

SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2020 • FALL ISSUE

FREE

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The Ultimate Boating Resource for the Great Lakes



FEATURES

TIME FOR ADVENTURE PAGE 26
WINTERIZATION PAGE 42

DESTINATIONS

BRAINERD LAKES, MINN.
KENOSHA, WIS.
ST. IGNACE & THE STRAITS OF MACKINAC
CATAWBA ISLAND CLUB & MARINA IN PORT CLINTON, OH
FAIR POINT MARINA IN FAIR HAVEN, NY
BEGINNING ON PAGE 78

CENTURY
24
Resorter

PAGE 22

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TIME FOR ADVENTURE



BOAT TRAILERING *the* Great Loop

BY: ROBIN G. COLES, ROBIN@ROBINGCOLES.COM

ALL PHOTOS BY ROBIN G. COLES

Oye! The end of summer is almost upon us. Time to discuss fall and winter boating. The Great Loop is always a fascinating choice, just not enough days. Why not trailer your boat? You could certainly drive alongside and over (via bridges) the Great Loop. It's a lot faster. Think about it – the Great Loop is approximately 5,429 miles. That's 140 travel days averaging 40 miles a day. You drive one side or the other in about 10 hours; slower pulling a trailer.

Depending on your preference of weather, you can travel inland rivers in the fall, taking you down the Illinois River through to Tennessee-Tombigbee. This ends in the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GICW/GIWW). Another 8-hour drive takes you to the Atlantic Coast on the border of Florida and Georgia. Then back up the Atlantic for another 10 hours. Of course, if you prefer the warmer weather in the winter, add another 8 hours to your drive to head further south to the Ft. Myers or Miami area.

The Gulf still gets cold at night during the fall. It's Central Daylight Time (CDT) so the

sun sets early. The panhandle of Florida is also CDT. To be in the real heat, you must go to the Caribbean. Since you can't drive there and don't have time, we'll talk about trailering on the GICW/GIWW, first. Then, we'll head to the Atlantic Ocean for more trailering.

Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GICW/GIWW)

Gulf Shores, Alabama, is a city on the Gulf Coast and is known for its beaches, trails, and zip line over the dunes.

If you're hungry, stop at **Home Port Marina**. The restaurant here is **Lulu's** and is owned by Jimmy Buffet's sister. There's plenty to do



for all ages such as the Mountain of Youth, arcades, barge watching on the river, face painting, etc. Once you're done, head over to **Canal Park Boat Launch** where you'll find paved parking, a picnic area, 34 spots, and restrooms on site. Nearby is Adventure Island where you can enjoy a five-story erupting volcano, go-karts, mini-golf, bumper boats, merry-go-around, and laser tag.

Another popular boat launch is **The Boggy Point Launch** found at the end of Marina Road, just off Ala. Hwy. 161. The recently renovated launch features new docks, ramps,



and paved parking. It's down the street from Caribe Marina where you can get fuel, bait and ice. This area also has a few restaurants.

Pensacola, Florida, is the westernmost city in the Florida Panhandle. Home to 200 marinas, there's plenty of places to launch your boat. Two locations are close to the Alabama border are: Pensacola Shipyard Marina & Boatyard and Mahogany Mill Public Boat Ramp.

The Pensacola Shipyard Marina provides overnight dockage for any launch ramp vessel. There is plenty of trailer parking and on-site repairs are available. You'll find picnic tables close to the Bay entrance. There is a \$5 charge to launch your boat here.

The other spot is Mahogany Mill Public Boat Ramp on the Bayou Chico - Pensacola Bay. This ramp is quiet. It's also next door to **Harbor View Marina** should you need

service, fuel, or storage. Bayou Chico takes you out into Pensacola Bay. Around the bend you can find Sanders Beach, Marine Max, and **Oar House Restaurant**. At

the front entrance of this restaurant is one of Pensacola's famous pelicans.



There were originally 41 of these artful pelicans commissioned in 2005. Today, there are approximately a dozen still around the city; most are in the downtown Palafox area. While you check out the city either on foot or by trolley, look for these pelicans and grab a photo with each one. There is Pelikini (a bikini-clad pelican), one painted for the USCG as well as every military branch, Donor Life, Pelican in Paradise, etc.—each one has a name and story behind it. Pensacola is also home to the famous Blue Angels. Sometimes you can catch them practicing from the bay in both Alabama and Pensacola.

Atlantic Ocean

Since you're trailering your boat, just hop on the I-10 straight across Florida. You'll cross into EST once you approach Tallahassee. Go through the Ocala National Forest to the Jacksonville, FL/ St. Mary's, GA, border. Head north on I-95 to Brunswick, Georgia. This will take approximately 7 hours. Once in Brunswick, there are a few spots to launch your boat. Each one is within a short boat ride from the other.

Brunswick, Georgia, is a city on the southeast coast of Georgia and the gateway to the four barrier islands of the Golden Isles. It's known for its Victorian-era Old Town Historic District and the huge, centuries-old Lover's Oak tree. It's also



— Continued on Page 32

RESOURCES

■ Home Port Marina

200 E 25th Avenue Ste A
Gulf Shores, AL 36542
(251) 968-4528
www.homeportmarine.com

■ Also, home to **Lulu's restaurant**, owned by Jimmy Buffet's sister
(251) 967-5858
www.lulubuffett.com/gulf-shores

■ Canal Park Boat Launch

City of Gulf Shores
200 East 24th Avenue
Gulf Shores, AL 36542
(251) 968-2425
www.watermeat.com/boat-launch/canal-park-ramp/

■ The Bogy Point Launch

The end of Marina Road, off Hwy. 161.
This launch is nearest the Perdido Pass Bridge and directly adjacent to the main channel.
www.outdooralabama.com/boating-access-coastal/boggy-point-boat-ramp

■ Pensacola Shipyard and Marina

700 Myrick St
Pensacola, FL 32505
(850) 439-1451
www.pensacolashipyard.com

■ Mahogany Mill Boat Ramp

1251 Mahogany Mill Rd
Pensacola, FL 32507
(970) 231-3103

■ Brunswick Landing Marina

1 Torras Landing
Brunswick, GA 31520
(912) 262-9264

■ Jekyll Harbor Marina

1 Harbor Road
Jekyll Island, GA 31527
912-635-3137

■ St. Simon's Marina

1000 Arthur J Moore Dr
St. Simons, GA 31522
912-638-7520

■ South of the Border

Interstate 95-U.S. 301-501
Hamer, South Carolina 29547
(843) 774-2417
www.sobpedro.com

For more information about the Great Loop:
www.captainjohn.org/GL-5-Scoop.html

GREAT LOOP, CON'T

— Continued from Page 31

one of the major ports for car ships and trains full of lumber and grain. Located in the heart of downtown is Brunswick Landing Marina; this marina has everything. The launch is nearby and you can set out for those islands for some family fun. Below are two of them.

Jekyll Island has been a vacation spot for over 3,500 years. Today, it's home of the Sea Turtle Center where sick turtles go for treatment. There's a lot of history on this island. Prominent bankers would



vacation here, and you can tour some of their homes. Driftwood beach is a great place to walk and take photographs or go fishing off the new pier. Tour the island on horseback; play miniature golf at Peppermint Land. Jekyll Island Marina offers a boat launch, full-service resort marina, dry storage, pool, hot tub, courtesy golf carts, and Wi-Fi.



St. Simons is the largest barrier island in the Golden Isles. It's known for its salt marshes and sandy stretches of beach. Visit the famous St. Simons Lighthouse, rebuilt in 1872 after the Civil War destroyed it. The pier is a great fishing spot and photo place for

views of both Jekyll Island and migrating whales. St. Simon's marina offers a boat launch, full-service marina, dry storage, restaurant, and shops.



Once the time has come to head back home, finish the Great Loop by driving straight up I-95. Check out the famous roadside attraction, South of the Border (South Carolina). Watch for humorous road signs to get you there. There are also plenty of marinas along the way to stop, eat, and relax. ⚓



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Robin is a passionate marine enthusiast and sailor who has interviewed countless industry experts, in the US and abroad. As a freelance writer and business strategist, she helps her clients create, replace, and update both technical and non-technical documents. Her articles include travel, suddenly-in-command, technology and boating secrets, to name a few. Robin is a member of International Travel Writers and Publishers Alliance (ITWPA) and Boating Writers International.

Robin's also the author of "Boating Secrets: 127 Top Tips to Help You Buy and Enjoy Your Boat". This interview series of 11 marine industry experts walks you through everything you need to know from buying a boat to selling it, plus making a living as a professional sailor. It is available in both print and kindle at <https://tinyurl.com/rbxomek>.



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