

2013 North Channel Cruise w/Eco-Trawler 33 by Karen Schuler

Besides a little fun & relaxation, our goal was to test the cruising abilities and living-aboard comforts of the Eco-Trawler by spending additional time in various waters, marinas, and anchorages. As we describe our trip from Manitowoc, WI to the North Channel, we will also point out the amenities and features of the Eco-Trawler that make her a comfortable live-aboard trawler.

On August 11th we packed up and set off for the North Channel. We crossed Lake Michigan in 7.5 hours arriving in Manistee, Michigan in the early evening. We cruised a good part of the way at the very economical speed of 7 knots (8.5 mph) burning only 1.9 gph. Later in the afternoon, the waves picked up to 2-4 footers so we ran 11 knots (13 mph) for a more comfortable ride and used 5.7 gph for that period. The narrow-entry bow and length to width ratio allows the Eco-Trawler to slice through the waves with almost no bow-wake making her very fuel efficient and comfortable in heavy seas.



Manistee north pier and lighthouse



Manistee south breakwater and marker

The Manistee North Pierhead Light is a tapering steel cylindrical tower, 38 feet tall with a nine sided eight foot lantern atop. It is built on a U.S. Corps of Engineers 1,300 foot concrete pier approximately a quarter mile from the shoreline and has one of the four remaining catwalks on Lake Michigan. It is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places for the period of 1925-1940.

Manistee has been a major port since the 1850's, at one time the third busiest port on Lake Michigan. It began with the export of lumber until the beginning of the 20th Century then joined by salt in the late 19th Century. Salt, brine, and chemicals continue to be exported today. The U.S. Coast Guard Station is adjacent to the property.



US Coast Guard Station at Manistee



Manistee Municipal Marina



Docked overnight at Manistee



The 8" thick foam mattresses are really comfortable

The mattresses are recessed into the framework allowing ample headroom. There's plenty of overhead and forward storage. We had no problem unpacking and stowing all of our clothes and accessories for a 10-day trip. The port windows with screens allowed for plenty of fresh air with no early morning sun intrusion. Even the large 24" x 24" hatch with its tinted window was not a problem.



View of catwalk as we leave Manistee



The rainbow after the showers

The next day we continued north to Charlevoix, MI. We encountered some very strong headwinds and a rain shower or two before we arrived at the bridge. It's easy to stay warm and dry in these conditions by closing the windows. The windshield wipers maintain good visibility and with the large side windows and the full glass door you still have 360 degree visibility and a feeling of openness.



Two very comfortable helm chairs are a real treat for long passages.



Entering Charlevoix Harbor



Docked at Charlevoix Harbor for 2 days



The marina is adjacent to the beautiful city park

Charlevoix City Marina - 8 seasonal slips, 60 transient and 2 commercial slips



Treated to an evening concert in the park



One of the many gorgeous mansions close to the bridge



Leaving Charlevoix at the 7:30 am bridge opening



Followed out by a large sailboat

Note the two full-size bikes padded and tied to the port side of the cockpit. There's ample room for them and very easy to load and unload from there. It always feels good to get a little exercise and do some sightseeing off the boat when we can. We used them to bike around the city and will use them again in the days ahead.



Approaching the Mackinaw Bridge



A spectacular sight.....

The Mackinac Bridge stretching from Mackinaw City, MI to Mackinac Island is currently the fifth longest suspension bridge in the world and is the longest in the western hemisphere. It is 5 miles long, 54 feet wide, and 200 feet above the water. All suspension bridges are designed to move to accommodate wind, change in temperature, and weight. It is possible that the deck at center span could move as much as 35 feet (east or west) due to high winds. This would only happen under severe wind conditions. The deck would not swing or "sway" but rather move slowly in one direction based on the force and direction of the wind. After the wind subsides, the weight of the vehicles crossing would slowly move it back into center position.



Repairs and maintenance being done on the bridge



A good close-up

We continued to cruise north from Charlevoix, under the Mackinac Bridge, past Mackinac Island, with our destination of Detour Harbor Marina in Detour Village, Michigan located on the channel between Upper Michigan and Drummond Island. Waves were 2-3 feet most of the way and the weather was sunny and clear. With the auto-pilot keeping us on course, we can enjoy the ride at 7 knots (8.5 mph) and getting 4.5 miles to the gallon. Detour Harbor Marina has been recently dredged and features new docks that are wood floaters. They also have fixed wooded docks for bigger boats (50-60 feet). The docks and the entire marina are in brand new condition completed in 2014.



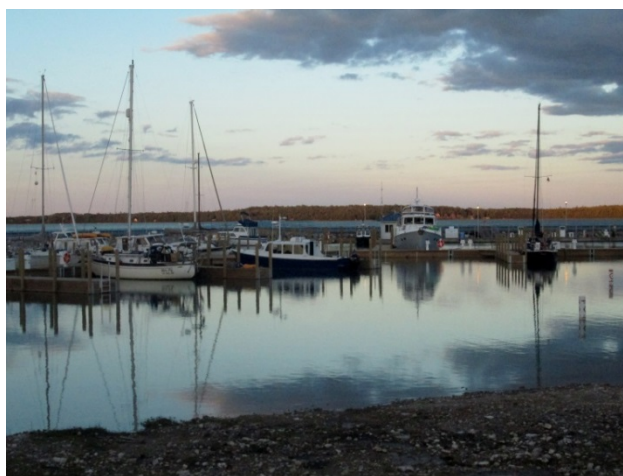
The Mackinac Island Ferry for passengers



Larger Carferry at Detour Harbour



Entering Detour Harbor Marina at Detour Village, MI



Snuggled in a slip for the night



Sunrise photo



All new docks....looking good!

From Detour Harbor Marina we headed north to St. Joseph's Island, entering Canadian waters. We made a brief stop at Hilton Beach Marina to check through with Customs via a phone located in the marina. The staff was very friendly and helpful. Our destination for a 2-night stay was Lime Island located on the St. Mary's River.



Approaching Lime Island



Docking on Lime Island



“Lime Island State Recreation Area is a 980-acre, wooded paradise in the St. Mary’s River. Lime Island received its name from limestone deposits that were dug from the island and processed into cement as early as the 1730’s. Today, the island is known for the excellent walleye and herring fishing and relaxation while watching the Great Lakes freighters pass by.” (Michigan DNR brochure) We did not fish but we certainly did relax, hiked around the island, and watched the freighters and tows pushing barges. The island is only accessible by boat. Boat dockage is available at \$15.00 per night on a first-come, first-served basis.



Tow & 2 barges on St. Mary’s River



Once a settlement, now Victorian home & school self-tours



One-room Schoolhouse built in 1912 – open to public



One of 16 lime kilns uncovered dating in the 1790's



One of 10 camping sites –reservations accepted



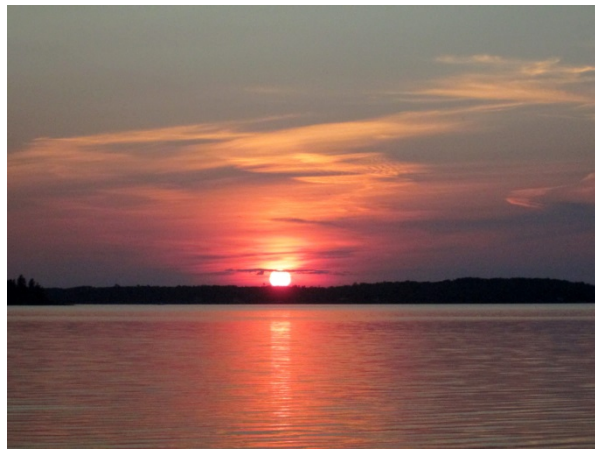
Wood walkways between camping sites, also hiking trails



The next day we kayaked to Round Island and discovered the restored Round Island Lighthouse on the 7-acre island . Built in 1892 to guide boaters through a group of islands in the St. Mary's River, the lighthouse fell into disrepair until the late 1990s when Charlevoix businessman Paul Lindberg and his wife Georgeann, an interior designer, spent 3 years renovating and restoring the lighthouse property. Ironically, Georgeann had just finished reading the book, ONLY KAYAK by Kim Heacox, so upon seeing us in the kayak, she walked down to the shoreline and tossed the book to us. We had a nice chat about the history of the island and what they all did to restore the lighthouse and turn it into a beautiful home.



Upon returning to our dockage we mounted our 2-person Eagle inflatable kayak on the Eco-Trawler. It's light weight and soft sides make this easy to store on the roof top. When deflated, it fits in one of the storage compartments in the cockpit.



A beautiful sunset ended the day and the hum of the freighters lulled us to sleep. The next day we hiked around the island and later in the afternoon we cruised back to Hilton Beach Marina in Hilton Beach, Ontario located on St. Joseph's Island. It is a popular marina with 160 slips and all the amenities to make your visit comfortable and fun.



St. Joseph's Island is the second largest fresh water island in the world. It is located just 30 minutes east of Sault Ste. Marie and is accessible by way of a free bridge. St. Joseph's Island is home to the largest producer of maple syrup in Ontario. It is well known for its rolling countryside, sandy beaches, historic buildings, and quaint villages with gift shops, galleries, and friendly island folk.



Entrance to Harbor Beach Marina



Our spot for a Saturday night



Six of these very strong and versatile aluminum welded cleats (3 on each side) give us the flexibility needed in attaching lines and hanging fenders.



Met the friendly owners of this restored steel hull trawler



Biked to St. Boniface Catholic Church for evening service



Keeping Trawlers Midwest open for business answering emails. This area closes up easily to look neat and protect the items inside.



Getting exercise and enjoying the countryside



Cute driveway greeters



Bubbling brook with quaint seating



Next plan was to anchor out for 2 nights – the locals directed us to a cove area around several islands a couple miles north/northwest of St. Joseph’s Island. Lots of rock formations everywhere but with the aid of our depthfinder and very clear water, we managed to keep our prop out of harm’s way. We also have the option of tilting the motor up in shallow waters. This model Eco-Trawler has a remote-controlled Powerwinch 41 Windlass and a Delta galvanized 35# plow anchor with 15’ chain and 250’ line.





We also used the optional Honda 3000-watt generator on this trip which allowed us to use the electric stove and air-conditioner when not on shorepower.



Taking a refreshing dip in the pristine waters



How about some wine with dinner?



A 5-step custom-made aluminum ladder stores on brackets in the cockpit, is light-weight yet very sturdy, and can be simply placed on two aluminum pegs on the port end of the swimplatform. This ladder can be used when the boat is in the water or on the trailer. And – it floats!



Next morning kayaking around the islands



Climbed ashore for a scenic picture



Returning to the boat around this bend



The scenery is spectacular

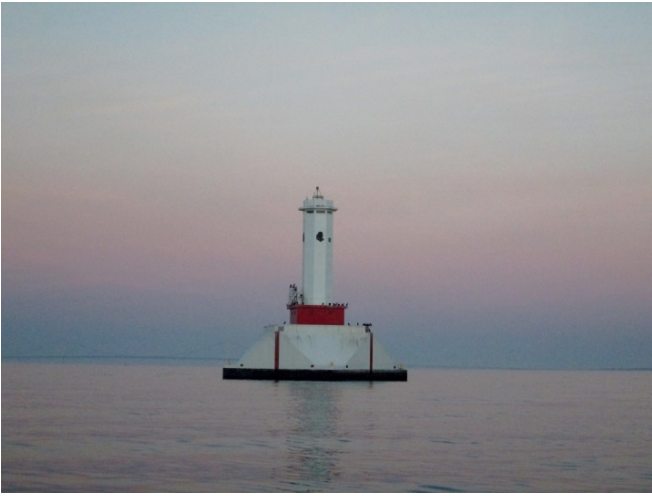


Back to Hilton Beach for one more night



Breakwater with pier is a nice feature of the harbor

One quick stop on Mackinac Island to clear customs.

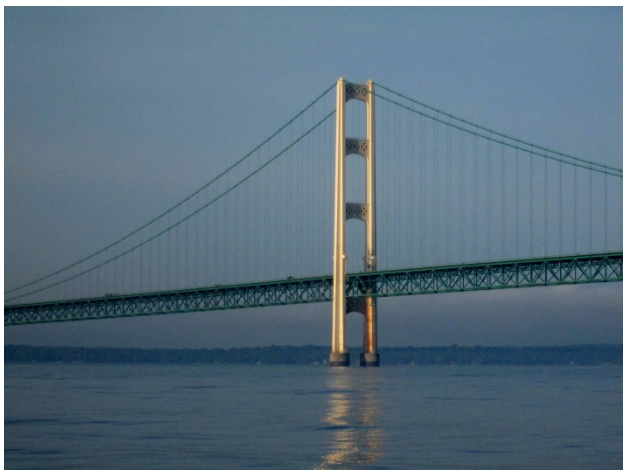


Round Island Passage Light (1948, automated in 1973) near Mackinac Island. Also known as Mackinac Island light.

Also shown is the Star Line Mackinac Island Ferry with service to Mackinac Island from Mackinaw City and St. Ignace Michigan.



Round Island Lighthouse was constructed in 1895 and is only 600 yards from the Passage Light. For 120 years, the lighthouse has withstood the harsh climate of the Straits of Mackinac.



We cruise back under the Mackinac Bridge and head down the west side of Lake Michigan following the Upper Peninsula of Michigan toward Wisconsin. The waves are 1-3 feet so we motor along at 9 knots (10.5 mph) and get 3 miles per gallon.



Washington Island Ferry



Shipyard Island Marina

On our last overnight we docked at the Shipyard Island Marina directly across the harbor from the Washington Island Ferry we passed entering the well-marked channel. Washington Island, WI, located six miles off the tip of the Door County Peninsula, is a favorite Midwest destination for tourists year-round. We treated ourselves to a nice dinner at the Sailor's Pub Restaurant located right there at the marina.



And here we are....back in the Manitowoc Harbor. It's been a fun, relaxing journey on a trawler designed with comfort and economy in mind. In the 10 days on board, we only ate out twice. The roomy side-by-side fridge/freezer and surrounding storage cabinets held all the food we needed. The 33 Eco-Trawler definitely lives up to our slogan, "Comfort you would not expect"!

On this trip, we cruised about 800 miles. If we did this trip again we would probably trailer the Eco-Trawler to a port near the North Channel and spend more of our time exploring that area and eliminating the long stretches of cruising on Lake Michigan. We recently trailered the Eco-Trawler to Hastings, Minnesota and spent 5 days on the St.Croix River both anchoring out and overnighiting on a sand bar. We enjoyed the scenery and exploring some of the small towns along the river. It is nice to have those kind of options.