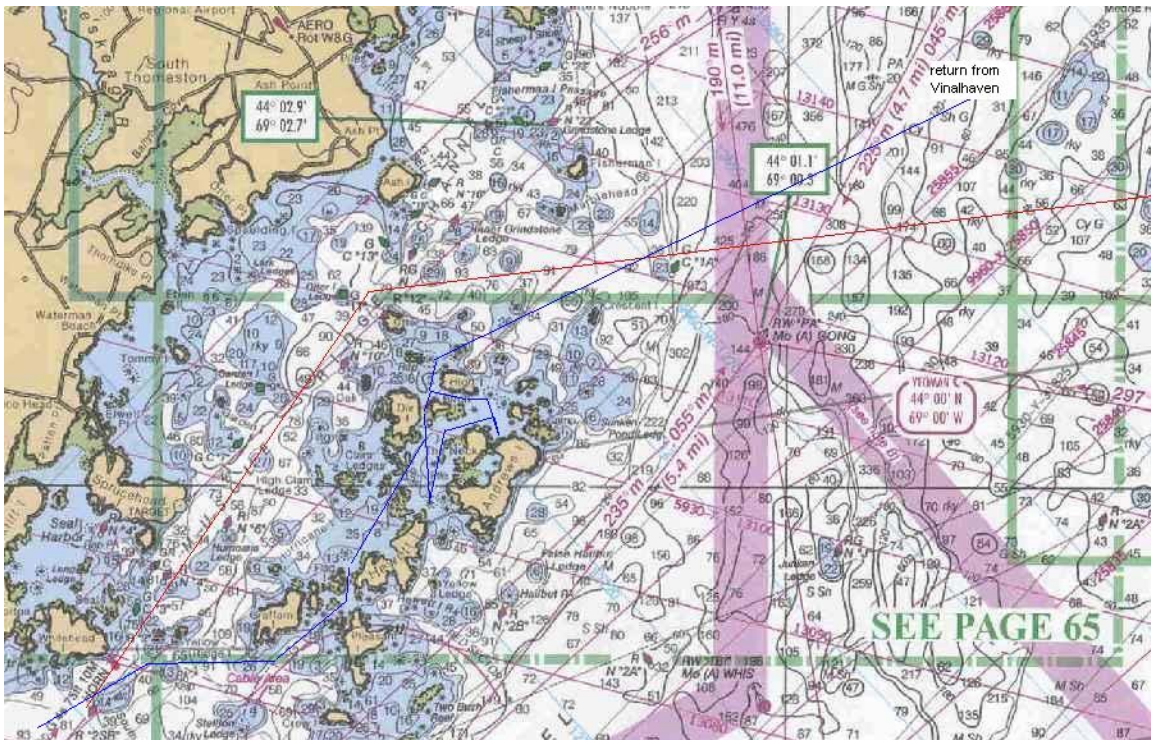


Part 2: Sail to Vinalhaven and Return

Now that we had moved on from Muscongus Bay to Penobscot Bay, we planned to sail up Muscle Ridge Channel, which runs north about four miles between the west shore and an archipelago of islands about two miles off shore, and then north east to the White Islands on the southwest side of Vinalhaven. A stay in the archipelago was on our itinerary either going to or returning from Vinalhaven, depending on timing and the weather.

On our way towards the exit from Long Cove we heard a shout of greeting from a passing lobster boat—it was the co-owner of a B & B Dick and Margie had stayed at earlier in the summer on their post-cruise rally Maine tour. We had met the fellow and his wife the day before on our walk around Tenants Harbor. These folks are transplanted from the Boston area—they went to Maine with their two kids, to rearrange their lives. He crews on a lobster boat, she is a nurse, and they together run the B & B.

We left Long Cove via the channel between Spectacles Island and Clark Island and headed toward the Whitehead Island Light house, that marks the west side of the entrance to the Muscle Ridge Channel. We had a 5-10 knot breeze from the southeast, and with the tide going with us we seemed to fly up the channel. It was a fine sail, and provided nice views of the islands (which we would visit on our return) and the shore. Passing Otter Island at the northern end, we set a course east for the White Islands.



Under a partly cloudy sky, the breeze picked up to 10-15 knots as we sailed towards Vinalhaven in three-foot seas. About half way across the 6 or so miles, the breeze picked up a bit more and we began to have more frequent white caps. The water was darker, less blue than earlier, and it became chilly as the wind increased and the

day turned partly cloudy. However, sailing with the wind on the beam meant we made good time and stayed dry. It was a great sail, with plenty of wind and wave motion. The White Islands were visible as a distinct bright streak on the distant shore line.

The white streak turned into wonderful white-orange granite as we neared the islands.



Heading into the channel that brought us into the lee of the largest island, the immediate sight was of the perfect blend of pine trees at the edge of granite shoreline set above water. The sudden stillness and quiet as we sailed with a light breeze gave a hush and intimacy that allowed the colors and shapes to take my breath away. It was a timeless scene, undisturbed by houses or commerce.



As it was high tide, made our way to a small cove tucked among boulders, anchored and brought a line ashore. It was mid afternoon, so we had lots of time to explore the island. The shore showed the abundance of sea life that supported the seagulls and Osprey. Mussel, crab and urchin shells littered the rocks. Lush tidal pools nestled in low lying protected areas created a private aquarium, and were filled with periwinkles, various multi colored seaweeds of pale, medium and dark green mingled with shades of rust and red. I thought of times in the past when my son and daughter were young children, and the delight they found in spending hours immersed in the watery microcosm exploring these pools in local sea sides. These islands, as a Nature Conservancy property, are like that, a small, preserved window into nature. We sailed in and became part of the timeless scene.



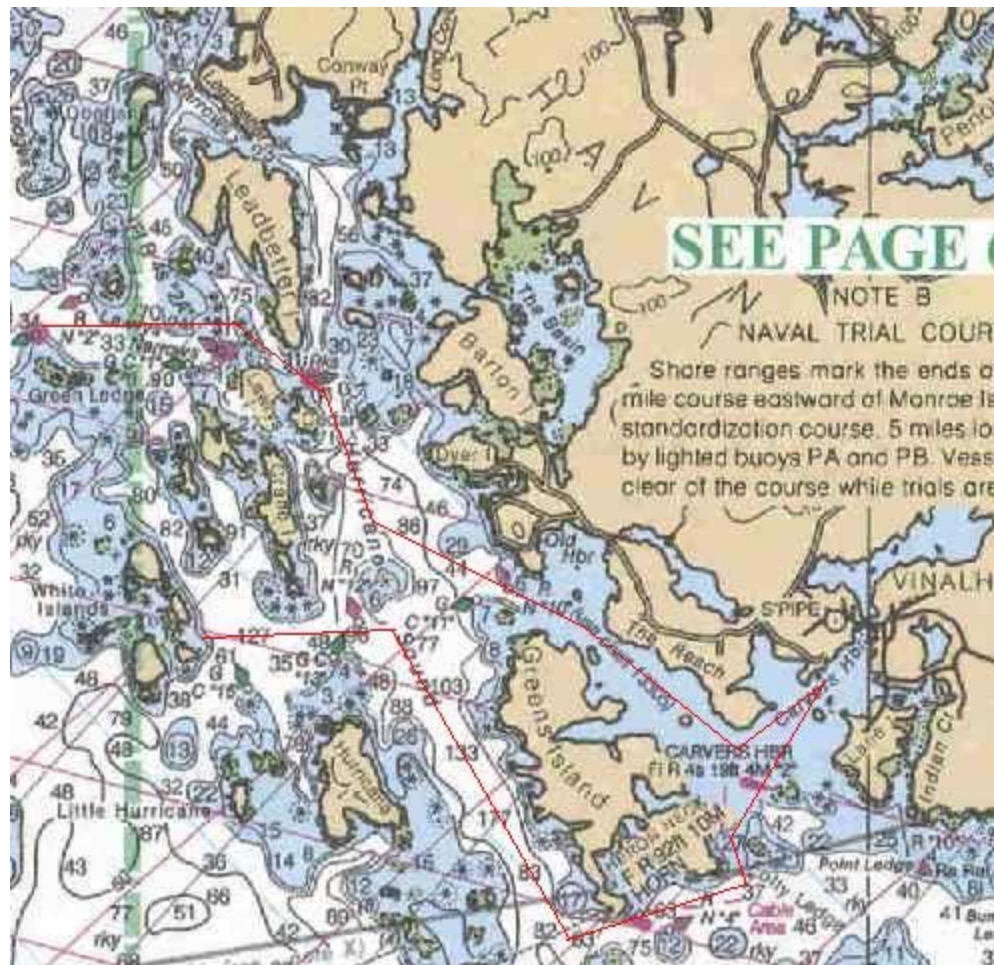


The rest of the day moved slowly for us, at tidal speed, towards evening. We began to look for mussels for dinner. But, the mussels live in the space about two or two and a half hours before low tide—just above low water. So we waited, enjoying the leisure, until we could finally gather our small bucket full for dinner. We shifted to our anchorage for the night, which was somewhat out in the open, and not directly in the lee of any island, but behind a large boulder. The breeze felt earlier continued to blow but there was little swell as the shoals between the islands reduced the wave action to a minimum, even though we were not directly protected. We steamed the mussels in garlic and white wine, boiled some pasta, and then sat through dusk into dark, slowly finishing every mussel, refreshed by the breeze, relaxed by the water, as the light disappeared.

The morning weather report indicated some possibility of storm winds later in the week, so a plan to sail around Vinalhaven, and spend another night at an anchorage on the island was shelved, and replaced by a plan to visit Carvers Harbor, south east and then sail up the Reach, a passage that runs on the south west corner of Vinalhaven, north through Hurricane Sound, and then west across the bay to High Island Harbor, an anchorage that is part of the archipelago of the Muscle Ridge. The course to Carver Harbor took us past Hurricane Island, the principal base for Outward Bound in Maine. There were several pulling boats moored there. These are the main instructional boats used for sea-based sailing courses. They are 30-foot ketch rigged, double-ended boats, that can be rowed with three or four pairs of sweeps. Typically, they are crewed by 6 or 8 students and one or two instructors. They have a port-a-potty head forward of the main mast, and everyone sleeps under

a boom tent on a bed made of ensolite pads on top of the sweeps arranged across the thwart. As I reviewed this, I appreciated what a comfortable bed a Camprest pad on Blue Mist's deck made.

We passed the Heron's Neck Light house and sailed into Carvers harbor. The harbor is filled with nearly all lobster or fishing boats. Unlike Tenant's Harbor, this is not a pleasure craft location. We made our way to the town dock, tied up, gathered our trash for disposal and walked up the ramp from the floating dock to see what was still open post-Labor Day. We found quite a bustle, at least to our eyes and ears. We had lunch-Dick had seafood chowder with cornbread and a 'slab' of butter, I seafood chowder and a crabmeat sandwich. All was very good. After washing up in the restroom (hot water for a face wash was much appreciated) Dick set off for the fire station to fill the water carrier, while I wandered around and tried to avoid buying too many food treats. I did pick up a couple of the chunks of cornbread with their butter slabs from the restaurant, figuring it would be great with a planned lobster dinner, or with a Spanish rice dish I had planned. There were ample other temptations, such as pastries, baguettes, and so on, but I resisted the urge to add unneeded food. We rendezvoused, stowed the water and gear, got the boat ship shape and headed out of the harbor.



The weather had continued to improve while we were at Carvers Harbor, so we had nice sunshine and light to medium winds, mostly at our backs for the sail north west

through the reach and then up Hurricane Sound. It is a pretty stretch with smaller islands to the west and the shore of Vinalhaven to the east. It was a clear day so that Camden Hills were visible in the distance as we made our way out into Penobscot Bay and headed across to High Island. The sail across was uneventful. Late in the afternoon, about a mile out from our destination we were reminded of Hurricane Island when we saw two pulling boats just starting across the Bay—sailing and rowing—and probably headed to the Outward Bound headquarters we had seen earlier in the day.