

Ahoy Puddle Jumpers,
Please take a few minutes to read the following important announcements.

Loosening of Restrictions

Yesterday, in a joint statement by the President and High Commissioner of French Polynesia, it was announced that the ban has been lifted on traveling between islands and atolls of the territory's five archipelagos. This means, for example, that cruisers who have been confined to their boats in the Marquesas Islands may now travel freely to any island in that archipelago. However, it does not mean that boats now in the Marquesas can also cruise the Tuamotus, Society Islands, etc. But there are indications that all restrictions on inter-island travel may be lifted soon.

That said, there are still some very fundamental policy decisions to be made by politicians and administrators regarding this year's fleet of visiting international yachts — including members of the Pacific Puddle Jump and Arc World Rallies. As many of you know, since mid-March French Polynesia has been allowing boats to make landfall on a case-by-case basis, in order to make repairs, fuel up and re-provision, functioning essentially as the only available harbor of refuge in the area, because most island nations to the west simply closed their frontiers to new arrivals when the COVID-19 threat spread worldwide.

To our knowledge, however, none of those boats have been allowed to actually clear in, as they would in a normal year. And until that issue is addressed, none of them — we assume — will be allowed to circulate between the islands, or make future plans based on the length of their visas, as they would in a normal year.

We anticipate, however, that these administrative issues will be sorted out very soon. We are told that marine industry representatives are working hard to insure that government policy-makers understand that, A) all visiting cruisers have proven their good health through weeks-long quarantines while at sea and at anchor, and B) cruisers are not only eager to spend money on shore side goods and services, but in the absence of cruise ships, income from cruisers this year may be more important than ever.

Here in the Marquesas — where I am writing you from my boat Little Wing — some boats that had cleared in before the lockdown are beginning to up-anchor and explore neighboring islands.

Others opted out of the uncertain state of limbo here and sailed on to Hawaii to wait out the pandemic and reassess their options.

Now that the peak of the crisis appears to have passed, we will keep you informed of additional developments and policy changes. We are very happy to finally have some good news to report!

Where Have You Been Sheltering?

Because reactions to the pandemic accelerated at precisely the time when Pacific Puddle Jumpers would normally have been starting their passages to Polynesia, less than half of the registered PPJ boats have made the crossing, wisely opting to stay put in a safe place and monitor developments in the islands.

We know about all the PPJ boats who passed through Nuku Hiva, but we are very curious to know about the rest of you.

Please tell us:

- Where have you been 'sheltering' since mid-March (aboard your boat or otherwise)?
- How have you been passing the time?
- Are you still considering a late-season crossing?
- If South Pacific island nations open their doors again, how far do you think you'll travel this year?

Send replies to Andy Turpin - andyturpinatlarge@gmail.com

Thoughts on Late-Season Crossings

Now that the idea of inter-island cruising is looking a bit more possible in the weeks ahead, we're sure that some of you will consider making late-season crossings.

Such decisions are yours alone to make. We would encourage you to do your homework, however, and consult with knowledgeable sources, be they highly experienced friends or professional weather gurus — especially if you will be traveling in north latitudes, where the Eastern Pacific Hurricane Season has begun.

Every year there are a few stragglers within the PPJ fleet, who, for whatever reason, are not able to set sail until late May, June or even July. Last season, for example, Michael Berry of the San Francisco-based Passport 42 Peregrine set sail from his homeport on July 10. He arrived in the Marquesas 49 days later, unharmed but weary, having dodged a tropical storm and two hurricanes along his route.

While he probably wouldn't try to talk anyone out of following in his wake, he would discourage them from crossing during that timeframe in anything but a heavy-displacement boat like his bulletproof Passport 42.

Frequent reports from PredictWind were ample and accurate during Michael's trip, but if he had it to do over again, he'd probably consult a professional weather routing service also, especially for long-range planning.

Wherever you are, we hope you are healthy and safe. And we hope to see you out in the islands eventually.

— Andy Turpin

Director, Pacific Puddle Jump

Editor-at-Large, Latitude 38 magazine

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LATITUDE 38 MAGAZINE & THE PPJ

Finally, we want to invite you to become familiar with our longtime event partner, Latitude 38 Magazine and its online Newsletter 'Lectronic Latitude. The editors there are always eager to receive photos and stories from cruisers like you about favorite destinations and the cruising lifestyle.

(Email editorial@latitude38.com.)