

## An ICW Cruise from Palm Beach to the Chesapeake Averaging 19.7 mph on the MJM 40z *Grateful*.

It's hard to imagine a better boat than the MJM 40z for the 1025-mile ICW passage from Palm Beach to mile marker "0" in Portsmouth VA on Chesapeake Bay. 40z has the speed to get from one great destination port to the next without feeling confined to the boat all day long and losing walking/exploring time ashore. There's enough speed to by-pass the day's intended destination, and keep going on the ICW, putting money in the bank, in order to avoid strong forecasted headwinds the following day in open sounds or wide rivers. When signs say "Resume Normal Safe Operation", that means 30 knots on a 40z. At 30 knots, you are never bored and would hate to miss any of the interesting sights along the way. When hearing about the 30 knot cruising speed, upon stepping aboard for the first time in Savannah, Mary dismissed the concept as unlikely. 20-22 knots was her happy speed threshold on the 34z. On the 40z, her comfort zone has changed. She's now driving the boat at 30 knots with a smile, while carrying on a conversation

A case in point occurred in Hilton Head. A Fleming 55 departed Harbour Towne at 8 AM to go 70 miles to Bohicket Marina on Seabrook Island, arriving by 3 PM. After a relaxed morning reading the New York Times, 40z GRATEFUL departed at 10:30 AM. We passed the Fleming at noon after 40 statute miles. They were averaging 8.7 knots. The 40z was averaging 23 knots, nearly 3x the speed. It took us 4.5 hours to go 90 sm, and took the Fleming 7 hours to go 70 sm. We were leaving a nice marina in Hilton Head. The City Marina in Charleston is the best. There's not much in between other than downtown Beaufort, which comes up too soon to be a passage-making destination.

There are some slow spots. We averaged 11-12 mph between Palm Beach and Stuart. There were only two other areas where average passage time was that slow: Between Myrtle Beach SC and Wrightsville NC and for 4 bridges in the last 20 miles to Portsmouth VA. A couple of other "no wake" zones didn't reduce our average much. They were south of Daytona near New Smyrna Beach and near Isle of Hope (Savannah GA). The rest of the waterway is mostly wild and wide open. Probably the best example was with Mark

Lindsay and Scott Smith aboard, running the 185 miles from St. Augustine FL to Isle of Hope in 6.5 hours, averaging 28.5 mph (25 knots).

Traveling at such speeds, it was fortunate that our ICW passage making was mostly during weekdays as I'm sure boat traffic alone would have pulled down 40z averages on weekends. We learned an effective technique for reducing wake. Speed is sustained to within a boat length of an overtaken vessel or about 5 boat lengths of an approaching vessel, the crew is warned and the throttles are pulled back into "idle". The boat seems to stop and is then overtaken by its wake (to dip its bow in a curtsy). Once the stern wave goes under the boat, throttle is applied to pass the other boat. This leaves a keyhole shaped wake astern with virtually no wake thrown out to either side from the point of slowing to regaining about 7.5 knots speed.

We generally prefer running inside. It's more relaxing as well as being entertaining for the sights and the other boats you meet. And, with 40z speed, most of the time we believed we could average better inside in smooth water, even with some "No Wake" zones to honor, than would have been possible outside in any sea, where we might be dropping running speeds to below 25 knots for comfort.

In terms of engine size, GRATEFUL is powered by twin Volvo Penta IPS 500 370 HP D6's. I debated going with the 300 HP D4's. After all, who cruises at more than 25 knots? Well, after this trip I must confess, "It's me". The 40z is so smooth and quiet (75 dBA) at 30 knots, there's no strain. And, to carve into turns through the narrow marsh creeks is a joy to be experienced.

The 40z consumed 572 gallons of diesel for the 810 miles between Daytona FL (mm 830) and Great Bridge VA (mm 20) or 1.42 statute mpg or 1.23 nmpg. That would project to just over two tank fills, 721 gallons for 1025 miles, or \$1442. Diesel ranged from \$1.89 to \$2.29 per gallon. The nmpg fuel rate of about 1.25 nmpg did not vary much whether going 20 knots or 30 knots. The

price at Halifax Cove Marina (Daytona) was \$2.00 and Great Bridge Marina VA was \$1.89.

A major advantage of the 40z is a low 12.5 foot height over water including the optional KVH radar dome and fixed steaming light (VHF antenna lowered). The overall ICW travel time for the 1025 miles was 52 hours 10 minutes including bridge-waiting time of 1 hour 40 minutes? 30 minutes at the pontoon bridge south of Wrightsville, and 1 hour 10 minutes for three bridges within 20 miles of Portsmouth. Most of the time we are passing long lines of trawlers, sportfish, motor yachts and of course sailboats that must wait for as long as 29 to 59 minutes. Between Miami and Portsmouth VA, there are 28 bridges with less than 20 feet clearance. On an earlier trip in February on the way to the Miami Boatshow, one Sabre 42 owner was bemoaning the fact that it took him 5 hours to get from Ft. Lauderdale to Palm Beach. The next day, GRATEFUL did the same trip in 3 hours. The 40z waited for 2 bridges, the Sabre 42 had to deal with 9.

“Flying Bridges” must have been an invention for slow boats in warm climates. When the weather is cool or windy, as it was in the first two weeks of April. Practically no one was up in their flying bridges, not even going 8 knots. Imagine if they’d been truly flying at 30 knots!

As much fun as traveling the ICW is, there may be times when an annual round trip is impractical to fit into one’s schedule. This is where the 40z, 34z and 29z are exceptional among boats fit for cruising. They are all designed purposely to make the round trip by land, as all have 12 foot beams or less and are under 13.5 feet height on a trailer, so they can be shipped at normal trucking rates. Trucking cost of GRATEFUL from Boston to Naples was \$5200. I asked the trucker what the rate would have been for a “flybridge boat” with a beam greater than 12 feet. He said the rate for chase car, lead car, plus alternative routing due to the height over 13.5 feet would be between \$18,000 and \$27,000... one way.

Of course, an ICW passage is not that long a trip for an MJM and it’s a great opportunity to be with friends. We enjoyed mini-rendezvous with MJM owners at both Eau Gallie and Wrightsville Yacht Clubs.

Going south, it’s possible to cover the 207 miles from Portsmouth VA to Beaufort NC, South of Hatteras, in less than 12 hours. That assumes that one is not going straight into 25-knot southerly winds with ebb tides in the large Sounds. So some advanced weather planning is advised to keep the wind at your back, ride northerlies south and southerlies north. Ideally going south, leave Portsmouth on a Thursday morning.

The next day could target Wrightsville or Bald Head Island. Although in the right conditions on Friday one could make it from Beaufort to either Georgetown or Charleston SC with an early start. It took us 15.5 hours to Charleston. It would be 12 hours to Georgetown, leaving a leisurely cruise to Charleston Saturday morning. Spend Saturday afternoon and Sunday in the Charleston City Marina. Lots of great restaurants.

On Monday, there are some nice destinations: Harbour Towne on Hilton Head, Isle of Hope Marina near Savannah, and Golden Isles Marina on St. Simons Island. The latter would be 210 miles of fairly unrestricted traveling, so 8-9 hours.

Halifax Harbor Marina in Daytona is a good protected overnight spot with a West Marine Store, cheap diesel and a Chart House restaurant on premises. That’s 155 miles from St. Simon’s island, or 7-8 hours time. An interim stop might be Camanchee Cove Marina in St. Augustine.

From Daytona, you can make it to the Palm Beach City Marina at the foot of Brazilian Way, a distance of 195 miles in 11-12 hours. An interim stop might be the Marriott Hutchinson Island Resort Marina in Stuart FL.

In summary, the ICW cruise from Portsmouth VA to Palm Beach FL (or the reverse) can be run in a week, leaving Thursday, arriving Wednesday with the weekend in Charleston.

Great fun. I’m ready to go again.

Bob Johnstone