

2018 Catalina 22 Northern Gulf Coast Lake Erie Cruise
By Joshua Landers



“Yeah it’s looking like rain all next week in Pensacola which stinks because we are headed there to cruise the bay for a week.” “Well that’s because tropical storm Alberto is forming in the Gulf.” “What tropical storm...”

So this was the conversation that I had with Josh Sneideman on the Tuesday before the Saturday that we were scheduled to leave for Pensacola Bay. Guy and Tina Campbell (Forget Knot), Katie, Ike and I (Per Diem) had been planning this trip for weeks. On Wednesday we had a new plan, Lake Erie! Katie and I had been to Put-In-Bay Ohio in our younger days when we lived in Pittsburgh. It was a really cool island with lots of bicycles, golf carts, and night life. I spent the day on the phone with Chris Cyrul talking about the places that they had been cruising for the past 2 years on their Olson 34. After another discussion with Holly Gregory who grew up cruising there, we had a solid itinerary and the weather was looking great!

Day1: (Chattanooga to East Harbor Catawba Island, Port Clinton OH)

We left Chattanooga that Saturday morning around 0630. The drive through the mountains of northern Tennessee and Kentucky was beautiful but also about all my poor truck cared to do towing our heavy

cruising boat. We white knuckled through Cincinnati (I hear it is a beautiful town) and the construction in Dayton. We finally got off the interstate and drove through Ohio farmlands. At last we arrived at 1645 with a whole 15 minutes to spare before the Midway Marina office closed. They acted like they had no idea we were coming, but were more than happy to give us slips for the night. We straight away started setting up boats and splashed our little weekend getaways around 2000 hours. Then we had our first of many Lake Erie water snake sightings. Ike was beside himself and wanted to catch one real bad. We persuaded him that it was a bad idea, drove to the nearest restaurant, destroyed some food, bought some groceries and went straight to bed. That was a long day.

Day 2: (Port Clinton OH to Pelee Island Canada)

We woke up early as it seems cruisers do and finished up the rest of the preparations for a week of cruising, showered, got ice and left the marina around 0830. East Harbor is tucked way inside Catawba Island and it took us about half an hour to get out to the lake. As we exited the breakwater, we were greeted with a fleet of fishing boats and fog. Yikes, now I was a little nervous for the first time. Luckily for us, Chris Edwards had suggested the Navionics app for my phone which allowed me to use charts and GPS without cell service. I punched in our destination and it routed us straight to the Scudder Marina harbor. Normally this sail could be done line of sight, but not this day! We cautiously sailed through the fishing boats trawling for delicious lake perch and walleye. As soon as we hit the Canadian border, we were all alone in the fog. We sailed with Forget Knot for 4 hours on a beam reach and 2 hours wing and wing through the fog. Ike had a blast battling the black flies and made a huge mess littering the leeward side of the boat with fly guts. The North end of Pelee Island slowly revealed herself and the wind shut down so we motored the last half



hour to the harbor. We were graciously met by dock hands who welcomed us to Canada! Customs is a little strange here. You simply call a 1-800 number from the marina office, answer a lot of questions, and done. With that all sorted, Ike, the great hunter, attempted to catch some spawning carp in the 50°F (10°C) water. This proved to be entertaining as Guy, Ike, and I all ended up swimming just to say that we did. Then Ike tried unsuccessfully to catch another snake. After the refreshing dip, we loaded up into a “cab”, blasted down a gravel road to the west side of the island only to find out the winery was closed. We made do and ended up having a great time hanging out on the local VFW’s picnic benches. By now we were hungry, called the “cab” again and headed to the restaurant close to the marine which was also

closed or didn't have any customers. We ended up at the local dive spot down the road and had some sweet greasy fried bar food. There was an awesome beach behind the dive bar where we watched the absolute most amazing sunset that I had ever seen in my entire life. We oohed and aahed through the magic light show. Ike swears he saw the green flash, but that cannot be independently verified.

Day 3: (Pelee Island Canada to South Bass Island to Middle Bass Island)

Happy Birthday Tina! Ike and Katie decorated Forget Knot with balloons and a festive birthday sign. We were pumped to have another nice sail only to see that the lake looked like glass. We motored for several hours only to be greeted back in American waters by the customs and border patrol boat. They interrogated Forget Knot (covered in birthday balloons) first then headed our way. Katie and I had already coached Ike about not saying a word about anything unless he was directly asked a question by the officers. The officers asked if we had anything to declare and the first thing out of his mouth was "just this bag of carrots". Luckily they didn't hear him and Katie took him down below for a different type of interrogation. They nicely chatted us up and sent us on our way. We had to check back into the states at Put-in-Bay OH on South Bass Island before we could go to our destination on Middle



Bass. This was Memorial Day and Put-In-Bay was a zoo. Huge power boats, meat heads in tank tops and some interesting cut off jean shorts on the "ladies". The dock guy was totally stressed out and not helpful. We called customs from the video phone at the bath house and got the heck out there post haste. The State Park Marina on Middle Bass Island was only a 30 minute motor away. The marina had cleared out that morning and we basically had it all to ourselves. We all walked across the street to JF



Walleyes so Ike could play in the kiddie pool lagoon. We all ended up in it and had a relaxing afternoon other than the water snake that was also in the pool hiding under a rock. We struck up a conversation with a member of the Middle Bass Island Yacht Club who graciously invited us into the club house for a tour and some air conditioning. We ended up cooking steaks on the clubs grill and celebrated Tina's birthday on their awesome back deck. We caught another awesome sunset on a state beach and then called it a night.

Day 4: (Middle Bass Island back to South Bass Island)



We were now in full cruising mode going to bed and getting up with the sun, but since we only had to go 30 minutes back across to South Bass, we decided to do some exploring. We had obtained some local knowledge the day before about a glass beach near the marina. We eventually found it and had a wonderful time sifting through the pebble beach and finding small pieces of smoothed glass. Ike says that the blue ones are the rarest. After filling baggies with glass and laughing at Guys “art” wad of rusty metal he found, we meandered through the ruins of the Lonz Winery next door. As

usual, it was closed and the grand reopening was scheduled for the next week. Regardless, it was a great morning and we slowly headed towards Put-In-Bay. Put-In-Bay was now a ghost town. We literally had the whole Park Place Boat Club Marina to our self. What a difference a day makes. By now we were in full on tour mode and headed straight to the Perry Monument which is taller than the Statue of Liberty and built to commemorate the War of 1812 centennial. This provided a stunning view of the islands and our home for the next 2 days. Guy and I scouted golf cart deals while Ike and the girls shopped the many stores. We played on the beautiful playground in the center of town and then wandered down the road along the water. Believe it or not we found a winery that was open and hung out underneath



their shade tree behind the building. The Put-In-Bay Yacht

Club was just down the street and we invited ourselves in. A staff worker let us look around and gave us some history on the place. By now we were all pooped and headed back to the boats. Per Diem had been dragging a kayak for 3 days now and I was determined to use it. Katie, Ike and I loaded up and headed for Gibraltar Island in the harbor. The wind was blowing pretty hard by now and the fetch was up. We got blasted going across the little bay and finally made landfall by the “Private Property DO NOT ENTER” sign. After a quick looky-loo, we kayaked down the lee of the island past the Ohio State University research facility. Ike needed a quick break so he hopped ashore to take care of business. Quickly after this we got yelled at for trespassing and were asked if we were ok



because there were no other kayakers out with this much breeze. We apologized and blasted back to the marina. That evening we destroyed some Lobster Bisque at the Boardwalk and went to sleep fat and happy.

Day 5: (South Bass Island)

Today was supposed to be a rainy day but turned off beautiful. We messed around on the playground and at the marina until the golf cart rental place opened. Guy secured us a killer deal for the day and off we went. We first went to Perry's cave to see firsthand the destruction that original owner did to the cave. After that we checked out the Butterfly house next door. A certain wife and youngster cheated by rubbing oranges on their hands and arms to attract the inhabitants. Hangry set in and we drove down the road to the Goat restaurant where Tina and I won the day with some Perch Tacos. Back to Perry's Cave for some mini-golf, where Ike showed his hockey and water hazard blocking skills. Then across the street to Heineman's Winery to tour the world's largest geode which was in fact pretty cool. It is actually a large cave with geodes on every surface. We ended up spending the rest of the afternoon driving around the island to make sure we had seen every square inch. We wolfed down some pizza at Frosty's and went down early again.



Day 6: (South Bass Island to Kelleys Island)

The wind had finally abated a bit and turned more SW, so we left the harbor in puffy conditions. We started with main only since we were running with the wind and wanted to round the island before we



finalized the headsail choice. We rounded the NE corner of the island to meet with nice 2-3 ft waves and the wind was just right for a close reach to the island. It was blowing 10-15 mph at this point and we were making no headway whatsoever in the waves with just the main. We rolled out about 2/3 of our new Blue Star headsail and blasted off immediately making gains on Kelleys. We had an awesome 3 hour sail in 10-20 mph winds with nice big roly waves. The waves calmed down a bit as we got between Kelleys and the main land. With Cedar Point in the background, we found Seaway Marina with no problem and we cooked an awesome lunch on the boat. The team spied a beach beside the marina and headed off with beach towels in hand. Ike showed off for the little girls by practicing karate. Guy and I were on golf cart duty again and headed to town. The locals were not going to cut us a deal for a 2 day rental so we tucked tail and headed back to

the marina. On the way back, we threw out our thumbs to hitch hike and were picked up by Gary the owner of the Village Pump restaurant. We recounted our saga with him and he said that he had 2 golf carts for rent and would cut us a deal. SERENDIPITY! We showed up to the beach in our new whip and spent the afternoon playing on the beach. That night we again cooked on the boat and ate like Vikings.

Day 7: (Kelleys Island)

Exploring was the mission for today. We finally did get some rain, so we hung around the boats a bit waiting for it to stop. It did stop and we headed for town checking out Inscription Point on the way.



From there we hit the little shops in town before heading to the north side of the island to see the Glacial Grooves rock formation and the sandy beach. We explored the old quarry in the center of the island, which was strangely interesting and hauntingly beautiful. We found an art studio in the middle of nowhere, but didn't have \$17k or room on the boats for the sculptures. Plus, Guy already had a sweet piece of art he found several days earlier that looked remarkably like these sculptures. Who knew he was an art

genius. From there, you guessed it, we found another winery, which seems to be the only commerce on the islands in the 1800s. The food there was awesome and then everyone was ready for some more beach time. We dropped the team off at the beach while Guy and I drove around the rest of the island. The coolest thing we saw was a group from the Sea Grant program pulling handfuls of snakes out of a tree. A lady on the team pulled 50 water snakes out of a nest and shoved them into a pillow case. Good grief this place really was snake central. We ate dinner that night at the Village Pump to pay back Gary for his golf cart deal and crashed early. It blew like stink that night and I seriously thought the docks were going to grind themselves into oblivion.

Day 8: (Kelleys to Catawba Island to Chattanooga)

We woke up bright and early to get going before the wind "built." We had a short 6 mile jaunt across the lake back to the mainland. We figured we would just motor since the wind looked light and so we could pack while underway. We rounded the SW end of the island and were met full on by a cold northerly. The waves started out small around 2 ft, then built to 2-4 ft with some random larger ones coming through. Katie had to come up from packing since it was so rough and Ike slept in the v-berth the whole time





without waking up. Tina swears she saw the back of our keel once and I seriously thought about cutting the kayak loose after it flipped over. We made it to the breakwater no worse for wear and bee-lined it for the marina. Katie got tickled at the breakwater as we watched a fishing boat come out, turn 180, and head back after seeing the wave height. We pulled the boats and packed up ready to hit the road at 1130. One funny incident was attempting to maneuver Forget Knot around a well place light pole on the boat ramp. Guess they don't launch many C22s there. We put the pedal to

the metal and got back to Chattanooga right around dark without incident.

Epilogue: We discussed in great detail on the way home as to what we would say if someone asked if we would do this trip again. The answer we decided on is that yes we would definitely do it again if we had never done it before. We have discovered that an adventure is never the same the second time and you can't relive firsts. What I hoped that this trip would do is to open the door to the next trip; the next sense of excitement and trepidation that comes with exploring a new place. ~Josh Landers s/v Per Diem

