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*“Oh God, thy sea is so great and my boat is so small!”  
Breton Fisherman’s Prayer*

### *The ‘Spirit Guide!’*

*Dear Guest,*

We are thrilled that you have chosen *Free Spirit* for your wonderful vacation! She is a great boat, very lively at the helm, quick under sail, roomy in the salon, and well behaved in marinas! We have prepared this ‘*Spirit Guide*’ to introduce you to some things you may find useful!

*If this is your first time in the San Juan’s, you are in for a wonderful experience. If you are a frequent guest, you will have fond reminders that will be stirred by the contents of this Guide!*

#### *Fun Things!*

*Marine Life.* Even seasoned mariners are astonished at the variety of the marine life that exists in the *San Juan Islands*! We have added some helpful information for you to identify these marine inhabitants, with colored cards in the magazine rack forward of the salon table. Spending some time on-shore looking through tide pools, walking sandy beaches looking at the water spouts from claims, and identifying the various shore birds is a grand experience! The plethora of marine life in the San Juan Islands is unparalleled, in the air, in the water and on and under the shore!

*Whales.* These are always a favorite in the Islands. There are three resident pods of Orcas, *J, K, and L pods*, numbering approximately 90 animals including a recently arrived *J pod calf*! Unlike many of their marine-mammal eating cousins, the *San Juan Orcas* dine exclusively on salmon! Some of the best places for seeing Orcas are *Lime Kiln Point* and *south* along the *western shore of San Juan Island*. Watch out for the periodic fishing nets marked by buoys in the area, but you will often see the Orcas coming in or going out from this area. Often, you will see whale watching boats driving hard to get in line with where they are going, and that is a good signal that there are whales in the area. You can check [www.orcanetwork.org](http://www.orcanetwork.org) for current information, including sightings! Also, another great site is: <http://www.seattleaquarium.org/orcas>, which gives additional information on these marvelous mammals!

The other place where we have seen the Orcas frequent is the north side of *Stuart Island* en-route to *Bedwell Harbor*. Again, the omnipresent whale watching boats may give you a clue that whales are in the area. Unfortunately, the whale watching boats have their own unique radio communication, which is disguised to prevent non-whale watching boats from listening in.

We have also seen the much rarer *Minke Whales* in the area between *Stuart Island, Orca, Waldron* and *San Juan Island*. We have also seen them at the bottom end of *San Juan Island*, again while on the lookout for Orcas. For more information on the *Minke Whale* see: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minke\\_whale](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minke_whale). They are quite fascinating and what we would consider as a good luck charm to see.

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Please remember that the *Marine Mammal Protection Act* precludes you from maneuvering closer than *200 yards* from the whales, although the whales are entitled to come closer at their option. We have found it best to simply cut engine and/or drop sails when we see whales coming close, and let them come to you rather than trying to go to them! At times, we have had Orcas swim upside down directly under *Free Spirit* – a wondrous treat indeed!

*Porpoise.* There are several species of porpoise in the *San Juan's*. The most common that we have seen are the *harbor porpoise*. However, if you are lucky, you might spot *Dall's Porpoise*. These have markings similar to Orcas with similar black and white configurations.

Most of the time, you will see porpoise on either side of tidal rips – of which there are a lot in the *San Juan's*. Keep a look for fins or breath clouds breaking the surface – you will usually see one or two together, but sometimes as many as four or five. They swim remarkably fast and will often outdistance your boat!

*Invertebrate Life.* One of our very favorite things is docking in a slip at *Friday Harbor*. While there is a lot of marine life in almost all of the marinas in the islands, there is a reason that the *University of Washington* has its marine laboratories just a few blocks from the town! Not only can you get an excellent shore meal, and can visit the *Whale Museum* a short walk up from the docks, you simply must take a night walk on the docks with a flashlight. Shining the light in the water will return hundreds of *glowing eyes* from the plentiful *bay shrimp* that cling to the sides of pilings and are swimming in the water! In the day, you will often see *decorator crabs* on the pilings, thousands of *white sea anemones*, and if you are lucky, a few *Clown Nudibranch* with their white and colored rim décor! For kids, and for adults who still have a kid inside, grab one of the long handled nets we have stowed in the *stern port locker* and go on a catching expedition with a water-filled bucket! You will soon have a few dozen envious adults standing around looking at your temporary collection in your bucket as you carefully bring out the crabs, shrimp and other mobile sea life. Please do not try to move the sea anemones, however, as they are very happy clinging to the sides of the docks! When you are finished looking, please be sure to carefully pour out your 'captives' back into the water so they can continue their own existence!

One of the most memorable times we had was one evening on Matia on a mooring ball. As the night darkened, we noticed that the water surrounding the boat would periodically flash with bioluminescence from the invertebrates that filled the water! Like kids, we spent the next hour at the stern, dipping our feet, pouring a bit of water over the side, and stirring the water which each time would yield an immense rippling flood of white flashes! We were all giggling like little kids and I'm sure we annoyed thousands of small sea creatures who were flashing disapproval at our antics!

*Fishing.* We love flounder! Although it is rarely fished for in the *Puget Sound*, our New England roots makes flounder a favorite for a fresh fish dinner! Be sure you have a *fishing license*, which you can get at *LFS* just a block from *San Juan Sailing*. We always pick up a small pack of frozen herring and drop in the freezer. In the *port settee locker* next to the salon table, we have a bit of fishing gear including a hand line (in the true New England tradition). Simply cut off about ½ inch of frozen herring, bait your hook, lower the lead weight on the hand line to the bottom, and

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then raise it up about six inches. If there are any flounder in the vicinity, you will soon get a tender nibble. It takes a bit of trial and error and quick dexterity to jerk up the line when you feel a bite, and before the flounder steals your bait, but if you keep trying, you will be amply rewarded. Our favorite flounder areas are in water about 30 feet deep on an outgoing tide. We have had great success on the mooring ball and the north end of *Jones Island* (more about that below), and on the mooring balls at *Rosario Resort* in *East Sound*. Once in a while, you may also catch a *dogfish shark* (our largest was almost 4 feet long with the hand line), and if you catch one of those, it is best to simply cut the monofilament line below the sinker rather than try to extract the hook from these small sharks. They do have sharp, biting teeth and a venomous dorsal spine that is mildly toxic to humans so beware! But it is a thrill to catch one! If you do get a few flounder, there is nothing better than cleaning them carefully, filleting them and either using a bit of flour or corn meal, gently frying them in some butter, garnish with a bit of lemon, and ..... Ummmmm. If you time it right, and if you are really lucky, you can add some freshly caught *Dungeness or Red Crab* (be sure you only take the males (the underside is narrow whereas the female underside is wide) and have the right size – a crab measuring device is in the *nav table* – and you can also use a dollar bill and make sure the widest part of the shell extends beyond the small edges of the bill when laid horizontally over the crab). Little white wine, maybe some corn on the cob..... What a wonderful way to close another fine day of sailing!

Cooking. Speaking of cooking, we have also assembled a good selection of spices on-board for your convenience. We have stocked a good array of the usual spices, along with the normal supply of salt and pepper. We would just ask if you run out of a spice, please replace it for the next guest! Also, we have placed a two marine cooking books on board, which will give you a lot of fun and tips on cooking in a boat galley, including a vegan section! While the stern BBQ is a wondrous tool for fantastic grilled meals, there is an endless array of exciting and easy meals you can prepare in the galley! Also, for the quick meals (or popcorn!), the microwave is available. The microwave can be used when not on shore power, but be careful with your *power management* when you are not on shore power or you can wind up with *dead batteries!* Make sure when you get your provisions; you have an ample supply of all of the fresh fruits and vegetables for the plans. We may also periodically provide you some suggested recipes for your testing! If you are going into *Canada*, you should discuss your provisioning list with *San Juan Sailing* **BEFORE** you buy, to ensure that you won't have a problem taking the food into *Canada* as there is often a bit of too and fro between *Canada* and the *US* on what is allowed in. But no worries, there are plenty of ports in *Canada* where you can re-provision with wonderful veggies!

Favorite Haunts. While there are so many things to see and visit in the San Juan's, here are some of our favorites.

Obstruction State Park. This is one of the most overlooked mooring locations in the Islands. It is just to the west of *Obstruction Pass* and at the bottom of *Orcas Island* and is about four hours from *San Juan Sailing*. It makes a nice '*first night*' if you have a later departure and positions you in great shape to either go south or north depending on your plans and the direction and speed of the currents (check your Current Atlas!). There are three state park mooring balls in this location just a few yards from the sandy beach. The water depth is fine for *Free Spirit!* Going

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ashore, you enter a fairyland of unique vegetation, with enormous ferns, trees and other unique flora! Personally, I think that most people think it is too 'open' to the usual SE winds coming up, but in fact, the winds rise over the moorage because of the height of *Orcas Island* itself. In fact, this last year over Labor Day weekend (2015), when every other marina and state parks were jammed with people, we had the place to ourselves and were the only boat in the park! The views are outstanding, and we have loved sitting on the stern watching the passing ferries in the distance! Please respect the private dock just to the west of the moorage! Cell phone reception is non-existent here.

Also, just to the south of *Obstruction Island* and on the north tip of *Blakely Island* lies the *Blakely Island Marina*, which has a good fuel dock just to the southwest of the marina entrance. **VHF 66a, tel: 360 375 6121**. Call first. The marina entrance itself is shallow and should only be crossed at high tide. Speak with the marina folks before entering the marina whether it is a suitable time for your 7 foot deep keel. It also boasts a small general store with ice cream and showers.

*Rosario Resort*. **VHF 78a, tel: 360 376 2152** email: harbormaster@rosarioresort.com. Just a short sail up from *Obstruction* is the *Rosario Resort*. It has some very nice mooring balls and a bit of a tight marina, but it has a good *fuel* dock and showers. One of our favorite flounder fishing areas is on the mooring balls outside of the marina! Again, the black tail deer come out in the evening to graze within an arm's reach on the grass next to the resort! Spotty cell phone reception here!

*East Sound*. For pure sailing pleasure, *East Sound* has some of the most reliable winds in the Islands. We have ridden the express SE winds up the channel numerous times, with 8-9 knots SOG being rather common. At the end, you can drop the sails and motor over to the town dock, which you can tie up to (do not try to go to the inside of the dock as the water is too shallow), for a short excursion into the town of East Sound itself! On the north side of Orcas is the small Brandt's Landing marina. We prefer to stay out of this small, narrow marina.

*Friday Harbor*. **VHF 66a, phone 360 378 2688**, email: contactus@portfridayharbor.org. As mentioned above, this is one of our favorite places to observe marine life, to have a nice shore dinner, and to visit the whale museum. However, Friday Harbor also has one of the best grocery stores in the islands, with an excellent wine and liquor selection as well! It is just a short walk from the docks! Virtually anything you need can be found in *Friday Harbor*. Be sure to sample the great ice cream just above the Ferry landing! If you don't wish to sail to Victoria, after the boat is secured and your moorage paid, you can hop the Ferry to Victoria for a day trip! For your sailing buddies who wish to depart or join your excursion, the Friday Harbor airport is just a very short taxi ride away, where they can catch the scheduled *Kenmore Air* trips back to Seattle and the shuttle to *SEATAC*! The marina boasts some excellent and inexpensive showers, and the Marina office sells hats and shirts!

*Prevost Harbor*. This beautiful harbor on the north side of *Stuart Island* is a place of true peace on earth! There is a small dock – if you are there during off-season, you can usually tie up there or grab one of the mooring balls. During the high season, often the powerboats crowd the dock, and the mooring balls, but the holding ground is very good. One clear night under a flood

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of stars, I slept in the cockpit, listening to the singing of unidentified whales just outside the entrance and watched the periodic satellites and meteors in the sky! When entering, watch the rocks and ledges that protrude out of both sides of the main harbor entrance – stay well in the middle, and **DO NOT** try to navigate through the **East Entrance** which is full of boat eating rocks. Once you are in *Prevost*, go ashore and take a hike to the west side of the island – there is a small school and a small stand where you can buy a souvenir shirt or cap, on a ‘trust basis’ as it is not attended. Wearing a Stuart Island hat is a sure sign that you have become an experienced San Juan Island visitor! Going out of *Prevost*, drive the boat west to *Turn Point* (watch for large ships coming around the corner) to see the picturesque lighthouse at the end! From here, it is a short run to *Bedwell Harbor* if you wish to clear customs into Canada and continue into the *Gulf Islands*, or take the longer run to *Semiahmoo*! If you choose to clear customs, just head into *Bedwell Harbor*, tie up at the dock (you may have to wait your turn), and have the skipper take everyone’s passport while they stay on the boat and walk up to the customs phones and call in the information. Please be sure to keep the customs number you are assigned as you will need it to return to the US.

*Deer Harbor*. **VHF 78a, tel: 360 376 3037**. This out-of-the-way protected harbor on the west side of *Orca Island* is a great overnight stay! There is a nice burger place right on the docks along with a little store for soda pop, a limited selection of wine, a good selection of ice cream and sundries. However, a short 10-minute walk from the marina there is a nice restaurant for an excellent shore meal! There is also a nice swimming pool that you can access from the marina. Cell phone reception is spotty, but you can get a couple of bars right next to the store at the dock.

*Jones Island*. This very small island west of *Orca* in the main *President Channel* is one of our favorites! Enter into the north cove and grab a mooring ball. The island is populated with black tail deer, which have become experts at suckering island guests into hand feeding them apples despite the ‘*Do Not Feed Deer*’ sign. Plus, this is one of our favorite flounder fishing locations! This is a very nice stopover point between *Deer Harbor* and *Stuart Island*! It also makes a great storm hole if weather is expected from the south. Although we enjoy staying on the boat, there are a couple of places for those who wish to take a tent and overnight on the island as well.

*Roche Harbor*. **VHF 78a, tel: 800 586 3590**, email: roche@rocheharbor.com. This is the BIG MONEY harbor! Once the harbor where *John Wayne*’s boat was docked, it remains the harbor for the rich and famous. Yet, the guest moorage is not bad and there is a decent store and restaurant. If you wish to have a guest fly in or out to meet you, the small airport just a short walk from town is served by *Kenmore Air*, which flies the short trip to *Boeing Field*, where a shuttle takes them to *SEATAC*. We have seen 100+ foot yachts here, guarded by some interesting *James Bond* types.... Every evening, there is a flag ceremony at dusk, which is very fun! Plus there is a series of shore sculptures that are very neat! It also has a customs dock if you are clearing customs from *Canada*, although the customs officers seem to have no sense of humor there. If you are clearing customs, make sure only the **skipper** leaves the boat with all passports and documentation. When presenting yourself in the customs office, place your documentation on the counter, step back at attention, and do not move or speak until spoken to. Each occasion we have cleared here, gives us the distinct impression that they are very annoyed at dealing with sailboats coming from

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*Canada*. Plus, they keep their guns very visible. When entering or leaving the harbor, only use the West entrance. **DO NOT** use the very shallow **East entrance on the east side of Pearl Island**. And please, do not enter the Harbor from the south through Mosquito pass. It is far too tight for the occasional mariner or deep keel sailboats. There is good cell phone reception.

Victoria Harbor. **VHF 66a. Customs: 1 888 226 7277**. This is a grand trip across the bottom of *Vancouver Island* and up the narrow channel to *Victoria*. This is a very busy channel with seaplanes (remember, when they are on the water, they are just a ‘boat’), but a great city to spend a day or two in or to meet guests. First clear customs at the very efficient customs dock, and then you can generally slide into a slip in the marina just adjacent to the customs dock in front of the *Empress Hotel*. By contrast to the rather stern and sour customs officers we find in returning to the *US*, clearing *Canadian customs* is generally a joy and an easy procedure and is often done by telephone at the customs dock itself. Just follow the guides in navigating *Victoria Harbor* and stay out of the seaplane takeoff zone. The Port has its own traffic scheme, which are found on **Chart 3412** published by the *Canadian Hydrographic Service* (see San Juan Sailing). However, the transit generally requires you to come in under power and keep the yellow floats on your port side all the way to the inner harbor.

Spencer Spit. With great mooring balls on both sides of the Spit, this is a great place to have a picnic and play in the sand! Also, this is a decent place to do a bit of crabbing, although we have caught a lot of undersized and female crabs, which seem to like the ride to the boat and then the free bait followed by the crab toss back in the water. We have even caught a large *Sea Star* that was almost three feet across with its multiple arms. Be sure to avoid the temptation of traversing the narrow channel between the *Spit* and *Frost Island* – if you need to change sides of the *Spit*, go all the way around the island!

Matia. The state park in Rolfe Cove is a tight little harbor with a couple of mooring balls and a dock. If you are early enough in the season, or early enough in the day, you might be fortunate to get one of these treasured mooring balls. The island is a gem – great place to do a bit of shore hiking, see nesting *Bald Eagles*, and play in the tide pools at low tide. Enter Rolfe Cove just from the west. Do not try to navigate the small narrow channel to the east of the entrance rock. If the mooring balls are full, **DO NOT** try to anchor or stern tie in the small cove just to the south of **Rolfe Cove**. Although it looks inviting, it is just too tight for *Free Spirit* and is best left to small power boats. Instead, head across to *Sucia* where there are more mooring balls and great anchorages! Be sure to approach *Sucia* only from the east, as there are a lot of famous keel eating rocks to the north.

Semiahmoo. **VHF 68, tel: 360 371 0440**. This is a long sail from *Sucia* across a great piece of water, and you are rewarded with a sweet marina! The guest slips are some of the least expensive in the Islands and a very nice *fuel dock* and waste facilities. The added plus is that during the summer months, you can grab a ride on the free *Plover*, which is a small steamer that plies the waters between *Blaine Marina* and *Semiahmoo Marina*. Taking the short ride is a highlight as it is very scenic and you then exit a short walk to the town of *Blaine* with nice shops and restaurants! Or, if you want a fantastic (but slightly pricey) dinner, the *Semiahmoo Resort* has a very fine restaurant. Plus, if you plan on having guests meet you, there is no better place than

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*Semiahmoo* where you can guest slip in the marina and do day sailing with your guests. It is only about 40 minutes to *Vancouver Airport*! Finally, the bay outside of *Semiahmoo* is one of the best crabbing places in the islands – with huge and plentiful *Dungeness Crabs*! Mount the motor on the dinghy, toss in the crab ring, a bucket, the crab measuring tool and head out in the calm bay water until you are in about 30 feet of water, bait and toss over the crab ring, and wait about 15 minutes! Dinner will come to you! If it is a slack tide, you can tie one of the fenders on the bitter end of the ring line instead of trying to hold station for 15 minutes on the dinghy. Then, pick up the fender and haul in the line to bring up the ring! Under Washington law, you have to tend the crab ring unless you have a registered ‘float’.

### **Helpful Hints.**

Cell Phones. Because the *San Juan*’s share a boundary with *Canada*, you may be surprised at incurring huge roaming charges on your cell phone from *Rogers in Canada*, even if you have never stepped across the border. Make sure you call your cell phone provider BEFORE you go to deal with international options. We also turn off all streaming and email data features when we are sailing in the *San Juan*’s and turn them on only occasionally when we want to check messages and emails. If you don’t do this, you may find a hundred dollar plus charge on each of your cell phones that was unexpected when you return home!

Provisioning. While there are several grocery stores in *Bellingham*, we generally use *Fred Meyers* exclusively. It is only a \$15 cab ride from *San Juan Sailing* and has both wine and a great grocery store, plus hardware and dry goods where you can find replacements for items you may have forgotten! One important note. *Bellingham* has banned plastic grocery bags and they make you buy your own paper bags. Paper bags are woefully inadequate for the rigors of storing stuff on the boat and getting stuff off the boat. I recommend you buy a box of kitchen garbage bags and use that for the groceries, which you can then double use for garbage bags during your voyage!

Chandlery. If you want to buy small items such as a fishing license, additional fishing line, crab or flounder bait, CO2 cartridges for your self-inflating life vest (if you have them), boat shoes, boat boots, or slickers, gloves and the like or other ‘boat-type items’ for your voyage, *LFS Chandlery* is just a block east of the *San Juan Sailing* office. The other nice chandlery is *Redden*, which is a bit of a longer walk south of the Marina.

Sailing Seasons. There are four distinct sailing seasons in the *San Juan*’s: Early Spring, Spring, Summer and Fall. The busiest season, as expected, is Summer. Of course, all the amenities are open during this time and it is a wondrous time to be in the *San Juan*’s! However, if you wish to have a less crowded experience, choosing the **Spring** can’t be beat! Not only are the winds a bit more reliable during the Spring, virtually all of the facilities are open and you generally have your choice of mooring balls, marinas, less crowded restaurants, and facilities! Plus, if you time it right, you get 10 days of vacation for the price of 7 from *San Juan Sailing*! It is one of our most favorite times of the year! The fine *Webasco* heater in *Free Spirit* takes away any chill from the cool Spring evenings. The early morning mist rising from the water makes a fairyland backdrop to your morning hot fresh pressed coffee sitting in the cockpit. Fall is our second favorite, and after Labor Day, the crowds vanish. Many of the facilities begin to close up at this time, however,

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such as the *Plover* in *Semiahmoo*. But it is the best time to take the run to *Desolation Sound* with the guided flotilla from *San Juan Sailing*. During the Early Spring, you must be prepared for weather. While that is very appealing to a lot of the very experienced sailors, it can be a bit intimidating to the less experienced folks or the pure recreational folks!

*Hammock Use.* We have a double hammock on board in the port locker next to the table! If the weather is cooperating, this is a great place to sleep ‘under the stars’ and to listen to the marine life during the evening! The hammock is placed between the forestay around the furled headsail, and the mast. Straps and carabiners for use are stored with the hammock! It also makes for a very nice afternoon nap in the sun!

*Some Do-Nots!* There are a few ‘do nots’ that we wish to warn you about.

*Fisherman’s Bay.* This is a very enticing harbor on the west side of *Lopez Island*. However, it is ONLY accessible during very high tide and then only through a very narrow channel 15-20 foot wide channel which has a famous submerged killer rock right in the middle (called ‘*Ming’s Rock*’ – named after the local guy who salvages boats and will often come out if you enter the channel, just salivating at another very large payday). We do not advise entrance to this harbor. The channel is very narrow as mentioned, and at high tide, it is only about 8 feet deep – which means during low tide it can be as shallow as 2 feet or less. Leave this harbor to the shallow draft power boats that don’t have a seven foot keel.

*South of Rolfe Cove.* The small narrow cove just to the south of Rolfe Cove on Matia is a small narrow cove. It is easy to get suckered into thinking that a bow anchor and a stern tie will keep you safe here. We have tried it and wound up spending a very nervous all night watch with knife in hand to cut the stern tie and ready to start engine as the tide swirled around pushing us within five feet of the very nasty rocks. Instead, head to Sucia if the two Matia state park mooring balls in Rolfe Cove are occupied.

*Mosquito Pass to Roche Harbor.* Oh, the temptation! You have been on the outside of San Juan Island down to Lime Kiln Point looking for Orcas and are headed back north. On your chart you see that there is a short cut into Roche Harbor through Mosquito Pass and you will hear the sirens tempting call! Take it from us. This is a short cut only for power boats, and not for deep keel sailboats. It is a narrow twisty channel. Take the extra bit of time to round the north end of San Juan Island and the safe Western entrance to Roche. It is less than 3 nm difference, or about 30 minutes. You (and the boat) will be glad you did.

**Guest Book.** On-board, we have placed a Guest Book! Please leave this on board, but please be sure to log notes about your journey, neat things you have seen, and any suggestions for the next guest (and for us!) Also, please feel free to email us about any questions you may have either before, during or after your voyage! Our email addresses are: Craig Johnson: [cjohnson@parsonsbehle.com](mailto:cjohnson@parsonsbehle.com); Nancy Johnson: [morningskydesign@yahoo.com](mailto:morningskydesign@yahoo.com). You should also feel free to call us on our cell phones at 801 673 7440 (Craig) or 801 209 6523 (Nancy). We will do our best to answer your questions and to help support your vacation experience! Also, please be sure to send us photos of your voyage!