

PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP RECAP—

Way back in the mid-1700s, when the first European explorers stumbled onto Tahiti and her sister isles, the vast region we now call French Polynesia began to earn its reputation as an exotic 'paradise on earth' populated by friendly, bronze-skinned people who lived in harmony with their lush volcanic is-

rally that we've been promoting and reporting on for more than 20 years.

As in years past, this year's Pacific Puddle Jump fleet set sail for French Polynesia from a variety of ports along the West Coast of the Americas — the first departing in mid-February and the last shoving off in late May. Among the 210 registered boats, at least two sailed directly from San Francisco, while one left from Chile, several left from Ecuador, and a half dozen left from Hawaii, which is rare. In all, the fleet hailed from homeports in 20 different countries.

Given such variations, it's tough to generalize about the sailing conditions encountered by this year's fleet. But based on the reports we received, it's safe to say that many boats were blessed with more consistent winds and less onboard drama than in many previous years — this seems especially true regarding the boats that set sail from Mexico. (Every year, the most popular jumping-off points are Banderas Bay, Mexico, and Balboa, Panama.) As an example, the Oregon-based Hylas 49 *Hylite* had a dream trip that any passagemaker would envy:

"We had a good, quick passage — better than we expected. We left La Cruz on a strong Norther out of the Sea of Cortez and transitioned seamlessly to solid northeast trades about three days out, which was wonderful. We had solid, consistent wind all the way to the ITCZ.

"We went a bit further west in the NE trades than most and it worked out well. We motored for 34 hours in the ITCZ and crossed the equator at 131°W. We picked up the SE trades (which were actually running E to NE at that time), just below the equator, and had a beam

to broad reach all the way to Hiva Oa. Our passage time was 18 days and 11 hours."

At the opposite extreme, the Victoria, BC-based Roberts 44 *AfterMath* was forced to endure a miserably slow passage after she lost her hydraulic steering and her crew was forced to steer with the emergency rudder from within the

"Another surprise was how little fuel we used. We had wind almost the whole way across the doldrums."

aft cabin — with no forward visibility. But many fleet members monitored her progress via HF radio and both *Cool Change* and *Harkequin* diverted to give her much-needed water. *Aftermath* eventually reached Nuku Hiva safely.

Another boat caused even greater concern among fleet members — and Coast Guard rescue personnel. Shaun Young and a friend left Hilo, Hawaii, bound for the Marquesas on May 10 aboard the 29-ft sloop *Windweaver*, expecting to cover that 1,900-mile distance in about 20 days. When they didn't, Young's family became concerned. The Coast Guard's JRCC Honolulu got involved, as did several South Pacific net controllers, but *Windweaver's* whereabouts remained a complete mystery until the two men finally made landfall at Hiva Oa June 21 — 43 days after departure.

"I am so sorry to have worried everyone," Shaun wrote us after arrival." He explained that after angling to the SE from Hilo, they turned south and "the boat took a hell of a beating," which damaged the roller furling system, and broke both the bowsprit stay and the port aft shroud. Later, they came dangerously close to running out of water. Although they survived the ordeal, their situation was not helped by the fact that the little sloop was equipped only with a VHF radio; no SSB or satellite communication devices.

Every year we poll the Puddle Jump fleet to get a feeling for what the passage was like. As you'll read below, no two experiences were alike.

How did your passagemaking



Stylin' in the islands. New Zealander Deyell Cameron of the Beneteau 41 'Boombbox' had an all-family crew.

lands and the bountiful lagoons that surround them. Given such descriptions, it's no wonder that still today the five archipelagos that make up this French Overseas Territory remain high on the must-see lists of cruising sailors all over the world.

We're happy to report that hundreds of them realize that dream every spring by making the Pacific Puddle Jump passage — a loosely formed cruising

Circumnavigators Ross and Jo Blackman of 'Sojourn II' demonstrate the ease of their doubleheadsail 'TradeWinder' rig off Moorea.



LIVIN' THE DREAM

experience differ from the expectations you had before the trip? Were there any surprises?

Cool Change — "We weren't prepared for the violent movement of the boat during high-wind days. But we were happily surprised by the degree of variation in wind patterns, currents and sea states along the way. We thought it might be monotonous, but it wasn't."

"Another surprise was how little fuel we used. We had wind almost the whole way across the doldrums."

Imagination — "We had light winds for the first week and I learned to be happy to be making only six knots. But the last two days the wind was more than 30 knots and I was very happy to slow the boat to less than six knots."

"The critical element of making sure that the crew is fully compatible. I had to

Mid-ocean respite. *Giselle Miller of the Hans Christian 38 'Sedna' celebrated crossing the equator with a dip in the deep blue sea.*



COURTESY SEDNA

ask one member of the crew to leave the boat at our first port, Nuku Hiva."

Platina II — "Having left from Panama, the coolness of the Humboldt Current was a surprise. The nights were cool enough to wear jackets, and the nutrient-rich water left a slimy slick and gooseneck barnacles on the hull. Wildlife was present every day — lots of birds, dolphins, fish, whales, certainly more than we saw crossing the Atlantic. In the South Pacific, we saw less trash floating than we expected. We were pleasantly surprised by being disconnected from the news, and we gained a much higher level of confidence than expected."

"We expected squalls but had none. We were surprised by how inaccurate GRIB files (GFS model) were until we reached 5°S, when they became more accurate."

Sedna — "We did not expect the downwind sailing to be so uncomfortable. We had great wind for the first 10 days, but needed to go dead downwind, which made living down below unbearable at times. Cooking underway was surprisingly hard, with food and utensils flying around. We also had a harder time than anticipated enjoying the journey because we were so worried about breakdowns."

Banyan — "The biggest surprise was how little of our supplies we ate and how well our fresh veggies and fruit lasted, thanks to the techniques of many who came before and shared their advice. We arrived in Atuona, Hiva Oa, after 22 days and still had fresh limes, carrots, cabbage, eggs and jicama. But we could have tripled our supply of 50 oranges and 30 apples. The



girls consumed those in the first week and none went bad.

"Other surprises were that we made it in 22 days. And how much we used the spinnaker. We were glad to have it."

TaDa! — "We had no surprises. It was pretty much exactly as everyone had told us it would be: nice trade winds, great weather, nothing too rough, the occasional squall, and some small running repairs along the way."

Tioga — "We expected the trade winds to arrive sooner and be more steady. The first two thirds of the trip involved more sail changes, playing the angles to maintain boat speed and keep the sails from flogging. We also naively imagined the strong trades that eventually filled in would be more peaceful, rather than the roller coaster ride it was for our final three to five days in the Northern Hemisphere."

"On the plus side, crossing the doldrums was less intense than anticipated. A few minor squalls, one just enough to fill our water tanks, then nine hours of calm and we were through!"

Uno Mas — "Expected much worse conditions. But we motored more than anticipated: 8 days of 23."

Temujin — "On our trip up from Panama, we were on the wind far more than expected. But we made better time than expected. We encountered a 1.5-knot counter current at 2°S. There were more fish in the open ocean than anticipated and we came within sight of more boats than expected — all fishing."

Long passages are often a balance of highs and lows. What were some of the high points, or low points, of your crossing?

Banyan — "High point: Departure

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COURTESY SEA CASA

Crewman Chase Jackson shows off the remains of his catch aboard the vintage Hunter 31 'Sea Casa' — one of the smallest boats in the fleet.

day — actually leaving after all that prep! And, a 169nm 24 hr run!

Low point: A 10-foot-long rip along the foot of the genoa on day 16 after the furling line parted from the drum in a squall.

"Generally, I got sick of constantly moving, never getting enough sleep, spilling things, and whacking myself constantly. Generally, high points came close after the lows — usually associated with a sunrise, a pod of dolphins or a clear, star-filled night.

"A daily high point was talking to other boats via SSB and also emailing the boats that were close to us. Happily, we had three other boats, all good friends, who left on almost the same day. We all managed to be no more than a few hundred miles apart and communicated via email daily. This was a huge help to our morale."

Cool Change — "Crossing the equator was a high point. It happened on a lovely, clear day with moderate winds and calm seas, and felt like a huge milestone.

"The low point was when Cindy was thrown down the companionway stairs twice in a row during heavy seas."

Chariba — "A high was spinnaker sailing a thousand miles from the nearest shore in the company of seabirds. Lows were getting becalmed where we expected trade winds, the big swells from northern storms that seemed to stay with us most of the trip, and sleep deprivation."

Imagination — "The highlight for me was being far from land and light on a clear, moonless night. The stars were so bright that the lower ones looked like nearby anchor lights."

Miss Tilly — "The high points were the unending horizons during the day, and stars that went from horizon to horizon, disappearing into the sea, at night. The beautiful sunrises and sunsets were also great. We also particularly liked the thought that we were thousands of miles from any land; it was a unique feeling!

"The lows centered around one very bad crew member!"

Platina II — "A high point was coming to the realization that we have a high level of hope and appreciation for how incredible this beautiful planet is, especially during this time of turbulent politics. Other highs included arriving at the spectacular island of Fatu Hiva, and surfing the boat down ocean waves.

"A low point was when the wind was light and the cross swell left us thrashing the sails and the rig, which tested everyone's patience."

Sedna — "Highs included stopping at San Benedicto (280 miles off the Mexican mainland), and doing some epic diving while waiting for a weather window to make the Pacific crossing.

"Another high was swimming across the equator! It was flat, calm doldrums the day we crossed, so we stopped the engine, threw out the swim ladder, took saltwater showers and swam around the boat.

"Lows included cooking and doing dishes. When I heard that a friend brought paper plates and boil-a-bag meals for the entire passage, I almost died. I cooked most days, and did not enjoy any of it. One particular low was the day I tried to bake bread. Two words: flour explosion! Another low was motor-ing for two days straight. But even worse was having a little bit of wind along with swells so large we couldn't keep the sails full."

TaDa! — "We were fortunate in having a good crossing with relatively few problems. We enjoyed good weather, amazing sunsets, beautiful starlit evenings and great food from our onboard chef, Andrew. The incessant rolling when running downwind in light winds was probably the most frustrating part of the whole trip."

Tioga — "The low point was when, on our first departure, the 3/4-inch-diameter bolt that held on all four lower shrouds sheared off, leaving

us with an unsupported rig 120 miles from land.

"High points were dropping all sails and sleeping for nine hours during a light-air patch in the doldrums, also crossing the equator, and the glorious sailing conditions in the southeast trades."

Uno Mas — "Lows: We got beat up going SW from the Galapagos, motoring for two days into the wind and what seemed to be directly into two knots of current.

"Fatu Hiva is beyond belief, the most beautiful place we have ever been to!"

(*Uno Mas* is a 41-ft cat that doesn't like going into seas.) Odd, but boredom was a low as we used a code zero and genoa 90% of the trip, which required very little sail adjustment for days."

Temujin — "High points: a 188-mile day, a two-knot favorable current for two days, a 419-mile spinnaker run, and landing two very large mahi-mahi.

"Lows: Unfavorable winds from Panama City to the Galapagos, light winds with large swell nearing the Marquesas, and losing lots of fishing gear."

Did you celebrate crossing the equator? If so, how?

Banyan — "Cameron dressed up as **When you see buffed, bare-breasted men and beautiful women in grass skirts, you'll know you have arrived. Inset: Six zeros at the equator.**



LATITUDE / ANDY

Neptune (egg crate beard, boat hook staff), Annie baked an 'Ecuador cake' and we had sparkling cider."

Platina II — "Three men donned sequin wraps and sparkly tiaras, and made an offering to Neptune and Poseidon, and a toast of champagne while listening to *Southern Cross* by Crosby, Stills & Nash."

Tioga — "We drank a bottle of bubbles, took a quick dip, and ate bacon — and shared some with Neptune, too."

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

Cool Change — "Relief, and an overwhelming feeling of accomplishment."

Miss Tilly — "It was pretty emotional, since there were times we weren't sure we would make it. In fact, since we had lost all of our power generation except our engine, fuel became the critical issue for generating power and, thus, also making water. We actually ran out of fuel 13 miles from Taiohae Bay, Nuku Hiva, so had to put the dinghy in the water at the mouth of the bay and tow the boat to the anchorage area in the middle of the night! We made it by the skin of our teeth!"

Hylite — "Landfall in Hiva Oa was near midnight so we couldn't see any-



thing, but the sweet aroma of wet earth, tropical jungle, and fruit trees was powerful as we entered the bay at Atuona. When we woke in the morning the view and feeling of arrival was exhilarating."

Platina II — "After we crossed the Atlantic, we each stated the first thing we smelled. One said cedar, one said grease, two said sewage (we will spare the name of the island). We did the same as we came around the corner of Fatu Hiva. We all smelled the most incredible, loamy, damp, nutrient-rich soil. The feeling was one of incredible accomplishment. It was life-affirming."

Sedna — "Initially, our landfall seemed a little uneventful. But when the clouds cleared around the mountain that towered over Atuona, it really

hit us."

TaDa! — "We had a great feeling of accomplishment. Two years earlier we had set this crossing as our goal, and it was amazing to finally arrive in French Polynesia."

Tioga — "We felt both excitement and nostalgia, as it felt like a chapter closing after 21 days of just the two of us being alone at sea. Unfortunately, we arrived around midnight and decided to heave-to until dawn, which meant keeping a careful eye on land which was so close!"

Temujin — "We were very excited, and very clean, as our arrivals coincided with an incredible rain shower."

Uno Mas — "We felt relief that a full night's sleep would finally happen. We'd done 3 hours on and 3 hours off the whole trip. We were a bit sad the trip was over."

Yana — "We were glad to have arrived without any problems. Scenery at the Bay of Virgins in Fatu Hiva is beyond belief, the most beautiful place we have ever been to!"

What advice would you give to future Puddle Jumpers?

Banyan — "Just do it! Bring lots of spares, sail conservatively and pick your crew carefully. The largest dramas out there seemed to be breakdowns and crew issues. Having an SSB is fun and expands your horizon. You also get to chat with people you really never thought you might chat with."

Cool Change — "Have dinner together every night as a way of checking in with each other. Be mentally prepared for a long journey. Keep good logs and/or journals because you will forget details otherwise."

Chariba — "Prepare your boat well and bring lots of spares. We double-handed, which worked out OK, but having a third hand would have meant getting eight hours of potentially uninterrupted sleep, which would have been huge."

Imagination — "Take your boat out in less than ideal conditions and get to know how it responds. We have sailed our catamaran on numerous occasions in strong winds and large seas while in the US and Caribbean to learn how

it responds. Although it wasn't always comfortable, we had a good understanding of what to expect when confronted by similar situations that we could not avoid."

Jade Akka — "Prepare well, be ready to manage breakages, and have fall-back plans in case vital things break."

Platina II — "Consider getting a long-



JULIE TURPIN

The Edinger family had a great time crossing the puddle aboard their Cross 42 'Defiance'. Seen here, daughter Annie trims the chute.

stay visa before departing (which allows you to stay for up to a year). Have fun. At a random time of each day, one of us would say "phrase of the day." It was the first thing that came to mind. We wrote them in our logbook to embrace the things we saw, felt and heard. We also committed to learning three new French words and three new Spanish words every day.

"Bring French Polynesian francs if you plan to stop at Fatu Hiva, as there is no bank machine at Baie des Vierges, and the *magasin* does not accept credit cards or any other currency.

"Keep your ditch bag(s) and EPIRB in the cockpit — friends had a fire and could barely reach the EPIRB under the companionway steps, nor the ditch bags under the salon table. Read lots of books. Keep a journal. Don't let the small stuff get to you. It can. Admire the color of the sea. Have a communication plan with someone on land: Text or email a daily position along with comments and thoughts. They are remarkably intrigued by the idea of sailing across an ocean. Text or email or SSB with fellow sailors for friendship and sometimes moral support.

"Most importantly, don't focus on an expected time of arrival until you can see your destination. When the GRIB files are inaccurate (and they can be), and the wind slacks, the disappointment is not

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worth it. You either live on your boat at anchor, on a dock or at sea. Enjoy living on your boat at sea and try not to focus on what it will be like when you reach your destination. Carry plenty of anchor chain, as anchorages in the South Pacific are often deep. Trust your instincts. Embrace the sense of freedom."

Sedna — "Learn some French! Don't listen to other cruisers who tell you that you can get by without it — it is so worth it to learn some French basics. I wish I had taken lessons before leaving."

"It's really hard to prepare mentally for the marathon that this is. There's really nothing that can prepare you for being uncomfortable in lots of swell for a month. Be aware before you leave that the term Coconut Milk Run doesn't mean it will be comfortable. It might be easy sailing, but it can be chronically

uncomfortable.

"Also, splurge and take occasional quick freshwater-rinse showers — it'll make you a new person on the water!"

TaDa! — "Prepare for the worst, and hope for the best! Don't overstress it though, it's easier than you think."

Uno Mas — "Time the first two weeks of weather for best conditions and constantly adjust for minimal wind/wave as you progress. We ended up crossing on 3°N, not 5° like most did. Take on more fuel than you expect to use. It's a blessing to have calm seas and motor downwind rather than getting beat up and unable to cook."

"Have a satellite texter/email and access to multiple weather models. It's good to hear support from friends/family

on the way. Bring lots of music; our MP3 player stores 2,000 songs."

Temujin — "Get a very large ocean fishing reel with lots of 100+ lb test line."

Yana — "Do weather routing and try not to sail too close to the rhumbline: Sail south until you meet the trades. It saves a lot of fuel and is far more fun!"

We congratulate each and every sailor who made the crossing this year, all of whom now personify the phrase 'livin' the dream' for friends back home.

As the 2018 PPJ fleet ponders where to sail next, yet another armada of tropical dreamers is now making preparations for jumping the puddle next spring. If you'd like to join them check out the PPJ website www.pacificpuddlejumps.com.

— **latitude/andy**

2018 PACIFIC PUDDLE JUMP — PASSAGE DATA

Although not a huge number of Puddle Jumpers responded to our survey this year, those who did give a representative sampling of passage data.

Boat Name	Boat Make & Length	Captain & Crew	Boat's Homeport	Departed From & Date	Made Landfall	Days of Crossing	Miles of Crossing	Equator X Long.	Engine Hours	Best 24 Hours	Worst 24 Hours	High Wd Speed	# of Fish Caught	Breakage & Breakdowns
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From Mexico to French Polynesia

Alexandra	Bavaria 37	Stuart Corbett	Amsterdam, NDL	Puerto Vallarta 5/17	Nuku Hiva 6/12	27 days	3,000 nm	130°W	101 hrs	131 nm	38 nm	35 kts	n/a	Seam parted in headsail. Mainsail car snapped
Banyan	Mason 43	The Vawter family	Napa, CA	Puerto Vallarta 4/13	Hiva Oa 5/4	22 days	2,750 nm	128°W	15 hrs	169 nm	91 nm	35 kts	9	rip in genoa
Cool Change	Pac Seacraft 31	Rick & Cindy Patrinnis	Sausalito, CA	Puerto Vallarta 3/27	Hiva Oa 4/23	27 days	2,940 nm	130°W	39 hrs	140 nm	69 nm	28 kts	2	head door problem, cockpit mic
Charabia	F-P 38 cat	Mark & Helen Humphreys	Jacksonville, FL	Puerto Vallarta 2/24	Hilo, HI 3/22	26 days	2,797 nm	n/a	86 hrs	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	(*second leg continued below)
				*Oahu, HI 5/1	Rangiroa 5/20	19 days	2,402 nm	147°W	44 hrs	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	saildrive seals failed, plus problems with autopilot, wind instrument, upper shroud, stitching on the bimini windows, fuel filter housing, frozen steering system pulley
Hylite	Hylas 49	Old Moon LLC	Coos Bay, OR	Puerto Vallarta 3/17	Hiva Oa 4/3	18 days	2,900 nm	131°W	42 hrs	206 nm	108 nm	30 kts	0	topping lift chafed through at masthead, one freshwater pump failed (we had spare), chafe on spinnaker halyard but caught it before it broke
Jade Akka	Bruce Roberts 542	Thoms & Isabel Zwicker	Basel, SWZ	La Paz n/a	Hiva Oa n/a	21 days	n/a	135°W	18 hrs	n/a	n/a	32 kts	2	problems with nearly new and little-used Spectra watermaker
Sedna	Hans Christian 38	Clifton & Giselle Miller	Juneau, AK	San Benedicto 3/16	Hiva Oa 4/6	21 days	2,700 nm	128°W	100 hrs	150 nm	85 nm	35 kts	3	reef line chafe

From Panama (or via Galapagos) to French Polynesia

Platina II	Hylas 48	J David Greene & JC Lyons	Toronto, CAN	Las Perlas PAN, 3/21	Fatu Hiva 4/17	27 days	3,874 nm	87°W	38 hrs	177 nm	102 nm	31 kts	1	lost 5 fishing lures and 2 spools of 50-pd test fishing line
TaDa!	Endeavour 40	Dunbar Lewis & Joy Lewis	Fort Lauderdale, FL	Galapagos 4/19	Hiva Oa 5/12	23 days	3,100 nm	89°W	48 hr	160nm	100 nm	25 kts	3	shorted batteries, burst water pipe caused all our water to be pumped into bilge (fortunately happened at the end of the trip)
Temujin	Tartan 34	Kennon Jones & Eric Bihl	Annapolis, MD	Panama City, PAN 5/19	Hiva Oa 6/18	29 days	4,056 nm	100°W	6 hrs	188 nm	51 nm	30 kts	9	small rip in heavy wind kite, bent spinnaker pole, broken jaw on whisker pole, one stanchion unbedded, gummed up steering bearing
Kia Ora	Beneteau 473	John & Frances Garner	Fremantle, AUS	Coronado, PAN 4/18	Nuku Hiva 5/21	33 days	4,042 nm	92°W	138 hrs	154 nm	79 nm	36 kts	5	rivets failed on the boom that held the reefing lines, shackle on the traveller replaced

Other Routes

Kokopelli	Hylas 46	Brian Black & Mizzy Lewis	Gm Cove Spgs, FL	Caraquez, ECU n/a	Hiva Oa n/a	23 days	n/a	n/a	8 hrs	170 nm	120 nm	28 kts	0	alternator drive belt
Imagination	Leopard 42	John & Lorela Hess	Annapolis, MD	Caraquez, ECU 4/12	Easter Is 4/28	16 days	2,369 nm	80°W	65 hrs	173 nm	118 nm	39 kts	5	Downward facing escape hatch latches broke due to pounding seas; installed electric pump to evacuate water entering leaky hatch for the remainder of the voyage; repaired latches until hatch replacement at next haul out. Rivets broke on end cap of boom at the gooseneck due to the boom twisting in light winds and large seas. Repaired at sea.
Miss Tilly	Beneteau 45	Richard Little	Marina Del Rey, CA	Marina Del Rey 3/5	Nuku Hiva 3/31	27 days	3,200 nm	131°W	40 hrs	160 nm	30 nm	27 kts	1	Cummins genset failed after 20 hours of use. Watt & Sea hydro-generator holder deformed, allowing it to come out of mounting fixture so it couldn't be used. Fuel/battery/water-level instrument proved to be too inaccurate to use. Iridium Go stopped sending/receiving texts, didn't allow emails and wouldn't allow blog posts. Staysail furler broke apart.