

Wayfarer Cruising the 1000 Islands National Park

July 9-11, 2015

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This summer we decided to do some cruising in the Thousand Islands National Park in our Wayfarer and it turned out to be a real treat. Such a great part of the world located so close to where many of us live is something that needs to be taken advantage of.

This travel log is to assist other considering making the trip. Lots of other people travel these water in power boats, sea kayaks and canoes, but we saw very few sailboats and of these boats, they were big cruisers.

Our trip came on a whim, and as luck would have it, I called the day before we left to book our campsites. Yes, we were going mid-week but I was surprised by how available the campsites actually were. Basically any site I wanted, was open; which demystified my belief that the 1000 Island National Park was a busy and over booked park. I am sure it is, by not for us, even though was the height of summer.

Knowing nothing about the area, the next planning task was deciding where we were going to launch. Our campsites were booked for the waters near Gananoque. Google maps showed a very measly launching area and the private marinas looked dirty, dusty and motor centric. After talking to some locals, the advice was to launch from the public boat launch in Gan. After

quick inspection, the launch looked intimidating. It was busy, no place to rig and parking was awkward. Nevertheless we persevered and we rigged amongst other people in power boats. Of course the motor boats are fast to prepare themselves and launch, we, on the other hand take time to rig our boat. There was also a few overhead wires to be mindful of – something the power boats don't have to think about.

With a bit of patience and good timing, were able to launch. People were good natured and intrigued by our boat and so in the end, there was very little drama in putting the boat in the water.

The next catch to launching in Gananoque was that you are not allowed to park at the launch. This is understandable because the best real estate in town was at the waterfront and the city did not want to use it up by a parking lot. Consequently the city made you park on the outskirts of town. Yes, this sounds crazy but in the end, it was not as difficult as it seemed. They city of Gananoque recognize that having cars and trailers parking downtown at the waterfront would be a problem and therefore have funded a free public transit system. Basically, you launch your boat, tie it up, drive your car and trailer out to a designated parking lot, and a bus comes every 15 minutes to take you back to the launch. Free of charge – both launch and parking. As crazy as it sounds, it all worked out and I now consider it not a big deal. In a pinch, you could actually walk the distance in about 20 minutes.

The other bonus about launching downtown at the public boat launch was there is a big park and public washrooms. For people waiting around, there is lots to do, especially for kids like a play structure, beach and plenty of grass to run around.



1- Boat launched and waiting at Gananoque public boat ramp. Public washrooms in the background.

We set sail out and tacking out of harbour (ie. marina). It was easy because there is lots of room to tack. Although there is tons of motor boat traffic and one should never assume that powerboaters know that a sailboat has right way and so we played it conservative.



2 - Mooring up at our first campsite.

All the campsites we stayed at had docks. Of course it was very handy but it was an additional cost. Apart from the paying for a campsite, which we did in advance, there was a 90 cents/foot charge for taking up a slip for the night; that you pay upon arrival at the dock. In all cases, we had no choice because there was no other place to moor. This can potentially be tricky because many powerboats have big parties and all their friends show up taking up all the spots. It was never a problem for us but it has potential to be an unwanted surprise.

I can't help it but one funny story to tell. I take a lot of pride in our Wayfarer and it is truly a beautiful wooden boat and so people like to come and see it. We landed for the night and this rather large man wandered out of his monster power boat and came to chat. He was keen to tell me all about sailing and then asked about how it was to transport the Wayfarer behind the car. "Do you take the mast down?"



3 - How we spent our day!

We did not come to the 1000 Islands to camp but to sail. We had 20 km winds for the three days that were there. Wind was never a problem. The mornings were light but by the afternoon, we had some quality sailing. I think one downwind run was close to an hour in duration. Big smiles all around.....and maybe a nap as well. Norah, my youngest daughter loves napping in the Wayfarer and we can tuck her in and make her comfortable.

Being the 1000 Islands, we did navigate using GPS, paper maps, binoculars, and most importantly good judgement. Lots of 'threading-the-needle' between small gaps of islands and keeping an eye out for shoals. There was only one place in the entire trip that we felt we were sailing out in big water, the rest of the trip was close sailing between obstacles.

We also felt that the distances between campsites was relatively short. Because we had great wind, it only took us a third of a day to get to where we needed to get go and as a result, we took large detours so to maximize our sailing time.



4 - Rain shelter. There were lots of these and a good place to get out of the weather, should you encounter it. Some of them even came with wood stoves, so you could warm up if you needed it.



5 - Unloading the boat for another night. To the left is the paybox for your mooring fees.



6 - Waking up for another beautiful day of sailing. Gordon Island Campsite no.3 (highly recommended)

Conclusions:

It was a very successful trip and we plan to do it again sometime. In the end, the launch and take out at the public boat launch in Gananoque was a non-issue. The sailing was stellar but the distances shorter than what we expected and could have planned to go further. Other than paying for mooring, the cost for the camping was very inexpensive and the sites and latrines were very well maintained. I consider it a well managed park. When booking the sites, I think it is a bit cheaper to do it online rather than calling and talking to a person.

Finally, we will be returning but I think we are going to do it in the early spring and fall. Because of the many shelters, there is always a dry place to go to get out of the rain and make a meal. I have a feeling that colder weather would cut down on the powerboater traffic.

Happy Wayfarer Cruising.
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