

# Sailing the San Juan Islands departing from Bellingham– Fall 2021

More trips are documented at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yf9rpXCMjBzrMnfyBDakTzFkOfKu5sjW/view?usp=sharing>

This was a last minute trip that we scheduled when work schedules freed up. We wanted to sail in the San Juan Islands and we also wanted to try an Island Packet sailboat. There was an Island Packet 440 that was new to the fleet at San Juan Sailing and it happened to be free for the week we wanted to travel. It was a big step up in size (45'9" length overall and 16 tons). It was also the first boat we had been on with a full keel, cutter rig, and bow thruster so we hired a captain for the first morning to get some training on the boat before heading out on our own. It has a very smooth motion under sail and is very steady when moored. With a self-tacking staysail we found the sail controls to be easy to use. As long as the winds are mild, it's easy enough to get around a marina. It's a long boat with a fairly high freeboard so on a windy day, it can be a handful depending on the docking scenario. We really liked the layout, but would like to try the Island Packet 370 which would be plenty of boat for a couple of people for long term sailing.

There are so many options for places to visit in the San Juan Islands and other nearby areas. We visited some highlights but there is a lot more to come back and explore. Apparently it can get really busy in the summer but we were in the shoulder season so it was a relaxed atmosphere. In the towns some of the businesses had closed for the season or were on limited hours. There is a lot of great hiking and some small towns / resorts to visit. The weather was cool, with some rain and either a little wind or a lot of wind. On a typical day, we would spend the morning underway and then the afternoon and evening exploring that location. There was quite a bit of motoring on this trip, but a lot of it was about navigating in tidal waters with plenty of current and rocks, and doing this on a larger boat with just the two of us.

On the following pages, there is a brief log of the trip followed by snapshots of our tracks from Navionics as well as some photos.

Here's a general map of the area numbered by where we stayed each night. The black line on the left is the border with Canada. When we were at Sucia and Stuart Islands we had to put our cell phones in airplane mode in order to avoid picking up a Canadian cell phone tower.



Date	Wind Direction	Wind Speed	Dept Time	Arriv Time	Nautical Miles	Weather	Location	Notes
9/25 Sat	SW	10-15	1545	1600	7.7	Sunny, Calm in the morning with winds building in the afternoon	Squalicum Harbor in Bellingham to Inati Bay on Lummi Island	Practiced harbor handling with Captain Bob in the morning, then we were on our own after that. Had lunch at the Lighthouse Bar and Grill, which has great outdoor seating overlooking the boats coming and going. Took an Uber to go provision before heading out late afternoon. Inati Bay is small, so we anchored and then ran a line from the stern around a tree onshore to keep from swinging, and the other nearby sailboats did the same thing.
9/26 Sun	SE	5-10	0750	1140	16.2	Cloudy and rainy	Inati Bay to Shallow Bay on Sucia Island	We motored up the Hale Passage with low winds and a current pushing us before turning west and putting up all the sails to go past Matia Island and around the north side of Sucia and into Shallow Bay to take a mooring ball. We took the dinghy and rowed ashore and went on a hike around the north side of the island. First we took the short walk across to see Echo Bay, which is a much larger bay on the east side of the island. On the hike, there were great views of cliffs and a number of Madrone trees which have bark that peels and vivid coloring. We got back to the boat just before a front arrived with a lot of rain and wind. It was a stormy night but Shallow Bay and we were glad to be much better protected from the strong southeast winds than we would have been on the other side in Echo Bay.
9/27 Mon	S	15-25, some gusts to 30	0830	1230	16.0	Overcast early, with some sun later and occasional showers	Shallow Bay to Roche Harbor Marina on San Juan Island	Windy morning. Motored straight into the wind for awhile before putting up the staysail and motor sailing and then putting up the main once we got into the more protected area between Spieden and San Juan Islands. After we got into Roche Harbor and started making our way to the marina, we heard a loud sound behind us and saw that there was a sea plane that had just landed and was following us in to the docks. Our boat was large for the slip we were assigned, but it was easy to get to. The lady that met us at the dock to help with lines graduated from Miami of Ohio, like

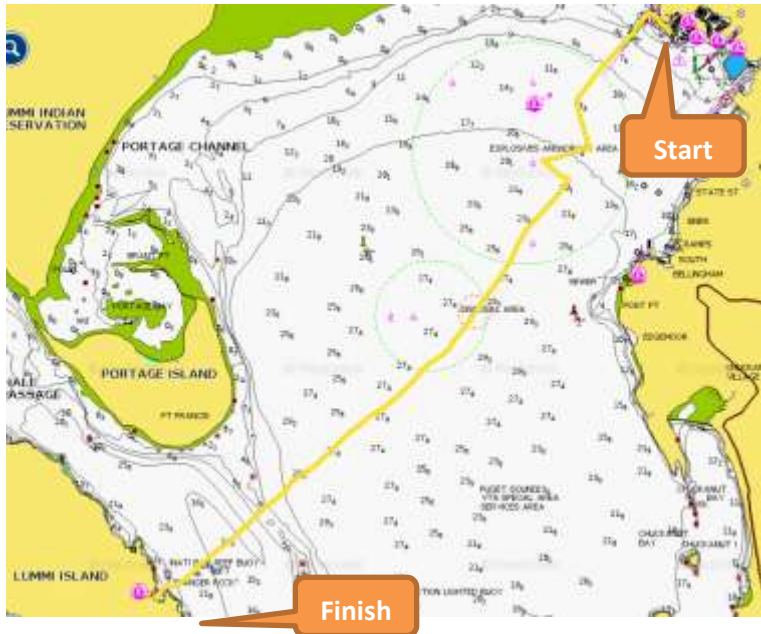
								Corrie. We had lunch at the restaurant on the dock while the sun was out before walking to a sculpture garden. Roche Harbor used to just be a resort but they recently started developing it for residential purposes. We talked to our slip neighbors for a while. They started sailing 7 years ago and spend the summers on their boat and were coming back from sailing up north in Desolation Sound in Canada. They gave us helpful tips for the rest of our trip.
9/28 Tue	SE	8-15	0745	1115	13.4	Partly Cloudy	Roche Harbor Marina to Friday Harbor Marina on San Juan Island	We left early and made the short trip to Friday Harbor. Used all the sails for for a bit and tacked into the wind, before motoring the final stretch into Friday Harbor. The winds built throughout the day and we wanted to get there before the marina was busy. Many boats were coming in for a couple of nights since there was a gale coming through that evening and the following day. Since our boat was slightly bit too large for their guest slips, we were on the inside of the breakwater dock and had a great view of everyone's docking adventures. We were truly impressed as we watched big ketch (over 60' long) come in single handled and do a standing turn with little room to spare and then tie up to the breakwater on the other side of the marina. We helped some power boaters tie up. People aren't used to meeting sailors from Nebraska and one of the boaters we helped mentioned that we seemed to know a lot for sailors from a landlocked state. We had lunch at a restaurant overlooking the harbor and went on a walking tour of Friday Harbor. You can download the brochure for the walking tour online. We also arranged for the "Pumpty Dumpty" pump out boat to come by. Apparently naming pump out boats is a thing around here since we also saw the Phecal Phreak boat at Roche Harbor.
9/29 Wed	SE					Cloudy and windy	Stayed at Friday Harbor	We spent my birthday at Friday Harbor while the gale was passing through. We went to the Whale Musuem and the San Juan Island Historical Museum and got an early dinner at the waterfront restaurant. We also got some additional provisions at the grocery store. Friday Harbor is a great town for boaters since it has

								everything you need in walking distance. Ferries come and go frequently from here since this is the largest town in the islands.
9/30 Thu	S	8-10	0920	1215	12.2	Cloudy	Friday Harbor to Reid Harbor on Stuart Island	We had mild tail winds as we made the short trip north to Reid Harbor where we took a mooring ball. This is a huge protected anchorage, with only a few boats when we were there. We rowed the dinghy to the docks and went for a hike. First we took the short walk across the island to see Prevost Harbor on the north side, and then we walked to the light house which takes a while to reach. We stopped for a break at their tiny school house which operates during periods where there are kids living on the island. The little library has a display with history about the islands. We passed by a grass airstrip on the way to the light house. Many of the islands have an airstrip and this island has another one on the east side of the island. There are a lot of sea planes around the islands as well. When we were taking shelter from some rain at the covered porch at the lighthouse keepers house (now a museum), we saw a group of sea lions playing in the water. We would also occasionally see some harbor seals while sailing or in harbors. Reid Harbor is far enough away from towns that there isn't any light pollution. We took a look at the stars at night and could see the milky way. It was the clearest view of stars that I've had in many years.
10/1 Fri	S	5-10	0815	1300	11.0	Partly Cloudy, foggy early	Reid Harbor to Jones Island and then to Deer Harbor Marina on Orcas Island	As we left Reid Harbor, visibility decreased due to fog. As we initially went by the north anchorage at Jones Island, all the mooring balls were full so we kept going. It's known to have poor holding for anchoring, and many reviews mention the problem of bold raccoons causing problems with boats at the docks. Fortunately, we saw a boat leave after we passed by so we doubled back and took a mooring ball. We rowed to the dock in the dinghy and hiked first across to the south side of the island and then around the western perimeter back to our anchorage. The mossy green and cloudy cool surroundings reminded us of Ireland. The deer on this island are known to like apples so we

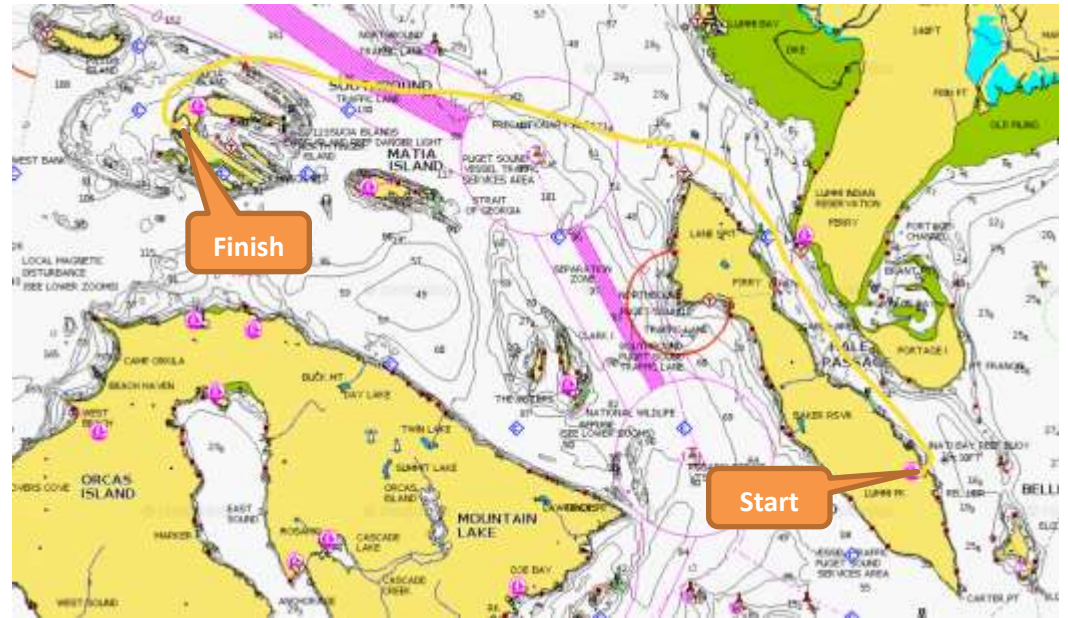
								fed a group of three deer. After the hike, we headed over to Deer Harbor. We walked to a restaurant up a hill with a great patio, good music and beautiful view of the town. We talked to some of our neighbors which had a Ranger Tug. All the major recreational tug boat brands (Ranger, American, Nordic) are popular in this area since they are great boats for the weather year round.
10/2 Sat	S	~5	0845	1215	14.6	Cloudy early, then partly sunny	Deer Harbor to Pelican Beach on Cypress Island	This was a day of motoring through some narrow passes, some of which had quite a bit of current. We saw some porpoises and harbor seals. We took a mooring ball at Pelican Beach and rowed ashore for a hike. Our slip neighbors back at Roche Marina said the hike to Eagle Cliff was their favorite and it is easy to tell why. The view from the top is amazing. You can look across Rosario Strait and see a lot of the area that we had sailed.
10/3 Sun	S	10-20, gusts to 25	0830	1130	13.6	Cloudy	Pelican Beach to Squalicum Harbor Marina in Bellingham	Winds were supposed to be mild, but it turned out to be a windy morning with winds building as we got closer to the marina. We hit our highest speed of the trip on a broad reach under full sail at 7.4 knots over the water and 9.5 knots over ground due to the current pushing us. Winds were still around 12-13 knots in the marina and it made for challenging approaches to the pump out and fuel dock where we were on the lee side and broadside to the wind. The winds calmed later in the afternoon and it would have been much easier then. We started talking with one of our slip neighbors who used to own an Island Packet sailboat and now own a 47' Nordhavn trawler. On an American Tug 35, they had done the Great Loop, which goes down the Mississippi, along the Gulf, up the Intracoastal, up through canals to Great Lakes and west across the Great Lakes to enter the river system). They gave us a tour of their impressive trawler. One of the great things about boating is all the interesting people you meet and hearing about their adventures.



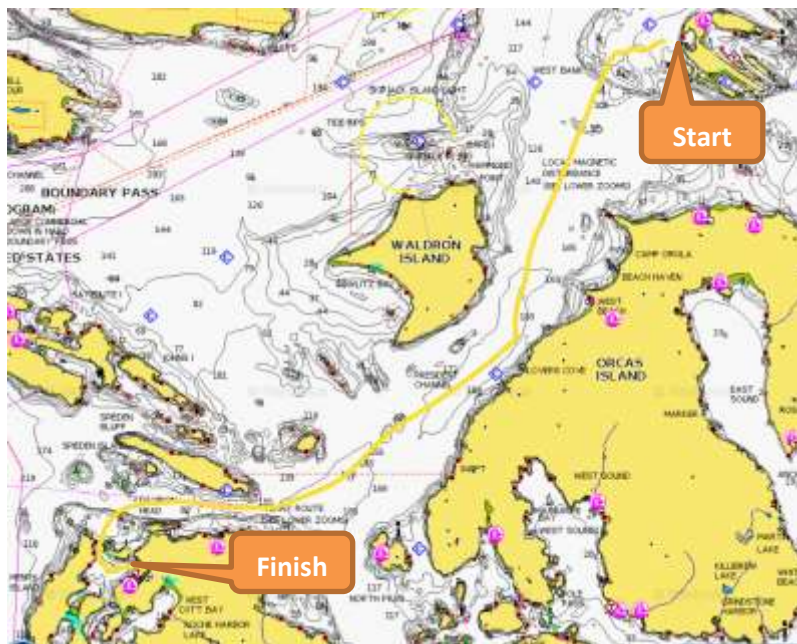
### Saturday 9/25



### Sunday 9/26



### Monday 9/27

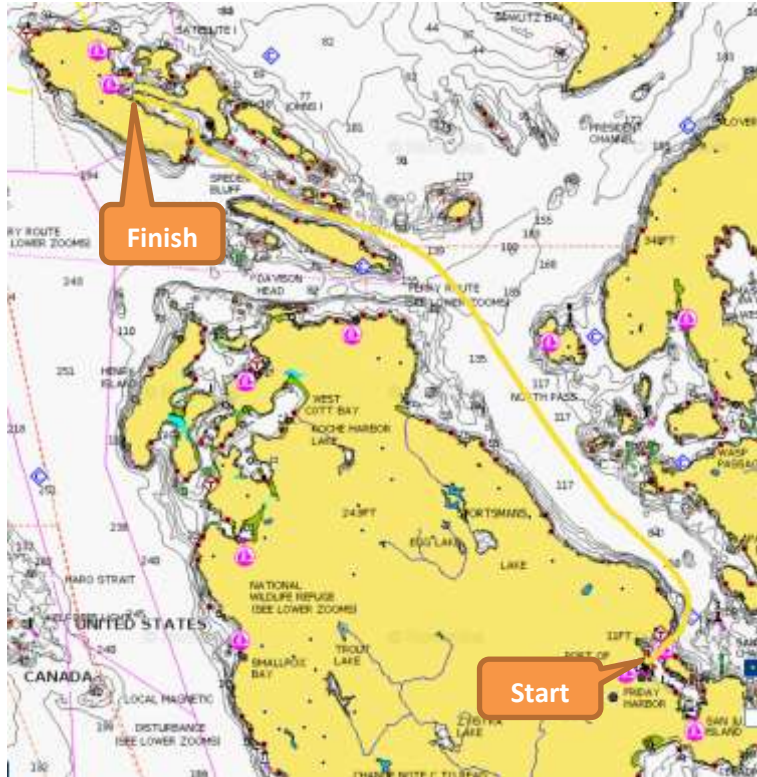


### Tuesday 9/28

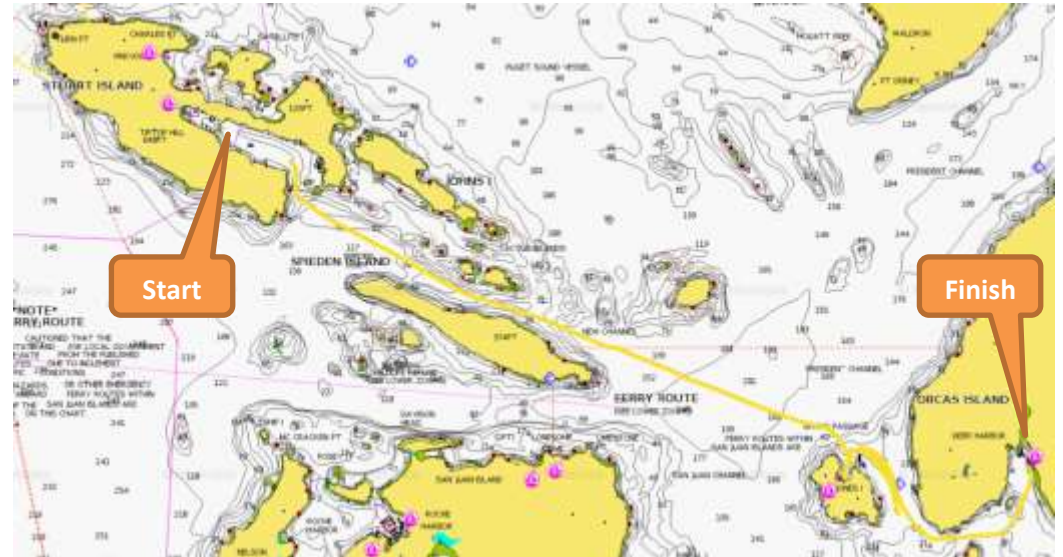




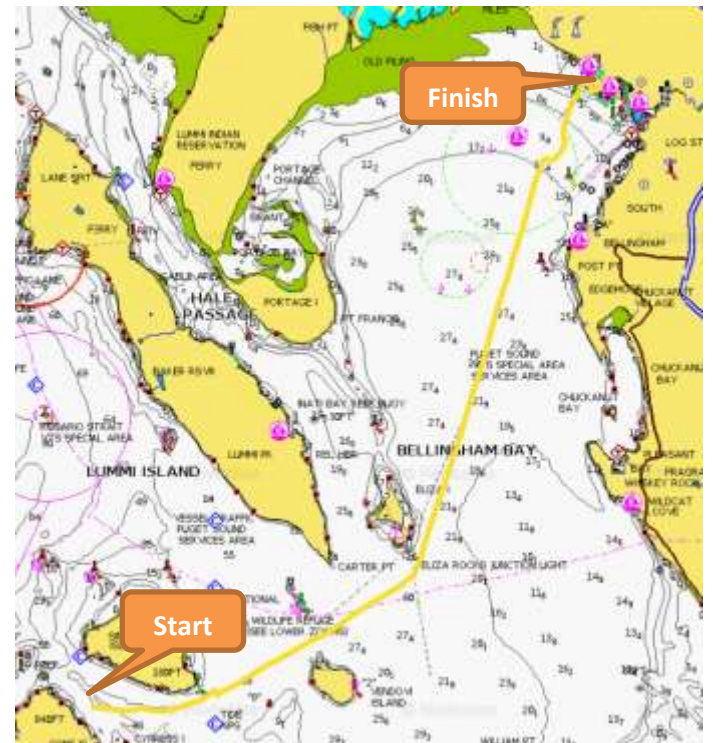
### Thursday 9/30



### Friday 10/1



### Sunday 10/3



### Saturday 10/2





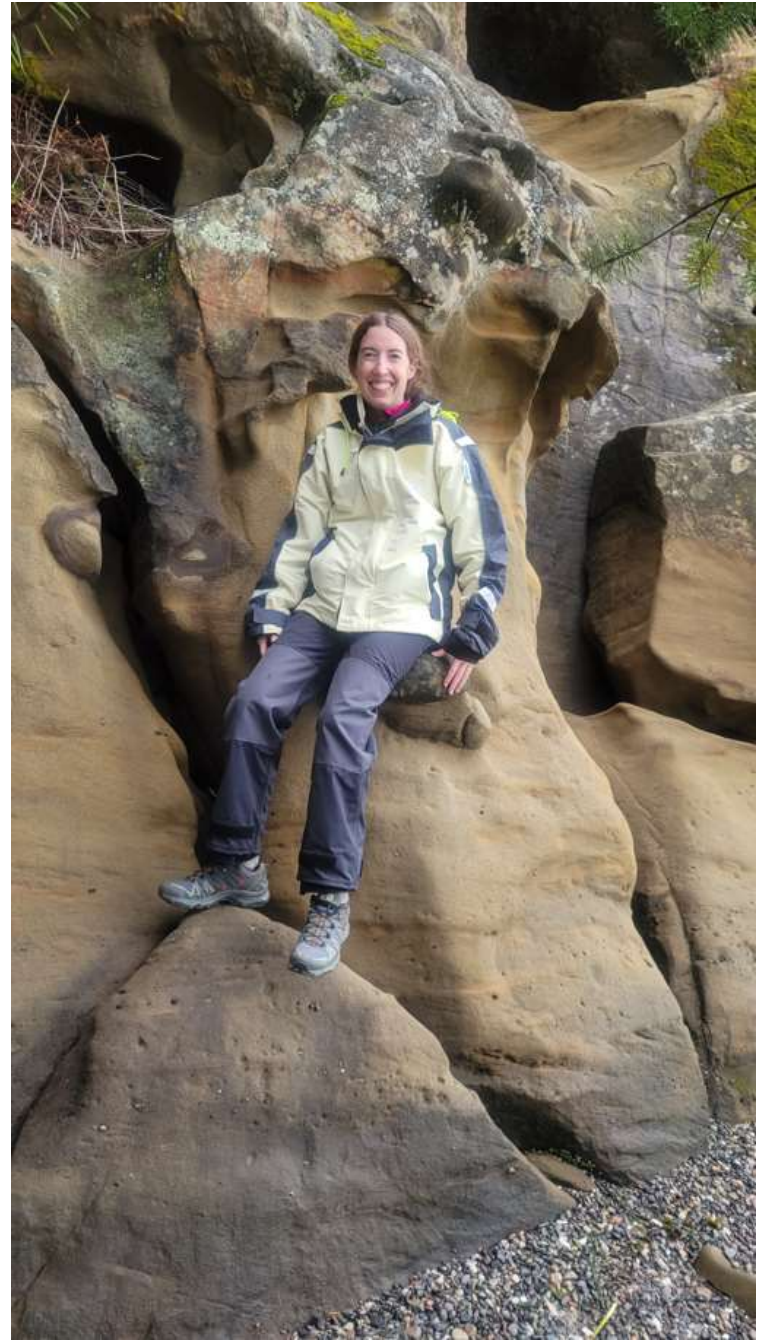












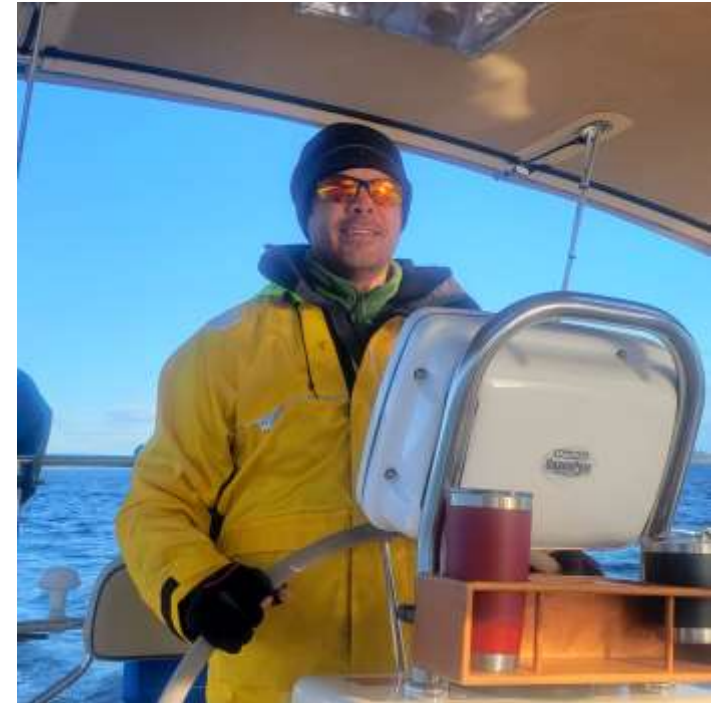












This superyacht looked like it belonged in a James Bond Movie. Even its dinghy (not shown) was an impressive boat!





School house on Stuart Island





