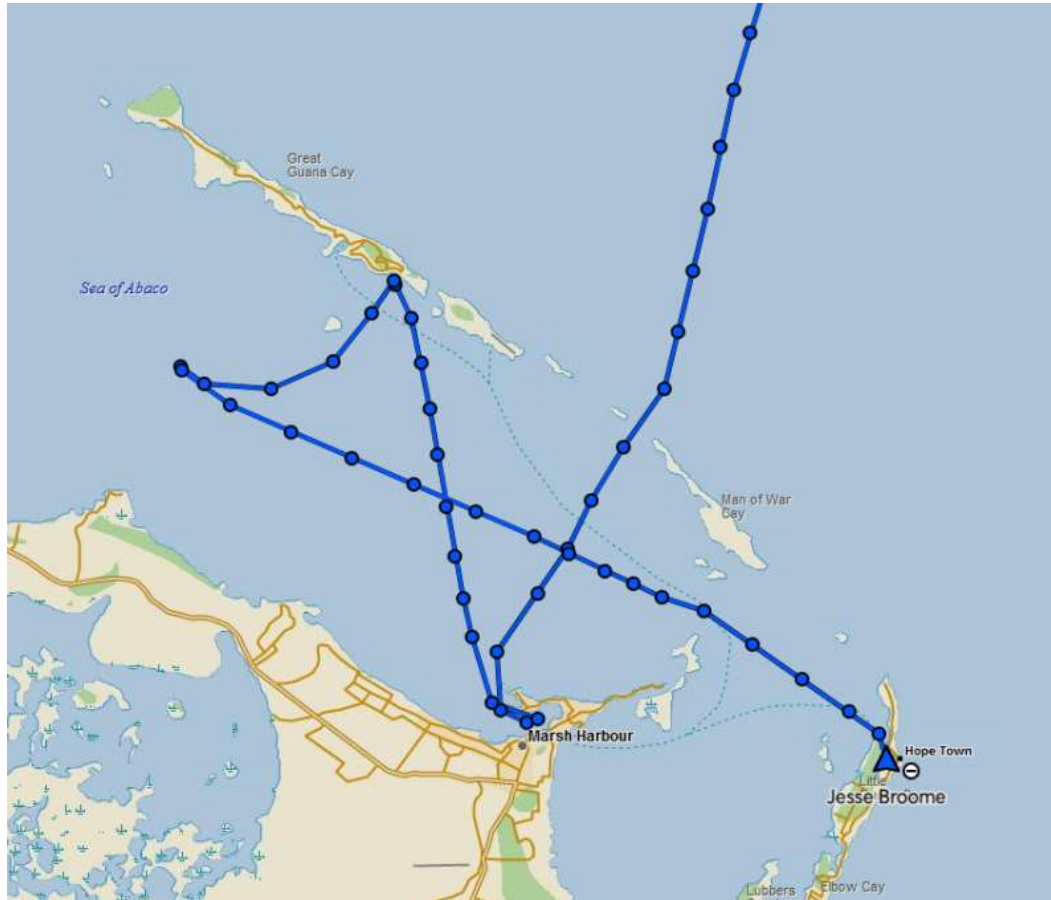


# November 2023 – Norfolk, Virginia to Abacos in the Bahamas

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This trip was with my friends Jesse Broome and Carl Graves. It was on Jesse's Island Packet 38, named Contented Turtle. Jesse keeps Contented Turtle at the marina/boat yard next to ours, and I met him there when Zephyr was getting worked on early this spring. It turns out that Jesse and I have a lot in common in addition to owning 38' Island Packets. Carl has is Island Packet 380 (same model boat as Zephyr) a couple of slips down in the same marina as us. He's been on all kinds of hiking, motorcycling, and flying adventures so sailing is his newest type of adventure.

On this trip we left from Norfolk, Virginia at 1pm on Sunday, November 5th and arrived in Marsh Harbor in the Abacos at 7am on Saturday, November 11th. From there we explored the Abacos for a couple of days before Carl and I had to fly back but Jesse is staying for the winter season in the Bahamas.



This was by far the longest passage for me with over 700 NM underway. It was calm weather with low wind to start with so we motored in sight of the coast initially. Once we got south to Cape Hatteras, we headed east and raised sails as the wind came up. Seas were a bit lumpy at the start of the gulf stream crossing with the north winds opposing the current. Jesse hand steered for a while to work through the sometimes confused seas. As we got past the strongest current, things calmed down. We had good wind for a couple of days as we headed south and maintained around 7 knots SOG close hauled for one of the nights. Clear skies made for amazing view of the stars. In the middle of the trip south, wind calmed and we made the most of light winds by broad reaching with the code zero up. We were glad to have the code zero since we needed to make as much progress under sail while we could. The last few days of the trip were mostly motoring or motor sailing as the winds died, and then filled in ahead of us. Overall, conditions were pretty mild with only a couple of squalls. We wanted to make it into the Abacos before a front came through. Jesse and I went on deck to transfer fuel from jerry cans into the tank, so it was good to learn that process with a shaker siphon.

Some memories from the trip south:

- Brief whale sighting
- Bioluminescence in the wake of the boat
- Beautiful sunsets and sunrises
- Radio chat with another sailboat where we crossed paths in the middle of nowhere. They were headed from Charleston to Bermuda



Conditions were calm as we made landfall through the North Man O' War channel and proceeded to the Conch Inn in Marsh Harbor. On our way in, we stopped by for a boat to boat chat with Michael who had already arrived on his IP380, which he singlehanded from Charleston. Clearing immigration and customs happened at the pace of island time. We got a bite to eat on the patio of Snappas, the onsite restaurant. The marina was in great condition, since it had just been rebuilt after the extensive destruction in the Abacos from Hurricane Dorian in 2019. The staff at the marina were also very friendly. I walked over to the Jib Room across the harbor to meet Michael for dinner, and he gave me a dinghy ride back. Before departing the next day, I went halfway up the mast to make some repairs on the steaming light. With one Jesse calling to the other Jesse, the communication on all of this was amusing to the other folks at the marina who were watching this unfold. As the dockmaster said, "Jesse's in charge."

Carl opted to explore on land for a couple of days while Jesse and I headed out to anchor by Great Guana Cay. We launched his new dinghy and got the new outboard on it. His dinghy setup makes it easy to get around quickly. We took advantage of the rising tide and dinghied through a shallow pass between Great Guana Cay and Scotland Cay to reefs on the ocean side. We snorkeled at 3 different reefs before heading back for the evening.

The next day we went over to Fish Cays for some more snorkeling. We saw a sand shark, a barracuda, and conch, and a variety of smaller fish. After that we headed over to Hopetown and took a mooring right next to another IP38 with Steve, Paul, Ed and Rohan. We dinghied over to chat with them and learned that they were part of the Salty Dog rally going from Hampton Roads, Virginia to Antigua but diverted to Bahamas due to weather. We all decided to go Cap'n Jacks onshore for drinks and dinner. Michael (on the IP380) was also moored in the harbor and joined us as well. Among the crew on Steve's boat was another IP owner: Ed and his wife own an IP35 in Maryland. The rest of Hopetown appeared to be pretty quiet on a Monday night but Can'n Jacks was the place to be and with a lot of people showing up for bingo. There was a great view of the sunset over the harbor from the patio.

I took a ferry back to Marsh Harbor the next morning. An Island Packet 370 had just arrived from a trip from the Chesapeake, so I stopped by to say hello and give them a hand with a few things. I got to meet Kevin, Blaine, and Mark. Kevin keeps the boat in Deale, Maryland for the summer and will be spending time in the Bahamas this winter. Blaine is a delivery captain and used to own an Island Packet. Mark often crews for Blaine, and Mark and his wife own an IP465 in Virginia. Mark and I shared a cab to the airport since he was on the same flight back.

It was a great trip and I'm looking forward to more ocean passages and exploring the islands!





