



My Voyage on La Peregrina (the Pilgrim)

I thought a few days would allow enough time for me to process my voyage on La Peregrina (the Pilgrim); however, I was wrong, I'm still reliving moments of the voyage. The following is just a glimpse into my adventure taking La Peregrina from Beaufort, NC to Annapolis, MD (both historic ports).

We started in Beaufort NC, a small sea town, midway up the Atlantic coast with sailing roots older than our country. It was there that I met La Peregrina, Captain Joe and crew. La Peregrina is a small, pretty, one mast sailboat strongly made for open ocean use and my home for the next seven days.

Sail plans were laid upon meeting ship and crew. There were two basic routes North for us to choose from: a) the outer sometimes faster route into the Atlantic and around Cape Hatteras; or b) a safer inland route on the Intercoastal Waterway. The Cape Hatteras route looked dicey with a strong North wind and heavy seas forecasted. That well-deserved dangerous reputation needed to be respected so the safest route was selected— The Intracoastal Waterway (ICW). My goal of sailing by Cape Hatteras would have to wait until another day.

With route selected and compass point now set, hours of nervous energy fell away as we left the Marina. Prior to leaving, a lone dolphin was spotted in the Marina, a good omen, way cool!!!. Our adventure began...



Beaufort to Oriental, NC

The beginning of our voyage North took us from Beaufort, NC into the Neuse River where I sailed by the Town of Oriental. Memories came flooding back as Oriental is where I took my first sailing lessons in April 2017.

These historic waters are where the once notorious Edward Teach (Blackbeard) took haven aboard the Queen Anne's Revenge, whilst running from the British (Arrrgggghhhh!). Like much of this experience and many sights, seemingly all too soon, Oriental too had passed beyond our sight.

“For the final leg of our voyage, we would be sailing nonstop for 32 hours.”





Peace in the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW)

Anchor weighed over fresh ground coffee, weather and wind forecasts were discussed as day broke and slow miles of pristine marshes and wetlands passed by. Wind for sails is constantly sought after until the sun starts to fall and awaited anchorages approached. In preparation of sunset water depths, swing room, and anchor scope become the most important topic of conversation. The anchor drops, boat and crew settle in for the night with a sigh of long miles made that day. It's time for dinner and light talk until the sunset fades and stars begin to glow, La Peregrina and her crew rest until next daybreak.

Super cool Navy vessel huge wake.

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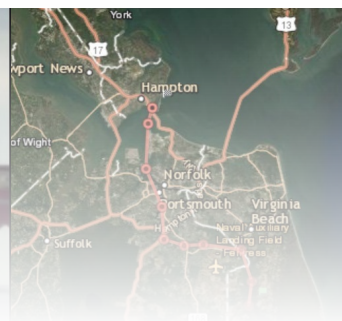
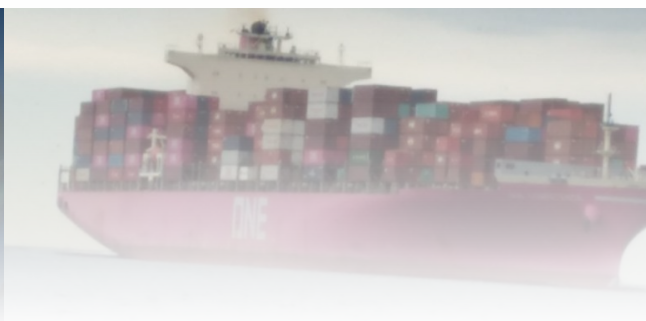
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This pattern repeated as we moved North. At times motoring or sailing or both—depending on wind or the lack thereof. A beautiful route, we saw many sights in our days traveling North along the ICW. With its numerous canals, rivers, bridges and locks, varied vessels and anchorages. Oh and ospreys galore! Quiet nature in all her beauty. Time for long thought as miles disappeared behind us. I didn't know then that our quiet days were behind us.

Seemingly without warning, we entered urban America with its industrial plants of rusted steel, concrete and steam. Soon after came the shipyards of Norfolk. There I felt like a mouse as the tiny La Peregrina made her way among giant aircraft carriers and mega container ships. Living history all around us. Bringing La Peregrina to our last anchorage on the ICW, we were surrounded by urban noise and sights. I longed briefly for the quiet left behind.





Conquering the Chesapeake Bay

For the final leg of our voyage, we would be sailing nonstop...no more anchoring. We began an overnight sail, near and inside major shipping channels. With shifting, gusting high winds and larger waves forecasted, plans were set and an uneasy sleep would follow.

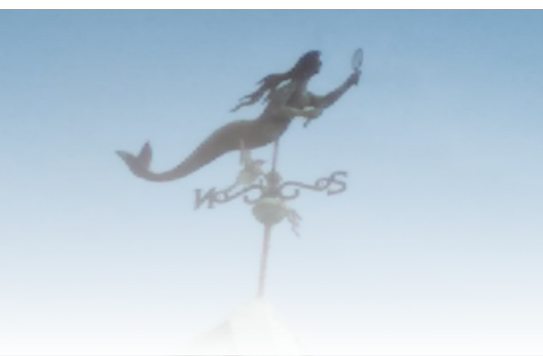
Before I knew it, at the break of day, off we went. As the sun rose we started to sail North in the Chesapeake Bay, nonstop from Norfolk, VA to Annapolis, MD. To do so our crew divided the sail time into four (4) hour watches: two at helm and two sail trimming and helm support followed by four (4) hours rest, then repeat for 32 hours. We wore life vests with tethers when on watch.

My watch was 10pm to 2am, then back on again at 6am. I was excited, but what started in as a beautiful day sail became challenging and very cold. As darkness fell, I retreated to my berth to try and rest. Waking for my watch I found the wind direction had become shifty—from dead North to West and back again. It gusted upwards 25 knots and larger waves broke over the bow as we slugged along in the dark. Everything in rough seas can be difficult—even just moving about takes planning to avoid falls. My earlier excitement soon gave way to concentrating on the simple act of sailing. I felt strangely at peace among the chaos of wind and wave.

Sailing along in the dark has its challenges. You steer, check course and peer out intently looking for other boats, rogue waves and any other dangers. Then you glance up at your sails. Checking their shape, adjusting them as needed. Then repeat. As quickly as it began my first watch was over.



La Peregrina





End of the Voyage

Too soon! Cold and wet could not dampen my enjoyment nor quell my smile. I have so many great memories for that part of my voyage. Like the moment when I peered upward at my sails only to find them lost in thousands of stars as the cold wind whipped and waves splashed.

My long anticipated night passage then came to an end as my last watch started. A perfect morning aglow with another beautiful sunrise. A morning finding wind and waves calming after a fitful night. A night filled with excitement, beauty, awe and wonder. Incredible memories made.

Port Annapolis was made scant hours later. As we neared the Chesapeake Bridge and our final channel marker, we could see a regatta starting. With dozens of bright spinnaker sails making a kaleidoscope of color before us...as if welcoming us. Then as soon as it started it was done. A great adventure and voyage was had. Now I had only to bid La Peregrina and her crew goodbye. Peering one last time at her as my feet felt hard ground once again. I'm still in awe of new memories made.

P.S. -Oh the stars! Did I mention waves and sails and stars?

The Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) is a waterway old as sailing. The Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) is a 3,000-mile (4,800 km) inland waterway along the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coasts of the United States, running from Boston, Massachusetts, southward along the Atlantic Seaboard and around the southern tip of Florida, then following the Gulf Coast to Brownsville, Texas. Some sections of the waterway consist of natural inlets, saltwater rivers, bays, and sounds, while others are artificial canals. It provides a navigable route along its length without many of the hazards of travel on the open sea.

