

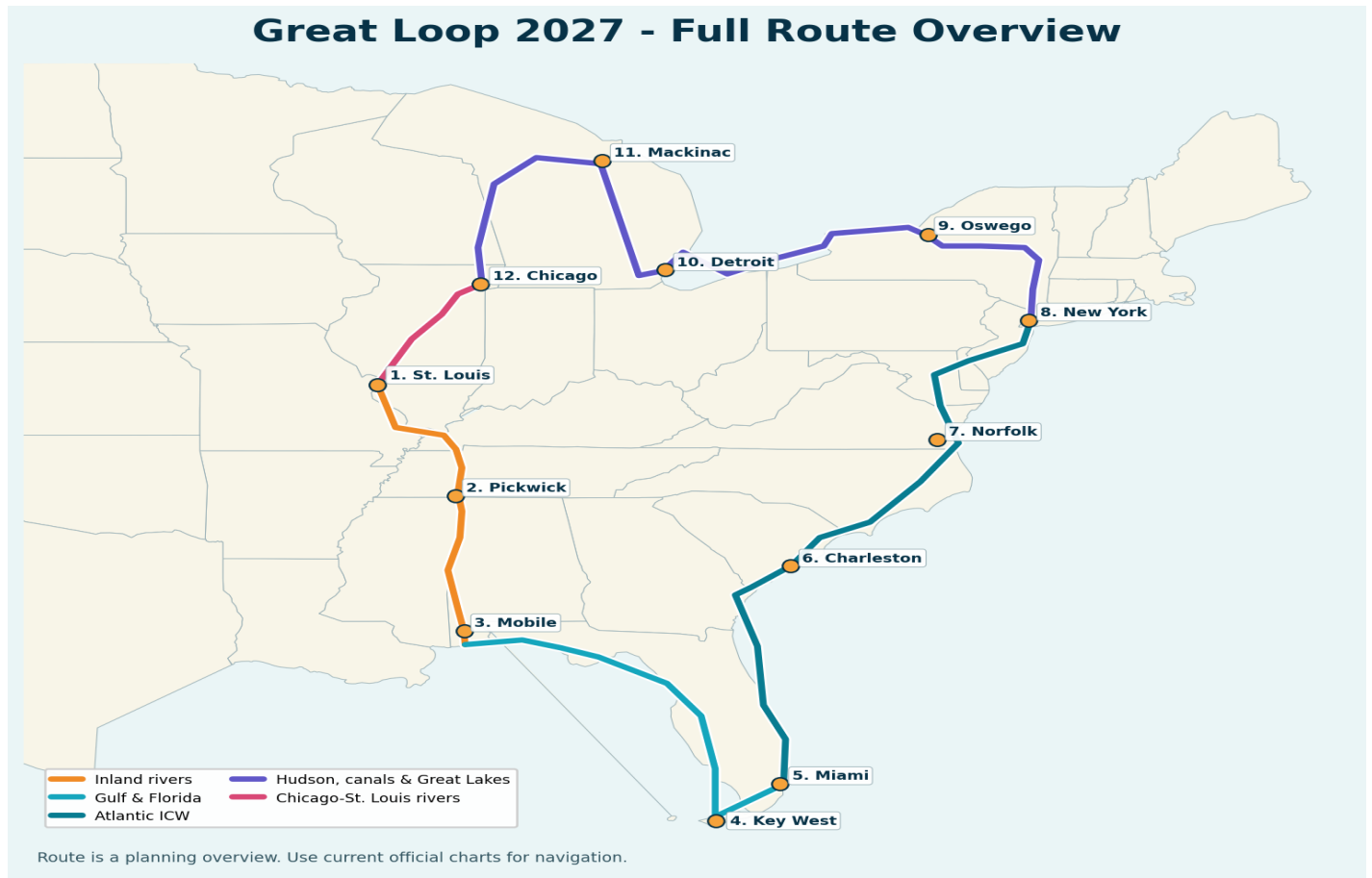
GREAT LOOP MASTER PLAN

2027 voyage aboard the Yukon Delta Nomad

St. Louis south via the Tenn-Tom, Gulf Coast, East Coast, Great Lakes and inland rivers

2027 WORKING MASTER PLAN - NOT A NAVIGATION CHART

Full Great Loop route overview



The colored route sections show the planned waterways: inland rivers south, Gulf and Florida, Atlantic ICW, Hudson/canals/Great Lakes, and the Chicago-to-St. Louis return. Numbered points are major planning hubs, not every overnight stop.

How to use this guide

This is a practical planning workbook for the 2027 Great Loop. It is built for two adults, Remi the Belgian Malinois, Ruger the Doberman, and the 25-foot Yukon Delta Nomad. It supports route selection, daily decisions, fuel planning, provisioning, marina/anchorage balance, dog logistics, and contingency planning.

Important: This guide is not a substitute for current charts, Coast Guard Notices to Mariners, USACE lock information, NOAA weather, local knowledge, or the captain's judgment. Facilities, depths, fuel availability, bridge schedules, dredging conditions, and regulations can change before 2027. Call every critical fuel stop and overnight location shortly before arrival.

Core voyage assumptions

- Spring 2027 launch following the Missouri River shakedown.
- Normal days of 4-6 hours at 5-6 knots; weather and lock delays override schedule.
- 80 gallons total gasoline; refuel well before the 20% reserve.
- Two adults plus Remi and Ruger; pet-accessible stops are part of routing.
- Mixture of marinas, town docks and suitable anchorages, with regular maintenance days.

Daily operating rhythm

Before departure	Weather, river stage, notices, engine fluids, bilge, steering, fuel transfer/selector, dog exercise.
Departure	Brief route, hazards, bailout points and next confirmed fuel source.
Every hour	Position, fuel use, temperatures, charging, traffic, wind and remaining daylight.
Midday	Recalculate ETA and reserve; stop early if conditions or crew fatigue warrant.
Arrival	Secure, log fuel/hour-meter data, shore-power check, dog walk, inspect strainers and running gear.

Seasonal route strategy

Order	Season	Route	Notes
1	Spring	St. Louis to Ohio/Tennessee/Tenn-Tom	Allow for high water, debris and lock delays.
2	Late spring	Tenn-Tom to Mobile and Gulf Coast	Complete before peak summer heat; watch severe weather.
3	Early summer	Florida west coast and Keys / Okeechobee option	Choose offshore vs protected routes based on boat and weather.
4	Summer	Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway north	Heat management, bridge schedules, shoaling and tides.
5	Late summer	Chesapeake, Delaware, New Jersey and New York	Wait for favorable exposed-water windows.
6	Early fall	Hudson, Erie/Oswego, Great Lakes	Canal closures and seasonal deadlines govern pace.
7	Fall	Chicago rivers, Illinois, Mississippi to St. Louis	Bridge clearance, river levels and cold-weather margin.

Master route modules

Module	Notes
St. Louis to Kentucky Lakes	Stage around commercial traffic; use confirmed fuel and protected stops; allow lock delays.
Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway	Ten locks, long pools and rural fuel gaps; contact locks early and never assume same-day passage.
Mobile Bay and northern Gulf	Choose protected conditions; monitor squalls and tropical outlooks; identify hurricane refuge options.
Florida	Decide Gulf/Keys/Okeechobee route after checking draft, bridge clearance, lake conditions and seasonal closures.
Atlantic ICW	Plan daily around tides, inlets, shoaling alerts and bridge schedules; call ahead for gasoline and pet access.
Chesapeake to New York	Use conservative weather windows for Delaware Bay and New Jersey coast; keep alternate ports.
Hudson and canals	Verify 2027 canal opening dates, lock schedule, dimensions, draft and overhead clearance before committing.
Great Lakes	Treat each lake as open water; short weather windows, fog and rapid wind changes may create multi-day holds.
Chicago to St. Louis	Confirm air draft through Chicago route, river closures, locks, current and fuel availability.

Monthly planning framework

Month	Key locations	Key considerations
April	St. Louis / lower rivers	Shakedown completion, river stages, locks and debris.
May	Tenn-Tom / Mobile	Steady southbound progress with reserve days.
June	Gulf / Florida	Weather windows, heat and tropical readiness.
July	Southeast Atlantic ICW	Short early departures and cooling/rest days.
August	Chesapeake / mid-Atlantic	Maintenance week plus protected-water exploration.
September	New York / Hudson / canals	Canal schedule discipline and colder-weather preparation.
October	Great Lakes / Chicago	Weather holds expected; do not rush open-water crossings.
November	Illinois / Mississippi / St. Louis	Complete before freeze/cold risk becomes unacceptable.

Lock procedure

- Monitor the published lock frequency and contact the lock early with vessel name, direction and location.
- Prepare long bow and stern lines, fenders, gloves and a boat hook before entering the approach.
- Follow lockmaster instructions; recreational craft may wait behind commercial traffic for hours.
- Keep dogs secured inside or on short harness leads away from lines and machinery.
- Never tie a fixed line that cannot rise or fall with the chamber unless explicitly instructed and safely tended.

Fuel and range plan

Use the 80-gallon capacity as total capacity, not guaranteed usable fuel. Keep a minimum 20% reserve and begin looking for fuel before reaching it. At 2-3 gallons per hour and 5-6 knots, the planning range varies widely with current, wind, hull condition, loading and engine tune.

Conservative	3.0 gph	5.0 kn	64 gal	107 nm
Middle	2.5 gph	5.5 kn	64 gal	141 nm
Favorable	2.0 gph	6.0 kn	64 gal	192 nm

Fuel rules

- Confirm the next fuel source by telephone; do not rely only on an app listing.
- Record engine hours, gallons added and conditions after every fill. After three to five legs, replace planning estimates with the boat's measured consumption.
- Avoid routinely drawing tanks completely empty. Rotate tanks deliberately and keep a written selector-valve log.
- Carry absorbent pads, spare filters, approved clamps and tools; never carry loose gasoline containers inside the cabin.

Crew and dog plan

Remi and Ruger make short, predictable cruising days especially valuable. Favor stops with safe shore access and avoid committing to long exposed legs without a realistic landing option.

Exercise	Long walk before departure; shore break at arrival; choose a midday landing when practical.
Heat	Shade, ventilation, nonslip cool surface and abundant drinking water. Never leave dogs unattended in a closed cabin.
Boarding	Harnesses with handles, fixed boarding routine, nonslip ramp or steps and one handler assigned per dog.
Identification	Current tags, microchip registration, recent photos, vaccination records and veterinarian contact list.
Emergency	Canine first-aid kit, medications, muzzle appropriate for emergency handling, nearest emergency-vet lookup before remote legs.

Safety, communications and contingencies

File a float plan with a shore contact and update it when the itinerary changes. Monitor VHF 16 and the working channel used locally. Use AIS as an aid, never as a substitute for a visual watch.

Fast current / debris	Rising river, recent storms, reports from tow traffic	Delay; use protected marina; avoid night travel; maintain maneuvering speed.
Grounding	Shoaling reports, water-color change, cross-track error	Idle immediately, assess hull/drive, back off only if safe, call for assistance if uncertain.
Engine overheating	Temperature trend, reduced raw-water flow	Reduce load, shut down if temperature continues rising, anchor only if safe, inspect intake/strainer/impeller.
Thunderstorm / high wind	Radar or alert, building gusts	Seek secure harbor early; remove loose gear; avoid exposed anchoring.
Crew or dog medical issue	Symptoms or heat stress	Identify nearest road-access marina/ramp; call 911 for emergency; keep vet and medication records accessible.

Required pre-departure checks

- USCG-required safety equipment, properly sized PFDs, dog flotation and recovery method.
- Primary and backup navigation devices, paper overview charts, charging cables and offline chart coverage.
- Two anchors appropriate for bottom and conditions, adequate rode, chafe protection and windlass/manual recovery plan.
- Spare belts, impeller, filters, fluids, fuses, relays, hose, clamps, plugs, basic fasteners and repair materials.

Budget and resupply workbook

Frequency	Task
Every travel day	Log engine hours, gallons, dockage/anchorage, weather, maintenance and next confirmed fuel.
Every 3-4 days	Groceries, laundry, water, trash, dog food check and medication count.
Every 25 engine hours	Engine/outdrive visual inspection; belts, hoses, fluids, leaks and fasteners.
Weekly	Full systems test, battery terminals, bilge pumps, alarms, fire extinguishers, anchor gear and route review.
Before exposed water	Top off fuel/water, secure cabin, verify communications, inspect weather window and identify bailout ports.

Go / no-go gate for every leg

- Weather and visibility acceptable for the most exposed portion of the leg.
- Fuel reserve remains intact if the destination becomes unavailable.
- At least one safe alternate or retreat option is identified.
- Crew is rested; dogs can complete the leg safely; arrival is before darkness.
- Known lock, bridge, closure, depth and traffic constraints have been checked that day.

Official planning sources

- US Coast Guard Local Notices to Mariners and Navigation Center.
- US Army Corps of Engineers lock, closure, river and district information.
- NOAA marine forecasts, river forecasts, tropical outlooks and tide/current predictions.
- Official New York State Canal Corporation schedules and notices for the chosen canal route.
- Current charts, Waterway Guide/ActiveCaptain-style community reports cross-checked with official/local information.