

Latitude 38

PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP RECAP

— LIFE IN THE SLOW LANE

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PUDDLE JUMP RECAP

The year 2009 was, in all ways, a record year for the Pacific Puddle Jump. More boats registered in '09 than ever before, more pre-crossing seminars were held, there were generally better weather conditions. . . All in all, it was an outstanding year.

One hundred boats registered on the Puddle Jump's informational site at Yahoo.com, and nearly that many registered on *Latitude 38's* annual fleet list. Most left from ports in Mexico, a sizeable number from Central and South America, and several directly from the U.S.

Much of the increase in numbers is probably attributable to the much-talked-about

'bond exemptions', arranged through the efforts of *Latitude 38* and the Tahiti YC. It was the first time Pacific Puddle Jump boats were allowed to enter French Polynesia without having to post the normal bond (equivalent to the price of a flight home) that's required for all non-EU citizens. Check-ins for exempted boats were very quick and efficient. Hopefully bond exemptions will become a regular feature of future Puddle Jumps.

As reported last month, the three-day Tahiti-Moorea Sailing Rendezvous was a huge success, with 60 boats attending the cultural exchanges, beach games and parties.

Sadly, the '09 South Pacific cruising season was marred by several disasters. Two former Puddle Jump boats sank while making passages: The Ventura-based *J/44 Elusive* went down during a crossing from New Zealand to Fiji, and the Santa Rosa-based *Trintella 53 Sumatra* sank en route from New Caledonia to Australia. Fortunately, both crews were rescued. The greatest tragedy concerned the '09 Puddle Jump boat, *Emily Pearl*. She was found holed and sunk off the southwest coast of Nuku Hiva less than a week after making landfall at Taiohae Bay. Singlehander Billy Landers was never found and is presumed dead — the first fatality in

Puddle Jump history. His tragic loss was deeply felt by all in the fleet.

Weather comparisons tend to dominate discussions between South Pacific cruisers. This year the luckier members of the fleet had great conditions: steady winds and few squalls in the Inter-Tropic Convergence Zone (ITCZ). The

ITCZ is a band of unsettled air just north of the equator. Squalls and heavy rain — sometimes of biblical magnitude — can be found there. When crossing it, timing is everything. Even

a week's time can mean significant differences in weather patterns.

For example, the first boats out of La Cruz, Mexico had great conditions and fast passages. Boats in other groups found calmer conditions and had longer passages. Only a few boats encountered severe ITCZ squalls approaching 40-knot winds. Happily, these squalls were fast moving, and even very 'entertaining winds' passed quickly.

First-time passage-makers are usually overly concerned about the ITCZ, and spend a lot of energy worrying about where to cross it. The best advice is to just go toward the equator and when the ITCZ is encountered turn directly south and get through it quickly.

Boats crossed the equator between 127°W and 133°W, a span of 360 nm. Another important point to clarify is that you will encounter the ITCZ only once. On the other side of the equator is the SPCZ (Southern Pacific Convergence Zone) that snakes throughout the South Pacific and will typically be encountered time and time again by cruisers.

Calm conditions were a common complaint this year. As the *Follow You Follow Me* crew reported, "We had light winds and not enough squalls! Given our watermaker failure, we were looking forward

to strong trades to move us along, and squalls to fill our water tanks. It seems that boats that left two weeks before us

"The long passage was rewarded manifold by the amazing beauty of this place."



For many Puddle Jumpers a traditional Polynesian tattoo makes a perfect souvenir.

CARINTHA



and two weeks after got more of both!"

Once the fleet arrived in French Polynesia, I asked them to share insights and impressions. The following are excerpts from those reports. Take a look also at the Passage Data table on page 110. You may find the comparisons both fascinating and educational, as I do.

— Bob Bechler

Crossing Notes from the Fleet

"We hooked a marlin bigger than our crew! Thankfully it broke the leader.

"All in all we had fabulous weather and good winds. We had far more wonderful days of sailing than challenging ones. Adored the gorgeous display of stars, phosphorescence and at least one amazing green flash. After such a long passage, the normal thrill of arrival is intensified. The long passage was rewarded manifold by the amazing beauty of this place.

— Philip DiNuovo & Leslie Linkkila
Carina, Mason 33

"We were pretty well set up for the crossing. In her *Cruising Handbook*, Beth Leonard does a good job outlining this subject. We ate well. Fresh food for 2/3 of the passage! Bad times were when we were in the squalls and in the boisterous NE trades for more than a week. Great times when we were out in the cockpit

— LIFE IN THE SLOW LANE



Inset: At the equator Pollywog Lori shares a toast with King (Chris) Neptune. Spread: Flat water is the norm in the ITCZ.

and we were zooming south! What a trip. What an experience!"

— *David, Jill & Rachel Heimke*
Amikuk, Crealock 37

"We should have brought vegetable and fruit tree seeds to trade for produce and supplies in the Marquesas and Tuamotus. Also should have brought more chocolate, raw nuts, canned fruits and veggies for us. Cigarettes, liquor, and .22 caliber bullets are popular for trading, but we're too timid for smuggling.

— *Larissa & Hobson Lane*
Australis, Antigua 44

Puddle Jump Resources

- A non-commercial informational website is maintained for Puddle Jumpers at www.yahoo.com (>groups>pacificpuddlejump). Of particular note is the 500-page Crossing Guide, a great resource for anyone preparing for a Pacific circuit.

- The homepage for Latitude 38's annual Pacific Puddle Jump rally to French Polynesia is at www.pacificpuddlejump.com. There you'll find articles and photos in downloadable archives, plus fleet lists and updates on the current year's migration — including bond exemption updates.

"The first third of the trip was slow until we got to the trade winds. Next third was quick in the trades — we were doing 150 mile days, with 12 to 15 knots SE winds day and night. We had the genicker up for 10 days and nights on the same tack. Last third of the trip was medium speed.

"It was great to have the bond exemption arranged for us. Our check-in took three minutes! One (non-Puddle Jump) yacht took four days to check in while trying to get his bond money from U.S. He tried using his credit cards, but his bank immediately froze his accounts.

Fatu Hiva was magic — it's said to be the most beautiful anchorage in the world. There's a great waterfall walk and good trading with the locals. We traded a 6-pack for a one-legged goat!"

— *Peter & Nikki Zabel*
Bagheera, Jaguar
36 cat

"The mainsail track on our in-boom furling system broke off (top 6 feet). Sailed with a reefed main most of the way. Even with that our best day was 231 miles and the worst was 139. Sea life spotted: whales, mola mola (sunfish), baby whale shark, dolphins, flying fish and squid. We were all out in the cockpit when we heard a thump, then saw a fairly large fin off the right rear corner of the boat. Mike recognized it as a Mola Mola. They are slow movers and often asleep. Neither the starboard daggerboard (which lifted a few feet) nor the Mola Mola seemed worse for wear.

— *Scott & Cindy Stolnitz, Mike Lonnes*
Beach House, Switch 51 cat

"Two 30-lb tuna caught and a few escapees. We tried a lot of lures, had a line out every day and only caught these two the whole time. Prepare for light winds!"

— *Patrick & Rebecca Childress*
Brick House, Valliant 40

"We had consistent heavy wind and seas in the NE trades after the first two days out. Wind south of the equator was generally too light for the sea conditions. Hard on the sails. Entire trip was very roly. Often had seas that did not reflect the current wind conditions which was rather frustrating. Lots of squalls starting at about 7° N. As with any long crossing there are good days and bad days. With only two aboard, it can get a little lonely on alternate watches."

— *Wayne Wilson & Susan Leader*
Daydream, Metalu 50

"We could take daily showers for three
Some passage-makers saw dolphin, others saw whales, but it seems that everyone got their fill of flying fish.



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people from the water we caught!

— Jackie & Neil Michell & Stan Starkey
Camelot, *Pan Oceanic 46*

"Only saw three commercial vessels on the radar in 20 days, but more than 24 squalls! None generated more than 25 knots of wind, though. We saw a floating marine BBQ (rusting) 1,000 miles out, followed by a blue jerry can.

— Dietmar Petutschnig, Kurt Roll,
Suzanne DuBose, Carolyn Sherman
Carinthia, *Lagoon 440 cat*

"On day two of the crossing our autopilot failed, so we hand steered for the next 22 days! The trip, other than tiring, was really quite nice. The various sunrises, and sunsets, the squalls dropping rain and wind, the various cloud patterns never let us get bored.

— Mike & Mary McCluskey
Carpe Vita, *Shuttleworth 43 cat*

"Our watermaker went out on day six, forcing us to expedite our passage via motoring, as we only had 75 gallons

of water when it broke. We hit a flat spot about 75% of the way across, and our blog comments reflected it. Several people emailed us back, reminding us

"We adored the gorgeous display of stars, phosphorescence and at least one amazing green flash."

that we were doing something very special that very few people will ever do and to stop feeling sorry for ourselves!

— Allan, Rina & Alyssa Alexopoulos
Follow You Follow Me, *Hunter 466*

"It just took us four days to get the trade winds. We were really happy about that and had a fast crossing. We only had one or two days with rain and just a little squall activity. One single bottlenose dolphin guided us to Baie Hanavave.

— Axel Brill & Brit Gebhardt
Hello World, *Sunbeam 53*,

"The squalls were very anticlimactic. Mainly they were mild and the wind actually died when the rain passed through. But we had constant 20- to 30-knots winds for 80% of the passage. We did get into the groove and were in harmony with the wind and waves as the days passed by. It's a long way out there, but the rewards of landfall are beyond imagination."

— Roger, Bobbie Jo & Robin Curley
Hipnautical, *Morgan O/I 51*

"Received an email two days from Hiva Oa saying that S/V *Inherit The Wind* was having difficulty. Turned around and, with the help of the Pacific Seafarers Net, vectored them, M/V *Tampa*, and us to a rendezvous point. *Tampa* transferred food and water, then we accompanied them for the next five days to Hiva Oa. The vessel *Ketchup II* met up with us at the end and towed the stricken vessel in to port.

— Joe Bayne & Dubis Blanco
Jubilee, *Corbin 39*

2009 PUDDLE JUMP PASSAGE DATA

Boat Name	Boat Make & Length	Captain & Crew	Boat's Homeport	Departed From / Date	Landfall & Date	Days Xing	Miles Xing	Eqtr X Long.	Engine Hours	Best 24 Hr	Worst 24 Hr	# Fish Cght	Breakage & Breakdowns
<i>Amikuk</i>	Pacific Seacraft 37	Heimke family, Terry Cady	Homer, Alaska	Puerto Vallarta 4/2	Nuku Hiva 4/27	25	2,900	131°		155	51	2	spinnaker clew, autopilot
<i>Australis</i>	44' ketch	Larissa & Hobson Lane	Pascagoula, MS	La Cruz 4/23	Nuku Hiva 5/18	24	2,000	131°	92	140	75	1	autopilot, jib ripped, watermaker
<i>Beach House</i>	Switch 51 cat	Scott & Cindy Stolnitz	Marina del Rey, CA	Galapagos 5/31	Hiva Oa 6/17	17	3,250	89°	70	231	139	n/a	mainsail track
<i>Brick House</i>	Valiant 40	Patrick & Rebecca Childress	Middletown, RI	Galapagos	Hiva Oa	25	2,850	90°	31	144	43	2	spinnaker ripped; DVD player
<i>Camelot</i>	Pan Oceanic 46	Jackie & Neil Michell	UK	Galapagos 2/25	Marquesas	22	3,061	n/a	70	170	89	n/a	whisker pole broke, sail ripped
<i>Carina</i>	Mason 33	Leslie Linkkila, Philip DiNuovo	Kingston, WA	Galapagos 4/8	Hiva Oa 5/6	28	3,127	88°	28	152	77	1	whisker pole mast fitting bent
<i>Carinthia</i>	Lagoon 440 cat	D, Petutschnig, S. DuBose, C Sherman, K Roll	Las Vegas, NV	La Cruz 3/12	Hiva-Oa 4/2	20	2,952	130°32'	36	198	117	n/a	autopilot, topping lift, nav wiring
<i>Carpe Vita</i>	Shuttleworth 44 cat	Mike & Mary McCluskey	UK	Galapagos 5/1	Hiva Oa 3/24	23	3,047	88°36'	50	164	86	0	autopilot, spinnaker, batten car
<i>Cooee Too</i>	Van de Stadt 50	Bronte Heinrich, Helmke Moller	UK	Galapagos 3/29	Hiva Oa 4/18	20	3,163	n/a	n/a	180	137	9	freezer compressor, sail tears
<i>Daydream</i>	Selesira 50	Wayne Wilson & Susan Leader	Ladysmith, Canada	Chamela Mexico 3/14	Hiva Oa 4/6	23	2,856	128°42'	47	159	91	0	foresail halyard, hydraulic steering
<i>Follow You Follow Me</i>	Hunter 466	Allan & Rina Alexopoulos	Volcano, CA	Banderas Bay 3/21	Hiva Oa 4/14	24	3,000	125°18'	171	145	60	1	watermaker, chartplotter, autopilot
<i>Hello World</i>	Sunbeam 53	Gebhardt's & Capt'n Bluebear	Flensburg, Germany	Panama 4/8	Fatu Hiva 4/26	18	3,117	89°	37	206	125	1	autopilot
<i>Hipnautical</i>	Morgan O/I 51	Curley family	Ventura, CA	La Cruz 3/10	Hiva Oa 4/2	21	3,000	128°	30	172	63	0	jib & reefing lines chafed
<i>Jubilee</i>	Corbin 39 ketch	Joe Bayne & Dubis Blanco	Norfolk, VA	Galapagos 4/21	Hiva Oa 5/19	28	2,776	n/a	12	164	57	1	fuel line problems
<i>Julia Max</i>	Passport 45	George & Sue Stonecliffe	Portland, OR	Puerto Vallarta 3/15	Hiva Oa 4/06	23	2,740	129°	120	156	75	0	alternator, mainsail batten pocket
<i>Kalalau</i>	43' sloop	George Hill, Kathleen Whitney	Port Townsend, WA	La Cruz 3/28	Nuku Hiva 4/21	25	2,863	132°27'	122	192	90	n/a	lower shroud snapped
<i>La Palapa</i>	Catalina Morgan 440	Roger & Chuck Hayward	Long Beach, CA	La Cruz 4/03	Hiva Oa 4/23	20	3,000	132°05'	80	170	120	0	generator impeller, inverter fan
<i>Lightheart</i>	LeComte 45c	Steve & Carolyn Bowie	Seattle, WA	Banderas Bay 3/28	Nuku Hiva 4/21	24	2,790	132°09'	100	175	80	n/a	snap ring on windvane
<i>Mandolin</i>	Panda 40	Chris Thompson & Lori Serocki	San Diego, CA	San Diego 4/19	Nuku Hiva 5/18	30		128°	30	150	60	0	compass on autopilot
<i>Milonga</i>	Horstmann 40 trim	Elke & Torsten Debus	Lübeck, Germany	Punta Mita 3/15	Hiva Oa 3/15	22	2,740	129°	110	155	0	0	none
<i>Obsession</i>	Cal 39	Les George, John Erhardt	Oceanside, CA	Cabo San Lucas 3/21	Hiva Oa 4/08	18.5	2,800	128°44'	52	168	130	3	head stay extrusion screw
<i>Romany Star</i>	Ohlson 38	Paul & Erin Moore	Seattle, WA	Galapagos 3/21	Gambiers 4/19	29	2,900	n/a	1	156	22	1	shaft seal & chafed windvane lines
<i>Sisiutl</i>	44' Gulfstar Ketch	Bob & Carylina Bechler	Portland, OR	La Cruz 4/24	Nuku Hiva	31	2,972	128°	20	128	25	n/a	alternator, autopilot
<i>Tarahumara</i>	45' CNZ Catamaran	J Sibthorpe, C Bryden, G Marsh	Alberta, Canada	La Cruz 4/5	Hiva Oa 4/23	19	3,000	130°	70	200	80	3	lost rudder 100 miles from Tahiti
<i>Tender Spirit</i>	Hans Christian 33	Joan & Chuck Martin	Sitka, Alaska	Mazatlan 3/12	Hiva Oa 4/15	34	3,286	128°	75	127	20	n/a	chafing of windvane steering lines
<i>Thin Wolf</i>	KP 44	Luke Tornatzky, Mike Ward	Port Townsend, WA	Banderas Bay 3/16	Hiva Oa 4/12	27	3,000	127°43'	15	170	0	0	windvane problems
<i>Thumbs Up</i>	Catalina 42	Orgee family, C Graveson, A Ross	Alameda, CA	Puerto Vallarta 3/17	Hiva Oa 4/6	20	3,000	130°	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	mainsail holed, traveler
<i>Victory Cat</i>	Seawind 1160 cat	Tim & Ruth Henning	Anthem, AZ	Punta Mita 3/30	Hiva Oa 4/23	23	2,844	127°18'	60	157	79	2	main halyard 2:1 block ripped out
<i>Warrior</i>	Britt Chance Design	Robin & Michelle Bendall	Launceston, Australia	Panama City 2/14	Gambiers 4/28	39	4,300	88°	70	182	37	9	whisker pole, drifter, autopilot
<i>Whisper</i>	Tartan 37	Malone family	Seattle, WA	La Cruz 3/17	Hiva Oa 4/09	23	2,700	129°	1	160	67	0	tore spinnaker
<i>Yaraandoo II</i>	Joe Adams Naut 40	Mike & Sue Powell	Sydney, Australia	La Cruz 3/21	Nuku Hiva 4/18	23	3,093	129°30'	41	173	96	0	autopilot, traveler shackle
<i>Yohelah</i>	Baba 40	Rob & Teresa Sicade	Seattle, WA	Galapagos 4/8	Fatu Hiva 5/2	24	3,165	89°	74	166	99	7	autopilot
<i>Zephyra</i>	Morgan 41 OI Ketch	Russ & Debbie Noorda	Lake Tahoe, CA	Galapagos 4/21	Hiva Oa 5/13	22	3,186	086°17'	56	180	104	0	ejected main mast partner

Please note: Many more vessels did the Puddle Jump this year, of course, but those who responded give a representative sampling of passage data.

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Mike McCluskey found that fruit is often free for the taking. Naomi and Veronica ride 'Apple's bow. Tobe and Roger chill aboard 'La Palapa.'

"One-pot meals worked the best. Sue baked pineapple upside down cake for crossing the equator. Of course. Sue, the Pollywog, had to undergo 'the cleansing' which included a special hot swirl applied by toothbrush to the mouth, and shaving cream applied to the face and removed by a squirt gun. Martinelli's was given to King Neptune."

— *George & Sue Stonecliffe*
Julia Max, Peterson 45

"King Neptune tests all those who dare to enter his realm, including us. On day 16, after some squalls passed, we had some very strong winds and a wonderful sail in 20- to 25-knot winds. Just as everything started settling down we heard a loud noise but could not locate its source. George discovered the lower port shroud had snapped. On further inspection the middle port shroud was only half attached. The winds were calm the next two days, so George was able to climb the mast and reinforce the middle shroud with a halyard and put a clamp on the wires. He disassembled the lower shroud and reused most of the wire, then added chain so he could reattach it.

— *George Hill & Kathleen Whitney*
Kalalau 43' sloop

"We were really glad we stocked up on \$3 plastic bottles of alcohol in Mexico. Investing in the BGAN satellite communications system allowed constant phone and Internet connections. A 45-ft sailboat sounds spacious until you realize that it is the exact size of your dream walk-in closet, and now you are stuck living in that dream closet with your husband. That said, we were amazed how quickly the trip went by, and how busy we were the whole time."

— *Roger & Tobe Hayward*
La Palapa, Morgan 440



NATHAN BECKFORD

"Great sailing at night wing-on-wing with a full moon lighting up the boat and low clouds all around at the ITCZ. The passage was tiring, as we were unable to sleep well for more than two hours at a time. At the equator we had a toga party and a champagne toast to Neptune."

— *Steve & Carolyn Bowie*
Lighthearth, 45' LaConte

"Flying fish numbered in the trillions it appeared. If we could only harvest these little buggers and sell them, we might be able to continue cruising forever. As for advice to anyone who shares this dream of spending all your money on overpriced gadgets and gear that will break sooner or later, the most useful items we brought were: 1) each other; 2) our Monitor windvane, which allowed us to cook, clean, and carry on our lives without constantly steering or depleting our batteries; 3) our bimini and cockpit enclosure that kept us warm in the higher latitudes, relatively dry in the rain and heavy seas, and protected us from the sun below the equator. But really the most important part is following through with your dreams. The diversity of boats and equipment here in Nuku Hiva shows that there is no 'best' way to get here. On one side of us is a 150-ft multimillion-dollar luxury yacht, and on the other, a 24-ft fiberglass sloop."

— *Chris Thompson & Lori Serocki*
Mandolin, Panda 40

"We saw plenty of flying fish. One hit me right on the forehead while I was



LA PALAPA

dozing on my watch. At the equator we had a dinner party, movie night and a full night's sleep for both of us on a flat calm glassy ocean."

— *Torsten & Elke Debus*
Milonga, Horstmann 39 tri

"This is the 4th Pacific Puddle Jump for me and the first for my wife, Carylina. We sailed from New Zealand to California and Mexico last year to catch the '09 Puddle Jump. The alternator failed, requiring us to terminate all non-essential electrical drains. We ate like kings and queens for a few days working thru the thawing freezer items. Later, a steering cable break and autopilot failure added to the issues we had to deal with."

— *Bob Bechler & Carylina St. Clair*
Sisiutl, Gulfstar 44

"We lost one rudder 100 miles from Tahiti. At the equator 'some' of the crew wore a dress, so pictures were not allowed!

— *Jim Sibthorpe, C. Bryden & G. Marsh*
Tarahumara CNZ 45 cat

"King Neptune tests all those who dare to enter his realm, including us."

"Wherever we went, the wind was not there! It was like chasing a rainbow. Our best sailing turned out to be in the convergence zone. On one windless day we spotted a turtle. As we were watching it, it passed us by and left us far in its wake!

— *Joan & Chuck Martin*
Tender Spirit, Hans Christian 33

"Joan and Chuck on *Tender Spirit* deserve the Heroes of the Puddle Jump award because they so graciously slowed down to let us catch up with them, 900 miles off Mexico, so they could give us their spare safety tube for our Monitor windvane. Otherwise, we were faced with

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hand steering the whole way or turning back.

— *Luke Tornatzky, Mike Ward & Lyon Omohundro*
Thin Wolf, KP 44

"Life is pretty simple at sea. It is much more complicated in port. Everything went according to plan. The wish list includes new sails, newer engine, bigger boat, refrigeration, more power to run the radar, a watermaker and sundry other nice-to-haves, but not at the cost of staying home to pay the bills."

— *Scott, Mary, Timothy & Finn Malone*
Whisper, Tartan 37

"We hit 10.2 knots in the middle of one night: Devon was on watch and she woke me up with, 'Hey dad we're doing over 10 knots.' It's amazing how quickly you can get on deck."

— *Ivan, Cheryl & Devon Orgee, Carlee Graveson, Alan Ross*
Thumbs Up, Catalina 42



Aboard 'Sisiutl' every crew member is sub-poenaed before King Neptune at the equator — even the ship's cat.

"We spotted giant manta rays (at San Benedicto Island), blue whales, dolphins and millions of flying fish. Had to clear the decks almost daily of squid and flying fish. We had almost complete solitude on the crossing — sighted only one other boat. There was indescribable euphoria when we successfully completed our Pacific crossing."

— *Tim & Ruth Henning*
Victory Cat, Seawind 38 cat

"We took a southern route: First to the Galapagos, then down to Easter Island, on to Pitcarin Island, and entered French Polynesia through the Gambiers. Not a well-traveled route, but well worth the extra miles."

— *Robin & Michelle Bendall*
Warrior, 50' custom sloop

"Thankfully, this was an exceptionally uneventful and nice passage. Maybe I should go back and read my blog entries and see if it really was as nice as we remember!"

— *Rob & Teresa Sicade*
Yohelah, Baba 40

"The most amazing memory of this passage was my first ever sighting of a perfect rainbow at midnight under the light of a full moon. The rainbow was to starboard and the moon to port. It was awesome!"

— *Mike & Sue Powell*
Yaraandoo II, 40' Naut Forty

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Aug 2,8,9
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