

Cruising....Plan Ahead!

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Having recently returned from a lengthy road trip across the U.S., an incredible journey over nearly 6,000 miles of our great and diverse country, it is worth reflecting on all the planning that made the trip possible. When travelling on the water, planning your cruise is even more critical for your safety and enjoyment. When cruising over long distances, it's not like you can just pop into the nearest gas station off the interstate, refuel and buy a bag of pretzels and a Coke, then continue on your way. When cruising on the water, your trip must be meticulously planned and executed with allowances for weather, fuel consumption, possible mechanical breakdowns, marina services and way points.

The first step is to prepare a float plan. Let those close to you know your plans, including projected arrival time, departure info and destination. Notify marinas on your path and secure a berth that will accommodate your vessel's beam and length; power, fuel and fresh water requirements.

For longer cruises, establish way points and check in times with your contacts to inform them of any changes in your plans to accommodate for weather, sea conditions or mechanical issues that might change your projected arrival or departure times. While it may sound mundane, this information could prove critical in the event of an emergency by providing starting points to initiate an emergency search.

One excellent means to stay in touch in real time with friends and family as well as fellow cruisers in and around your location is Nebo, an app available for Apple and Android operating systems. For many, this is the Go To boating app with accurate real time location information as well as a platform to exchange real time information with fellow boaters including photos, points of interest, route travelled, etc. A "Track Me" component of the app allows non-users of Nebo to access your location and tracking data using SMS, WhatsApp, email or Facebook Messenger.

There are multitudinous cruising resources available online and in various publications that are updated regularly. Many cruisers author popular blogs or You Tube channels with legions of followers around the globe. Readers may remember the Atticus II, a 1997 Pacific Seacraft 40 fixer upper family sailboat moored for many months on the Washington waterfront and later rehabbed at McCotter's Marina before embarking across the Atlantic. The YouTube show "Sailing Project Atticus" is available on YouTube and stars owners (and new parents) Jordan and Desiree and their dog Captain Oso. Even for non-cruisers this show is engaging and educational.

The Active Captain community of products, purchased by Garmin in 2017 now includes the Garmin and Navionics apps for both Apple and Android. Both offer integrated navigation and planning tools for cruisers. Additional online resources include:

www.cruisingguides.com - Cruising guides plus access to charts and charting software

www.lakelandboating.com - Waterway Guides for the Great Lakes and tributaries

www.noonsite.com - First hand worldwide cruising information

www.portsbyboat.com - Information on ports and harbors around the world

www.knowwake.com - Great planning info—especially for shorter cruises

Most if not all of these sites offer apps that can be downloaded to your phone or tablet.

Many books have been published about popular cruises such as the Great Loop, to/from the Caribbean and across the oceans. Be sure and look for titles with authors around your own age. Traveling as empty nesters is vastly different than cruising with young children. One excellent book chock full of practical tips for cruising the Great Loop (up the Intra Coastal Waterway and the Hudson, across the Great Lakes, down the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers across the Gulf and Florida and back) is the 2023 Edition of The Loopers Companion Guide, by Capt. John. It's not cheap, but is worth every penny if you, like me, have looper friends or have becoming a looper on your dream bucket list. Another highly recommended book is Fifty Places to Sail Before You Die by Chris Santella. Although published some 15 years ago, the book is chock full of recommendations from sailing experts on their favorite destinations. Be sure and check Amazon or your local library for more destination-specific books and guides.

Interested in learning more about building boating skills and boat safety that can make your boating experiences more enjoyable? A Basic Weather Seminar (2-1/2 hr.) is being offered July 25th. To register or learn more information contact Kelly at papsed@gmail.com. We invite you to visit <https://pamlicosailandpowersquadron.org> to learn more about what we can offer in the areas of Boating Education & Safety.