

The Adventures of HIGH COTTON

HIGH COTTON is a year 2000 Camano Troll, a trawler that was originally designated as 28' but is now known as 31'. HIGH COTTON is powered by a single Volvo TAMD41P diesel engine and is equipped with a bow thruster. There is no onboard genset, but there is a four battery house bank and a 2000 watt inverter. The galley is equipped with a refrigerator and a three burner propane range with oven and broiler. Cruising at 2000 RPM, she makes 7 knots over slack water and burns about 1.8 GPH.

The following is an account of a cruise south on the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway from Charleston, SC to Savannah, GA and back in October, 2013.

Captain's Log, day one (October 3, 2013)

On the road again, we just can't wait to get on the road again

Well, we're not on the road, we're on the water but that doesn't fit the melody. ;)

We're headed to Savanna, GA for the Oktoberfest weekend on River Street next to the docks. Never mind that it would only take a couple hours by car and about fifteen hours by boat. Never mind that it would take five gallons of gasoline in the car and thirty gallons of diesel for the boat. We bought this boat to travel and travel we will do!

So, 7:15 AM found us slipping out of RiversEdge Marina and heading down the Ashley River to the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway. It's a trip we have made several times before and a trip many of our boating friends have made as well.

We saw the usual dolphins but in Watts Cut we saw a fairly large alligator sunning in the mud. When we circled around to get better pictures, he slid into the water and out of sight. A small DNR boat passed us and Kiki (the sea dog) barked at it. The DNR guys smiled and waved back.



Alligator in Watts Cut

For a change, the current was with us for much of the way, not against us. The tides were a different story. On the cut leading to the Coosaw River, the depth sounder alarm beeped merrily as we tried to find the deepest part of the channel. Entering the Coosaw River there's a shoal to be avoided and even following the chart and the markers, the bottom kept getting closer. Five feet, four feet, then three and seven tenths feet. Well the boat needs three and a half feet so that's cutting it pretty close. Anyway, we inched through to deeper water and headed up the Coosaw River towards Beaufort.

We decided to dock at the Beaufort free dock for a few hours and stretch our legs. We walked for a bit, then got back on the boat and headed for an anchorage south of the big sandbar. Tomorrow it's on to the Savannah River and up the river to Savannah.

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HIGH COTTON at the free day dock, Beaufort, SC

Captain's Log, day two (October 4, 2013)

We had an uneventful start today; got up, got dressed, made coffee, wiped down the seats and upper deck and motored through the rest of the Beaufort no-wake zone. Beaufort is posted as a no-wake zone from bridge to bridge with threats of a thousand dollar plus fine, but every time we've been there, the smaller boats seem to ignore the no-wake signs. Yesterday and today were no exceptions.

There were several more dolphin sightings today and again Kiki marveled at the "big fish".



Savannah, GA in the distance

Entering Fields Cut, a narrow and often shallow man made cut leading to the Savannah River; we heard a vessel making a securite call on the radio. Normally these are made by large ships or tugs to warn other ships or boats of their presence. You wouldn't want to meet a tug and tow in Fields cut. We got on the radio to try and find out more information on the vessel we were about to meet in the cut. Just as we raised the captain on the radio, the boat came around a bend and it was a large private trawler type boat. We asked the captain if he was the "white trawler" coming around the bend. His reply; "No, this is the white seventy foot **motor yacht**." Oh well, we didn't mean to insult him.

Anyhow, two boats passing in the cut is no big deal so we passed each other, he headed north and us headed south. To repay us for our unintended insult, he didn't slow down one bit.

We had already seen several container ships going both ways on the Savannah River and as we approached the intersection we heard a securite call from a cargo ship headed towards Savanna. We called him and asked his speed. He indicated that he was making about ten knots and knowing we wouldn't be going that fast, we decided to wait and let him get in front of us. No sense in getting ourselves in a situation where he would have to pass us. Those ships throw a big wake! Even following a half mile or so behind it, we felt the wake.

When we got to the dock, there was nobody there. The dockmaster had been called away on an emergency so we docked unassisted. We pulled up to the dock, Patti stepped off onto the dock with one line, Captain Ron tossed her the other and she tied us up.

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Number One Deckhand at Work



HIGH COTTON at the River Street Marketplace Dock

The party had already started on River Street. The vendors are set up and the bands are playing. Kiki went for a walk and met many new friends including several dogs and two cats in a cat buggy. Back on the boat, there was a fireworks show across the river at 9:30. Kiki does not like fireworks!



The Rinelanders Oompah Band

Time to turn in, tomorrow should be a fun day with the wiener dog races and other entertainment.

Captain's Log, day three (October 5, 2013)

The Captain's log is a day late; the captain fell asleep before writing it. Day three (Saturday) was the day for the wiener dog races so we took Kiki and walked to the park and watched several heats. These are just people's pets racing for fun. Some run to the finish line, many don't know what to do and just wander around. It's amusing and entertaining.

A boat pulled into the dock in front of us and they had a dachshund puppy so Kiki played with it for a bit.

The rest of the day was spent looking at the exhibits, shopping, listening to the German band, and eating. In the evening we walked up from River Street to a section of the city where they have closed the street to cars and have stores, restaurants, bars, and street entertainment. It was a long walk (with the sea dog) and it seemed longer walking back, especially since we had to carry Kiki much of the way. Too tired to write.

That's our story and we're sticking to it!

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Captain's Log, day four (October 6, 2013)

Change of plans! We decided to stop by Harbour Town Yacht Basin for a night. We've heard so much about it from others at RiversEdge and it's only a mile or so out of our way. Having been here just a few hours, we have to say it's a first class operation. They bring you a complimentary bottle of wine after you check in and you don't even have to walk to the office, they check you in at the slip.



HIGH COTTON at Harbour Town Yacht Basin

There's a small beach so we took Kiki for her first time at a beach. Unfortunately, it was low tide and much of the beach was mud. She had a great time playing in the mud and the water but of course she had to have a shower before she could come back on the boat. After Kiki's shower, we each took showers. We can shower on the boat, but it's great to shower in a marina with unlimited water.

Patti took the credit card and visited the shops while Captain Ron hooked up the cable TV and watched Denver vs. the Dallas Cowboys. As Washington Redskins fans, our two favorite football teams are the Redskins and whoever is playing against Dallas!

We ate a delicious seafood dinner in one of the restaurants in the complex and have enough left over for tomorrow.

The weather forecast is looking pretty iffy for tomorrow so we may just stay another day before heading for home. We shall see.

Captain's Log, day five (October 7, 2013)

Based on the forecast of 90% chance of rain today, we signed up for another night at Harbour Town Yacht Basin. We're still waiting for that rain; it was a beautiful, sunny day. We could have been halfway home or more. No matter, we had a great day walking around the complex, shopping, dining, and taking Kiki to the beach again. This time we took her nearer high tide so there was no mud to deal with, only sand. She seemed to have a good time again.

We will leave here tomorrow and head for home. We'll get halfway or more, then anchor for the night. That's the plan anyway.

Captain's Log, day six (October 8, 2013)

Whew! We hardly know where to begin! Probably the beginning would be best. Yes, it was raining. Not hard but raining. Captain Ron got his rain gear on and filled the water tanks while Patti walked with Kiki to the office to settle the bill. She got back and Captain Ron looked at it. Nearly \$300 for two nights! We figured this place was expensive but not that expensive. Captain Ron commented to Patti and she looked at the bill. They had charged us for another boat, a fifty two foot boat! We walked back to the office and they straightened it out, only \$150 for two nights. That's more like it.

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We got everything unhooked and untied, set up the inside helm seat, and headed out of the harbor into Calibogue Sound. It was not only raining, it was windy and the waves were up. Way up. The waves were breaking over the bow. An uncomfortable ride, but HIGH COTTON is built to take it. At our ages, we're not sure we are.



Rough Ride on Calibogue Sound

Scull Creek behind Hilton Head Island afforded some relief, but then we had to cross Port Royal Sound. We heard a loud metallic crash. We thought maybe the boat poles and brushes had fallen but when Captain Ron checked, they were still where they belong. Then he climbed the ladder and looked at the flybridge. Three of the bimini support poles had been pulled out of their ends and the bimini frame was flopping around. We slowed the boat so he could get out his trusty roll of duct tape and secure them so there would be no further damage.

Even though we probably had plenty of fuel to make it home, we're not comfortable running close to empty so we stopped at Port Royal Landing Marina and took on thirty gallons of diesel fuel. Once we got closer to Beaufort, the waves died down again.

So far, we had been traveling with the current so at least we made pretty good time. The current

changed as we left Beaufort for the Coosaw River so we made good time there as well. Once we got to the South Edisto River we were traveling against the current and we had a slow trip. We decided to anchor upstream from Watts Cut on the South Edisto River.

Apparently we hadn't had enough drama yet today because as we were anchoring, the rode jammed in the anchor locker and Patti had to hold the boat in place with the engine while Captain Ron unhooked and moved the TV so he could get to the anchor locker and untangle the rode. That's the first time this has ever happened to us.

Once anchored, Captain Ron got his tools out and put the bimini frame back together so he could lay the bimini back and store it in its boot. Then he put the TV back and Patti fixed dinner.

The plan is to get back to RiversEdge tomorrow.

Captain's Log, day seven (October 9, 2013)

We had a nice dinner (doggie bags from the restaurant at Harbour Town), then a quiet and peaceful night at anchor. No other boats, no houses, just us and nature. After all that happened yesterday it didn't take long to fall asleep.

The morning pre-startup check revealed something a little unsettling – water in the bilge! Not a lot but more than the “none” that is customary. Captain Ron couldn't find an obvious source so we got underway with the thought of checking it later in the day. After a couple hours, we stopped to check the bilge. He could see a slow drip from the hose under the raw water strainer so he got a screwdriver and tightened the hose clamps. He did notice though, they weren't loose.

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After lunch, it was warm and sunny so we moved to the flybridge to run the boat. After a while Captain Ron went down to check the engine again and saw that the leak was actually from the cover of the raw water strainer and the drip was running down the hose. It's a known issue on this engine that unless the cover is really tight, it will leak. No problem, we need to clean the strainer anyway so we will take care of it when we get home.



The Limehouse Bridge - Returning to Charleston, SC

There was no way we could make it back to RiversEdge for the 12:47 PM slack tide so we decided to take it easy and hit the evening slack tide. We anchored across from the Charleston City Marina to watch the sights and kill some time.

A little before 6:00 PM we started the engine, raised the anchor and headed up river for home. The sun had set by the time we got there but the wind never died down. Imagine our surprise when we were met at our slip by Sadler Love and his boating buddies who graciously took our lines and helped us into our slip. They are heading out tomorrow morning for Beaufort and Hilton head.

So, we packed up the dirty laundry and other things that needed to come home, Captain Ron got the oil change pump and pumped out the

engine oil while it was still warm from the trip. Tomorrow he will change the filter and add new oil, fix the leaking strainer, and do his best to wash the salt crystals off the boat.

We had fun, saw lots of sights and Kiki had a good time. We're home on land and ready for a good night's rest.