

Chasing 75:

Cruising the Eastern Seaboard of the United States

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Chasing 75...what exactly does this mean? Many boaters dream of cruising up and down the east coast of the United States chasing 75°, which most consider the ideal boating temperature. A large number of these boaters are hesitant to take this trip if they are owner-operators who are not familiar with the waters. I recently had the pleasure of sitting down with Captain Tad Joy who has cruised the eastern coast over 110 times covering an astonishing 121,000+ km! I had the opportunity to get answers to some of the most frequently asked questions by boaters looking to embark on this adventure for the first time, and I would like to share this information with you.

Aye Aye, Captain!

First off, I would like to tell you a little bit about the captain. Tad Joy has been a licensed captain since 1987 when he was fresh out of college, and looking to help some friends in the Clearwater, FL area. He started out by helping to move and fuel a fleet of commercial fishing boats when the regular captains were not available. He also did weekend fishing trips and tournaments on sportfish vessels and short cruises on express vessels. He quickly moved up in the captain world as he became more and more experienced and landed his first full-time captain job in 1992 on a 55-foot yacht. In 1996 he took his first trip up the east coast and, as they say, the rest is history. He now has 26 years of experience cruising up the east coast and has explored just about every mile of the coastline. Captain Tad is not employed by Marlow but he is intimately familiar with Marlow Yachts. He has operated just about every model Marlow has ever built, from the 49E up to the 97E. He has been a free-lance captain and a private captain for several Marlows throughout his career.

Planning the Trip

One of the first questions that comes up when considering the east coast trip is “how long does the trip take?”

Well, this is a very tricky question. How long do you have? It can take as long as you want it to, or as short as you want it to. The quickest Capt. Tad has done it is in 5 days, from Ft. Lauderdale to Newport with one stop in Charleston, SC. With that said, a comfortable trip from the west or east coast of Florida to the New England area is about 24 days relaxed. That is stopping and spending a few days here and there at some of the more scenic places as well as the inevitable weather delays. The consideration for this trip is how many crew members you have on board.

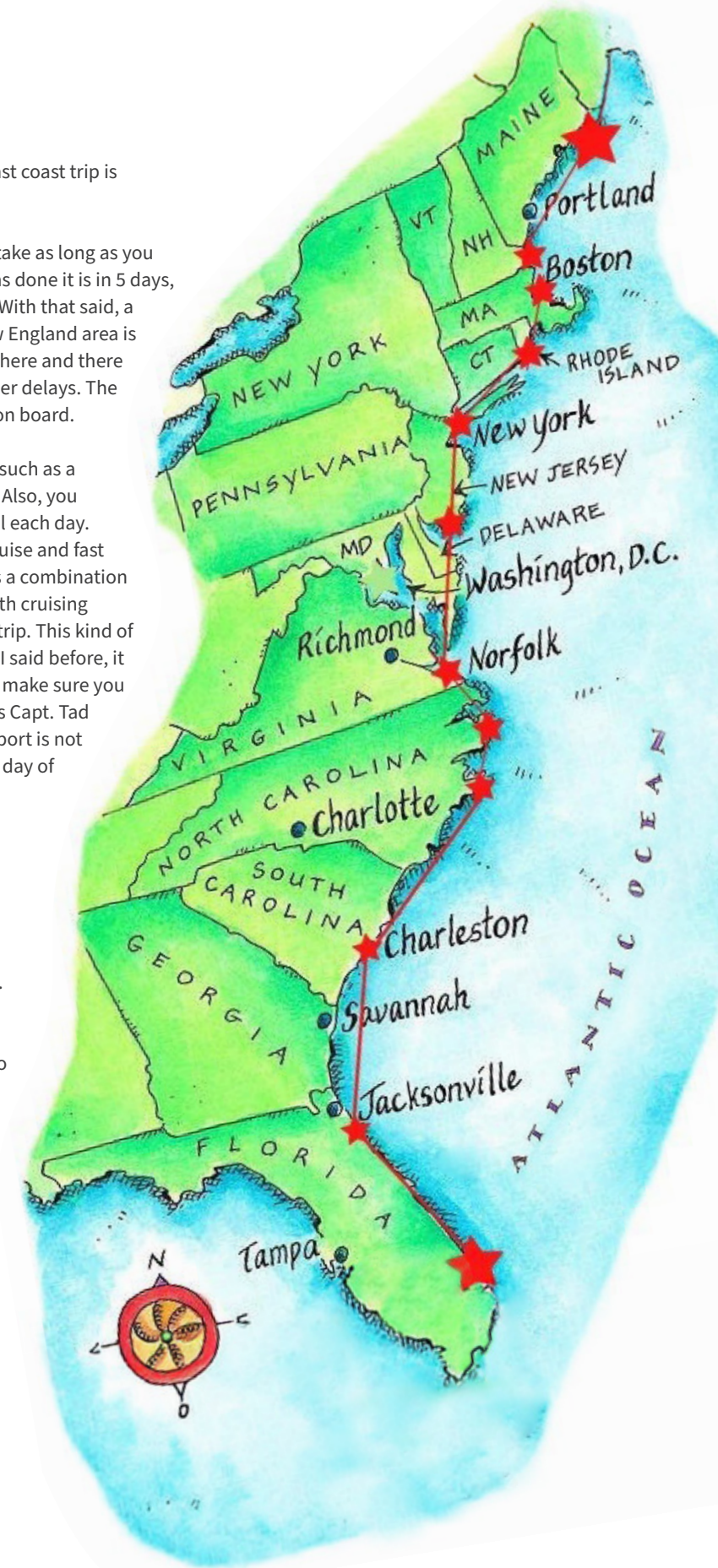
A crew member is someone who you trust to take a wheel watch such as a spouse or friend. It does not necessarily mean a captain or mate. Also, you must consider how long you, your crew, and guests want to travel each day. How fast do you want to run the yacht? What are the best slow cruise and fast cruise speeds for your vessel? The best trips are typically done as a combination of fast and slow cruising. So, if we round up for extra time, 1 month cruising north and 1 month cruising south is a good estimate for a round trip. This kind of schedule gives you plenty of time to stop and smell the roses. As I said before, it can be done a lot quicker if you are just looking to get there. Just make sure you are being realistic with the capabilities of the rest of your crew. As Capt. Tad points out, “10 and 12-hour days running hard to get to the next port is not for everyone. I have seen A LOT of itineraries change after the 1st day of an owner who thinks this is great but his wife not so much.”

When should we do this?

Another frequently asked question is “what month/dates/season should I take this trip?” Considering the goal is to chase 75° there are a couple of weather windows annually that are best to follow.

If you are departing Florida, heading north, middle to late May is what you will want to plan for. For the return trip, you will want to begin your southbound cruise sometime middle of September or October if you are departing from Maine or Long Island.

Additionally, Captain Tad being as experienced as he is, pointed out an important factor to consider. He states that “a lot of this is decided by your specific insurance policy. If you are planning to take the boat north (or south) your insurance policy will have certain regulations as to when you must be north or south by a certain date and where exactly. This insurance consideration, as well as the weather you will encounter along the way will help create the migration. Everyone tends to head north in the late spring/early summer and back south late fall/early winter.



Tied up, On the Hook, or Overnight?

I asked Captain Tad what he has found to be the best way to experience and make the best of the trip(s). Should you go from dock to dock, anchor out, or run overnight? Being someone who has done all of the above, he states that “this again goes back to what the capabilities of your crew are. Overnights are a great way to get some miles under the keels but they do add challenges”

There are a number of factors to consider. In addition to obviously knowing your vessel and what it is capable of, also consider how is your eyesight? How is your crew’s eyesight? How many crew members do you have onboard? Do you as the owner and or captain really trust the crew member with a wheel watch? Are you going to be able to sleep with your crew at the wheel? Does anyone else on the boat think this is fun? If you cannot immediately say yes to the last 3 questions, then planning an overnight is not advisable. Dock to dock or dock to anchor is a wiser choice.

If you have not done an overnight trip but are considering it, captain Tad shares a very helpful tip: Pick a couple of days and start your cruising early on those days. Early being before the sun comes up! This will give you an idea of how confident and comfortable you and your crew are with running in the dark while having the comfort that the sun will soon rise if running in the dark is not for you. If this is something you are going to do, make sure to plan your departure and arrival in the daylight. *“It is a bad idea to plan to arrive in the dark in an unfamiliar port. It is very stressful and not a lot of fun.” - Capt. Tad.*

Does size matter?

A common concern of boaters who are going into unfamiliar waters and territories is whether marinas will have dock space for them. As we all know, as the vessel gets larger and/or requires more power, dockage becomes something we have to think about a bit more. Captain Tad who has run large vessels up and down the east coast, including the 97E Marlow Explorer, indicates the size of the vessel is not a problem if you are willing to plan ahead. Depending on the location and time of year it is smart practice to look ahead and figure out where you would like to go and see what is available in the area. For example, in Newport, and in general the entire New England and Maine areas, you should plan way ahead of time if you want dock space and/or a mooring. Their season is very short, so they fill up quickly a few weeks (if not months) ahead of time. As you travel south during the migration, most places you can find a spot with the



exceptions of Norfolk and Charleston. For both of these stops, you should try to book about 1 month ahead of time if this is a “must” destination for you. The bigger the yacht the more planning it takes to find premium spots. The good news is that along the way there are several good anchorages and plenty of fuel stops. Captain Tad mentions that *“post covid things have certainly gotten busier. Most places are very willing to try to work it out. There is a certain percentage of boaters that plan way ahead of time and a certain percentage that just want to wing it. Either way is great. So long as if you’re a wing it type you don’t have your heart set on a particular marina or location”*

Where should I go?

“As a Captain, I normally use Dockwa and Snag-A-Slip. Both of these apps help me find marinas as well as book the reservations at the touch of a button. I normally look for and find marinas using these apps along with Active Captain.” - Captain Tad.

Nowadays, there are so many tools at our disposal that will help you make this trip more enjoyable. As the captain mentions, using applications on your smartphone or tablet will help you look at marina reviews, websites, marina layouts, dockage, etc. You do not have to exclusively book on these apps it just helps when you are at the helm and need to find a marina on the fly. It makes it easier to book.

Since he has made this trip a time or two (or 110+), I asked captain Tad for his personal “must-see” stops along the way:

Liberty Landings Marina in New Jersey

1 This marina is in Liberty Landings Park. To get to the marina you go right by the Statue of Liberty and right thru New York Harbor. It is a very impressive site to see. The marina has a lot of green space and a great restaurant on site. The views of lower Manhattan across the Hudson River are breathtaking.

Newport, RI

2 I normally stay at the Newport Yachting Center. It is right in the middle of all the action. This is one of the busiest harbors for yachting/sailing/cruising in the world. Lots to do and see here.

Charleston, SC

3 I normally stay at the Safe Harbor City Marina (Known as the Mega-Dock) This is another very historic city. Easy to walk around and great restaurants. Lots to see and do.

Saint Augustine, FL

4 Very interesting little town again very historic and walkable. If you plan to visit the city, I suggest staying at the St. Augustine Municipal Marina.

There are a ton of other great spots, but we would need the whole magazine to name them all!

If you have been wondering what it is like cruise and experience what the east coast of the United States has to offer, now you have a little bit of insight as to what to expect.

Life is short, I encourage you to start chasing 75° and making memories...