



## **COCOA TO NEW SYMNRA APRIL 1ST**

We left the dock at 8:00 AM. We are headed to New Smyrna Beach. We will be going past Titusville and the Space Coast and will have nature preserves all around us almost the whole way. I'm looking forward to this cruise today as I remember seeing lots of birds and dolphin last time we came through.

## **COCOA VILLAGE**

We had a great stay at Cocoa. The marina is well run with very nice facilities. Everything is easy and convenient and just makes you want to linger: nice laundry, bathrooms, pool, showers, clean dock carts ( and always where they are supposed to be), and the marina is close to Cocoa village for antiques, art, clothing, restaurants, live theatre, interesting old architecture, nice waterfront park for



strolling and lots of town events and activities. Actors in Victorian costume stroll the streets and engage visitors with their antics. It's a fun place.

Besides the ice cream parlor, Larry's favorite place was the old hardware store established in 1885. To still be in business

with the arrival of Home Depot is surprising. Larry loved to browse through all the aisles with dusty merchandise stacked high on tall shelves that can only be reached by climbing old wooden rolling ladders. I found some interesting things too, like stoneware crock pots to make sauerkraut in and freestanding iron kettles for what looked like pioneer cooking over a fire pit. The best was their Paul Bunyan sized wrenches and tools. Who the heck buys those things anyway?

We enjoyed several restaurants during our stay: Cafe Margaux, Thai Thai and the local Italian/pizza restaurant, and there still were more to try if you had the time. Cafe Margaux puts on wine tasting dinners that looked like they would be fun and the Saturday night we were there the town had

a rip roaring chili cook off down at the town park with music. So no need to cook during our stay.

We snooped in some of the antique shops and ended up buying some old bronze dog heads which we will make into book ends when we get home.

One negative, if you don't have a car, it's too far to walk to get groceries. They do have a small farmer's market on Saturday but the day we were there, I hate to say it, compared to Fort Pierce, I wouldn't bother. But with all the restaurants, who needs a grocery store or farmer's market during your stay if only to provision for when you leave?

What's not to like about this place? It's not fancy or slick but just a cute little neighborhood village.

## MARINA

The marina, just like Fort Pierce, was full of fish, I mean schools of fish. Someone told us they were mullet. They looked kind of like cat fish to us.

The dock master, Theresa, is very efficient and helpful and seems to be always walking at a fast pace up and down the docks talking a boater into the marina on her hand held. She's got a good attitude and doesn't even seem to mind doing the dirty jobs like helping with pump outs which by the way can be done right in your slip.

## DOCKING FIASCOS

I got to talking to her one day about how difficult it must be getting boats into these tight quarters with the constant winds we



experienced during our stay. She said the most surprising thing is when people come in and don't think to have their lines out and ready or if they do, some people don't have them hooked to their boat cleats. So many times they will throw her a tangled wad of rope that is not hooked to the boat. One guy though, she said, topped the cake ..."he didn't have any lines to tie the boat". He finally found some polypropylene line he had stored in a fishing box. "It was like trying to tie a boat up to the dock with dental floss".



"It's surprising how some people are so lackadaisical about docking".

Another boat, again on another windy day, didn't have their lines out. She said she yelled to the captain to "Please Captain, can you get your lines ready so we can tie you boat up?" The captain, casually left the helm and proceeded to slowly walk around the boat get the lines out while the boat was blown completely past the slip and heading on a collision course with

several other docked boats. Luckily they were able to fend a disaster and finally get him tied up.

## **SIDE TRIPS WITH THE VAN**

We still had the van while in Cocoa. It was a never ending conversation this entire trip as to where we could store the van so we could head north without having to figure out how to get the van up to the next stop. We finally found the perfect place near the airport in Orlando. It's a covered indoor storage building and will be convenient to fly in to when we want to bring it north on a longer stretch. So until we put it in storage we decided to see some of the surrounding areas.

## **SPACE COAST**

We took a drive one day to the Space Coast and surrounding nature reserves. We took some pictures of birds and drove the isolated coastal area. After several hours we had worked up an appetite and just by luck stumbled on to a fun fish restaurant out in the middle of no where.

## **GOODRICH**

It's a local place right on the water and been there since the 70's. The food is served up family style with Southern style collard greens, cheesy creamy grits, black eyed peas and all the freshly caught fried white shrimp you could eat that night. They offered lots of oyster dishes too but despite all the oyster laden shores, the oysters weren't local but from the Gulf Coast. We had the fresh local white shrimp grilled and along with that came steamed potatoes and corn. Loved it. The place is called Goodrich and is in a



beautiful setting just down the road from an archaeological site we had just visited (Indian mounds and an old settlement house just on the edge of the Space Coast).



## **CAR-TRAIN**

Another day we drove inland to a town called Sanborn to see the last cruising stop on the St. John's River and that is where we found out about the car train. Wow, never knew you could ship your car to Virginia and back like baggage while you ride the train!

About 50 cars were lined up the day we came. The cars were driven right onto the

train and the passengers got into the passenger cars for an overnight ride to Virginia. We looked into putting the van on as a way to get it to the Chesapeake but the height restriction didn't allow for it. Dam, too bad, that seemed like a fun thing to do.



## **WINTER HARBOR**

We also drove to Winter Harbor, a charming old college town and had a late lunch/dinner at a nice Turkish restaurant. The town has a cute main shopping street lined with outdoor cafes and a nice park that runs for several blocks on the opposite side of the main street. The train runs right through the center. Really a neat place.

Just down the block is a lake where you can take a little scenic boat ride to see turn of the century beautiful mansions that overlook the lake. Of course the giant oak trees covered in Spanish moss sheltering the small streets added to the charm of the place.

Traffic though getting out of the Orlando suburbs soured any notion of coming back for another visit.

## CRAB SHACK

One afternoon we decided to try out the little crab shack across the bridge from Cocoa on Merritt Island, called Mrs. Apples Crab Shack.

It's nothing more than a rustic fish market in the armpit of the bridge. Inside were large bins filled with ice loaded with crabs, lobster, shell fish, stone crabs, crawfish...you name it they had it and all as fresh as you could get it off the boat. You could order bags of raw fish or raw shellfish to take home or you could buy prepared dinners half cooked. Most of the dinners were \$11. I ordered one dinner with steamed shrimp and snow crabs with a side of corn on the cob and steamed potatoes. It might sound tacky but the dinners come in plastic to-go boxes and you can either take them home and heat them up or what most people do is heat them up right in the fish market! They had about 8 microwaves all set up and already set to cook for 2 minutes. After microwaving your food, you take your warmed food outside to eat on picnic tables.

You tear off a large piece of kraft paper from the roll mounted on the wall for a table cloth and tear off a handful of paper towels from another roll on the wall.



There are hammers at each table to use to crack your crabs or whatever needs cracking.

The food is drenched in a delicious garlic butter sauce and very messy to eat. The only thing they forgot is bibs! Once you are finished you just gather everything up in the kraft paper and throw it all in the large dumpster right in the center of the dining area. You wash up at a large laundry sink. Crazy? Yes! But so fun and delicious!

The locals know how to do it right as they come prepared lugging in coolers filled with drinks (beer and soft drinks) and paper plates, silver ware, place mats and napkins, and oh yes, a variety of hot sauces.

Quite an experience and quite hilarious.

## DRIVE ALONG THE WATERFRONT

If you have a car, don't miss taking a long drive along the waterfront (the west south side of ICW) on Cocoa. It's a nice drive lined with some nice old homes on a curvy shady lane. Worth the drive.

## FISH CAMP

We happened on to Lone Cabbage Fish Camp one day where they had airboat rides to see alligators in the wild. We decided to give the restaurant a try. It's pretty rustic but kind of fun but you have to wade your way through some really greasy food. All during lunch I kept staring at an autographed picture of Arnold Palmer hanging on the wall above me and wondered, did he really come here and eat all this grease? I'm hooked on the fried pickles though.

## APRIL 1ST "THEY START HEADIN' NORTH"

It's the busiest we've seen it yet this season on the ICW. Guess April 1st is the official start of the migration of cruisers heading north, or at least that's what the dock master said at New Smyrna.



We are nearing Titusville now and see a string of 15 white egrets flying in formation overhead and then several white pelicans with black tipped wings fly by. A dolphin or two came by to play with the bow.

Guess my expectations for seeing wild life will be met today.

Seas are fine, just a little chop with winds out of the north about 10 knots.

## NORTH OF TITUSVILLE

We're passing Merritt Island Reserve off to our starboard.

Suddenly by MARKER 8 we see lots of birds on a little island off to our port and it's loaded with roseate spoonbills, pure white pelicans, and two bald eagles to name a few! Too far away to get any decent pictures and can't really stop to look because we have to continue in the narrow dredged channel as there is a boat behind us. You can't stray as it's very shallow on either side as we quickly found out and scurried back in the channel.

A couple spoonbills and a black wing tipped ibis decided to fly along with us across the waterway. Pretty neat!

Red "1" marking a shoal is missing right before the canal. We see it beached on on the shore.

We head through the Haulover Canal and pass a grey heron watching us go by along with lots of fishermen standing on shore. A fairly large sailboat has anchored inside



the fishing launch area which surprises

He does! I get so mad I yell at him on the



Larry.

radio.

We make the turn out into Mosquito Lagoon and finally leaving the Indian River which we've traveled on for the last few days. Off to our right and then behind us you can make out the silhouette of the Space Center.

I guess I shamed him in front of the other two trawlers so he slowed down for them to pass but then raced on again. You wonder why people like that don't just go on the outside if they are in such a rush? What destination would require him to race by and wake us like that?

## DEEP BLUE

We are following a couple trawlers now, going at a nice pace and just enjoying the scenery when behind us I see a fast boat coming with a huge wake. He comes on fast and it's obvious this guy is not going to give us a slow pass. It's a bit scary to watch as you know he's going to wake the hell out of you.



We begin to see some settlement now for the first time and passing Goodrich

Seafood restaurant again but from the waterside. We called to see if they had enough depth at their dock so we could stop for lunch but they only have 4 feet.

We begin to pass RV parks one after another. They sure have a good spot, lots of nature and no development. Must be great fishing around here. Soon we are passing quaint old homes and before you know it we have arrive in New Symrna. There's something about this place that I like already. Seems so laid back and quiet.

## **SMALL WORLD AFTER ALL**

Oops. Guess what? Deep Blue is docked one slip over as we head in to our slip. It makes you wonder what in the heck the big rush was if they only were coming this far? Wonder if they'll be a little bit embarrassed having to face all those trawlers they waked along the way. Just goes to show you, you might want to have some manners out there on the water because who knows who you will see at the dock on the next stop along the ICW? It's a small world out here.





It'll be an overnight stay here and then up to Marineland. A storm is coming soon.