



The Apostle Islands Cruise 2022

By Stuart Weist

Photographs provided by Apostle Islands Cruisers



What an adventure it was for the 2022 Apostle Islands Cruise. We were blessed by fantastic weather and some of the best sailors I have ever met. In total we had 11 boats join us 8 were Catalina 22s, 1 was a Hunter 260 (the big boat), one Catalina 25 and our most adventurous skipper in a Capri 18. It was a fantastic time and for those that missed out you truly missed an adventure of a lifetime.



We started our week on Monday with a launch day for everyone. Since boats were coming from all over the country and arriving at various times it made it much simpler to have a launch day. Everyone put in at the Bayfield ramp and then motored the short distance to the marina just around the corner. Then, it was off to explore the city of Bayfield, Wisconsin. Filled with shops and a great Maritime Museum, the skippers and crews had plenty of time to shop, explore, and learn all about Lake Superior and her vast history. Monday night with the boats all sorted and settled and the vehicles parked for the week (special thanks to the city of Bayfield for their hospitality in parking all the trailers) we met for a kickoff supper in the park near the marina.

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This was the official start to the week as we shared food, answered final questions, reviewed our route, and gave away some fantastic door prizes! Yup, you read that correctly we had sponsors for this cruise who gave away more than \$1,500 worth of gifts and prizes. We had a full 1-year unlimited Boat US membership, some sailing gloves and gear from Ronstan, skippers bags courtesy of Waters Sails (thanks Joe!), Catalina 22 national Association gifts of coasters, pins, and patches, discounts from Boom Kicker, a gift certificate from CRS Apparel, maps from the Apostle Islands Marina, and some amazing gifts from Catalina Direct (including a new mast cradle for the bow for one lucky sailor). Everyone walked away with something and all at no cost to the skipper. Some of our crews I think even came out ahead with all the gear won. But enough about all the fun prizes what about the sailing?



Tuesday, we headed out early and were met with the first and only cruise ship I have ever seen in the Apostles. My family enjoyed sailing around the ship and were in awe of its sheer size. Winds were light on Tuesday, so it was mostly a motoring day. We made our way out of Bayfield to Raspberry Island to explore the light house. It is one of the most picturesque lighthouses in the Apostles lovingly maintained by the National Parks service. Volunteers staff the house, so we enjoyed a full tour of the grounds, and climbed to the top of the light to take in the breathtaking view. From there we sailed/motored to Sand Island to take in the sea caves since the wind was not favorable to see the caves at Devil's Island. I had never been to the caves on Sand Island before, but they are now among my favorites.



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The caves which are carved by the winter storms stretch deep into the sandstone cliffs of the island. You can row, swim, and motor through the caves and explore to your hearts delight. It was a fantastic adventure with my family seeing how small a cave our little dingy could get through. Once done exploring the caves we could hear a storm building to the north and decided to head south to our anchorage on Oak Island for the night. It was a nice downwind run and even gave me the chance to fly the Spinnaker until the leading edge of the storm reached us and I took it down. There was no rain to speak of but some decent 15-20 mph gusts which help push us home for the night. Once on Oak everyone set their anchors and we settled in for the night.



Wednesday morning brought us a steady breeze of 15 gusting 25 and gave everyone a taste of the "big wind" of Superior. We beat our way into the wind from Oak to a sheltered bay on Stockton Island for the night. What was supposed to be only about 7 or so miles turned into an all-day sailing adventure. The fleet battled waves which started at 1 to 2 feet and built to 6 feet out in the main channel between Stockton and Michigan Islands. We battled a current of over 2 mph to the West and the boats handled it great. Those that did not want such a spirited ride could choose to stay close to the shore and motor toward the anchorage while those who loved heavy weather sailing had a great time. I left my Genoa up for a good bit and passed through most of the fleet. However, when we stuffed the bow taking a wave all the way into the cockpit and cabin (never seen green water completely over the bow before) the look from my family said it was time to reduce sail. We sailed around on the main for a bit waiting for the fleet to catch up as we wanted to make sure no boat was left behind and then followed in the last 2 boats as the sun began to set. What a great day of sailing and what an adventure for sure. By the time we set anchor for the night my arms hurt, and I



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was exhausted from beating to weather for over 10 hours, but it was good kind of tired. My son and I even managed to retrieve one of our skippers lost kayak whose line parted in the heavy waves. It was truly a sailing day for the books.



Thursday was just the break we all needed. We set out about 10 A.M. from Stockton for a downwind run toward Madeline Island and the docks at the Madeline Island Yacht club for the night. I set the chute early and our boat blissfully glided thought the fleet for the next 4 or 5 hours under sail. It was awesome and so calm compared to the previous day that most of my crew fell asleep. Yup, you read that right a spinnaker run so long and relaxing you can sleep on your way to the turn. You can't do that on a racecourse! Once round the corner the wind died, and we finished motoring the last mile or so into the marina. We were greeted by a delightful staff and some amazing amenities. Showers, regular restrooms, and local fare was the favorite of everyone. That evening all the skippers decided to head out and have a meal together at a local restaurant. So, we walked to Grandpa Tony's for some supper and ice cream. We basically took over the small restaurant with our large unplanned group, but it was a great time. Madeline Island is a small community filled with art shops, restaurants, and local trinkets to purchase. The marina also has one of the best chandleries I have found in the Apostles. Making parts for repairs and small things which you had forgotten were readily available.



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It is here that I should mention that the trip was not without its trials. We did have one boat who was having motor troubles the entire trip. But the skipper and crew were undaunted by the challenge and never gave up. They were towed to one anchorage by another Catalina 22 (who says a 5 horsepower motor is not enough) when the motor would not start and shared a ride on a few other boats to see the sights. They sailed to the anchorages on other occasions received generous help in diagnosing the motor issues. Eventually, it was determined to be a bad fuel line which was readily available at the Madeline Island Yacht club. They even ordered in a special fuel filter to arrive next day on the ferry from Bayfield so they could get back on the water with us the next morning. Its amazing how sailors band together in times of need.



Friday saw us saying goodbye to one skipper and his family while the rest of us headed south to Long Island. It was a short motor/sail as the winds were light to explore the island and search for the wreck of the Lucerne. The Lucerne was a 3 masted schooner which sank in 1873 with all hands being lost. It sank in a very bad snowstorm and came to rest in only about 15 feet of water only a few hundred yards form shore. Unfortunately, the crew had no idea where they were or how close the shore was. According to official reports at least 2 men survived the initial sinking but were found the next morning frozen under 4 inches of ice to the top of the masts sticking out of the water. It was an eerie and amazing wreck to find and explore. The Apostles have such clear water that the wreck can be seen almost perfectly preserved simply by swimming over top or taking the dingy around. It takes a bit to find it but is well worth your time.

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Once done seeing the wreck we made our way to the Long Island light for the night. This is still an active light house with no tours but a great beach to explore. We said goodbye to another couple boats as they needed to head for home and set anchor for the night. A couple boats even chose to beach right on the shore where we had a campfire and watched the sun fade over the horizon. It is my favorite memory from the trip. I am still laughing about the fun we had with one of our sailors who had a prosthetic leg and needed help getting from his boat on anchor into the shore. But that’s a story I’ll let him share.



As the sun rose on Saturday morning the sky was bright red. You know what that means, it’s time to go. We checked the radar on my phone and there was a lot of rain coming. So, we woke everyone up early and made a beeline for Bayfield. If the storm continued to build the weather could have been severe and that is not something I want to tangle with on Superior. Fortunately, the storm fizzled into just a bunch of

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rain as we all made our way to the ramp. Putting away a boat in the rain is not much fun but breakfast in town was fantastic. Everyone had a great time and as we said our goodbyes, we all agreed we need to do this trip again. While I don't think it will become an annual cruise, we will most certainly do it again in the years to come. It was a fantastic trip and gave the opportunity to sail with some fantastic people from all walks of life. I will cherish the pictures, and memories from this trip for a lifetime.



We had sailors who were brand new to sailing, some who were seasoned vets, and everything in-between. It was a great group, and the comradery was not to be missed. Everywhere we stopped and everyone we met was so excited to see our group of trailer sailors living the dream. You see a Catalina 22 sailor is truly living Lin and Larry Parley's slogan of "Go Simple, Go Small, Go Now". These little boats can often handle much more than the men and women who sail them. They are dependable, well built, and well known for adventure while bring her crew back safe. So, if your one who is still dreaming about the adventures you might have on your boat, let me encourage you to stop dreaming and start sailing. Join a Catalina 22 Cruise, join a sailing fleet in your local area, start a Catalina fleet at your local club. Don't spend your time dreaming about boat life. Spend your life living the dream. Until the next cruise, fair winds my fellow sailors.