



The Professional Captain: Cruising Chronicles of Captain Don Fleming

Captain Don Fleming is well known on the Hudson River and the Sound for his on-board training in docking, maneuvering, navigation, and electronics. He holds a USCG Master of Oceans license for power and sail up to 100 tons and a Masters of Education. He has over thirty years experience as a professional captain and as an educator. He is available for private onboard instruction. For additional information call 914-941-3998 or visit www.captaindonfleming.com.

Long Island Sound on a Tank of Gas

What if I said you could enjoy a week to ten day vacation cruise in Long Island Sound on approximately one tank of gas? Sound good? Well it's possible, it's great fun, and it's easier than you might think. I'm talking about the full round trip from somewhere in Haverstraw Bay and back.

Today's boaters are committed to their favorite sport in spite of tough economic times, and we are looking for affordable ways to get the most out of our boating experiences. We want to get the greatest return (read fun) for our dollars. Rather than sitting around the dock using our boats as floating summer homes or going to the same old nearby places, we can learn efficient cruising strategies.

For example, a guy complained last year about how much it cost him to take a day trip down to the Statue

of Liberty. He did the "Circle Line Circuit," circumnavigated Manhattan, stopped for lunch, burned the fuel, saw the sights, and had a very enjoyable day; but it cost him a fortune. My reaction was: maybe that type of spontaneous, "full speed ahead and damn the torpedoes" boat trip can be modified with an eye toward economy. My thinking is: if you are going to go that far, why not plan a little more carefully, go a little further, spend a few more days, even a week or more, and get more bang for your buck?

How to do it on a Single Tank of Gas

How do you cruise the Long Island Sound so economically? You do it using three simple concepts. One, you plan your cruise in Western Long Island Sound, the closer end, nearest to the Hudson, where each new stopping point is approximately five or ten miles away from the next.

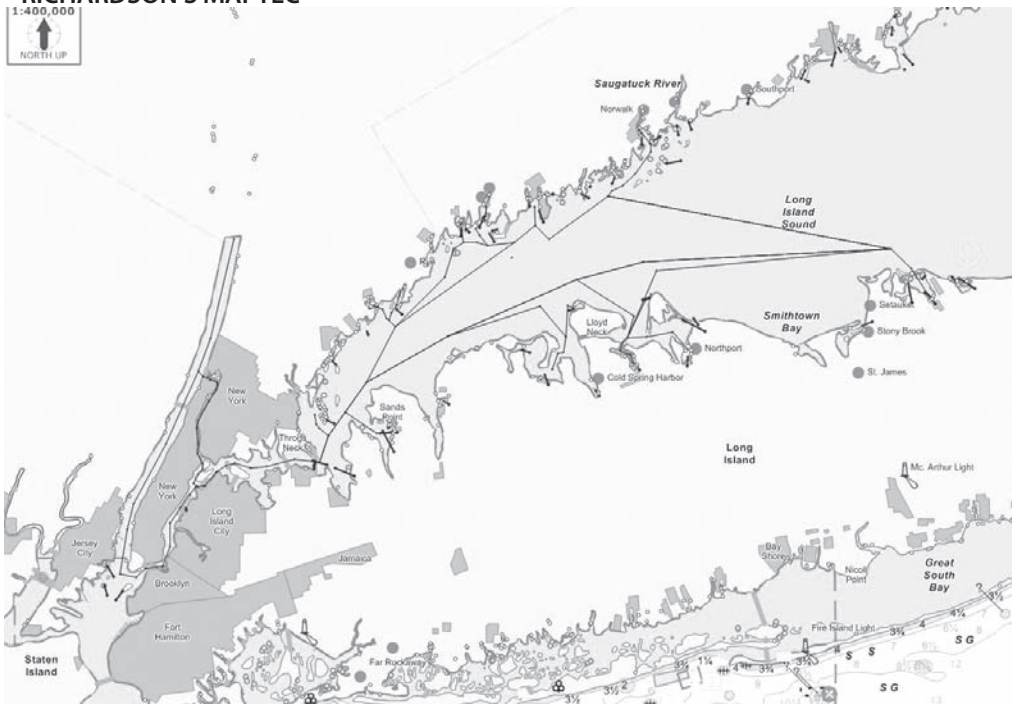
Two, you run your boat at its two most efficient speeds, choosing the appropriate one as circumstances dictate. That means either slowing down to maximum fuel efficient displacement speed, which can save roughly twenty-five percent in fuel, or running at the optimal planing speed for your engine(s) and hull design.

This optimal speed technique was discussed in my article "Boat Smart to Save Fuel" in the August, 2008, issue of this magazine and is available @ www.captaindonfleming.com.

Three, you learn how to play the currents so you can keep them in your favor to achieve a twenty-five to forty percent savings at the economical displacement speed and ten to twenty percent at the optimal planing speed.

For example, you can run down the Hudson, Harlem, and East Rivers at twenty knots and arrive at the near end of the Sound in two hours with your normal fuel

Photos and Chart courtesy of
RICHARDSON'S MAPTEC





Eaton's Neck Cove

burn or you can use your optimal planing speed for savings. You can also ride the currents at displacement speed and be there in five hours, six if you take the scenic route around the Battery, and save fifty percent in fuel. That's right fifty percent. The latter strategy also allows for a more relaxing, smoother ride, and a better appreciation of the magnificent Manhattan skyline. You can also vary the two strategies to your preference.

You can spend your first night in Great Gatsby's backyard at Manhasset Bay or in the funky "Bronx Tale" atmosphere of City Island, both of which offer great restaurants and modern marinas. You can save more money by renting a transient mooring out in the harbor with water taxi service ashore. A typical mooring rental is thirty-five to forty dollars compared to three to five dollars per foot for transient dockage.

The Fabulous Forgotten "Gold Coast"

I've often thought of Western Long Island Sound as the "forgotten" part because, in the heyday of free flowing coin, most people blew by it, convinced they had to blast out to Montauk or Block Island. Ironically, the western part is and always has been incredibly beautiful with pristine beaches, quaint harbors, quiet anchorages, resort marinas, and villages with great restaurants and lively attractions full of fun for the entire family. Equally important, everything is very close together. Therefore, cruising distances are shorter and fuel burn is less, even if you decide to run at planing speed for a while.

For example, it's only thirty-five miles from Throgs Neck to Port Jefferson, the furthest point of my proposed cruise plan. It's only twenty miles to the Huntington Bay, my alternate turn around point. On a typical day you can cruise for less than an hour, even at the slower displacement speeds, stop at one of the numerous white sand beaches for a swim or do a little fishing off one of the peninsulas. Then, you can cruise to any number of nearby tranquil coves, like Eaton's Neck or the Sand Hole, to relax, barbecue your dinner, and spend the night. How good is that?

Alternately, you can visit a quaint town like Northport, pull up to the town pier, stroll among the bou-

tiques and shops, the shady waterfront, and treat the kids to an ice cream. You can also stay in one of several high end resort marinas, some with swimming pools, and all with fine dining, in places like Manhasset Bay, Huntington, Northport and Port Jefferson.

Better yet, vary your overnights. Spend the best weather at anchorages or moorings, and use the marinas when you want the amenities or protection. In addition to the savings, anchorages and moorings, which are in protected no wake zones, provide a private and tranquil change of pace, away from the noise and congestion of the crowded docks.

The Picturesque Connecticut and Westchester Coasts

Across the Sound from the beautiful North Shore lie the nearby picturesque coasts of Connecticut and Westchester, which offer among other attractions, sophisticated urban settings like Stamford and Norwalk. You'll find dock and dine facilities, full service marinas, arts centers, restored downtowns, concert venues, upscale shopping, multiplex movie theaters, and family entertainment.

The Sound is only five or six miles wide from Oyster Bay to Stamford and not much more from Huntington Bay to lively SONO (South Norwalk). Here you have the famous Norwalk Aquarium and IMAX theatre for the kids along with excellent marinas and an economical town dock that caters exclusively to transients. The longest leg of my proposed cruise options, from Port Jeff to South Norwalk, is a mere fifteen miles.

Need more variety? The Norwalk Islands and the Captain's Islands in Greenwich offer incredible beaches and quiet anchorages for day tripping or overnighting. You can also vary your experience by cruising through some of the most upscale waterfront real estate this side of heaven in places like Greenwich, Westport, Southport and Larchmont. You can even pull into one of several marinas in Rye or Mamaroneck, hop in a cab, and take the kids to Playland Amusement Park.

continued next page.



Greenwich Harbor

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Long Island Sound Cruise continued
from preceding page.

New Cruising Symposium Helps You Plan It All

The possibilities are tremendous for a long weekend, a week or ten day summer cruise, and all it takes is a little more careful planning and some sharper navigation than the Hudson River requires. Keep in mind that the Sound is more open water and the channels can be more intricate, and at times more confusing, than in our "user friendly" home waters. I would urge everyone to make sure they have the necessary navigation skills and to carefully plan the trip before heading out.

With this in mind, and in an effort to get everyone out on their boats for maximum enjoyment this summer, I am offering a training seminar titled appropriately Long Island Sound on a Tank of Fuel. It will take place on two consecutive Saturday mornings, April 18 and 25, from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon, at the Conference Center in Haverstraw Marina.

In the first session I will guide you through the area in much greater detail, suggesting the best locations and how to approach them. Experienced navigators will only need this first session. The second session will focus on navigation skills such as chart reading, course plotting, and electronic navigation essential to a safe voyage.

I'll be using the latest MAPTECH large screen electronic software, and you can follow along on your own charts. You can take advantage of my many years of experience cruising and training in this area and get all kinds of valuable tips. I'll also show you how to run with the currents and how to find your ideal slow and fast cruising speeds so you can apply significant savings to family fun during the trip.

Seating is limited and advance reservations are necessary. Cost is seventy-five dollars (\$75) per person per session. I am also offering a twenty percent (20%) discount for any additional immediate family members. Call me at 914-941-3998 if you are interested in attending.

One way or another I sincerely hope you consider ways to maximize your boating fun and minimize your costs so that you have a great boating season this year.

"Quick's the word and sharp's the action." See you next time from wherever the winds blow us.

The above comments are general suggestions. They are not intended to be used for navigational purposes. Individual captains are ultimately responsible for setting proper courses and safely navigating their vessels by relying on their own knowledge, judgment and experience to determine the correct action in any given situation

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