



Fleet 77

2017 Cruise Captain Notes

Cruise Captain Notes (February 2017):

This is the 20th year for the Northern Gulf Coast Cruise hosted by Fleet 77 and the Fort Walton Yacht Club (FWYC). Again this year we have included the additional destination point, Palafox Pier Yacht Harbor, located in the historic downtown Pensacola area. This will give members on the cruise the option to either stop at the Quietwater Beach/Little Sabine area or the Palafox Pier Yacht Harbor on the Sunday or Wednesday legs of the cruise. The decision will be left up to the captains and their crew to decide which location they will choose for those nights. This means some of the group will be at Quietwater while others will stay at Palafox Pier.

Once again the Amica Bay area will be our destination turn around point for the cruise. Amica Bay includes Bear Point Marina (limited slips available), Pirate's Cove, Ingram Bayou, and Barber Marina. This provides the option for anchor sites or a dock slip. There will be a Pot Luck Dinner at Barber Marina.

Fleet 77 will host a welcome picnic for NGCC participants 6 P.M., Friday evening, May 5.

It would probably be advisable to print a copy of the final updated cruise notes (May 2017) to bring with you on the cruise. We do not anticipate providing the customary welcome packets with maps; however, we will provide tide schedules, updated Itinerary, along with any cruise updates at our first anchorage Saturday night on the beach at Spectre Island. We will assemble on the beach around 6:30 P.M. to allow everyone to have their evening dinner and enjoy the camp fire as the sun sets.

Cruise participants will be allowed to park both trailers and vehicles on the FWYC grounds for the duration of the cruise. We will e-mail a parking layout indicating the areas for parking trailers and vehicles as we move closer to our cruise date. We will also have someone at the FWYC to direct you to the proper parking and trailer storage areas. Upon arrival at the FWYC please check in with the office for boat slip assignment and registration payment if you have not paid in advance.

The cruising fleet will depart the FWYC for our first destination, Spectre Island, Saturday morning. Our plan is to be under sail/motor at your leisure keeping in mind this first leg of the cruise is about a five-hour sail. A departure time between 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. 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, the launch ramp is a single ramp and usage is first come first served. The FWYC Registration form should be completed and submitted prior to your arrival. Ramp launching and trailer/vehicle parking for the week are to be paid in advance or upon your arrival. You can also beach anchor your boat on the club promontory (free) and walk ashore, or anchor out and utilize your dinghy.

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 limited 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 across Highway 98 for fast food restaurants, grocery store, and shopping center. No nearby source for fuel on this side of ICW. Also just west of the T-dock is the East River Smokehouse and Marina—good Barbeque restaurant. Fuel and Ice are available.

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.

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.

Sabine Marina: Located in Little Sabine. Transient slips, fuel, and ice available.

Pensacola Beach Yacht Club: This club is no longer located at Sabine Marina however there is Bar still located in upstairs area. Showers and restrooms are still located adjacent to the current Bar.

Palafox Pier Yacht Harbor: This marina is located approximately 6 miles northwest of the Pensacola Beach Bridge (Quietwater Beach/Little Sabine). The marina has floating dock slips (\$44 daily) with hookups for shore power, fresh water, and basic cable—available on site are fuel, cold drinks, beer, ice, along with restrooms and showers. The marina is next to a bay front bar & grill (Jaco's), and is in easy walking distance to the Pensacola downtown historic district where you will find many different restaurants, shops, a brewery, and museums. This is an option for a stopover on Sunday or on the return

leg of the trip on Wednesday. Entrance into the marina can be tricky so pay attention to your charts—there are some shallows around this area so short cuts are not advised. Palafox Pier Marina information can be found on the internet at www.marinamgmt.com

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. No marina/shore services available.

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 restaurant/small convenience store, showers, toilets, fuel and ice.

Bear Point Marina: This originally was our destination turn around point. Now there are very limited slips available (\$20 slip fee) or you can anchor outside of the marina in several different locations. Fuel, ice, water, soft drinks, beer, wine, food items, and miscellaneous supplies are available, as well as toilet/shower facilities, and washers/dryers. The marina restaurant, FLIPPERS, also has 4 slips available for restaurant customers.

Pirates Cove: Pirates Cove's Restaurant (Classic "Old Florida" type marina) with food and beverage(s). Visitor slips available at no cost or you can drive your boat bow straight up unto the beach and set a beach anchor or dinghy ashore. Restrooms, showers, and washing machine/dryer are available.

Ingram Bayou: This is a natural area with no houses, roads, or boat docks—a very quiet anchorage and well protected from foul weather. Ingram Bayou is located a short distance west of Pirate's Cove.

Barber Marina: A first class marina with plenty of docks slips (\$1 per foot). The facility has restrooms, Ship's Store, showers, washers/dryers, supplies, ice, and fuel. No restaurant facility on the premises. This is where we have our Pot Luck Dinner. Courtesy vehicle is available.

Campfires: Plans are for three or possibly four campfires (weather permitting) with possibly two at Big Lagoon and two 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.

Outboard Motors: It is imperative your outboard motor 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.

It is possible to sail the entire cruise without motoring and many will sail most of this cruise if winds are favorable. 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. An extra fuel hose and/or fuel hose connectors are a good idea.

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

Alternatives for lodging in Ft Walton Beach are to stay in a slip at Fort Walton Yacht Club. You can also anchor out adjacent to the Fort Walton Yacht Club. Upon 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 to complete the FWYC Registration process. You may also anchor off 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 from 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. Vehicle should be parked in the south lot across from the FWYC building or as directed by FWYC staff.

On the northeast corner of the main yacht club building you will find an ice machine. There is no fee for ice. The small building adjacent to the icebox has showers and toilets for your use. The lock

combination for the toilet and showers will also be provided upon your arrival and check-in at the yacht club office.

Parking: Trailers and vehicles may park on the FWYC for the duration of the cruise. We will e-mail a parking layout indicating the areas for parking vehicles and trailers.

Groceries and Supplies: There are several shopping centers a short distance from the FWYC. The closest shopping center has a Winn-Dixie Grocery Store, West Marine, and Wine/Liquor Store. Non-Ethanol Fuel is also available nearby. Directions can be obtained by contacting NGCC Chief Yeoman McKenzie or inquire at the yacht club office.

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 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.

Equipment Checklist: One of the originators of the NGCC, Bob Endicott, was asked during the early years of the cruise to put together an equipment/provisioning list to help folks prepare for the week-long cruise. It became known as "THE BOOK". Over the years new equipment and products have evolved

but for the most part the check list will give you some ideas of what you may or may not want/need to bring on the cruise. With Bob's permission, we are in the process of updating the check list, although a majority of the items will be from THE BOOK. Also last year Jane Overbeck wrote "TRIP TIPS FOR THE NGCC", an excellent guide that covers a wide variety of cruising topics.

While an updated Equipment List is in the works, a copy of Bob's "THE BOOK" and/or Jane's "TRIP TIPS FOR THE NGCC" can be obtained by contacting the NGCC Chief Yeoman at www.captmac747@gmail.com.

Anchoring: From experience we have noted that many inland sailors, mostly racers 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 want to part with our second anchor to lend to someone who brings clothesline for an anchor rode. Yes, that happened one year. Ideally you should 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.

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, this stuff really 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 solutions here to have harmony with your crew and comfort for yourself. Consider the following:

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.

Know that many days we have opportunities for stops at marinas and restaurants where you can use their toilet facilities.

In 2008 our cruisers were introduced to a new product called **Wag Bag**. We have used them with great success since that cruise. 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. Cabella's (on-line web site), as well as some WalMart stores have a similar product that can be found in their camping equipment section. West Marine also has a similar product (Double Doodie Bag with Bio-Gel) that contains 6 bags for \$17.99. If you do not have a portable toilet some of the outdoor equipment stores or catalogs/on-line (such as Cabella's), Wal-Mart, and West Marine have a toilet seat that fits on top of a 5-gallon/2 ½ bucket or other portable toilet units for use with the waste disposal bag products.

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

NOTE: For all you "Do-It-Yourself" folks out there we may just provide the instructions and secret formula so you too can make your own "HOWDIE DOODIE" Bags. After all, the cruise is the official sponsor of HOOLIGAN Foul Weather Gear developed by Captain Paul Gallant of the infamous Blackwater Pyrates.

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
- **Palafox Pier Yacht Harbor:** 30.24.06 N/87.12.51 W
- **Peg Leg Petes**
- **Pier 21 at the Bridge Bar & Sunset Grill (Gulf Breeze)**
- **Paradise Bar & Grill** 30 20.180N/087 08.108W
- **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
- **Barber Marina:** N 30° 18' 47" W 87° 34' 10"
- **Juana's Pagodas & Sailors Grill**
- **East River Smokehouse & Marina at Navarre**
- **Legendary Marina Fort Walton Beach (Brooks Bridge)**
- **Sabine Marina**

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
- **Pirate's Cove:**
<http://www.superpages.com/bp/Elberta-AL/Pirates-Cove-Marina-Restaurant> or
www.piratescoveriffraff.com
- **Fort McRee (Big Lagoon)**
<http://www.exploresouthernhistory.com/fortmcree.html>
- **Bear Point Marina & Flippers Restaurant**
<http://www.bearpointmarina.com/> www.flippersrestaurant.com
- **Barber Marina** <http://www.barbermarina.com/>

- Palafox Pier Yacht Harbor <http://www.marinamgmt.com>
- Fort Walton Beach Yacht Club www.fwyc.org
- Holiday Harbor Marina & Sunset Grill www.myholidayharbor.com
- Pensacola Boat Yard www.psmc.net
- Peg Leg Pets at Pensacola Beach www.peglegpetes.com/marina
- Pier 21 at the Bridge Bar & Sunset Grill (Gulf Breeze) www.bridge-bar.com
- Paradise Bar & Grill at Pensacola Beach <http://www.paradisebar-grill.com/>
- Legendary Marine at Fort Walton Beach (Brooks Bridge)
<http://www.legendarymarine.com/>
- East River Smokehouse & Marina at Navarre <http://eastriversmokehouse.com/>
- Juana's Pagodas & Sailors Grill <http://www.juanaspagodas.com/>
- Sabine Marina (Little Sabine) <http://www.sabinemarina.com/>

Carole Ann McKenzie, Fleet 77 Cruise Capitan ---NGCC 2017