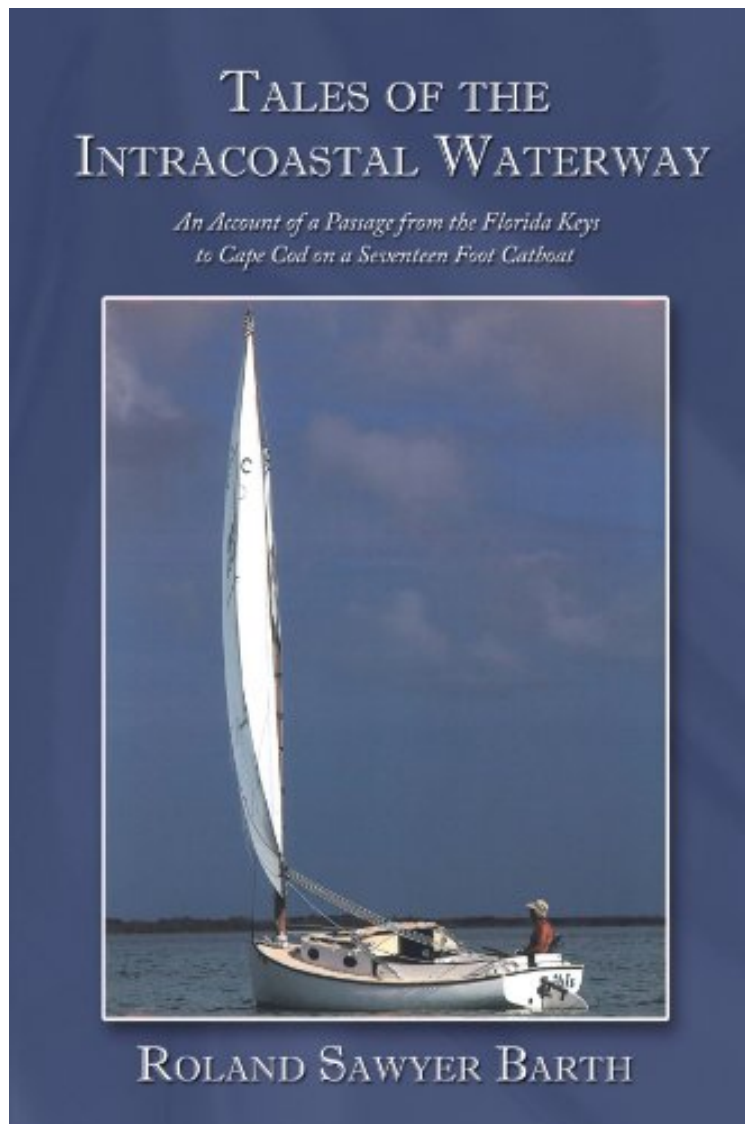


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Tales of the Intracoastal Waterway: An Account of a Passage from the Florida Keys to Cape Cod on a Seventeen Foot Catboat

Roland Sawyer Barth

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Roland Sawyer Barth : Tales of the Intracoastal Waterway: An Account of a Passage from the Florida Keys to Cape Cod on a Seventeen Foot Catboat before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Tales of the Intracoastal Waterway: An Account of a Passage from the Florida Keys to Cape Cod on a Seventeen Foot Catboat:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. What's it like to cruise the ICW on a tiny boat? By David Dennis

Nearing his 70th birthday, with the feeling his best years might have been behind him, the author decides to cruise his 17' catboat up the ICW to its place of birth, Boston, Massachusetts. This book is basically a bunch of emails he wrote to his friends along the route to keep them up to date on his progress. I really enjoyed this account of his journey, his crew and conditions along the route. It was lucid and fun to read, with enough of a combination of cruising account and local color to retain my interest. It was also quite short and I finished it about two hours after plunked it in my mailbox. The trip started fun and enjoyable, getting more serious and much less fun as he continues north. I had suspected from the beginning that his start date of mid-April was a bit early to begin, considering that he would still be in pretty scaly weather as he neared Boston. The book's story basically confirmed my hunch. Roughly the first half of this book shows him having a blast. He had congenial company in his wife and crew members, he had mostly pleasant surroundings, and all in all everything was great. This first half is likely to encourage us all in our own armchair trips up the ICW. I bought the book because I'm about to purchase a Grand Banks 42 and am considering taking it up to Georgia. There is sadly little on the trip from Florida to Georgia, but it's pretty clear that it's a fun journey well worth taking. But as we get closer to the frozen north, the air gets chillier and the company becomes rarer (although no less congenial when present). The wind starts to blow, hard, and he minimizes his stops. Navigation aids are scarce, and he runs aground more. He writes less, and almost much exclusively about the sea conditions. Instead of taking time to pause and smell the roses, he seems determined to simply make it to Boston. I would think he would have been better off taking a break and waiting for better weather, but his iron constitution saw him through. Especially towards the end, he's averaging 50 miles a day and taking between 9 and 13 hours a day to get there. (Remember, his typical speed is about 5 knots, and that is under moderately favorable conditions). So he is really being a hard charger in a trip that I would normally associate with a more leisurely pace. John C Wright, who has written his own book about intracoastal cruising, suggests in his web site that the trip up the Intracoastal from Florida to New York typically takes three months in a trawler (which is faster than the Catboat used here); Roland Barth took just a shade under two months to get all the way to Boston. Some interesting figures from his book: He motored about 1/3 of the time, motor-sailed about 1/3 of the time and sailed about 1/3 of the time. Interestingly enough, he sailed more as he got further north. One huge advantage of his small boat was low cost. He estimates that he spent about \$1,000 on the trip, which wouldn't pay the fuel bill on a power trawler. And yet the trip clearly would have been a lot more enjoyable on a big boat that wasn't so sensitive to wind and waves. As he said at the end, this is something he's glad he did but would not want to repeat. I'm glad to have been on the journey with him, in an armchair sailor's sense. This book definitely contains useful information that I feel was worth the time in contemplating my own trip. I may duplicate the southern part in my own boat someday ... but I think I will avoid the frozen north like the plague.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Good overview but want more details. By BBBoy

Anyone thinking of making this trip in a boat this small and under powered as it was, will come away from reading this book with second thoughts. And well they should. Catboats are chubby forward and will not push through a seaway, so all the open water portions of the trip were difficult whenever the wind and waves were from ahead. and dangerous when the seas became huge, as they were between Stonington, CT and Cape Cod. On that leg, a cockpit full of water from one following breaking sea could have ended the trip early. This book is valuable as a caution but also as a glimpse at the day to day routine one will face traveling at 5 knots in narrow channels with faster boats passing, draw bridges not opening, current trying to sweep you out to sea and weather that has absolutely no concern for your schedule. What I would have liked is more book, more details of the preparation as well as "what I would have done differently." The book is enjoyable and informative. What I learned is I'm going to need a bigger boat. And watch the weather.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. tedious

By a Peterson

Essentially no history of the intracoastal. Just someone who motored and sailed it who mentioned the size of his boat (small), his age (70), and how wonderful his friends are 1,435 times (or so it seemed) while neglecting many of the aspects of the intracoastal that I would find interesting. Eg there is far more detail about what he ate than the people and communities he could have gotten to know.

TALES OF THE INTRACOASTAL WATERWAY is the lyrical account of a small boat sailor from Maine and Florida who decided to celebrate his 70th birthday by traversing the waters in between. He conscripted his wife and a few friends, each of whom took a leg on the passage from Key Largo to Cape Cod. A third of the voyage he sailed solo. What happened? Quite a lot! Read on. . . .

About the Author Roland Sawyer Barth, author of CRUISING RULES, LESSONS LEARNED, LEARNING BY HEART, IMPROVING SCHOOLS FROM WITHIN, RUN SCHOOL RUN, and OPEN EDUCATION AND THE AMERICAN SCHOOL, is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and a former public school educator and member of the faculty at Harvard University. He and his wife Barbara live and sail in New England and Florida.