



## Garden Peninsula

Garden Peninsula is the most approachable “out of sight of land” CPC route, and it can still challenge you in all the right ways. The passage begins with a Traverse City departure and a clear go/no-go decision based on weather, visibility, and crew readiness. As we run out of Grand Traverse Bay, crew members complete the first watch-change rotation and settle into night-running procedures before darkness fully takes over. When the sweeping beam of the Grand Traverse Light drops astern, we commit to Lake Michigan, plot a course toward Fayette, and work within the edges of the Manitou Passage shipping lanes—building real situational awareness for upbound commercial traffic and disciplined use of AIS, radar, and VHF protocols.

The overnight crossing is purposeful, not dramatic: steady navigation, speed management, and crew coordination. Landfall typically comes after a 5–6 hour run, giving crew members a full cycle of passage making in a single leg planning, watch standing, fatigue management, and a clean arrival at first light. You may even pass the storied “Poverty Island” that local folklore claims hundreds of millions of dollars in gold was lost in a shipwreck near the island. Once secured at historic Fayette State Park, the training shifts to harbor operations, debrief what was seen, what was missed, and what could be tightened up the next day with leg planning. The day is yours to explore the parks great historical buildings.

From Fayette we continue through protected water legs with memorable ports that keep the days achievable while still reinforcing skipper-level fundamentals. The route works down to Cedar River, continues to Sturgeon Bay for a Door County stopover, then finishes with a crossing back to Leland before returning to Traverse City. It’s an ideal itinerary for sharpening passage planning, weather strategy, fuel-and-distance management, and arrival/departure discipline, especially for anyone ready to make their first open-water passage with structure, coaching, and a real watch rotation.