



Sault Locks Passage

Sault Locks Passage is our longest multi-day CPC training run—a true Great Lakes “mini-expedition” that blends open water legs, river navigation, and a full Soo lock transit into one purposeful itinerary. We depart Traverse City with a full passage brief (weather window, routing, alternates, fuel-and-distance planning, watch roles, and communications standards) before committing to a long first run to Detour that immediately sets the tone for disciplined watch rotations and clean navigation. From Detour, we head north on the St. Mary’s River toward Sault Ste. Marie, where students learn to manage a busy, professional waterway—current, traffic, narrow channels, and bridge-to-bridge-style situational awareness—while staying ahead of the boat with sound speed and spacing decisions.

The lock transit on the Canadian side is a major training event: line and fender setup, assigned roles, calm communications, and controlled boat handling in close quarters. Once through the Soo, we turn back downriver to Drummond Island, then work west to St. Ignace at the Straits, adding more complex approaches, traffic management around Mackinac Island area forcing real-time decision making as conditions evolve. From there we continue to Beaver Island for another open-water crossing before making the final push south back to Traverse City—bringing together everything practiced along the way. Weather window choices, route efficiency, fatigue-aware watch rotations, and repeatable arrival/departure routines.

Throughout the passage, crew members rotate through skipper level responsibilities—briefing the plan, running the watch, leading docking and line handling, managing navigation and communications, and debriefing outcomes—so the learning experience is continuous and realistic. By the end, crew members leave with more than just hours and miles. They gain a working system for multi-day passage-making on the Great Lakes and beyond, built on preparation, sound judgment, and confident execution in changing conditions.