

Abaco Vacation

By Mike Kutz

The first part of this was hand written, I then switched to typing and came back to type the beginning part in. If there were points I remembered, I added them in for clarification. I've put a couple items at the end, including maps so you can visualize the places better. The last one is out of the Abaco cruising guide. This is the one we used daily, which I highly recommend you buy before the trip, and you get a much better view of things. Enjoy.

6/13/04-Today was the start of our vacation. I decided I wanted to try and document a little of it with this journal along with pictures. I've never done this before and I'm not a great writer and my spelling is even worse, so no proof reading, just read along and enjoy the adventure.

Sunday: This morning started out OK, a little hectic, but OK. Diane and I ran around the house getting it ready for Polly to come over and watch the kids, along with finishing the packing. Along with that, I was finalizing our flight preparation with kneeboard printouts of all the airports along the route, weather checks and flight plan filing with flight services (FSS). The plan was to go from KPIE to West Palm VOR (PBI), to the Freeport VOR, then to Marsh Harbor (MYAM). The weather was predicted to be smooth flying along our route with a slight head wind. When I started to file my flight plan with FSS, I found that instead of filing a DVFR plan, it actually had to be an international flight plan instead. No problem and the guy at flight services helped me through it without a hitch. None of the questions were any different than a normal VFR flight plan. When Polly showed up, we packed up the truck with all our stuff and the dog we were baby sitting, named "Captain" and we headed out. I don't think we did too bad packing. We had 2 duffle bags, 1 backpack, my laptop bag, 2 snorkel gear bags, a small tackle box, 2 small fishing rods and my flight bag. We'll see how much of it we use when we finish the trip. We also had a 2 wheel collapsible dolly as well, which came in handy so far. Well, we dropped off the dog, grabbed a quick sandwich at Wendy's and headed to the airport. The plane was waiting, looking clean (thanks to Kim) and beautiful with very few clouds in the sky. N7100Q was going to take us out to the Bahamas. I was so excited, I could hardly control myself. I don't know how Diane really felt. I think she was pretty excited, but also probably a little nervous as well. Diane loaded the plane as I pre-flighted. As I checked the fuel, I noticed a sticker that said 19 gallons. That reminded me that I used 42 gallons for my planning, and 38 was the actual useable amount. No problem, my plan was with 42 gallons, at 9 gallons per hour and 138 kts we should have over 4 ½ hours of fuel for a 2 ½ hour trip, so 4 gallons less was about ½ hour less, so still 4 hours of fuel for 2 ½ hour trip. After we were loaded up, we headed out. Pretty normal Class B services heading out of St. Pete (KPIE). We tried to get to 5500 ft, but there were now too many clouds. I had wanted to take off at around noon, but it was now 1 PM.

Everything went well until Tampa gave me a frequency change to VFR and cancelled flight following. I probably should have asked for Miami center's frequency, but instead spent the next 15 to 20 minutes searching my kneeboard and the charts for the frequency. I was totally unprepared for Tampa to not pass me off to Miami center. Anyway, around Sebring, I finally got the right one and called them up. While I was hunting I had the autopilot on. It was nice to be able to use both hands to search for stuff although it made Diane very nervous that I wasn't actually flying the plane, especially when we hit an air pocket. During this time, I realized I knew where I was via GPS, but not using the chart. This was a little uncomfortable. I really like knowing where I am on the chart. So once I found we were near Sebring, and validated it on the chart, I continued to use the chart as well as the GPS to keep track of where I was. So we again hooked up with flight following, which made me feel a lot better, especially since we had to cross the Gulf of Mexico and the ADIZ. I forgot to mention that I wasn't able to open my flight plan until Tampa almost let me go. I had to have been at least 20 minutes in to the flight. Back to Sebring, now that we had flight following again, I was able to look around the plane again. I was only flying around 98 kts. My flight planning had me at 138 kts, but since I was lower than expected, I figured 120 should be the right number. Still not a fuel problem, just a small adjustment, again. I assumed I had a decent headwind since I always seem to when I'm anxious to get somewhere. But, looking at the flap indicator, I noticed it looked like they were extended a little. I didn't really trust the gauge, but I flipped the switch up sort of instinctively. Sure enough the flaps went up about 5 degrees and we gained about 10 kts of airspeed and were now doing 110kts. We now are coming up on Lake Okeechobee and there is a nice rain shower right in front of us. I steer a little to the left and I catch what I think is lightning to my right. I ask Diane to keep a lookout for more. Not that I'm afraid of being hit by lightning, I just really, really don't want to. I also don't want to deal with the up and down drafts associated with them. Sure enough, Diane spots a few more as we fly under the now completely overcast skies. She even thinks she saw one out to our left. I'm hoping it was just a reflection in the glass, but either way, I can see clear skies ahead and we are almost out. Just before West Palm, the sun gods smiled on us and gave us sunny skies for the Gulf Stream crossing. Just before getting to West Palm, I was handed off to West Palm tower who asked me to stay a little north of the airport to be clear of landing and takeoff traffic. I complied and started out over the Atlantic. As we started the crossing now at 3500 ft, I looked down and saw the beautiful blue water of the Atlantic. I always forget how blue it is. As we crossed, we were transferred to Miami again. About halfway, Miami was going to lose us from radar and tried to hand us off to Freeport tower. I decided to try and climb to 5500 ft to stay with them a bit longer, but there were too many clouds, so we dropped down to 3500 and was transferred to Freeport tower. Still too many clouds, so I got cleared down to 2000 and that is where we stayed. I don't think either one of us was nervous about crossing the Gulf stream, but I didn't make any changes to the throttle and mixture the whole way over, just in case. After only 15 or 20 minutes, we could make out the north end of Freeport. I have to admit, it was comforting. I think

mostly due to all the pilots and stories telling me how they wouldn't do the crossing in anything but a twin engine plane. When we over flew Freeport airport, there had to be 6 planes in the area, and it didn't seem like the tower was keeping us separated, or notifying any of them about the whereabouts of the others. I was glad to get past them, and from here it was only 80 miles to Marsh Harbor. Freeport told me to close my flight plan with them before we landed and when we were about 30 miles from Marsh Harbor, they called. I answered, but I guess being at 2000 ft was too low for them to get my transmission. I briefly tried climbing to try and reach them, but no luck. All this time we passed to the east of Grand Bahamas. The water was now all the aqua's, greens and sandy colors you see in the brochures. Couldn't even tell how deep it was. Sometimes it looked so shallow you could walk. Marsh Harbor finally came in to sight right where the GPS said it should be. I raised Nassau radio and closed my flight plan. It was really hard to understand them through the static, but after verifying twice, I'm pretty sure I closed it. I now got on Unicom and started calling to land on Runway 27, but after hearing another plan landing on 9 and another waiting to back taxi to 9, I changed to 9 as well. I think I cut in line since the twin waiting to back taxi had to repeat his call after I landed. It was a good landing. I flared a little high, but floated it down for a nice landing anyway. We taxied to where all the commercial twins where, including Continental, and found Customs and Immigration. Got all the paper work filled out, including the cruising permit and then had to clear customs. This meant emptying the plane and bringing it through customs. So, before doing that, I asked the customs guy where Zig Zag aviation as. He instead called the fuel truck to come and fuel us. We had planned to fuel up, move the plane to Zig Zag to tie down for the week, and then move our stuff through customs. It was now 4:45 and the fear was customs was closing at 5. While having the plane refueled, we started talking to another couple that flies in all summer long about parking the plane. They convinced us to use the government spots that were free, but there where no tie downs. Instead the planes had their wheels blocked with coral and scrap wood. I was a little nervous, but the other couple convinced me it was safe, and noted the other, much more expensive planes I was going to park next to. Once we were fueled up and I grabbed the receipt, It looked like we had taken on 36 gallons of fuel, that meant only 2 gallons in the tank when we landed. That's not good, but I was down and safe, and in a hurry, so I vowed to re-calculate later to see why my over 4 hours of fuel turned out to be a little over 3. The nice couple then helped us move the plane to one of the free government spaces by the customs office. We blocked the wheels with coral and driftwood, and put the parking brake on, along with the prop lock and emptied the plane and took our stuff to customs, saving about \$35 in tie downs. As we walked away, it looked a little funny that the little 172 had the prop lock while the twins and bigger planes had nothing but the coral under the tires. Anyway, this was the PPAs plane, MY plane and why take chances? I had the lock, so I might as well use it, right? After clearing customs with nothing more than an OK from the lady who was waiting to go home, we headed outside for a taxi ride, but I didn't know where to go. By this time I was hot, sweaty and thirsty and I had left the number to Amy & Austin in

the plane. While I was getting it, the taxi driver raised them on the VHF radio and found out where they were going to meet us. It was the pool bar at the dock. Not a bad place to meet, so off we went. Along the way, the taxi driver told me that Sea Level Cottages had been checking on us since 3:30, the time I was supposed to land. I thought that was nice of them. We got to the pool bar just as the taxi threw a fan belt, which he said he would have to get tomorrow. At the pool bar all I wanted was water. I was so dehydrated I had a killer headache and I stunk. So I changed my shirt as Diane went to get the beverages. Just as we started to drink them, Sabrina showed up in our boat. Sabrina works for Amy & Austin. We loaded up and off we went. As we idled out of the marina, we passed yachts that you wouldn't believe. Huge boats at least 150ft long with small ones, like 50ft Haterasses, next to them as toys. Some of the names of the big boats were "Chevy's Toy" with it's tender being the 50ft Haterass named "Mercedes". Another great boat name was "Bodacious". Once we passed them, Sabrina briefed us on some of the rules and off we went. The water was crystal clear. Diane was smiling, I was smiling and Diane was saying "we aren't leaving". We got to the cottage around 6 or so, dropped our stuff off in the "Garden Cottage". It was cute. It had two rooms, a bedroom and the other room that has the couch, dining room nook and kitchen. There is a screened in front porch, as well, with a hammock. No air conditioners, but the fans do a really great job. We are tucked back behind the other cottages all by ourselves. It's nice and quiet. I forgot to say the cell phones don't work here and we were given a handheld VHF to use to get a hold of Seal Level people if we need to. We were told that Amy & Austin is 1 minute away, and Sabrina and her husband Clint are two minutes. So I've turned in my cell phone for a handheld VHF and my car for a boat. I can live with that. After smiling for a while and patting myself on the back for a job well done in finding this place, we decided we where hungry and it was time for dinner. So, off to "Cracker P's" (www.crackerps.com), by boat of course, we went. As we went to the boat, we talked to someone who recommended the "Conch boat" for a Bahamian dinner. We jumped in the boat and 2 minutes later we were at "Cracker Ps" trying to tie up to the dock, bow towards the dock with a stern anchor. It's been a while but I managed. Dinner was outstanding. The "Conch Boat" was great with a few Kaliks to wash it down. Diane had a New York strip that was perfect. Dinner was expensive, \$69 for both of us, but we're worth it. When we got back, we walked in the water for a while before heading back to the cottages. We sat around and talked for a while before heading back to the dock to see if anyone was fishing. We got there; no one was fishing and when we looked up, was amazed at the amount of stars in the sky. You forget that when there is no light pollution that there are trillions of stars up there. Not long after we came back and showered up and got ready for bed. Not sure what tomorrow will bring, or what we're doing, but I can't wait. My guess is that we'll be going to "Hope Town" to pick up some supplies for the empty fridge.

Well, I'm sure I left out some details, but if I remember any good ones, I'll fill them in tomorrow. Diane is already asleep and I'm pretty tired. It's 11 PM and I've written

almost 8 pages on my first day and first journal. Not bad or maybe when I read this again I'll never do it again. We'll see.

6/15/04-Well, it's Tuesday night and if you are paying attention, I didn't write anything for Monday yet. Well I was tired and had a couple of rum drinks and I fell asleep, so I'll do my best to record yesterday and today at the same time, so I'll be caught up tomorrow.

Monday: I woke up around 7, Diane was still asleep so I made myself a cup of tea, we hadn't gone grocery shopping yet and it was the only thing worth drinking that early in the morning. So I took my tea and went for a walk to the dock. What a great way to start the day. Beautiful water, fresh breeze, salty sea smell, so I sat down for a while in one of the chairs and thought about work. Just for a minute to get it out of my system. Then I turned around and walked towards to beach. Before I got off the dock, some of the other renters where coming on. Rob was his name, and we talked for a while as his kids bounced around us. While I was there we saw a 3ft shark and a little sting ray also looking for breakfast. I walked up and down the island road a little, not much to see other than a house with an outdoor birdcage that had an Amazon parrot, cockatiel and another bird. I came back and went out the front porch so I wouldn't wake Diane. On the VHF radio at 8:15 every morning is the "Cruisers Net" where Barometer Bob does the weather (barometerbob.com), and someone else does the news, passes messages, e-mails and answers questions for anyone listening, which is all mostly boaters and a few of us cottage renters. Did I mention a VHF handheld came with the boat? Well it did and we take it everywhere like cell phones back home. Anyway, halfway through the broadcast, Diane woke up. So we finished listening and decided it was time for breakfast. Since there was nothing here, that meant heading out on the boat. While we were out we decided that we needed to get groceries as well, so Hope Town became our destination. About a 15 to 20 minute boat ride north gets us to Hope Town harbor. It has a beautiful lighthouse, one of 3 in the Bahamas and world I think, that is still manual. I need to go and find out more, and I'll probably do that Thursday. Coming in to this harbor, it looks a lot smaller than the map looked, but we navigated easily and found a place called "Captain Jack's". It was all pink and the outdoor seating area was built over the water. Boats tie up to it with a stern anchor. You might be starting to see a pattern. So far, all docks make people use this technique, so I'm getting my practice, bow to the dock with stern anchor holding you off. Breakfast wasn't anything special, the people where friendly and it was a little pricey, but what do you expect, we're not in the U.S anymore. After a quick breakfast, we moved the boat to a public dock and started in search of the grocery store. I shouldn't say "the" since there are two on the island. Along the way, we saw a wooden sign that said "Public beach access". Since we were on vacation, with no time tables to follow, and no watches on, we followed the sign. As we came up over the large dunes, the view was unbelievable. We took pictures, but it won't do it justice. Beautiful sandy beach with one person on it as far as you could see, this beach lead out to the dark dark blue ocean. It drops off

fast here and there is nothing but ocean all the way to Africa. We walked along the beach for a while before taking another access path back to the main road, which is single lane, but I haven't seen a car or a moped, or a golf cart yet. We made another turn, past the bank. This time I can say "the" since there is only one and the sign out front tells you when it's open, which is only on Tuesday, but I forgot the hours. You can read that again, and I didn't make a mistake, it is the only bank in Hope Town and it is only open on Tuesdays. We made our way to the grocery store still laughing about the bank which I did get a picture of for proof. The grocery store was small, what you would expect from an out island Bahamian store. All the basic necessities and not much else. What was missing was bread, which was at the other grocery store, "Vernon's", that was also the bakery. It wasn't nice fresh baked bread we bought, just the normal sandwich stuff. We were also only looking for necessities. I forgot to mention that we had also stopped in a few gift shops before the grocery store. Not much different than Florida, just the names on the t-shirts. Now with groceries in hand, we jumped back in the boat and headed for home, which for us at this point in time is the "Garden Cottage". Dropped off groceries and headed out for some fishing with minnows we got at the gas dock, along with a bottle of rum, in case of emergency. Forgot that part, but if you remember the beginning of this entry, there was rum mentioned . . . same rum. We went to the "fish hotel" as it was mentioned in our cruising guide in the room. We figured it would be the perfect place to catch fish. Wrong. I think they are on vacation as well. With Diane's persuasion, I jumped in with my snorkel gear to take a peak. First thing I saw was a whole lot of jelly fish, upside down on the bottom in the grass. I mean everywhere, and since I was only in 7 to 8 feet of water, when I stuck my head up and kicked my fins, it would stir them off the bottom. Not a good thing if you don't want to get stung. Snorkeled around a bit and found a starfish about 1 ft across. Snorkeled

6/16/04 – Well, it's Wednesday night and it took me a while to figure out the date. The days run together and you have a few drinks and it doesn't matter what day it is anymore. Well in case you didn't notice, yesterday's entry stopped one word in to a sentence. Diane and I got to talking; I got tired and fell asleep. This journaling isn't easy. Finding time when you aren't tired or had too much to drink is not an easy task, so tonight, I've only had one rum. It was big, but only one and we'll see how we do. First, I still need to finish Monday if I can remember that far back.

Monday, continued: After finding the starfish, I snorkeled towards the coral outcropping. Lots of little fish, sea cucumbers and more jellies. It was nice and easy snorkeling, so I encouraged Diane to jump in. She did and after getting used to the gear, enjoyed a little time at the fish hotel. Then we picked up anchor and headed south, past a castle built on the shore, towards Tilloo Bank. It's one of the biggest shallow areas to our south. We were afraid to get in too close for fear of running aground, which I seem to do almost every time I take a boat out, so we decided to anchor near another boat and snorkel in. So I donned snorkel gear and jumped in. It was only about 3 ft deep so it wasn't a big jump. It was all

sand where we were and we started to swim against the current to get to shore, as we got closer, we got in to about 3 ft of water that was a grassy bottom and I noticed there were spiny sea anemones. I warned Diane that we had better not stand in the grass or we might stand on one of them and it wouldn't tickle. As we got closer to the beach, eventually we were in about 1 ½ ft of water, which meant we were swimming within inches of the spiny creatures. We finally found a sandy spot where we could stand and we walked to the beach. It was a nice beach, only a few people on it. So we walked a while up the beach to where someone had put some table and chairs and an umbrella. We were later told that locals did that to have somewhere nice to go and relax. We walked back and I decided I would snorkel out to the boat and bring it back in for Diane. It was probably a 50 yard swim. A few of those and you'll really get in shape. After picking up Diane, we decided to go to "Tahiti Beach", which is at "Tilloo cut", the north end of "Tilloo Cay", "Tilloo bank" is at the south end. It's a great little strip of beach that juts out from Elbow Cay. We anchored in about 3 ft of sand, no more than 20 yards from the beach. It was strange feeling the temperature differences between the nice warm water from the inside of the islands and the colder water from the ocean side. We walked around the beach for a while and waded in the water a little, saw a few jellies and headed back to the boat. Diane grabbed her mask and took a quick look around, but nothing but sand to see. So we picked up anchor and headed "home", and had a quick dinner. Before dinner, we bumped in to Amy. We got some suggestions on fishing off the end of the dock. The trick is to catch 6 to 8 inch fish before sunset. Remove the backbone, but keep the fillets and head connected, and then use that as bait after dark for the big fish. Big as in up to 80 lbs. So we took our little 2 ft fishing rod and the minnows we bought in Hope Town and went to the end of the dock. We caught 3 good size fish, but one was a baby grouper, so we tossed him back. Filleted up the other two and waited for dark. After dark, I took the Yo-Yo fishing rig and put one of the filets on it. It was the smaller of the two and one of the other family's sons was asking if what I was holding was even a fishing rod. Well the first strike took the one side of the bait and the second took the rest. Now I had put the hook through the head on the first one, so for the second and last fish, I thought that if the fish took the bait, I would like the hook to come out of the bait and go in to the fish. That wasn't going to happen, so I put this hook through the meat of the fish, twice, and tossed it out. I sat down this time, since it was late now, I was tired and all the rest of the guests were back home. Diane was fishing with one of the little poles, with her back to me. Then I felt a nibble, and then I felt him take the bait. I let some line out so he would take it all and after 20 or so feet, snugged up the line. I don't think he liked that. He took off; the line cut my arm somehow in four whip looking cuts. I then heard a big splash and since it was dark except for the small light at the end of the dock, I couldn't see what it was. The line was loose and I thought I had lost him, so I started reeling it in. As soon as it got snug and he realized he was hooked, he took off like you wouldn't believe. Snapping the 60 lb test line like it was nothing. So with my defeat fishing and my arm bleeding, we went home for some rum, for medicinal

purposes only. Thank goodness I bought it or I'm not sure what would have happened, we might have had to cut the arm off.

Tuesday: We are up and listening to the "Cruisers Net" again while having breakfast. Yesterday, Amy suggested "Little Harbor" as a good lunch spot along with a rum drink called a "Blaster" at "Pete's pub". Along the way there is a great beach by "Pelican Cays", the northern most, then we were thinking of snorkeling around the south end of Pelican Cay where there are some buoys to tie up to and on the way back, troll for some fish. We had a plan, and out we went. We bumped in to Amy and Austin going out towards the boat and since yesterday, I had suggested to Amy that she give Diane some boating instructions, she was ready to go. So we had a great local guide coming along for the day. Off we went, the three of us, south to Tilloo Bank. Once we got to Tilloo, we idled across the shallow bank with the motor tilted up, and we did this real close to the shore since that's where it was the deepest. We kicked up sand once or twice, but nothing to be concerned with. Once through the bank, we were only minutes from one of the most beautiful beaches around, and one of Amy's favorites, Pelican Cay. We anchored in about 6 ft of water since Amy's a little more conservative than me, and it's her boat. So, we swan in to shore. Just as we were getting there, the only other boat was just leaving, which left the beach to us. We walked along the beach, and then headed up over the Cay to the other side where the view of the ocean was again beautiful. From here you could see all the way north to Hope Town. There was a stone wall and an old broken down house on the island that was destroyed by one of the hurricanes along with a lot of the nice palm trees. When we walked back, we decided to snorkel on the south side of the beach. Not a whole lot to see, but a couple of coral rocks with plenty of little fish to look at. I forgot to mention that yesterday at Tilloo Bank, we picked up some sand dollars, there were some here as well, but not as nice. Also here were a lot of empty Conch shells; we grabbed one nice one which I hope we can clean up nicely. As we were snorkeling, Amy moved the boat closer so we wouldn't have to swim as far. Once we got on, off we went. We decided not to stop at the snorkel spot since Diane had gotten sun tan lotion in her eyes and they burned. So we passed there and headed straight to "Little Harbor". As we got there, Amy pointed out a cave that she said the family who started the bronze castings on the island lived in this cave for months while the house was being built. I'm sure dad and the boys had fun, but we were guessing mom wasn't so happy. We docked the boat and headed up to Pete's pub. How can I explain Pete's pub? Gazebo bar on sand with shirts, bras, license plates and whatever else you can put on the walls and ceilings. So we ordered a "Blaster" and Diane had a coke. While we were waiting for our drinks, I looked over and saw the infamous Bahamian ring game. I hadn't done it in 10 years or so and wanted to see how rusty I was. Second try and the ring was on the hook, so I walked away, not wanting to push my luck, but I still have the touch. The Blaster was great along with lunch, which was Conch fritters and Mango Grouper. As we were leaving, I decided we needed a few pictures of the place and while backing up, tripped and fell flat on my you know what smacking my

other arm on the stairs. I now have a bump on my left arm along with my fish whippings on my right. This is a tough vacation! We made our way to the gallery and found a nice little seahorse we liked, so we helped the local artist by buying one. I saw a sign for a lighthouse on the island, so I had to go and see it. As we headed that way, we passed the studio where they made the molds and the castings that they sold all over the world, along with the gallery we just left. Continued on up the narrowing path and finally got to the lighthouse, or should I say what was left of the house along with the current "light bulb on a small tower". It had a little kitchen building outside the main building where the cooking and kiln firing was done. This old lighthouse had a cistern where rain water was collected and used for drinking water. I commented to Amy how my grandfather's farm had a cistern, but was converted to city water. I also commented on how I would be a little uncomfortable drinking rain water that was collected that way. Amy just smiled and didn't say anything. Back down to the boat we went to head back home. Diane wanted to troll for fish and before we left to go to Pete's pub, Austin gave us the "special lure", yellow with a red nose. Sure to catch fish. We planned on going out the cut just south of Tilloo Cay; troll all the way North to Tilloo Cut. It was rough on the inside on the way south to Little Harbor, so we talked about just taking a look out the south end before going out. Sure enough, we got there and stopped and all we saw were white caps. So now the plan became to go to Tilloo Cut, go out and if it was too rough, head back in. This way we would be out in the heavy stuff for less time. We got to Tilloo Cut, idled the boat and watched the waves. They didn't look too bad, so with a group decision, I took us out. Once we got out of the cut and in to the rollers, Amy drove and I rigged the Yo-Yo with the "special lure". It would have been smarter to do this before we got in to the rollers. We trolled up and down for maybe 20 to 30 minutes with no luck, so we headed in and back home. Once we got back, Diane went to the cottage while I drove Amy home in the boat. She and Austin are living just south of Cracker Ps on a property they are developing in to more rentals. Once I got back, we decided we were hungry. With no fish to fry, it was off to find somewhere to eat. We passed Cracker P's and they were closed. We forgot they are only open on Tuesdays for lunch and completely closed on Wednesday. Our only other option was Hope Town. We docked at the same public dock and headed in to town. Checked out "munchies", but didn't look like what we wanted. Come to find out it's for take-out only anyway. So that left "Captain Jacks" again. Nice dinner, I had coconut cracked Conch and Diane had chicken wings. Since everything else on the island was closed, after dinner we headed home. We needed to get home before dark anyway since we're not supposed to be out with the boat after sunset. Also, since the only navigation light is the one at the end of the dock, if someone turned it on, we would be struggling to make it back at night. Got back in time to talk to some of the friends of the guests that are staying here. They actually have a cottage around the corner on the same island. They talked about "Guana Cay" or actually "Great Guana Cay" with a deserted cruise ship port, lunch at "Nippers" bar and a beautiful beach. It was at the north end of our cruising limit, but sounded like a

great trip for tomorrow. After that it was a little journaling, some talking and off to bed.

So there, that's Tuesday done and I'm starting on Wednesday, which matches today, so if I get through it, I'll be completely caught up. I am tired and my handwriting is getting sloppier as well, but I'll press on.

Wednesday: We get up this morning and cruisers net was our first order of business. Sorry, forgot a part of yesterday. Somewhere while talking to Amy, it had come out that the reverse osmosis water generator, that I thought was where we were getting out drinking water from, was only run when the cisterns were dry. It took a second to sink in and then I asked Amy if our cottage had a cistern, she kind of smiled and said yes. I said, "So I'm drinking from a cistern?", "Yes", she said, I couldn't believe it. Amy said nothing at the lighthouse, but now I guess my fear is over, I am drinking from collected rain water and I am still alive. OK, back to Wednesday. Finished breakfast and off we went. We cruised out to Cracker P's where we turned around to go back since I forgot something. When we got back, Sabrina was there. We told her our plans and I was a little relieved that someone knew where we were going since it was pretty far away. Little harbor is about 11 miles to the south, but Great Guana Cay is about 19 miles to the north. It turned out to be a long boat ride. The Abaco sound was choppy, mixed with rollers coming in through all the cuts and channels. We finally get there to the old docks. Most of the planks for the dock are long gone. The main part has been repaired by someone and there are about ½ of the planks are new. With the wind direction it took me three attempts to dock, again with a stern anchor. Diane is getting good at dropping it on cue and keeping it out of the prop. Once tied up, we climbed on the dock and headed to shore. To our right are a bunch of pilings that used to be the pens for the dolphins that people could swim with. As we continued on the dock, we came over the beach and through an opening in the trees to the first building of the old cruise port, which is the theater. You could see that is used to be an amphitheater type seating facing a stage that was thatched roofed and bright lights, which were still there, but rusted. We continued down the path that was mostly wooden boards, but sometimes a coral type pavers or tile. We passed a building that was obviously a bar or nightclub, and another that was a buffet, and another housed the Jet Ski repair shop. It was a little uncomfortable or even eerie. By the time we got to the end, Diane was ready for it to be over, so we walked back along the beach. We met three boys that were cleaning Conch shells who were with the Boy Scouts, and where down here for a week on a huge sailing ship being followed by a second big sailing ship. I forgot to mention this, but we saw them at Tilloo bank on Monday, and Hope town at Captain Jacks on Tuesday and now here. Once we left them, we continued down the beach, past the dock to the other side of the old dolphin pens where there was a sunken boat. It was probably in 8 to 10 feet of water and about 30 feet long. I was told it was a great place to snorkel and there were a lot of fish, but I wasn't in the mood to swim and I was getting hungry. So, back to the boat and off to "Settlement Harbor" on Guana where

there is gasoline for the boat and “Nippers” bar and grill for the belly. We pulled in to the fuel dock just before the fuel barge did, so we had to move for him. Found out that there was no gas and it would take about an hour to unload the fuel barge. No problem, we were on our way to Nippers anyway and would come back. Another stern anchor docking and up the hill to Nippers we went. As we got there, we couldn’t believe our eyes. This was an oasis paradise. On the right were rental cottages that looked like log cabins, and on the left as you approached the bar, the first thing you saw was a two level swimming pool with steps in the pool leading from one to the other. In the bottom pool, at pool level was a bar. Wow. When we got to the top of the hill, the view from Nippers of the Atlantic Ocean was again breathtaking. It had a huge barrier reef offshore that is supposed to be the third largest in the world. We ate lunch looking at the ocean and at all the colorful benches and tables and umbrellas. When we finished lunch, we met up with a guy that looked like Santa Claus on vacation. He even had a t-shirt that said “North Pole” on it. We asked if we could take a picture and then he sat down and talked for a few minutes. Come to find out he has been to the North Pole on a nuclear powered ice breaker. Only one of about 10,000 people in the world. He is also a pilot, which makes sense if you need to get around the world in one night. After saying goodbye to Santa, we checked out the gift shop and commented one more time how we should own something like this place, that this place is “us”,. We headed out to the boat to re-fuel and head to Man-o-war Cay, right after stopping in a gift shop for a quick ice cream. I neglected to mention the comedy routine of Mike & Diane as we disembarked our vessel before going to Nippers. The tide was very low and where we docked, there was no ladder. I therefore jumped on the dock and offered to help Diane up. When she grabbed my hand and put a foot on the dock, and started up . . . let’s just say it wasn’t graceful, we both almost ended up in the water and Diane hurt her shoulder. Thank goodness there weren’t too many people around. We sat on the dock after Nippers and getting ice cream, to finish eating the ice cream. The tide hadn’t come back in yet, but getting down to a boat is a lot easier than getting up to a dock. So off to Man-o-war after gassing up without any other dock incidents. We got to the Man-o-war harbor pretty quick and had a little trouble finding a public dock. We asked some other boaters and docked where they pointed even though it had a sign marked “reserved”.

6/22/04 -Well, it’s now Tuesday. We landed Sunday afternoon and have been running ever since. As you can tell, I’ve got a lot of catching up to do, but I’ve switched from hand writing to typing so if I can remember all the way back to where I left off, I should be able to go a little faster, so here goes.

Still Wednesday: When I ended my last entry, we had just docked at Man-O-War. We walked up to the main road and left to the North towards the sail shop. Along the way everything we saw had to do with building or repairing boats, which is what this place is known for. There were shops with a lot of old tools and woodworking machines, shops with new fiberglass molds with boats being made in them and railroad rails to haul boats out of the water, some of which

were very big. We continued down to the sail shop where there were women creating beautiful bags out of canvas on the oldest electric sewing machines that are still working on this planet. Every type and size of bag possible was here and they all looked very nice and well made. There were also a few nice hats as well. I understand that if we had gotten there early enough, we would have been able to enjoy breakfast with the ladies as well. From there we headed East down a road where we expected to be able to turn back towards the boat but instead we ended up on the other side of the island at the beach after walking up a big hill. After a short walk to the beach, we headed back to the main road up another big hill and to the grocery store. We figured this is what our parents meant when they walked up hill to school "both ways". Amy had told us about this grocery store. I think she called it the "Stephen King" Grocery store. Every item in this store was in a neat line, all pushed to the front, and after someone checks out we think the lady in the store runs around and neatens everything up before the next person comes in. Diane even commented to the clerk how neat the store was, and the lady chuckled. We hit a couple of gift shops and t-shirt shops next where we got shirts for the girls and flip-flops for Diane, she had blown out her flip flop Tuesday, didn't step on a pop-top, but since that is what we lived in, and my temporary fix wasn't looking like it was going to last, she needed to get another pair. While we were there, the headlines of the local paper had the story of the plane crash that happened a few days ago. Seems a Cessna 210 or something, ran out of fuel just a mile short of the runway. The picture on the front had the plane upside down in the woods, and what I read about quickly two people died and three were injured. One of the passengers made his way to the runway before he collapsed in order to get help. The clerk said we could take the free paper, but I wasn't in the mood to read about a plane crash while on our vacation and with a long flight coming up soon. With our shopping done, it was time to leave Man-O-War, so we headed out and back home.

Thursday: We woke up to rain. We went out to the dock a couple of times when the rain had stopped, with our backpacks ready for another days adventure, only to find more bands of rain coming in. So, the only logical thing to do was to take a nap in the hammock on the front porch. We then had lunch, and since it was still raining, took an afternoon nap. When we woke, the sky had cleared enough, and we needed a few things from the store, so we went off to Hope Town and Vernon's grocery store. Vernon, by the way, is also the minister at the church, and has collected and displayed around his store, a bunch of funny quotes. While at Vernon's, they were out of eggs, since they get their shipments on Thursday, but Vernon asked how many we needed, and since two would get us through tomorrow's breakfast, he brought out two eggs for us. I thought it was nice of him. I also decided we needed some fresh fish, and to bring luck to Diane's fishing, bought some before we left. I figured if we had fish, we would catch fish, if we needed to catch fish to eat, but didn't have any, we wouldn't be able to catch any. We headed back home after stopping at the gas dock for bait, but it was after 6 so it was closed. When we got back and dropped off our groceries, we ventured out to Cracker P's, but this time, decided to walk. It was

a lot longer than the map looked and a lot longer than a short boat ride. The map warned that we should have a flashlight, but since it was before dark, and we didn't plan on staying after dark, and I left the flashlight in the plane, we went out without. The last part of the walk was through woods and we could see how it would be hard to navigate after dark. We got to Cracker Ps and saw Sabrina working there. Diane and I split a surf and turf, along with fish spread. They have the best fish spread I've ever had and although they wouldn't give out the recipe, they would let out that it was cream cheese based. It went well with the "Shotgun", which tasted a lot like the "Blaster" at Pete's pub, but Sabrina swears that it is a different recipe. I think they are all the same, just with different names. We ventured back just after sunset, and it was still light enough to see our way, but just dark enough to be creepy. It was a long walk back, but nice and gave us a chance to talk under the stars, which there were trillions of in the night sky. When we got back, we decided to play some cards, poker, I lost my shirt, and Diane wasn't going to let me forget it. That about wrapped up the day.

Friday morning: The only thing left that I had not done was the Hope Town lighthouse, so after the daily "Cruisers net" information and breakfast, it was off to Hope Town. According to what I heard, or read, this is supposed to be one of only three lighthouses left in the world whose light is fueled by kerosene, and whose lenses rotate mechanically with a weight. Diane decided to stay at the bottom as I trekked up the stairs to the top. There wasn't a charge to get in, only a guest book and a donation box. It wasn't a long walk and I was at a spot right below the light part of the lighthouse where they brought the kerosene and it looked like they heated it in some boilers or something here and pumped it up to the top. Then I went up to the top and got to see all the gears that it took to turn the lenses at the right timing. It was interesting and simple. I didn't quite figure out how it worked, but it looked interesting, along with the lenses. There was a door to go out on the ledge on the outside, but since Diane warned me not to touch anything, and the door was closed and I always listen to Diane, I stayed in and took pictures from the inside. After I had gotten my fill, we topped off the boat at the gas dock, grabbed some bait and headed back. We decided to grab the sea kayaks and fish from them. It was a two person kayak and Diane sat in the front and we had the fishing gear bungeed to the back and the bait and masks between my legs in the back. You have not seen anything more comical than me and Diane teaming up to try and get this kayak where we wanted to go. If Diane wasn't smacking my paddle, she was hitting my foot, when she wasn't hitting my foot she was trying to go left when I was going right. We finally got coordinated and to our fishing spot just to the right of the beach by the cottages. I baited her hook then did my best to keep us in the same spot while Diane fished. We caught a nice size grunt here that we kept for bait for night fishing. We then continued to fish the docks along the way to Cracker Ps and Amy and Austin's house where François was supposed to be working. I was told he was the man to talk to about making a thatch roof out of palm fronds. Before getting there, Diane caught a very nice foot long Barracuda. It was interesting as she passed the fish on the end of the rod to me to take off the hook, while we were still in the

rocking kayak. When we got to Amy and Austin's dock, Diane decided to stay on the dock and fish while I went looking for François. No François, and back at the dock, Diane was starting to catch some fish. Somehow she had lost hooks on both rods, so we needed to go back and get more hooks. We came back with the motor boat and cleaned the place out with about a half dozen grunts for tonight's dock fishing. We then headed home and when we got back, Diane fished our dock and caught a snapper, and some mud perch, I think. Watching out for the resident sting rays and nurse sharks, who would strip the reel if they got a hold of it. While I was preparing the grunts for bait by filleting both sides, but leaving the head and removing the backbone, I was throwing the backbones in the water when Diane said there was a really big barracuda eating the scraps. I found out later that this old fellow was named Jeff and is a regular resident of the dock. He was watching me clean the fish and waiting for me to throw the scraps in the water. As soon as the pieces hit the water, Jeff would dart after them and eat them up. I decided to try and catch Jeff, so I grabbed one of the deep sea rods and put a fish head on the hook, all the while being watched by Jeff. As I tossed the head in the water, Jeff didn't even move. He saw me put the bait on the hook and was smart enough not to grab the bait. We were amazed. I pulled the bait out of the water and left it on the dock and continued to clean the grunts for bait, and the snapper and perch for our dinner. Sure enough all the other pieces I threw in, Jeff gobbled up. A boat came in and with the distractions and a few more pieces of bait, I had hopped Jeff had dropped his guard, so I through the bait back in. Sure enough, Jeff grabbed it and started swimming off. After about 10 yards or so, I went to set the hook. As soon as Jeff tasted that hook, he jumped completely out of the water and spit the hook back at me. It came back over the dock just to my left. We laughed so hard at this smart fish who didn't want to be caught, and then who spit the hook at me. That was enough fishing for me. We went back to the cottage, and I cooked up the fresh fish that Diane caught. It was great as most fresh fish is, but it tasted even better since Diane caught it. We then went off to Cracker P's for some fish spread and a rum by boat. Clint was there, Sabrina's husband, and we talked for a little about his job working on the set of "Flipper" the movie. Seems his job was to swim the perimeter nets and repair them before the days shooting. Finished talking, and drinking and went back home to the dock. Some of the other guests were fishing and invited us to fish with them. I think his name was Rob, and he was three sheets to the wind. We were wondering how he didn't fall in. He set up Diane with one of his rods and was teaching her how to use it. She caught a nice snapper as did his sons and since he was leaving tomorrow he said we could keep whatever they caught as well. Once we had about 6 fish, he was showing me how to filet the fish, I was expecting him to lose a finger at any moment, but he was so good that his inebriation only barely effected how well he filleted these fish. We finished up around 11 and called it a night.

Saturday morning: We woke again to the cruisers net to plan the day while I cooked up some of the fish Diane caught last night. They were so light tasting they were perfect for breakfast. We were planning on snorkeling at Sandy Cay

south of us near Pelican Cay after heading in to Hope Town to go to a Jewelry store for a trinket for Diane. We got a late start after talking to Amy, Austin and Clint and having a little work done on the boat's lift system. When we got to Hope Town, we went to Iggy Biggy and bought some things, then went to Ebb Tide, before we got there, we went to the island museum, paid \$5 and looked around at all the antiques along with a picture book with pictures of hurricane Floyd in 1999. It was some good pictures and amazing how devastating it was to the island. We then got to Ebb Tide, only for it to be closed for lunch. We decided to head off to Pete's Pub for lunch, then snorkeling. When we headed out of the harbor, all we could see along our path was rain, so we turned around and went back to Hope Town for lunch. We went to Harbors Edge for a nice burger while we watched a local Golden Retriever give its owner a hard time. It was also fun to watch people coming to the dock and trying to stern anchor up to the dock, especially now that Diane and I were experts at stern docking. After lunch it was back to Ebb Tide for a little shopping. Nothing great, so nothing bought and back out to the boat we went still trying to get south for some snorkeling. As we got out the harbor, the weather south still didn't look great so we decided to go west to Marsh Harbor and find a jewelry store that Amy had mentioned called "Abaco Gold". We got there without a problem and found the "Sea Level" slip. It was a tight fit, and after a second try was docked. We debated getting a taxi, but decided to walk out to the shop. Good thing, it was literally 50 yards from the entrance of the marina. It would have been embarrassing to hail a taxi for that short of a ride. It was a great shop and the lady who was helping us was great. Her two children made most of the gold jewelry which were sea horses, starfish, dolphin, sand dollars and the like. We got Diane a nice sea horse necklace and made a break for it. Since ice cream wasn't anywhere close, we headed back to the boat. It was tough getting the boat out of the slip, but I did it without hitting any one of the other boats around. We headed back and stopped at Tahiti beach for some last minute beach coming and snorkeling. It was relaxing and I think Diane felt a little guilty since we didn't make it to Sandy Cay. We headed back to the dock and Diane just had to throw the hook in one more time before dinner. She was teasing a little barracuda for a while, or should I say, it was teasing her. It was a nice little 2 footer. It finally got the taste of the hook and spit it right back at Diane, a lot like Jeff did with my hook. That was enough fishing for the day, since it was getting late and we were getting hungry so we headed back to cook up the fish I had caught/bought at Vernon's. We decided that one more trip to Cracker Ps for some fish spread and rum were in order after dinner. We took the boat and were enjoying out last night and listening to the different people talking when Austin showed up. We bought him a drink and talked for a while before deciding to head back home. By this time, it was very dark, not a piece of the moon was showing and you couldn't even see the shoreline. I idled back from Cracker Ps and I used the navigation lights, the red and green ones, every once in a while, but since they reflected off the top canopy, couldn't use them to see very well. We passed a sailboat at anchor and I avoided the docks and made it back to our dock. Thank goodness one of the other guests had turned on the dock light, or we would have had a

really hard time finding it. They were fishing, so we talked for a while and headed back to the cottage for the night.

Sunday: We were up early to pack and clean the cottage. We had talked to Clint about taking us back to Marsh Harbor at 9 to try and get out a little early.

6/27/04 – It's now Sunday, one week after the end of our vacation and I hope to finish the journal today. Once I'm done, I'll go back and retype the part that I hand wrote in order to be able to keep it electronically.

Once we cleaned and packed, we took everything out to the dock. It was obvious it was the end of our week, we didn't listen to the Cruisers Net, we didn't put sun tan lotion on, and we were dressed in more than just our bathing suits and flip flops. I was full of mixed emotions, on the one hand, I was sad it was over, on the other hand, happy with one of the best vacations I think I have ever had. On the dock, we talked to the people that had arrived the day before and told them about all the nice things we did and saw, offered them any of the extra food, condiments and bait we had. We also said good bye to Rob and Chrissie who were also going home. We also thanked Amy and Austin for being such accommodating hosts. When Clint showed up, I went to the office to make my pre-flight calls. The office was hot, with no fan and the phone was the one that had the buttons on it to use credit card or calling cards. It took a few attempts to place the call, and once or twice, the operator had to help. It seems that not every digit entered gets to the computer for verification. My first call was to flight services (FSS), got the weather briefing and filed my flight plan. I was going to go from Marsh Harbor (MYAM) to Freeport VOR, then to West Palm VOR (PBI) and finally landing in Fort Pierce (KFPR) to clear customs. The FSS guy said that if we were going to be near West Palm, then we had to land there since it was the "closest" to our point of entry. I therefore adjusted my flight plan and removed West Palm and decided to go straight from Freeport to Fort Pierce. I really didn't want to land at the busy West Palm, even though on the way over it wasn't that busy, and I think with my radio skills, I could have without a problem. We added ADCUS to the comments section of the flight plan to advise customs as well. I got a few frequencies for Nassau radio, Miami center and FSS from the FSS guy before I was finished, and I hung up. I then tried to contact customs at Fort Pierce since the ADCUS thing doesn't always work, but I had the wrong number. Come to find out only the area code was wrong. By this time I was hot and ready to go, so went back to the dock where the board was already loaded with our stuff, so I jumped in with Diane and Clint who was go bring us back to Marsh Harbor. It was a quiet ride back to the docks; I don't think Diane or I said two words to each other. Once in the marina, it was straight to the gas docks to fill up. We docked behind a huge fishing boat. The fighting chair was beautiful. Made of teak, it had two rod and reels on each side of the chair, and four mounted to the back. The rods where gold and as big as a coffee cans and the rods where black and the thickest I had ever seen. It doesn't look like any fish would have a chance against this boat. The team on the boat had just come from the Florida Keys, near Marathon Key. They had just filled up with over 800

gallons of diesel fuel in a boat that holds 1200 gallons. I didn't complain about the cost of the 20 gallons we had just put in our little 20 footer. Once we were topped off, Clint dropped us off at the dock; we caught a cab back to the airport. I finished the exit documentation and fees while Diane had to wait outside. I noticed another pilot on the pilot only phone talking to someone. When I asked he said he was calling customs at Fort Pierce with his arrival time. He gave me a quick tip on how the free pilot phone worked and I made the same call. It was a little hard to talk with the static, but I got the information to the Customs official, and he gave me his initials for future reference. We then headed over to the plane which was just where we left it. A thorough pre-flight and we taxied out to the edge of the ramp for a run-up. Everything was running fine, so when it was my turn, off we went at about 10:45. Only 45 minutes later than planned, but still not bad. As we were climbing out we were listening to two other planes coming straight towards us, planning to land in the opposite direction from the way we just took off. I continued to make position calls as we climbed out so they knew I was out there, but we couldn't see each other. As we were listening, I decided to head a little north of course to avoid them, as we did, Diane pointed out a plane crash below us. It was a low wing plane, right side up in what looked to be a field, not the high wing, in the woods that looked to be upside down from the beginning of the week. I was warned that plane crashes aren't removed, I wish they would, I don't think I like the reminders that things can go wrong, especially when we have just taken off. We climbed to 4500 feet and switched from Unicom to Nassau radio and made our first radio call to Nassau to open our flight plan. They were just a little easier to hear than last Sunday, but I managed to open my flight plan. We switched back to Unicom and then flew a little north of our course to stay out of the way of the incoming flights. Once I heard they had passed my position, I switched to Miami radio. I wanted flight following and needed to contact them to get our Customs code, or squawk code before crossing the ADIZ again. As I listed, and waited for a break in the calls to get our turn, I heard plane after plane coming out of Marsh Harbor opening their flight plan with Miami, and it was as clear as a bell. I even heard Miami, busy as they were, give weather information upon request to a few pilots. I know that is who I'm going to call next time; it will be a lot easier. Once I got a break, I got my chance and got our squawk code. By this time we were getting close to Freeport, and remembering how hectic it was, decided to monitor Freeport Tower just to be safe. After a few calls, I picked up that a plane had gone out of contact, and Freeport was asking all flights on a certain radial at a certain distance to look for it. None of them could find anything. Around Freeport, we headed northwest, direct for Fort Pierce. I had planned to cheat a little to the West of direct just to be close to land, but once Diane fell asleep, I figured, direct was faster, and I stayed on course. While sitting in the plane with time to kill while crossing 45 minutes of water, I decided to think about what I would do with an engine failure. I looked down and saw rows of boats heading back from the Bahamas to Florida. I figured I would aim for one and we would only be minutes from rescue. I then saw a cruise ship and now thought that would be what I would aim for. Not only would we be rescued and have medical attention if

needed, but they have good food and a bar. Now that would be crashing in style. As I got close to Fort Pierce, I realized I didn't print out the kneeboard form for the airport and had to get out the chart for the tower frequency and ATIS. Got ATIS no problem and contacted the tower who gave me a choice of runways. I told them either would do and they put me in on 27. Nice landing and after we cleared the runway, I asked ground for progressive taxi instructions to customs. They had me follow a Seminole and we got there without a problem. It was now about 1 PM, still a little later than expected. Once we parked, a fuel guy came up and helped us empty all of our luggage, including snorkel and fishing gear, on to a cart to take in to customs. We told him we were going to refuel and eat lunch after customs before we left. We then took the cart in to customs. After a little more paperwork, we talked to a customs guy. I told him this was our first time flying back to the US as I handed him our paperwork. He said he could tell, as he handed it back and had me fill in the information I had forgot. Once I fixed the omissions, he took the paper to a back office and while he was gone talked to another pilot. He had come from St. Pete/Clearwater this morning and flew to Bimini for breakfast in a twin Bonanza (I think), that did almost 200 kts. He was coming back through Fort Pierce on his way back to St. Pete as he has done in the past. I asked him if we normally went around the MOAs and Restricted airspace, and he said that he normally flies direct without a problem. The customs guy came back about 5 minutes later and asked to look in one of our duffle bags, so we opened it and pulled out the ditty bag and flip flops on top. He then cleared us to go. We loaded up the plane and notice that there was a puddle under the plane, and the plane was leaking. I thought at first that the fuel man filled the plane and it was leaking, but after smelling it, it was just water. Weird, since this is an air cooled plane and there was no rain on the flight. We walked over to the "Airport Tiki" for one of the best hamburgers I've had in a long time. Paid for the gas and lunch and went to the pilot phone for a weather update and status of the restricted use airspace. He said we needed to contact Miami center for the latest update and permission, but that there were no NOTAMs stating it was in operation. I got the frequency for Miami center at the desk when I paid for lunch and gas, and headed back to the plane. After checking fuel and pre-flight inspection, including checking the water still leaking, we fired it up and headed and taxied out. We took off on 27 at about 2:30 to the west and climbed up to 4500. At this altitude, we were flying around clouds, so I tried 6500 and called Miami center for permission to enter the restricted area along with flight following. I am still amazed on how busy those people are. It seems the only time you can get a word in edgewise is when they take a breath. I finally contacted them, got flight following and permission to enter the restricted area. I couldn't stay at 6500 feet for long since the cloud tops were too high, so I dropped back down to 4500 as we were handed off to a few Miami frequencies that seemed to be just as busy as the first. As I got close to Tampa, we were handed off from Miami center to Tampa approach. They dropped us down to 3000 then 2500 and vectored us east of runway 9/27. I knew the routine at Tampa was to have us cross over the 9/27 runway to St. Pete and that's what they did. Once we got handed off, St. Pete gave us the winds from 250 at 7 and

then gave us choice of runways. I mean they really gave us a choice, 27, 22 or 17L. Since any choice was a cross wind, and we were lined up with 22, we took it, and dropped in for a nice little cross wind landing. We unloaded the plane, tied down and headed back to the truck after asking Signature to top her off. It was now around 4 and time to get home and see the kids.

It was then end of a great vacation, but it was also good to be home safe and sound.

I wrote this mostly for me to remember a great vacation with my wife, but also for friends and family who might be interested in reading about it. I hope you enjoyed it, learned from it and are encouraged to follow in our footsteps. It was a great adventure that I hope to do again, along with many others.

As for the packing, I think we did very well. I could have used a few more t-shirts instead of polo shirts, but other than that, we did well. The little fishing poles worked out well since they easily fit in the plane. We might want to get some of those telescoping poles next time, just to be able to cast a little better. And the cheap flip-flops I bought where a must have item. I wore them everywhere. They protected my feet from walking on the coral, and down the hot roads, and cushioned the boat ride, since I was standing most of the time. We should have brought more sun tan lotion; we put it on at least once a day and sometimes twice. We ran out and had to buy more, which was very expensive. All store items where expensive and if we had room, next time we'll bring some more supplies from the states. I didn't use the laptop at all, I tried to use it for some flight planning, but couldn't get a phone line to work. Next time, Austin says he's going to have wireless working, which would be nice for flight planning. I also think I'll do my journaling on the laptop instead of trying to do it on paper.

For those pilots who are reading this, you probably want to know the outcome of my "fuel issue" that I mentioned on the first day when I though Zig Zag put 36 gallons of fuel in the plane (it was actually 32.6). Well, what I planned was the following, 138 kts, 9 gallon per hour fuel burn and 42 gallons of fuel. I collected all the receipts for the fuel and went back to flight planning to recalculate all my numbers and here is what I came up with. My actual airspeed was 110 kts, which according to the POH is correct for 75% power at such a low altitude. I got the 138 off the website which was a mistake. I then took the fuel I purchased and divided by the flight time to get a fuel burn rate.

Flight from KPIE to MYAM I bought 32.6 gallons at Zig Zag. The trip was about 3 ¼ hours long which works out to be about 10 gallons per hour.

From MYAM to KFPR I bought 17 gallons. The trip was about 1 ¾ hours long which works out to be about 10 gallons per hour.

From KFPR to KPIE I bought 12.7 gallons. The trip was just over 1 hour, which works out to be about 10 gallons per hour.

So I was burning on average 10 GPH and I was even leaning the way I was taught. So when I landed at Marsh Harbor, I had 5.4 gallons of useable fuel, which equates to about

32 minutes, which is a little small for a reserve, but still within the legal VFR limits. People who I talk to say they use 9 GPH for planning, which would give you 4 hours 13 minutes of fuel vs. 3 hours 48 minutes, 25 minutes difference. I'm going to continue to get average GPH averages from other people flying the plane, along with documenting it whenever I fly so I can get better planning numbers. I think the next time I fly close to my fuel limit, if I'm flying low and unable to lean very far, I'll put a fuel stop in for added safety.

Other notes to remember:

Bahamas departing tax: \$15 per person

I want to make sure I learn how to contact Miami center, or learn where to find the frequency on the chart or airport directory before my next flight. It would save a lot of stress while in the air. Here are some other frequencies I used.

Frequencies at MYAM (but double check charts before you fly)

- Marsh Harbor Unicom 122.8 (most non-towered airports Unicom)
- Miami center 126.9 or 122.4 (we used 126.9 and it was very clear)
- Nassau radio 124.2 (very hard to hear and understand)
- Flight watch 122.0 (didn't try)
- Freeport Control Tower 118.5 (not sure if they were ever in control)

Frequencies out of KFPR

- Miami Center 132.25

Web sites used:

- www.sealevelcottages.com
- www.abacotoday.com
- www.goabaco.com
- www.abacovacations.com
- Baramoterbob.com
- www.nippersbar.com
- www.crackerps.com

Boat rentals:

- www.islandmarine.com
- www.sea-horse.com
- www.bluewaterrentals.com
- www.richsrentals.com

Other hotels and cottages:

- www.hopetownlodge.com
- www.abacoinn.com
- www.hoetown.com
- www.watercolourcottages.com
- www.donnasands.com
- www.summerviewcottage.com
- www.tomatopaste.com

Drinks:

Horny Monkey:

1.5 ounces banana liqueur, 1 oz vodka ½ oz. Light rum, 2 oz coconut cream. Shake pour over ice and fill with pineapple juice.







