

FLORIDA CRUISE

Cruising the intercoastal waterway in your own ship offers a different form of vacation few people will ever have the opportunity to take. Living on a lake, we often find ourselves standing on docks admiring the "big" boats wondering -- what it would be like to pilot one. Frequently, we'd often see young couples sitting on the bridge of an exceptionally large vessel and say "no way they own that boat. Certainly, it's papa's." Until now, we never knew how easy and relatively inexpensive it was to sit on our own monster vessel. But, piloting them requires some skill. It's not quite as easy to parallel park a 40,000 pound log, seemingly with a mind of its own, in a cross-wind or ocean current, as one of our "captains" found out.



We picked up two 42-foot Grand Banks, the [Paper Moon](#) and [Lady Alexandra](#), at the Holiday Marina near the the Sarasota airport. Our 15-foot wide home for the week had three staterooms: two in the bow and one aft. Between them the twenty by fifteen foot combination galley, lounge, and dining room, was probably not much smaller than that in our efficiency apartment at Purdue. Our trawler had four levels: a mechanical room with twin 135-hp diesel engines and three air-conditioners, a state-cabin level, the deck and galley level, and lastly the fly-bridge level. With its polished oak handrails, teak decks, and bimini top, our boat stood twenty feet above the water line. Around the edge was a 18-inch wide walk-way that we ran back and forth to throw ropes to dock attendants from mid-ship, the bow, and the stern while docking.



Paper Moon Crew:
Jammie & Joddie Totten, Barb & Terry Kelly



Lady Alexandra Crew:
Larry & Beth Bucklin, Sharyn & Tom Evans

The trawlers were fully equipped with all the latest sailing tools. For navigation we had GPS, Loran, Radar, and two VHF radios. For comfort, we had microwave oven, refrigerator, freezer, propane stove with oven, two "heads" with showers and, most important in Florida, three separate air-conditioners. A brand new tan canvass bimini top ran the length of the fly-bridge, from the instrument panel to the aft ladder, covering an area that comfortably seated twelve people.

The only real skill required to captain this vessel in the intercoastal waterway (ICW) was docking. Piloting it in the ICW could be done by anyone with only rudimentary boating experience. The navigation charts were fairly obvious to interpret and the ICW was well marked. In only two locations did we have to use bearings to find our way, a trivial task for your average boy scout. We read the bearing from the chart, plugged it into the GPS, set the auto-pilot, and sat back and enjoyed the view.



We had to radio several bridges to raise or rotate in order to allow us pass. Our Lady required 20-foot bridge clearance. The Paper Moon required 26-foot clearance, because it had an additional mast to carry a tender. But that was easy. Most bridges cleared water traffic every 30 minutes or within five minutes of our request for passage.



Expect to dock the boat in a wind, with the stern first, in a slip with little more than one-foot clearance on either side. Common sense clearly relegates this job only to the person with the most experience. Resist the machismo urge to take turns at this task. The slightest mis-calculation can surrender your **\$3,000 damage deposit** on a \$800,000 boat and ruin an otherwise wonderful trip. The Paper Moon found a dock post in an unfortunate location, cracked a couple of teak boards in the aft swim platform, and earned an additional charge \$750 for their trip.

We started at Sarasota and motored south to Captiva Island. Traveling for no more than four hours every day, we stopped at the Crow's Nest Marina at the Venice Inlet, at Palm Island Marina, and South Seas Resort heading south. We repeated this itinerary in reverse on the return trip.

- Fri 4/23 *Holiday Inn Sarasota* - 941-355-2781
(Cocktails at Norm & Phyllis Brown,
Dinner at Country Club)
- Sat 4/24 *Jung Charters* – 941-355-2781
Vessels: - Paper Moon & Lady Alexandra
Crows Nest Marina, Venice - 941-484-7661
- Sun 4/25 Palm Island Marina - 941-697-4356 (Susan)
- Mon 4/26 South Seas Resort - 888-777-3625 (Aaron),
Captiva Island
- Tues 4/27 Golf
- Wed 4/28 Palm Island Marina - 941-697-4356 (Susan)
- Thur 4/29 Crows Nest
- Fri 4/30 Holiday Marina (Sarasota)
- Sat 5/01 6:50pm Nashville

Our typical day had us waking around 8AM, having breakfast on-board, using the Marina showers, and departing around 10:30AM. We ate lunch while sailing and docked for the evening around 2PM. At 6PM each boat took turn hosting a cocktail party and around 7:30PM we went ashore for dinner in a nearby restaurant. All the Marina's had pools so our tribe used them in the afternoon. The Crow's Nest had bicycles, which we rode a mile and a half into Venice where the ladies did a little shopping. The South Sea's Resort had a golf course and clean ocean beach. The guys golfed and the ladies beached.



The trip is not for those who get motion sickness. Generally, while we slowly cruised at 9 to 10 knots, boats passed us as close as 10 yards. Each time our vessel rocked side to side with sufficient roughness requiring us to hold tightly to rail to avoid getting bruised. We also had some rough seas on one day when we moved through the Boca Grande pass. The Coast Guard warned of five foot waves, but the most we saw was a couple of feet. Nevertheless, these waves hit us on the starboard and rocked the boat continuously for nearly an hour. In the Marinas few waves rock the boat.

The price tag for this vacation was very reasonable. The boat rented for \$2,800, docking averaged about \$85/night, and fuel costed \$80. Food was cheap. Our typical evening restaurant bill was \$45/couple and included drinks, appetizers (which we shared), the entre, and dessert (which we also shared). Breakfast, lunch, and lots of beer and wine were on-board. I think the girls spent about \$250 to stock the boat for the week. Add it up, divide by two, and that was the cost per couple.



Will we do it again?

Probably not. We have a very long list of trips that everyone wants to do and very little time left to repeat anything.



Docked at
Palm Island Marina



Ladies enjoy pool at
Palm Island Marina



GRAND BANKS BLUE CHIP

Staterooms

Three staterooms: Forward cabin has v-berth with filler cushion, side cabin has three quarter berth with a canvas pull out bunk over, Aft cabin has walk around queen berth, Forward head has stall shower, Aft head has split head and stall shower.

Equipment

Twin 135 Ford Lehman diesels, 8kw generator, three reverse cycle air conditioning units, propane stove with oven, microwave, holding plate refrigerator, holding plate freezer, icemaker, windlass with dual anchor platform, swim ladder and platform, full canvas. Optional RIB inflatable and outboard.

Electronic Equipment

TV with VCR, AM/FM/CD player with flybridge speakers, GPS, (2) VHF radios, (2) depthfinders.



PAPER MOON

Staterooms

Three stateroom Motoryacht: Forward cabin has v-berth, pocket cabin has a three quarter berth with canvas pull out bunk over, Aft cabin has walk around queen berth . Forward head has stall shower, Aft head has split head and stall shower.

Equipment

Twin 120 Ford Lehman diesels, 8kw generator, (3) reverse cycle air conditioning units, undercounter refrigerator, icemaker, built-in cooler under settee, electric stove with oven, microwave, windlass, swim platform with swim ladder, full canvas.

Electronic Equipment

TV with VCR, AM/FM/Cassette stereo, GPS, (2) VHF radios, (2) depthfinders, searchlight. Optional inflatable and outboard.