

Bill's Bahama Adventure of 2006 The 500 Mile Odyssey

Day 6 (5/28): A Short Sail Down the Tougne of the Ocean and A Blue Hole

The story continues on Day 6 as we leave the beach and the safety of our boat to venture through the jungle to the famous blue hole of Hoffman's Cay.



Hiking through mosquito infested underbrush

The hike to the blue hole is short, but because of the heavy underbrush and mosquitoes, one feels like they are on the movie set of the African Queen. You can hear the buzzing of insects and almost feel the branches and repressive air closing in on you. Yet, it is so quiet that you can hear yourself breath. Just as I was about to lose it and breaking into a run, the foliage opened up and we found ourselves standing atop a rock ledge; looking down into a blue abyss. The view was quite dramatic with a deep, nearly perfectly round pool surrounded by scrub trees and bushes around its rim. It looked nearly inaccessible from where we stood.

Looking straight down, I was surprised to see a very large grouper looking back up at me. Dinner? Apparently, the grouper has lived in the blue hole for years and has become somewhat of a mascot. It lives off of the handouts from the swimmers and begs for food like a dog.



Looking down into the Blue Hole

“How are we supposed to get down there?” I asked.

“Jump.” Matt said matter of factly.

“It must be 30 feet to the water from here!”

“Jump.” He said again.

With that, Matt kicked off his shoes and jumped. Joe and I were not nearly so quick. Before we could talk ourselves out of it, Matt appeared behind us.

“Do it!”

Joe succumbed to the peer pressure first. I designated myself as the photographer, but soon the lure took hold of me and I too took the leap.

“Wheeeeeee!”

It was the perfect swimming hole. After taking the plunge, you are rewarded with a cool grotto under the overhang that seemed to channel cool air. It felt like air conditioning. We all took several more jumps and then simply lounged in the grotto, enjoying the coolness and waiting for the grouper to come back.

After awhile, a cruising family showed up and took the plunge a few times. They tried to get their dog to jump in too, but he would have nothing to do with it. Always in the back of my mind, I asked them about fuel at Chubb Cay. They said that they had not been there but had talked with other cruisers that told them there was fuel to be had. I was quite relieved to hear this news.



Who goes first? Not me, I'm taking pictures



Aaaaaaaahhhhhh!!!



Swimming in a bottomless pit



Synchronized Jumping



A view of the blue hole from under the ledge



Mid-Air



It's great to be a kid again



Is Joe tail walking like a dolphin?

Our stomachs began to growl so we headed back to the beach and our boat. On the way back we encountered another trail that appeared to loop around the blue hole. Deciding to be the great explorers we started down this lightly traveled trail to see what treasures we could find. What we found was the biggest swarm of voracious mosquitoes I have ever encountered. We were covered instantly. If anyone had been there to watch us emerge from the jungle, they would have thought we were either crazy or being chased by cannibals. Climbing over each other in our haste, we charged out of the woods and dove into the water. Then, with noses just above the water, we argued for some time about who would have to get out of the water and retrieve our dinghy. Joe lost and nursed his mosquito wounds for days afterwards.



It was nice to see the boat waiting for us upon our return.

As we settled back into the security of our boat, another beautiful sunset was in the making. Unfortunately, the stinkpot “house on a hull” motor boat had returned and cranked up its generator just before sunset. We feared that our peaceful anchorage would be ruined. Thank goodness they shut it down just 30 minutes later. They must have gotten the message when we threw an old moldy orange across their bow.

A few cans of hearty man beef stew and the last of the salad was all we had for dinner, along with our snack food. I started to think about that grouper back at the blue hole.

After dinner we relaxed and enjoyed watching the changing kaleidoscope of colors that the sun cast over the sea and sky as it slowly settled into the horizon. It was very pleasant indeed; to sit with bellies full, not too hot and not too cold; feeling just slightly tired from a day of folly and relaxation instead of totally exhausted from a long day of passage making.



Another Perfect Sunset in Paradise

After the sun dropped below the horizon the wind died to a dead calm, and the mosquitoes came out from the island to join us. Whoever says that there are no mosquitoes in the Bahamas has obviously never anchored at Hoffman's Cay. There was no threat of rain so we took down the bimini and put up a large mosquito net that I had packed along "just in case". It proved to be one of the most valuable pieces of equipment on the boat. Nothing will drive a crew more insane than being harassed by mosquitoes; especially when trying to fall asleep. The netting was large enough that when attached to the bottom of the boom, it covered the entire cockpit and cabin with the pop top raised. I didn't put up the pop top enclosure so had improved ventilation which was enhanced by the 12v fan that I ran all night. Between the mosquito netting, the tarp, the bimini, the pop top, and the pop top enclosure, there were many options for shelter configurations that allowed us to meet nearly every circumstance. I'm sure that given more time and ambition, we would have eventually figured out an efficient way to configure the tarp as a rain shield that worked better than the boys simply wrapping it around their bodies. But boys will be boys, and they were quite content with wrapping themselves like a burrito when the tarp was needed.

This was perhaps the best day of the whole trip. We had had no problems, and several more days of pleasure in paradise still awaited us.