

To Hell and Back (Sunbury Crab Company)

By Bob Newbert
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We went through hell to get there, but it was worth the trip. Sunbury Crab Company is a delight.

But first, the hell part.

Our route took us into Ossabaw Sound where we passed through “Hell Gate,” a narrow, shallow, passage where boats can easily run aground. It is a treacherous stretch with a name that reflects the difficulty of navigating it.

One cruising guide describes Hell Gate as *“very shallow water with tight channel geometry and strong tidal cross currents that push your boat sideways out of the channel onto the shoals.”* Whoa!

Good News: We made it. Both ways, too. Down & Back.

From Hell Gate, we entered what’s known as the “Florida Passage” (less intimidating name) to make our way to the Medway River and Sunbury Crab. Pausing on our Florida route, we took in Ossabaw Island, destination for my Adventure Cruises in 2020 and 2022.

Ossabaw is absolutely fascinating as these highlights from past visits remind us:

- Uninhabited island 2x size of Bermuda
- Once home to a 103 year-old woman, who, as sole resident of the island, lived alone in a 20,000 sq. ft, pink, stucco mansion with a glass walled room for her monkeys.
- National Register of Historic Places and GA State Heritage Preserve.
- Strictly OFF LIMITS. We needed permission from the State of Georgia to land on the island. Every ABCHH member had to undergo a Background Check (submitting DOB and SSN) and sign a Liability Waiver.

- Home to feral Sicilian Donkeys and one-of-a-kind pigs, originally brought to the island by Spanish explorers in the 1400's, that have evolved into an entirely new species due to their isolation on a barrier island requiring adaptation to survive. It's the Ossabaw Hog, studied by science for its low-grade, non-insulin dependent diabetes.

After Ossabaw, we entered St Catherines Sound with its eponymous St Catherines Island, another uninhabited island that is home to the world's only population of wild Ring-Tailed Lemurs outside of their native Madagascar. It's not a lonely outpost, though. The Lemurs on St Catherines Island are joined by Kudo, Sable, Hartebeasts, Dama Gazelle, Gemsbok, Scimitar-Horned Oryx and other exotics.

Who knew?



WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE – Ossabaw Island and St Catherines Island

Enough of these rare animals on uninhabited islands. We came for seafood so let's get to it.

Sunbury Crab Company is family owned & operated. They harvest crab the "morning of" every day and keep only the biggest and meatiest crabs for the table. Local fish, shrimp and oysters are also landed at the dock. It doesn't get any fresher than that.

The restaurant exudes atmosphere. It was hand-built by the owners – the Maley family. The same people who harvest crab, greet you, and cook your meal constructed the building using 160 year-old lumber salvaged from old barns. "There's not a staple to be found anywhere," the family matriarch claims. "We drilled holes and screwed each piece of antique heart pine together. We even built the tables."

With this attention to detail, and fresh seafood right off the boat, it's no wonder Sunbury Crab is a GO TO destination for mariners up and down the coast. And, like us, they go through hell to get here.



WELCOME to SUNBURY CRAB CO.



HAND CRAFTED RESTAURANT built by the chef and his family.



SUNBURY SCENES



KLAUS LOEHR “puts the hammer down” for a Photo Op with John Bowen and Stefan Gantenbein (right).



SUNBURY’S CHEF PREPARED FOOD and THE TABLE (he made it) for (L to R): James Dickie, Julie Traylor, Beth Dickie, John Fitzgerald and Ann Fitzgerald.



HAPPY TO GET THRU HELL ALIVE are (L to R): Jeff Vanino, Russ Collins, Andrew MacDonald, Marilyn Sobwick, Kevin Thieneman, Lorraine Berry, Ed Berry and Lori Vanino.



NOEL WENDT (far right) anchors a table of ABCHH guests and Hell Gate veterans.



CLASS PHOTO



TAKING A KNEE before heading home and challenging Hell Gate a 2nd time.