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Marine Generator

Case History

Where:

Around the eastern U.S.

What:

7.5 kW MDKBJ marine diesel generator.

Primary choice factors:

- Long-term relationship with Cummins Onan
- Reliability
- Low noise and vibration



Beneteau Swift Trawler completes the Great Loop, promotes cruising lifestyle, with help from Cummins Onan

The Greatest Loop on the Great Loop

The Great Loop is a popular route for recreational boaters seeking an interesting challenge. It circumnavigates eastern North America, running north up the Atlantic coast to the Hudson River, the Erie Canal and sometimes Canada's Rideau and Trent Canals. Then it turns west to the Great Lakes and Chicago. The next leg goes south by way of the Illinois, Mississippi and Tombigbee Rivers to the Gulf of Mexico. The last part heads around or through Florida and back to the Atlantic. Most people travel the Great Loop in this counterclockwise direction, to take advantage of river currents.

An ideal craft for the Great Loop

Not every boat can make the loop. The boat's draft cannot exceed 5 feet, and its height cannot be more than 19 feet, the amount of clearance needed for a low bridge in Chicago under which the boats making the loop must pass. The most popular kind of boat for this voyage is a recreational trawler.

In 2011 Beneteau America's Powerboats division launched the new recreational Swift Trawlers for the North American market. The Swift Trawlers were designed as performance-based cruising boats with exceptional fuel efficiency, stability and maneuverability. One model in this new line is the Swift Trawler 34.

Beneteau recognized that the Swift Trawler 34 would meet the demanding requirements of the Great Loop, in part because the boat draws only 3'7," and her "air draft" or height above the water line is just 11'11" with the mast down. Given the passionate enthusiasm for the route among cruising enthusiasts in the U.S. and Canada, the company decided that a Great Loop trip would be a noble test of the Swift Trawler 34's performance and comfort. So plans were put into action for a Swift Trawler 34 — aptly named The Greatest Loop — to make the journey.

Manufacturing in France, installation review and outfitting in Annapolis

The Greatest Loop was built at the Beneteau factory in Challans, France, and equipped with a 425 HP Cummins Marine QSB5.9 engine, the standard power plant for the boat. In addition, she had a 7.5 kW Cummins Onan MDKBJ marine generator with sound shield installed. The MDKBJ model has the highest power density of any housed generator set in the Cummins Onan marine product line.



The MDKBJ unit installed in the lazarette of The Greatest Loop. Plenty of room for service access.

Like Cummins Marine, Cummins Onan was a partner on The Greatest Loop's voyage. Cummins Onan is the generator provider of choice for Beneteau boats of this size range, and although they are an optional feature, generators are installed in 90% of Beneteau boats. Because The Greatest Loop's generator was destined for use in North America, it was converted to run at 60 Hz.

When the boat arrived at Annapolis Yacht Sales in Maryland, the generator was given a thorough installation review by Noah Cotton, a Product Manager with Cummins Power Generation. He replaced the water pump impeller and checked out items like seacock access and the siphon break. He also stowed a cruise kit with commonly used maintenance parts in the lazarette. This storage compartment had ample room, thanks to the MDKBJ's compact size.



Seacock Access. The seacock and local generator controls are easily accessible.



Cruise Kit. The boat was prepared for her long journey with a handy cruise kit, which contained common maintenance parts for the generator.

In addition, the boat was outfitted by Annapolis Yacht Sales and VesselVanguard with equipment from several other partners, including Dometic Marine, Navionics, Raymarine, Weems & Plath and Zodiac.

Finally, the lower portion of the hull received three coats of anti-fouling Interlux paint, and the boat was given an eye-catching blue graphic wrap.

Many hands

From its initial planning, the voyage of The Greatest Loop was conceived as a cooperative endeavor. Writers and editors from several boating publications and representatives of Beneteau dealers took turns as captain and crew. Maryline O'Shea, Marketing Director for Powerboats at Beneteau America, set up a website (<http://www.thegreatestloop.com/>) and Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/TheGreatestLoopByBeneteau>) devoted to the trip. Crew members blogged daily about their progress. The America's Great Loop Cruisers' Association (AGLCA) also signed on as a partner and informed its 2,400 members about the trip.



At the Chicago Yacht Club, Heramb Nigudkar of Cummins Power Generation greets Peter Janssen, Cruising Editor of Power & Motoryacht magazine, and one of the captains on the voyage.

More than a dozen receptions, demonstrations and other scheduled events were held along the route, as well as many informal tours. Thousands of people used the Internet to follow the voyage, which covered some 5,300 miles in 12 legs, from May to September 2012.

The role of the generator

All along the route, the Cummins Onan generator performed flawlessly. It powered the air conditioning (AC) and the battery charger, which in turn ran the refrigerator, water heater and other appliances. The generator-powered AC was essential to comfort on hot summer nights when shore power was not available. As Patrick Hopkins of Annapolis Yacht Sales, the technical advisor on the Greatest Loop's voyage, pointed out, "Having a reliable generator like the MDKBJ gives boaters the freedom to anchor wherever they want, without the need to find a marina."



The planned route of The Greatest Loop. The actual route was slightly different.

The Beneteau Swift Trawler is known as a quiet boat, said Maryline O'Shea, and the Cummins Onan generator did its part to contribute to that reputation.

The generator was checked daily and received a thorough service in Charleston, South Carolina, thanks to Kirby Barnett, the Service Supervisor for Cummins there. The routine service included the following items:

- Drain water from the fuel filter
- Change the oil and oil filter
- Check the V-belt tension
- Inspect the battery and its connections

At the time of the service, the generator had clocked 496 hours of operation.



Photo credit: Priscilla Parker

A success all around

The voyage of The Greatest Loop was a rousing success. Thousands of boaters interested in extended cruising followed the trip and learned a great deal about the qualities that make a Beneteau Swift Trawler an ideal craft for this lifestyle. The editors who took turns at the helm chronicled their portions of the voyage, covering the high points as well as the challenges — from storms to delays at locks to hitting a submerged log and bending the prop. (Fortunately, thanks to thorough planning and preparation, a spare prop was among the equipment stowed before the boat weighed anchor.)

One of the captains, John Wooldridge, Editor-in-Chief of *PassageMaker Magazine*, commented, “For us, the boat ran perfectly. It was just magnificent. The Swift 34 was light, yet strong with a very efficient diesel engine. We felt really safe with her. Her fuel burn was right where we expected it to be, and it made our planning around fueling stops very predictable — and actually our fuel consumption ended up less than theoretical figures.” This superior fuel efficiency was also gratifying to Beneteau America.

The Greatest Loop, tested and proven during her 5,300-mile voyage, was put on the market at Annapolis Yacht Sales and was purchased even before the end of the voyage. There is still most of the five-year, 2,000-hour warranty remaining on the generator. Perhaps the lucky new owner will get to replicate this great adventure of the Great Loop.

“Having a reliable generator like the MDKBJ gives boaters the freedom to anchor wherever they want, without the need to find a marina.”

— Patrick Hopkins, Annapolis Yacht Sales,
Technical Advisor on the Greatest Loop’s voyage

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