

CRUISE REPORT: GUNKHOLING THE SOUTH BAY

This report covers our travels to the South Bay and back. The cruise was intended to explore as many new spots to visit and anchor as possible. Most participants never left their boats over the 10-day trip. While we did raft up late in the day, all rafts were separated by 7 PM.

Day #1 (6/5/20) Four boats traveled from the Choptank to the Patuxent and met a fifth boat who had traveled the day before. The early morning breeze was S 5-7> 10 kts later in the day. The sail to R-10 was pleasant but after that the wind was on the nose and we motored the remainder of the way picking up stronger wind against as we approached the Patuxent. Our anchorage for the evening was just beyond R-8 on Mill Creek in Solomons (38 20.145/076 26.173). Keeping with distancing we had two rafts of two boats and held our Captain's meeting by radio at 1730. Five boats were present.

Day #2 (6/6/20) We left early for our next destination, Smith Creek on the Maryland side of the Potomac. The sail down the Patuxent was pleasant but once we reached the Bay, the wind (S5-10>5) became light and most boats motored to Pt Lookout. Some found enough wind when we reached the Potomac to sail part way up to the creek. Our anchorage choice was in or across from Dove Cove (38 07.432/076 24.845). We again had two rafts with Divided Sky anchored in between. Five boats were present.



Day #3 (6/7/20) We left early for the Greater Wicomico. One boat retired due to electrical problems and returned to the Patuxent. The sky was sunny again and the wind initially gentle, (N 8-10>NW 15-20) became brisker as we approached Pt.

Lookout. Cruisers encountered waves of 2-4 and wind resulting in a fast and salty trip to Smith Point. Once we turned down the Bay around the Point, the water became less problematic and we had a nice sail to the River. Anchorage was in Mill Creek which is the first creek on port immediately after entering the River (37 47.566/076 19.328). We had a 3-boat raft for cocktails and Divided Sky joined us by dinghy. The raft broke up after visiting. Four boats were present.

Day #4 (6/8/20) We left in light air (N5-8) which increased slightly when we reached Deltaville so that some boats could sail part of the way. After taking on fuel, water and pumping out at Deltaville Marina, we anchored in Jackson Creek near the Fishing Bay Yacht Club (37 32.714/076 26.949). It's a very pleasant location without traveling around the Stove Pipe sand spit to get to the Fishing Bay anchorage. We had one 2 boat raft and our Captain's meeting was carried out by radio. Four boats were present.

Day #5 (6/9/20) Only three boats went on as the crew on the fourth boat dealt with a mild illness. Once again we had light air from the south (S 5-6>10) and motored until mid-morning when the wind picked up and we were able to beat the remainder of the trip to Wolf-Trap Light and then Mobjack Bay. We ended up anchoring at the head of the North River because wind and water appeared to make our initial choice in Blackwater Creek more exposed (37 25.329/076 26.949). The site included the Elmington Plantation which resembles Monticello. This resulted in a 9-10-mile trip to the anchorage from the open bay. Three boats were present.



Day #6 (6/10/20) In anticipation of more brisk southerlies today, we left the anchorage early to try to reach the bay without fighting head winds. It happened that the wind went SW during the night so Mobjack Bay was relatively calm and the breeze from the SW light. We reached the mouth of the Bay by 9:15 AM and

started north with the intention of reaching Mill Creek before the front arrived late that afternoon. Wind (SW 5-10>S 5-10>10-15) gradually shifted to the S and increased over the day so that by noon we were motor sailing with genoas partially reefed while surfing off the 2-4-foot waves. Brisk sailing was experienced by everyone. Our fourth boat was able to join us and everyone reached Mill Creek safely before the front arrived at 4 PM. We had a three-boat raft which Divided Sky visited briefly by dinghy being concerned about the GI issues they had (37 47.622/076 19.288). Four boats were present.

Day #7 (6/11/20) The front arrived with wind (S 20-25) and threat of thunder storms with rain so we took a layover and everyone slept, read and recovered. We had the captain's meeting by radio. Four boats were present.

Day #8 (6/12/20) The wind had shifted to the NW and despite an early start it was already brisk (NW 10-15 >N 5-10>5) when we got out on the bay. We motor sailed and motored across the Potomac in 1-3>2-4' waves until we cleared Pt Lookout whereupon the water calmed and the wind gradually decreased. It was continually on the nose the entire trip. Our anchorage was the Mill Creek above the bridge on the south side of the Patuxent. Divided Sky left us to join another CSSM cruise so we had a 3-boat raft with the remaining group (38 20.179/076 30.179). By now, we were all in the same bubble and so we joined together on Moonshadow for cocktails. Three boats were present.



Day #9 (6/13/20) The wind returned from the north (N 10-15 g20) so all boats agreed to wait one day and return on Sunday. Some went for water and pump out and others went sailing on the Patuxent. We anchored in Mill Creek by Solomons as we had the first night. (38 20.145/076 26.168) Three boats were present.



Day #10 (6/14/20) We left Solomons Island with the other CSSM Cruise group and started up the bay in wind (E 7-10>ENE 7-12>3-6. Once able to clear Cove Point it was a beautiful sail up the Bay on a tight reach. When the wind decreased, everyone motored home safely.



Observations: June cruises are something we should encourage. While there will be some wind shifts that can delay progress, the days are longer, cooler, dryer and the wind stronger than later in the month. The trip to Mobjack Bay was cut short by the front but I recommend another effort with the intention of staying for more than 12 hours. It is a round sailing Bay with anchorages on all sides. There is plenty to see.

Nights:

Divided Sky-6

Elusive-9

Moonshadow-9

Tryst-9

Whisper-2