

A Guide to Cruising with HHSA

While racing is the exciting, competitive, adrenalin-rush side of sailing, cruising is a bit more laid back and less pressured. Cruising offers a different set of challenges and rewards. The sailing focuses less on sail trim and tactics and more on skills such as navigation, anchoring, rafting and managing the boat's systems for an overnight or extended stay on the water. The rewards include a chance to enjoy the beautiful and varied sights and sounds of Chesapeake Bay and the friendship of other members over drinks and hors d'oeuvres at the end of the day.

If you are new to cruising with HHSA, this guide will give you an idea of what to expect. But it is only that – a **guide**. The emphasis is on having fun, not on constraining the experience to a set format. Members bring new ideas to the cruising program all the time. Maybe you will too.

Getting Started:

Information on upcoming cruises is available in the HHSA newsletter, *Harbour Light*, and on the HHSA web site in the Event Calendar, and on the home page. The r/c Cruising will ensure that information on an upcoming cruise goes out via email to the membership covering such things as the destination, the theme, if there is one, and the VHF hailing and working channels to use. You can get a reminder on the next weekend's cruise by e-mail by joining the HHSA cruising list-serve described on the Cruising web page, or by checking the Cruising Forum for discussion prior to the cruise. In some cases, where reservations for dinner or a slip are needed, the cruise captain may ask members planning to join the cruise to contact him or her in advance. But most of the time, if you want to go, just register for the event by clicking on the link on the Event Calendar or on the bottom of the home page on the HHSA web site.

Some cruise captain's may choose to hold an optional meeting generally starting at 9:00 AM on the first morning of the cruise (usually Saturday) at Herrington Harbour South or Herrington Harbour North bulletin board. The cruise captain provides charts and information regarding the destination and other details such as communications, weather forecasts and cruise activities. In the digital age, this information is more typically communicated to registrants in the description of the cruise on the Event Calendar, via email and/or the Cruising Forum on the website. You are urged to contact the cruise captain/host via email/cell phone/VHF with any questions you may have. Everyone has their own style and approach when they sail on a cruise. Larger boats will not require as much time to reach the cruising destination, while smaller vessels may need to leave earlier in the day. Some members rise with the birds, and others depart at the 'crack of noon'. You can join a cruise at any time. Hail the cruise captain on VHF 16, or other channel he may designate, and let him/her know you will be joining the cruise. Weather can change the best of plans, so it is a good idea to check in with the cruise captain before you go, or enroute to the destination.

To cruise, you will need, at a minimum, a paper chart of the central portion of the Chesapeake Bay. Some form of GPS would be helpful; a small hand-held GPS (eg Garmin) is sufficient. Chesapeake Bay Magazine's **Guide to Cruising Chesapeake Bay** is updated annually, and contains all the local knowledge you need to find Baby Owl Cove and any other HNSA cruise destination. Here's a link to purchase it:

http://www.amazon.com/2014-guide-Cruising-Chesapeake-Bay/dp/1884726194/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1399389212&sr=8-1&keywords=chesapeake+bay+cruising+guide

Rafting at a Cruise Destination:

Rafting is a very informal affair. You may anchor alone or join a raft as you prefer. Rafts tend to be composed anywhere from 2 to 7 boats, depending on the size of the boats, the weather conditions, and personal preference. The skipper of the anchor boat is the raft captain. It is the raft captain's decision to determine the number of boats on the raft and each boat's location. Matching size and weight on starboard and port sides is an important consideration for the anchor holding ability, security of the raft and safety of the rafted boats. Rafts or partial rafts may be pre-arranged by members (e.g., families with same age children wishing to raft together), or formed on a first come-first served basis, with additional rafts being formed as more boats arrive at the destination. No one is obliged to raft up, however, so if for some reason you require rafting with someone else in order to participate in the cruise, you would be wise to pre-arrange this with another registrant.

When arriving at a destination anchorage, you may contact the cruise captain for rafting instructions/advice or contact a boat you may wish to raft with to request permission to raft up. If radio contact cannot be made, slowly come within hailing distance and talk to the anchor captain. Or, drop your own anchor and let arriving boats know they may raft with your boat. You indicate your willingness to take on boats by placing fenders on whichever side of your boat you would like the other boat(s) to tie up.

A boat starting a raft should put out fenders on both sides. A boat that has joined a raft should put out fenders on the free side if the raft captain so indicates. More fenders can be added if needed. A boat joining the raft is responsible for providing the necessary lines to safely secure to the anchor boat (1 bow line, 1 stern line, and at least 1 spring line). Have these lines ready before coming alongside the boat. Once alongside and standing off a short distance, pass the looped end of the bow and stern lines to the host boat and, once secured at that end, breast your boat over to the fenders and cleat the free ends. Then run the spring line(s) with the boats' masts offset.

While most rafts stay together throughout the night, winds, weather, poor holding ground, or anything that could lead to dragging anchor or excessive boat motion is cause for breaking up the raft. The raft captain will decide if and when a raft will be broken up, and has the responsibility to communicate clearly the decision to all boats in the raft.

Individual boats may also break off from the raft in the evening to anchor or leave. If you have special rafting needs or a desire to break off in the evening or early morning, please inform the raft captain before joining so that provisions can be made to accommodate your needs.

Once you have joined a raft, you have given implicit permission for others, in the raft, to cross your boat. Good manners dictate that such crossings should be made forward of the mast, across the bow, and that crossing not be made when you might expect raft mates to be sleeping. Permission should be requested to visit or cross through the cockpit. Be careful where you are walking to prevent tripping or fouling the other boat's gear.

Cruise Social Parties:

The cruise captain decides, communicates and coordinates where and when the cruise social party will be located. This information is provided via email announcements prior to the cruise, on the Event Calendar link when you register, or during the cruise. Those desiring to attend can radio the cruise captain for the particulars. In general, most cruise parties start about 5:30 PM and are held on the boat/raft of the cruise captain. Sometimes another boat on the cruise (especially a larger one) is designated the host boat and depending upon the cruise destination, social parties may be held on a beach, if one is available. There are no hard and fast rules on exactly what the social party entails... that's what makes it fun!

Members anchored alone or part of rafts other than the host raft, should dinghy to the host boat or appropriate location. If you are new to cruising and don't own a dinghy yet, you can perhaps arrange IN ADVANCE with another registrant to 'taxi' you to the host boat. Most members are more than willing to assist a newcomer, but this is not something you should assume will happen.

Each member boat attending the party brings an hors d'oeuvre to share and their own drinks, unless the cruise captain has specified otherwise. Hors d'oeuvres can be whatever you like, such as chips & dips, cheese & crackers, pizza, pate, sweet & sour meatballs or stuffed mushrooms. Simple or elaborate, anything is welcome and appreciated. Remember to bring non-breakable serving pieces (plastic, acrylic, wooden, etc.), not glass. Care should be taken in passing food and drinks around, so that clean up after the party is not a nightmare for the host boat(s).

Other Cruise Activities:

Depending on the particular cruise, other activities may be planned by the cruise captain for your enjoyment. For example, there has typically been a cruise that includes special activities for children (Sea Urchin Cruise), e.g., dinghy races, nature walks, etc. On some cruises, restaurant dinners or brunches are planned and those attending the cruise may join or not, as they prefer. Joining in on any of the activities is strictly individual choice

but guaranteed to be fun and a fond memory during the winter months. As noted earlier, information about the cruise plans will be published in the *Harbour Light* newsletter. Misplaced your newsletter? It's available on the HHSA web site. You can also call the cruise captain to get additional information before a cruise.

New Member(s):

If you are new to cruising, anchoring, rafting, etc. don't let that stop you. Discuss your concerns with the cruising commodore, cruise captain or other cruise participants and you will find that others are happy to help. The goal is to make boating a pleasure, not a chore. Most of us didn't "learn the ropes" without the advice and help from someone else. In fact, cruising with others provides an excellent opportunity to develop and improve your general boating skills through advice and discussion with other cruisers.

Don't miss the opportunity to cruise with friends, enjoy the great outdoors, participate in stimulating conversation and have a wonderful learning experience with all the members of your family.