

A Tale of Two Boats

Diesel vs Gasoline

When first thinking of or starting to plan to do the America's Great Loop Cruise, many are advised to **ONLY** consider a diesel powered boat, unless of course they are independently and extremely wealthy. The problem, of course, is that many already have a boat they love, are used to and either can't afford a new (or newer) boat, nor is converting from gas to diesel an affordable option.

We thought that others in the same predicament might be interested in a fairly good comparison of two boats who traveled together for much of the Great Loop and the statistics from our past summer of cruising during which we traveled completely together:

MARGE'S BARGE, a 1968 39 ft. Avenger
ca. 30 GRT
14 ft beam
<4 ft draft
Twin 200 hp Perkins diesel engines

TWO J's V, a 1986 36 ft. Carver Mariner
ca. 19 GRT
12.5 beam
<4 ft draft
Twin 340 hp MerCruisers (454 cu) engines.

Below is a summation of 2003 (second year) of our America's Great Loop Cruise statistics:

Total days aboard the boat = 131.

Days Cruising versus Days not cruising:

76 days cruising, 55 days in a marina or stationary.
76 out of a total of 131 from Toledo Beach Marina in LaSalle, MI (Lake Erie) to Ft. Pierce, FL (east coast).

Total number of Statute Miles traveled:

3557 (for this comparison)

Average statute miles traveled on cruising days = 46.8

Average cruising speed (statute mph) = 9.5 per GPS
The two boats tried to run at 10 mph when possible.

Fuel Consumed (gallons):

Marge's Barge (diesel): 2,289.7 US gal (0.64 gal/mile)
Includes generator use: ca. 23 hrs.

Two J's V (gas): 4,356 U.S. gallons (1.25 gal/mile)
plus 24.6 gal for genset (~13-15 hours) cost of \$ 51.88

Average Cost For Fuel:

Marge's Barge (diesel): \$1.61/gal.
Two J's V (gasoline): \$1.91/gal.

Fuel Cost (US dollars) and cost per mile:

Marge's Barge (diesel): \$3,681.22 (\$1.03/mile,
including generator)
Two J's V (gasoline): \$8,301.09 (\$2.33/ mile).

Engine Fuel Per Hour:

Marge's Barge @ 2,289.7 gallons.
Gallons per engine hour (390) : 5.87
Two J's V @ 4,356 gallons
Gallons per engine hour (390.8): 11.15

The main point of this comparison is that if the gas powered boat takes its time and cruises at a comfortable 9 to 10 statute miles per hour (8 to 8.5 knots), it can do so fairly economically, have fun and do the Great Loop Cruise without having the expense of a new boat or retro-fitting the boat from gas to diesel - the important thing is that you can do the loop! A bonus is that at the slower speed, it is more relaxing and one gets to see a lot more. Also a slower speed in unfamiliar waters is less stressful.

TWO J's V -- John and Judy Gill
MARGE'S BARGE -- Howard and Maggie Daniels