

CHASING THE HORIZON —

"Prepare for the worst, and just deal with whatever Mother Nature throws at you." As simplistic as that sounds, it's probably the best advice we've heard for crossing from the West Coast of the Americas to French Polynesia — especially these days, when



PAGENA

A hitchhiking booby. We're not sure what the turtle gets out of this deal, but crews on at least two boats observed the same crazy pairing.

wind and weather patterns seem to be anything but reliably predictable.

There's also the luck of the draw to consider. This year, the 205 boats that registered with our loosely formed Pacific Puddle Jump rally saw a wide range of conditions, even if they'd left from the same port only a few days apart. As much as we hate to generalize, boats leaving from Mexico seemed to have a somewhat smoother ride than those that

It may have been the only fish Barbara and Lionel caught aboard 'Sea Whisper', but it was a nice one.



SEA WHISPER

dropped into the Southern Hemisphere earlier, having crossed directly from Panama or made a pit stop at the Galapagos Islands (600 miles off Ecuador).

As always, sloppy seas were more annoying than too much or too little wind. One old salt who's done many Pacific crossings claims the trick to keeping nasty cross-swells to a minimum is to stay in the single-digit latitudes (i.e. 4-8° S) while traveling westward, south of the equator, as you'll find less residual swell influence there generated by Southern Ocean storms.

As you'll see by the crossing data in the table on page 106, the fleet experienced a wide range of max wind speeds — from 17 to 57 knots — with the big wind almost always coming during squalls in the notorious Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ), or doldrums, on or near the equator. That said, some boats pass through it in a flat calm. The ITCZ is the ultimate wild card of this 3,000-mile passage, as it is constantly reshaping itself, so that some boats cross it in a few hours, while others are stuck there for days. Having good weather intel is often a key to greater comfort.

Overall, the biggest complaint we hear each summer when we meet the fleet in Tahiti is that they had too *little* wind, rather than too *much*.

Enough of our generalities. Let's hear from the sailors who actually made the crossing this year. The following comments are excerpted from our annual crossing surveys.

Expectations vs. Reality

We're always curious how cruisers' pre-trip expectations stack up against their actual experience. (See the table on page 106 for owner names, and boat info):

Sea Whisper — "We expected the weather conditions to be more consistent, i.e. SE trades to be stable. Nevertheless, soon the journey became a truly magical experience of oneness with the sea — more than we could have imagined.

Athena — "The trade winds were not at all what we expected. The NE trades approached gale force (+/- 25 knots) and the SE trades blew mainly from the South and later from the east!"

Cherokee Rose — Michael: "It was a much quicker passage than we were anticipating. I had envisioned drifting across the equator and having a shell-

back party. We ended up crossing the equator in the middle of the night at 5.5 kts." Anita: "Who knew I could feel seasick for 18 days. Overall, the passage itself wasn't nearly as intimidating as I had built up in my head."

Bella Vita — I think it was a lot harder

The ITCZ is the ultimate wild card of this 3,000-mile passage

than we expected it would be. We have a theory that it's a little like childbirth: you forget the pain after it's over!"

Tutto Bene — "It was faster than expected — 19 days from San Diego."

Kokomo — "We left Ecuador April 17 and expected consistent trade winds. That did not happen. But it was an easy and comfortable trip."

Kiapa — "The major surprise was the lack of wind. We needed a spinnaker or screacher."

Starship — "We were both surprised by how confused the seas were for the



COMPASS ROSEY

PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP RECAP

entire trip. We kept waiting for those nice big long period rollers you hear about, but never found them."

Splice of Life — "The lack of other boats was a surprise. We sailed three weeks without sight of another yacht!"

Sophie — "It was calmer and easier than we thought."

Slowride — "*Slowride* lived up to her name. We had nine days with no wind, but slow still gets you there!"

Red — "Our crossing was pretty much uneventful. We did have a moment of mirth, though, when a flying fish landed on the galley countertop having come in through the open hatch above!"

Realtime — "Winds were steadier, seas were rougher, and more stuff broke than expected."

Nyon — "We did not expect to beat as much as we did. There were also way more birds out there than we expected, a nice surprise!"

The Highs

Long ocean crossings tend to be a mix of highs and lows — sometimes *extreme* highs and lows. First, some of the happy memories:

Athena — "The high point was the SE trades south of the equator, 10 to 15 knots — from the correct direction! — calm seas, sunny warm weather and an escort of up to 50 beautiful dorado around the boat. Real "martinis-on-deck" weather! The ocean teemed with fish and birds — huge shoals of flying fish, tuna and many unidentified fish."

Green Flash — "Still in the Gulf of Panama, I doused the main and ran dead downwind under twin headsails on the rhumbline with no sail adjustments for 3 days."

Compass Rosey — "Flying the cruising spinnaker for seven days, some great dolphin moments, and an encounter with a whale off Socorro."

Sea Whisper — "Appreciating nature: The tranquil and sometimes tempestuous sea; the infinite sky and the host of constellations in the night, including our favorite, the Southern Cross."

Bella Vita — "Sitting under the stars on a peaceful night or watching the birds circle the boat endlessly during the day. Feeling the peace of being out

on the ocean with no land and no people around. Just staring out at the waves and losing yourself in your own thoughts and the beauty of the sea."

Yindee Plus — "Seeing the green flash at sunset for the first time; quiet nights with moderate winds and flat seas while accompanied by white sea birds who flew along beside us; and listening to our radio net each day (Southern Cross Net)."

Wings of the Dawn — "Our first 200-mile day."

Morrigan — "Sailing downwind wing-on-wing with following seas."

Mazu — "The awesome sunsets and the feelings of accomplishment by doing something that not everyone has



HYDROQUEST

As Will and Sarah of 'Hydroquest' demonstrate, crossing the equator is an excuse for dressing up and offering ritual toasts to Neptune.

done."

KajjaSong — "For 24 days of our 26-day crossing it was so incredibly glorious; what we termed it the magic carpet ride."

Irie — "Moving along at 3-4 knots with the spinnaker in 5 knots of apparent wind."

Hydroquest — "My brother Ben's proposal to his fiancée Katie as we crossed the equator."

Millie B — "Catching a marlin."

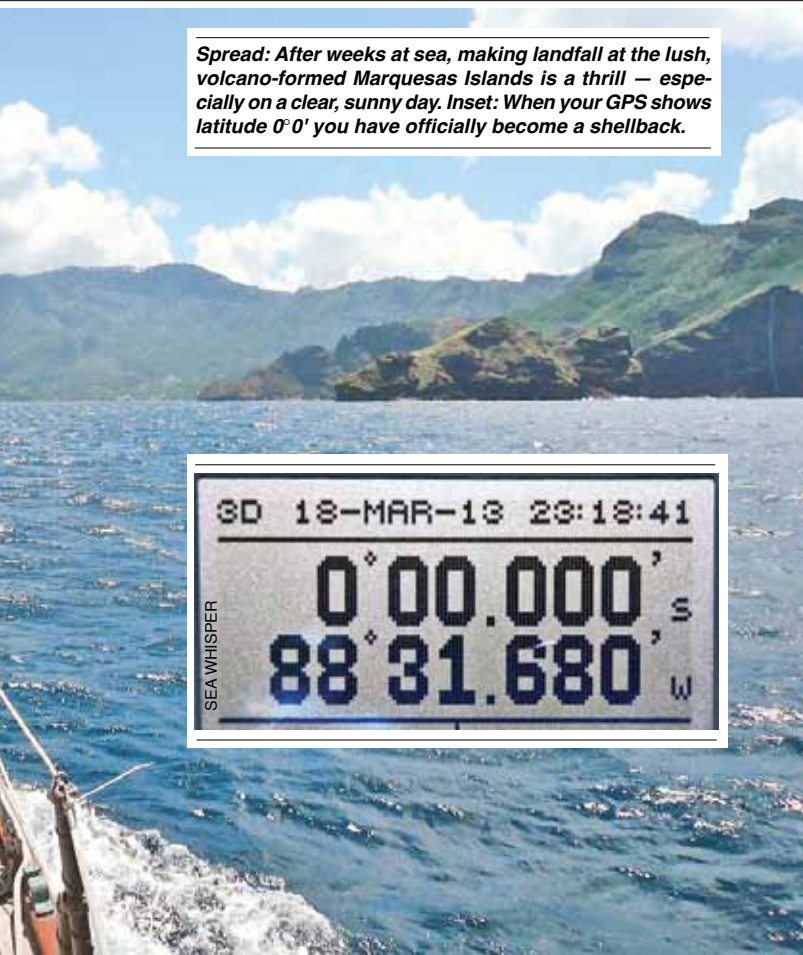
Nothing brightens up a lonely day at sea like a visit from a dolphin or two.

Slowride — "The pods of whales and dolphins that kept us company; and finally crossing the equator after seven days of dead calm."

Shellback — "Rendezvousing on the equator with our sailing buddies Steve and Chris of *Scott-Free*."

Pagena — "When the squalls filled our water tanks!" (Their watermaker

Spread: After weeks at sea, making landfall at the lush, volcano-formed Marquesas Islands is a thrill — especially on a clear, sunny day. Inset: When your GPS shows latitude 0°0' you have officially become a shellback.



SEA WHISPER



COMPASS ROSEY

CHASING THE HORIZON —

SOPHIE



ORION



ORION



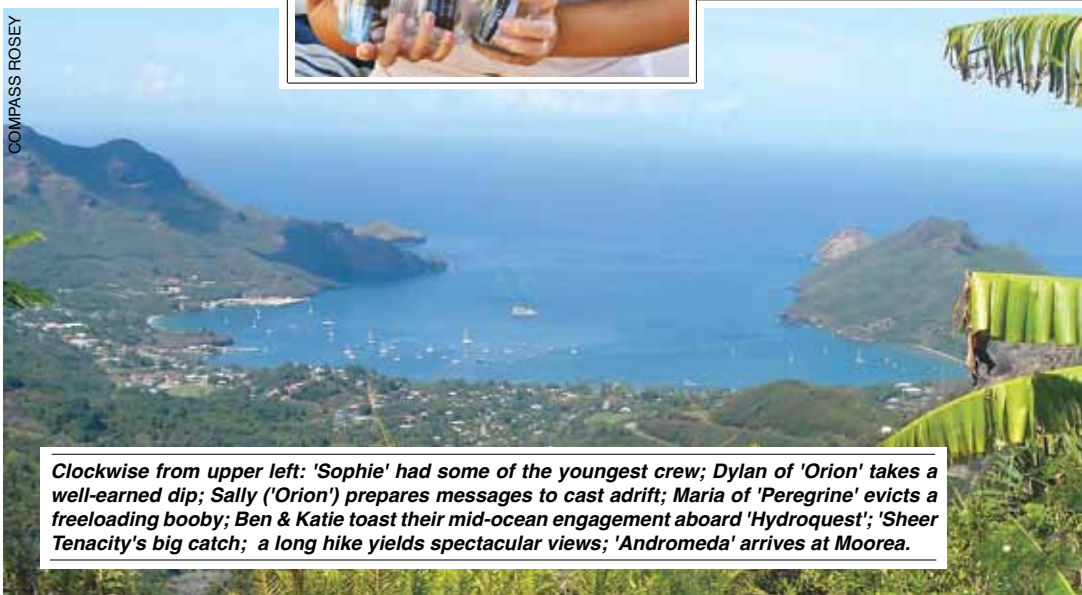
PEREGRINE



LATITUDE / ANDY



COMPASS ROSEY



Clockwise from upper left: 'Sophie' had some of the youngest crew; Dylan of 'Orion' takes a well-earned dip; Sally ('Orion') prepares messages to cast adrift; Maria of 'Peregrine' evicts a freeloading booby; Ben & Katie toast their mid-ocean engagement aboard 'Hydroquest'; 'Sheer Tenacity's big catch; a long hike yields spectacular views; 'Andromeda' arrives at Moorea.

had failed.)

Orca Suite — "The day 60 dolphins surrounded our boat for over an hour; and the day we flew our spinnaker for 11 hours."

The Lows

In contrast to the highs, of course, there are always some low points.

Athena — "Twice we were hit by vicious squalls with winds over 50 knots that lasted 40 minutes or so."

Chaotic Harmony — "Losing steering 1,500 miles into the trip and completing the last 2,500 miles without it, after heaving to for two days to effect repairs and manage damage to the hulls." (This cat lost her port rudder due to a fishing net; the sheared rudder stock holed the hulls.)

Sea Whisper — "Fifty or more squid came out of a wave and attacked *Sea Whisper* with their slimy bodies and black ink! What a rush! It was both a high and a low."

Kaijasong — "After 24 days of won-

derful weather, and avoiding any real storms and damage, we were 111 miles from our destination. Suddenly the skies blackened and we could see a line of squalls coming. Within moments it was blowing 30 knots. It blew 25 knots or more for nine hours, with 6 hours of 30 knots, gusting to 40. During the night

"The low point was being in a dead calm for nine days."

I looked up and saw that our mainsail was blown from luff to leach. We had no autopilot, no main, and no forward gear on the tranny, and it was blowing 30. I was hand-steering through big, nasty, lumpy seas when the 40-inch wheel came off in my hands!"

Bella Vita — "Being absolutely exhausted after a long night of sail changes in rough seas — not enough sleep and

just wanting to be out of the constant washing machine motion of confused seas."

Slowride — "The low point was being in a dead calm for nine days. Julie had a slight breakdown on day 27 but then a pod of pilot whales came by and lifted her spirits."

Yindee Plus — "Eleven hours at night of nonstop torrential rain; total exhaustion on about day 32 which made Sue cry."

Mystic Moon — "Port left open during 50-knot squall — ugh!"

Irie — "Taking in salt water through our engine room air vents from all the waves crashing against the side of the boat."

Hydrovane — "The low was when we hit the ITCZ and had three days of heavy rain. When you're trapped inside a boat with four people it gets really small, really fast."

Starship — "Spinnaker being destroyed at night in a squall."

Sheer Tenacity — "Just over half way,

PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP RECAP



HYDROQUEST



SHEER TENACITY



DIVIDED SKY

After arriving at Hiva Oa, sailors from 'Divided Sky', 'Peregrine', 'Sirena of Oars', 'Lady Lay', and 'Miss B'haven' took an island tour.

with a ripped mainsail and an engine that refused to start, we watched as a wall of black clouds approached, bringing with it winds gusting 35+ and heavy rain. We already had three reefs in the main, so we put away the genoa and hand steered our way through it. Our tracks that night looked like a cat had gotten into Grandma's knitting basket."

Pagena — "When our watermaker refused to produce drinkable water just after we left Puerto Vallarta and we had to ration drinking water strictly."

Orca Suite — "Bob had to hand steer for 3,010 miles because our autopilot failed at the beginning of the trip."

Crossing the Equator

It's a centuries-old tradition to make a toast to Neptune, god of the sea, when you cross the equator. Sometimes shellbacks (those who've crossed previously) make pollywogs (newbies) perform silly rituals.

Mazu — "It was 3 a.m. We decorated the cockpit, played *Southern Cross* re-

ally loud on the iPod and made an offering to Neptune, plus drank a shot of rum. The Captain, dressed as King Neptune, passed out 'shellback certificates' to the crew."

Kiapa — "Irene swam over with a glass of champagne at 6 a.m."

Making Landfall

After weeks at sea, making landfall beneath the majestic mountains of the Marquesas is usually thrilling and emotional.

Kaijasong — "The anchorage was breathtaking: the caldron of an ancient volcano; dramatic, steep, jagged mountains all around; an oasis in the middle of the ocean; a respite from the heavy ocean swell — safe harbor."

Compass Rosey — "Landfall was met with mixed emotions: Nuku Hiva is certainly a beautiful landfall, enjoyed by all, and we were relieved to get our sick (seriously dehydrated) crew member to the hospital, but sad that for some of us it was all over. They'd be on a plane in a couple of days and back to work."

Bella Vita — "Absolute elation! We were so happy to put our anchor down and rejoice friends we had made prior to departure. Rum drinks all around."

Tutto Bene — "Relief, but that was short-lived as our dinghy was holed by the Nuku Hiva jetty ladder."

Hydroquest — "When we got off the dinghy and took our first steps on solid land, it was difficult to balance. Katy dropped to the ground and did a 'land' angel. The rest of us kissed the ground."

Time2 — "When we made landfall in Nuku Hiva at 2 a.m. the island smelled wonderful; green and floral."

Starship — "Excitement and wonder. We could hardly believe we had made it to this spectacular island after so long at sea."

Sea Whisper — "We sighted Hiva Oa in full moonlight. I remember the unbelievable sense of 'smelling the land'; the heavy, sweet, woody fragrance wafting through the air as we approached."

Splice of Life — "Fabulous feeling of accomplishment. We leaped into the water when we dropped anchor."

Peregrine — "Hitting land was such a wonderful and encouraging relief. By this time, we were so, so, so, so ready. And Fatu

Hiva was a great place to make landfall. The two communities there were the most pristine and pure experience one can have."

Irie — "We arrived in 'paradise' in totally crappy weather. Everybody felt bad for us to make landfall this way. The wind was howling and dead on the nose when we entered and crossed the Gambier lagoon. We had to bang into splashing waves, straight into the wind, engines on full throttle!"

Orca Suite — "We were amazed, grateful, sleep-deprived, and relieved because we came in on diesel fumes."

Advice for Future Jumpers

The heartfelt advice of fleet members is worth considering:

Sea Whisper — "Don't overanalyze; be positive. Leave the dock and enjoy the ride! You will become a doer, not just a



CHASING THE HORIZON —

dreamer."

Divided Sky — "Buy lots of beer and wine before the passage. Prices are high in the Marquesas, and there are lots of great opportunities for happy hour."

Athena — "Follow Jimmy Cornell's route slavishly."

Compass Rosey — "If you're thinking about it, or toying with the possibility, just bite the bullet and do it. You won't regret it."

Cherokee Rose — Michael: "Really shake down your equipment before you jump. I think half of the equipment let-downs could have been weeded out." Anita: "Pre-made meals made for an effortless galley — quick and easy."

Wings of the Dawn — "Enjoy every minute of the crossing. It is a hallmark for future passages and all will be compared to this if this is your first major



PEREGRINE

Maria cools off with a little skinny dipping off the stern of Peregrine. Simple things often make happy memories.

crossing."

Yindee Plus — "We skipped the Galapagos to save money and time, but it meant more time at sea and no chance to top up with fuel, which was important

when the wind died three days out of Marquesas. Join an SSB net: it was the highlight of each day."

Murar's Dream — "Stock up on lots of spares. Redundant systems are also a good idea."

Kiapa — "Know your crew well before leaving, and bring a spinaker if you depart from Mexico."

Irie — "If you leave from Panama, stop at the Galapagos Islands on your way to FP. The wildlife is as incredible and "tame" as the documentaries claim."

Hydroquest — "Don't get stuck in the Mexico vortex. The South Pacific has far exceeded our expectations. Mexico is great but the South Pacific is on a whole other level."

Starship — "Don't fly the spinnaker at night. We heard that advice but did it anyway, with less than satisfactory

2013 PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP PASSAGE DATA

Although many more sailors did the Puddle Jump this year, those who responded to our questionnaire give a representative sampling of passage data.

Boat Name	Boat Make & Length	Captain & Crew	Boat's Homeport	Departed From & Date	Landfall & Date	Days of Xing	Miles of Xing	Equator X Long.	Engine Hours	Best 24 Hours	Worst 24 Hours	High Wd Speed	# of Fish Caught	Breakage & Breakdowns
Alegria	Caliber 40	Brian Black & Mizzy Lewis	Green Cove, FL	La Cruz, 4/26	Hiva Oa, 5/26	30	N/A	129 W	50 hrs	140	50	45 kts	0	gooseneck & jib block wear
Athena	Chey Lee 35	Andrew Green	Kilronan, IRL	La Paz, 4/9	Hiva Oa, 6/19	60	2,976	135W	0 hrs	98	-9	57 kts	0	topping lift failed; engine overheated
Beez Neez	Warrior 40	Bear & Pepe Millard	Plymouth, GBR	Galapagos, 5/19	Hiva Oa, 6/13	23	2,957	89 W	82 hrs	164	88	38 kts	1	small sail tear; traveller car damage
Bella Vita	Hylas 45.5	Brett & Stacey Hoopes	Seattle, WA	La Cruz, 3/30	Hiva Oa, 4/18	20	2,765	129 W	108 hrs	177	116	25 kts	0	we didn't break anything!
Chaotic Harmony	Catana 42	Ian Johnstone	Darwin, AUS	Panama, 3/3	Hiva Oa, 4/1	28	4,003	084 W	2 hrs	215	72	38 kts	6	lost port rudder due to net; holed hull
Cherokee Rose	Alajuela 48	Michael Moyer	Newport Beach, CA	Nuevo Vallarta, 3/28	Hiva Oa, 4/15	18	2,871	129 W	22 hrs	210	110	27 kts	0	jib halyard; boom vang tang failed
Compass Rosey	Polaris 43	Graham Stephens	Southampton, GBR	Mazatlan, 4/14	Nuku Hiva 6/5	22	N/A	N/A	81 hrs	169	96	34 kts	0	spin halyard broke twice; main shackle
Corvidae	Island Packet 38	Steve & Nona Larson	Portland, OR	Mazatlan, 4/28	Hiva Oa 6/2	32	3,000	N/A	110 hrs	114	-21	28 kts	0	whisker pole extension line broke
Divided Sky	Catalina 40	Colin & Jeanne Harrison	Goolwa, AUS	Galapagos	Hiva Oa	24	3,015	N/A	6 hrs	152	96	35 kts	0	N/A
En Pointe	Searunner 31 tri	Tom Van Dyke	Santa Cruz	Nuevo Vallarta, 3/11	Ua Huka, 4/7	27	2,850	126 W	63 hrs	147	35	30 kts	3	minor sail repairs
Flour Girl	Chey Lee 44	David, Kimberly, Zack Edwards	Coral Bay, USVI	Galapagos, 4/22	Fatu Hiva, 5/13	21	2,927	88 W	20 hrs	181	113	28 kts	35	fridge cooling pump; halyard chafe
Hydroquest	Beneteau 40	Will & Sarah Curry	Vancouver, BC	Banderas Bay, 3/28	Nuku Hiva, 4/16	19	2,700	128 W	40 hrs	180	135	35 kts	0	blown spin halyard; lost SSB transmit
Irie	F/P 35 cat	Mark Kilty & Liesbet Collaert	Delaware	Delaware	Gambiers, 5/28	21	2,910	85 W	10 hrs	181	70	35 kts	1	only minor things
Kiapa	M/M 52 cat	Lionel & Irene Bass	Fremantle, AUS	Puerto Vallarta, 4/1	Fatu Hiva, 4/25	17*	2,970	133 W	44 hrs	213	123	30 kts	10	water pump dead by pumice at Socorro
Kokomo	Prout 50 cat	Peter Schmieder	Meerbusch, GER	Ecuador, 4/17	Hiva Oa, 5/14	27	3,700	80 W	8 hrs	181	108	17 kts	0	shroud toggle broke
Mazu	Outbound 46 cat	Mel & Elaine Bryson	Rainier, OR	La Cruz, 3/24	Hiva-Oa, 4/12	19	2,570	128 W	0 hrs	182	94	37 kts	0	blown spin halyard block;
Minnie B	Ovni 395	Phil & Norma Heaton	Belfast, IE	Panama, 3/3	Hiva Oa, 4/23	29	2,990	89 W	50 hrs	199	113	35 kts	5	watermaker leak; genoa stitching
Morrigan	Dolphin 46 cat	Arne & Kristen Metza	Chippewa Falls, WI	Nuevo Vallarta, 3/29	Hiva Oa, 4/15	17	2,783	130 W	48 hrs	204	134	27 kts	1	screacher shackle broke
Murar's Dream	Beneteau 46	Andrew Rosen	Boulder, CO	Galapagos, 3/23	Fatu Hiva, 4/13	21	3,271	89 W	41 hrs	179	112	35 kts	3	gen impeller; gen leak; head solenoid
Mystic Moon	Selene 53 trawler	John & Kathy Youngblood	San Francisco	Galapagos, 3/16	Hiva Oa, 4/4	19	3,003	N/A	246 hrs	241	125	50 kts	24	stabilizer leak; autopilot interface issue
Next	Jeanneau 39	Hideaki Nishida	Nagasaki, JPN	LaPaz, 5/18	NukuHiva, 6/10	23	2,939	132 W	51 hrs	156	96	20 kts	0	none
Nyon	Lapworth 36	Kyra Crouzat & Rick Forbes	Victoria	SJ del Cabo, 3/29	Hiva Oa, 4/24	26	2,817	133 W	17 hrs	144	43	30 kts	0	reef line broke; clogged bilge pump
Orca Suite	Morgan 33	Bill & Belinda Tackett	San Diego	Nuevo Vallarta, 4/1	Hiva Oa, 5/9	39	3,010	132 W	0 hrs	168	30	15 kts	3	sail damage; lost all water due to hose
Pagena	Ovni 345	J. Probst & S. Toelzel	Wiesbaden, GER	Puerto Vallarta, 3/18	Fatu Hiva, 4/12	26	2,900	128 W	65 hrs	147	74	25 kts	2	watermaker
Realtime	Norseman 447	Bob & Karyn Packard	Long Beach	La Cruz, 3/29	Hiva Oa, 4/19	21	2,762	121 W	67 hrs	159	60	26 kts	0	bent bowsprit; sail damage
Sea Whisper	Fraser 50	L Dobson & B Erickson	Victoria, BC	Galapagos, 4/6	Hiva Oa, 4/25	19	2,968	88 W	19 hrs	192	108	28 kts	1	broken main halyard
Sheer Tenacity	Shearwater 39	Rod & Mary Turner-Smith	Cape Town, ZAF	Galapagos, 5/1	Marquesas, 5/22	20	3,018	87 W	32 hrs	170	127	38 kts	5	chartplotter; main rip; engine failed
Shellback	60-ft Schooner	Sue & Gary Drent	Long Beach	Galapagos, 4/13	Hiva Oa, 5/7	23	3,264	90 W	790 hrs	163	112	28 kts	1	outhaul; fridge; fuel manifold failure
Slowride	Downeaster 38	Michael Sturm & Julie Goss	Ventura	La Cruz, 3/25	Nuku Hiva, 4/30	36	2,827	128 W	32 hrs	129	119	35 kts	5	losty tranny; gooseneck, davit welds
Splice of Heaven	Irwin LOA 42	Doug Thompson	Brisbane, AUS	Puerto Vallarta, 2/16	Hiva-Oa, 3/9	21	2,881	131 W	55 hrs	173	61	48 kts	4	wind gen failed; alternator belt
Starship	Islander 36	Chris & Anne-Marie Fox	Victoria, BC	Punta de Mita, 3/24	Hiva Oa, 4/16	24	2,890	127 W	8 hrs	158	67	30 kts	0	sail failure; roller-furter, stereo
Time2	Nordhavn 57 twrlr	Michael Drinkrow	London, GBR	Turtle Bay, 4/3	Nuku Hiva, 4/18	15	2,710	132 W	N/A	191	168	20 kts	0	none
Tutto Bene	Beneteau 50	Bronie Savage	Fremantle, AUS	San Diego, 5/9	Nuku Hiva, 5/29	19	2,830	134 W	30 hrs	174	92	31 kts	0	boom preventer; main traveler damage
Wings of the Dawn	Hans Christian 52	Robert Bennatts	Friday Harbor, WA	El Salvador, 4/7	Nuku Hiva, 5/9	32	N/A	100 W	55 hrs	195	70	25 kts	0	both heads broke; autopilot failed
Yindee Plus	Seastream 43	Chris & Sue Bright	Liverpool, GBR	Panama, 4/25	Nuku Hiva, 5/30	35	4,190	087 W	98 hrs	156	83	32 kts	5	windvane failed; sail damage

* (after a week at Socorro Island, Mexico)

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results."

Realtime — "Bring spares and things you can make spares with. There is no way you'll have every system completely covered, so bring nuts, bolts, pins, o-rings, hoses, bungees, etc. that will allow you to make work-arounds for things you really can't anticipate, and can't do without."

Pagena — "Non-EU citizens: Apply for the six-month 'long stay visa' a couple of months before you leave home! French Polynesia has many attractive islands and you need more than three months (standard visa) to explore them all."

Orca Suite — "Have a windvane steering device, watermaker, new batteries, paper charts, and don't buy too many refrigerated food items. Have patience and a sense of humor, and keep it safe at all times."

Shellback — "Don't wait! There's always an excuse to delay departure. Our



DIVIDED SKY

After so many days at sea, cruisers love to socialize. Here in Hana Moe Noe Bay on Tahuata, cruisers enjoyed a fresh fish barbecue.

original plan was to cross in 2006."

Nyon — Prepare well, but be ready for things to break because they will, and some days will suck. Make sure to make 'small pleasures' an important part of your routine. Have treats stashed for those downer days. Relish the good days, because there are many of those too."

So there you have it. Lots of solid advice, and worthwhile food for thought. The Puddle Jump is not a feat to be taken lightly, as it is typically the longest nonstop crossing in an around-the-world cruise. But its rewards are well worth the effort.

— **latitude/andy**

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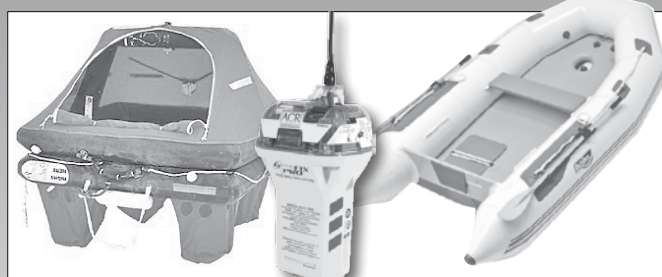
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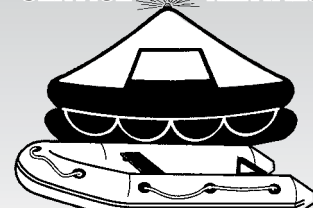
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