

PELICAN CAMPING TRIP TO CYPRESS HEAD

It was a pleasant little trip.

A pleasant trip that I and friend undertook two weeks ago in my trusty little Pelican. Not a grand adventure like the Ross Lake trip. Nor an ambitious one like the 30 mile round trip excursion from Lund to Tenedos Bay and back. All Pelican camping trips taken in my younger days – like when I was fifty.

No, this was a short little trip from Washington Park in Anacortes to Cypress Head. A distance of about 5 miles one way. Yet, it was to someplace both new and familiar. A cruise to knock some of the rust off of old skills and push back a bit on the shrinking boundaries of my world as my sixty sixth year approaches. A total of four days and three nights.

It has long been a tradition with Pelicans in the northwest to fill our sturdy little boats with some camping gear and head out to the islands for a bit of beach camping. A particular favorite over the years has been Pelican Beach at north eastern edge of Cypress Island. This was a place that Fred Smith, long time Pelican builder, starting camping at so long ago that it always Fred at Pelican Beach. More than 30 years have I been involved in Pelicans and there was Pelican Beach.

But this is a story about this trip, in the year 2026, and Cypress Head.

Cypress Head is small patch of DNR land, rugged and steep, on the south eastern side of Cypress Island and connected to the main island by a narrow neck of low lying land maybe 5 ft about high tide. A place, a tombolo, that park signs state will disappear someday, leaving Cypress Head as its own little island. But for today, that little spit of land creates two small harbors, one open to the south and one open to the north. The beach is moderately friendly to beached Pelicans for about 20 ft down from the high tide line. After that, it is decidedly unfriendly.



My friend Lori and I arrived at the campgrounds on a Wednesday and had the place to ourselves. Oh, there was a day tripping kayaker one day, and various boats would tie to the mooring buoys for a single night. But in the campgrounds, it was just us until Friday afternoon. And we setup camp at a site up off of the beach and out of the wind. Yet the beach and the harbor was still visible. Pleasant.

The weather and sailing conditions for this trip turned out to be pleasant. Warm but not hot during the day and a little chilly in the morning. Plenty of sunshine and pretty sunsets. The wind would die in the evening and start rising in the late morning; reaching a moderate level in the mid-afternoon. And it did this every day we were there.

From a sailing standpoint, the light morning winds allowed us a gentle start to our trip both coming and going. And the building winds during the day allowed us to make good time in our slow boat. And the winds kept us on our toes, but did not push us too hard. Ditto, the tide rips. They were there and needed to be respected but did not overly stretch us. In other words, a nice pleasant workout. (A technical note, currents rule these waters and one must time the trip to match the currents. On this trip, I managed to pick a good fit.)



So, how did we occupy our time for the two complete days we spent in camp? Well, we definitely enjoyed the surroundings. Cypress Head offers long vistas to the north and to the south. As well as a bird's eye view of the harbor and our boat sitting at anchor. We also did a bit of hiking. On the first day, we followed the signs on the "main trail" and after about 2 hours steep trail work, I wussed out. In hindsight, I wished I stuck it out for another 30 to 45 minutes as we stopped just shy of Reed Lake. We did find an abandoned dump truck that Lori insisted looked just like the Tow Mater from the Cars movie. And we saw signs of private habitation. Homes,

water wells, etc. On the second day, I chose to stay in camp and read a book while Lori hiked all the way up to Pelican Beach. That is more than half the length of the island and involves a lot of climbing up hills and around hills and down hills. Good work, Lori; but phew, what a workout. It was a good book I had but still, maybe someday...

(A technical note, I chose to put the boat on a two point anchor. At low tide, the shore anchor would let the boat dry out on the soft beach and keep it off the rocky barnacled beach further out. The tides were such that the boat would be floating on the day of departure due to the water side anchor but reachable because of the shore anchor. The wind pattern kept wave action to a min when it counted the most – that is, when the boat was drying out.)

Of course, what is a camping trip without food and conversation? Lori made the provisions for this trip and we both had plenty to eat. And we caught each other up on what was happening in our lives. Again, a pleasant way to spend one's time.



Topping off the trip, was an after-the-trip dinner in downtown Anacortes.

All in all, a very pleasant trip. And sometimes that is just what the soul needs... Michelle