

To There and Back: the Albemarle Loop Cruise on Elusive

June 7, 2023: Left BP Marina at 0725 for Solomons or Mill Creek. WS 5 NW. Motor sailed with partial genoa and motor at 2500 rpms. Because Bay was flat, we continued south at 6.5-7.5 kts past the Patuxent to the Potomac River and then across to Smith Point. We arrived at 1630 and had the anchor set in Mill Creek by 1700. It was a long day and we covered 64.1 nm.

June 8, 2023: Left Mill Creek at 0815 and started motor sailing for Fishing Bay/Deltaville. After crossing the Rappahannock River, we put up both sails and sailed to Jackson Creek to pick up fuel. Winds were light but boat moved well. We had multiple sightings of dolphins in groups of 3-4 including tail thwacks and multiple dives. We also discovered a stowaway beautiful red/brown moth. No fuel available at Jackson Creek, so we started around to Fishing Bay where fuel was available. Got caught in severe T-storm (WS 30 kts) before we could get to Fishing Bay. When storm cleared, took on fuel and anchored there. The moth was disembarked at the fuel stop. It was a day for T-storms and several pods of dolphins. 23.4 nm.

June 9, 2023: Left Fishing Bay at 0730. WS was light 5-8 kts W. We motor sailed down the Bay to Thimble Shoals arriving about 12:15. We motored through Hampton Roads to Portsmouth and arrived at Ocean Yacht Marina by 1430. We saw many warships in Norfolk Harbor along the way. 49.5 nm

June 10, 2023: Left Portsmouth around 0900 for the Dismal Swamp. Arrived at the Deep Creek Lock in time for the 1100 opening. Because we were traveling at low tide, the approach to the lock was very shallow although we did not ever run aground. The lock raises boats 6 feet to the level of the canal. The army corps of engineers maintain a depth of 6 ft in the canal but there are stumps and tree limbs which can make travel more challenging. We did encounter some of them but without harm to the boat. We did not encounter any boats on our trip to the visitor center which is at mile marker 28.9 SM. The trip was lovely with lots to see including birds, cypress trees and many turtles. Tied up at the visitor's center at 1430. We toured the museum and visitor center before getting ready for dinner. 25.5 nm.

June 11, 2023: Left visitor center around 0900 which was very early for the 1100 lock opening about 3 miles down the canal. We had to wait for a bridge to open before proceeding to the lock. We encountered two north bound catamarans who had made the 1100 lock opening and were proceeding to the visitor center. Below the lock we entered the Turner Cut which was very straight and joins the Pasquotank River to the Canal. Once in the river we continued south to Elizabeth City. We tied up at Mid America Christian University which is just north of the EC bridge. The weather was expected to be T-storms and rain with SW winds of 15-20 g 30. The docks at Elizabeth City were expected to be difficult with strong southerly winds. This dockage at MACU was free but had no electric and modest services(students are on break). It is maintained by the Maritime Ministries who use a fleet of sailboats in visiting other ports (think Caribbean). Contact information is on website at MACU. 20 nm

June 12, 2023: We sheltered in place awaiting a better weather window. We could easily walk to Elizabeth City but because it was Monday many restaurants and stores were closed. The crew enjoyed a round of Mexican Train.

June 13, 2023: 0815 we left dock and proceeded to the bridge for the 0830 opening. We sailed down the river to the Sound and proceeded westward. The wind was SE at 5-8 kts so we motor sailed again. Reached the Yeopim River around 1400. Arrived at Albemarle Plantation marina. This marina is not suitable for boats drawing more than 6'. We got into the mud once or twice while at the marina. This is a resort community and not necessarily ideal for visiting mariners as there is only small café for food but it does have fuel and pump out. The people are very friendly. 35.6 nm

June 14, 2023: 0935 leave marina for Edenton. WS10-15 NW so trip was done by motor because wind was on the nose. Passed under the bridge (not on our chart plotter) about 1030. Then had 2-3' waves just off the bow until we reached Edenton. Tied up to town dock at 1130 without help. This was most challenging tie up of the trip. 15.5 nm

June 15, 2023: Layover in Edenton to tour colonial town. Historical Society is very close to town dock. Many different period homes reflecting the history of the area. Lovely town. Good restaurants.

June 16, 2023 0700 leave marina for Coinjock. Wind light from the SW so motor sailed to mouth of North River which is the ICW. Then motored up to Coinjock. Arrived ahead of T-storms which were predicted for late in the afternoon. 1500 arrived Coinjock. This marina has a restaurant with the best food and it is now twice the size it was 5-6 years ago. Prime rib is a must and it was excellent. 52.4 nm

June 17, 2023: 0750 leave Coinjock. WS 10-15 g20 NW. Currituck Sound had 2-3' waves and wind on the nose for the first 25 nm. Once we left the sound we motored comfortably to Great Bridge Lock which we reached at 1400. This lock raises and lowers boats 1'. The remainder of the trip to Portsmouth was uneventful. Arrived at marina about 1600. 45.5 nm

June 18, 2023: Layover in Portsmouth to do laundry and tour Norfolk. Visited the Wisconsin BB 64 which brought back memories of my Navy experience on the Enterprise for a few weeks.

June 19, 2023: Leave marina at 0655 for Mill Creek. WS 5-10 SE. Arrived Thimble Shoal at 0900. Put up sails and motor sailed up the Bay. Reached Windmill Point 1415 and so continued to Mill Pond where we anchored. 61.4 nm

June 20, 2023: 0700 left Mill Creek for Solomons. WS 10-15 g20 E. Wind speeds were actually slightly higher than was forecast. Put up main with 2R and unfurled small genoa. Sailed across Potomac River with 3-4' waves and plenty of wind. BS was between 6.5-7.6 kts. Everyone got wet. As the day progressed, the wind and water decreased slightly to forecast values. Arrived Patuxent River 1400. Tied up at Zahnizer's Marina. 40 nm

June 19, 2023: Layover in Solomons because of predicted Gale force winds. Visited Calvert County Museum and enjoyed a second round of Mexican Train.

June 20, 2023: 0900 leave marina. WS 10 NE. Wind was enough for sailing in flat water but not sufficient to push boat through 2-3' seas. Motor sailed with main to R "2" on Choptank and then motored remainder of the way to Oxford. Arrived BP Marina 1420. 30.3 nm

Totals: 16 days cruise. 463.2 nm