corner) anchorage and the Little Sabine anchorage have areas of grass bottoms that challenge Danforth anchors. It may require patience and numerous efforts to get a good set. Remember to back slowly and give your anchor an opportunity to bite. Little Sabine can be quite a challenge for a Danforth anchor and a Delta or other plow style anchor is best to dig past the grass/weeds (if you are fortunate to have one on board).

Because we practice a form of Mediterranean anchor or beach anchor at Big Lagoon, Spectre Island and sometimes on the beach area at Quietwater Beach (if predicted winds are favorable) just west of the “T” dock, it is necessary to have a second anchor on your boat. At these anchorages we set our bow anchor and then back our boats up to the beach raising keels and rudders until the stern is in the shallows. A stern anchor then is walked to the beach where it is planted in dry sand. The luxury of an extra long rode on each end allows you to pull off the beach to accommodate tide changes without having to reset either anchor.

Just keep in mind, a well set anchor and a functional anchor light on your mast is the recipe for peace of mind and a good night’s sleep—it is no fun to get out of your nice warm and comfortable bed in your cabin at 2 a.m. because you have to reset your anchor, or worse yet breaking loose and banging into fellow cruisers’ boats---yes, it happens.

Boat Toilets: We are sailing for a full week and our portable heads have a finite capacity. So your mate wants to know what your plans are since she has priority for the head and a 2 ½ gallon capacity is insufficient for her alone. Add to this your cruise captain’s warning that “thou shall not dump your pottie at sea and shall not dump it at marina or other bathrooms along the way”. It is helpful to know some answers here to have harmony with your crew and comfort for yourself. Consider the following:

1. Purchase a “Little John and Lady J Adapter” from a marine supply store. These allow you to dispose of rather than fill your holding tank with liquid waste.
2. Know that many days we have opportunities for stops at marinas and restaurants where you can use their toilet facilities.
3. In 2008 our cruisers were introduced to a new product called **Wag Bag**. We used them with great success for the 2008 and 2009 NGCC. The bag is placed in your toilet bowl. You add “Pooh Powder” to your liquid and solid waste and it solidifies it. You zip it shut, store it, and dispose of it with trash. This is a legal trash disposal that results in no complaints.

Wag Bags can be ordered through **Southwinds Magazine** by calling (941) 795-8704 or e-mail: editor@southwindsmagazine.com. The prices for WAG Bags are \$4 for one, 10 for \$30. Wag Bags are also available on line at Cabella’s, and some WalMarts have a similar product that can be found in their camping equipment section. Also, if you do not have a portable toilet some of the outdoor equipment stores or catalogs/on-line (such as Cabella’s) have a toilet seat that fits on top of a 5 gallon bucket for use with the Wag Bag.

Read the articles about WAG Bags at www.southwindmagazine.com/wagbags.php

GOOGLE EARTH GPS Plots for NGCC Route: Make these plottings on GOOGLE EARTH's website to see the NGCC route via satellite imagery. If you have a GPS you will want to store these coordinates for your cruise.

- **FWYC:** 30.25.29.33 N / 86.35.29.70 W
- **Spectre Island:** 30.24.10.14 N/ 86.41.44.43 W
- **Navarre Bridge/Juana's:** 30.23.08.74 N/ 86.51.59.52 W
- **Opal Beach:** 30.21.56.38 N/ 86.58.13.71 W
- **Quietwater Beach Dock:** 30.20.14.73 N/ 87.08.29.27 W
- **Big Lagoon:** 30.19.36.72 N/ 87.19.01.50 W
- **Holiday Isle Marina:** 30.18.31.16 N/ 87.26.11.83 W
- **Pirate's Cove:** 30.19.14.47 N/ 87.31.58.71 W
- **Bear Point Marina:** 30.18.30.57 N/ 87.31.28.89 W
- **Wolf Bay Area:** 30.21.18.95 N/ 87.35.43.99 W

Useful References:

- Nautical Chart 11385 – Florida West Bay to Santa Rosa Sound
- Nautical Chart 11378 – ICW Santa Rosa Sound to Dauphin Island
- NOAA: www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/mcd/dole.htm
- Book: Cruising Guide to the Northern Gulf Coast by Claiborne Young
- Paper copies of Nautical Charts 11385 & 11378 can be difficult to find even locally. Other charts of different scale and detail for the same area may be easier found at West Marine. Chart books are also good choices.

Fleet 77 members not participating in the cruise are invited to join us during the cruise at the following:

- Fleet 77 NGCC welcome cookout at the FWYC gazebo at 5 PM on Friday, 7 May
- Quietwater Beach (Pensacola Beach) on Sunday, 9 May
- The bonfire at Big Lagoon on Monday, 10 May

- The group dinner at Bear Point Marina in Orange Beach, on Tuesday 12 May, 5:30 p.m.
Directions: Alabama Highway 182 to Orange Beach, Alabama. Turn at Highway 161 North to Canal Road (stop light). Turn right on Canal Road and proceed 3.3--3.4 miles. Turn Left to Bear Point Marina. There is a small Bear Point Marina sign on right side of the road. More Specific Maps and Directions available on Google Maps or MapQuest.
- The bonfire at Spectre Island on Saturday 8 May and Thursday, 13 May via boat.
- The post cruise dinner at FWYC on Friday, 14 May. 4 PM Cash Bar 5 PM Dinner

Carole Ann McKenzie, Fleet 77 Cruise Captain

