

Gota Canal & Trollhatten Canal

Notes extracted from a report on a cruise to the Baltic & southern Norway summer 2006 in moonlight of down by John & Pat Driscoll

These comments are to supplement the advice given in the 'Baltic Sea Pilot' page 78, CA 'Cruising in Sweden', page 24 and the 'Gota Canal 2006' (etc. - the annual brochure), pages 24/25.

1. Gota Canal. 102nm. 58 locks.

6.2.1.1. The granite block and in some cases the bare rock sides of the locks are not all fair, particularly low down in some of the chambers. An untimely cross wind gust or a moment's inattention can cause cosmetic damage to the topsides.

1.2. The use of fender boards is debatable. The upside is that they would help to prevent cosmetic damage to topsides. The downside is that if they catch in a lock gate or gate recess, they could result in structural damage to the securing points.

1.3. Whilst the Gota Canal staff were all pleasant and friendly, all the lockkeepers were students doing a holiday job. In general their boat handling and line handling knowledge and ability was extremely limited. There were a small proportion that seemed to be more interested in their book, or mobile phone, than the job.

1.4. Although generally willingly provided, one cannot rely on the lock keepers for assistance. They are reluctant, for operation reasons, to leave the control side of the lock which can vary. Therefore it is recommended that the canal authority advice that a minimum of three people are necessary for the transit is followed. This enables the vessel to have one person ashore to line handle and control.

Some small vessels, where one person on board can handle both lines simultaneously and control the boat, are handled by two people.

For our 42'/12 ton vessel, centre cockpit with the control position inside the dog house, the realistic requirement is for four people, one ashore, a line handler at each end aboard and one to control. We were fortunate in being able to use an extra person from another OCC yacht during most of our transit. When there were just two of us we had problems thereby causing problems for other yachts. We would not transit the canal again with just the two of us.

1.6. The Gota Canal guest harbours generally consist of strut boxes suitable for vessels up to about 32' and 10' beam. We did not fit. There are generally some alongside staging berths, but these are often occupied by well spaced out small motor boats which would easily fit into the boxes. However we either found a place to anchor in one of the lakes or found a place at a lock/bridge waiting stage ready for a 0900 departure the following day.

2. Trollhatten Canal.

43nm. 6 locks.

2.1. In some chambers the NW wall is not lined or fitted with recessed bollards. If possible use the SE side, the side of the control buildings.

2.2. The whole system of locks and bridges is comprehensively TV monitored and controlled from the three lock control rooms.

2.3. The turbulence in the lock on ascent and descent is negligible. In fact one OCC yacht, that came through with only one other in the lock, was advised by the lock keeper that the locks are so large that it was not necessary to make fast but just to position with the engine and a push with the boat hook if required. This resulted in a quick and effortless transit. Small commercial craft transiting were observed to use just one line from the knuckle of the bow and lie across the lock at an angle.

2.4. The advice to use long lines on descent is not recommended. If you are packed in a lock, the angles become wrong as with long extensions you cannot control any shear that might develop. Moving the warps down the recessed bollards or ladder rungs is in fact easier. Having a bow line to a recessed bollard and hanging onto a ladder with a boat hook aft was observed to be a very easy and effective method.

3. General.

3.1 We transitted the system during the last week in July when there is very heavy traffic returning to the E coast of Sweden at the end of the holiday season. This caused severe pressure on the locks that resulted in a 5 hour wait at the bottom of the Borensult Flight (Gota Canal). The following boats did not get up until the next day

3.2. When we got to the top of the Trollhatten Flight (1+3) there had been a 5 hour delay for yachts waiting to descend, due to the phasing of large commercial traffic. This resulted in a 15 boat scrum in the lock for descent. This was compounded when, unbeknown to us, they locked 8 boats up at the same time, a sort of yacht 'dodge'em car' scenario.

3.3. Notwithstanding the events described in Para 6.3.3.2 we found that the Trollhatten Canal a lot more scenic and interesting than intimated in the pilot books.

We regret we did not have the time available to cruise in Lake Vanern.