

PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP RECAP —

With its entry roster eventually swelling to 258, more boats signed up for the 2014 Pacific Puddle Jump than ever before, making it second only in size to the Atlantic Rally for Cruisers, the largest trans-ocean sailing event in the world.

To be clear though, we use the word 'rally' loosely to describe the Puddle

Jump, because unlike the ARC, the Baja Ha-Ha and other big rallies, the PPJ has no concrete starting day, no committee boat, no daily roll call and no cost to enter. Entrants depart from various points along the West

Coast of the Americas during a four-month period.

The common thread between them is that they all will eventually converge on the same dreamy archipelagos of French Polynesia, the first stop on their island-hopping tour of the South Pacific. You might say that the Puddle Jump does provide 'prizes', though; experiential prizes like cooling off under a waterfall at the end of an ancient Marquesan hiking trail, or relaxing at anchor in the turquoise lagoon of a Tuamotan atoll, where the water is so clear that you can

Every year passage-makers send in shots of Fatu Hiva, in the Marquesas, and we're always amazed by its beauty.

watch kaleidoscopic parrotfish swimming around your anchor on the sandy bottom below.

During the two decades that we've been reporting on the Puddle Jump, news about it has spread far and wide, evidenced by the fact that sailors registered at www.pacificpuddlejump.com this year from at least 24 countries. (Check out the full list on the website.)

No doubt many of them did so in order to take advantage of a program we facilitate with a Tahitian yacht agent who offers clearance in and out, access to duty-free fuel and bond exemptions, all for a very reasonable fee. Without this exemption non-EU citizens must deposit the cash value of an air ticket home in a Polynesian bank until the day they clear out — it's an insurance policy of sorts for the government, but cruisers regard it as

"Kattu' likes to go fast, but we constantly had to rein her in because of the rough sea state."

a royal pain. (This year's agent, Tehani of Tahiti Crew, got rave reviews by the way, even though it was her first time dealing with the Puddle Jumpers. By June, she had processed paperwork and performed other services for more than 160 boats.)

Registered Jumpers are also invited to attend our annual send-off parties at the Vallarta YC in Nuevo Vallarta, Mexico and at the Balboa YC in Panama. Both

events combine educational seminars with mix-and-mingle socializing.

Talk to cruisers from 10 different Puddle Jump boats, and you're likely to get 10 very different assessments of the rigors of the crossing, from wind and weather to breakage and state of mind. Even boats that leave from the same port only a few days apart often experience substantially different wind consistency — or lack thereof. Needless to say, boats with easy access to GRIB files and other weather resources generally have a more pleasant time than those who don't.

But there are always wild cards thrown into the mix in the much-contemplated doldrums, or ITCZ (Intertropical Convergence Zone), an ever-changing band of often-unsettled weather that lies between the northeast and southeast trades.

Where to cross it is a subject of endless debate and pontificating in sailors' bars as well as on ocean-crossing nets. Some boats report motoring across it in a couple of hours, while others report several days of squally weather with occasionally high winds. One truth that's born out anecdotally each season is that if you're going to see any high (aka scary) winds on this crossing, it will probably be within the ITCZ. As you can see on the table of crossing data on page 92, the highest gusts reported by survey respondents were 45 knots, with the average being closer to 30. In fact, in any given year, before departing many Jumpers will be worried about facing heavy weather, but when we meet up with them in Tahiti they complain about not having had enough strong breeze. Bottom line, it's more or less a crap shoot. The best advice we've ever heard about it is to be prepared for the worst, and simply deal with what you get.

Boats jump off from various ports in Mexico and Central America — plus a few sail from Ecuador, Chile, Peru and California. But the greatest numbers always leave from Puerto Vallarta and Panama, with many of the Panama starters stopping off at the Galapagos along the way. From there, or from PV, the distance to French Polynesia is roughly 3,000 miles.

When you read the answers to our survey questions, you might think



While sipping coconut water, Lewis of 'Eleutheria' shows his intricate body art.

ELEUTHERIA



EXODUS



ACCESSING THE ARCHIPELAGOS



Shot with a GoPro on a boat hook, we suspect, Captain Max passes the time taking a mid-ocean selfie aboard 'Fluenta.'

the respondents are talking about two completely different oceans. The range of comments illustrates how different one passage experience can be from another. Needless to say, boat size and type come into play here also. The following is a sampling of experiences.

How did your passage-making experience differ from your expectations before the trip? Were there any surprises?

Rockstar: "The surprise was inconsistent wind. It was more uncomfortable

"It exceeded our expectations — no pirates, no cyclones, no Moby Dick attacks."

than we expected. But, we believe that was because we chose to leave from Costa Rica."

Laragh: "We had a lot more wind and associated seas in general than the name 'milk run' would have led us to believe."

Exodus: "The ITCZ wasn't very clear-cut. I was expecting to *know* when we were in it, but it seemed to be a mystery. We were in it, then we weren't, then we were in it again. Thankfully, we never

had dead calm, just very squally periods to contend with."

Bangorang: "Since the weather was generally pretty good, in many ways the passage was easier than expected. On the other hand, I was surprised by the subtle differences in weather and sailing tactics that came into play each day. We changed and adjusted sails every day. We had a great passage, and aside from a couple dozen squalls, we experienced mostly broad reaching in

10-20 knots."

Romany Star: "We never saw any serious weather and were able to avoid most squalls, so it was an easier passage than we expected. The incidence of a second ITCZ south of the regular one was unexpected — and unfair!"

Mintaka: "The only surprise was having pretty benign weather in the ITCZ — almost no squalls."

Manureva II: "The Pacific is a much calmer ocean than the North Atlantic."

Luckness: "The passage went much easier than I expected. The surprise for me was how well the ITCZ crossing went."

Kattu: "Kattu likes to go fast, but we constantly had to rein her in because of the rough sea state. Also, the conven-

tional wisdom on routing did not work well for us."

Pamela: "It exceeded our expectations — no pirates, no cyclones, no Moby Dick attacks."

Evenstar: "Our autopilot breaking was a big surprise. We hand-steered 2,700



MOANA ROA

Wahoo! Fish was on the menu this night aboard the big cat 'Moana Roa'. Cruising kids get an education in the school of life.

miles of the trip from the Galapagos. My two teenagers stepped up big time, taking watches and sharing the driving."

They say a long crossing is often a balance of highs and lows. What were some of the high points, or low points, of your crossing?

Tatoosh: "Balance? More like a roller coaster. Crossing the equator and getting into the southeast trades were among the biggest highs. The definite low was losing the starter on the engine. Crossing the doldrums we hit 0.0 knots through the water, with the current pushing us southeast at 1.5 knots. We had no steering and were at the mercy of the elements."

Rockstar: "The low points were rain

After weeks at sea, it's great to get out and stretch your legs on a Marquesan trail. The views are often spectacular.



PAMELA

PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP RECAP —

squalls in the middle of the night (on the Captain's shift) and the sea state throwing the boat around for days on end."

Laragh: "Highs — Sunsets and sunrises, whale dolphins, nearly landing several big fish, and seeing another yacht that we knew out there after seven days. Lows — Trying to cook with ingredients jumping all over the galley. Tiredness changing a normally good-humoured skipper into a cranky bollux."

Exodus: "Some of our highs were catching yellow fin tuna and having sashimi snacks, rainbows and sunrises at sea, skipping school to bake cookies, crossing the equator, and Tricky the dolphin who would barrel-roll on command."

"Some of our low points were getting caught by a 45-knot squall with too much sail up, being in the south equatorial counter-current, and having to run

the generator so much because of the autopilot."

Eleutheria: "Highs for Alyssa: showers. Highs for Lewis: ice and SOG over 6

"The highs were flying the spinnaker in 20 knots of wind and making 250 miles in 24 hours."

knots. Lows: leftover seas and no wind two days out of Zihua and the unbearable heat of running the engine through the humid doldrums."

Bangorang: "We were all pollywogs (first-timers) and crossing the equator

under sail was a high."

Romany Star: "The high point was leaving Mexico and reaching the deep blue of the open ocean."

Novae: "The highs were beautiful starry nights, and the lows were the thunderstorms in the ITCZ."

Manureva II: "The highs were flying the spinnaker in 20 knots of wind and making 250 miles in 24 hours. The lows were winds forward of the beam."

Kattu: "Low points were taking five days to transit the ITCZ with winds directly from the south, and being hove-to in a gale for three days around 10° south of the equator."

Did you celebrate crossing the equator?



PAMELA



TATOOSH/ERIC NEWTON



STARSHINE



ROMANY STAR

ACCESSING THE ARCHIPELAGOS

Exodus: "We made silly crowns out of duct tape, gave toasts to Neptune, cut our hair and offered it to Neptune, swam in the ocean, and had a huge feast."

Bangorang: "We made offerings of coins from our home port, toasts with champagne and tequila, and commemorative scrolls for the memories."

Novae: "We supined the greenest sailor to the Neptune tribunal, and when convicted threw him to the sharks — then we all joined in."

Kattu: "We poured Neptune a glug of champagne and drank the rest, enjoying being newly confirmed shellbacks."

Can you remember the feeling you had when you first made landfall?

Tatoosh: "Yes, I was relieved and awestruck by the scenery in Taiohae Bay. Stepping ashore I was dizzy and promptly fell over."

Laragh: "Satisfaction and relief; a sense of achievement."

Exodus: "Euphoria."

Eleutheria: "You can smell the flowers on the island. Alyssa was ready for land a week before we saw Hiva Oa."

Bangorang: "Great! It was right where it was supposed to be! It suddenly no longer felt like it had been three weeks."

Mintaka: "It felt more like the end of a long road trip. The tedium was over, and we could begin to enjoy the destination."

Manureva II: "We made landfall at Atunono at 4 a.m., but the feeling of waking up in the morning with sun bathing the mountains of Hiva Oa was amazing."

Luckness: "I arrived in Nuku Hiva, but the first land I saw was Ua Huka. I saw it just before sunrise and it was awesome. As I neared Nuka Hiva I started seeing the details of the land — the lush forests and valleys, the enormous variety of shades of green as the light played over the forests. Entering Taiohae Bay was wonderful, a nice large anchorage with plenty of room surrounded by all that beauty. I loved every moment of it."

Kattu: "Grateful to be alive, and have the boat in one piece. Definitely a feeling of major accomplishment! Looking

Pictures tell the story. Clockwise from upper left: equator antics on 'Pamela'; dolphins swim beneath 'Tatoosh'; another brilliant sunset; becoming shellbacks on the Wharram cat 'Kattu'; dad brings home lobster on 'Exodus'; the 'Qi' crew goofing with Daniel's Bay kids; 'Exodus' kids strike a pose; kayak sampling in the Gambiers; meeting friends along a tranquil road.



ROCKSTAR



KATTU



EXODUS



EXODUS



COURTESY QI

PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP RECAP

CYGNUS



"Ah, here I am," says Sally from 'Cygnus'. She was one of many crew who caught a 3,000-mile ride to Polynesia's awesome archipelagos.

forward to sleep, fresh food and cold beer — in reverse order!"

What advice would you give to future Puddle Jumpers?

Tatoosh: "No matter how much preparation you do, you cannot cover all the bases. Be confident in your ability to deal with adversity in its varying forms."

Rockstar: "Take as many crew as possible. Having even one extra sailor makes a huge difference to shifts, morale and conversations. When provisioning in Central America load up on non-perishables and alcohol."

Laragh: "Know yourself and your crew well."

Exodus: "Track your departure weather window yourself in addition to getting advice from others. We left when

everyone said there wasn't enough wind, but our own analysis told us there would be, and we were ready to go, so we left. We had a fine passage."

Eleutheria: "Get the long stay (six month) visa for French Polynesia. The standard three months is way too fast. And bring more booze; a bottle of whiskey is worth almost \$100 when trading in the islands."

Romany Star: "Provision for morale as well as nutrition — night watch needs cookies! Carry a spare autopilot, or at least spares of the parts likely to break. We carry three electronic autopilots in addition to our windvane. That leads to restful passages."

Mintaka: "While there are risks to the adventure, they are manageable with good preparation. So, prepare as well as you can, accept the risks, and go."

Manureva II: "If you haven't made a long passage before, then it is hard to prepare mentally. Take something that you can work on for at least two to three weeks. I brought a French language course with

a lesson every day."

Kattu: "This is one serious ocean. You can't expect trade wind conditions of the sort you read about. You might have them, or you could get clobbered most of the way like we did."

Pamela: "Jump early and often. Put aside all the fears. Life is short."

If Puddle Jumping sounds like a challenge you'd like to take on, check out the passage data table below and see more info on the website. Signups for the 2015 crossing season begin in November at www.pacificpuddlejumps.com.

— andy



Bob Cadranell (center) demonstrates that you don't have to be young to be silly. He and the boys sailed 'Tatoosh' home via Hawaii.

2014 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
Bangorag	F-P 42 cat	Colin & Wendy Gegg	Ventura, CA	PV, 3/21	Hiva Oa, 4/11	21	2,774	129W	93 hrs	156 nm	105 nm	40 k	0	mast cleat, preventer, generator
Cygnus	Cabo Rico 38	Joe Lavash	Newport, OR	PV, 3/23	Hiva Oa, 4/15	24	2,860	133W	22 hrs	162 nm	89 nm	35 k	7	autopilot, solar charge controller, fuel blockage(s), macerator pump, whisker pole, nav computer
Eleutheria	Tartan 37	L Allen & A Alexopoulos	Redwood City, CA	Zihua, 3/10	Hiva Oa, 4/5	25	2,970	129W	110 hrs	140 nm	72 nm	38 k	1	alternator, jib UV strip, shackle on code zero
Evenstar	Hallberg-Rassy 53	BJ Porter & Kathy Woodruff	East Greenwich, RI	Galapagos, 5/15	Nuka Hiva, 5/31	16	3,008	N/A	9 hrs	162 nm	20 nm	25 k	2	autopilot, hydraulic vang leak
Exodus	Lagoon 400 cat	Gresham family	San Diego, CA	PV, 3/11	Hiva Oa, 4/2	22	2,908	127W	11 hrs	181 nm	91 nm	45 k	4	mainsail reef line chafed thru, genoa tear
Fluenta	Stevens 47	Brown-Shaw family	Halifax, NS	PV, 4/21	Fatu Hiva, 5/13	21	3,000	129W	7 hrs	170 nm	N/A	25 k	4	AIS, toerail, small diesel leak
Kattu	Wharram Tiki 38	Alf Bangert & K O'Brien	Hornby Island, BC	PV, 4/20	Nuku Hiva, 5/19	29	2,824	130W	12 hrs	146 nm	19 nm	40+ k	0	nothing broke, minor chafe
Laragh	Jeanneau 44	D Hennessy & B O'Regan	Cork, IRE	Panama 2/20	Hiva Oa, 4/16	27	3,982	87W	70 hrs	178 nm	120 nm	32 k	1	bolt sheared between quadrant and the autopilot drive, bearings in steering column failed, laptop died
Luckness	Pacific Seacraft 37	Craig McPheeters	Seattle, WA	PV, 3/11	Nuku Hiva, 3/31	20	2,700	131W	0 hrs	152 nm	107 nm	35 k	N/A	nothing broke!
Manureva II	Voyage 58 cat	Paul Scott	Nevada City, CA	Galapagos, 4/21	Hiva Oa, 5/14	15	N/A	N/A	50 hrs	250 nm	160 nm	30 k	5	leaky seal on engine fresh water pump; genset impeller issues; high capacity alternator on one engine failed
Mintaka	Ingrid 38	M Bennett & R Rogin	Salt Lake City, UT	PV 3/15	Hiva Oa, 4/9	26	2,949	129W	50 hrs	161 nm	79 nm	N/A	1	deck light water intrusion
Novae	Fountain Pajot 48 cat	Stefano & Helen Piviali	Fremantle, AUS	Galapagos, 3/12	Hiva Oa, 4/1	18	3,064	87W	117 hrs	201 nm	116 nm	28 k	5	nothing
Pamela	Pacific Seacraft 37	D Maggard & P York	San Francisco, CA	PV 3/15	Hiva Oa, 4/10	27	3,500	131W	48 hrs	148 nm	75 nm	31 k	3	lazy spin sheet launched bow light
Rockstar	C&C Landfall 43	Jeff & Amber Lim	Vancouver, BC	Golfito, CR 4/3	Hiva Oa, 5/7	34	3,600	N/A	60 hrs	175 nm	75 nm	35 k	1	generator failed; broken spin pole end
Romany Star	Ohlson 38	Paul Moore & B Wagner	San Francisco, CA	PV, 3/28	Gambier, 4/26	30	3,300	122W	58 hrs	140 nm	3 nm	35 k	1	autopilot failed
Tatoosh	80-ft Custom Seaborn	Bob & Molly Cadranell	Seattle, WA	San Diego, 5/1	Nuku Hiva, 5/27	26	3,339	129W	3 hrs	176 nm	52 nm	40 k	7	outhead car failed, sprang clutch on engine starter, refrigeration compressor