

## 2024 Pacific Puddle Jump Rally

Fleet Letter #6

### PPJ News & Reminders

Please note:

We were just finishing up this Fleet Letter when we learned of the tragic loss of the 46-ft monohull *IdaLina*. (She was not a PPJ rally member.)

As you may have already learned through other sources, the Swedish-built Arcona 46 suffered a rudderpost failure on April 8 which left her crew unable to maneuver or stop the ingress of seawater. Owners Ravvud and Katarina Baath were forced to retreat into their liferaft, but were soon rescued by their buddy-boat *Pacific Wind*, which reportedly arrived as *IdaLina* sank beneath the surface. Our hearts go out to *IdaLina*'s crew.

— Andy Turpin, PPJ 2024

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**Recent Arrivals** — You probably already know that early-to-mid-April is the most popular time to set sail from the West Coast to French Polynesia. And this year has been no exception. Following in the wake of several ‘earlybirds’, roughly a half-dozen PPJ boats made landfall in the Marquesas during the past week, dropping anchor at either Hiva Oa or Nuku Hiva. And most of them seem to have made relatively fast passages.

**Fleet Tracking** — It’s been both informative and entertaining to follow their progress on the PredictWind tracking map as they zigzag across each other’s wakes, while they converge on their first Polynesian landfalls.

If you haven’t done so already, check out the fleet tracker on the rally’s site: [www.pacificpuddlejumps.com](http://www.pacificpuddlejumps.com), and learn how your vessel can be included.

**Arrival Declaration & Clearing In** — From the reports we’ve received it sounds as if the process of clearing in continues to be relatively simple, as in years past. But let us remind you of the French government’s new “declaration” requirement: Prior to arriving and clearing in, foreign-flag vessels are now required to fill out a customs and immigration declaration online (<https://www.demarches-simplifiees.fr/commencer/declaration-unique-plaisance-polynesie-francaise>). We are told it takes about a half hour to enter all your data, so it is wise not to wait until the last minute. But don’t panic. Because this is a new requirement, boats that arrive without having completed a declaration are not being penalized (so far).

**Future Regulations Being Discussed** — We are told that the French Polynesian government is also currently considering the establishment of a variety of new regulations aimed at protecting marine ecosystems and preventing overcrowding in popular anchorages, particularly in the Society Islands. Again, don’t panic. If such regulations are actually voted into law, these new regulations probably

*In the Marquesas, Ua Pou’s volcanic spires make a dramatic backdrop.*



will not be put into effect until the fourth quarter of this year, at the earliest.

Also, as discussed recently on the [pacificpuddlejumps.io](http://pacificpuddlejumps.io) forum, some aspects of obtaining and renewing Long Stay Visas and Carte de Sejour documents have unfortunately become more complicated.

**Blame It On Covid** — What’s behind the push for the new rules and regulations? In my humble opinion, the Covid-19 catastrophe is at least partly to blame. Back In 2020 when the Covid scare grew into a full-blown pandemic, French Polynesia was the only South Pacific nation to offer safe refuge to the many foreign yachts that were already at sea when the pandemic became a worldwide phenomenon. All the French territory’s neighbors closed their borders completely to international traffic.

In the first weeks of the pandemic dozens of foreign-flag boats were left unattended in FP waters (primarily around



*Cooling off on Fatu Hiva.*

Tahiti), while their crews were flown to their home countries aboard free repatriation flights. Although the French Polynesian government was applauded for adopting the age-old tradition of offering “harbors of refuge” to mariners in need, the policy created a “logjam” of unattended boats, particularly in the Tahiti lagoon. This forced the government to take a hard look at its minimally regulated anchorage policies, particularly around Tahiti, Moorea and Fakarava.

By the time the pandemic finally waned and international cruising yachts began heading west again, numerous posts on social media led arriving sailors to believe that finding either a place to anchor or a berth in a marina in

the Society Islands would be next to impossible. Although such posts were greatly exaggerated, they had the positive effect of encouraging visiting cruisers to spend more time in the Marquesas and Tuamotus and less time in “Tahiti and her islands,” as the Societies are often called these days.

**Spending More Time in the Outer Islands** — We have been advocates of doing precisely that since long before the pandemic. Why? Because, although Tahiti and her sister isles comprise one of the most breathtaking cruising grounds in the world and should not be missed, the

Marquesas are truly primeval, only minimally developed, and are visited annually by only a fraction of the travelers who come to Tahiti. Likewise, the sparsely populated atolls of the Tuamotus are truly spectacular, particularly for the richness of their numerous unspoiled coral gardens.

After a month or more of bluewater sailing, some weary sailors can't wait to get to the sophistication of Tahiti, perhaps spend a few nights in a swank hotel, and feast on delicious French cuisine. But when we catch up with those same sailors later, they often tell us their only regret is that they hadn't spent more time in the outer islands.

The good folks at Tahiti Tourisme tell us there are 110 islands within French Polynesia, so we would encourage you not to simply follow the herd to the most talked-about islands and anchorages, but also to do some exploring in lesser-known places.

**Respecting and Protecting Coral Reefs** — Needless to say, the coral fields of French Polynesia are as delicate as they are beautiful. So we hope all visiting sailors will consider it their responsibility to do no harm to the reefs and coralheads (bommies). With that in mind, please take some time to learn the technique of "floating your chain." YouTube offers several simple examples, one of which is "How to Float Your Anchor Chain." by WEsail.

Please take this request seriously, as the health of these reefs is constantly being challenged. In fact, just this week we received a report about coral bleaching on a familiar reef in the Tuamotus, believed to be due to a rise in water temperature several months ago during the El Niño cycle.

Coral everywhere is constantly under threat, so please strive to 'do no harm' and 'leave a clean wake.'

**Offshore Safety on a Vast Ocean** — We are happy to tell you that ever since the first Pacific Puddle Jump in 1997, the overwhelming majority of PPJ participants have made the crossing to French Polynesia safely, without do-

ing major damage to their boats or their bodies, despite a few unavoidable "boat bites."

That said, there have been a few bona fide emergencies that required mid-ocean assistance or rescues. On those rare occasions, it has been a tremendous comfort to know that the Tahiti JRCC (rescue coordination center) has a long-established working relationship with the US Coast Guard's Honolulu JRCC, whose full range of rescue resources can be put into action if needed.

A case in point occurred early this month. An adolescent crew member aboard the British Columbia-based *Camdeboo* became seriously ill, and her parents suspected appendicitis — a very dangerous situation when you are hundreds of miles from shore.

*Camdeboo's* crew informed us and Honolulu JRCC of the situation. The guardsman on duty soon patched the crew through to a Naval flight surgeon for a consult. In our experience, there's always one of these invaluable officers on call, and their services are free to all mariners in need.

Even before we clarified to the CG which PPJ boats were closest to *Camdeboo*, the Guardsmen had diverted the 750-ft LPG tanker *Musanah* toward a potential rendezvous point. But the ship does not have a sophisticated sick-bay, nor a medical officer. Also, if an open-ocean transfer had become necessary, it would have been quite a dangerous operation for all concerned.

Fortunately, however, *Camdeboo* had a well-stocked medical kit that included two types of antibiotics, the use of which brought the young patient back to good health long before making landfall at Nuku Hiva 11 days later. Ashore, she spent three days in Nuku Hiva's small hospital for observation, where she reportedly received excellent care. Thank God for happy endings!

**Important Numbers to Note** — If you don't already have contact info for the JRCCs posted at your nav station, we suggest you do so now. And you can also feel free to call me at any hour.

- Honolulu JRCC: 1-808-535-3333

email: [jrcchonolulu@uscg.mil](mailto:jrcchonolulu@uscg.mil)

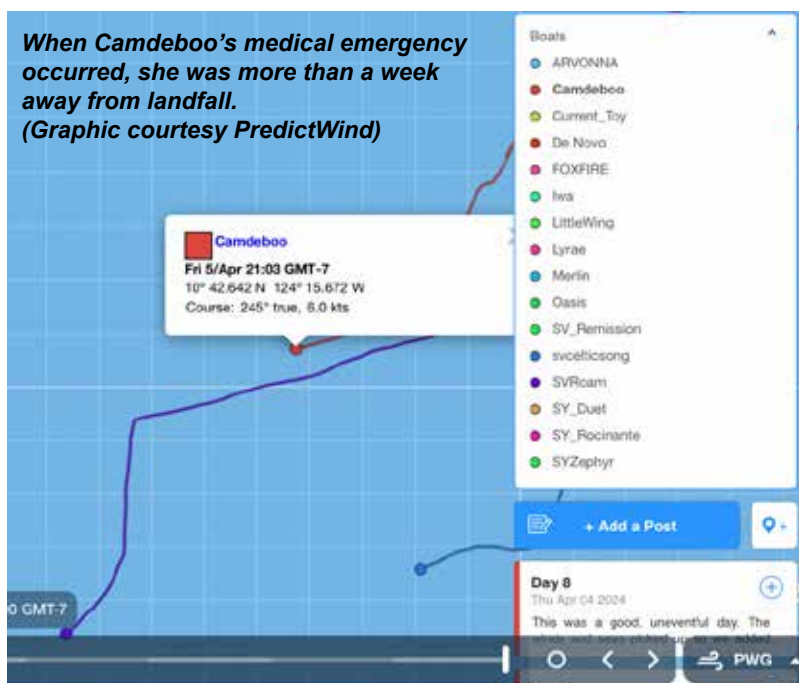
- Tahiti JRCC: 689-40-54-16-16

email: [contact@jrcc.pf](mailto:contact@jrcc.pf)

- Pacific Puddle Jump; 1-415-272-4654

email: [pacific.puddle.jump@gmail.com](mailto:pacific.puddle.jump@gmail.com)

or: [andyturpinatlarge@gmail.com](mailto:andyturpinatlarge@gmail.com)



**Footnote** — Incidents like this explain why we share the PPJ fleet database with US Coast Guard officers every year, complete with each boat's vessel identification info and onboard communications resources. (Fear not, the Guardsmen will not share your personal info or try to sell you anything!)

— Andy Turpin, PPJ 2024