

Duluth Harbor Trip 2016

By Deb Strike

This trip is full of possibilities. Now I know why some participants sign up for this trip every year. This year the weather was lovely with lots of color surrounding the harbor and St Louis river. I must admit that as many times as I have driven across the bridges to Wisconsin I never thought "Oh I need to paddle there". Now the harbor and the St Louis River area will never look the same to me. It is a mix of urban and wild that is unexpected and really takes more than 2 days to explore. Now I will see the harbor as "I wish I was paddling there".



Saturday we launched under the Blatnik bridge and headed out under the Bong bridge and the swing bridge seeing only a few small boats in the channel. (This is also a good place to see and learn to use navigation aids.) We paddled by the Arrowhead Fishing Pier and Billings Park access on our way to Clough Island. Once upon a time there was a working farm on the island. The island is now home to 115 species of birds which increases to 230 during migration. Lunch was at Clyde Avenue Boat launch. We had some wind to contend with to get there, but when we returned it was pushing us along. A little chop is fun. The total distance was a little over 12.5 nautical miles.



Sunday the winds were to pick up out on the big lake so we chose to paddle the Pokegama Bay and River just north of Clough Island. Trying to pronounce it correctly was the hardest part. This area is valued by the Chippewa tribe in the area and they are trying to once again establish wild rice beds here. It has been described as a "little piece of heaven" by the tribe. And it is. It was a beautiful day in a beautiful place and we mostly had it to ourselves. We saw 1 boat and 1 hunter. The trip was about 11 nautical miles. It was hard to leave and go back home.



The only thing that would make this trip better is to have several groups participate. There was a waiting list this year. With so many places to explore at any level of paddling, it would be better to offer the opportunity to more participants.

Glad I went.