

Proper preplanning prevents poor performance

By Ed Huntsman, February 2019 Newsletter

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Proper preplanning prevents poor performance. Whether you are planning a day trip to the lake, an extended cruise or something in between, planning will make all the difference and that's what these tips are all about. There are a myriad of details before any boating or cruising trip, regardless of its length or location. Beyond just the basics of who we are taking, what clothes, supplies and equipment will be needed, what activities we will be involved in, etc., etc., etc. All of these issues and more will affect the success and enjoyment of the event or activity, and cruising is certainly no exception. But, no matter where you go, whom you go with or how long you plan to stay, always pack the sunscreen, swim suits, snorkeling gear, camera, and easy-to-wear, comfortable clothes. And don't forget to let the Post Office know the dates to stop and start your mail (you can do that online), stop the newspaper and have someone lined up to feed the pets. This is where the Internet will become your best friend; simple phrases on any search engine will yield unbelievable results, providing ideas for places to go, ways to get there, and things to do when you arrive.

Deciding Where To Go

If you are lucky enough to live in the Phoenix metropolitan area, there are several options for short-range cruising. We've actually sailed in the morning on Willow Springs Lake above the Mogollon Rim northeast of Payson, and left San Diego Harbor late that same afternoon in route to Catalina Island off the coast of Southern California! Living in Arizona offers boating and paddle sports enthusiasts' tremendous options for cruising excursions. Be your focus fishing, skiing, wake boarding, paddling, sailing or watching wildlife, Arizonans have a real variety for consideration, all within a day's drive. And if you go to the airport, those options become exponential!

Looking for a weekend getaway? Consider Bartlett Lake; boating, camping or renting an Aqua Lodge are all great options for this beautiful local lake. Canyon Lake offers spectacular views second only to Lake Powell. And any serious fisherman knows the treasures that wait at Roosevelt Lake in the Superstition Mountains. For a long(er) weekend, if you haven't experienced the majesty of Lake Powell, here's your chance. I've met people there who arrived and been so impressed that they've decided to stay. I'm not sure if the German tourist we met in 1998 is still a live aboard on the houseboat at Wahweap Marina, but I certainly wouldn't be surprised.



When we planned our first cruise for a two-week cruise in the Abacos in the Bahamas with friends we went early enough to miss the storms, chartered a 40-foot catamaran from a reputable company with two other couples and we had a wonderful time! A major aspect to make sure you consider on this type of adventure is to make sure you really enjoy the company of the friends you'll be with and to plan your activities ahead of time.

A 40-foot catamaran may sound like a lot of boat, but even 60 footers can get small after a week or two if you find you didn't quite know your friends as well as you thought you did. Take all the insurance options, shop for airfare and make sure you understand where you can go on the boat and when you can go there. It's never a bad idea to get charts of the area you plan to boat in and don't be afraid to ask the locals about things you should know when it comes to an unfamiliar cruising area.

Trailing Your Boat

Towing is always a great option for those of us who own a trailerable boat. Some friends had a week open and decided to load up with their 21-foot open ski-boat and head up to Lake Powell. They borrowed a detailed map I have of the lake, rented a satellite phone, stocked up on food and supplies and headed out for a week of boat camping on one of the world's most beautiful lakes. They came back with some fantastic pictures and memories to last a lifetime!

Travel

Despite what the folks at the security checkpoint may think, every airline allows passengers to take an inflatable life jacket with you; many will even allow it in your carry-on with an extra cartridge. However, be sure to check the baggage-carry rules for the airline you're using. I always print out a hard copy of the airline's policy and wrap it around my inflatable; I've never had a problem. If you use travel agents, make sure they're reputable. An hour or two of research on the airline's Web site will probably yield you the best deal possible. With the availability of sites such as Priceline.com and others out there for low fares, if you are flexible in your plans, you can find very reasonable fares. We bought our round-trip tickets to Marsh Harbor in the Bahamas for just over \$600 per person - not a bad fare at all. Make sure you don't over-insure here though. Many charter companies offer trip-protection insurance that also covers your airfare. So, if you have insurance with the charter company, don't pay extra for the same coverage through the airline or travel service.

Local Knowledge

Take the time to talk with the locals, regardless of your destination. Whether it's a group of kids near the roller coaster at Mission Bay or fishermen on the dock at Treasure Cay in the Abacos, these are the folks who can provide the best of information on a variety of topics ranging from the right bait to use to where you can find the best restaurants or grocery store.

Sightseeing



You'll have your camera and probably some extra time to take in the sights; so don't forget to take some photos along the way. With digital pictures, we don't have to worry about paying for developing the photos we don't want anymore, so get a bigger memory chip or extra space on the cloud and take lots of pictures. Pictures of the huge saguaros along the highway when heading to Arizona's inland lakes or the Colorado River; the dolphin and whales you spot between Long Beach and Two Harbors, or wherever your destination may be, you're taking time out of your life and money out of your pocket to be there, so take some pictures to share when you get back home to show your friends what they missed.

Cruising is a wonderful way to spend your time and relax. Whether you only have a few days and time to get to an inland lake, or enough time to cruise around the world on a Class-A cruise line, take the time to enjoy it and plan before you go.