

CHESAPEAKE BAY

We approached Great Bridge and found it just as advertised in the cruising guides. There was a free dock on each side of the big new drawbridge. A few blocks south we found restaurants and a shopping center with a grocery store. We ran into other cruisers at the KFC, getting chicken take-out to carry back to the dock!

It was surprisingly peaceful here; the photo is our view of the opposite shoreline from the free dock. Below is Mary tending the lines in the lock.



Norfolk was fascinating. We only got held up once at a drawbridge. There wasn't much commercial traffic, but there were lots of small boats arriving for the Norfolk Harborfest. It's billed as the worlds biggest dock party. I thought about anchoring out by Hospital point, but, I didn't like the heat, and I sure don't like anchoring in a crowd.

We cruised on past Mile Zero, Nauticus, the battleship Wisconsin, and the Norfolk naval base.

The engine has been giving me fits again. It's eating V-belts. I've put one on each day for the last three days. The original plan was to sail and cruise the Chesapeake for a month, anchoring out, footloose and fancy free. The weather in June is usually mild, with temperatures low enough at night that



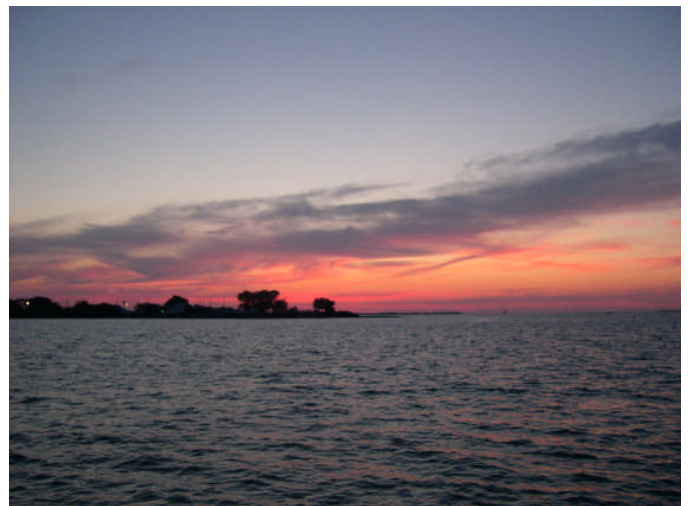
air conditioning isn't critical. But, with engine problems, it's time for a change of plans. I glanced through the cruising guides and found Salt Ponds marina, which other cruisers had mentioned. Time to head for a dock, so I can do the mechanical work on the V-belt issue. Salt Ponds, here we come!

We call ahead and get reservations. It's near low tide, and my IP-38 has a 5' draft. How deep is the channel? "Oh, we have a minimum six foot depth all the way!" OK. The entrance channel is narrow. I'm dead center between the markers as we enter the jetties. BUMP! BUMP! BUMP! Lurch-drag-STOP! We're aground again! Six-foot-depths-my-ass! Hmm.... can I power through it? Full throttle forward and get over what might be only a narrow bar? I try. Water churns astern. We get more and more solidly stuck. That was a BAD IDEA! And now, the wind is pivoting us SIDEWAYS in the narrow channel! Oh-No-Oh-No-Oh-No! OK. Can we reverse and get out? It's a falling tide, but I've only been stuck a couple of minutes. Reverse. Rev it up. We're still motionless. A fishing boat stops behind us, with several guys aboard giving us the what-the-hell-are-you-doing look. I ignore them; I'm busy. Ah. Motion! We're slowly creeping back off... and still turning sideways! BUMP! BUMP! Time to do a K-turn and get out of here. Spin around, finally headed the right direction, and BUMP! BUMP! back out the channel to the bay.

We move a few miles further north and anchor for the night in Back River. It's a lovely area surrounded by Langley Air Force Base. We had our own air show with F-15's, F-16's and coast guard helicopters doing maneuvers in the area. Thankfully they quit at sunset, and we had a quiet night.



Sunset and sunrise from the Back River:



The next day, after checking the tide tables, we carefully enter Salt Ponds. There's a three foot tide, and my depth sounder shows 2.5' under the keel. The MLW depth in the channel is 4.5', not the 6' the marina claimed! LESSON LEARNED! Marinas lie about their depth!

Salt Ponds has a nice facility, including a pool. No restaurant, and no shopping; nothing in walking distance. Not a big problem, since we'll move our car here for the summer. It's hot; by mid-month it's high nineties by day and high seventies at night. We're thankful for shore power and air conditioning! We settle in and start on a new round of maintenance projects, spiced by local sight-seeing of the history in the area on weekends.



JUNE PROJECTS:

- Remove alternator and replace mounting bolt for V-belt alignment
- Replace worn V-belt, and buy more belts as spares
- 100 hour maintenance. Change engine oil and the oil and fuel filters.
- Clean the deck and polish the stainless steel.
- Clean and wax the hull; get rid of our ICW mustache
- Heat-gun remove the old cove stripe and replace it with a new stripe
- Paint a couple of the bilge compartments.
- Remove torn bimini panels and have them re-stitched.
- Install new macerator unit for forward head.
- Disconnect and flush out sanitation hose on the forward head.
- Install new water hoses for refrigeration water cooling.
- Install new water pump for air conditioner cooling.
- Install a galvanic isolator in the shore power electrical system.
- Schedule a diver for hull cleaning and zinc replacement.
- Weekly maintenance – inspections, water strainers, etc.



Roy with a heat gun on the hull to remove the old stripe.

Mary cleaning the surface as we prep to put the new stripe on.



We typically spend four or five hours each day in maintenance work when we're docked in a marina. We're retired; we don't overwork ourselves; but there's always something to do.

SIGHT SEEING:

- Norfolk Harborfest – the worlds biggest dock party!
- Historic Jamestown
- Yorktown battlefield
- Hampton Air and Space museum
- We take a two day driving tour around Chesapeake Bay



During our drive around the Bay we stay at the delightful Imperial Hotel in Chesterton. It's a beautiful century old downtown hotel. <http://www.imperialchestertown.com/> Very romantic! We stop at a half dozen villages around the bay, looking closely at marinas. The most attractive one for us is the Town Marina in Urbanna, Virginia. Their web site is: <http://www.urbanna.com/> The forecast is for a hot summer, so we'll be tied to the dock with the shore power umbilical for air conditioning. We've reserved a berth there for July and August.

June 1 Great Bridge – free dock by the drawbridge
June 2 Back River anchorage
June 3 - 30 Salt Pond marina in Hampton Virginia
Next stop: Urbanna Town Marina for July and August.