

PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP PROFILES, PT II —

Industry experts tell us that participation in sailing is slowly shrinking. But you wouldn't believe that if you saw all the westbound cruising boats in Panama during March and April, prepping for departure to French Polynesia.

Every year, hundreds of them converge on that tiny Latin American country from the East Coast of the US, Canada, the Caribbean, South Africa and practically every nation in Western Europe. Like the Pacific Puddle Jumpers that we profiled last month who were all heading west from Mexico, the salty souls we met in Panama have wildly different backgrounds and sail aboard an extremely diverse fleet of boats.

We found it fascinating to meet dozens of these international sailors and hear their tales during our annual PPJ Send-off Parties — dubbed Tahiti Bon Voyage this year by our Tahitian partners. The first was March 6 at the Shelter Bay Marina (on the Caribbean side of the Canal) and the second was March 8 at the Balboa YC (on the Pacific side).

As you'll read below, some Jumpers had bought their boats only recently, while at least one couple was on their second loop around the planet. Many will stop at the Galapagos Islands on their way across, as there's 4,000 miles of open ocean between Panama and the Marquesas — 'only' 3,000 from Mexico.

Tignanello — X-Yacht 442
Willem Smit & Remco Kobus
Amsterdam, NED

When we met Willem his left arm was in a sling, the result of overzealous bottom cleaning of his boat in preparation for the long cruise that lay ahead.

"I've been sailing since I was seven," said the Dutchman. "I've sailed all over the Med and Caribbean, but I've always wanted to see French Polynesia — it's #1 on my list." He plans to explore the archipelagos for a year, then push on to Indonesia.

Ta-B — Fontaine Pajot 46
Jane & Russell Poulston
Vancouver, BC, CAN

"What's our boat's name? *Ta-B*. You know, like to be or not to be... cruising. That's the question," says Jane with a laugh. "But we're definitely meant to be cruising the South Pacific."

Although the boat is registered in Canada, Jane is originally from England, and Russell is a Kiwi. They bought this big cat nine years ago in Trinidad, took her across the Atlantic and sailed the Med for five years, then crossed again and spent four years in the Caribbean.



Jane of 'Ta-B' proudly shows off her PPJ burgee. Every attending boat got one.

"Now, says Jane, the Pacific is calling."

Corinthian — Craddock 40
Thorsen & Laura Bohnke, DEU

Thorsen, who is German, and Laura, who is Canadian, aren't just carefree cruisers. They're on a mission. As they travel they are making a series of films about environmental projects such as nature preserves.

"The story of how we met is complicated," she warns. He was a sailor who was eager to cruise. Although she knew little if anything about sailing when they first



Filmmakers on 'Corinthian'.

met, she took to it quickly, and as we understand it, they crossed the Atlantic together. It was while cruising the Caribbean that the plan evolved to head farther west into the vast Pacific — where they should have no trouble finding worthy subject matter for their documentaries.

Nora J — Ganley Pacemaker 40
Paul & Jane Teen, Lyttelton, NZL

When New Zealanders go cruising, they tend to stay out for a while. Paul built their boat himself and launched her on his 50th birthday. "We're heading home now," says Jane, explaining that they took off in 1997. So, after transiting the Canal, it will be their first time in Pacific waters in 18 years!

Villomee — Beneteau 473
Trevor & Jan Henderson, Opuia, NZL

This Kiwi couple bought their sloop

in Long Island Sound two years ago, and had a splendid time exploring the Eastern Seaboard. The highlight, says Jan, was cruising the coast of Maine. They also spent time in the Caribbean, but other than Cuba, they found most of it to be "too bloody crowded."



Cuba is less crowded.

Previous to this trip, they cruised from New Zealand north to the tropics and back for 14 years.

Van Kedisi — Prout 39
Dick & Marian Leighton
Vancouver, BC, CAN

"In 1970 I left New Zealand for Canada," explains Dick, "so returning after 46 years away will be very special." Upon their arrival 'back home', they'll base their cat in Whangarei, in the North Island's beautiful Bay of Islands.

SwiftSure — Leopard 47 cat
Lanny Pirtle & Ginger Hawkins
Laguna Beach, CA

Both Lanny and Ginger are avid scuba divers who've sampled the diving in many exotic venues around the world during the past 25 years, including parts of French Polynesia. But they can hardly wait to return to some of those places aboard their big cat and explore them at a leisurely pace. "We have no return plans whatsoever," claims Lanny, "We might just stop somewhere and never come back."



'SwiftSure' sailors.

They bought *SwiftSure* in Puerto Rico, and island-hopped to Panama from there.

Velindra — Oyster 37
Zoe & Charlie Darwall, GBR

Zoe and Charlie met while sailing, and at some point she remembers saying, "If I could do anything I wanted, I would sail around the world." Turned out that was his longtime dream, too. That said, it was Zoe who pulled the trigger: "I guess you could say I initiated this, because I bought the boat while he was out of

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town!"

They set sail from England last April, and don't expect to be back home until 2018. She's a primary school teacher and he's a merchant mariner, so they hope to supplement their cruising kitty with stints of working along the way.



Charlie & Zoe of 'Velindra'.

Lumiel — Fountaine Pajot 46 Trish & John Elkins Bristol, GBR

When we met Trish and John, they'd just arrived from Cuba. "When we were ready to clear out," John explained, "the immigration official rowed out to *Lumiel*" to deliver their exit papers. "I think more people travel by horse and cart there than anywhere else on the planet."

They bought this cat two years ago in Martinique, and they've been all over the Eastern Caribbean since, including Haiti, where their son sponsors a child.

"We were very disappointed by Caribbean coral," says John, who's originally from Brisbane. "So we're really looking forward to getting back to our part of the ocean."



Eager for pristine coral.

We met a huge crowd of sailors at Shelter Bay's Tahiti Bon Voyage, which was generously supported by Tahiti Tourisme.

Freewheel — Tayana 55 Magnus & Annelie Kristiansson, GIB

When your cruising experience is as vast and varied as this Swedish couple's, a 4,000-mile ocean crossing isn't that big a deal. Years ago they cruised from Sweden to Turkey, including a side trip into the Black Sea. Since buying this boat in 2011 they've sailed all over the Med and Caribbean.

After island-hopping across the South Pacific they intend to cross the Indian Ocean to South Africa, then sail up the South Atlantic to the Caribbean and on to New York where they'll sell the boat. Nothin' to it, right? Like so many Puddle Jumpers that we meet, Magnus says he's wanted to sail around the world since he was a small boy.

Kristiane — Oceanic 46 Patty & Carolyn Mitchell Sydney, AUS

Patty and Carolyn bought this boat 12 years ago in Sydney, the place they call home, and they've cruised far and wide since then.

"We're getting older, but I hate to give up this lifestyle," says Patty, "but, actually I think the best part of our circumnavigation is still yet to come."

On their way to French Polynesia, they'll make a three-day visit to the Galapagos.



The crew of 'Kristiane'.

Starry Horizons — F-P 44 cat David & Amy Alton, Kemah, TX

If you want to be envious of someone's good fortune, you might consider David and Amy, both 31, who not only



Meet the young crew of 'Starry Horizons.'

are among the youngest boat owners in the fleet, but have one of the newest boats. They picked up *Starry Horizons* brand-spankin'-new from the Fountaine Pajot factory in France in mid-October and sailed her across the pond to Florida.

"Yes, we're going around the world on a five-year circuit," explains Amy (aka 'the admiral').

"I wish I could say that this has been a lifelong dream," says David, "but I had never sailed before I met Amy six years ago." As you might have guessed, Amy comes from a family of sailors with ties to the industry.

Miss Catana — Catana 42 cat Marita & Gary Pennicott Hobart, Tasmania, AUS

"I never had dreams of sailing," explains Marita, "but on my first date with Gary he told me he wanted to go

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Heading back to Tazzy.

sailing around the world. It was like a test, and I knew if I said 'no' he wouldn't want to go out with me. So I said, 'yes!' But it was really a joke because I couldn't even swim."

She and Gary have had many adventures on the water since then. One favorite memory was when they were sailing in Tunisia — they never saw another cruising boat there. Gary bribed a guard to let them into a historic, yet condemned, castle, where he staged an elaborate birthday dinner party for her.

They too bought their boat direct from the factory in France.

Margarita — Westsail 32 The Christensen family San Francisco

"My game plan is to sleep all the way across the Pacific while Brian steers," jokes Tim. His 10-month-old son Brian was born in Panama, and is probably the youngest Puddle Jumper in this year's fleet.

"I've dreamed of crossing the Pacific for years," says Tim. "The trip got delayed, but now we're back at it again."

He and his wife, Nok, set off from Florida a while back, and spent a long time enjoying all that Panama has to offer — including good prenatal care. They are ultimately headed to Southeast Asia and Thailand, Nok's home country.

Star Charger IV — Oyster 435 Alasdair & Gill Maclean London, GBR

"After reading sailing books when I was eight or nine, I wanted to learn to

sail so I could sail around the world," explains Alasdair. "But the local sailing club wouldn't allow me to start learning until I was 12."

By contrast, Gill says she never had

any desire to sail around the world until she met him, but now she's three years into a grand adventure. "We got married on

March 16 of 2013, moved onto the boat a week later, and set sail shortly after that."



They'll stop at Pitcairn.

Unlike any others we met, they plan to stop at Pitcairn Island on the way to French Polynesia.

Seute Deern — Reinke 52 Niels Frommann & David Kory Cape Town, ZAF

Niels explains that this unusual boat name comes from a rare Northern German dialect, and means Sweet Girl. "The term resonated with my uncle who had it custom built in South Africa, based on a German design," explains Niels. "It was his longtime dream to go sailing. But after 12 years of it, he called it quits, so I picked up where he left off — I couldn't say no."

We were surprised to see that Bay Area adventurer David Kory was Niels' crew. He is undoubtedly one of the most

Our second PPJ fiesta was co-hosted by the Balboa YC, which is perched near the Pacific end of the Canal.



Niels and David of 'Seute Deern'.

experienced offshore sailors in the fleet. Believe it or not, this will be his 14th trip to Tahiti. "Niels helped me sail my Catalina 38 *Barking Spider* back from the 2003 Transpac. Since then he's done charter trips with me, and has crewed on races with me for years."

Temptress of Down — Jeanneau 47 Kevin & Susie Harris, Belfast, GBR

In the UK every boat must have a unique name. So lest there be any confusion, this is the *Temptress* from County Down in Northern Ireland.

"We're ultimately heading to Singapore," says Susie, explaining that they've lived and worked there previously.

"The funny thing is," explained Kevin, "we were sitting in Grenada talking about the best way to get back there and we realized that the distance if we went east across



Taking the 'easy way' home.



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the Atlantic would be 10,940 miles, and if we went west across the Pacific it would be 10,980 — only a 40-mile difference. So naturally, we're taking the downwind route to the west."

**Free Spirit V — Dolphin 460 cat
Belinda Schoeffel & Ken Norris
Sydney, AUS**

The Aussies we meet in Panama often amaze us with their thirst for travel. Belinda explained that after buying this boat in Grenada, she and Ken sailed up the Eastern Caribbean chain to Cuba, then all the way up the East Coast to the Saint Lawrence Seaway, through the Great Lakes, down the Mississippi, around the other side of Cuba, to Jamaica, the Caymans, Eastern Mexico, Belize, Guatemala and Panama. And she's not tired of the cruising life yet. The couple plans to take two years crossing the Pacific before finally returning to Sydney.

**Enchantress — Aphrodite 42
David & Susan Simpson
Aberdeen, GBR**

"We're actually on our second circumnavigation," explains Susan.



They're on lap #2.

"We went 'round in 2009 to 2011. But this time we decided to go more slowly and enjoy more sights, including New Zealand." Two highlights of the first trip were the Galapagos and the pristine lagoons of the Tuamotus.

**Chatd'O — Manta 42 cat
Bill & Martha Gervan, CAN**

Bill, a Canadian, and his Colombian wife Martha are among the many cruisers who linger in Panama for years. It's friendly, inexpensive, and for a tiny country seems to have a wealth of unspoiled anchorages to explore.

Their planned route to Tahiti is an unusual one. They plan to sail up to Hawaii first via the old Clipper Route, then down to the Marquesas from there.

**Beach House — Switch 51 cat
Scott Stolnitz & Nikki Woodrow
Marina del Rey, CA**

"This trip is essentially my 'swan song' for long-distance sailing. Or at least I suspect so. When we get to the



Meet Nikki & Scott of 'Beach House'.

East Coast of Australia, Nikki will have sailed around the world, which was always one of her goals and dreams.

"Even she, being an Aussie/Brit, was inspired by Robin Lee Graham [*Dove*], as many of us were. I'm the elder statesman now. I have 46,000 miles just on this boat, and probably over 100,000 lifetime miles."

Scott left SoCal on Christmas Day, 2007, and has been 'out there' ever since.

**Quatra — Orana 44 cat
The Monjol-Delphine family
La Rochelle, FRA**

"We have spent almost three years now enjoying the Caribbean," says Adrien (dad). Along the way, he and his wife Audrey are home-schooling their boys Axel, 15, and Arsene, 9, which apparently is easier some days than others. "That's one reason we are going to Tahiti," Audrey explains. Once there, the boys can attend regular classes in



The happy French crew of 'Quatra'.

French. "And," says little Arsene with a mischievous smile, "I hear the girls there are very beautiful!"

**Amarula — Crowther 60 cat
Lynne Sands & Eric Toyer, GIB**

Lynne, an Aussie, and Eric, who's English, got together while both were working in Africa in the early 1990s running exotic charters, such as trips from Dar es Salaam to Zanzibar, Tanzania. Later, they went to Australia together and built their 60-ft cat there to a Lock Crowther design. They set sail in 2001 to

circumnavigate and are just completing the lap now. Lynne says, "The highlights up until now have been Madagascar, Chagos, Tanzania and Mozambique."

Catharyn, their newly recruited English crew, crossed the Atlantic in another boat in November, and now "can't wait" to sail the Pacific.

**Shelanu — Jeanneau 42
Nimrod Palzur, ISR**

"I've dreamed of sailing the Pacific since I was a little boy growing up in Israel," says Nimrod. He and two sailing buddies bought this sloop in Greece, cruised the Med, Adriatic and Caribbean, and are now heading west to Australia.

**Folavoalh — Catana 47 cat
Luc Malejac & Nelly Jouannot
Concarneau, FRA**

"We've come from France, through

the Caribbean — Cuba, the Virgin Islands, Haiti, Guatemala, Colombia — and now to Polynesia," says Luc nonchalantly, as though it were a completely ordinary accomplishment. Then we understood why: "Actually, this is our 16th year of sailing, through the Med, to Africa and Brazil, on different boats. And we think it might be another 20 years before we're tired of it!"



Luc & Nelly may never stop.

**Eliana — Adams 40
David Isom, Melbourne, AUS**

This cheerful Aussie is two-thirds of the way through a singlehanded circumnavigation. "I'm heading back to Australia now, to complete the loop," he explains. "But I'm in the fourth year of what was supposed to be a two-year circumnavigation.

"Being an Australian," he says, "this is something I have wanted to do all my life."

**Pia — Three Seas 40
Brian & Yoko Takai-Ozzard
Vancouver, BC, CAN**

"I've been out boating for 40 years," says Brian, a Brit originally, who often finds work on megayachts doing electrical and mechanical jobs. Yoko has been sailing with him for eight years now, and they both like the idea of staying in French Polynesia and working for a while — he on yachts and she as a translator for Japanese tourists. Because of Brian's

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British passport, they can linger as long as they like (as can all EU passport holders).

Arica — Sirius 38

Alan Berrington, Kerry, IRL

As he sails west toward Australia, Irish Alan is recruiting crew for the various legs. For the trip to the Galapagos, he'll be joined by an affable Scotsman named Martin: "I actually lied about my qualifications to get the job," he laughs.

Alan says, "I've had two longtime dreams relating to this trip. The first to cross the Atlantic. The second to cross the Pacific to Australia." His beautiful German sloop should get them there in style.

Jade Adelaide — Admiral 38

The Hannell-Hubbard family Port Adelaide, AUS

Father (Alex Hannell), mother (Michelle Hubbard), son Noah, 10, and daughter Fern, 8, all seem quite happy to be heading off across the Pacific, but this cruising plan was definitely Alex's idea. "I eventually gave in," recalls Michelle, "after a long time spent lying in bed with a man who was constantly highlighting passages in sailing books and marking pages with Post-It notes —



These Brazilians live the 'Dulce Vida'.

crew, can't wait to test the surf breaks all across the Pacific and beyond.

Meanwhile, Tina (mom), their daughter Cecilia, 11, and son Elito, 7, all seem thrilled to be part of the adventure.

Laros — Hylas 44

Johnny & Debs Semberg Southampton, GBR

Debs explains, "It's been our long-term plan to retire and sail from England to Australia, where I'm from."

But they have a very special stop to make along the way: "It will be our 30th wedding anniversary August 2," she says, "so we're hoping to be at Plantation Island — where we first met — on the second of August this year. We might even renew our vows."

Ichiban — Jeanneau 43

Simon Hess & Vitus Tschupp, Basilea, CHE

Simon and co-captain Vitus have been friends since their kindergarten days in Switzerland.

"I've also always wanted to see the world," says Simon, and Vitus seems to be equally eager. They bought this sloop in Sicily, did some work on it in Genoa, and now they're heading around the world with a two-and-a-half-year timetable. "By then," says Vitus, "we'll be out of money and will have to go back to work."

Elas — Beneteau 44

The Kaufmann family, Basel, CHE

"When I was three or four years old I had a pirate ship that I loved to play with," recalls Kim (dad), "and I'm sure that started my dreams of doing this." Luckily for him, his wife Claudia, and daughters Lenja, 11, and Neele, 9, went along with the plan.

The cheerful Swiss family bought their sloop in Croatia, and headed west from there in July. "We've been sailing very fast up until this point," says Claudia, "but now we'd like to slow down and

stay for two seasons in French Polynesia. Nice plan.

Balikcil — Jeanneau 45

Elif Keskin & Mustafa Yurbulmus Marmaris, TUR

Elif and Mustafa were among the most cheerful folks we met during our long stint of interviews. and why shouldn't they be? They're living their dream of sailing around the world — no doubt Mustafa was the primary driver of this plan, as he works as a sailing instructor along Turkey's famous Turquoise Coast. Their timetable? Open-ended.

Blowin' Bubbles — Dufour 45

Shelley & Kyle Benger, ON, CAN

As the name implies, both Shelley and Kyle are avid scuba divers. For 20 years they compensated for chilly Canadian winters by spending summers running a dive shop in Cozumel, Mexico, and still today, their boat carries a compressor and 10 sets of dive gear.

"When our children were growing up we told them that when the youngest went off to college we were taking off," explains Kyle. "They didn't believe us at first, but when the for-sale sign went up on the house, they knew we were serious." Their cruising schedule is open-ended.



They like 'Blowin' Bubbles'.

Catarina — Catana 431 cat Rainer van Beckum & Denise Gatt Leer, DEU

As we said, you meet sailors from all over the world in Panama. Rainer and Denise live in Malta, although he is from a German town near the Baltic Sea. They crossed the pond with the 2013 ARC rally and have been cruising the Caribbean ever since.

Now, though, they'll head off to the Galapagos, then west as far as New Zealand. After that? It's anybody's guess.

Wow. So many fascinating sailors. We can't wait to hear about their passages when we catch up with many of them at the Tahiti-Moorea Sailing Rendez-vous (June 24-26). So look for lots more PPJ coverage in the coming months.

— andy



Heading Down Under on 'Jade Adelaide'.

Hal Roth's *How to Sail Around the World* was probably the biggest contributor to his dreams."

They set out from Turkey three years ago, and will probably be out for another two, home-schooling the kids along the way.

Dulce Vida — Sea Runner 37 tri The Burle family, BRA

This Brazilian family was all smiles when we met them. The father, Helio, explained that they bought their vintage tri three years ago in the Sea of Cortez, and have been living the sailor's life ever since — sailing and surfing, that is. Helio and his friend Paulo, who's along as