

Day 1, Tuesday, August 24, 2004

At five a.m. I rolled over for the umpteenth time. It was raining hard. Glad we did not water the grass yesterday.

Up at 6:45am and on the road at 8:00am. We had learnt that the Rockton ramp onto I90 is closed, so instead of taking Rt 75, we joined I90 in Rockford. Probably a faster route anyway.

It is a dull day with very low clouds. At one point we passed a round blue gray-painted water tower. For a moment I had the illusion that it was a large balloon floating in the sky.

At Mukwanago we see signs for breakfast so we pulled off and followed the pointers into town. We never did find any of the eating places, so turned around and settled for an egg MacMuffin. Why is getting a breakfast egg always exciting for us?

Jan watches the temperature crawl over 70°F, tumble back down, and finally reach 73°F. Of course, as soon as I hand over the wheel to her, it starts to sprinkle, but only for a mile or two.

We reach Door County. What strange depressing names they give their roads. "Dump Road", "Dead End Road", "Pit Road", "Cemetery Road", and more.

We cross over the bridge at Sturgeon Bay, following route 42. We had expected to see Lake Michigan, but the road runs inland and only jogs down to the lake at towns like Egg Harbor and Fish Creek before we reach Sister Bay.

Everywhere we see new building, mostly up-market condos, shops and hotels. Along the water are some very expensive and beautiful homes.

We find our hotel easily. It is an older structure, located right on the lake, extensively renovated. The furnishings, furniture and carpet look new. Nice!

After unpacking, we made a sandwich and sat on our balcony, which is glassed in.

"Jan, why is that owl sitting on the pole at the dock?" We watch for several minutes....
"That is a decoy." It does not seem to bother the resident seagull.

At the front desk. "No sir, you can't hook up to the phone for the internet in your room. We provide a computer in the lobby." Well, we shall see....

Alexander's sounds interesting for dining. We get instructions. It is about a three minute drive and make a reservation for a window seat at 8:00pm.

We walk around a few tourist stores in Sister Bay, but make no purchases.

Alexander's was great. My lamb walked onto the plate!

Not sure how they have it fixed, but I can not get a dial tone when I disconnect the hotel phone, so no Email.

Day 2, Wednesday

As we walk from our room to the lobby in search of a complimentary continental breakfast, we encounter a tour group excited for their bus. Jan chats briefly with the tour guide. Today they are heading for “the back roads.” So are we.

From Sister Bay, we head north on Beach Road. Somewhat of a misnomer for there are million dollar homes with long driveways and extensive wooded grounds between us and the lake shore. The drive is beautiful; the homes stunning. Everywhere we travel today we see new homes being built and many almost new up for sale. Jan wonders if it is a sign of the condition of our economy. People forced to sell a second home. Although these would qualify as a first home by our standards, it is doubtful if they would be accessible in winter.

We headed for Ellison Bluff County Park. The guide books showed pictures of the highest red bluffs on the peninsula. We were surprised to find they are actually white dolomite. Presumably the guide books cheated and showed pictures taken at sunset. Still, they were impressive.



Ellison Bluff.

A blink and we pass through Ellison Bay. All the little towns we visit today post signs boasting populations of just two to three hundred (hardy) souls. They must only count year round residents.



The Rocky Beach.

Door Bluff Headlands County Park was just a nice wooded area without access or a view of the lake. The guide books do a poor job of documenting what can be seen, but do a superb one describing every imaginable boutique, gallery and antique shop.....

On the way to Gills Rock we stop at a rocky beach and chat with a couple with an Illinois plate. It turns out they are from Elizabeth and know Freeport well. They visit every year and have some good advice for us.

At North Port we follow a road saying “Ferry” and had to make a quick turn to avoid driving on to it. We don’t have time to visit Washington Island.

Travelling south now we plan to visit Newport State Park, but find there is an entrance fee. Since we don’t plan to stop, but just drive through, we turn around.

We return to Sister Bay and turn south for Baileys Harbor, expecting it to be a larger town. Before we realized we were through and heading for Jacksonport.



Cave Point.

Just south is Cave Point County Park. The bluffs are about 30-40ft high. Here the waves have eroded caves at lake level. Jan wonders if there is a tide because the rocks are wet much higher up, then the explanation. An enormous wave lashes the rock face.

Time for lunch. We put on jackets to sit at a picnic table. A greedy gull waits patiently a crumbs throw away. When we are done we satisfy him too.





Close by is Whitefish Dunes State Park. It has been an overcast day, though no actual rain. The beach is shrouded in fog blowing off the lake. We walk on the hard sand. If only there were sun.

Enough of this. We pass the tour bus from our hotel going in the opposite direction and head back to Sister Bay having driven about 80 miles.



Whitefish Dunes.



Friends had told us to go to a fish boil, so we have reservations at the “Old Post Office” in Ephraim. “Be there at 6:10pm for the show.” The Old Post Office is a new restaurant attached to a hotel. So named for one of the original buildings of the late 1890’s. At the rear of the building is a large pot surrounded by a circle of bench seats. A substantial wood fire has the water in the pot boiling merrily. The “cook” provides an amusing narrative describing the process. First come potatoes, then onions and finally white fish. The whole process takes about a half hour. We watch the last fifteen minutes. It is drizzling now and are glad of jackets and umbrella.

The finale involves throwing kerosene on the fire. A flash of flame. The pot boils over flushing all the foam and impurities off.

Fish boils have roots in Alaska and were introduced to Door County by early loggers. The first conducted for tourists was in 1956.

We join a line inside and are served buffet style. Two large pieces of white fish, little round potatoes, a huge onion, slaw and fresh baked fancy bread. Waiters flit from table to table deftly removing the bones. The portions were enormous topped off by home baked cherry pie and ice cream.



Fish Boil Finale.

As I write I am sitting in the glassed in balcony looking out over Sister Bay. I am struck by how few lights there are.

Day 3, Thursday

It rained heavily several times through the night and started out very dull.

We drove south to Sturgeon Bay. I expected we would spend the day “shopping”. We found our way downtown, parked, and walked several blocks to the tourist center. We told a pleasant lady, “We only have a couple of hours, so what is there to see, and please do you have a map?”

“Here is our best map. Well, how about the Maritime Museum and a boat tour? Just cross the bridge.”

Having established that there are two bridges, we walked to the downtown one.

Sturgeon Bay has its share of upscale stores, but, at least where we were, nothing to spend the day in.

I was not enthused about a boat tour. It was still overcast and cool. We crossed the bridge and parked at the Maritime Museum, next to the tour boat, thinking it might not be going out on a day like this.

We inquire? “Sure we are going out.”

“What time should we be here.”

“Well, you are here now.”

Smart answer.....



Our tour boat.

“Jan. I’m going to change into jeans. It will be cold out there.”

We stroll into the museum and change. Jan buys a sweat shirt.

Back at the boat. “Senior citizens I assume.”

I nod and we get a nice discount.

“Shall we go up front? The back is enclosed in plastic. I can’t take pictures there.”

We do. I feel like the figure head. Our Captain comes and gives us a pair of good binoculars. What are we going to see in this overcast?

We are early and sit for a while. The sun starts to break through. It is hot! Jan sheds the coat I insisted she wear. Where are my shorts? In the car.

Cast off.



[Downtown Drawbridge.](#)

Our tour boat was built in 1937 as a Chicago Fireboat. The ‘Fred A. Busse’ has been extensively re-modeled. It’s clean, well maintained and painted bright red of course.

We back up into the main channel and wait a few minutes for the downtown draw bridge to be raised on the hour. Cruising between the channel buoys we hug the south west coast of Sturgeon Bay. The tree lined shore is Potawatomi State Park. We cruise to Green Bay (lake, not town) and turn around at the Olde Stone Quarry County Park.



Potawatomi State Park.

The Captain keeps up a great narrative spiced with some corny jokes.

The sun is shining. It is finally hot!





Gantry Crane.

As we cruise back into Sturgeon Bay we hug the north shore and pass by huge dry docks, a gantry crane and a company building multi-million dollar yachts.

Passing again under the draw bridge we sail east under the new bridge and into the canal, dug in the late 1800's to link Green Bay to Lake Michigan.

Again we see condos and homes with too many zeros after their price.



Channel Marker.



Condos.



We turn around at the Coast Guard Station, retrace our wake, and dock just two hours after we sailed.

Coastguard Station and Light House.



Eagle Bluff Lighthouse.



I am hungry. “Let’s take Rt. B which follows the shore and find a place to picnic.”

Again we had made our sandwiches in the hotel room. Not to save money. We just don’t need a large mid-day meal.

More beautiful homes along the lake.

Which of the seven deadly sins did I just break. “Though shall not covet.....”

Not planned, but we found the Quarry Park and enjoyed a nice lunch by the shore.

Following the shore we enter Egg Harbor, Fish Creek and find Peninsula State Park.

“We are driving through. Can we just have a one hour pass?”

Nice views of the lake. Thousands of campers. Well perhaps just many hundreds? Many in tiny tents. With all the woods I wonder how they manage mosquitoes? “Look, they do have toilets.”

We park at Eagle Bluff Lighthouse. Take some pictures, but decline the tour.

Completing our drive we return to Sister Bay and locate our targeted dining for tonight, Kristofers. Elegant dining, but they only serve wine and beer. Jan orders chicken marsala and I the duck.

The Harbor at Sister Bay.



The front at Sister Bay.



Helm's Four Seasons Hotel.

Day 4, Friday - Home

During our stay we have driven almost all of the coast roads, and much of the interior, skipping only Washington Island. Enjoyable, but I don't think we will revisit.

Time to go. We depart at 7:00am. Bright sunshine, an excellent journey. Home by 1:15pm. It's 337 miles.

Go get Windsor out of jail.