

WEEK FIVE PART TWO OF CRUISING ON A RHODES 22

The passage was easy but it took a bit longer than anticipated and we ended up fighting a 5+ knot current at the narrow exit channel. Inching through we emerged into a broad channel and could see the cluster of public and privately owned islands known as the Octopus islands. By now it was late afternoon and we worked our way through the myriad of islands, shoals and rocks that make this cluster of islets a destination for so many sailors. We found an

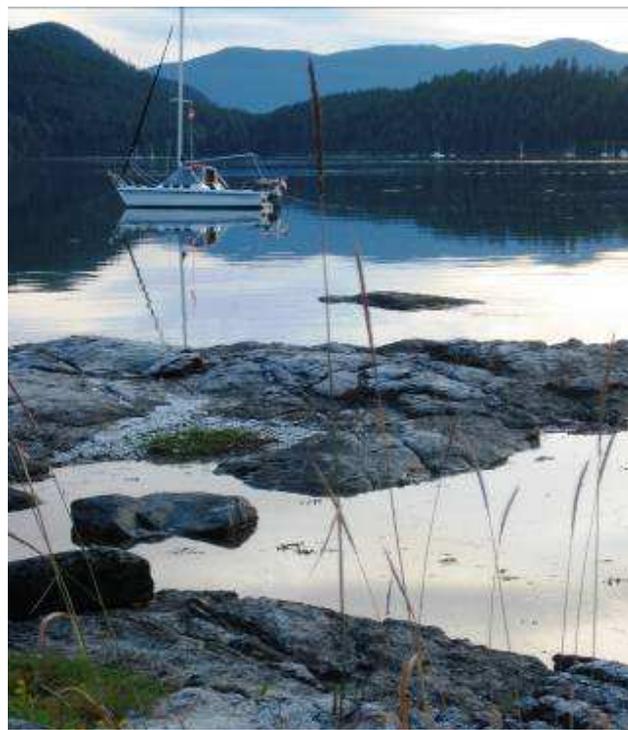


almost deserted cove and anchored,

Just finished fighting the 5+ knt current



Almost calm water after Hole-in-the-wall
running the ubiquitous shore line to a tree
on land.



At rest on Octopus Islands



Island rules



Tidal pool dam, sun warmed water almost tropical

Eager to explore we went ashore to investigate what sounded like a stream cascading over rocks. The islands are too small and low to have streams, so our curiosity was piqued by this sound. It turns out that someone had dammed a large tidal pool and as the tide fell the water would run over and through the rock dam seeking a way to the lowest point. An interesting sign on the island stated "Private Island, no camping or fires" but nothing about walking about, so we did. And what a surprise awaited us as we came up from the shore to see a weathered old logger's cabin. Festooned with flags and what appeared to be sculptures on the deck it was not what we were expecting. A sign welcomed us to enter. Pure delight! In the twelve by 24 foot cabin with just openings for doors and windows there were hundreds of found object art creations from all the sailors who visited here. The guestbook asks that each person use their unbridled imagination and clear eye to take found objects and create something unique. The only restriction was it should not just be a pile of trash but incorporate the flotsam and jetsam and debris found on the coast. I have never seen a "private" island where the owners wish to share the island with the boating population and asked only that they leave a piece of art that reflects their experience in the journey there.



The Octopus House

I can't even begin to describe all the amazing, humorous, poignant, clever, beautiful, and strange creations the many boaters over the years came up with.



We were inspired, hmmm nothing too complicated but we had to come up with something symbolic and emblematic of this beautiful area. Someone must have answered our plea. Walking along the beach a short time later we found the perfect item. It required almost nothing from us, a bit of rope strands, an enlargement of a split in the wood and we had our piece, properly signed and put on display. You might say we sealed the deal on this one.



Greek Pinaped

The next day we revisited the Octopus house and then decided to circumnavigate the island on foot. It wasn't really big perhaps $\frac{3}{4}$ mile across if that. The tide was going out and all sorts of interesting things were uncovered. The island had been logged in the past like almost all islands here but the trees and understory were almost fully recovered. We discovered a lot of other small coves and anchorages that had sufficient depth (low water is a help that way). Even with the many boats around the islands and bays it still seemed like we were almost alone. We did see some kayaks and boats anchored a distance off but nothing in tight. We



Low tide at Octopus Island

of us and saw all sorts of strange drift wood. Walking along this shore was a combination of rock hopping and a balancing act on logs. Some of these large and solid looking logs turned out to be unstable with unfortunate results. While stepping from one to another on a pair of these walkways they suddenly

shifted and I went plunging down toward the rocks. Pat was immediately at my side, not to render aid but to take pictures.



When over confidence meets gravity

eventually reached the end of the passable shoreline and decided to turn inland. Initially there were lots of bushes heavy with huckleberries and we enjoyed eating the tart small berries. We wandered around in the fern jungle for a while until finding a trail that led through an old logging camp and eventually out to a shore we could follow back to the boat a quarter mile away.

We surprised a martin, a weasel like animal that was quite unafraid



Jurassic Park, raptor food to right

I had jammed one leg in between the logs and as I went down it brought me up short so I didn't smash into the rocks. I pulled some ligaments in the knee and took a big chunk out of my left palm and elbow. On the bright side two days before I had received a stitch worthy slice out of my right thumb and index finger on a sharp underside of the stove, so with this new injury I sadly could no longer do KP duty for the rest of the trip. A bit stunned, I asked if



Solitude is a small and remote cabin

Pat would help me up and then asked him to pull the grit and unknown other semi organic debris out of the wound. He declined. I reminded him he had said he knew first aid. His response was yes he did know “first aid” and several other medical terms such as appendicitis. Smart-ass brother-in-law.

After some self-administered first aid we had a lunch (ha he had to

do the dishes, that’ll show him!) we headed out of the islands bound for

our last and hopefully least exciting rapid. By now we had figured out how to read the tide tables properly and knew that we would be at the narrows right before slack tide. This rapid had a nasty reputation and only 8 minutes of slack water before it quickly became totally impassible for almost any kind of displacement vessel. We continued down the channel toward our destination passing a lone semi abandoned cabin at the base of a steep hill. It defined remote, and served to emphasize the dominance of nature and the landscape of this place.

We arrived with 15 minutes to spare and could hear the water flowing around the many rocks and islets. There was only one safe passage, narrow with an unmarked hazardous rock ledge that was hard to spot. Slowly the sound subsided and at the appointed minute we headed into the channel. And then panic, a brief and intense feeling as we saw whitewater splash up 30 yards ahead and it was too late to turn back. Fear gave way to amusement a moment later



Entering “Killer Seal” rapids

when we realized that what we were seeing was not rocks but a seal with an unfortunate salmon in its mouth. The seal was frolicking around splashing the water and flinging the salmon back and forth. As hoped for, this passage was

remarkable only in its calm aspect. In a few minutes we were through just as the first counter current was beginning to flow and swirl around us.



At anchor in a quiet and protected cove, rock climbing anyone?

Not far down the coast we selected a small cove behind a long finger that pointed south on the east coast of Read Island halfway down. There were a few homes nearby but the cove itself was uninhabited. We found good holding ground most of the way in and ran a line ashore to a madrone tree at the base of a 100' cliff. The cliff, small by comparison to other places we anchored, was still impressive and beautiful in its multicolored and rugged aspect.



A visit by the local “sheriff”

The next morning we were visited by one of the homeowners who explained that the land was private which meant if I fell off the cliff he would not be responsible. He cautioned that if I chose to climb the cliff it was a bit of a challenge and I should use proper equipment. He then wished us a pleasant stay and returned to his home. Not quite the same concept as American private property.

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