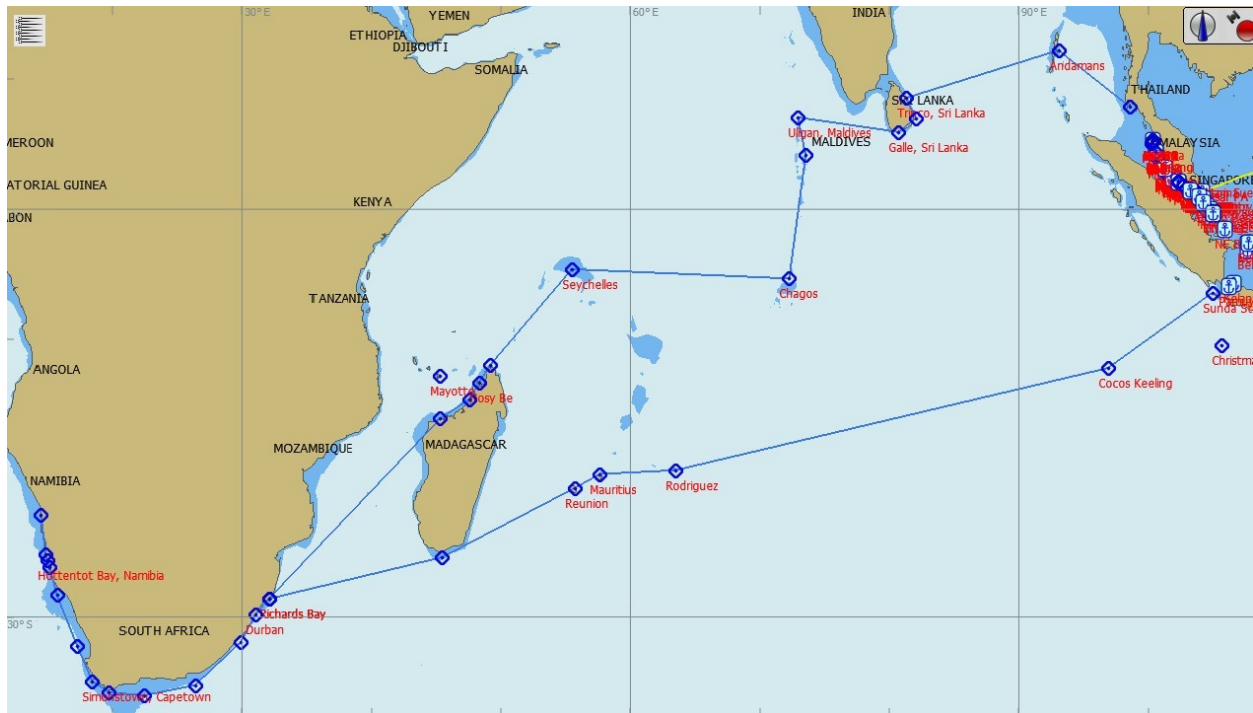


# The Indian Ocean Crossing Compendium

A Compilation of Guidebook References and Cruising Reports

Covering the Indian Ocean Crossing (South Africa is in its own Compendium)



**IMPORTANT: USE ALL INFORMATION IN THIS DOCUMENT AT YOUR OWN RISK!!**

Rev 2023.3 – 06 Nov 2023

We welcome updates to this guide!  
(especially for places we have no cruiser information on)  
Email Soggy Paws at sherry –at- svsoggypaws –dot- com.  
You can also contact us on Sailmail at **WDI5677**

The current home of the official copy of this document is

<https://svsoggypaws.com/files/#indian-ocean>

If you found it posted elsewhere, there might be an updated copy at svsoggypaws.com.

If you are headed for the Red Sea, be sure to also download the **Red Sea Compendium**.



## Revision Log

Many thanks to all who have contributed over the years!!

Rev	Date	Notes
2023.3	06-Nov-2023	Sheltering in Mozambique from a southerly. Kurukulla's experiences in Sri Lanka and Maldives
2023.2	05-Aug-2023	Trinco Agent Notes
2023.1	01-Feb-2023	Updates to passage reports, and Maldives info (mostly). Link to Soggy Paws' anchorage and dive waypoints in Maldives.
2022.2	08-Dec-2022	Updates to passage reports, and Maldives info (mostly)
2021.2	18-Dec-2021	Some info updates on Cochin/Kochi
2021.1	23-Oct-2021	Slip Away's 2018 Passage Notes on the southern route. Ile Juan de Nova between Mozambique and Madagascar. Mayotte YC contact info. Mozambique arrival and stops info. Duty free parts into Kenya. Coast-hopping Tanzania.
2020.2	10-May-2020	Provisioning in Male vs Uligan, Maldives
2020.1	23-Feb-2020	Shipping stuff into India. Communications equipment issues in India. New Coronavirus arrival issues in Cochin, India and Trinco, Sri Lanka. Update on Cochin from Bird of Passage.
2019.3	25-Nov-2019	Services updates on Seychelles (Haulout, shipping in parts). Kenya to Djibouti). A few more tidbits on other parts of the Red Sea. Rev 1: fix formatting errors and add page numbers.
2019.2	30-Apr-2019	Mostly updates from the Red Sea people arriving in Egypt
2019.1	08-Mar-2019	Cocos comments from Expeditius. Myanmar notes from several cruisers. Bits on cruising Madagascar. Updates from Brick House on Mayotte. Time zones chart. Info on less common routes in the Indian Ocean.
2018.4	10-Sep-2018	Added a few bits on Christmas Island
2018.3	02-Sep-2018	Several more Red Sea recounts, Updates from Alba's blog on Rodriguez, Mauritius, Reunion and Madagascar. Passage notes from Paseafique. Activity notes from Slip Away and Brick House. More on Madagascar / Ile Ste Marie. New Section on Tanzania (thanks to Tiger Lilly).
2018.2	02-April-2018	Brick House Sri Lanka Visa Update & Trinco arrival notes, and eVisas in Kochi, Lofrans agent in Maldives. Red Sea notes from current cruisers. Cocos Keeling Update. Chagos update from Alba (2017). DIY Visa Renewal in Sri Lanka.
2018.1	06-Feb-2018	Break-in warnings for Seycheles. Foot and Mouth disease warnings in Reunion, Rodriguez, and Mayotte
2016.2	03-Aug-2016	Various updates from the fleet as they cross
2016.1	24-Feb-2016	Yindee Plus updates on Mauritius
		Warning about theft in Madagascar
A.0	07-Sep-2015	Initial version, still very rough at this point!!

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# 1 Introduction

The original Compendium for the Tuamotus in French Polynesia started out as a way for s/v Soggy Paws and a few friends to organize notes and various internet sources on the Tuamotus, prior to our cruise there in Spring of 2010. Later, it became a way for us to pass on what we've learned while cruising the Tuamotus in 2010 and 2011. Now the idea has migrated with Soggy Paws, from the Tuamotus, to the Marquesas, to the Societies, Hawaii, the Cooks and Samoas, Tonga, Fiji, the islands between Fiji and the Marshall Islands, the Micronesia area, and most of SE Asia, and now the crossing to South Africa.

If you haven't yet found our other 'Compendiums', they're available online at <http://svsoggyypaws.com/files/>

This is not intended to replace the guidebooks or charts, but to supplement out-of-date guides with recent cruiser first-hand reports, and fill in places that the guides don't cover.

To compile this 'compendium', we have used all sources at our disposal, including websites, blogs, emails, and our own experience. We always try to indicate the source of our information, and the approximate time frame.

If your information is included in this guide, and you object to its inclusion, please just email us, and we'll remove it. I try hard to attribute everything that gets placed in here, and place references to cruiser's blogs where there is usually more information and pictures.

On the other hand, if you'd rather I not mention your name, I'd be happy to anonymize your information.

This is a non-commercial venture mainly to help cruisers from all of our collective experiences.

## **1.1 Organization of the Guide**

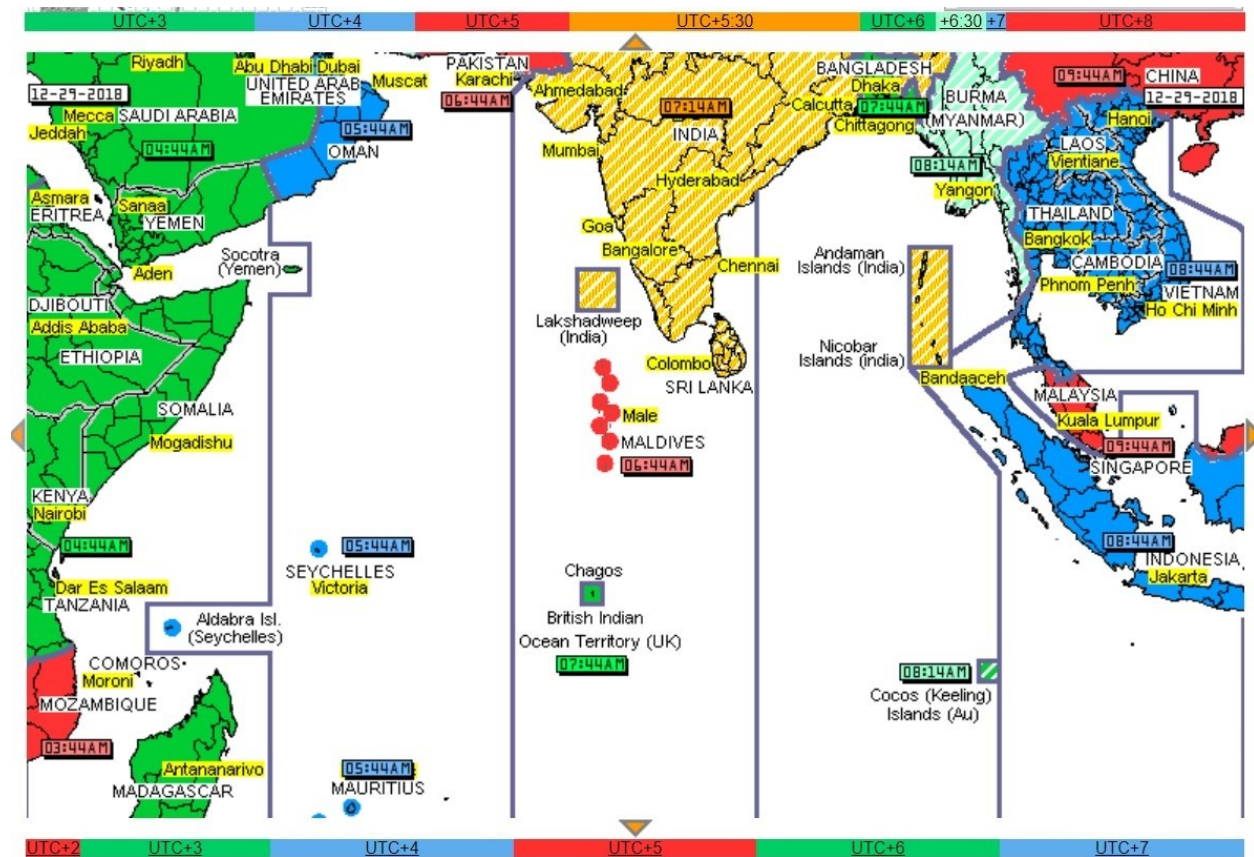
This guide is loosely organized from East to West across the Indian Ocean. I am still learning my Indian Ocean geography, so I may have made a few mistakes in this first edition of the guide.

If you are heading up the Red Sea, there is a different Facebook group, and a different Red Sea Route Compendium available in that group, that covers the route into and up the Red Sea.



### 1.3 Time Zones

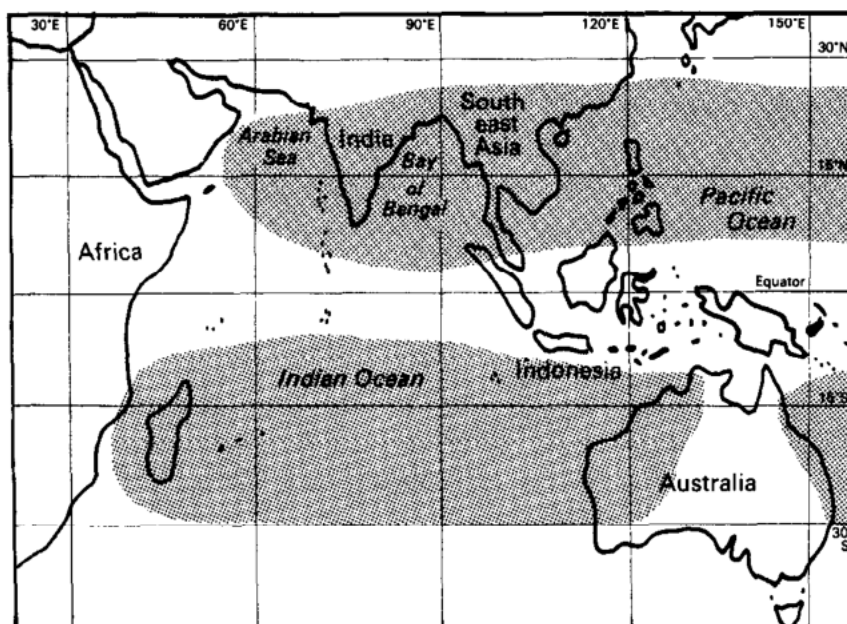
Here's a great overview of the timezones as you cross the Indian Ocean:



Source & interactive version: <https://www.worldtimezone.com/wtz014.php>

## 1.4 Weather In This Area

### 1.4.1 General Weather Conditions



#### **DESTRUCTIVE WIND ZONES**

The two shaded areas indicate the limits of destructive winds in the northern and southern hemispheres. Each experiences its 'cyclone' or 'typhoon' season in summer only.

*Source: Red Sea and Indian Ocean Cruising Guide – Alan Lucas – 1985*

#### **Des Cason – March 2018 - Cyclone patterns in SW Indian Ocean.**

On average this area gets 5-9 cyclone annually (some years more and some less) and these have to be differentiated between those that originate south of Chagos (BIOT) and those that develop in the Mozambique Channel south of Mayotte.

The Chagos cyclone as a rule track W/SW and usually hit the east coast of Madagascar and then re-curve back SE crossing Mauritius and Reunion. Very seldom do they actually cross Madagascar and get into the channel between Madagascar and Mozambique. The stats on these events are freely available and most yachties would be aware of this pattern.

What they are usually not aware of is the incidence of the formation of RTS (Revolving Tropical Storms) in the Mozambique channel south of Mayotte. On average they occur 5 times a year and have their origins south of Mayotte in the region off Nacala in Mozambique and then move down the channel and after making a few detours invariably with a very erratic pattern usually head SE and clip the southern tip of Madagascar and trash Toliara on the SW coast of Madagascar. Whist not as a rule classified as true cyclones they have been known to have sustained wind speeds of 45-50kts+ and typically torrential rain which is due to the system being trapped between the two land masses and the warm current to feed off.

Those yachts who elect to go via the northern route around the top of Madagascar and then down the Mozambique channel should be aware that they could be exposed to this pattern from

Nov and peaking in Feb when Mozambique as regular as clockwork has torrential rains and floods in the Xai-Xai/Inhambane area.

**Tiger Lilly – June 2018:** Take a look at the attached pic (IO cyclone tracks from 1980 to 2005). This picture, and our Cornell Pilot Chart book, convinced us that we either needed to be in South Africa for Cyclone Season, or on the coast of East Africa N of Dar Es Salaam.



Cruising the Mozambique Channel and Madagascar (both coasts) during Cyclone Season is just asking for trouble. (The two islands in the pic off the crook in the African coast N and clear of the cyclone tracks are Zanzibar and Pemba; Dar Es Salaam is just SW of Zanzibar, and Tanga - Latitude 5S - where we currently are - is W of Pemba Island.)

The South Africans we have met who have experience cruising East African coastal waters agree with this point of view.

#### **1.4.2 Weather Sources – With Onboard Email**

**Tiger Lilly – June 2018: - HF EMAIL:** We had pretty good Sailmail connectivity with the Borneo station from Sri Lanka to just S of Chagos. We were without Sailmail from W of Chagos until just before we crossed the top of Madagascar. However, we did not try too hard to get connected because we are comfortable without a lot of data.

To us, the most important product is the Met Area Forecast, and we really only care about the top paragraph with the Cyclone, Storm, and Gail Warnings. About once a week on passage we do download the GRIB files for the next 7 days, but we view that as nice-to-have but not really

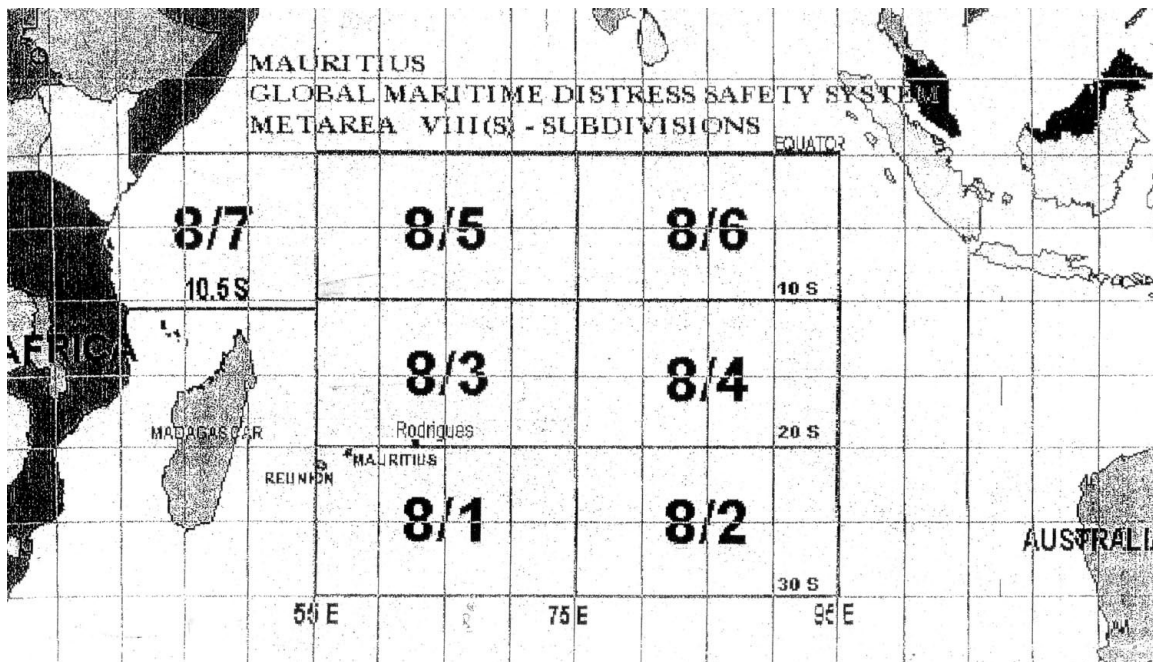


needed for ocean passages. If it blows, reef her down - and when it quits, shake them out; however, for us, warnings on heavy weather have an entirely different priority.

**Crystal Blues – 2015:** For boats traveling south and west across the southern Indian Ocean, local weather forecasting is hard to come by.

The Saildocs service on the Sailmail email system provides access to a range of forecasts, including those covering the southern Indian Ocean.

The Mauritius Meteorological Service prepares a very detailed short term forecast, available on Saildocs as "Met.8s / Southwest Of Indian Ocean". It is also available via the GMDSS forecast tab on the Predict Wind Offshore application.



**GMDSS Area VIII Graphic from Crystal Blues Blog**

This forecast covers the complete GMDSS Area VIII, including relevant storm warnings and valuable weather interpretations (see today's forecast below). However the forecasting is segmented into sub-regions, 1 thru 7, that are not identified in terms of latitude and longitude, within the forecast. To actually use the forecast you need to be able to identify the sub-region boundaries.

Via the friendly meteo office here in Rodrigues we were able to obtain a copy of the sub-region map, as shown above. With this, the Met Area VIII forecasts now make sense.

URL: [http://weather.gmdss.org/navimail/GMDSS METAREA8-S INMARSAT](http://weather.gmdss.org/navimail/GMDSS_METAREA8-S_INMARSAT)

Date: 16 Jun 2015 04:07:27 -0000

Last-Modified: 15 Jun 2015 12:52:57 -0000

GMDSS\_METAREA8-S\_INMARSAT

=====

FQIO26 FIMP 151239

1:31:08:11:00

SECURITE

SHIPPING BULLETIN FOR METAREA VIII (S), METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES  
MAURITIUS, ISSUED ON MONDAY 15 JUNE 2015 AT 1245 UTC.

PART 1: TTT WARNING OF NEAR GALE

STRONG BREEZE TO NEAR GALE FORCE SOUTHERLY TO SOUTH WESTERLY WINDS  
TOGETHER WITH ROUGH TO VERY ROUGH SEAS EXIST WITHIN AREA BOUNDED BY  
LATITUDES 25S TO 30S AND LONGITUDES 86E TO 95E.

STRONG GUSTS UNDER SQUALLS.

PART 2: GENERAL SYNOPSIS OBSERVED AT 1200 UTC ON MONDAY 15 JUNE 2015.

LOW 1008 HPA NEAR 24S 58E.

WAVE NEAR 15S 64E.

SHALLOW LOW NEAR 08S 58E.

TROUGH AXIS ALONG 07S 78E, 10S 80E, 13S 81E.

WAVE NEAR 15S 87E.

FRONTAL SYSTEM ALONG 18S 61E, 22S 63E, 27S 64E.

HIGH 1028 HPA NEAR 39S 84E EXTENDING A RIDGE ALONG 30S 75E, 25S 73E,  
21S 70E.

HIGH 1020 HPA NEAR 27S 47E.

PART 3: AREA FORECAST VALID UP TO TUESDAY 16 JUNE 2015 AT 1200 UTC.

8/1: CLOCKWISE 10 AROUND LOW 1008 HPA NEAR 24S 58E. EASTERLY TO NORTH  
EASTERLY 15-25 ELSEWHERE. SEA ROUGH. SCATTERED SHOWERS WITH ISOLATED  
THUNDERSTORMS IN SOUTH WEST. VISIBILITY POOR IN SHOWERS.

SOUTH EAST 8/2: SAME AS TTT WARNING.

REMAINDER 8/2: SOUTH EASTERLY TO EASTERLY 15-20 IN WEST. SOUTHERLY TO  
SOUTH WESTERLY 10-20 IN NORTH EAST. SCATTERED SHOWERS. SEA ROUGH IN  
EXTREME WEST AND VERY ROUGH ELSEWHERE. VISIBILITY MODERATE IN  
SHOWERS.

8/3: EAST SOUTH EASTERLY TO SOUTH EASTERLY 10-20. SEA MODERATE IN  
NORTH EAST AND ROUGH ELSEWHERE. SCATTERED SHOWERS IN WEST. VISIBILITY  
POOR IN SHOWERS.

8/4: EASTERLY TO EAST SOUTH EASTERLY 10-20 IN NORTH EAST. SOUTH  
EASTERLY 15-25 ELSEWHERE. SEA MODERATE IN NORTH EAST AND ROUGH  
ELSEWHERE. SCATTERED SHOWERS WITH ISOLATED THUNDERSTORMS IN SOUTH.  
VISIBILITY POOR IN SHOWERS.

8/5: SOUTH EASTERLY 05-10. SEA MODERATE. SCATTERED SHOWERS WITH  
ISOLATED THUNDERSTORMS IN SOUTH WEST. VISIBILITY POOR IN SHOWERS.

8/6: SOUTH EASTERLY TO SOUTHERLY 05-15 IN SOUTH. SOUTHERLY TO SOUTH  
WESTERLY 05-10 IN NORTH. SEA MODERATE. ISOLATED THUNDERY SHOWERS IN  
SOUTH WEST. VISIBILITY GOOD EXCEPT IN THUNDERY SHOWERS.

8/7: SOUTH EASTERLY TO SOUTHERLY 15-25. SEA ROUGH IN SOUTH EAST AND  
MODERATE ELSEWHERE. ISOLATED SHOWERS. VISIBILITY GOOD.

PART IV: OUTLOOK FOR FURTHER 24HRS:

NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGE

=====

### **1.4.3 Weather Sources – Voice**

**Tiger Lilly – June 2018:** There is a weather-guru in South Africa named Des with whom several of the IO cruisers consulted on the way across via satcom email. Des is part of a South Africa HF Weather net which cruisers listen to, and he can be contacted by email. Experienced East Africa cruisers report that Madagascar is about as far N as the SA Net can be reliably copied.

### **1.4.4 Weather Sources – Internet**

## **1.5 Customs & Immigration**

See individual sections.

## **1.6 Local Information and Customs**

See individual sections

## **1.7 Yachtsmen's Services – Overview**

Crystal Blues has dribbled a set of “Cruisers Services Directories” behind them. You can download them as PDF files here:

<http://svcrystalblues.blogspot.com/p/cruising-diretories.html>

### **1.7.1 Money**

#### **1.7.2 Diesel and Gasoline**

**FB Group – 2018:** Diesel prices in various places in 2018, in USD

\$1.16-1.20 per liter in Mauritius.

\$1.74 us per liter in Reunion (non-duty free)

\$1.04 diesel and \$1.22 usd gasoline in Madagascar.

Tanzania (at Dar es Salaam fuel stations) diesel is around 1 \$ / liter, petrol slightly more. Mtwara (S) and Tanga (N) likely bit more expensive

### **1.7.3 Propane (Cooking Gas)**

#### **1.7.4 Groceries**

**Crystal Blues – 2015:** If we had a mission statement for our cruising life it would be shaped by what we truly enjoy - that is travel by boat, to experience new cultures, cuisines and music. The past few months have offered a smorgasbord of this mix. But none of this could have happened without a lot of planning. Before leaving Lankawi, Malaysia, all boat systems were checked, upgraded where necessary, the spares list re-checked and every empty space on the boat was filled with food and more than a little bit of wine, before we began sailing through the Indian Ocean.

We provisioned extensively in Phuket, stocking up on bread flour, pork, bacon, sausages and ham. Then we continued in Lankawi, stocking up on tinned and dry food, steak, salmon,

toiletries, tinned butter, and duty free wine. Over the previous months Ley had taken careful note of our consumption per month of all these items. Then we multiplied all this by six, hoping that our supplies would last around six months.

With those stores on board, the real provisioning challenge was fresh food - principally fruits and vegetables. What we can buy in Sri Lanka or the Maldives ? Will it last us for the 6-7 weeks after we depart Gan Atoll for Chagos and then Rodrigues ?

Fortunately the cruising community share information quite freely and efficiently, so we already knew that it was wiser to purchase fresh eggs, pumpkins and fruit in Sri Lanka, as nearly all produce in the Maldives is imported from there (plus India and Pakistan).

The Maldivian Islands have very little fertile soil, with most of the new villages being built on reclaimed land. Very little produce is grown locally. It is not a great provisioning place.....

So the challenge was buying ten to twelve weeks of fresh provisions and doing our best to keep this produce fresh and edible in the tropical heat.

#### How We Fared

**EGGS** - Our lovely brown eggs were purchased in Trincomalee, Sri Lanka, all 90 of them. Each egg was then washed and tested for freshness. Very fresh eggs sink and lie on their side in a glass of water, while when not so fresh they stand on one end under water. If they float they are stale and possibly rotten. With this process we sorted the eggs carefully, using the least fresh earlier of course.

They were lightly coated in warm Baby Oil and stored in plastic egg trays, in a dark location. Twice weekly we invert each egg in the tray in a careful rotation process. Occasionally they were re-tested in water. Eggs we purchased at the end of February in Trincomalee were still perfectly edible in early June. A quick survey of three other boats who also purchased eggs at the same shop at similar times showed a much higher attrition rate if they were not coated in oil and not frequently rotated. Eggs newly purchased in the Maldives were less fresh than our older Trincomalee stock, and did not last very long at all.

**POTATOES** - These were stored in cloth or calico bags, in a "cool and dark" spot, and lasted 8 weeks. We checked them twice weekly to remove any that were not in perfect condition.

**PUMPKINS** - We love butternut pumpkins and purchased two dozen of quite small size in Trincomalee. More pumpkins were bought in the Maldives and we still are eating them here in Rodrigues two months later. Stored in a "cool and airy" position they have lasted around 4 months.

**ORANGES** - Grown in Egypt and purchased in the Maldives, these were mostly supplied wrapped in tissue paper. They lasted more than two months, in a mesh "hammock" slung from the ceiling above the galley benches.

**TOMATOES** - We rented a motor cycle in Gan and drove around for days trying to find a stock that had not been refrigerated. We purchased in all different shades of ripeness, wrapped each individually in paper towel and stored in a dark, airy space. These lasted over two months. They also need to be checked regularly and the ripening ones moved to the galley.

**ONIONS** - Stored in the dark, these lasted for months, the red onions (more common in Asia) storing longer than the brown type.

TROPICAL FRUIT - Pineapples, watermelons and bananas all ripen fairly quickly, so they were stored in hanging baskets under the cockpit shade.

We were fortunate to meet a local family in Nilandhoo, North Nilande Atoll in the Maldives. Invited to their home for lunch, they picked and provided us with two large supermarket bags of green mangoes, from their own tree. These slowly ripened over the next month, so we were able to have fresh mango for breakfast almost every day in Chagos, with our own Turkish yogurt.

#### The Refrigerator

Carrots, red and green cabbage, capsicum, cheese, butter, salami and chocolate were all stored in the refrigerator. We used the last of the carrots from Maldives and the last of the cabbage from Sri Lanka just last night, the cabbage was 4 months old and still very good.

Our major provisioning problem was that we had to depend on fruit and vegetables imported into the Maldives, where the produce was often mishandled, left to sit in the sun after being refrigerated, then re-refrigerated, so we had to settle for less than perfect fruit and vegetables. The only other choice was to go without, as there are no shops in Chagos.

#### The Freezer

Not every cruising boat has a freezer. The upside in having a large freezer is being able to freeze down meat, fish, cheese and vegetables, and even to make ice. The downside is the need for massive amounts of power to keep everything frozen. We have a large freezer, so we must accept the necessary maintenance that is required to deliver power each day.

Living off the Sea - Some people are quite expert at living from the sea. Not us, though we did catch fish in Chagos and shared a few communal barbeques when a huge Wahoo was caught.

Our last passage was too big for fishing. Ley did not even put a line in the water, from Chagos to Rodrigues. However she is eternally optimistic, the gear is ready, so watch out fish further west!

#### **1.7.5 Water**

#### **1.7.6 Boat Parts & Repairs**

**Anthony Daniels (FB)** - Some time ago I asked if anyone could suggest a good place to haul out and antifoul. For anyone else in a similar position. ... Crater Bay in Madagascar has a flat area by a wall and it is only 30,000 AR per day to lie against it and a couple of guys made short work of cleaning and antifouling. There is not much choice of antifouling, but at least you can buy it.

To buy the paint, there is a small chandlery in Da Es Salam which is at Crater Bay. You could probably get it in Hellville as well.

#### **Various – April 2016 – Haulout Facilities:**

Is a travel lift available in Maldives? I can wait until Mauritius.

**Vincent Chirié** Repairing / Dock yard / Dry dock

Gulf Craft Service Centre Maldives

H, Orchid Maage, 3rd Floor, Ameer Ahmed Magu, Male' T:+9603315540...See More

It seems from RealSeaHawk (Assad) documentation that they have a big travel lift, but probably not wide enough for cats (monohull only).

**Davina Hellewell** There are 3 boatyards on Thilafushi, Gulf Craft is the biggest and they have a 150 ton travel lift. Phone number of boatyard is 664-0280.

For anyone going to The Seychelles, there is also the same size travel lift there at Gondwana Boatyard in Mahe. Call Rajen Naidu on +(248) 4384747 or +(248) 2814592.

**Rose ERose – May 2015:** A few people have asked me recently about getting yacht parts sent to places in the western half of the Indian Ocean, northern route (Seychelles, Mayotte, Madagascar and Comoros). This is assuming you need the package before South Africa.

In our experience the Seychelles was the best option followed by Mayotte.

Madagascar and the Comoros are hopeless. Sailors who live in Madagascar told us it was worth sailing over 800 miles to the Seychelles to get parts, rather than trying to get them in Madagascar or Mayotte.

We got a package sent to the Seychelles yacht club, and did have to pay some duty, but it was definitely the best option. We also got an item sent to Mayotte, care of the yacht club. Both yacht clubs were helpful and friendly

### **1.7.7 Medical**

The availability and cost of medical care varies wildly in the countries of the Indian Ocean. See comments in each section.

### **1.7.8 Laundry**

## **1.8 Embassies and Consulates**

## **1.9 Getting Visitors In and Out**

## **1.10 Communications**

### **1.10.1 VHF**

**General VHF Advice that applies to all areas:** Be aware that on high power, a good VHF will transmit 25 miles line of sight. So if you are only doing within-anchorage communications, switch to low power. On the flip side, if you are trying to call across island, or to the next island, use high power, and turn your squelch down. Make sure you are aware which channels are automatic low power (ie 17, 67 on some radios), and stay away from the low-power channels for long distance conversations.

Though widely spaced in channel number, channels 16, 68, and 18 are very close to each other in frequency. Most VHF antennas are 'tuned' for channel 16, so long distance communications will work best on 16, 18 or 68. Conversely, in a crowded anchorage, transmission on high power on channel 18 or 68 may 'bleed' over to channel 16 (and almost any other channel, if you're close enough). You don't need high power to talk to the boat next to you, so turn your radio to Low Power!!

Also be aware that some channels that Americans use frequently are 'duplex' channels in International mode. So, for example, you may have trouble communicating with a European boat, or an American boat whose radio is in International mode, on Channel 18. (see any VHF guide for the full list of international and US channels and frequencies, but any US channel designated 'a', like 18a, 22a, etc will cause trouble with VHF's in international mode).

Make sure you ask in each port what the local channels are--both so you know how to reach someone ashore and so you know not to use those channels for your off-channel conversations.

### **1.10.2 SSB Radio Frequencies and Nets**

The Indian Ocean is a big place, and no one frequency / time will work for all boats at all times. So SSB nets form and die as waves of boats leave key spots. Below are some comments from the Facebook group of frequencies and times that proved workable.

**Mike Reynolds – August 2015:** For those still east of Rodriguez, the IOCnet started by Sea Bunny is still operating on 6227kHz at 1200UTC daily. Minnie B then Haulback followed Sea Bunny as net controllers. Several yachts expect to depart Cocos this week so the net will continue.

### **1.10.3 Telephones & Cell Phones**

#### **1.10.4 Internet Access**

#### **1.10.5 Mail**

#### **1.10.6 News**

### **1.11 Diving**

### **1.12 Haulout, Storage, and Repair Facilities**

There is a slipway in Rodrigues that can be used to haul cruising sailboats. The port authority also maintains a large slipway, easily accessed in the creek just west of the harbour.

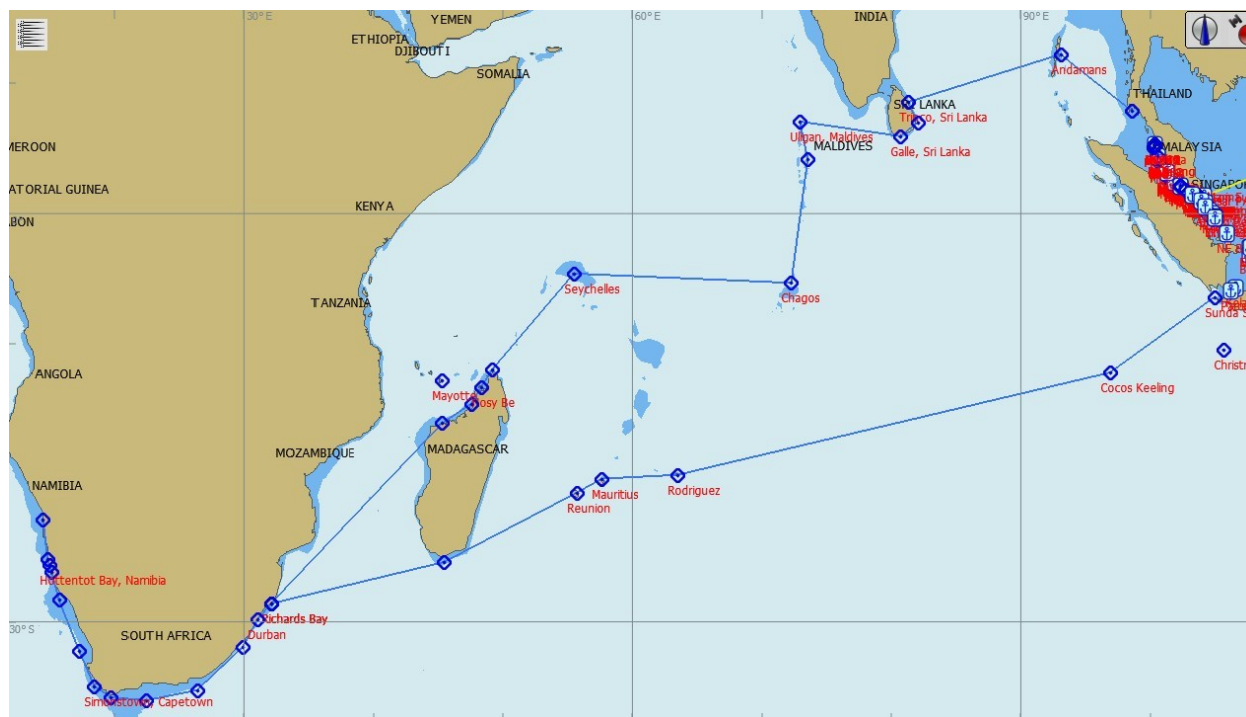
The railway is used for servicing the local tugboats, so it has plenty of load capacity, though it is not quite deep enough for large keelboats. Metal work and welding can be done by local contractors, though (surprisingly) the site does not have an air compressor for air powered tools.

You would need to supply all your own parts and materials here - there is no local chandlery, any marine items or specialist paints would need to be obtained from Mauritius.

A small workshop at the wharf is kindly made available to cruisers when not in use by the tug crews.

**IO Crossing FB Page – July 2019:** We'd like to recommend Taylor Smith Boatyard in Mauritius as a good option for haulout for boats crossing the Indian Ocean. We thought we'd wait until South Africa for anti-foul but **Mauritius** worked well for our schedule. It's next to a shipyard so there is access to engineering and welding and the paint crew is really competent. English is the 'official' language for commerce so there was no language barrier. They haul catamarans and monohulls. Overall, a very good experience.

## 1.13 Routing and Timing Advice



### 1.13.1 Route Choices

**Tiger Lilly – June 2018:** - We use Cornell's Pilot Chart "OCEAN ATLAS" for voyage planning. From that source we expected to see the SW Monsoon replaced by the SE Trades somewhere between the Equator and 3S on the longitude of Sri Lanka; however, the change process did not even begin until 6-30S where we tacked-over to the port tack, and even then we could not start easing the sheets to full and by until about 7S (which is 240 miles further S from what we had hoped and planed for). I suppose that your fancy satellite photos would have shown this situation before departure; but it would not have changed anything - we still had to get S on the starboard tack with the SW Monsoon before we could sail W on the port tack with the SE Trades. Do you suppose that God is a Democrat, and this climate warming stuff is for real?

If a boat sticks to one hemisphere, voyage planning in the IO is pretty straight-forward; N Route to the Red Sea on the NE Monsoon, or the S Route to South Africa (via Madagascar) on the SE Trades (my route on the first time around). However, for those of us who want to stay N to Sumatra and Sri Lanka, then head S of the Equator for points in the Southern Hemisphere, it is more complicated because of the reversed Cyclone Seasons. To further complicate the dual hemisphere planning process, the IO Northern Hemisphere has TWO active Cyclone Seasons, one between EACH of the Monsoon transitions. Thus we end up doing a bit of a Cyclone Avoidance Two-Step, and having to go against the grain of the SW Monsoon to get S at a safe time.

**Ley Langford – 2016:** Going over the top of Madagascar lets you visit some of the best cruising areas we've ever been to - the northwest coast is sensational in the season.

**Gryphon 2 – October 2014:** The important decisions are when to go and which route to take.



The **route choices** are broadly these:

To go the **traditional route** from Thailand to Sri Lanka and then turn south via Chagos to either the Mascarene Islands go direct to north Madagascar and on down the Mozambique Channel to South Africa.

ADVANTAGES: Some interesting stops.

DISADVANTAGES: A potentially hard trip if going from Chagos to Mauritius with strong winds forward of the beam. Close to piracy risk areas

To go down the **west coast of Sumatra**, across to Cocos and then onto the Mascarenes. From there either round the north of Madagascar and again down the Mozambique Channel or direct to South Africa probably from La Reunion.

ADVANTAGES: The west coast of Sumatra is very remote and unspoilt. Good for surfers.

DISADVANTAGES: Good for surfers, i.e. big swells! Need a CAIT (Indonesian Cruising Permit) if you want to stop. Lots of motoring, poor winds in Indo.

**As above but leaving via the Sunda Strait.** This was our preferred option.

ADVANTAGES: The southing is made in the generally benign waters east of Sumatra. Visiting the smouldering island of Krakatoa.

DISADVANTAGES: Must be done early or the NE monsoon will have started and the Trades will have become too boisterous for comfort. CAIT needed if you want to stop. We chose not to get a CAIT instead buying some extra fuel cans so we did not need to stop.

**Gryphon 2 – October 2014 – Our Choice** We opted to go the direct route around the southern end of Madagascar. We chose to do this for a variety of reasons. Firstly the route north of Madagascar is within the area classed as a piracy risk (see comments above).

The most problematic part of the whole trip across the Indian Ocean is the last 75 miles. The Agulhas current runs southward at up to 6 knots close to the African shore. Its position, speed and width vary but it is fastest at about the 200m contour and may be only 10 or 20 miles wide. Periperi radio were a great help in advising on its strength and location. Our experience was that we started to pick up a SE flowing current at up to 2 knots when still 100 miles offshore, which gradually turned to a more southerly direction. The total width of the current was at least 50 miles to a maximum close to the 200 m contour from where it declined to 1 knot off the harbour entrance at Richard's Bay.

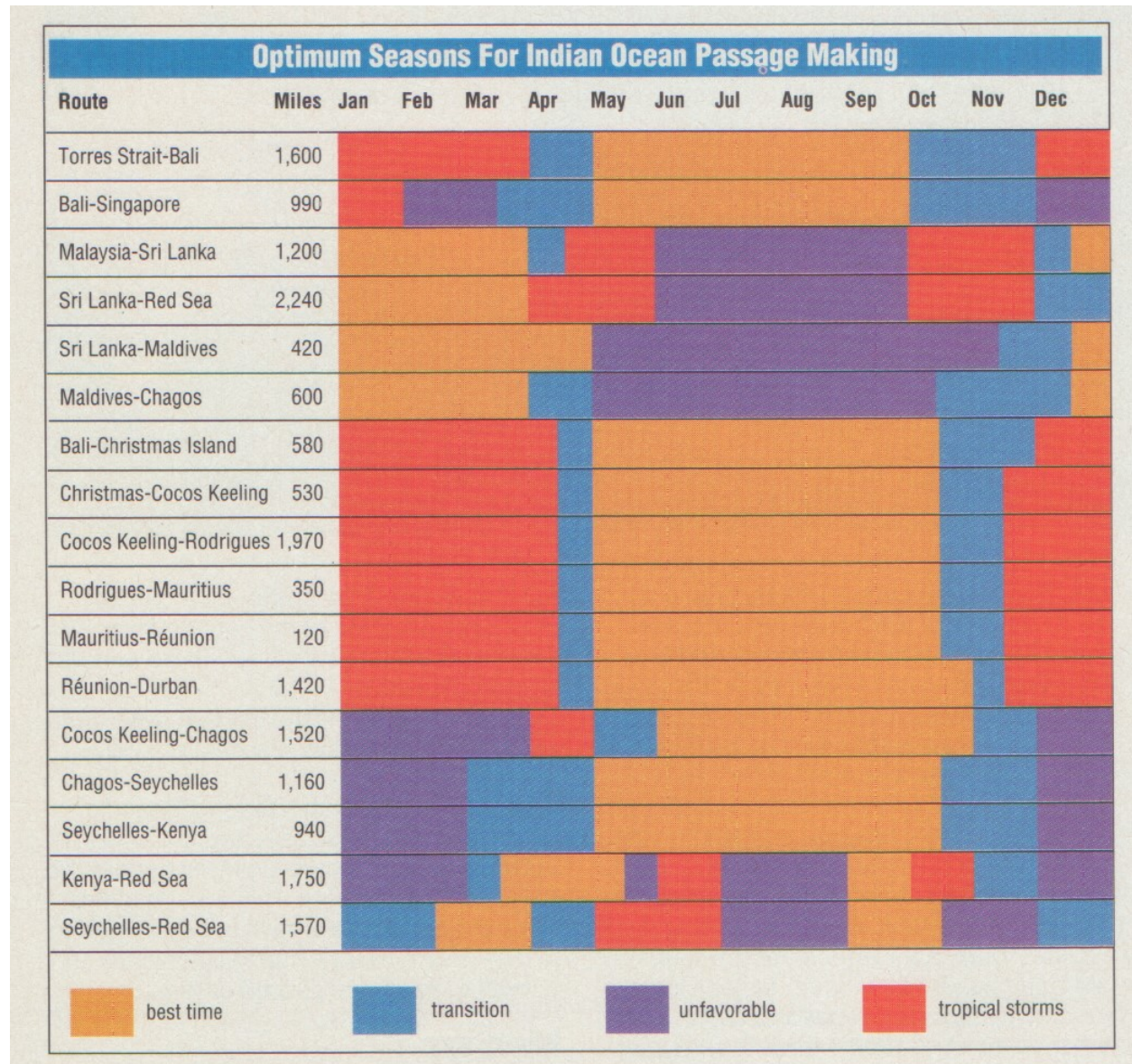
The problem comes when a southerly buster comes up the coast. These are cold fronts associated with depressions further south and can come on very quickly. A southerly gale against a southerly current is a recipe for disaster for any small boat. For Brits think Portland Race on a spring ebb with a westerly gale....on steroids. The good news is that Periperi radio can advise on the likely conditions in the current. It is recommended that yachts heave to outside the current if conditions are not right and wait.

We just got in in time. 18 hours later a frighteningly powerful storm hit the coast, lasted nearly 48 hours and at its peak had 60 knot winds and 7 metre swells. An English singlehander behind us just failed to reach the harbour and had to heave-to and eventually had to call for help from the local emergency services who went out at the height of the gale and towed him in.

### 1.13.2 Timing

See Jimmy Cornell Graphic, next page! This graphic was in a 1992 Cruising World Article by Jimmy Cornell.

Also to plan your own route, have a look at OpenCPN's Climatology plug-in and Weather Routing plug-in. Climatology is easy to use—it lets you pull up fairly recent historical weather information for any month (any date) in the year, including cyclone tracks. Weather Routing is more difficult to learn, but it will let you do a routing using your polars, and the Climatology data, to start on any date you choose.



Source: Jimmy Cornell Article in Cruising World 1992

**Divinity – December 2014:** We would advise any boats leaving Thailand or Malaysia for Sri Lanka, Cochin or The Maldives and intending on sailing to South Africa next year, to leave as early in 2015 as possible or you won't have time to see everything.

**Gryphon 2 – October 2014:** The important decisions are when to go and which route to take.

The received wisdom is that it is best to do the long crossing to the Mascarenes in May before the Trades are at their height. We followed this advice leaving Cocos in the second week of May and had generally favorable conditions with winds in the mid 20s most of the way.

Boats leaving later had more wind and found more uncomfortable conditions. Leaving after the Trades have become less boisterous in September is possible (see Aurora B's blog on Mailasail - link at bottom of report) but this allows very little time in the Mascarenes which are lovely islands (see Gryphon's blog on mailasail - link below).

The problem with leaving early is that there is then a long time before it is wise to leave for South Africa. The recommended time is in October or early November before the chance of an early cyclone, but arriving in Richards Bay late enough for there to be less chance of a southerly gale.

Our solution was to use the enforced lay over to return to the UK for a couple of months, leaving the boat in Caudan in Mauritius. Some went up to Madagascar either from Mauritius but mostly from La Reunion which it would be a pity to miss.

### **Our Experience**

Our plan worked well, although we had to wait a while at Krakatau for good winds to take us to Cocos. We anchored a number of times on the route south through Indonesia, but no one took any interest in us, although there have been reports that the officials at Krakatau (park wardens not police) are charging boats that stop there now.

Our trip to Cocos was uneventful. Cocos is an odd place but worth a stop with an island just for cruisers, but an awfully wet ride to the nearest expensive shop.

The onward trip to Rodrigues was also uneventful, moderately uncomfortable and fast. Rodrigues is not to be missed. The short trip to Mauritius was easy and we managed to do it with only 2 nights at sea. Yachts that came from Chagos to Rodrigues had a hard trip.

Mauritius proved a good place to leave the boat. (See our other reports on noonsite for more on doing this).

After the 3 months in Mauritius it is an easy 24 hour sail to Reunion. We were unlucky at booking a berth in St Pierre but the alternative of Le Port has many advantages of good yacht services if not ambience. A new marina should be in operation by late 2015.

<http://blog.mailasail.com/gryphon>

### **1.13.3 Piracy Risk**

**Soggy Paws - October 2016:** Since I've been monitoring the FB group, in the last 2 years (2015, 2016 crossings), no piracy incidents have been reported by sailboats heading for South Africa. The boats heading for the Red Sea have been very quiet about it, and the ones who DID post, had mercenaries aboard. Here is part of their report (the entire thing has been included in the Red Sea Route section):

*We had only a couple of suspicious approaches that we wrote off as most likely curious fishermen at the time. One skiff was particularly suspicious... we spotted them from over a mile away with two occupants. We put three guys with assault rifles on the deck by the time they*

*came near. Once within 100 meters, they saw our guns on display, one guy put his hands in the air and they buzzed off at high speed. On review of the photos we took during the incident, we now see there was a third guy hidden beneath the deck level (or maybe just sitting low to avoid the wind) and what appears to be a rifle sitting on the driver's lap, hidden beneath a jacket, that we also didn't notice at the time of their approach. Very difficult to say for sure what was going on, so I attach several telephoto pics so you can assess for yourself - maybe our minds are playing tricks. This was approx 50 miles off Yemen, about 200 miles east of Aden.*

*There were no other incidents that we think could possibly have been pirates. We stayed near the commercial transit corridor (patrolled by coalition warships) and stayed on the Yemeni side most of the time. I would probably do the routing this way again.*

**Gryphon 2 – October 2014:** There have been no piracy attacks against yachts here but even so we decided it was not worth even a small risk. On consulting our insurers, their preference was for us to go south about.

Yachts that went the northern route had no piracy problem but there were thefts including from occupied boats. It is of course also considerably longer to go that route, although there are some wonderful places to visit in the north west of Madagascar. In previous years some yachts using the southern route have stopped en route and anchored in bays on the south coast of Madagascar (see Tagish's blog for more on this - link below). However, we were strongly advised against this by some South Africans. The southern tip of Madagascar has a reputation for enhanced winds and unpleasant sea conditions and the advice is to go at least 150 miles south of the island. We cut the corner by less than this as the winds were very light and the seas very calm.

We encountered a lot of shipping and AIS was a great help. An active AIS would have been good. On one occasion we called a ship coming rather close and the watch officer suggested I needed to check my AIS, he seemed a bit surprised when I said I did not have a unit that transmits. Currents were very variable around the end of Madagascar, even 100 miles off with counter currents of up to 2 knots for a time.

#### **1.13.4 Madagascar to Richards Bay, South Africa**

**Gryphon 2 – October 2014:** We opted to go the direct route around the southern end of Madagascar. We chose to do this for a variety of reasons. Firstly the route north of Madagascar is within the area classed as a piracy risk (see comments above).

The most problematic part of the whole trip across the Indian Ocean is the last 75 miles. The Agulhas current runs southward at up to 6 knots close to the African shore. Its position, speed and width vary but it is fastest at about the 200m contour and may be only 10 or 20 miles wide. Periperi radio were a great help in advising on its strength and location. Our experience was that we started to pick up a SE flowing current at up to 2 knots when still 100 miles offshore, which gradually turned to a more southerly direction. The total width of the current was at least 50 miles to a maximum close to the 200 m contour from where it declined to 1 knot off the harbour entrance at Richard's Bay.

The problem comes when a southerly buster comes up the coast. These are cold fronts associated with depressions further south and can come on very quickly. A southerly gale against a southerly current is a recipe for disaster for any small boat. For Brits think Portland

Race on a spring ebb with a westerly gale....on steroids. The good news is that Periperi radio can advise on the likely conditions in the current. It is recommended that yachts heave to outside the current if conditions are not right and wait.

We just got in in time. 18 hours later a frighteningly powerful storm hit the coast, lasted nearly 48 hours and at its peak had 60 knot winds and 7 metre swells. An English singlehander behind us just failed to reach the harbour and had to heave-to and eventually had to call for help from the local emergency services who went out at the height of the gale and towed him in.

### **1.13.5 Recommended Blogs**

Tagish - [tagish.blogspot.com](http://tagish.blogspot.com)

Sal Darago - [saldarago.blogspot.com](http://saldarago.blogspot.com)

Aurora B - [blog.mailasail.com/aurorab](http://blog.mailasail.com/aurorab)

Gryphon 2 (2014) - [blog.mailasail.com/gryphon](http://blog.mailasail.com/gryphon)

Simanderal - [blog.mailasail.com/simanderal](http://blog.mailasail.com/simanderal)

Totem (2015) - <http://www.sailingtotem.com/blog>

Totem's Stops: <https://farkwar.com/boats/totem>

## **1.14 Tsunami Information**

### **1.15 Cruising Information Sources**

We are indebted to the people and organizations below for documenting their experiences and sharing them with us. We hope they don't mind that we've gathered their comments into this document to share with other cruisers who don't have internet

A few details about the boats are included, where we know them, so you can assess what 'a foot under the keel' means, for example.

Where it's important, we've annotated the contributions. But every section is a mix of several sources.

#### **1.15.1 Local Websites**

Here are some websites you should visit when you are looking for information on this area:

#### **1.15.2 Cruiser Reports**

For most of the earlier sources, we have gleaned the information off the internet (cruiser's websites, blogs, and online forum postings) or out of an SSCA bulletin. For the sources reported below as 2014-2015, much of the info has come directly from our cruising friends, and the Indian Ocean Crossing Facebook Group.

**Vega (2022):** <https://voyageofvega.cactus.co.uk/> (left Thailand Feb 2022)

**Starry Horizons (2019):** <https://outchasingstars.com/category/travel/southeast-asia/>

**Alba (2017) -** <http://www.thehowarths.net/alba-chronicles/2017-indian-ocean/>

and their cruising notes: <http://www.thehowarths.net/cruising-information/cruising-notes>

**Adina (2016)** - <http://yachtadina.co.uk/>

**Yolo (2015)** – Karen & Jason on Yolo, a PDQ 42 Catamaran, crossed in 2015. Their route was Phuket – Sri Lanka – Maldives – Chagos - Rodrigues – Mauritius – Madagascar. You can see lots of pics and more personal details on their blog:

<http://yoloτραutz.blogspot.com/>

**Totem (2015)** – Behan, Jamie, and kids on s/v Totem did the Indian Ocean Crossing in 2015.

<http://www.sailingtotem.com/>

**Zephyr (2015)** - Bill and Tracy Hudson on Zephyr.... They have a Shin Fa 458 (monohull).

Their blog is located here:

<http://www.sailblogs.com/member/svzephyr>

**Crystal Blues (2015)** – <http://svcrystalblues.blogspot.com/>

**Infini (2014)** – Mike and Sue on Infini did the Indian Ocean Crossing in 2014, stopping at Sri Lanka, Maldives, Madagascar, Mozambique, and entering into Richards Bay in July 2014. They blogged extensively. Their full blog is here.

<http://svinfini.blogspot.com/>

**Nine of Cups (2014-2015) – Dave and Marcie.** They left Western Australia at Geraldton and headed for the [Cocos Keeling Islands](#), our first stop in the Indian Ocean. From the Cocos, they sailed on to the [island of Rodrigues](#), and then to [Mauritius](#). The cyclone season was fast approaching as they headed for [Durban, South Africa](#).

**Mary (2013)** - Linda, Ludvig, Lovis and Otto on S/Y Mary

[www.symary.com](http://www.symary.com)

Reports taken from their website, or Noonsite.

### **1.15.3 Indian Ocean Crossing Facebook Group (Private Group)**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/IndianOceanCrossing/>

You must ask and be approved before being admitted to the group. They are admitting only cruisers who actually intend to cross the IO on their boat in the near future.

### **1.15.4 Noonsite**

Originally started by Jimmy Cornell, this site is a great repository of information for all those out-of-the-way places. Made possible by YOUR contributions.

<http://www.noonsite.com>

### **1.15.5 Seven Seas Cruising Association**

The SSCA is a world-wide organization for cruisers whose primary function is to exchange information about cruising destinations. They have a monthly publication that is mostly letters from cruisers about the areas they are cruising. They also have a good website and a well-

attended bulletin board. Membership is reasonable, and the monthly publication is available electronically every month. Indexed back issues are also available electronically.

<http://www.ssca.org>

### **1.15.6 Ocean Cruising Club**

The OCC is a world-wide organization for cruisers whose primary function is to exchange information about cruising destinations. They have a website and bi-annual publication that is mostly letters from cruisers about the areas they are cruising. Membership is reasonable, and the publication is available electronically. Indexed back issues are also available electronically.

<http://oceancruisingclub.org>

## **1.16 Printed Sources**

### **1.16.1 Cruising Guides**

We are consciously NOT duplicating any printed, copyrighted information here. It takes a lot of effort AND money to publish a cruising guide, and we firmly believe that if it is still in print, you should BUY it, not steal it (in electronic form).

**Indian Ocean Cruising Guide – Rod Heikell – November 2007:** A good general cruising guide covering the routes from Europe to Australia and points in between, Indian Ocean Cruising Guide covers all the usual points of interest for cruising yachtsmen, from history to climate, weather patterns, formalities, route planning and so on. The general sections are followed by a country-by-country round up in which key ports are described in detail with the aid of harbour plans and photographs.

[Amazon Link](#)

### **1.16.2 Recommended Reading**

For background, we recommend the following books:

## 2 Passage Reports

### 2.1 Northern Route

#### 2.1.1 Lankawi to Sri Lanka

**Sanne Komhoff – January 2023: After 7 days at sea we have arrived in Trincomalee!**

The crossing started well with almost perfect conditions. After the many motorcycle rides in Indonesia and Malaysia, it was a pleasure to be able to sail again.

The second half of the crossing became a challenge and exhaustion blow. The wind picked up to a force of 7/8 and the waves were building up. In addition, there were continuous showers with lots of rain. The nights were pitch black due to lack of moonlight and the bad weather.

**Bird of Passage – Dec 2019 / January 2020:** By the end of December 2019 we were ready to leave Lankawi in Malaysia. We checked out and filled our tanks. The original plan was to sail to Port Blair in the Andaman Islands, but that plan had to be changed because the authorities in Port Blair did not accept our Indian E-Visa. This was a surprise to me and not in conformance with information I had received earlier. So, we decided to skip the Andamans and make a stop in Sri Lanka instead.

Checking the wind forecasts for the Bay of Bengal showed better winds if we followed a slight northerly route. Still we had to motorsail a lot and used almost 200 liters of diesel to keep the daily distances up. We averaged about 130 NM per day so it took us 9 days to do 1220 NM from Lankawi in Malaysia to Galle in Sri Lanka. We arrived to Galle before dark on the 24th of December.

As always on a long crossing you have plenty of time for different activities. My crew liked to fish and caught two nice tunas of more than 10 kilo each. While pulling in his fishing line he discovered another line hanging after the boat. We pulled that in and it showed to be the end of a big chunk of ropes and floats and other junk that was caught in one of our propellers. It took us at least an hour to get rid of it and we saved what we could in a plastic bag on board to dispose when we arrived to Galle.

#### 2.1.2 Thailand to Sri Lanka

**Tregoning – January 2023:** Our nine-day trip from Phuket was very much a tale of two passage halves with the first four days being about as perfect as possible. With ideal winds, small waves at a comfortable angle, sunny skies, and no fishing boats, we were sailing along happily at an average of 5 to 6 knots on a good course. Life was good!

On the fifth day, the clouds rolled in, the wind started to increase, and now that we were in the large Bay of Bengal, rather than the more sheltered Andaman Sea, the waves on the beam were larger and rolling the boat a bit more. Then a series of problems started to arise, finally leaving us having to motor the last three days of the passage.

First a line chafed through on the self-steering wind vane (not fixable unless very calm). Luckily, our electronic autopilot could cope.



Then we had various issues with the jib furling mechanism as we tried to reduce the sail's size in stronger winds. The first jam we could fix but the second problem arose when a squall caught up to us much faster than expected. Instead of furling the jib to a much smaller triangle, while partly furled the sail caught on itself and jammed. It could not be furled in further, it could not be released, and it could not be dropped. A mess.

We tried various ways to secure the flapping mid-section but to no avail. We would need much calmer seas and little wind to safely untangle it all. Instead, we had to motor-sail with just the mainsail and listen to the thrashing mid-section of the jib, wondering how badly damaged it would become. With the wind unexpectedly coming from the east, we had to make big gybing zig zags to keep the mainsail full in the larger seas.

The following afternoon, we realized that one of the seams on the mainsail, just below the top baton had become unstitched. I cursed myself for not getting all of these seams restitched in Thailand after having had to repair a small one myself in Indonesia following a period of 40-knot gusts. We dropped the mainsail and aimed straight for our destination. At least, we would have made a direct line until we saw AIS icons of fishing boats, "nets", and "buoys" on the chart-plotter...stretching directly across our course. With almost constant rain and squally gusts that beat the jib mercilessly, this had become a really unpleasant passage.

We were so relieved to get into the lee of Sri Lanka on Monday morning and motor in much calmer conditions into Galle Harbour. We were directed to tie-up at the "New Jetty" which is obviously intended for much larger vessels. We had to clamber over the large "fenders" on the concrete wharf to get ashore and the boat moved back and forth enough to make placement of our own fenders awkward.

Even before the officials arrived and the paperwork started, we managed to untangle the jib and drop it on the deck. Areas of fabric are definitely more worn now, but there appear to be no rips and most of the work needed will be restitching some seams and patching bits of the Sunbrella.

Our agent from Windsor Reef has been very helpful in getting us cleared into Sri Lanka and has found us locally a person who can repair our sails. We will be able to move to a slightly easier wharf later today or tomorrow. We have to wait until the cruise ship "The World" leaves the bay and its tenders no longer need to go back and forth to shore. Our intended stay of 7 to 10 days may have to be extended, depending upon how long the sail repairs take, but with an historic fort in Galle, spectacular National Parks nearby, and several sightings already of interesting birds, there seems to be plenty here to keep us happily occupied.

**Liberté – January 2019:** Some notes on our passage:

1. Indian Coast Guard over flow us several times just north of an island. Even though we were more than 12nm offshore they made radio contact and very were polite. They just wanted our details.
2. Fishing fleet East of Trincomalee. From 40 to 60 nm East of Trincomalee we encountered a substantial fishing fleet. While many vessels including nets and buoys had AIS, many didn't. There were also unmarked floating drift nets! I would suggest only transiting this area during daylight hours.

**Pacseafique – February 2018:** Pacseafique arrived in Trincomalee Sri Lanka earlier this week after a 7 day passage from Phuket. For the passage, winds were NE ranging from 0-30kts but mostly 15-20 kts. We motored for 30 hours.

**Totem – February 2015:** We left from Thailand's Butang Islands, after spending a day (and a couple of nights) resting up and doing our last tasks at a more relaxed pace.

Day 1 - When we finally did take off, it was a rolly ride dead down wind in 18-20 knots. Not the most comfortable point of sail, but after all the motoring we've done in Asia, it felt really good; the dolphin sendoff from the last point of land didn't hurt either. We play with various sail combinations, and end up with a single reef in the main and a poled-out genoa, as in the photo at top.

Around 50 nm out, we started crossing bands of current every 5-10 nm. I've never seen anything like it: they run perpendicular to our westward path, as far as the eye can see. Inside them the sea state changes from relatively smooth swells with a few wind waves, to washing machine chaos. Oddly, it seems to have little effect on Totem, although it looks like we should be thrown around or have our speed affected. At night, the frothy wave crests in these rivers glow green with bioluminescence and make for an eerie stripe in the ocean.

Day 2 - The wind goes light and we end up making about 150 miles in our first 24 hour run. It's typical to get lighter as the NE monsoon season progresses, and the weather data we're getting on our new Iridium GO! from PredictWind indicate we'll have less and less breeze as the passage goes on. We're anticipating about 10 days to landfall, although with better wind we should be able to manage it pretty easily in six or seven. This day we just want enough to propel us between Sumatra to the south and the Nicobar islands to the north, after which we can alter course and point more northwest towards Trincomalee. That will give us a better angle on the wind, both because of our heading and because of an expected wind shift west of the Nicobars. Until then, there's a nice boost from the current and we're squeezed like a watermelon seed between Indonesia and India into the Bay of Bengal. It's a good 1.5+ kts and helps keep progress in the light air.

There's nothing but ocean in every direction, but we're far from alone. Just after dawn, I have to alter course so we don't bump into an Indonesian fishing trawler. Passing just a few boat lengths away, work stops for the men hauling a large net on deck as they whoop and wave. One man holds a tuna aloft, another waves us over. Siobhan and I clap and yell and wave but decline the invitation.

Ships pointing to the Malacca Strait funnel here in a wide band that requires constant vigilance. It's amazing how quickly a 700' cargo ship goes from horizon speck to behemoth when moving at 20 knots. I'm grateful for the AIS transponder we added to Totem last year. Previously, we had a receiver, as transponders were not yet available to private boats when we left the US. But having made the switch, we can see how the large merchant ships alter course for us, and never reach the point we need to make a radio call to alert them our presence. It is tremendous peace of mind.

The wind gets lighter and lighter, so we motorsail a few hours to try and get to the point where we can turn up towards Trinco.

**Day 3** - The wind picks up a few hours after sunrise and we're treated to spectacular sailing conditions: relatively flat seas, and 10-15 kts on the quarter. As if we weren't having enough fun

yet, a pod of a half dozen whales – humpbacks? – pass nearby to bless our progress, although it's a little sobering to look beyond them as they pass between Totem and a tanker that's more than four football fields long. The only downside to these great conditions is that we're sailing too fast to catch any fish. I'm not going to complain.

**Day 4** - We're a little out of sorts for the first few days, getting used to disrupted sleep patterns and the motion at sea. But by the fourth day the mental fog clears, and with such comfortable conditions as we're having the daily routine becomes even more enjoyable. And truly, it is glorious! Our new angle puts the breeze more squarely on the beam most of the time, a fast and flat point of sail on Totem, and gentle seas keep the motion very comfortable. As if we weren't already on a high, the dolphin escort joins us in the early hours of the fourth day to lift our spirits again. The half dozen common dolphins aren't always visible in the dark, but puffs of breath at the surface remind us of these constant companions. The pod stays until just after dawn, and then disappears to the north.

Nighttime watch has a magical quality when you're not fighting to stay alert. We've left with a waning moon: not ideal, since it will give us little light for the back half of the passage, but great for stargazing. In the wee hours, I can see the Big Dipper and North Star to starboard; to port, the Southern Cross stretches up into the sky.

During the day, we cross the halfway mark in terms of mileage. But we've had a good breeze, and the forecast still shows it getting lighter ahead, stretching out our expected days at sea. That's OK: we're in the passage making groove now. And in truth, conditions are so pleasant, we just don't care if it takes us longer to make landfall. Thankfully, it seems we haven't had to re-learn passage making lessons the hard way...yet.

More... <https://www.sailingtotem.com/blog?month=02-2015>

**Yolo – January 2015:** Most yachts visiting Sri Lanka depart from Lankawi, Malaysia or Phuket, Thailand. From Phuket you sail almost due west to get to Trincomalee, which many people call "Trinco". When you leave Phuket you will typically encounter a few local fishing boats.

The biggest surprise when sailing towards the Nicobar islands are the rivers of currents you encounter running north or south. You will certainly feel their counter current chop of over a knot and notice that your boat sudden changes it's heading, by 30 degree or more in some cases. These streams of currents were encountered every 5 or so nautical miles between Phuket and the Nicobars regardless of the depth of the water.

After passing through the Nicobars using the Sombrero Channel between Great Nicobar Island and Katchal Island, the mid-ocean rivers disappeared. FYI, we sailed through the very deep and wide Sombrero Channel between Great Nicobar and Katchal at 0200 without any issues. No boats or fishing equipment was seen.

During late January and early February steady winds from the northeast were encountered in the low to mid-teen range. Seas for the most part stayed below 1.5 meters, often lower. With the winds on the aft quarter, per normal for this time of year, you should expect a comfortable 1,100 nm passage of around 9 days. Several brief rain showers were encountered during our passage and the wind did come out of the northwest for several hours. You can see the squall lines forming and the winds ahead of them stay favorable.

Dolphins and whales were about the only thing spotted between the Nicobars and Sri Lanka by most yachts.

About 65 nm from the west coast of Sri Lanka you may see a few fishing floats in very deep waters. About 35 nm from shore you will encounter a few fishing boats. These boats frequently approach yachts from all directions at full speed, with a cast of characters using flailing hand signals. Net, net, they want clothing, food, booze, or tobacco products, despite the crashing waves and winds. Wave them away and proceed west as fast as possible. Don't be surprised if you have to bear off or start an engine to avoid them.

**Bebe – January 2011:** This passage turned out to be a major learning experience for us and a true test of our sailing skills, as well as a true test of our physical capabilities and emotional well-being. It was far too rough to update this blog during most of the passage. I am writing this posting from handwritten notes that I updated daily. I will attempt to adjust posting dates when finished with all postings so that the entire trip appears on the blog in consecutive day order.

s/v BeBe Passage from Phuket, Thailand to Galle, Sri Lanka 3 Jan – 16 Jan 2011



Day #1 -- We departed Patong Bay on the island of Phuket, Thailand at 10:00 on Monday morning 03 January 2011. Barometer 1008.5 The genoa was poled to starboard, mainsail midline and mizzen on preventer to starboard. Winds were predicted to be from the NE but as soon as we cleared the coastline the wind proved to actually be coming from the SE. Sailing conditions were great from 10:00 to 18:00; a little lively with 2-3 meter swell on 5 second from the SE on our aft port quarter causing the boat to twist and roll somewhat uncomfortably. For our non-sailing friends, any time the swell is equal in seconds to the height of the swell in feet then it is comfortable. For example, an 8-ft swell on 8 seconds is ideal. And 8-ft swell on 10 seconds or higher is almost imperceptible. An 8-ft swell on 6 seconds starts to get a little rough. An 8-ft swell on 5 seconds is noticeably uncomfortable and it only gets rougher as the time shortens. Having 2-3 meter swell on 5 seconds was decidedly uncomfortable. Not dangerous in any way; just uncomfortable. At 01:00 Tuesday morning a squall moved through. We took in all sails and motored until 08:00. Bill checked in with the SSB net at 09:30 (Thailand time). We were doing 7.5 - 8 knots boat speed in 12-15 knot winds from the SE. Total distance sailed was 135 miles, of which 124 NM were actual miles-made-good toward our destination. Barometer 1007.3

Day #2 Experienced continued good sailing through mid-day. Then winds slackened and the boat started rolling. Started the engine and motor-sailed due west several hours to lessen the rolling. We were getting queasy and had no appetites. I took advantage of the calm to steam

almost all our fresh produce since it was already almost a week old, but we were not interested in eating any of it at this point. Yogurt, granola bars and snack crackers were our food items of choice. We passed through a field of debris that appeared to have resulted from a fishing boat going down recently. There was a large solid table floating upside down (fish cutting station?); many fishing floats and flags; many jumbled bundles of floating lines; a couple of small suitcases; several large black plastic trash bags; and other typical debris one might expect from the interior and deck of a small commercial fishing boat. We searched the area and found no people and did not know where to report this apparent ship sinking -- India, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia or Myanmar? Tuesday night was a new moon but it was obscured by heavy cloud cover. For our second night at sea I was treated to stars that went on forever and Bill was treated to squalls again. A small pod of tiny brown porpoises came to play with our boat; but soon lost interest, probably because we were going so slow. The second day distance sailed (MMG) 145 NM. Barometer 1006.7 (NOTE: All weather information available to us thus far had been incorrect. All GRIB files and Buoyweather indicated that winds should have been from the NE, yet all weather was coming from the SE and S. We should have turned around right then and stopped in Indonesia until these weather inconsistencies were sorted out. We should not have continued on this passage when we knew the GRIB files and all weather information did not match what we were actually observing.)

Day #3 -- Early this morning we passed south of the Nicobar Islands, which are administered by India and off-limits to visiting yachts. India is doing everything possible to not intrude on the ancient jungle tribal way of life on the Nicobars. Let these people live as they have for centuries. Some people might remember the photo after the big tsunami in late December 2004 of a man clothed only in a loincloth aiming a spear at a rescue supply helicopter. That happened in the Nicobar Islands. These folks just want to be left alone and want nothing to do with modern mankind. Closest we came to the Nicobars was 8 NM off the southernmost coast of the southernmost island. Swell was now a full 3 meters on 4-5 seconds and coming from 2 directions, SE and S. Conditions were very rolly; for 10 hours it was very much like the Gulf of Carpentaria on the northern side of Australia. We each took Scopace and took turns sleeping all day. Winds were from the SSE at 10 - 20 knots and lots of small squalls. The clouds truly did have a silver lining with the sun setting behind as we sailed westward. Conditions were much more comfortable and less rolling. Lunch for me was another "foreign language" experience. The yogurt purchased in Thailand turned out to contain corn and red kidney beans. That was a surprise I could have done without. Obviously I should have looked at that label a little closer. The barometer was dropping and we were watching it closely. Miles-made-good sailed today totaled 178 NM. Barometer 1006.3 at 15:00. Barometer 1003.0 at 17:00. Barometer 1004.5 at 18:20.

Day #4 -- S/V Estrellita arrived in Sri Lanka yesterday after a very uneventful fast passage. Today we were slightly more than half way and hoped to arrive in Sri Lanka in about 3 more days. However, a 40-knot squall soon changed that idea. This day we sailed 158 NM, of which only 145 were MMG. Wind and swell from from the SE and from the S; very confused and close together tumbling. We were still able to sail westward as we passed through several 30 - 35 knot squalls. One squall moved up from the S very suddenly at 40 knots and lasted 1 1/4 hours. I attempted to film a short video and will try to upload it later if it worked. This squall passed so quickly that seas flattened and did not build at all. Afterward there were many more squalls packing 30 knots wind only; no rain. Strange. Don't think we have previously

encountered squalls without rain. Barometer 1007.7 That is good. About what it was when we left Thailand.

Day #5 -- At 07:45 several dozen tiny brown porpoises came to play with our boat; stayed around a long time even though our boat speed at the time was only 4.7 knots into current, motoring, with no wind and dead-flat calm seas. Around 09:00 we passed a very large sailing yacht motoring in the opposite direction at speed of 15 knots. I could see from their AIS signal that we were on a direct collision course and immediately moved well out of their path. S/V Red Dragon was 52 meters long, 10 meters beam and 4 meters draft. Love their AIS Class A that provided us with all this information. We have an AIS receiver but not a transponder: we can see them but they cannot see us on their electronic charts. Little did we know at the time that this mega yacht was probably fleeing the approaching severe weather. Would have been nice if they had warned us about it.

Around noon a large very dark system approached from the SW. (Remember, absolutely nothing in any weather information we could obtain had indicated anything to come from the SW or W.) There was no way to avoid this rapidly approaching weather system. It hit us with sustained 35 knots, gusting in low 40s for 7 straight hours. Winds then moderated to sustained 20 knots, gusting 28 knots, for an additional 5 hours. I personally would classify what we were experiencing as a gale, not a simple squall. All forced us farther NW than we wanted to go. The seas were large and rough. The GFS and NOGAPS weather files had been consistently wrong all week. There were no predictions for wind from the SE, S or SW; yet that is all that we experienced. We saw no winds from the NE; yet that is all that had been predicted. After 18 hours the winds finally abated to consistently 20 knots, sometimes a few knots less. Seas remained large and confused. We sailed 158 NM this day; of which 135 were MMG. We were tired and could not understand what the heck was going on with this strange weather. Without knowing what was going on, how could we know where to go? It was very frustrating. We decided to heave-to and attempt to sort it out. (Our non-sailing friends can Google the term "heave-to" to learn about this very valuable sailing trick. I don't feel like explaining it now.) We needed to rest and heaving-to provided the opportunity to sleep for 4 hours. Barometer 1004.6

Day #6 -- Before starting again this morning after heaving-to for 4 hours, Bill sent emails to 2 sailing friends who were safe in ports and had internet access and requested any weather info they could provide for our location. We also sent an email to Commanders Weather. We had set up an account with Commanders Weather in October 2008 but had not used this service. Thank you God for sending me the memory about Commanders. Winds were down to the 15-knot range from the SSW when we resumed this morning. Still none of those predicted NE winds materialized. Seas calmed substantially, but only briefly. There were repeated 30 - 35 knot squalls all day. In the early evening we heard back from Commanders Weather with weather routing instructions. It was our good luck to get a weather adviser named Ken Campbell. Ken had once participated in the Volvo Open Ocean Race and had visited this area. It helps a lot when someone is really familiar with an area and not just sitting at a desk attempting to analyze something they really know nothing about. Ken said there was nothing to be done except press onward to the NW. He gave us a latitude and longitude to shoot for and said that if we could reach that waypoint then we would be able to break out of the grips of this LOW. If we continued NW then eventually we should encounter winds from the W or NW, which when light enough should allow us to tack and turn south and sail either along the eastern shore of Sri Lanka or tack SW direct to the SE tip of Sri Lanka. Barometer 1004.2

Day #7 -- Weather same. Still pinched as westerly as possible to avoid getting forced too far north into what the US Navy weather website indicated was the really severe developing LOW system. We heard back from our sailing friends. One was traveling and could not help. But Michael on S/V B'Sheret came through with info from a large file he was able to download while he had good internet access. There were multiple small LOWs forecast right in our path. At this point we were no longer bothering to keep track of miles sailed each day. What possible difference did it make? All we wanted to do was break out of this horrible weather. There was an attack of dragon flies filling the cockpit around 04:00 when way the heck out at sea. Where did those come from? Barometer 1004.3

Day #8 -- Weather same. We both were getting very tired. The stress and lack of proper meals and dehydration were taking tolls on both of us. At daylight (the beginning of day 8) we were 129 NM from the closest point of eastern shore of Sri Lanka. And we could not get there because of the SW winds! But this day we were getting very close to that waypoint where Ken Campbell said we should be able to break out of this LOW. We desperately hoped to encounter light westerly winds later this day. Everything inside the boat was damp with sea air. So many clothes were wet with rain and splashing seawater. The boat smelled like a wet dog. Hey, wait a minute. Maybe that was just me! Barometer 1003.9

During the late afternoon we arrived at the "tacking" waypoint and it was like someone flipped a switch. Ken Campbell had done a superb job of predicting exactly where we could break out of this storm. About 15 miles from the waypoint the wind instantly shifted 40 degrees higher. That did not last and soon it was back to the SW. Ken had warned us about this -- that there might be several "false" wind shifts before we encountered the true shift of wind direction. Sure enough; a couple of hours later the wind instantly shifted 60 degrees higher. I corrected course to the new point of sail and several minutes later the wind again instantly shifted 60 degrees higher. THIS WAS IT!!!! We could now turn and head directly towards the SE tip of Sri Lanka!!! This was much more exciting than crossing the equator for the first time or any of the other typical sailor "highs." Barometer 1006.6 We set course for the new waypoint and enjoyed calm sailing in light westerly winds for 7 hours. And then the winds suddenly started building dramatically -- straight out of the west. Much, much later we realized that the LOW was again building just behind us. We got to a point 43 miles NE of our much-desired waypoint on the SE tip of Sri Lanka when the 45-kt westerly wind forced us to turn. We had a choice. Either turn south or turn north and go back to where we had just come from. We opted to try south. Not sure that was a wise decision. Maybe we should have begun fleeing north right then. Barometer 1003.1

Day #9 -- After turning slightly south in the very high westerly winds, we fought this mess all afternoon and overnight. Winds were sustained 35 knots and gusting up to 45 knots the entire time. We attempted to heave-to again before dark but could not do it. Even hove-to the boat was "drifting" at over 8 knots!!! We could not figure out what we could be doing wrong. We never had problems heaving-to before this. Never did figure out what was different; only that we could not accomplish heaving-to. So we rode it out all night while getting further exhausted. Winds abated ever so slightly in the pre-dawn and we were finally able to heave-to again and rest for 1 hour. We immediately called Commanders Weather for advice. Ken was not there, but the man we spoke with told us to go ANYWHERE except south! Yet that was the direction that this storm was taking us. At this time we were less than 35 miles from that much-desired waypoint on the SE tip of Sri Lanka. It was so discouraging to be that close and yet not

be able to get there! Commanders said to get north as quickly as possible!

And while we were hove-to in the pre-dawn is when the storm really decided to build and to build instantly! The wind hit us suddenly and nearly laid the boat over sideways. We have no idea how high the wind was at that moment. Thank God the backed sails did not fill with seawater when laid down suddenly like that. Bill instantly unlashd the helm and we were off for the ride of our lives. Later, we realized what had happened. Commanders was predicting the LOW to relocate and intensify off the SE tip of Sri Lanka about 24 hours later. They had hoped we could get west of this point before the LOW intensified. We didn't. Barometer 1002.4 The LOW relocated and strongly intensified right where we were hove-to off the SE tip of Sri Lanka. We were caught in the strongest SW winds of the LOW system and there was nothing we could do except ride it out.

For the next 10 hours we went NNE. We were forced to ride the LOW right to the eye wall. We never entered the eye. Instead we were moved around the eye wall. When we reached the eye wall coming from the SW we were catapulted around the eye and off to the NW. Okay, great. We had done this before and knew the drill for breaking out of the NW corner of a LOW. We did not know where that point should be located this time, but if we continued NW then we knew conditions would eventually improve.

We have a recording barometer that automatically records every 4 hours. When we later compared the barometer to our time of position at the eye we learned that 15 minutes after we reached the eye it recorded Barometer 1000.3 This was the lowest barometer reading that we saw during this entire ordeal. This storm was not a cyclone or hurricane because the wind speed was not 74 mph (which would be roughly 67 knots). But it very definitely was a counter-clockwise circulating tropical storm with an eye and eye wall. We hope never to experience any storm stronger than this one!

After turning NW over the eye wall, it took several more hours before we began to see a lighter area in the distance. Bill steered as hard as conditions allowed to get us to that lighter area. You have heard how when people die, they should "walk toward the light." Well, when caught in a nasty storm like this, sailors should "sail toward the light." As night time closed in we reached the lighter area and conditions began to calm noticeably. As soon as conditions allowed we again phoned Commanders Weather. This time we got yet another guy; Ken Campbell was not working at this hour. This latest guy I will call Dick. I do not want to reveal his real name because someone might use Dick and value his opinions and analysis. Neither Bill nor I do. Dick gave us very bad advice. We later learned why, but that is no excuse for it happening.

Dick said we should continue westward towards the eastern coast of Sri Lanka, then turn south. WHAT!!! ARE YOU CRAZY!!! We just spent an entire day getting up out of that mess! Dick the Dickhead insisted there was no bad weather south of our current location. We explained that we had just experienced about 18 hours of sustained 45 knots winds, gusting 50 and over, and violent seas. It was still there 6 hours ago; how could it not be there now???? Dick insisted, "I am looking at the satellite image. It is not there now. There is no bad weather south of you now." (Again, we later learned why he was so wrong; but that is no excuse considering the scope of his job.) Well, okay Dickhead; we would turn south. It went



against our better judgment but we would do what he said was the right thing to do. We turned south.

In less than 2 hours we were entering back in 45 knot winds from the west. Oh NO! We were not doing this again. Obviously Dick did not understand what he was looking at on that satellite image. We turned around and headed as due north as possible. We continued north the rest of the night and most of the next day.

The storm. There is a huge difference between being in a 30-kt or higher storm for a few hours and being stuck inside one for 5 or more days. The sound of the wind screaming through the rigging and all the constant motion of being tossed about by the high seas wear you out. Normally when at anchor we notice the difference of noise level when winds kick up higher than 20 knots. During this storm we now considered 20 knots to be nothing and did not even hear wind at that level. Wind had to be higher than 30 to even hear it. And the sound difference between 35 and 45 knots is very, very noticeable. It just wears you out.

After being almost laid over when the winds kicked up so suddenly, we rode with the storm. Winds were first sustained in the 35 to 40 knot range. Soon it was solid 40-45 knots. That eventually rose to solid 45 knots and gusting higher. Our wind gauge maxes out at 50 knots. As we approached the eye wall the gauge was pegged over to 50 knots repeatedly. We have no idea how high the wind actually reached, but assume it was no higher than 55 knots. FWIW, a Category 1 hurricane (cyclone) starts at 67 knots of wind speed (74 mph); and certainly this storm was not that high. Waves were 6 to 7 meters high (over 20 feet) and extremely violent. Waves at times towered over the bimini on our center cockpit boat and crashed down into the cockpit. The first time anything like that has ever happened. Our cockpit is normally dry regardless of how rough the seas. The waves were the size of houses tossing in all directions at once. The wind was so strong that it was blowing the tops off many waves and streams of foam were flying through the air.

Near the eye wall there was a lot of lightning. At that point, Bill, being reared in Catholic schools, began mumbling Hail Mary's beneath his breath. I, on the other hand, was reared Southern Baptist; and my reaction was to think: God has put this trial before me as a sign that I should examine my life. What faults should be corrected? Am I guilty of hubris? Being too judgmental? Or should the deeper thoughts be put aside. Is this just Mother Nature being a real bitch? I decided that this simply was not the time to think about any of that. When conditions get that violent, one sort of separates from reality and looks around as if watching a movie. My reaction was to analyze how the boat was reacting to the conditions. And I very quickly decided that there was no way that our boat was going to sink in those conditions. She was handling it beautifully. Walls of water often were washing over the bow and deck, but the bow always rose back up and shed the water quickly. In the highest winds the boat would lay way over to her starboard side and bury the rail deeply into the water. A wall of water about 2-foot high would wash from the bow all the way back alongside the cockpit and shed off the stern. Even if the boat were totally laid over, it was obvious that she would eventually turn upright again. As long as we stayed inside the cockpit (even if the boat was totally on her side and the cockpit filled with water) then we would eventually be fine. The biggest worry would be hypothermia, even here in the warm tropics.

We were both literally freezing!! Our foul weather gear is tropical weight and we were thoroughly drenched and shivering. I went below and dug out the 2 heavy blankets that friends

Donna & Bruce gave us when we sailed south to cold New Zealand. We wrapped ourselves up in the blankets, which also were soon thoroughly soaked. Being wrapped in the wet blankets helped trap the heat generated by our bodies. The wet blankets really helped us warm up.

Day # 10 -- After fleeing north for hours we eventually reached a point that the winds were relatively calm. By now we had a new meaning of calm. Sailing in 30 to 35 knots had become our new norm. Calm was anything less than 20 knots sustained. Around 15:00 that after we reached the calm area. We continued to motor farther northward for another 2 hours to ensure that we were well away from this storm. Then we hove-to for a desperately needed night of sleep. During the day of the storm neither of us had eaten or drank anything. We were both dehydrated. After exiting the eye area Bill had grabbed a few bites to eat and lots to drink. I could not face neither food nor drink. Around midnight I managed to force down 5 Wheat Thin crackers and a cup of water. Bill slept well while we were hove-to. I was still on an adrenaline high and could not sleep, so I sat in the cockpit all night. I was afraid the wind would pick up and wanted to be prepared to instantly react. Barometer 1006.8

Day #11 -- We drifted 6 miles south and then 16 miles west overnight while hove-to. Both directions were to our advantage when it was finally time to start south again. Overnight the wind had slowly shifted to come from true north. Things were looking up!! At 13:40 Bill decided that conditions had improved sufficiently for us to again try to go south. We used the satellite phone to call S/V Estrellita and learn what current conditions were in Galle Harbour. We again phoned Commanders Weather and talked to a guy named Chris. Chris said we were good to go south. He recommended that we head SW to the spot of coastline that projects eastward on Sri Lanka; then follow closely to the coastline all the way down. We agreed that if we encountered ANY winds from the W or SW that we would immediately flee north again.

Sailing down the coast was a breeze this time. There were light winds from the north on our stern most of the way; along with a 2+ knot favorable current. The wind slowly shifted to just east of true north. That was even better! This was the wind direction we had been searching for since departing Phuket 11 days ago! It was a very fast ride down -- often seeing boat speeds of 10 knots and rarely slower than 7.5 knots. Barometer 1008.1

Day #12 -- This morning we finally reached that waypoint on the SE tip of Sri Lanka. We had been blown away from this spot 3 times. Our 4th approach was in completely different conditions. Winds were extremely light (like non-existent) and seas were flat and calm. I did not mind running that engine even one little bit! I really had had enough wind to last me a long time. We turned west beneath Sri Lanka and proceeded very slowly toward Galle Harbour. Bill calculated that we needed to average only 5.9 knots boat speed in order to arrive at Galle first thing after sunrise on Sunday morning; so that was our goal. We ran the clothes washer and did several loads of laundry. I was so glad to get those seawater soaked things clean and smelling nice again. I saved the blankets and sheets and towels and heavy items to send in for laundry service once we reached Galle. But all our clothes were clean and smelled good again.

We put the boat into some semblance of order again. Things had been tossed all over the place during the worst of the storm. Nothing was damaged, but there was somewhat of a mess strewn about. I cooked steaks, hash browns and the very last of the fresh produce -- a stir fry of green beans, finely sliced Asian cabbage, onions and topped with grape tomatoes. It was pure heaven!

We pulled into Galle Harbour around 07:00 Sunday morning. All safe and sound and very glad to arrive in a port we had not intended to visit.

2<sup>nd</sup> Post with a few more details

Here is an enlarged image of of the difficult part of our track for the passage from Phuket to Sri Lanka when we were repeatedly locked inside the LOW.

The red numbers are explained below. The shipwreck icon indicates approximate waypoint where S/V Bachas was abandoned and crew rescued by passing cargo ship Maersk Europa. Only the degrees and minutes were reported in the distress call. We did not get the seconds so the waypoint is not exact. We were between points 6 and 7 at the time S/V Bachas was abandoned



1. One day past Nicobar Islands we encountered the first squall exceeding 40 knots. This did not force us to change course.
2. Encountered the large squall from the SW that lasted hours and forced us to begin moving NW. (Sorry; I realize that #1 and #2 are not shown on this close-up image.)
3. Hove-to for the first time and contacted Commanders Weather.

4. Point where we broke free from the LOW for the first time; then were able to tack towards SE tip of Sri Lanka.
5. Encountered strong westerly winds (40+ knots) when approximately 43 NM from SE tip of Sri Lanka; turned south hoping wind would abate.
6. Heaved-to for less than an hour (So frustrating to be only 35 NM from tip of Sri Lanka and not be able to get there!); then hit very hard with strong wind and forced to ride with the storm for next 10 hours.
7. Reached the eye wall and were turned NW. Continued several hours and broke out of the LOW for the second time.
8. Turned south as per instruction from "Dick" at Commanders Weather and soon again encountered 40+ knots of wind. Turned around and fled north.
9. Reached calmer winds farther north and heaved-to for almost 24 hours, drifting mostly westerly while hove-to.
10. The following afternoon as soon as winds showed a hint of NNE (5 degrees), we sailed south towards that same waypoint on the SE tip of Sri Lanka. Reached it in calm conditions on this fourth attempt and turned west beneath the island headed to Galle. Calm conditions all the way to port because the LOW had now moved much farther south and west to the Maldives, where it dissipated.

### **Why such incorrect weather forecasting?**

After the fact we learned why the weather GRIB files and Buoyweather and other such weather forecasting tools were so totally wrong for the Bay of Bengal right now. All the weather forecasting is done by various computer programs utilizing data from weather satellites. The USA has the best weather satellites. However, the USA weather satellites for this portion of the world ceased functioning a couple of years ago. And the United States has no plans to replace these satellites. Nor should we, in my humble opinion. India should step up to the plate and pay for new satellites since it directly affects their country.

Since the USA weather satellites are no longer working, now European weather satellites are being utilized. Unfortunately, the European weather satellites are not very sophisticated and do not provide the angled images and side-angle images. The result is that the computer model programs are not receiving the input data required for the programs to function properly. The old saying "garbage in; garbage out" directly applies to what is happening today with weather forecasting for the Bay of Bengal. Man, do we wish we had known this before starting this passage!

Sailors beware!!! DO NOT TRUST GRIBS FOR THE BAY OF BENGAL. You are pretty much guaranteed that the GFS and NOGAPS and Buoyweather and BuoySpots are not going to be accurate 90% of the time for this particular area. You either luck into good weather for an 1100 mile passage. Or you don't, as exemplified by our recent passage through hell.

**What did we learn?** I cannot relate here all the things we learned on this passage, but here are a couple of highlights.

1. Absolutely anything that is secured to a deck cleat will become uncleated with heavy seas washing across and down the deck. Every halyard or line that was cleated to a deck cleat came uncleated at least once. We now know that when setting out to sea each halyard or line should be cleated and then the bitter end should be tied off to something stationary.
2. In very high winds and heavy seas a sailboat cannot be controlled using just an engine -- you must use sails. We have a 110 hp engine and that was not large enough to maintain maneuverability during this type weather. We absolutely had to use small bits of foresail and mainsail in order to be able to control movement of the boat. Our mainsail was blown out on one seam. Six other boats that we know also had their mainsails blown out during this storm.
3. The anchor windlass and associated electrics take a beating with so much wave action over the bow. During this storm the bow took so much water over the anchor chain counter sensor that it started recording the chain as being pulled in. At one point it indicated that we had brought in 231 meters of anchor chain. That would have been a little hard to deal with that much anchor chain strewn all over the deck and filling the cockpit! Not too worry. If the sensor is shorted out, we do carry a spare.

Several other boats turned around after hearing of our plight on the morning SSB net. They were wise to return to Indonesia or Malaysia or Thailand rather than to proceed into this storm. They were following the GRIBS and had no idea how bad it really was out there until they heard from us. Several other boats were able to heave-to for a couple of days and let the storm run itself out or move away. They were wise to do so.

Our 1100 passage from Phuket to Sri Lanka covered 1600 miles. I will post an image of our track soon so you can see the round-about way we got here.

After arriving at Galle we learned that 29 people on the island had died during this storm. And more than 1,000,000 people lost their homes due to flooding and mudslides.

Another sailor caught in the storm during that worst day that his instruments recorded high wind speed of 60 knots. His wind gauge maxes out at 60 knots and it was pegged to max several times that day. Remember, our wind gauge maxes at 50 knots; so we do not know what were the highest winds sustained.

### **2.1.3 Sri Lanka to Maldives**

**Kurukulla – Feb 2023 – Galle to Uligan:** The passage from Sri Lanka to the Maldives started in an almost flat calm, hence we motored for the first two hours. By then the wind had filled in from the SW and we were away on port tack heading for our destination.

Two and a half days, 450 miles and many windshifts later we hove too off Uligan at 0300 in the morning, waiting for daylight before entering. By 0800 we were anchored off the village on Uligan and in contact with the agent.

**Tregoning – Feb 2023 – Galle to Uligan:** Just before 10 am on Thursday (9th February), we arrived in the Maldives at the northernmost port-of-entry on the small island of Uligamu (a.k.a. Uligan). There were six monohull sailboats already in the anchorage. It is a beautiful atoll with pastel blue patches of sand visible near the shore, swaying palm trees, long sandy beaches,

and large sections of reef. We are forewarned that the coral may not be in good shape but the clarity of the water, (we can see the bottom anchored in 67 feet or 20 m), is truly delightful. It is so good to be back at an atoll, although sadly, this may be the last that we visit in Tregoning.

Our 441-nm passage to get here followed more-or-less the predicted plan with motoring at the beginning and end, and about 3/5 of the time sailing in the middle. It was a bit choppy and sloppy at the beginning but eventually flattened out to be a very comfortable ride. The equipment all worked flawlessly, and it would have been an ideal passage except for one slight glitch...me getting a very upset digestive system on the third day. I will save the specifics for another more gruesome recounting but with a temperature spike of 103.5°F (39.7°C), it was not surprising that Randall was rather worried and I was asleep for most of a 24 hour period.

Luckily, Randall only had to be a solo-navigator for one night and I was soon able to go back to my watches having started a course of Cipro antibiotics. We were very lucky that this started after the seas had calmed down and we were going at a comfortable speed. It was frightening to think what it might have been like if we had both succumbed at the same time in harsh conditions.

**Red Sea FB Group - March 2019** – The passage from Sri Lanka to Uligan was very quiet with no or very little winds. But it was easy enough to stock up fuel in Uligan. Our visit in Uligan was absolutely amazing, locals are extraordinary supportive not only in organising diesel from the neighbor island, but also in showing us around. We had a superb time. Stocking up fresh produce is possible, but product selection is depending on the visit of the last supply ship. There is also a small farm directly on the island happy to sell pumpkin, egg plant and tomatoes to cruisers. Especially for our little boys, 4 and 6, Uligan was a perfect starting point before the long passage.

**Paseafique – May 2018 – Trinco to Gan:** After two months of swinging at anchor in Sri Lanka, Paseafique left Trincomalee Harbour, for passage to Gan at the southern end of the Maldives. It is 850nm from Trincomalee to Gan for which we were anticipating light winds against us (rather than all cruisers' preference of wind behind us), and unfavorable current for some of the trip. We were the last boat to leave the anchorage, and we had been listening to the experience of our friends already underway – they were all bemoaning the current, not just down the east coast of Sri Lanka, but also an east setting current through the Maldives, making it difficult to sail west to get there.

The first day started out quietly enough with little wind and the new motor humming away until about 2.30pm when the afternoon wind arrived and we could sail. Things became a bit boisterous as the wind increased to 16-18 knots on the nose, the swell started to increase, and we had current against us. We were both feeling a bit nauseous, unusual for me unless in rougher conditions. The boat was leaning, for goodness sake! And we were tacking! I had got a bit soft over the last two months. Late in the day, we discovered that some of the stitching along the seam towards the top of the mainsail had given way, leaving it gaping. We had decided to anchor for the night in any case, so we dropped the sails and the anchor, had dinner, showered and gratefully crawled into bed. We had sailed (and motored) 90 nm, but our distance made good was a little less at 84 nm.

Feeling refreshed in the morning, we got underway early by motor, and settled in to repairing the mainsail by hand.

The wind came in around 11.30 am, just as we had finished the repairs, and so we sailed for the afternoon. Conditions were much kinder than our first day- the winds were still on the nose but lighter and there was less current against us and less swell. We still had to tack though. Our nausea had settled and we were much happier campers.

The east coast of Sri Lanka is very pretty so we had some lovely scenery for the day. As evening approached, the moon rose and the gentle wind continued, in fact swinging around onto our beam, so we had a lovely patch of quiet moonlit sailing. When the wind died out, we anchored again for the night. We had sailed (and motored) 78 nm, with our distance made good being 73 nm.

Day 3 - We motored for a large proportion of the daylight hours today. Our mood brightened up when Phil spotted a pod of three whales some distance away from the boat. The wind came in about midnight and so Phil had a glorious 5 hours sailing until I got up in the early morning. In the 24 hours to 6am we had covered 137 nm and motored for 61% of that time.

Day 4 - We had a very good sailing day today and were able to make a fair bit of progress westward, which was our strategy for this part of the passage. The night was gorgeous, with great wind, good seas, and a full moon. However, the night also brought a change in wind direction, and so we ended up heading a lot more north than we would have liked. In the 24 hours to 6am we had covered 134nm and motored for close to 6 hours. We now have about 500nm as the crow flies to our destination- about half way.

Day 5 - An uneventful but pleasant day. The wind became mostly westerly so that is probably the end of pushing westward. Nonetheless, we sailed all day and night in quite pleasant conditions. The evening again was gorgeous, and we both got very good sleeps. We covered 123 nm in the 24 hours to 6am and no motoring at all.

Day 6-The day started out with a continuation of yesterday's pleasant conditions. Not so pleasant, however, inside the boat when I investigated the smell I had noticed coming from our cool storage and found that all 4 cabbages had started rotting from the stalk – unpleasant smelly mush.

By mid-afternoon, conditions outside were becoming unpleasant also. The wind was up about 15-20 knots but also the swell had increased, which brought slapping waves to our hull. We (Phil) put a reef in the main and furled in some of the headsail which made things a bit more comfortable.

Several days ago, when consulting the auto-pilot manual on another matter, we discovered that it has a wind vane mode. What an absolute revolution for this particular passage. Once you have decided on the required wind angle and set up the wind vane mode, you are miraculously freed up, and much less mental energy is required (especially on my part) to keep the boat sailing nicely. We had the wind vane mode operating from the late afternoon and all night, and what a huge difference it made for the night watches! We have not been in a position to use this kind of capability before. Our old autopilot did not have that function, nor was our old wind instrument accurate enough, and the data from these instruments were not integrated. It's great to have the benefit of new technology as various bits of kit need to be replaced. Still it was an unpleasant night with waves thumping the boat.

Despite the stronger wind, we had our slowest 24 hours covering 114 nm, reflecting the effect of wind direction being against us, and also the waves slowing the boat. 292nm in a direct line to go to our destination.

Day 7 - A very uncomfortable day, with the wind and waves continuing to conspire to impede our progress. Added to that, we now also have an east setting current pushing us sideways, making it even more difficult to get further west. We are starting to experience a few more squalls, most of which are fairly short lived. However in the afternoon we had a longer one (45 mins or so) that brought rain as well as wind. Phil had seen it coming, and we put a second reef in the main. The wind only got to 30 knots so it was not too severe.

We tidied up and dried out after the squall, and after a short period of lighter winds, the conditions reverted so that we were back to beating against wind, waves and current. However, the thumping we had yesterday has pretty much disappeared so that was better. By 6am on Thursday morning, we had sailed 119 nm in the previous 24 hours and had about 180 nm in a direct line to go. Only problem was that we could not sail in a direct line!

Day 8 - Another uncomfortable day during which we really started to notice the effect of the east setting current. We had more squalls, which required shortening of sails, dealing with wind shifts, and then putting the sails up again once the squall had passed, all of which requires a fair bit of physical effort, especially when going to windward. We did have a quiet period during which we managed to repair a tear in the mainsail. We were getting a bit fed up by this stage – struggling to make headway in these conditions, tired of having the boat heeled over on a lean, and mentally tired by the continual change in conditions associated with the squalls. I hadn't been able to get much in the way of incoming messages through the HF in the last two days, and so that also tends to dampen our mood. It's always nice to get a couple of messages from friends and family. By 6am Friday morning, we had sailed 89 nm in the previous 24 hours and had 145 nm in a direct line to go. This meant that we had only made good by 35 nm – so we had sailed 89nm to only get 35 nm closer to our destination!

Day 9 - General conditions were a little better this morning. The wind had eased off a bit, and the swell had moderated. However, the wind eased off a little too much so we took the opportunity to put on the engine and push our way west against the current to try to get into a better position where we might get some protection from the current by sailing closer to one of the Maldivian atolls. By the afternoon the wind had returned so we were sailing again. Our strategy of seeking some relief from the current paid off and we felt we were making better progress. Another area of stitching on the mainsail came undone. The mainsail was old when we bought the boat, and so we had a sailmaker oversee and re-inforce some of the seams, but clearly he missed some places. Towards the late afternoon/evening, we had three squalls come through one after the other, again up to 30-36 knots. Once again, shorten sail and sit out the squall. We put the motor on for a while in between squalls to try to get ahead of the systems somewhat.

The timing of this squally weather put our usual evening routine out. We had museli bars and apples for dinner and neither of us bothered to have a shower. Phil eventually got into bed around 8 or 8.30pm, about an hour later than usual. However, the wind kept changing and conditions were unsettled. I was not feeling very confident at all about managing the boat, particularly when it was so important to keep as close to our course as possible. So it was not too long before Phil was back on deck and he sent me to bed, where I lay miserably



contemplating my shortcomings, before eventually falling into a restless sleep. Meanwhile, Phil covered both our watches, having a few catnaps in the cockpit. There were four episodes of large windshifts which required a rapid response to prevent unintended tacking. By 6am on Saturday morning, we had sailed 124 nm in the previous 24 hours to get 101nm closer to our destination, and had 44 nm in a straight line to go. A decided improvement on the previous day.

We had also crossed the equator for the second time at some point before 5am, but neither of us noticed at the time! There was certainly no equatorial rituals on Paseafique for this crossing.

Day 10 - We had another challenging morning with a series of squalls, after which the wind dropped off, so we put the engine on at about 8am. By 10am conditions had settled down and Phil went to bed for a decent sleep. We had decided at that point that we were just going to keep motoring and push through the wind (which was coming directly from where we wanted to go) and current to get into Gan today. The rest of the day was uneventful, and we dropped anchor at Gan inside Addu Atoll at 3pm. We had sailed (and motored) 1055 nm over 9 days and 10 hours. We motored for 29% of that time and used approximately 140 litres of fuel.

We would have had a better passage if we had left Sri Lanka earlier and headed for the northern Maldivian atolls and then spent time slowly cruising south to Gan. However, the Maldives are an expensive destination for cruisers and so we had not planned to go there at all. We had changed our minds though as we thought it would be prudent to stop there for a short time to top up with fuel and water – the last opportunity to do so for the next 5-6 weeks.

Normally, there is quite a degree of excitement associated with arriving in a new country, but the only emotion we felt was relief.

**Tiger Lilly – June 2018 – Fishing Boat Collision:** We were 400 Miles S of Sri Lanka when we encountered 3 fishing boats, and one of them approached TIGER LILLY. We were close-hauled on the Port tack in about 15 knots of wind, with perhaps a 2 meter sea running. The heavy wooden trawler got right up on our windward bow just in front of us, and as we approached, seemed to try to maneuver clear, but the twenty-something helmsman misjudged, and his starboard quarter smacked TIGER LILLY on the starboard cap-rail forward. There were perhaps ten young men aboard this small (perhaps 35 foot long) Sri Lankan trawler, and they were all yelling for us to pass them booze and cigarettes before they hit us. Immediately after the collision, they all got quiet, the helmsman gunned the engine, and they headed for the N horizon. We don't think that it was a deliberate or malicious attack; perhaps the Sri Lankan Millennials are no smarter than their counterparts in America...

The second boat made a pass but stood well off when I showed them our flare gun. (I figured that a burning parachute flare in their pilot hose would give them something else to do other than creating a hazard to navigation for the Cheeky Yankee Yachties - but fortunately, it did not come to that.). The third vessel stayed about 3 miles to our leeward.

This was not an isolated incident. We heard reports from several boats of close encounters with fishing boats S of Sri Lanka, and at various levels of aggression. Cruisers should be aware of the situation within a 600 mile 30 degree cone S of the south coast of Sri Lanka. We would recommend that if approached by a fishing trawler in these waters that the engine be started and warmed up, and a competent helmsman be hand-steering before they get within about 100 meters of your yacht. Again, we don't think it was a malicious incident - but we could (and should) have been more ready to maneuver...

**Yolo – March 2015:** FROM TRINCOMALEE, SRI LANKA: After leaving port and heading south along the eastern coast of Sri Lanka you will be faced with a current running north, up to 3 knots. When you are at the southern end of Sri Lanka you will have a neutral to the favorable current flowing to the west, up to 2 knots. There are numerous cargo ships passing the southern tip of Sri Lanka, usually 10 miles or more offshore. The ships will remain with you until you are 250 km from the Maldives. South of India the current will flow towards the northwest at about 1.5 to 2.0 knots. In all of these locations you might have favorable winds, or most likely no to light winds. Make sure your fuel tanks and cans are full when you leave Sri Lanka, you might have to do 700+ nm of motoring!

FROM GALLE, SRI LANKA: South of India the current will flow towards the northwest at about 1.5 to 2.0 knots. In all of these locations you might have favorable winds, or most likely no to light winds. Make sure your fuel tanks and cans are full, you might have to do a lot of motoring! As soon as you leave the harbor you will see numerous cargo ships skirting the southern tip of Sri Lanka. These ships will be near you until you are within 250 km of the Maldives

#### **2.1.4 Sri Lanka to Chagos**

**Brick House – July 2018:** If you skip Maldives and go direct to Chagos, do not underestimate the effects of the east setting current from Maldives westward. It changes a LOT from week to week...monitor it and go when it has the narrowest band and least velocity. Currents play a HUGE role in this passage. Predictwind and other displayers of currents have them right but it's easy to underestimate their effects. Sri Lanka to Seychelles

**Petite Ourse – August 2016:** In Mahe, Seychelles. We arrived August 3rd after 11 day passage from Gan. Awaiting parts packages for the boat. Finding Seychelles very attractive but very expensive.

Relatively easy passage. No wind first day and light winds for 3 to 4 days at end with current against. For a couple of days in the middle of the passage we had 25 knot SE winds and a few waves into the cockpit (we have Valiant 40 with relatively low freeboard).

#### **2.1.5 Sri Lanka to India**

**Bird of Passage – Feb 2020:** We left Galle, Sri Lanka on the 8th of January 2020, anchored outside Cochin in India on the 10<sup>th</sup>, and cleared in with the authorities the next day.

From Sri Lanka to India during the North-East monsoon you have very little wind to begin with. We motor-sailed for 8 hours. Then you enter the funneling monsoon between Sri Lanka and India with winds constantly over 20 knots and rough sea against you. We sailed with two reefs in the main and only half the jib and seasick crew for 20-30 hours. Not fun, but the speed was good, 7-8 knots in average and we like that.

We arrived outside Cochin as the sun went down and decided to anchor outside the harbour and wait for daylight before we proceeded. [More here.](#)

**FB Group (Red Sea) – 2019 – Question:** Can someone please advise....assuming Trinco is the preferable option to Galle, is onward passage possible to Cochin over the top of Sri Lanka (via Pamban Bridge?) or is it necessary to go South past Galle which adds a further 200 nm?

**Elizabeth Coleman:** You must sail south around the southern tip which is close to Galle. You CANNOT go around the top as there are 2 bridges close together and no one seems to know

the clearance height. Plus the current is very strong so if you got into trouble it could be disastrous.

**Elizabeth Coleman – 2019:** We had a good sail from Trinco down the east coast and across the southern coast. As we got close to Galle we encountered a large fishing fleet. And then about 100nm NW of Galle there was another large fishing fleet, most without AIS. When we reached the southern tip of India we had a tough passage into head winds and a head-on swell. Lots of fishing boats again just south of Kochin. Weather forecasting was very inaccurate.

**Equanimity – January 2015:** We finally made it but it was a long night the other night. We crossed the 'Gulf of Mannar' which is the body of water between Sri Lanka and southern India. We had strong winds for good sailing but it was what they call "square seas", so we were taking water over the side quite regularly, big slaps on the side of the boat and deluges coming aboard at times. So, it was a long night, and thankfully only one night but enough to become salty ole dogs for sure. But EQ was a trooper, she just kept on going, rail in the water and a bone in her teeth. All we had to do is strap in and hold on (we do worship our autopilot!). However, having a cold just before leaving didn't help, so not our best passage for sure.

But we are here, safe and sound, though a bit salty around the edges, inside and out. We had to heave-to (back-wind the sails to stop the boat) a couple of times so Roger could dive on the prop as it picked up fishing nets and lines. There is heaps of junk in the water around here. Coming up the west coast of India there was also tons of fishing boats everywhere, more than we've ever seen. So we spent the second night dodging fishing boats, many with no lights until you were just upon them, they'd shine strong lights in your eyes and blind you... big surprise.

### **2.1.6 India to Maldives**

**Yolo – March 2015:** If you are visiting the Maldives during the first quarter of the year your sailing conditions will most likely be favorable at first. Upon departure along the coast of India, the wind and current are in your favor heading south. However, when you approach the Maldives from the north you will be fighting a 1.5 to 2.0 adverse current. Suggestion, leave Kochi with full fuel tanks.

NOTE: A few yachts have made the passage to the northern Maldives under sail in early 2015. Most during the first quarter of 2015 did way more motoring than they wanted.

### **2.1.7 India to African East Coast**

**Kokomo – February 2020:** We left Cochin on 22 January 2020. It took a few days to get away from the coastline and find wind that would take us SW to Tanzania.

The total distance from Cochin to Tanga, Tanzania was 2515 NM.

The weather was very different from what we expected.

10 days we had 5kn or less of wind,

8 days with 10kn of wind,

5 days with 10-15 kn of wind.

We had one squall with heavy rainfall and 30kt of wind for one hour. The rest of the time we had beautiful weather and it was very hot.

We sailed 8 days w/o using the engine and 15 days we used the engine part of the day/night. The wind was not consistent. The total engine time was 211 hrs.

We had several tropical disturbances, low pressure areas further south of us while we were underway. No problem for us since we were too far north but it looked like it was sucking all the wind out of our area.

Equatorial Counter current created more problems as expected because we did not have enough wind to overcome the current.

Our Iridium Go with PredictWind and current information was very helpful. We stayed in contact with Des Cason the entire time but he could not get us more wind either.

Getting closer to the African coastline the main current throughout the year is the north going East African Coast Current. During the North Monsoon the current we had was around 1-1.5kn.

Sailing at night closer to shore and around Pemba and Zanzibar Isl. is not recommended. Lots of fishing boats and nets and no lights.

So we decided to anchor for the night at the west coast of Pemba at 05-13.989 S and 039-36.443 E. Not a great anchor spot but it was alright for one night.

Next morning COG 285 and 36 NM later we were anchored at the Tanga Yacht Club. For check-in notes see the [Tanzania](#) section.

### **2.1.8 Maldives to Chagos**

**Crystal Blues – April 2015:** Crystal Blues arrived in Chagos on Saturday May 2nd, after a three day voyage from Gan in the Maldives.

Conditions on the trip were mostly calm - in fact they were too calm, with not enough wind to sail against the strong east setting current.

So we motored for about 200 of the 300 miles, arriving at the pass into the lagoon right on time, just before the high tide. The monsoonal change started on the last day of our passage - south easterly winds here and south westerly winds further north in the Maldives. We had planned to be here before the change, and we only just made it.

### **2.1.9 Chagos to Seychelles**

**Vega – May 11-23, 2022:** It has taken me a long time to write this blog, partly as I found it difficult to reread my diary of the passage. This has definitely been the worst passage of the whole voyage so far. Apart from two days of enjoyable sailing the rest of the 12 days was mostly unpleasant and at times quite terrifying.

The wind was unpredictable, no wind, too much wind, sometimes from the west when we wanted to sail west, 12 knots one minute then 25+ knots the next, meaning were constantly furling the genoa or dropping the mainsail, or unfurling and raising sails, only to find we had too much or too little sail up. Frequent squalls with heavy rain made conditions very unpleasant. The seas were often choppy and chaotic, which caused the boat to roll and slow down, although occasionally gentler seas allowed us to speed up. Hugh was a hero tackling most of the sailing in bad conditions whilst I often became unhappy, anxious and afraid, which I'm not proud of. So

many times I've promised myself and him: that's it, I'm not getting back on that boat. But somehow I'm still here.

The 1000 mile sail from Chagos to the Seychelles looked easy. You just head south west to about latitude 7 degrees south to pick up the SE trade winds, then a pleasant sail west in gentle winds and calm seas until you get near to the Seychelles, then northwest to Mahé, the largest island, to check in at the capital, Victoria. Easy, it should take us 8 or 9 days based on the weather forecasts we'd been seeing. I was even rather looking forward to it and had plans about baking bread and cakes, fishing for tuna and mahi mahi, making delicious meals etc..... How wrong I was.

For many yachties crossing the Indian Ocean, and particularly those heading down the Mozambique Channel to South Africa, the go-to person for weather forecasting and passage planning is Des Cason. Des has sailed this route many times but now spends his retirement, at home in S Africa, giving advice to cruisers for free.

As we were settling down to a cold beer on our first night in Chagos, Hugh read out the latest email from Des:

*“Allow me to dispel some myths about the SE trades. Unlike the Atlantic and Pacific the Indian Ocean has peculiarities which make it a very hostile ocean...”*

We laughingly, and it turns out foolishly, composed a jokey email along the lines of 'Annie is wondering is it too late to ship the boat home or where she can get a flight home from now?' We never sent it. We really should have listened more attentively to Des!

We subscribe to a weather forecasting and passage planning app called PredictWind, and get daily forecasts and updates at sea using our satellite system, with suggested routes to take. The forecasts are based on a number of different GRIB files (compressed weather forecasting data) produced by various weather forecasting centres such as the U.K. Met Office.

The forecast we got the day before we left Chagos showed suggested routes we could take and where we would be by May 14th, four days ahead. It predicted there would no longer be any wind at Chagos by the 14th, which is why we decided to leave when we did.

Around the equator is the ITCZ (the inter-tropical convergence zone) between the trade winds of the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. An area known by sailors as the doldrums because of the monotonous windless weather but also an area renowned for thunderstorms, squalls and rain showers. The ITCZ tends to move north or south depending on the time of year and this year it was unseasonably far south, meaning we needed to sail further south than usual to pick up the SE trade winds.

*From Des 'The only predictable thing on the edge of the ITCZ is its unpredictability.'*

*Des again.... 'The Indian Ocean has an extremely bad reputation for very good reasons. In this transition period between the NE and SE trade winds....severe wind conditions are invariably due to squalls and thunder storms. But unfortunately that comes with the territory. Just the nature of the beast.'*

With the wind forecast to die off around Chagos in two or three days, and with our concerns about the worn bearing in the propeller shaft, meaning we didn't want to use the engine, we needed to get going. We regretfully headed off on the Wednesday, all ready for an 8 or 9 day

sail, as prepared as we could be. Meals had been cooked for the first few days at sea, everything was stowed, the check-list checked and life-jackets and safety equipment on hand.

Our first two days at sea the winds were as hoped, around 10 to 12 knots, mainly from the SE, and we made good progress south west on a smooth sea aiming to get down to 7 degrees south of the equator to pick up the SE trade winds.

*Des warned us that 'If you stay on 6S you will run into the southern edge of the wind hole developing. This area of no wind could expand and would strongly recommend you aim to get below 7S by Saturday. No threats apart from the wind hole.*

I always feel rather lethargic and queasy for the first few days at sea as my body adjusts to the motion of the boat and to disturbed sleep as we take turns on watch overnight.

On our second night at sea, soon after midnight, Hugh spotted a boobie sitting right at the top of the mast, taking a rather wobbly rest from flying. He was worried it might damage our wind instrument. He tried shining a torch at the bird, switching the nav lights that are also up there, on and off, shouting and blasting the fog horn at it. Nothing would budge it and I certainly wasn't going to be hauled up the mast at sea, at 1am. After that, our wind direction instrument did indeed stop working consistently.

The next day the wind dropped and the seas became bigger causing the boat to roll unpleasantly from side to side. We poled out the staysail with the genoa, which took an age to achieve, but with a sail on either side of the boat we could sail better with the wind behind us. We were still making reasonable progress. And then around midnight the squalls hit.

On the morning of day 4 the wind came round from the west, the direction we needed to go, and Hugh took the helm, steering, as the wind and seas were so difficult. We were forced to sail SSE, further south but heading away from the Seychelles, and the crew became increasingly despondent. We sent daily emails to Des and on his advice continued to head towards 8 degrees south, hoping to reach the SE trade winds. Hugh spent much of the time on deck battling the wind and rain, whilst I made him hot meals. In the early hours, as the wind gradually died, we took the sails down and just drifted in no wind and light rain, turning all the instruments off to conserve battery power.

On day 5 we had an email from Des 'you have arrived at the top edge of the SE trades and have survived the tiger bearing his teeth.' The morning felt brighter, the sea flatter with big, widely spaced rollers coming from the east, and the wind started to come in from the southeast, lightly at first then increasing to 15 knots. We reefed the genoa and enjoyed the feeling that we could at last start to make progress although it was dispiriting to realize that by noon of day 5 we had got exactly zero miles nearer to the Seychelles in the previous 24 hours.

At midday the squalls started coming in again and the wind backed to the northeast. We tried to sail NW but made little progress west and so tacked, now heading SW again, desperately trying to get further west to make up the distance we'd lost. Later that afternoon the wind settled and we had easier sailing, with a quieter night.

It was highly entertaining that evening at dusk watching the red footed boobies coming in to land on the smooth shiny surface of our solar panel then jostling for position, trying to get a grip with their webbed feet. They squawked at any newcomers, trying to dislodge them and I got so fed up with their squabbling I prodded them all off. They gradually returned and eventually there

were six perched in a row, who settled down to sleep for the night after some preening, head under wings. In the early morning light it was like returning home to find the teenagers had had a party whilst you were away. The deck, awning, solar panel and railings all around were covered in bird poo. That was the end of a free overnight ride for the boobies.

The following day it promised to be much easier sailing, but by mid morning the squalls were back with heavy rain and a confused sea rolling Vega from side to side.

We still had 625nm to go and we were making dreadfully slow progress. Hugh was in the cockpit dealing with the sailing in the heavy rain, winds and chaotic sea.

It was a long day as we continued our slow progress west, with the GRIB files all suggesting we get further south despite the long row of squalls all the way. When the wind eventually dropped we had a cup of tea and played scrabble, and took turns at napping. When a huge rogue wave hit Vega on the side everything went flying, including the tea.

Overnight the wind came in from the NE, the sea became calmer and we had some good sailing in 12 to 18 knots of wind. All the hopeful boobie hitchhikers got pushed off the railings and solar panel.

Day 7 was a stressful day of putting up and taking down sails, poling out the staysail to try to get further west now the wind had veered to the SE then the S. The winds we were getting seemed to bear little relationship to the ones predicted by PredictWind, or to Des's forecasts. After reporting our overnight progress Des would reply along the lines of 'the wind hole in the process of moving spawned a small cell of low pressure and with clockwise rotation generated some contrary local winds'. Hmmm.

The crew was tired and frustrated with the weather!

Day 8 and we should have been nearing Mahé by now, according to our original 9 day passage plan, but we still had over 450 miles to go. I made coffee and left the pot on top of the gimbed stove to brew. The pot slid and tipped over, pouring boiling hot coffee over the top of my left thigh, leaving a nasty blistering scald.

That afternoon the sea was gentle in light winds and we put up the cruising chute until dusk, then sailed with just the genoa in the dark. We tend not to use the big sail overnight in case the wind suddenly comes up and we're overpowered. We had a great sail until around 0100hrs, when I watched on the radar as a squall slowly approached from starboard, hoping it would miss us. Too late, as the wind suddenly increased to over 20 knots, I woke Hugh who came up on deck wearing nothing but his lifejacket, and we got the large genoa reefed. After the squall had passed the sky cleared and it turned out to be a beautiful night with a waning full moon, sailing in 12-14 knots of wind on a slight sea. I gradually let out the genoa and had a wonderful sail... the first time I'd really enjoyed it on this passage!

The following morning was bright, warm and sunny. We were heading in the right direction at last, doing 5+ knots in light winds, sailing well with the cruising chute up most of the day.

Normally we share the cooking on passage, but this time I did most of it, freeing Hugh up to deal with weather forecasting and passage planning and with most of the worse weather. We discussed sail plans several times a day, especially before dusk to ensure we had hopefully anticipated any difficult conditions after dark. Mostly we sailed just with the genoa, which easy to furl quickly, but also at times with a reefed mainsail and a poled out staysail which works well

when the wind is almost directly behind us. We had the cruising chute up a couple of times until dark clouds approaching warned of stronger winds and time to take the big sail down.

For supper that night we had tuna salad with lentils, with Christmas pudding and cream, eaten in the cockpit as the sun set, listening to the Who's greatest hits. Later more squalls passed through and at one point I crawled to the bow to untangle the cruising chute sheets which had got tangled in the furled genoa. A boobie had decided to sleep on top of the satellite dome that night and would not be persuaded to move.

Day 10 at sea and we continued to sail well in gentle conditions. By the afternoon, conditions had deteriorated again with the wind backing to NNE, increasing to over 25 knots with heavy rain and a rough sea.

Overnight the wind settled a bit allowing us to take turns at sleeping. In the early hours, on his watch, Hugh nodded off and, as the boat rolled, he fell forward onto the cockpit table, giving him a hard blow and a nasty graze on his forehead.

By day 11 we were still progressing far too slowly towards our destination in dismal, cloudy, wet conditions in a choppy sea. In the afternoon a pod of large dolphins, possibly small whales, passed at a distance and later we watched a flock of small, black and white seabirds swooping low over the waves, occasionally diving under the water to catch small, silver fish. I had tried at times putting out the fishing line but never had a bite, probably as we were just going too slowly.

Although we were at last approaching the Seychelles, we still had to negotiate the large area of shallows that surround it. This meant heading north for 35 miles before turning west directly towards Mahé, the largest island. It was another bad night with heavy rain and squalls. Hugh nobly stayed up most of the night, in wet weather gear and life jacket, dealing with one squall after the next, jibing as necessary, whilst I cowered down below, in the dry, providing food and cups of tea as required, but spent a lot of the time napping or trying to maintain a zen-like calm. I don't think he got any sleep at all that night.

In the morning there was a heavy sky and drizzle, the sea a dark steely grey with white horses and rollers. We sailed slowly with a reefed genoa only. Hugh slept most of the morning whilst I sat in the cockpit, staring at the sea which just looked immense and terrifying.

*From Des: What you have experienced so far is uncomfortable but not fatal. Have a safe run into Victoria and expect some turbulent seas across the shallow banks'*

As we turned west towards Mahé there were dark grey seas and storm clouds, but we were now less than 100nm from Victoria, the capital of Mahé. We approached where the ocean depth abruptly rises from 2000m to 50m and had anticipated rough seas here but, thankfully, as we crossed the shelf, it was an anticlimax. Overnight the heavy cloud started to clear and the sea became less choppy. In the early hours as I slept Hugh had 'some of the best cruising on this passage' in a slight sea and steady 14 knots of wind.

When I woke on day 13 of our passage the lights of Mahé were in the distance, with the outline of the mountains, their peaks covered in cloud. Nearer to land we could make out the densely wooded mountain slopes with small, colourful houses dotted around, then some wind farms and large tuna fishing trawlers.

Approaching Victoria we called Port Control for permission to enter the channel into the outer harbour. A few hours after dropping anchor in the quarantine anchorage, with just time to clear



up a bit down below, officials from Customs and Health came on board to clear us into the country. After that we motored slowly in to Eden Marina. The Seychelles is beautiful, as expected.

### **2.1.10 Chagos to Rodrigues**

**Brick House – June 2018:** We left on May 21 or so from Solomon atoll in Chagos. Took us 8 Days. We went to the east of Chagos Bank...actually probably more east than anyone did...about 50 miles east of Chagos Bank, before we turned south...just because we had some south winds and east is what we could do. We also knew we would be getting 35-40 knots, according to the PredictWind PWE report (the most accurate forecast model in our experience across the IO so far) and wanted to be well east so we could head downwind and not miss Rodrigues when the bad weather came...

We saw a whale 10 miles east of Chagos so that was a bonus, but it didn't let us get close. We also had a booby eat some of the instruments from the top of our mast. Then we turned south and had a fast easy sail southward, fairly to windward. Seas a little confused in beginning, but then straightened out and a nice sail in 20 knots SE and small waves at most 2 meters for about 4 days or so. Then we got the weather we knew we would get, almost to the hour, where wind picked up to about 35 or so, more in gusts. Waves were close together and breaking with great power... not the large well space rollers we had always heard about. We reefed to just a staysail for 2 days. Didn't travel as fast as Patrick would have liked to have ...about 4.5 to 5 knots, but with it a bit more on our port quarter. Waves went to about 4-5 meters which are more than 35 knots of wind should achieve, but believe me, they were big. Everyone commented how on their trips the waves were bigger than the wind should allow. The waves were still unfortunately from the South though wind from SE so we were taking big breakers all over the tops and sides of Brick House and water was getting in places it never had gotten in before in 11 years of cruising halfway around the world. So many waves hitting us again and again! Blue water in the port holes very very often even though the boat was upright. Even with the companionway completely closed, we had waterfalls down the companionway stairs in to the cabin. Even though the galley overhead hatch has never leaked before, dogged down, barrels of water come in, in force!

The boat motion itself was actually quite comfortable at this point, as heading a little off the wind always is. The boat didn't heel or yaw in any great way..it was as though we were heaved to with just the staysail up. So we still cooked, and moved around fairly comfortably. But the water ingress was disappointing, and it made everything steamy and smelly inside the boat. This lasted for 2 days. Then we put up more sail and resumed a glorious sail for 2 more days in to Rodrigues. We found only helping current, never any real west setting current as we had read about.

We weren't sure if PredictWind currents would be right or not...they never ever showed much west setting current for our trip, but everything I had read said huge west setting current. Getting east was more about being able to turn downwind when bad weather came...not the current sweeping us westward. PredictWind was huge help... we even knew where NOT to go as we approached Rodrigues. And it was amazing how this part changed from day to day on the report. We are trusting it more and more these days.

We had 2-3 ships a day but all on AIS and all made a point to give us plenty of room without asking. Overall a nice passage if not for the water egress. We arrived smelling very badly and with everything on the boat either wet or mildew and had to wash every last article of clothing, bedding, towels etc.

We arrived at 730pm at night, about 10miles off of Rodrigues. We felt a little sad to end the passage so we didn't go to the outside anchorage...we just hove to 10 miles off, put on all our lights, and lots of alarms and went to sleep, sort of. At 3am we had a sailboat approaching us...Tina Princess...and we were not sure they saw us, so we then carried on the remaining 10 miles, communicated with the Rodrigues Coast Guard about our arrival details, waited 10 minutes or so before receiving clearance to come in to the harbor and in we went.

**Alba – May 2017:** Alba has just completed the 1,100 mile passage from Chagos to Rodrigues, so here's my thoughts on the routing.



In 2017, the SE Trades had established by mid-May and six boats left Chagos in the last week of May. I've included their experiences as well - we all knew that this could be a tough up-wind passage, so we put a lot of thought into our routing.

The general weather trend is that the wind varies in direction from East to South and increases in strength from 10-15 knots at Chagos to at least 20-25 knots at Rodrigues. The general strategy is therefore to do most of the up-wind sailing in the first half of the passage where the winds are lighter and the seas are smaller.

Another complication is the Great Chagos Bank, which is a 100-mile wide atoll directly south of the Solomon Islands. A major decision is whether to sail to the west or east of this huge reef system.

If you head east, then you will be faced with a 60 mile motor-sail directly into the prevailing south-east winds and waves and then you'll have to sail directly south

for 80 miles down past Diego Garcia - again hard on the wind. You need a light wind start for this plan.

If you head west then the first 24 hours will be much more pleasant, but you'll end up 120 miles further to the west than the eastern route, making the remainder of the passage harder on the wind by at least 10 degrees.

In past years, there have been strong south winds around Rodrigues, so most boats in 2017 headed for a waypoint 150 miles ENE of Rodrigues, so that in the last 24 hours, we would not be beating into in the stronger winds. (In late May 2017, we experienced steady ESE 20 knot winds at the end, which was a lovely broad reach.)

Alba left Chagos on 22 May with SE 15-20 knot winds, so we chose to take the western route around the Great Chagos Bank. Our plan was to head south for 3 days, which would be a

tough upwind beat in 15-20 knot winds. As the wind increased, we planned to bear away 10-15 degrees for the next three days and then have a down-wind run for the last 2 days when the wind would be strongest and the waves largest. (Our target waypoints were 07°34S 70°40E; 12°S 70°40E; 17°S 069°E; 19°S 066°E)

The first day around the west of the Great Chagos Bank was very nice with the 15-20 knot wind at 60° apparent. Days 2-4 were harder on the wind, sailing as close-hauled as we could manage. The wind was 20 degrees further south than the GRIB files forecast, so for days 3 & 4 we could only manage a course of 190°T. After four days, we were over half way at 14°S and had only given up 55 miles of easting.

The next two days were horrible. The wind picked up to 25-30 knots with sustained squalls every hour giving us 35-40 knots accompanied by heavy rain. The seas built up to 4 metres and were very confused. Fortunately, by this time, we were able to ease the sheets and steered a course of 215°T - 80° apparent. The worrying thing was that the GRIB forecast showed no ridges, troughs or lows - just a steady 20-25 knot wind, so we had no warning of this bad weather, which lasted 36 hours.

For the final two days, we had ESE 20 knots. Very steady and a pleasurable broad reach all the way to Rodrigues. It took us exactly 8 days. We downloaded GRIB files while underway and could see that we were going to get ESE winds at the end, which enabled us to "cut the corner" for the last three days, passing through 17°30S 67E.

So in summary:

Alba, a 42 foot monohull took 8 days. They took the western route and had 25-40 knots with 4 metre seas for 36 hours at around 15S. Turned towards Rodrigues at 17°30S 67°E. Bent a stanchion with preventer rope when had an unintentional gybe, running downwind in a 40 knot squall at night.

Hokulea, a 50 foot catamaran took 5.5 days. They took the western route, leaving at the same time as Alba and managed to miss the bad weather system. The max wind was 30 knots with 4 metre seas. Turned towards Rodrigues at 17°30S 67°E. No damage, but took lots of water over the deck.

Ngalawa, a 42 foot catamaran took 7 days. They took the eastern route, motoring into 10-15 knots with 2 metre seas for 12 hours and then were able to sail down to Diego Garcia. The max wind was 40 knots in short 15 minute squalls with 3.5 metre seas. Turned towards Rodrigues at 15°S. No damage, but took lots of water over the deck.

Relax, a 42 foot catamaran took 7.8 days. Sailed with Ngalawa, so had the same route and sea conditions. Lost a length of trim on their bow in the heavy seas and took in water in two hatches that weren't completely closed.

Endymion, a 34 foot monohull, single hander took 11 days. He took the western route and had trouble maintaining a south course, but was able to sail 40 miles east of the rhumb line. Max winds about force 8 (he doesn't have an anemometer), max seas 4 metres, confused. Had trouble starting engine at end of trip - had a blockage in the pipe exiting the fuel tank, probably from being bounced about so much.

Cataya, a 53 foot monohull, singlehander sailed directly from Gan, Maldives and took 9 days. Sailed south to a point 80 miles east of Diego Garcia and then stayed comfortably on the wind,

trying to retain easting until 100 miles east of Rodrigues. Max winds 35-40 knots in prolonged squalls. Seas 3.5 metres, no damage.

**Crystal Blues – June 2015:** We departed the peaceful paradise that is Ile Boddam, Chagos, on Monday afternoon.

It was worth the effort to get there, and our 25 days at Ile Boddam were unique - a place that few people visit that has intimate connections with the cruising lifestyle (and many of our friends) going back decades.

However you can only eat so much fish ! So when the beer supply was low and the green vegetables almost non existent it was time to move on, and we set out on the 1050 nautical mile windward beat to Rodrigues.

Crystal Blues has covered almost 600 miles since then, and we expect to make landfall on Monday morning. The weather has been a mixed bag, with some delightful days but also many cloudy squally periods that bring stronger winds and send us scudding off, usually in the wrong direction.

The south easterly trade wind is not being consistent - direction and speed vary constantly, requiring frequent attendance to sail trim and course. Sea conditions are very sloppy, with a 3 meter SE swell overlaid onto wave trains from two or three other directions. With a full mainsail and staysail set we are happy in the bigger squalls, and during the day we also roll out some genoa if conditions are right.

We've averaged over 7 knots at about 40 degrees apparent for most of the voyage, though I'm hoping the forecast easterly swing will happen tonight and allow us to lay off the wind for a softer ride.

There are over a dozen boats on passage in the region, and we keep a regular safety schedule on HF radio, morning and evening. Kerstin and Helmut on the German yacht Lopto have done a great job running the net. 300 miles ahead of us the Australian yacht Silver Girl was dismasted two days ago. With the mast gone they had no radio antenna - they had cut away and abandoned the rig so they were able to start motoring towards Rodriguez. They also didn't come up on the radio net.

We contacted them by sat phone and obtained a position. Lopto was close by, so they intercepted Silver Girl and are now traveling (slowly) with them. All of this was co-ordinated using a combination of HF radio and our Iridium Go satellite transceiver. It's been a very interesting few days. At the moment I'm helping out with radio net control on the evening schedule. The boats out here are using 6646 MHz, with schedules at 03:30 UTC and 14:00 UTC.

In Rodriguez we'll be looking for fresh salads, French bread and a good night's sleep in a bed that doesn't toss and tumble.

**More on this passage:** At some risk of understatement, we refer to our recent Indian Ocean passage to Rodrigues as "character building". It was perhaps a little more than that....

We departed Chagos with a reasonable seven day forecast, expecting the winds to build as we moved further south. Many large sea birds followed us very closely for the first 24 hours, before sensibly leaving us before we moved south into heavier conditions.

The first three days were hard on the wind, heading generally south into a 15 knot SSE wind. We then slowly angled off, reaching south of the rhumb line to put the wind behind the beam for the expected heavier conditions for the last two days. However by day four we were already in 30 knots and for the last two days we had over 40 knots, a solid 45 for the final day.

The usual Indian Ocean multi-direction wave trains made the ride very aggressive. I had expected these to merge into a single, more predictable, swell as the conditions built, however this was not to be. After 24 hours with over 40 knots we still had waves from three directions. When they co-incident the inevitable peaks were enormous curling breakers that broached us several times.

One wave broke higher than the boom, taking the sail bag away, pulling the pop riveted bolt rope track right off the boom in an instant. From that point on we ran on staysail alone, still averaging 7 to 8 knots. In a curious twist, our Life Sling rescue system itself needed to be rescued when a breaking wave took it off the railings.

Approaching Rodrigues in thick conditions and constant rain squalls, as expected the waves built higher as we came onto the 60 meter deep continental shelf around the island. Now it felt like we were skiing! Slanting off across the huge wave fronts, many at 10-12 meters in height, was exhilarating. The new autopilot steered the entire distance without fault, thank you Raymarine!

For the final 12 hours we also ran the engine at cruising RPM, which made only a small difference to the boat speed but gave the rudder more bite in the frothy disturbed water on the wave crests. It also kept us moving in the troughs, when the wind was masked by the height of the waves behind us.

It was a very big week in the Indian Ocean - one boat ahead of us was dismasted, another yacht behind us lost its rudder and was abandoned, the crew being rescued by a nearby cruising boat. Another yacht at Chagos dragged onto the reef in a night time squall. All character building experiences.

Cruising friends were ready to take our lines at the dock in Port Mathurin, and even handed over fresh baguettes as we tied the lines off.

We have now repaired the boom and sail bag, and cleaned the salt water out of all those places you never expect to see it - the cockpit was filled with green water so many times, but no water came below into the cabin.

Physically we were both sore for days, arms and shoulders aching from the constant load of hanging on. The bruises were spectacular (sorry no pics folks) but have now faded.

Rodrigues is a delight, a fantastic destination, and we'll be here for several weeks. We ate and slept like royalty for a full week, before feeling truly "normal" again. At some risk of understatement, we refer to our recent Indian Ocean passage to Rodrigues as "character building". It was perhaps a little more than that....

**Caduceus – May 2016:** Caduceus left Chagos on 6 May after 16 days great stay. Arrived Rodriguez on Friday 13 May, taking an hour over 7 days. We headed south to get beyond 12S and picked up the SE Trades for the last four days which provided winds consistently over 25 knots and seas up to 4.5 metres. This gave us a fast passage if a little bumpy. Rodriguez is

great, the people happy to see you. We are berthed in the commercial harbour with currently 5 other boats.

### **2.1.11 Chagos to Mayotte**

**Footprint - October 2022:** The best weather window to start our passage from the BIOT/Chagos wasn't until the third day after our permit expired. Fortunately, the problem was a minor one. Rather than having to wait out a big storm or strong headwinds, our problem was going to be winds of less than five knots from the wrong direction. Those first three days would be tacking in flat seas. Oh, well. We figured if we could get fifty miles away by the time the good tailwinds kicked in, that would at least be fifty miles down, only about 1,800nm to go.

It actually worked out even better than that. When we first left, the wind was enough from the side that we were able to almost head directly at our waypoint at 12 degrees south, 62 degrees east. It is here that there is a gap in the Mascarene Bank, which runs north to south for hundreds of miles. Imagine the Great Barrier Reef with no Australia behind it. Our only other option would be to cross way up at 8 degrees south, but the trade winds aren't nearly as reliable there.

Our luck held out until late afternoon, when the wind swung dead ahead. We had plenty of tacking room between Peros Bahnos atoll and the Great Chagos Bank, so we really only had to perform the maneuver about once or twice per watch. As the sun set, we were still close enough to Salomon to see five of the islands there plus four more to the north at Peros Bahnos. By morning, they were gone, over the horizon, and it was just us and the sea.

After another day, the wind started slowly swinging from southwest to south. We tacked one last time, which started heading us just a little north of west, but gradually we curved back towards the waypoint again. We decided to overshoot as a hedge against a forecast wind shift forward later.

The first of these days was a really slow one. Maryanne got the record for slowest hour on her watch with a run of 0.17NM – about thirty boat lengths. Luckily, we had almost a two-knot current in our favor.

We thought we would have a pretty good chance of spotting some illegal fishing boats, but we never saw anyone. It wasn't until we were more than two hundred miles from the nearest island that I started to notice a change in behavior in the occasional boobies we have been seeing. Instead of ignoring us as the end of the day approached, they would make a close pass, casing the joint, and then make a point of keeping us in sight until it was getting dark. Oh, no! Here we go again.

Since we were heading upwind, and since they like to be on that side for an easier takeoff, they all headed for the very tip of our port bow, just about as far as you can get from our wind turbine. The only incident came when one late arrival got a little below the glide path and clipped a wingtip feather on a blade. We ended up with five of them all clustered together, with three more circling in hopes of getting a standby spot. It seemed like the most miserable place on the boat to be if their goal was to try to get some rest. The two forward birds were constantly getting doused by spray and waves. Occasionally, they would get knocked off, making room for standbys.

As each day passed and each line of latitude was crossed, the trade winds slowly filled in and became more reliable. As we approached the 12-degree gap, our previous hedge to the south allowed us to curve around as the wind shifted forward, leaving us on a relatively comfortable reach instead of beating into increasing seas. By the time we crossed 12 degrees, we were finally headed downwind enough to drop our working sails and replace them with the spinnaker.

When Maryanne handed the boat over to me for my next afternoon watch, we were already halfway across the gap in the Mascarene Bank. We were hoping to get across it entirely in daylight because it is a favorite spot for fishermen and we had heard there may be lots of unlit gear floating about. She told me that she hadn't seen any gear, but there was a Sri Lankan fishing vessel on AIS at the limit of our range that was showing up intermittently on the display.

I saw nothing on my watch, not even birds, until about an hour before it was time to go wake Maryanne again. Then a slow-moving fishing vessel appeared ahead that looked like it may end up being close to our course. Like most fishing vessels, it was erratic in both speed and direction, so it was difficult to tell for sure. As they came over the horizon, they were heading right at us and appeared to be trailing gear. Damn! That made us the give-way vessel. I didn't want to turn downwind to pass behind them because I didn't know how long their gear was, but I could only turn another fifteen degrees upwind before the spinnaker would collapse. I decided to ride that edge and hope the wind speed would hold enough to let us cut in front of them.

Then they turned towards us, which killed that plan. I turned sixty degrees downwind and then they turned that way, too. Oh, for... We did this dance a couple more times until they were close enough that I could see the guy at the helm. His plan seemed to be to pass behind us, but close enough to get a good look. Well, I guess there's not much to see out here; any diversion must be a welcome one.

As they got nearer, they waved and I waved back. Then they waved some more in what was clearly a bid to get my attention. The guy at the helm turned to give chase. When they got within earshot, they started asking for soda and cigarettes. I tried saying sorry, we don't drink soda, which they clearly didn't believe. What kind of American boat doesn't have gallons of Coca-Cola aboard?

After about the third try, they changed their request to water and started gesturing for me to slow down because they were struggling to keep up with us. When I tried explaining that yes, we had water, but it was in the tanks and we have no ready containers to give them, this was met with the same disbelief as before. Mistrust in tap water is so well marketed that even many first-worlders get all the water they drink from plastic bottles. We've seen other boaters provisioning for long passages by loading flats and flats of one-liter plastic bottles (which are then further wrapped in another layer of plastic to hold the flats together). We refuse to do it. We've been on too many beaches to know that plastic water bottles are a scourge the world over. Plus, where are we going to store all of that trash until we get to port? I was not effectively conveying this over both the language and distance barrier between the boats, so they continued gesturing me to slow down.

My mood was starting to morph from friendly and helpful to frustrated and annoyed. I tried my best to keep it to myself, but I knew I was close to failing at that. They were all very friendly and smiley.

When the weather is not scary and the navigation is easy, my primary concern during my watches is to try to protect Maryanne's sleeping environment. It was getting to be the time of day where a carelessly dropped pen could wake her up and these guys were wanting me to slow down. The spinnaker doesn't reef, so the only way to slow the boat with it up is to go through the whole kerfuffle of taking it down. Maryanne and I can do it quickly together, but by myself, there's really no way to do the job without a lot of shaking and noise.

No sooner had I secured the sock Maryanne appeared, asking what was going on. She might have ignored the spinnaker noise, but she had also heard the voices, so she knew something more involved was up.

With the spinnaker furled, our boat speed dropped from eight to two knots. The Sri Lankans were able to pull alongside and their engine went from a roar to a low hum, which made it a little easier to converse. They tossed over a long fishing line with a big clip on the end, which we were able to use to transfer some of their containers over to us. Maryanne filled them from our tanks. While we were all waiting, I was able to piece together that they had been at sea for two weeks and had only caught four fish. They are shark finners, so it was hard to root for them. We are squarely on Team Shark when it comes to that.

When Maryanne finished filling their bottles, she passed them back over the line suspended between our two vessels (the skipper did an amazing job staying in close formation with us) along with some fruit and cookies as a consolation for not having any Coca-Cola. They thanked us with big smiles, retrieved their line and peeled away. I rehoisted the spinnaker and within twenty minutes we were both over the horizon from each other again. Well, Maryanne, since your up, how about some dinner?

After that, we had five days of chugging along at 12 degrees south with the spinnaker flying and the current in our favor. The only drama we had was one day where the wind was right below the limits for both angle and speed for that sail. Every time the wind would pick up a couple of knots or shift ten degrees forward, I'd find myself involuntarily cringing as I tried through force of will alone to get the wind back into the comfortably safe zone.

As we approached Cap d'Ambre, at the northern tip of Madagascar, both wind and current started to speed up as it neared the squash zone at the top. The weather was still presently perfect for the spinnaker, but we switched down to the jib out of caution. It was tough for the first couple of hours to readjust to our new lower speed, but when the gusts finally arrived on Maryanne's night watch, she was glad to be able to reduce sail further by rolling in the sail as needed.

We got pretty lucky with our passage over the top of Madagascar. The wind usually blows there in the high twenties, with gusts into the high thirties with four-to-five-meter waves not being uncommon. I tried to time our arrival for the biggest lull, which got us there in eighteen knots of wind with gusts to twenty-five. This was reduced by our speed as we surfed gently down two-meter waves, so it was really quite comfortable for us. We even got a glimpse of the Madagascar coast before the sun went down.

When the 'lull' ended, we were well past and the land had long receded over the horizon. Our new problem, now that we had left Cap d'Ambre behind, was timing our arrival into Mayotte. Each day, we had a ten-hour window for arrival at the pass between sunrise and enough time to



get us to the anchorage by sunset. To get there before the next day's window closed in the afternoon, we would have to pile on sail and push the boat hard.

Or... we could slow way down to try to kill fourteen extra hours. Let's do that. We're not racers whose sponsor will buy us a new boat next season if we wear this one out. We started with no mainsail and three reefs in the jib, which is 2.7m<sup>2</sup> (out of our 85m<sup>2</sup> total). That turned out to still be too much, so we furled the sail entirely. Now we had no worries about crash-gybing, which was good, because the wind was blowing 25-30 from almost dead astern and the waves were slewing us to and fro as they passed under us. After days of being exhilarated by above-average speeds, we had effectively pulled the car over so we could get out and walk the rest of the way.

We reached the pass at the Mtsamboro inlet right at dawn. After a mile or so of churned-up water on the outside, we entered the flat water of Mayotte's lagoon. From there, it was another fifteen miles upwind to the anchorage at Dzaoudzi. I was worried we wouldn't be able to sail the whole way, but the wind stayed pretty steady. We only had to tack twice.

As we had been previously warned, the anchorage at Dzaoudzi is packed so full of moorings that the only choice for anchoring is to get way out past the far end of the mooring field. As we approached, we saw a dense cluster of boats, plus one lone monohull way off to the left. That mono was Maia. They were leaving so soon that they were already on deck getting ready to weigh anchor. We swung by to have a brief chat over the lifelines before dropping our anchor way too close to them. That's okay, they'll be gone soon and then it will just be us in the boonies.

Blog Post: <https://sv-footprint.blogspot.com/2022/10/passage-to-mayotte.html>

### **2.1.12 Seychelles to Mayotte**

**Vega – Oct 2022:** Friday 30th September to Friday 7th October 2022

I was sad to leave the beautiful Seychelles but also keen to push on as we plan to complete the circumnavigation and be home in Bristol around June of next year. The next destination is Cape Town with the first leg being around 800 miles to Mayotte, a small French island lying between the top of Madagascar and mainland Africa. After that 1200 miles south down the notorious Mozambique Channel to Richard's Bay in South Africa then, hopefully, short and gentle hops along the coast round to Cape Town where we aim to be by late November.

The main worry about this passage was the 'compression zone' north of Madagascar, where the southeast trade winds coming across the Indian Ocean are funneled around the top of the large land mass of Madagascar, causing not only strong winds but huge seas. For a small sailing boat it is the sea state that is actually more concerning than the strength of the winds (up to a certain point anyway).

The actual passage plan was pretty straightforward. We planned to sail southwest along the rhumb line from Mahé to Mayotte but, as far as possible, keeping south initially to avoid bumping into any of the small islands along the way and to allow us to get a better wind angle should we need to head more north later in the passage. The southeast wind would be mostly on the port beam but if the seas and wind got too strong we could turn towards the west and with the seas and wind coming more from behind it would be an easier and more comfortable sail.

We had been watching weather forecasts avidly for the last few weeks. One potential weather window appeared when we didn't feel quite ready to leave. Over the next few days the 'window' didn't look quite so good and even Des, the weather guru, said it looked risky. One boat decided to head off despite this, and encountered 5 to 6 metre waves, their large yacht was knocked over and their life raft self-inflated (although they managed to retrieve it). Thankfully they made it safely to Mayotte, in an impressive 4 days 6 hours.

We were anticipating at least a 6 day passage and coinciding with our being ready (psychologically as well as practically) a good weather window appeared, with winds to a maximum of 25 knots (with stronger gusts up to 30 knots) and waves a maximum of 2.5 metres. Des agreed, with the proviso 'I suspect it will not be as benign as it appears but here's hoping'.

Checking out of the Seychelles was done over two days and was the most convoluted, time consuming and expensive process we've encountered so far on our travels, requiring the help of our agent Jude, with trips to and fro, between the maritime security office in town and immigration and customs in the port area, before we eventually had our departure document officially stamped and were approved to leave the Seychelles.

As we left the anchorage at Eden island we called up Victoria Port Control to advise them of our departure from the Seychelles and they kindly wished us a safe passage to Mayotte. Instead of leaving we sneaked around the top of Mahé and dropped anchor in Beau Vallon bay on the other side of the island to make an early start the next morning. Hecla and Endorphin were planning to head off 24 hours after us.

It was a beautiful, bright, sunny morning as we raised the anchor the following day, and headed out past several small fishing boats in the bay using seine nets to encircle and trap shoals of fish.

For the first two days of the passage we had gentle winds and a pleasant sail. I tried fishing, putting out a line to trail behind us with a lure on the end, but had no bites on this passage – disappointing!

At dusk we would eat supper in the cockpit, usually a meal defrosted from the freezer, and listened to music as the sun dropped below the horizon. At night we had clear, star-filled skies with a crescent moon which set before midnight.

On the third day, the winds, as anticipated, gradually started to increase with steely grey seas and drizzle, then later in the day heavy rain. With winds gusting up to 30 knots we recorded a boat speed of 10.8 knots, albeit momentarily, a record for Vega.

The fourth day was the most difficult, with fully reefed foresail and mainsail we surged along in the strong winds and big seas, chaotic waves sometimes hitting us on the port side, rolling Vega violently from side to side. At one point the waves were over 3 metres, occasionally breaking over the boat and flooding the cockpit. Mostly though Vega just rides up over them quite happily.

The following two days the weather gradually eased, the sailing became more comfortable and the heavy cloud cleared to sunshine.

On our last full day at sea I woke to a gloriously sunny day, a gentle wind and almost flat sea. We were sailing beautifully! It was just a shame we seemed to be heading in the wrong direction

to be able to reach Mayotte due to a strong current taking us too far north... eventually the motor went on to get us heading in the right direction.

The passage took us 7 days in the end. A few days of quite unpleasant conditions but we think we got off lightly.

We saw a few large cargo ships and tankers on AIS but otherwise were alone.

Complete blog post: <https://voyageofvega.cactus.co.uk/seychelles-to-mayotte-the-compression-zone/>

### **2.1.13 Chagos to Madagascar**

**Paseafique – July 2018:** We departed from Chagos at 9am on Monday June 14th, and started out with fairly pleasant conditions. However, by that afternoon we found ourselves in a boisterous and splashy sea, and as we were sailing to windward, the ride was very uncomfortable and moving around the boat was becoming difficult. Phil started feeling sea sick but at this stage, was not too bothered by it as this often happens at the beginning of a passage and settles within the first two days.

We had changed over to our second water tank, as the level in the primary tank was getting too low for the electric pump, given that the boat was on a lean. To our horror the first water that came out of the second tank was filthy! This was pure water that we had purchased in Sri Lanka (and the same water we had been drinking from the other tank), and our tanks had been as thoroughly cleaned as possible when we had the boat out of the water earlier this year. We had some bottled water that we had been carrying since 2015 so we dug that out of a locker, and were able to use that with a plan to see if we could get more water out of the primary tank the next day.

In continuing rough and now squally conditions, the next day, we gathered up a number of containers, flattened off the boat, and got as much water as possible out of the primary tank. Unfortunately, this was somewhat dirty too! Once all the containers were full, we changed back to the other tank with a plan to use that for washing and showering, and to filter the remaining water through cheesecloth for drinking, once the supply of bottled water ran out. By now the seas had become quite rough with lots of water splashing over the boat, so we had to close up the hatches, and zip our drop sheets onto the dodger to stop water from being splashed down the companionway.

By day three, we had found various small leaks in the boat, most of which were not new, but which had not been an issue for a while as we had not been in conditions where we had so much water being dumped over the boat. Consequently, we had almost every spare towel stuffed strategically in position to mop up the water. Things were getting pretty manky inside the cabin by this stage. We were getting a bit manky too as we could not be bothered having a shower in these conditions. To add to our woes, Phil discovered a water and oil leak in the engine bay when he checked the engine that morning. We were puzzled about the water leak, but really dismayed about the oil leak into our nice clean and recently painted engine bay.

Our old engine had an oil leak and so we had suffered years of an oily engine bay and bilge, and a delightful by product of fitting the new engine was no more oil leaks! And here was another one. We were not sure where it was coming from, but at least it was clean oil. The water was salty so that had to be coming via a leak somewhere at the back of the boat.

In any case, we set about cleaning that up, with Phil doing the dirty work and me passing him oil absorbent pads, rags and buckets – and ginger to help keep the persistent sea sickness under some sort of control. After the clean-up, we each managed a shower. I had mine sitting on the floor – nowhere to fall that way. By that afternoon, conditions had improved marginally, but we opted for an easy meal that evening – cold baked beans out of a can. We were quite exhausted from the effort of moving around in the rough conditions, and when not trouble shooting problems with the drinking water, leaks and the engine bay problem, we were spending most of our time lying down on our bunks as this was the easiest thing to do.

The 4th day was a bit of a turning point as we started to head west and thereby our angle to the wind was more conducive to comfortable conditions. Over that day and the next three days, we were able to settle into a comfortable routine as Phil's sea sickness disappeared, and Paseafique powered along in the steady south-east trade winds. After breakfast, I would usually be checking the communications, connecting up through the HF radio to send and receive e-mails, checking in on the sat phone for messages, and writing e-mails. Then showers for both of us, and Phil would head off to bed, leaving me on watch. After lunch and a general tidy-up, we would have an hour or so together before I would have an afternoon sleep. Late afternoon was nibbles time, dinner preparation, and then the net on the HF radio during which we got to check in with other boats doing the crossing and see how they were going. When the net was finished, we would have dinner, and then Phil would once again head off to bed until about 11pm or midnight, when it would be my turn in the bunk until early morning.

The weather was very consistent, and there was virtually no shipping or other traffic, so the night watches were fairly easy going. We were also able to track the source of the oil leak which at first we thought might have been coming from a large drum of oil we had stored in the back of the boat. We were holding our breath as Phil climbed in the back to investigate, but were very relieved to be able to eliminate that as the issue. However, this left us worrying that it was coming from the autopilot, although Phil was fairly sure that as it is purely mechanical, it does not have an oil reservoir in it.

But wait, there is also a store of 5 litre oil bottles in a locker under the bunk in the aft cabin, but as far as we knew there was no connection between that and the engine bay. However, it was worth a check and one of these bottles proved to indeed be the source of the leak. There is a drain hole from that locker to the engine bay. Fortunately, the whole 5 litres had not leaked out and so it was not too difficult to clean up. It is still a bit of a mystery though, as the offending container was still sealed and we could not see a hole or split in it. Phil had also worked out that the source of the salt water leak into the engine bay is likely to be from the bolts holding the back platform to the stern. Replacing and sealing off those bolts is another job to be added to the list.

On the morning of the 8th day when we were about 150 nm from the west coast of Madagascar and the winds increased, squalls appeared, the seas increased, and the rain came down. The closer we got to Madagascar the rougher the conditions became. This section of the passage became a bit more complicated as we needed to slow the boat down to try to avoid rounding Cap d'Ambre (Madagascar's northern point) in the dark. Conditions became even more uncomfortable when we did slow the boat down, so we gave up on that and just sailed as per the conditions. At this stage we were about 95 nm from the Cape and we had three reefs in the main and only a small area of headsail out, and were back to lying on our bunks, hoping that

conditions would certainly not be worse for rounding the Cape. We had the waypoints from our friends on Amandla who had been around the Cape a couple of days previously, so this made the prospect of going around at night a bit more reasonable. It was somewhat of a relief when conditions started to improve when we were around 25-30 nm from the coast. Although the wind did not decrease (20-25 knots), the seas seemed to settle down and so it was not as rough. We knew we would be rounding the Cape in the wee small hours of the morning, so we decided to abandon our usual watch keeping schedule and have short sleeps of 1-2 hours.

In fact it was very hard to actually sleep, as the wind and waves were quite noisy and the boat movement was anything but a gentle rocking. The actual rounding of the Cape went well, even though the wind was up to 30 knots. I had gone for a sleep/rest about midnight, and woke around 4am to discover that I had actually slept through this event, while Phil kept the good ship *Paseafique* on course.

By 10am, Tuesday June 19th we had anchored in a bay on the west side of Madagascar, and were basking in the accomplishment of having arrived! We were very pleased with the performance of the boat on this passage. We had sailed 1538 nm, with our 24 hour runs ranging between 186 and 199 nm, and an average boat speed of 8 kts, despite the fact that we were sailing conservatively to protect the main sail which is nearing the end of its life and becoming quite brittle. The boat handled the rough conditions very well, and we are certain that a slower boat would have provided a much more uncomfortable ride.

**Gryphon 2 – October 2014:** If you need to be persuaded not to do this crossing and put your yacht on a ship instead, read the final blog of *Simanderal* (link below). This was a well found, well skippered yacht that got into difficulties en route from Chagos to Madagascar and had to be abandoned. The final blog is an excellent, dispassionate account of the attempts of her crew to keep the boat afloat until the final rescue of her crew.

*Simanderal* - [blog.mailasail.com/simanderal](http://blog.mailasail.com/simanderal)

## **2.2 Southern Route**

### **2.2.1 Malaysia to Sunda Strait**

**Slip Away – April 2018:** The first leg of our journey was a motor trip south from Port Dickson in Malaysia, crossing the Malacca Straits into Indonesia, then traveling along the east coast of Sumatra to the Sunda Straits, which is located between the islands of Java and Sumatra, a total distance of about 650 miles (1,046 km). The Sunda Straits would be our gateway to the Indian Ocean.

The area in Indonesia through which we would be traveling is commonly referred to as the doldrums because it is near the equator, and winds are generally light to non-existent, so we expected there would be little, if any, opportunity to sail. On the bright side, for much of this trip the island of Sumatra would provide protection from any Indian Ocean swell, so we could expect mostly flat seas. Since we didn't want to arrive at the Sunda Straits with an empty fuel tank and nowhere to buy more, we left with a full fuel tank (168 gallons / 636 liters), and carried an additional 95 gallons (360 liters) of diesel on deck in jerry jugs (twelve 30-liter jugs). *Slip Away's* stern was sitting quite low in the water!

We left Admiral Marina in Port Dickson late in the day on April 28, motored overnight, and stopped the next afternoon at Pulau Pisang, a small island with a good anchorage near the border of Malaysia and Singapore. We anchored for the night, and early the next morning we continued on our way, first crossing the very busy shipping lanes of the Malacca Straits and then entering the Durian Straits, timing the tide so that we would be traveling with a positive current. This was a great plan, but what we didn't count on was headwinds. As we entered the Durian Straits, we had about 10 knots of wind from the south (on the nose), which made for a bumpy wind-against-current ride. As the morning passed, we watched a big black cloud in front of us getting bigger and blacker. We didn't get a lot of rain, but the wind increased to 20 knots wind on the nose, which made for very short and steep waves in the channel, and we were bashing and burying our bow and making very slow progress.

We looked at our charts and saw Galam Harbour nearby and decided to duck in there until the winds subsided. There was nothing on the charts indicating that this was a big shipping harbor, but in fact it was, and there was even an Indonesian Navy Base here. As soon as we reached protected waters, we had a small launch coming at us with a young Naval officer aboard. The launch pulled up alongside us, and the officer boarded Slip Away and asked our intentions. We showed him our port clearance paperwork from Malaysia indicating our intended destination of Australia (Cocos Keeling), and explained that we had just pulled into this harbor (actually a seaway between two islands) to get away from the rough seas. This young officer spoke some English but did not understand most of what we were trying to explain to him. He called his Commanding Officer and then told us we needed to bring Slip Away to their naval dock so his CO could determine our intentions. We respectfully refused to do this for many reasons, not the least of which was that we were within our rights to travel through Indonesia without checking in with their authorities as long as we did not go ashore. We had documentation stating this, and actually had an internet connection here so that we were able to access this information on-line in the Indonesian language (Bahasa) so that the young officer could understand.

Long story short, we were detained for a couple of hours while several other Naval officers came out to us. We believe the first one to show up was an Intelligence Officer - he came with his camera, took photos of the outside of the boat, and then photos of the interior. (He was especially intrigued with Rich's stock of rum!) Once the Intelligence Officer was on board Slip Away, the younger officer departed, and the Intelligence Officer sat surveillance on board Slip Away until the Commanding Officer and a translator showed up. When the CO and translator arrived, we think the Intelligence Officer let him know everything was fine because the atmosphere became much more relaxed. The translator explained to us that they have problems with drug trafficking through this area, so it was necessary for them to make sure that we were not a part of that. At this point, everyone was all smiles, but even prior to this the officers were always very cordial to us - they were never rude or threatening, although the first launch driver needed some training because he put a gash in our hull! The CO gave us his phone number and told us to call if we had any trouble as we traveled to the Sunda Straits. They also asked if we wanted to come ashore and have dinner with them, which we politely refused. And, as is very typical of Indonesia, everyone wanted to have their picture taken with us!

We breathed a huge sigh of relief when they finally let us go, but we lost 2½ hours of time. It was 4:30 p.m. and we had a problem. We did not have enough time before sundown to get away from the narrow straits where the local fishing fleets ply the waters at night with nets and

long lines. We looked at the charts and found a small island (Morolaut, coordinates 00 46.57N, 103 39.71E) where it looked like we could anchor for the night. We dropped our hook at 8:30 p.m., a very nerve-wracking 90 minutes after sunset, but the moon provided decent light, as we dodged a few fishing floats on our way to the anchorage. This little island proved to be a nice calm anchorage, and we got a good night's sleep before continuing on at first light the next morning.

The rest of the trip to the Sunda Straits went without incident, and we traveled non-stop for the next 3½ days. We transited the Durian Straits, crossed the equator for the third time on board Slip Away, and then transited the Berhala and Bangka Straits before finally reaching the Sunda Straits.

Once south of the Durian Straits, we saw limited fishing activity at night, perhaps because of the shipping traffic in the Berhala and Bangka Straits. The shipping traffic required us to be on high alert during our night watches, but it also provided the shot of adrenalin needed to do so. Night watch in the Bangka Straits was especially challenging because there was so much tug-and-tow traffic, and not all of them had AIS, but radar and a full moon helped us out there. We had agreed that we would stop and anchor if we felt it was too risky to travel at night (the depths were such that we could have easily pulled off to the side of the straits to anchor), but neither of us felt the situation was unmanageable.

We approached the Sunda Straits with some apprehension because we'd heard stories from others that there are ships and ferries coming and going in every direction with no real traffic pattern. Maybe it was just good timing, but for us there was no drama. We stayed close to the Sumatra side of the channel and saw only a couple of big ships near us. We had to deal with some ferry traffic because they run back and forth across the channel between Java and Sumatra, but it wasn't a big deal.

We transited the Sunda Straits at noon, and had 44 miles to go to reach Rakata Kecil (Little Krakatoa), our intended anchorage for the night. We would be arriving at the anchorage just after dark, but there wasn't another one closer. We had a waypoint from friends who had stayed in this anchorage previously, and from the charts, the approach looked easy and straightforward.

The sun was setting as we were a few miles from the anchorage, and since we were just past a full moon, once the sun dropped, darkness descended quickly. The darkness was exacerbated by an approaching squall with lightning and thunder. As we neared the anchorage in pitch blackness, with howling winds, lightning and thunder, we saw a line of fishing boat lights in front of the anchorage - our stress levels were soaring right about now! But we somehow managed to weave our way through the fishing boats, and drop our anchor seconds before the rain started pouring down. Relief! After dumping some rain on us, the squall passed and all was calm. We drank a beer, ate some dinner and crashed. We woke the next morning to the sight a smoking Krakatoa volcano off our starboard beam. Wow!

We spent 3 days at Little Krakatoa prepping for the next jump – to Cocos Keeling.

The majority of boats which transit the Indian Ocean travel via a northern route (via Sri Lanka, Maldives, Chagos and Madagascar), but the stops along the "southern route" appealed more to us. We were aware of and in touch with two other boats who were also planning to travel the southern route.

## **2.2.2 Australia NW Coast to Cocos Keeling**

**Begonia – August 2022 – From Broome:** The weather was not ideal for our departure from Broome to Cocos (Keeling) Islands. That said, it wasn't particularly terrible either. The forecast called for very light headwinds for the first two days, then the winds would slowly back counter-clockwise and increase until we had typical trade winds by day three or four.

We left our mooring at first light in a brief period of locally offshore winds. Since we didn't have to weigh anchor, and thus start an engine, we raised full sail and then released the mooring pennant.

Usually, on my first day off-watch of a passage, I have trouble sleeping during the time of morning that I am normally having coffee and looking forward to my day. This time, I surprised myself by sleeping for a solid two hours before switching to two hours of on and off tossing and turning.

When Maryanne switched with me at noon, I emerged and was surprised to still be looking at the anchorage. By that I mean not only could I still see Gantheaume Bay, I could still pick out each moored boat within.

Our forecast had called for light winds out of the southwest, which should have allowed us to ghost northwards up the coast towards the favorable equatorial current a day or so beyond. The wind was instead irritatingly from the northwest, which meant Maryanne's only option was to sail west on a starboard tack into the current that was running up the coast. In her entire watch, she made it just under a mile over the bottom. The current pretty much cancelled out her speed, so that she spent most of her time sailing west-southwest through the water while going either backwards or sideways across the bottom.

In the afternoon, the wind slowly picked up just enough for us to start moving in the direction to which we were pointed. At three o'clock, I climbed onto the cabin top and watched the horizon until the last mirage of the Australian continent vanished into the sea. We had spent so much time seeing so much of it and as I watched it go, I was well aware that I didn't know when or even if we would ever see it again. Now it was going to be just us and the sea for a while.

It wasn't until 3am on my next watch that the wind finally backed enough for us to tack and head north with the current. We sailed close-hauled all day in light winds and flat seas until just after dinner. then the wind finally had finally backed far enough for us to aim directly at our intercept waypoint with the westbound equatorial current.

The wind picked up on Day Three until we were easily romping along with over-reefed main and jib. This would end up being our fastest day of the passage. The southeast trades were still annoyingly mostly out of the south. A big storm, also in that direction, was sending up a swell that was being added to the building waves, giving us uncomfortable beam seas.

The next day, the wind had finally backed far enough for us to dispense with our working sails and deploy the spinnaker. We were we now faster, and the shadow the mainsail had been casting on our solar panels was now gone. That made it much less of a struggle to recharge the batteries during the day after running the boat all night.

The next three days were the best part of the whole passage. The spinnaker stayed up day and night, with the only attention it needed being to move the sheet in or out just so slightly every watch or two. The seas calmed and started coming more from astern, which made our motion



smooth and gentle again. We also had bright days and clear, starry nights where the air ranged from almost too cold to be the perfect t-shirt temperature to almost too hot to be the perfect t-shirt temperature.

At the end of Day Seven, the wind started building until the spinnaker was too much for it. We brought it down and replaced it with the jib, which soon needed reducing to keep things under control. The waves began building again and we had two days of cloudy, drizzly conditions sailing over a gray sea.

On Day Ten, the skies finally cleared again. Half a day later, the wind started to abate. It was also forecast to swing behind us to the other side, so I wasted no time in switching back to spinnaker. After downloading the latest forecast, it appeared the dip in wind strength was going to be deep enough to cost us an extra day at sea. It wasn't here just yet, so we were hoping the spinnaker could keep our speed up high enough to beat the prediction.

It turned out to be a pretty stressful day and a half. Both the lull in the wind speed and the shift farther behind us never materialized. We spent the entire time hovering at either the maximum wind speed limit for the sail or at the most forward angle that would keep it set, usually both. Every now and then a five-degree wind shift would collapse the sail. It would flap like crazy, making a huge racket, then ever so slowly refill into its normal balloon shape.

On Maryanne's night watch, the wind came forward even more. She didn't want to wake me by making all of the noise of pulling down the spinnaker and then hoisting the other two sails, so she bore off slightly to the north of our course to keep it filled. The good news was that we had managed to keep our speed high enough to where we were definitely going to arrive just after the next sunrise, making the extra day at sea unnecessary after all.

When she woke me for my watch at midnight, it was obvious that Cocos (Keeling) was too far upwind to be able to continue with the spinnaker. It was a relief by then to pack it up and switch back to our normal working sails. I put an unnecessary reef in the main just for good measure and then pointed Begonia across the wind towards the entrance to the pass.

We arrived right at first light without having to do the usual sail reductions to slow way down. Just as we got there, yesterday's predicted wind lull finally arrived, giving us flat seas as we motored the last couple of miles to the quarantine mooring. As it was Sunday, the police told us to sit tight, they'll come out to clear us in tomorrow.

This was fine with us, as it takes us a day to reacclimate to not staying awake half of the night, but also not fine because we were technically not supposed to leave the boat until we were cleared in. The turquoise water of the lagoon was sooo beautiful and today was the only calm spot in the forecast for the next sixteen days, at least. We wanted to go snorkeling; not just teasing little laps around Begonia, but all over the whole bay. This is the first time in months that we have been in lovely warm water and not had to worry about our first plunge sounding like a dinner bell for the nearest crocodile.

<https://sv-footprint.blogspot.com/2022/08/passage-to-cocos-keeling-islands.html>

**Alyosha – June 2018 – From Darwin: (St Francis 50 Catamaran)** The passage from Darwin to Cocos Keeling was pretty straightforward: we had great trade winds for the first 6-7 days that pushed us along, followed by very light winds that weren't helpful at all! By day 4 we had the

spinnaker up and we spent about 60 hours sailing 8-9 knots with little to no adjustment on the sail whatsoever- that was definitely a first for me!

A few things really stood out on the passage: we had a tremendous full moon by midway through the leg so every night was beautifully illuminated for us. We were very successful on the fishing front: at a certain point we grew tired of all the fresh tuna and just started throwing them back! However, each Wahoo we caught did not make it past the next meal time...

We also burned a ton of fuel getting here- way more than I expected. The light air during the second half of the trip, mostly from directly behind us, just did not keep us moving against the Indian Ocean's notorious southern swell, so we ran one of the engines almost non-stop from days 8-11.

My 3 crew were a great asset during the trip and some absolute gourmet meals have been served up during our passages.

### **2.2.3 Sunda Strait to Cocos Keeling**

**Slip Away - May 2018:** We spent three nights at the Little Krakatoa anchorage, watching the weather and prepping for the next leg of our journey, another 600+ mile passage, but this one offshore to the Cocos Keeling Islands, owned by Australia. Jan prepared passage food - one pot meals which could easily be reheated on our stove. Rich used a 12-volt pump which he built to transfer the diesel from the jerry jugs into our main fuel tank, and we then flagged down a local fishing boat and gave them six of our empty jugs. They were grateful to have them, and we were happy to be rid of them. We kept six jugs because we figured we might need them in the next few months.

We charted our course to Cocos Keeling and watched the weather. We also took some breaks and swam around the boat a bit to cool off. The weather is hot at the equator!

(May 7 to 12, 628 nautical miles, 4 days + 20 1/2 hours). This would be our first offshore passage in the Indian Ocean, and it had been quite a while since we had done any offshore sailing. Since the Indian Ocean has a reputation for being rough, we were a little nervous. We downloaded weather files, and they looked pretty reasonable, except that the winds and seas would be up near the end of the trip. Although we did not anticipate any problems dealing with 3+ meter seas, they didn't sound all that appealing, but we figured we probably needed to get used to having seas of that magnitude in the Indian Ocean.

We weighed anchor early afternoon on May 7 and motored through the channel separating Little Krakatoa and the main Krakatoa volcano.

Overall the passage to Cocos Keeling went well, with a couple of exciting moments. Shortly after departing the anchorage, we had enough wind to set our sails, and we shut down the engine. By departing at noon, we were well away from the local fishing fleet by sunset, so relieved that we didn't have to worry about them.

Our first couple of days on passage were quite pleasant as we sailed on a broad reach with wind in the mid-teens and 1-2 meter seas. We never saw another fishing boat until we were over 300 miles offshore from Indonesia when we came across a large fishing fleet in the middle of the night. The fishing fleet was well lit to attract fish, but none of the boats were running AIS transponders. Rich was on watch, and using eyeball navigation he guided Slip Away through

the fleet. He breathed a huge sigh of relief when we left them in our wake and hadn't gotten caught up in any nets or long lines.

The following night was no less exciting compliments of Mother Nature. When we changed watch at midnight, even with no moon, we could still see that the skies behind us were very heavy, and we reefed down to deal with whatever might be coming. We felt like sitting ducks as the squalls marched through, one after another. Winds would increase from 12-15 to 25-30 knots, the rain would pour down, and then the winds and rain would abate. The cycle repeated every 20-30 minutes. We kept the sails reefed, so Slip Away moved slowly, but she handled it well. The squally weather lasted about 24 hours, and needless to say, we were very happy when it subsided.

The next morning, shortly after sunrise, we arrived and anchored at Direction Island, Cocos Keeling.

**El Toro – May 2018 - Cocos Keeling to Christmas Island** AGAINST the wind, current and waves... 10 days and 8 hours sailed (left and right all the time) 982 nautical miles in really difficult conditions... but happy and safe SY EL TORO

**Shango – 2014:** The first two legs of the passage, Sunda Strait to Cocos Keeling and Cocos Keeling to Rodrigues were pretty straight forward. We waited for good windows, had a mixture of mostly strong winds and a couple periods of light wind. The currents were consistently favorable.

**Three Ships (OCC Newsletter) – May 2014:** We left the anchorage at Pulau Peucang in the Sunda Strait the next on 12 May. The winds were a little variable and the seas confused, but we made good progress out into the Indian Ocean towards Cocos Keeling.

Just after midday a dorado took our towed lure with such enthusiasm that it broke the rod holder, and rod, reel and fish all disappeared beneath the waves – another omen perhaps.

The squally winds kept us on our toes for the next three days, but at least the thunderstorms were gone, for the moment at least, and the main impact was heavy rain and lighter shifty conditions. Even so we covered the 600 miles in four days exactly.

The morning of 9 May saw us winding our way through the shallow, reef-infested waters into the quarantine anchorage off Direction Island, Cocos Keeling.

Frank from Tahina and Chris from Griffon 2 came out in their dinghies to guide us in, and with 0.3m of crystal-clear water under the keel we made it into the anchorage and dropped the hook.

#### **2.2.4 Sunda Strait to Rodriguez**

**Happy Bird – April 2016:** From Singapore, we started our Indian Ocean crossing in one passage, first 7 days through Indonesia, horror, we almost were overrun by a tugboat with a huge tow, we almost hit another huge tow, it was only on a few meters distance, unlit, size of a soccer field, brrr, we were caught in a fishing net, crosswaves, freak currents etc. by Sunda Strait we should enter the Indian Ocean, we passed by a Dutch tugboat, who just came from the ocean and the captain told us, it was heavy outside. Hmmm, nice start! Nevertheless, it worked out well, we had a lot of wind and really high swell, waves 6 mtr very steep, some breaking, but we made fast progress using our sails only.

In 21 days we arrived from Sunda Strait in Rodrigues. We loved it there. Unluckily our engine had a problem, parts of the impellor were hiding in the cooling system so the engine overheated and we were drifting in high waves between the reefs, so we had to be tugged into the harbor. Stress! Rodrigues is pronounced the same way as my husbands name Roderick, so we told everyone, he was the King of the island. Fun! The locals all knew him. When we went to dinner, they already told each other, Roderiques is coming.... We loved the island, made a lot of hikes alongside the reef, beautiful and nice, friendly Creole people!

### **2.2.5 West Australia to Cocos Keeling**

**Nine of Cups – September 2014:** Our passage from Geraldton, Western Australia to the Cocos Keeling Islands in the Indian Ocean was idyllic. We could not have asked for better weather, better winds or better conditions. (Okay, that 10th day sucked, but the good days were really good! ) Here's our passage stats:

Planned miles: 1422 Actual Miles: 1468

Days at sea: 10.5 Average speed: 5.8 kts

Flying fish: 14 Squid: 4 Birds: 1 Edible fish: 0

**Day 1** - Once we passed the anchored ships in the outer harbor, we pointed Cups' bow towards Cocos Keeling ... a straight shot. We sailed past the low-lying Abrolhos Islands and sighted whales along the route. Humpbacks were breaching and spouting. I finally got a reasonable shot, but you'll have to wait till we reach internet-land again.

The wind was the predicted 15 knots and we beam-reached for hours. By mid-afternoon, the wind had freshened and the waves had steepened. We took a reef in the main and cruised along in the 7's. By 1700, the wind had worked it way to 25 knots on the beam and we took another reef... and continued in the low 8's. By 1800, we were both seasick. We took two hour watches on a cold, raw, boisterous night, fighting off the cold and the seasickness as best we could. The passage soup went untasted.

**Day 2** - The wind has shifted to SE and we're sailing downwind, wing-on-wing, but slowly in 8 knots of apparent wind. The seas have calmed down and the sun is shining brilliantly. The sky is pale blue today with puffy, grey-white cumulus clouds floating lazily by. The sea is dark. We saw dolphins earlier, but they were all business and didn't stop by to play.

Despite the lessening of the waves, the swell persists making for a lot of rocking. We've been sleeping like starfish in the aft cabin in our bunk (in shifts, of course)... laying on our backs, arms and legs spread out to keep from rolling.

By evening, the wind returned to 20-25 knots and lasted throughout the night.

**Day 3** - We had a good run today. 163 miles total and 159 miles to the good.

The days continue to be fair, the night's cold and clear with a waning moon and increased winds. As we move north the temps are becoming warmer during the day... low 70s F (20s C), in the 50sF (low teens C) at night and with 25-30 knot winds, the wind chill keeps us layered up.. a t-neck, sweatshirt, fleece and heavy offshore jacket for me, plus sweatpants, socks, scarf, gloves, hat, socks, shoes and two blankets, just about does it for me. It's wonderful to slide into the sea berth at the end of my watch, already pre-warmed by David.

We had to switch the whisker pole from starboard to port side to accommodate a change in wind. This should have taken 15-20 minutes max, but instead it occupied nearly two hours. The pole jammed in the track on the mast and David noticed that the swivel is bent. It took brute force on the part of the captain (read that a hammer), to jury rig it into place, but it'll need attention in Cocos. The list of the to-do's is, of course, beginning to grow daily: a minor issue with the voltage regulator on the alternator, lines to whip, replacing the preventer on the boom. Some we'll do at sea, others will wait. David took a chafed dockline and recycled it into two new snubbers today.

Saw several sooty shearwaters checking out the waters for fish this morning. Perhaps what I read was wrong and we'll have some good fishing in the Indian after all.

**Day 4** - The wind switched to SW for awhile today and is now a steady south tending to SSE. Looking at the forecast for the next few days, we're pretty sure we've found the trades - southeast, southeast, southeast.

**Day 5** - We are officially in the tropics now... we crossed the 23.5 latitude line known as the Tropic of Capricorn.

**Day 6** - A dark, sapphire blue sea for as far as we can see under a cornflower blue sky... not a cloud in sight. Days have been glorious. We're 600 nm off the Western Australia coast now and Java is about 700 nm due north. We're more than half way to Cocos Keeling and we celebrated with Half Way Alfredo for dinner.

It's a slow sailing day today. The winds are light and a bit contrary. We only made 120 nm to the good. Quite honestly, it's so beautiful out here, who cares?

We're slowly shedding layers... scarf, gloves and foul weather jackets are stowed away and we're down to one blanket on night watch. We're edging our way to the warm, day by day.

Another flying fish met his demise in the scupper ... this one pretty large comparative to the 2- incher who glided aboard the other night. We regularly see them gliding long distances from wave to wave... must be something chasing them. We put out the fishing lines today.

**Day 8** - 316nm to go. A circle of dark clouds surrounded us this morning and, for the first time in a week, it rained. We witnessed a good tropical downpour for all of 20 minutes, just enough to rinse the squid ink off the deck, and then it cleared and the day turned beautiful once more. We're becoming quite spoiled with this weather.

No luck fishing although it appears the big wad of plastic debris caught on the end of the line might have accounted for some of the problem. Once cleared, we got one solid hit which even left bite marks on the lure, but no fish for supper. Only one flying fish in the scuppers this morning ...slow night.

What a contrast to a week ago! We're barefoot and in t-shirts now and...sweating. We've definitely found the warm. Do not in any way construe this as a complaint.

The winds were light today and dead downwind which had us tacking to maintain a reasonable course. It's reflected in our low mileage today. Fresher winds from the SSE are forecast for tomorrow. We're nearing the Cocos now and, like horses getting close to the barn, we're keen on getting there.

**Day 9** - As we move further west on our route, the sun rises and sets later. We're sailing into a new time zone: GMT +6-1/2 hours - a 1-1/2 hour difference from Western Australia. The time of day makes little difference to us at sea and since the change is minimal, we'll wait until we arrive in the Cocos to collect our extra hour and a half.

Neptune is teasing us big time these last two days with light, fickle winds. As we get closer to the Cocos and excited about our arrival, he's been holding back the southeast trade winds and sending 3 knot breezes from the ENE and E in their place. We had thought to make landfall in two days, but two slow days in a row might necessitate an extra day at sea. Much depends on the winds over the next two days. So much for plans.

**Day 10** - The tenth day of our passage was rather action-packed.

The day started out well enough, the light breezes of the past two days disappeared and Neptune graced us with the trade winds once again. We picked up speed and of course, as the winds increased, so did the seas. We rigged the port settee with lee cloths as our sea berth.

Just after Noon, the AIS alarm went off. A ship, 15 nautical miles away, had a CPA (closest point of approach) of under one mile. We had a visual on him 6 miles out. His CPA was getting closer - .75nm. We hailed the freighter, Berge Manaslu, a Panamanian registered vessel en route from Brazil to China, to make sure they could see us and asked their intentions. We got a quick response in good English that indicated yes, we were on their radar and they had adjusted their course to port to allow us more clearance room. We chatted for a moment, exchanging pleasantries. Though we would have guessed he would have crossed behind our stern, it appeared he was crossing our bow. He certainly had access to more sophisticated equipment and probably more experience, so we went with his decision.

As he came closer and closer and the CPA showed an imminent collision, we took evasive action. We needed to jibe. Since we were poled out, this meant taking in the jib in record time, jibing, and cutting hard to port to pass behind his stern. We came within .2nm of either being t-boned or hitting him broadside. Huge ocean out there and not enough room for a tanker and a tiny sailboat. We hailed again to ask him what he was thinking, but this time no response to our hails. Whew!

Shortly after resuming our course, we got a solid hit on the fishing line. Hooray ... Fish for dinner. But, alas, we had hooked a white fairy tern known by the locals as the "pilot of the Cocos". Oh, no! I went to grab a towel in hopes we could somehow catch and release him, but David gave me the "kaput" sign, index finger across the throat. He'd been dragged under for quite awhile. He was a goner. Then, like a Phoenix rising from the ashes, he darted out of the water like a shot and flew away. This would have been tantamount to killing an albatross in my book and, oh, the consequences of that!

The winds continued to increase, the seas building, but we were moving along nicely wing on wing until a rogue wave, an untimely gust and an accidental jibe and ..CRASH! The whisker pole snapped in half, leaving two halves with ragged aluminum shards on their ends falling to the deck. David assessed the damage. The mast-end of the pole could not be lifted back into place, so we lashed it to the mast pulpit. After much coaxing, the sheared-off extender tube was freed and lashed to the lifelines above the fender boards.

With the 30 knot wind still behind us and significant weather helm, we wrestled down the mainsail and flew the jib alone, sacrificing no speed and getting a marginally better ride.

The night was a wild ride. We stood two hour watches. It was unpleasant on deck with the boat knocking around in the waves. Salt spray flew off breaking waves and stung our faces. Below, there was no comfortable place to be. The sea berth, though confining, allowed little rest and added to the already mounting list of aches and pains. It was a toss-up which was worse, standing watch or trying to sleep.

And then morning came and, though I wish I could tell you all was calm and fine, it was more of the same. The good news? 62 miles to go to Cocos Keeling.

Today's catch: 6 flying fish, 1 bird, 1 whisker pole, many bumps and bruises, no edible fish, equal amounts of TimTams. That's my story and I'm sticking to it.

**Final Day** - 62 miles to Cocos and oh, how we worked for those miles. We flew along with just the jib until David noticed a small tear on the leech near the UV. We hauled in the jib, put up the staysail and a triple-reefed main and maintained nearly the same speed. Add a jib repair to the growing list of to-do's.

The wind continued to scream with gusts near 40 knots, the following seas building and giving us a sleigh ride of a passage. There were no naps to be had; the cockpit was the most comfortable place aboard. The saloon looked like a hurricane had hit... 10 days of passage including the last two days of rough weather had taken its toll below.

Per instructions, we called the Australian Federal Police a couple of hours out to advise them of our arrival. All good, they'd check us in at 2pm tomorrow and we were free to leave the boat prior to that if we wished.

The Cocos Keeling are low-lying islands, but finally about 10 miles out, when we reached the crest of a wave, we spotted a long expanse of palm trees, seemingly growing right out of the ocean depths. We were still showing 6,000 (1,845m) foot depths and there, just in front of us a few miles, were islands lush with palm trees. We slogged our way into the wide atoll opening between Horsburgh Island and Direction Island, not quite enjoying the cold, wet sting of the waves as they now slapped the side of the boat and rose up, thoroughly drenching us each time.

It was dusk as we rounded the end of Direction Island and watched the depth meter go dramatically from "unreadable - too deep" to 40 feet (12m) in seconds. It was that dramatic. Our electronic charts seemed spot on and the flashing lights shown on our charts were functional. Hallelujah! A small ship was anchored in Port Refuge. We passed by and headed east towards a more suitable depth for Nine of Cups. There is an inner lagoon for sailboats, but the area is dotted with coral heads and negotiating this area at night was not advisable without knowledge of the waters. We were content to drop the hook in 22 feet (6.7m) and call it a day. Even though it was dusk, the water was so clear, I could see our anchor hit the sand on the bottom and coral patches seemed easily distinguished. Dropping the hook, seeing the anchor dig in and finally turning off the engine provided a wonderful satisfaction and relief. A few days R&R (that's repair and regroup) were definitely in order.

We were close enough to the inner lagoon anchorage to count the boats at anchor there ... 20! How could this be? This late in the season, we were expecting to have the place mostly to

ourselves... perhaps a few other boats, but a whole fleet? Even after we were comfortably anchored, we noted two other sailboats arriving. One was flying a discernible burgee... the ARC! We had checked weather, currents, regulations, things to see and do. We had not checked to see if there were any rallies scheduled to stop in the Cocos.

### **2.2.6 West Australia to Mauritius**

Mauritius Island is covered in more detail [here](#).

#### **MV Egret – Freemantle to Mauritius – September 2010:**

We left Freemantle on 1 September 2010 for Mauritius, an Indian Ocean island east of Madagascar. The 3365 miles were beyond the comfortable range of her tanks – Egret carries 1000 US gallons (3800 litres) in two tanks, and averages a little over 3 miles per US gallon at ocean crossing speeds of 6.3–6.4 knots. Throttled back to 5.5 knots her range would be nearer 4000 miles. But we don't take chances ... ever ... and when Egret left for Mauritius she carried three aircraft-quality fuel bladders on deck as well as an assemblage of jerry jugs – even the diesel heater gravity-feed tank was filled to the top. Everything was filled but the kettle. The total fuel on board was 1360 US gallons, or 5168 litres.

A southbound current flows offshore down the west coast of Oz, but there is a counter-current flowing north tight to the beach. Our plan was to run north to the southern end of the Abrolhos Islands near Geraldton, then turn left and ride the southeast trades to Mauritius.

Egret wallowed north with full fuel, deck fuel and very heavy provisions like the overweight pig she was. All went as expected, then she turned west. The trades were supposed to begin a day offshore, but even though the pilot charts for September said the trades began 150 miles further south, we didn't enjoy them for a single day during the entire trip. Instead of a welcome surface current and wind from astern, there were numerous counter-currents and variable winds.

After emptying the deck fuel we increased rpm a bit and her average speed increased, particularly as her fuel burned off. The passage took 23¼ days with an average speed of 6.03 knots, which included waiting for 12 hours offshore in order to enter in daylight. She arrived with 255 US gallons (969 litres) remaining – a 25.5% reserve – having averaged fractionally under 3 miles per US gallon.

### **2.2.7 Maldives to Rodrigues Island**

Rodrigues Island is covered in more detail [here](#).

**Flomaida – May 2016:** Flomaida arrived safely in Rodrigues on Monday, May 2nd, after 1360 nm from Gan. We were sailing about 70% of the distance, sailing first south from Gan, passed Chagos at the east coast and went down to 13°S. Here we found the ESE trade and turned SW rhumb line to Rodrigues.

Coast Guard gave permission via VHF 16 to come in to the harbor. We moored at the main Jetty, administration was done in one hour, but with a huge amount of paper work. We enjoy the island, the friendly people and the civilization after 3 month of lonely islands and reefs. We are the first yacht here in 2016 and are planning to stay 2 more weeks to explore more of the island. The town is small, restaurants are available, super market and shops, also the harbor is safe.



## **2.2.8 Cocos Keeling to Chagos**

## **2.2.9 Cocos Keeling to Rodrigues Island**

Rodrigues Island is covered in more detail [here](#).

**Slip Away – June 2018:** Cocos Keeling to Rodrigues Island (June 4 to 18, 2000 nautical miles, 14 days + 10 hours)

During our stay at Cocos Keeling, we were keeping a watchful eye on the weather. Our next passage would be a long one - 2000 nautical miles, which would take about two weeks - to the island of Rodrigues, and we expected it would be one of the most challenging of our passages for the season. It's impossible to accurately forecast the weather two weeks out, so one needs to just take their best guess and go for it.

We know of boats which had good passages from Cocos Keeling to Rodrigues, and others which had it pretty rough. Sue & Stefan (s.v. Charlotte) departed for Rodrigues a few days after we arrived in Cocos Keeling, and we kept in touch with them via the SSB radio to monitor their progress and conditions. The first part of their trip went well, but then they had a few very rough days with winds gusting into the mid-40's (50+ mph) and 5-6 meter seas toward the end of it. We've never sailed in conditions like that, and had no desire to do so, but we knew that we needed to be both mentally and physically prepared.

Lionel & Nathalie (s.v. Rokalo) left a few days after Sue & Stefan, and another French boat came and went. We kept looking at the weather and thinking it looked rougher than we would prefer. By the end of our second week in Cocos Keeling, the weather was quite unsettled, with numerous squalls and winds up to 35 knots in our anchorage, and so we waited. After the big winds came and went, the forecast showed no wind for the first several days of the passage, and since we didn't want to burn through our supply of diesel on the first part of the passage, we continued to wait. All this weather stuff was playing mind games with us, and we grew incredibly anxious!

Departure from Cocos Keeling required that we motor north out of Port Refuge and then turn northwest to round Horsburgh Island before setting our west-southwest course toward Rodrigues. Winds were blowing 15-20 knots from the northwest when we left Direction Island, so we bashed into 1.5 meter (5 foot) seas for about 45 minutes until we rounded Horsburgh Island.

For the most part, this entire passage was pretty rough and uncomfortable, but we expected that, and felt very fortunate to have avoided any severe weather. The highest winds we saw were in the upper 20's, which are quite acceptable, and for almost the entire passage, the wind was usually just aft of the beam, so the sail plan was easily manageable - port tack with double reefed main and genoa on starboard side. The seas were generally about 2 to 3 meters (6 to 10 feet), and especially at the start we had a cross-swell, which made them rough and confused (and made the crew a bit grumpy!).

The roughest day was Rich's birthday (June 7), and late that afternoon, Jan was below working in the galley and Rich was in the cockpit when a big wave slammed into the port side of the boat. What a horrible sound!! The wave did no damage to the boat; however, despite having our cockpit enclosure secured in place, about 5 gallons (20 liters) of water streamed into the cockpit, completely dousing Rich. Not a great birthday present!

During most of the trip, we often had splashes of seawater in the cockpit - never any major waves flooding it, but our normally dry cockpit was rather soggy. Many of the entries in our logbook on this passage say "Rough!", and we had a number of squalls along the way, but again, nothing severe.

On our last night at sea (about 14 hours out of Rodrigues), the winds backed, which meant that in order to continue sailing efficiently, Rich would need to go out on deck to set the pole on the headsail to sail wing-and-wing. Seas were rough, it was 2 a.m., and neither of us wanted Rich to go out on deck. We had plenty of fuel, so we furled the headsail and motor-sailed the rest of the way to Rodrigues, arriving at the channel to Port Mathurin in the early afternoon. Slip Away was covered in salt, but all was well and we made it!! This passage which had caused us so much angst was over and done with!!

**Yindee Plus – September 2015:** Our two week passage to Rodrigues, near Mauritius, was a boisterous, trade-wind blast as expected. We were blessed with two days 'off' in the middle, when the winds and swell eased and we sailed gently on at 5.5 knots as if we were in the Pacific!

Most of the voyage though was notable for the closed hatches, to avoid splashes of saltwater entering after waves collided with the side of the boat. Normally, we can keep our cockpit hatches open but not in the Indian Ocean. This area is notorious for breaking marine equipment and unfortunately we broke some too (see: Marine Products and Services: Hydrovane).

**Shango – 2014:** The passage from Cocos to Rodrigues saw 3 straight days where the winds remained consistently above 30 knots with gusts of 45+. Seas built to 15-20 feet and unfortunately in addition to the wind waves at our port quarter, there was also a large SW swell a little forward of our port beam which made the ride wet and uncomfortable at times. The Cocos to Rodrigues leg fulfilled the Indian Ocean expectation of fast sailing in strong winds and big seas. The favorable currents and long period waves were real positives. The consistently good currents avoided any need to try to plan routes other than straight rhumb line courses.

**Nine of Cups – Early October 2014:** Miles to go: 1994

With a mild 3-day forecast of 15-knot winds and fair weather, we reluctantly headed out of our gorgeous Cocos lagoon and back into the wilds of the Indian Ocean. We were all prepared with our custom, shortened whisker pole ready and rigged, but within an hour, the wind had switched more southerly and we were main, Yankee and staysail all full, tooling along in the mid-6's, the southeast swell keeping the ride a bit rocky.

The low-lying Cocos were out of sight within 10 miles and we once again sang our usual "On the Road Again" classic as we continued our western passage. Our hard fought northerly progress of a couple of weeks ago will be slowly relinquished as we head WSW (255M) on a

route that will eventually lead us to the small island of Rodrigues, formerly French-owned and now a dependency of Mauritius.

The sun set about 6pm, making for a long night. The night watches, however, weren't very stressful. No traffic, the wind remained steady, and the night was mild and clear. A good first day at sea.

**Day 2** - Miles run last 24 hours: 139 Miles to go: 1838

A pair of boobies followed us for miles today, alternately fishing and eyeing Cups for a good landing spot. They didn't appear successful at either venture and near dusk, they disappeared. Sometime during David's first watch, a booby did manage to land on the solar panels and spent the night resting, preening and pooping.

He was still there, however, at my 6am watch.

My entertainment for the day was watching David try to shoo our hitchhiker away. The booby would take off with significant, up-close prodding and then be back before David could return to the cockpit. He'd be on return approach, in fact, before David could turn around ...Ready to land and launch a new load of poop. David dug out his old slingshot and armed with popcorn kernels, fired round after round with no effect, despite the fact he had hit his target. After several fruitless attempts to discourage our unwanted rider, ( I counted no less than 15, but lost count as I nearly peed my pants watching), David finally grabbed a line and swatted him which evidently delivered the right message to his tiny booby brain. He left in a huff and wasn't seen again.

**Day 3** - Miles run last 24 hours: 141 Miles to go: 1697 Squalls ...squalls....squalls!

Our beautiful weather changed abruptly to squall after squall after squall. The gentle, warm 15 knot breezes morphed into 35 knot gusts and torrential downpours that soaked and saturated everything on deck and anything that didn't make it below on time. They came on suddenly during the night and whoosh ...no warning, the skies opened up and dumped buckets...the wind blew through like a night train making up time and the seas were as confused as we were. As suddenly and as ferociously as it all began, all would calm down, only to begin again in another 15-20 minutes.

**Day 4** - Miles run last 24 hours: 158 Miles to go: 1539

A very boisterous night led into an even more boisterous day, though everything seems easier to handle in the daytime. Squalls and heavy rains alternated with calm during the night. Today, bright sunshine. The winds have been consistently in the high 20s- mid 30s with gusts to 40 knots and the ride quite uncomfortable. There is no comfortable spot for the on-watch person below when the weather is nasty and we're on a port tack. These are the times a pilot house would be nice.

The seas are confused and a bit angry, whipped into a foamy 15'+ (4-5m) frenzy ...every third or fourth one that crashes by is guaranteed to douse the cockpit crew. The scattered-cloud, blue sky is deceptive because just looking at it, you'd expect a fine day. The high altitude mare 's tails are telling the story of a front coming through. Our weather forecasts underestimated the winds. We've triple-reefed the main with a reefed staysail and a handkerchief of a jib out and we're still moving along at 7-8 knots. Not much weather helm, but not a comfy ride either. At least we're making good distance and speed...some of it in the right direction.

Winds forecast to continue like this through the night and lessening tomorrow. We can only hope.

**Day 5** - As advertised, the winds calmed to the low 20s during the night. The seas became more sailor-friendly...no wave crests blowing into our faces or breakers crashing into the cockpit. The ride is more comfortable and the crew is predictably happier. The stove gimbal still needs attention and there are innumerable salt- water-wet, sodden towels, t- shirts, shorts and sweatshirts in various heaps in the saloon, but the day dawned blue-sky lovely with no ominous clouds on the horizon and we're 163 miles closer to Rodrigues.

**Day 7** - Miles run last 24 hours: 148 Miles to go: 1095

The day started out beautifully. Blue sky, fluffy white clouds, reasonable winds and seas ...an enjoyable day to be sailing on the Indian Ocean. Just before dinner time, dark clouds appeared on the southeast horizon ...huge ,black, ominous-looking clouds. Maybe just a squall. We saw a rainbow...a full rainbow, arcing across the sky. Rain on its way. The wind piped up. We reefed down as we watched the rain moving in heavy, dark sheets towards us. We gathered all of our gear from the cockpit and stowed it below. We were in for a soaker.

The wind increased ... 25, 30, 35 knots. The seas kicked up quickly. We hunkered down below. Making dinner was a challenge. We cozied up on the starboard settee ...stuck in place by gravity. Nine of Cups jerked and bucked violently, reacting to the collusion of winds and seas. It became uncomfortably hot below while outside a cool wind kept screaming. Waves crashed loudly ...thud....splash.

Sleeping was wishful thinking. The ride was too rough. By my 0300 off watch, however, I was exhausted enough to finally doze off. I awoke to the sound of a freight train colliding with Cups. One "big mutha wave" delivered a huge hit and the boat rolled like a boxer taking a wicked left cross to the jaw. CRASH ... In the following seconds, things went flying through the saloon and a huge deluge of water forced its way through the secured companionway hatch boards and the dorades.

David, on watch at the nav station, was thrown out of his seat against the breaker panel. Marcie asleep on the starboard sea berth was the recipient of gallons of sea water over her head. Everything was soaked ...clothes, sheets, pillows. Water on the galley counters stood two inches deep and worked its way inside lockers. An iPad went sailing across the saloon, ricocheted off the galley wall, and finally settled in a puddle on the galley floor. The saloon table, the bookcases, the sole ...everything was completely doused and dripping. Stuff was strewn about everywhere.

It took a second or two to figure out what had happened. The wind continued to shriek, the boat shuddered and bucked. We were both momentarily flustered. We pulled ourselves together quickly, assessed the damage, grabbed towels and rags and began mopping up. We heard an alarm sounding on deck.

Evidently, the cockpit had been totally pooped ... all lines and sheets were hanging over the starboard side trailing in the water. It was the ignition switch that was shrieking so loudly and it wouldn't shut off. The switch had gotten submerged, and so much salt water had gotten inside the switch, it had caused it to short, turning on the ignition. Other alarms were sounding ...the bilge pump was on, the high water alarm added to the bedlam; the autopilot was complaining that it was off course.

**Day 8** - Miles run last 24 hours: 160 Miles to go: 941

David temporarily disconnected the ignition switch, knowing he'd have to do something if we were to turn on the engine later to top the batteries. The other alarms were handled in turn and the chaos was in check. Our back-up cockpit GPS was not working.

The day finally dawned ...dark, dreary, and boisterous. Once it was light, David conducted a general triage of apparent damage and began fixing. He re-wired the ignition and replaced the switch. The GPS was an easy fix. When he was thrown against the breaker panel, he hit the outlet switch and unknowingly turned it off by accident. A flip of the switch and the GPS came alive, found its fix and started ticking off the miles again.

Long, uneventful naps during the day despite the continued rough sea, and the crew recovered a bit. We've been at sea a week now with another week to go. Let's hope Neptune considers our dues paid for this passage.

**Day 9** - Miles run last 24 hours: 162 Miles to go: 779

We've not been able to sit in the cockpit for the last four days. The wind and, mostly, the errant waves prevent us from sitting there and staying even a little dry. I'm not talking salt spray; I'm talking big old drenchers. We wander up for few minutes at a time to get some fresh air, mostly standing on the top step of the ladder in the shelter of the companionway. When we hear the thud of a wave hitting, we duck back down. Think of hermit crabs in their shells! At least we're making good progress.

We're more than halfway to Rodrigues and celebrated with Halfway Alfredo for dinner. I'm certainly looking forward to a calm anchorage in Rodrigues for dinner, a glass of wine and sleeping in our comfy bed together. We're both lame and sore from sleeping in the sea berth (among other causes)...lots of ibuprofen being consumed.

As we make our westerly progress, it's becoming light later in the morning and staying light later in the evening. The time change from the Cocos to Rodrigues is 2-1/2 hours. We prefer the light later in the day and thus, we're resisting making any changes. We'll have to do it eventually, just not now.

**Day 10** - Miles run last 24 hours: 157 Miles to go: 622

Same old...same old. Winds and waves have not diminished although each weather forecast indicates it will, but always "tomorrow". So far tomorrow hasn't come. We are not life-threatened; we are mighty uncomfortable and a bit grumpy.

**Day 11** - Miles run last 24 hours: 141 Miles to go: 481

At last...we've escaped from below decks and we're out in the fresh air again. Winds are 15- 20 knots on the beam; seas are down, although every once in awhile a big breaker crashes onto the scene, prompting an immediate duck and avoid maneuver.

The wind gen tail has literally disintegrated in all this rough weather, rendering the wind generator unusable at the moment.

Below decks looks like a typhoon hit. Salt water sodden things never seem to totally dry out. We have stuff draped everywhere. Everything is out of place and looks dirty and messy. There's a thin layer of film on everything ... a combination of salt and passage dust.

**Day 13** - Miles run last 24 hours: 147 Miles to go: 198

We're whittling down the miles now, getting close to Rodrigues, making a final sprint. Neither of us slept during off-watch due to choppy seas at an odd angle to the boat that kept us rolling and wallowing, gunwale to gunwale, for most of the night. The rolling action is not conducive to sleep nor comfort in any way. It had calmed a bit by morning and we've both enjoyed refreshing naps.

There's been lots of ship traffic the last 36 hours or so. We hadn't seen a ship in several days and now there have been 5 heading east and 3 heading west. We talk to some on the radio, depending how close they are. All those hailed have answered promptly. The Golden Bell came a bit too close for comfort and having learned a lesson just a couple of weeks ago, we took evasive measures early on and they still came within 0.5nm of us. Thanks, Neptune, for taking care of us.

It looks as if our final run will have us arriving during the night unfortunately. Rodrigues has a large outer harbor with a well-marked entrance through the reefs, and an inner harbor where we'll eventually clear-in and anchor. Notes from other cruisers indicate that it is prudent to wait until daylight before proceeding to the inner harbor. I guess we'll figure it out when we get there.

**Day 14** - Miles run last 24 hours: 139 Miles to go: 59

We finally caught a nice dorado yesterday.

Shipping traffic has increased significantly with at least one ship on the AIS every watch.

Unlike the Cocos which are low-lying coral islands, Rodrigues is volcanic and rises about 1,300' (~400m) out of the sea. We could see it from 35 miles out ... a hazy hump on the horizon, poking out of the ocean. In fact, Rodrigues sits on a triple tectonic plate which would seem to make it vulnerable to earthquakes and tsunamis, but we've never heard that it's a problem there.

Predictably, Neptune is aware that we're anxious to get in, so he's calmed the winds and seas. Hence, we're dawdling along in the 4s on a beautiful, sunny day, anticipating an after dark arrival. We talked about churning out the miles with the engine to make it in before dark, but then thought "Why? It's a gorgeous sailing day and turning on the engine would just be a waste of fuel and money....not mention noisy and smelly." We'll sail till dark, and then, heave-to till morning. We'll complete the final miles tomorrow and enter Rodrigues in the light of day.

**Day 15** - We did, indeed, heave-to about 20 miles northeast of Rodrigues. We stowed the whisker pole and tidied up a bit below. We enjoyed the rest of our dorado catch in a citrus marinade for dinner. It was a beautiful night ... light winds, small seas, and a gazillion stars, so not at all unpleasant. We maintained a watch, but it was easy duty, just floating lazily, quietly and peacefully. We drifted about three miles in the right direction during the night, and after a batch of chocolate muffins came out of the oven, we adjusted the sails and headed into Port Mathurin, the entry port for Rodrigues. I dug out the courtesy and Q-flags and David ran them up the halyard.

We'd had a few brief showers during the night and a heavy gray cloud still shrouded Rodrigues Island. From this distance, the island resembled a speed bump in the middle of the ocean, placed there to slow us down.

We took turns showering and dressing appropriately in anticipation of meeting several officials in the upcoming hours. We contacted Rodrigues Port Control about two hours out and received permission to enter the harbor. We'd heard another boat announce its arrival just before we set sail, so we wouldn't be the only new kids in town.

As we approached about 3 miles offshore, the island features began to take shape. Mangroves fringed the shore. Further up the hillside, a copse of trees contrasted sharply with large areas of tawny brown. The highest ridge of the island succumbed to black volcanic rock. We could see a small town close to the water, houses clustered close together, and several houses dotted the hills sporadically. A red and white tower sat upon the hill and wind turbines were busy churning out power for the islander.

The island is surrounded with reefs. We aligned Cups with the leading marks to enter the outer harbor, then caught sight of the red/green markers delineating the channel. The water changed color rapidly from dark blue to turquoise as we lost depth. We spotted masts, but had to maneuver through the coral ...a dogleg to the left and then to the right, before we reached the inner harbor.

The supply ship/ferry was docked and the harbor seemed quite small. Six boats were already at anchor and finding a good spot out of the channel took a couple of tries. Before we had even set the anchor, a dinghy of officials was hovering around us waiting to board. Rodrigues at last.

Passage stats ... Total miles planned: 1985 Total miles sailed: 2036 Passage days: 13.5  
Average speed: 6.3 knots Flying fish: 26 Squid: 1 Birds: 1 Fish caught: 1 dorado

**Three Ships – May 2014:** On 22 May we set off from Cocos, in company with Alibi and Yovo, on the 2000 mile passage across the Indian Ocean to Rodrigues in the Mascarene Island group.

The first week was characterized by fresh 18–25 knot winds and occasional heavy rain squalls, plus a 3–4m southeasterly swell with a 1m wind wave on top, all making for lively living conditions. But we caught fish, made bread and Fi's galley never failed to produce the most excellent food.

On 29 May we sighted a large fin whale and the next day the wind dropped to a light east-southeast and we took the opportunity to send Toby up the forestay sitting astride the spinnaker pole to put a patch on another gradually increasing tear in the headsail.

Two days later, after a fairly wild night with good boat speed, we made our best 24 hour run of 178 miles ... and then the Monitor windvane self-steering's rudder sheared off – probably due to stainless steel fatigue over the previous ten years – leaving us with a choice between hand-steering and the Raymarine autopilot. The latter performed well, though the rough seas meant that it had to work hard to keep us on course and the rudder movement consequently increased considerably.

Next day the headsail ripped for the third and last time so we took advantage of the easier sea conditions to drop it and hoist our spare, which is about half the size but, with pennants to adjust its position on the foil, worked well in the freshening winds.

And so it went on. At 2330 the following night, while we were running at 8 knots on starboard tack with three reefs in the main and the boom on a preventer, the starboard forward lower fractured at the T-ball fitting and fell to the deck with a resounding crash.

This was a bit of a shock for Toby, who was on watch at the time, and somewhat surprising for us since all the rigging had been replaced some 18 months earlier while in Phuket.

We quickly dropped the main and carried on, somewhat cautiously, under staysail, still doing 6 knots and with 370 miles to go to Rodrigues.

Two days later at 0230 in the morning, while Fi was on watch and with Rodrigues in sight, the port aft lower decided to go the same way.

We furled the headsail and motored through the offshore reefs to tie up alongside. The following morning I climbed the mast to discover that the port forward lower fitting was also halfway broken – but we were in, safe, and all was well, though we were extremely unimpressed by the quality of the fittings and wondered how many other yachts had been supplied with the same fittings when they re-rigged prior to their next ocean crossing.

But fourteen days to cover the 2000 miles was fine, even if the manner of its execution left something to be desired ... but that's ocean sailing for you.

### ***2.2.10 Cocos Keeling to Seychelles***

**Sukha – Sep 2017:** Yay we finally arrived at the Seychelles Tuesday morning, we left the Gold Coast, Queensland on the 24th March this year, so it's been a big one for us on a new boat. Who buys a boat, personally does a two month fit out and heads to Africa? My DH!! This last leg of the journey from Cocos Keeling to the Seychelles was, mentally, probably our hardest passage to date! We hit a gale at 46 knots 3 nights out of Cocos Keeling and then no wind for 6 days. Sukha handled the gale real well and so did captain and crew but still it was scary, phew!!! The next 6 days was like torture, not enough wind to sail and not enough fuel to motor, so lots of flapping, rolling and drifting backwards

### ***2.2.11 Cocos Keeling to Madagascar***

**Alyosha – September 2018: (Boat: St Francis 50 catamaran)** We waited an extra day in Cocos Keeling because we knew some weather was going to be blowing in, and it most certainly did... Our final day in Cocos Keeling was a nasty, raining affair, with plenty of wind as well: We were able to fill all of our water bottles and water tanks throughout the day.

And then came departure day. We rigged up the storm sail, anticipating some serious wind and we were not let down: as soon as we got out of the lee of Cocos Keeling we saw some huge waves (we were completely knocked sideways early on by a "rogue" 25 footer) and the winds were howling. After about 5 hours, I was nearly ready to turn around and wait for a better window!

I would like to say that things then settled down, and we began a really enjoyable transit across the Indian Ocean, but that it not what happened at all. We had five straight days of too much wind, big seas, and all kinds of crashing and banging about on Alyosha. There was no sunshine and there was no break from the squalls constantly passing through. Almost a month later, it is



not hard to conjure up my emotions each morning when I would see the sun rise on yet another grim day at sea.

Eventually things did settle out, and we had a pretty enjoyable stretch of weather that lasted another full week. At one point we did a 220nm day under our spinnaker, even though we often had to take it down for small squalls. The crew passed the time by reading, playing games (chess, Risk and cards, mainly) and some enjoyable debates (religion and politics were in play!)

An absolute highlight of the trip occurred one morning during the second half of the passage when a pod of pilot whales joined us for awhile. These whales were about 4-5 times the size of the dolphins and porpoises that typically play around the boat and watching them surface, breathe and even breach was spectacular.

As is very typical with my experience on these crossings, the Indian Ocean did not want to give us up easily and our last day and a half featured very strong winds and a triple reefed main and jib. Unfortunately, the many days of heavy winds have really taken their toll on our sails which are now both properly ripped and feature some unrepairable sections!

The rounding of Cape D'Ambre after such a long passage will stay with me a long time, with the sun coming up perfectly to present Madagascar in the best light. The Indian Ocean was done.

### **2.2.12 Rodrigues Island to Mauritius (350 Miles)**

Mauritius Island is covered in more detail [here](#).

**Slip Away –July 20 to 23, 2018:** (350 nautical miles, 2 days + 13 hours).

As we watched for a weather window to sail to Mauritius, we found ones with either more wind than we preferred or no wind at all. We didn't really want to motor the 350 miles to Mauritius, so we finally settled on one that had fairly strong winds on our first day out, but settling down on day two. The crew of s.v. Charlotte was planning their departure at the same time as us, and our boats were pretty well matched in terms of speed, so it was nice to know that we would have company on this trip.

We completed our departure paperwork on a Friday morning, and departed Port Mathurin at 10:30 a.m. As expected, winds and seas were up - it was blowing 25-30 knots, and seas were about 4 meters. Our first day was fast with our speed over ground mostly in the high 6's, and Charlotte was close by. Our first night at sea was very rough - lots of squalls, wind shifts and variance in wind speed. As a squall would approach, the wind would gust up into the low 30's, then it would rain and blow 25-30 knots for 30 minutes or so, and then the wind would completely die. After another 20 minutes or so, winds would normalize at about 20 knots, but then shortly thereafter the squall cycle would start again. This went on pretty much all night and was not fun! We furled our headsail and sailed with a double-reefed main only. In all of the miles we've sailed, this was the most challenging night ever for our autopilot. We had a number of "off course" alarms when the initial gusts of the squall hit us, and the on-watch person would need to steer us back on course and re-set, but overall, we were quite pleased with how well it handled these conditions.

Conditions settled down the next day and were quite pleasant. The squalls went away, winds settled out at about 20 knots, and although the seas were still about 4 meters, the period between the swells was long enough to be reasonably comfortable. On our second night at

sea, we had mostly clear skies and only one very minor squall. What a difference! If we had been able to leave Rodrigues on a Saturday instead of Friday, this would have been our first night at sea, and we could have avoided that first night from hell!

On Sunday afternoon, we were approaching the north end of Mauritius, trying to time our passage over the top of the island to coincide with slack tide to avoid rough wind-against-current conditions. Winds were supposed abate, but instead they were back up to 25-30 knots, and we were arriving too early. After much discussion, we decided to take down the main and continue with just our headsail because we felt we could control our speed better that way. This decision was not easily made because it required that Rich would go out on deck to secure the main, while Jan steered Slip Away into the strong winds and 4 meter seas.

We successfully completed that maneuver, and continued on with just the headsail, which slowed us down nicely to arrive at slack tide, although we still had a few hours to go to the north end of the island. We were patting ourselves on the back for about 90 minutes, but then the winds dropped to 12-15 knots. Grrr!!! Our headsail was flogging around with little wind and big seas. Rather than go through the exercise of changing our sail configuration again, which would require another trip on deck for Rich, we started the engine. We were frustrated and rationalized that it was just not worth it to risk an injury - buying more fuel was a much better option!

We arrived at the north end of Mauritius at slack tide as planned and as the last traces of daylight were fading. We rounded the top, and as we turned the corner and motored south along the west coast, we had pleasant and calm conditions with the island blocking the wind and seas. Friends on s.v. Brick House had given us a waypoint for a spot along the coast where they had anchored for the night - an open roadstead which was easily approachable in the dark. We dropped our hook just before midnight, and s.v. Charlotte pulled in just behind us. We celebrated our arrival with a beer, enjoying this peaceful and tranquil spot for a short while before heading to bed. We weighed anchor the next morning at 0900 and motored the last few miles to Port Louis, where we would check in.

### **Alba – June 2017: 17 June 2017 Rodrigues to Mauritius (Day 1)**

There was hardly any wind in the morning with frequent showers - not the best weather to start our three day passage to Mauritius. I looked at the weather forecast and it's going to be another five days before the wind picks up again. We've enjoyed Rodrigues, but we couldn't face another week here, so we went ahead and cleared out, knowing that we'll be motoring for the first 24 hours.

The weather brightened up and it was sunny as we motored out of the harbour at 11am. However, as forecast, there wasn't much wind, so we motored for an hour to get away from the island and then tried to sail for a couple of hours. I rigged up our spinnaker pole and we ran wing-on-wing for a while, but when our boat speed dropped below 3 knots, we had to turn the engine on.

By night fall, we'd rolled away all of our sails. We normally leave our mainsail up when motoring to give us a little more drive and reduce rolling, but the apparent wind was going all over the place and causing the sail to crash and bang. Fortunately, the waves were only about 1 metre and from our stern, so we didn't roll too much without sails.

At our 01:00 watch change, the wind finally picked up to 7-10 knots from the SSE, which allowed us to sail on a starboard reach (after 20 minutes dancing on the front deck, swapping the pole from starboard to port.) We then had a lovely sail for three hours, under a bright half moon, but the wind gradually petered out and we motor-sailed for the rest of the night.

### **18 June 2017 Rodrigues to Mauritius (Day 2)**

At 07:00, the wind picked up to 10 knots from the south-east, so we were able to start sailing on a broad reach with the genoa poled out to port. It was a lovely day with mostly blue skies and 25% fluffy white cloud cover, although we had a couple of showers. The nice thing was that the showers didn't alter the wind strength too much, although the wind veered and backed a little causing us to gybe the genoa a few times.

As the afternoon passed by, the wind picked up to 12-15 knots and, with the slight 1 metre seas, it was fabulous sailing. The first half of the night was very dark, but the good wind continued. The wind gradually increased to 15-20 knots, so the second half of the night was more boisterous and we had a few showers, which increased the wind by 5 knots and had us reefing and gybing the genoa a couple of times.

### **19 June 2017 Rodrigues to Mauritius (Day 3)**

Dawn brought us overcast skies with 20 knot South-east winds, so we were bowling along at 6 to 7½ knots. At 07:00, we had 75 miles to go to the channel between the islands at the north of Mauritius, so we were hoping that we'd make it through before dark. Once around the north of the island, it's another 15 miles to a roadstead anchorage to the north of Port Louis. We'd be anchoring in the dark, but it's a wide open approach.

At lunchtime, we still had good winds and Glenys spotted land. The seas continued to build over the afternoon and by the time we were approaching the northern tip of Mauritius, we had 20-23 knot winds and 2 metre seas. The headland is called Cap Malheureux - "the Unhappy Cape" and there are several small islands to avoid. The charts show many places around these islands where there are overfalls, which are large steep waves caused by strong currents against the wind. In the boisterous conditions, we wanted to avoid those spots.

The quickest route around the headland is through a channel between Cap Malheureux and an island called Ile Coin de Mire. The charts showed that there could be currents of 2-5 knots against us in a flood tide (low tide was at 15:30, so the tide would be flooding). We were hoping to get through the islands before dark (at 17:45) and we didn't seem to have any current against us, so I took a gamble and started to head through the Coin de Mire channel.

Everything looked okay at first, with no reduction in speed over the ground. However, by 16:45, as we approached the channel, the current picked up to 1 knot of current against us. I couldn't see any large waves ahead, but didn't relish the thought of being trapped in overfalls with a 5 knot current against us as night fell - it could take us a couple of hours to go the three miles to the other side.

So we gybed, did a 90 degree right turn and headed around the top of Ile Coin de Mire. It was a couple of miles further, but better for my peace of mind. We made it through the islands before darkness fell and then had a good close reach in gradually calming seas as we sailed into the lee of Mauritius.

At 19:50, we anchored a couple of miles up the coast from Port Louis at 20°06.41S 057°29.89E in 12m depth. The chain rumbled a lot, but held on something. It was pitch black, so we couldn't see where we were, but the sea bed shelved very slowly and it was a safe approach. I sorted out the deck and put the spinnaker pole away, while Glenys warmed up a lamb stew, which we ate with a nice bottle of red wine.

20 June 2017 Port Louis, Mauritius

We slept like logs last night and woke to a pleasant day. Before we went into the port, we ran our water-maker for an hour and filled up our tanks, which will last us a week - I don't want to be running our water maker in the dirty water in a port.

By nine o'clock, we were ready to move, but had problems lifting the anchor - the chain was caught on something. We tried to motor around in different directions to un snag the chain, but couldn't budge it. I jumped in the water and snorkelled down 12 metres to find that the sea bed was thick with coral and our chain was wedged under a three foot high bommie. It took us twenty minutes of messing about to get the anchor up. Basically, I had to keep diving down and lifting the chain clear of the coral while Glenys lowered & raised the chain and drove the boat.

Once free of the sea bed, we motored two miles to the entrance to Port Louis. At the outer channel marks, we called Port Control, who gave us permission to enter the busy port and we motored past large ships onto the Customs Dock. For some reason, I was expecting a dusty dock next to a warehouse, but it's actually the harbour wall, next to a line of restaurants.

We pulled alongside and found Gary and Jackie from "Inspiration Lady" standing there to help us with our mooring lines. There are no cleats, so we tied up to the very nice, shiny stainless steel railings. Other cruisers have reported a shallow rock near the customs dock, so we were very cautious as we approached the dock. The rock is now marked by a yellow buoy and is at least 100 metres from the dock, so I don't know what all the fuss was about.

It took us four hours to clear in. First we had to wait for the health officer to come to the boat. He refused to climb over the railings and didn't want to come on board, so we did the clearance sat on a restaurant table. There have been rumours of food being taken from cruisers because of a recent outbreak of Foot & Mouth disease, but he didn't ask about food.

Caudan Marina

Caudan Marina

I then walked 50 metres to the customs office where I had to fill in ten forms, all mostly nil return. Next stop was immigration. The Immigration officer refused to come to the boat, so I had to walk a mile to a ferry terminal to get our passports stamped. I could have got a water

taxi, but the robbing b\*\*ard wanted to charge me 600 Rupees (£15), so I walked - my righteous indignation kept me going...

Finally, back at the customs dock, I obtained the clearance from the Coastguard and we motored across to Caudan Marina. This is more like a boat basin with overhanging concrete walls. It's not very big and there were already nine cruising boats in there, so I couldn't find a big enough space against the wall. I eventually had to raft up on "Relax" - I can't remember the last that I've had to raft up.

The marina is in the middle of a car park next to the huge Caudan Waterfront shopping centre, so it's not a peaceful place, but it's only a small car park and pretty (for a car park...). They only charge £10 per night and that includes water and electricity. In the evening, we went out for meal with "Inspiration Lady" and "Jackster" who arrived yesterday. I had my first burger with French fries for months.

**Nine of Cups – Late October 2014:** We were planning on a late departure from Rodrigues... around 4pm... so that we could slow down if necessary on the other end and arrive in Mauritius during morning daylight hours. The wind was a brisk 20-25 knots from the ENE. Everything was stowed and Cups was ready to go. We read for about an hour, but our impatience finally got the best of us, and we raised anchor and headed out through the small channel about 2:45.

Day 2 - Day's mileage: 89 nm (19 hrs) Miles to go: 261

With a 3-day forecast of winds 15-20 knots, we braced ourselves for stronger winds based on the typical Indian Ocean trades we'd experienced thus far. We were fast off the mark, charging out of the channel at 7 knots, with a wicked rocking motion that just wouldn't quit.

The wind lessened as did our speed, but the rocking continued ... worse when we slowed. The motion of the boat coincided well with the jostling of our bodies .. especially our stomachs. We were both nauseous and feeling a bit green around the gills. We hadn't taken Stugeron, thinking it wouldn't be necessary. We still had our sea legs. Au contraire! We could have taken it after we were sick, but kept thinking it was a temporary condition. Instead, the nausea nagged on and on along with a slight headache.

We'd slowed to 3s and low 4s. We tried different sail configurations, but the wind just wasn't there ... only the continuous rock.

**Day 3** - Day's mileage: 109nm Miles to go: 152

Neptune is known for enjoying the pranks he plays on sailors. This is a good one. No wind in the tradewinds? We've been lumbering along, making low mileage, feeling better, but now we are off course to take advantage of what little wind there is. We're cautious about complaining too much. "Be careful what you wish for."

The days have been gloriously sunny. No squalls, no showers...just the incessant rock and even that has dissipated with the light winds. We had consciously planned our departure time for late in the afternoon to give us the best chance of a daylight arrival in Mauritius. Neptune, being the

prankster he is, sent the light winds to insure we would arrive later than anticipated and certainly after dark.

Our morning cuppa was pleasantly interrupted by the appearance of a whale about four boat lengths off our port beam. He was heading for Mauritius, too. David scrambled for the camera, but too late. Our visitor gave us the big eye and then headed off rather abruptly. He obviously wasn't interested in poking along at our slow speed. David identified him as probably a Bryde's whale based on his hooked dorsal fin and our location.

**Day 4** - Day's mileage: 61 Miles to go: 91

And we thought we were moving slowly yesterday. Well, there's slow and then there's SLOW. Saying that we're moving at a snail's pace would be an insult to snails and definitely overstating our forward progress. We've had 1-2 knots, mostly on the beam. You can't go too far in a sailboat without wind unless you want to crank on the engine. We don't ... we prefer to go slowly to burning diesel. We considered fabricating some oars and drawing straws to determine who'd be the galley slave, but in the end it sounded like too much work, and, as you know, we're lazy sailors. We're content to just poke along.

There's plenty to do to keep us occupied. David whipped lines. We re-calibrated the wind vane. I began polishing the stainless. No sense wasting time in port on chores we could be doing at sea. Reading, a game of Sudoku or two, writing, cooking, cleaning up, chatting, making plans ... we certainly haven't been bored.

Day 5 - As of 0600 this morning, we still had 15 nm to go. Compare this passage to continental drift! Arrival is imminent, however. A very unusual night for winds. Yes, the winds finally returned, but they came from the north and the west and the southwest and the south which made for never-ending sail adjustments, choppy seas, frequent squalls, heavy showers and very little sleep.

During the night, we could see the glowing loom of Mauritius off to port. With the dawn came views of the island, all rugged and high.

We motor-sailed down the west coast and entered the channel at Port Louis, the country's only customs entry port. We received permission to enter from Port Control and proceeded past all the large container vessels and bulk carriers to a small Customs dock for yachts. We've talked about how each tie up is different. Well, this one was really different. No bollards or cleats to tie to. We tied instead to lamp posts and balustrades against a cement wall.

Passage stats:

Miles planned: 350 Miles sailed: 372

Total time: 3 days, 13 hours

Average speed: 4.4

### **2.2.13 Mauritius to Reunion (135 Miles)**

**Slip Away - August 6-7, 208:** (135 miles, 25 hours). We intended to leave Port Louis on a Monday morning, and were hoping to shove off at about 10 a.m. since the trip to Réunion would take us a little over 24 hours.

We made arrangements with the Customs & Immigration officials to complete our clearance paperwork at the Customs Dock near the marina first thing on Monday morning. The

Immigration Officer showed up promptly at 8:30 a.m., but Customs made our life difficult. They did not show up as agreed, and we both waited patiently for a while, but then Rich headed back to Slip Away to complete some preparations. Jan waited a bit longer, but then the Customs officer decided he was not coming, and told her she needed to come to the main Customs office.

The main Customs office was too far to walk in a reasonable amount of time, so she needed to take a taxi. This normally would not be a problem, but we had spent almost all of our Mauritian rupees in anticipation of leaving, so she had very little local cash. On top of that, she found herself negotiating with a taxi driver who wanted to charge her an inflated rate. She finally convinced the taxi driver that she did not have any more rupees than she was offering him, and it was a fair amount.

It was a frustrating morning, but with clearance in hand, she made it back to the marina - only 45 minutes later than we had hoped to leave, but a bit frazzled. Minutes after she stepped aboard Slip Away, we shoved off. The trip from Mauritius to Réunion took us 25 hours - winds were light, and we were only able to sail for 9 of those 25 hours, but at least the seas were reasonable!

**Alba – Late June 2017:** The alarm went off at 06:30 and we lifted our anchor half an hour later. The tide was falling and we were keen to leave the bay with half tide.

We had another lovely sail in the calm waters along the coast, although there were strong gusts as we approached Port Louis. There was another yacht on the customs dock, so we had to go port-side-to, in front of them with our bow 5 metres from the corner – the depth dropped to 2.2 metres.

The clearance process took an hour, mostly waiting for the immigration officer to come to the boat, which gave me time to put our dinghy on deck. Customs and the coastguard were very quick, so we were able to drop our mooring lines at 11:00.

It was difficult to leave the dock in the windy conditions. I tried to back out, but our stern tucked in and I ended up peeling to starboard, straight into a 2.0m mud patch. We ground to a halt as we bottomed out, but I was able to use the bow thruster to spin us 120° to starboard, and powered off the shallow spot when we were pointing out into the harbour. It probably looked very professional to the tourists watching us leave...

Once safely out to sea, we had 15-20 knot south-east winds, putting us on a beam reach. The first three hours were gusty with large confused waves, but we soon escaped the effects of land and the conditions settled down later in the afternoon. With only 135 miles to go we were in no rush, so we put two reefs in the main and had a scrap of genoa out, scooting us along at 5 to 6.5 knots.

There was a half moon, making the first half of the night very pleasant. At our 01:00 watch change, we could clearly see the lights on the hillsides of Reunion, some 50 miles away. During my 1-4 watch, I was contacted by a coastguard aircraft, who confirmed our destination and asked if we'd submitted our Arrival Notification form, which thankfully we had.

At 03:30, we had 35 miles to go; 20-25 knot winds; and at least a knot of current with us, giving us a speed over the ground of 7.5 knots. The charts show many unlit Fish Attraction Devices (FADs) around Reunion, so we didn't want to be approaching in the dark, so I rolled away the

main sail and we plodded along with a scrap of genoa. It slowed us down to 5.5 to 6 knots. Sometimes it's really hard to slow down.

30 June 2017 Mauritius to Reunion (Day 2)

At dawn, we had 20 miles to go, with no sign of any FADs. As we approached the impressive mountainous island of Reunion, the wind dropped to 15-20 knots, so we let out all of the genoa. Thirty minutes later the wind was down to 10-15 knots, so we unrolled the mainsail.

We arrived off the port at 10:00.

Continue here: [Reunion – Approach Arrival and Formalities](#)

### **2.2.14 Reunion to Madagascar**

**Slip Away – Aug 30 to Sep 2, 2018 - Réunion to Ile Sainte Marie, Madagascar:** (400 nautical miles, 3 days + 2 hours).

Since docking was so tight in the Reunion marina, we were quite nervous about our departure and asked the marina manager to stand by with their launch to help us maneuver if necessary. Fortunately, a slight breeze worked in our favor, and we looked like we knew what we were doing when we backed perfectly out of the slip into the narrow fairway with no assistance necessary (but grateful that help was there if we needed it).

From the marina berth, we motored to the fuel dock and topped off our diesel tank (109 gallons [412 liters] at US\$5.32 per gallon - Ouch!!).

We departed the harbor, and then motored north to escape the wind shadow caused by the island's high peaks. We had a mix of sailing conditions on this passage - very little wind at times, great sailing at others and a few squalls thrown in just for fun, but the seas were reasonable (around 3-6 feet or 1-2 meters), and we were able to sail 80% of the distance, so overall it was a good trip. Our wind instrument decided it didn't want to participate on this passage, so we were guessing at wind speeds, but we were able to make reasonable estimates and adjusted sails accordingly, and again, it was all pretty benign.

After three days at sea, as the sun was rising, we were approaching the southern tip of Ile Sainte Marie, which lies off the east coast of the main island of Madagascar.

We had just a few hours until we expected to arrive at our anchorage, and we were changing watch - Rich was coming on watch, and Jan went below to catch a quick nap before making landfall. As she climbed into the berth, she heard a strange noise - it sounded like Dori in "Finding Nemo" talking like a whale. But we knew that humpback whales congregated in this bay - this was a REAL whale song! Rich poked his head below, and he heard it too. Jan was so excited - there was no way she could sleep. She came back up into the cockpit, and as we sailed toward our anchorage, we saw several spouts, a couple of whale tails and one breach. All were pretty far away, but it was still awesome!

Arrival and clearance in Ile St. Marie is covered [here](#) and Anchoring information [here](#).

**Alba – August 2017:** In a stunning act of forward planning, I had a look at the weather forecast - it's about time that we moved onto Madagascar. The weather pattern is dominated by high pressure systems that trundle from west to east about 1,000 miles to the south of us. These pass by about once a week and bring strong south-easterly winds and big swells to the area, so



we want to avoid that. There's a patch of strong winds around the 10th, so it looks good to sail around Saturday 12th.

As we left, expecting big waves outside the port, we drifted in the outer basin while we put the ropes and fenders away. I also rigged up our spinnaker pole to starboard, so it was 08:20 before we cleared the port – “Jackster” and “Red Herring” were at least an hour ahead of us.

About ½ mile from the port, we spotted the blow of a Humpback Whale only 200 metres from our bow, I scrambled for my camera, but missed the classic photo of the whale's tail stretching out of the water as it dived. It's the mating season for Humpback Whales and we're hoping to see more when we get to Ile St Marie.

The wind shadow of Reunion stretches dozens of miles to the west of the mountainous island, so we motored north-north-west for an hour until we were able to sail. The 3 metre swell built up faster than the wind and the waves were confused, throwing us about, making life very unpleasant.

After three hours, the wind had built to SE 20-30 knots and we were able to steer our required course of 305°T - the wind was on our starboard quarter. The large, confused seas were slewing us about, so I rolled away the main and set up the genoa poled out to starboard with the staysail out to port. It was better, but the motion was making us both queasy - Glenys because she was still fluey and me because I've not been at sea for 7 weeks.

The day wore on remorselessly. Continuing to feel a bit dodgy, we were unable to read for any length of time and just staring at the horizon makes the minutes pass very slowly.

We had dinner at 18:00 before the sun went down. As night fell, I spotted a long line of clouds to the south of us, so I switched on the radar and could see a line of rain about five miles away, running parallel to our course - it looked like the clouds were streaming downwind from Reunion. I altered course ten degrees to the north hoping to get away, but the cloud system caught us at 20:00.

We didn't have any rain or really strong wind, but the wind veered by 90 degrees, moving from our starboard quarter to our port quarter and then swinging back, varying in strength between 10 & 25 knots. It would have been very frustrating with the main sail up because we would have had to keep gybing, but with the poled-out genoa and staysail, we can easily handle a much wider range of wind direction. I just rolled the staysail away when the wind was on the port quarter, which slowed us down a little, but I could leave the genoa alone because being poled out, it works with the wind from either quarter.

Glenys's 10-1 watch was just more of the same with the wind strangely staying at SSW for long periods – the forecast was for SE20-25. Glenys was looking decidedly tired and queasy at our one o'clock watch change, so I did a long watch until dawn, so that she could get six hours solid sleep.

From 4 to 7, there were long periods of heavy rain, which was blowing under our bimini rain panels, so I escaped the wet cockpit and went down below. By this time, I was feeling very tired, so I dumped some cockpit cushions on the saloon floor and slept on them. In order to keep a proper watch, I set a timer to wake me up every 15 minutes, so that I could pop my head up and check the sails and AIS. Doing 15 minute naps worked okay, but I wouldn't like to do for days and days like the single handed sailors do.

14 August 2017 Reunion to Ile St Marie Madagascar (Day 2)

The day started grey, but at least the rain soon stopped. By 10:00 the clouds had moved north leaving behind blue skies and 15-20 knot south-east winds. By midday, the wind had dropped to 12-18 knots, so we pulled the mainsail out to port and ran downwind wing-on-wing. The seas reduced to 2 metres and in the afternoon, we had idyllic sailing, albeit a bit slow at 4-5 knots – fortunately we had at least 1 knot of current with us, so we were making reasonable time.

The good weather continued through the night, but the wind dropped a few knots and reduced our boat speed to 3 - 4.5 knots. It was lovely when the half moon came out at midnight, but it's cold on the night watches. During the day we're wearing shorts and t-shirts, but when the sun goes down, on go the fleeces. Last night, in the strong winds, I ended up wearing a fleece, a jacket, long thermal trousers and even a pair of socks. Tonight was a little warmer with the lighter winds – no need for long trousers and socks.

15 August 2017 Reunion to Ile St Marie (Day 3)

At 07:00, we had 124 miles to go, so we planned to have a relaxed sail and arrive tomorrow morning. The wind stayed at 8-12 knots through the morning, but after lunch dropped a couple of knots more and came directly behind us, so that we were only sailing at 2.5 to 3 knots. This low speed combined with the 5 foot waves bounced us around, so the sails were constantly slatting. However, we persevered because we had 1.5 knots of current with us and still had time to arrive tomorrow morning.

I put out a couple of lures because I'd heard that the fishing was good around Madagascar, but with a boat speed of 3 knots, I didn't hold out much hope. When I pulled the hand line in a few hours later, the lure had gone, so something was tempted...

By 16:00, a bank of clouds overtook us and the wind dropped even more, so with 80 miles to go we started motoring. We then had showers all night, with the wind remaining light, but clocking around as rain clouds passed through.

16 August 2017 Ambodifototra, Ile St Marie, Madagascar

Glenys woke me at dawn, just as we were rounding the south end of Ile St Marie. We motored for 8 miles along the west coast and had four sightings of Humpback Whales. Unfortunately, the light was so poor that I was unable to take any decent photographs.

The skies remained grey and we were overtaken by a shower as we approached the harbour for Ambodifototra - the island's only town. By 07:30, we were anchored at 17°00.13S 049°50.85E in 10 metres of water on sand/mud. The anchorage is a little rolly, but the inner harbour has moorings with no space to anchor.

More in the [Madagascar Section](#)...

### **2.2.15 Reunion to Richards Bay**

**Happy Bird – April 2016:** We went from Reunion Island in one tack to Richards Bay, South Africa. Not easy, but of course you will manage it. The marina in Richards Bay is one with the greatest lack of maintenance we ever visited. In a storm, the whole pontoon collapsed like a concertina. Look at the pictures in our website [www.happybird.info](http://www.happybird.info). I have to mention, gusts of

74 knots. In a second storm the whole pontoon sunk to the bottom. But we had a great time there, with 50 boats we knew a long time, never a dull moment!

**Shango – 2014:** The last leg from Reunion to Richard's Bay was a different story from our previous two legs. Since the passage would be at least 9 days we knew that picking a weather window really only pertained to the first part of the passage around the southern tip of Madagascar. The last half of the passage to Richard's Bay really could not be predicted from a weather point of view. It would be a crap shoot. Having said this, for 3 weeks prior to our Reunion departure we were looking daily at the big picture pressure patterns. We could see time periods when strong low pressure would move north towards our route and then periods where high pressure seemed to block these lows from coming north.

We basically waited for a projected window when there appeared to be less of a chance that a big low pressure system would be moving north. We found such a period and overall we felt pretty lucky with the weather that we had. We had no adverse winds for our 9 day passage, although we had to rush at the end to beat a SW wind moving up from Durban as we headed into Richard's Bay. We beat it by about 4 hours.

On the topic of weather, we found the SAMMNET to be as good as advertised. On three separate occasions, Sam predicted wind directions and strengths that were distinctly different than the GRIBS and a commercial routing service that we used. On each occasion he was spot on. No one is ever 100% right but he was pretty good on our passage.

For us the big issue was the state of the currents. Beginning at the southern tip of Madagascar all the way westward to Richard's Bay and before the Agulhas Current, we experienced anywhere from neutral currents to 2-3 knots adverse or favorable. At the same longitude one boat would be experiencing favorable currents while another 5-20 miles north would be experiencing 2-3 knots of adverse current. When you are trying to beat a SW wind reaching the Agulhas before you, an adverse current is very significant and very frustrating. We looked at current tables and concluded that a route 100 miles south of Madagascar might give us a better chance for positive current rather than closer to shore or further offshore of Madagascar. For our passage this worked. A boat closer to shore experienced far more adverse currents than we did and likewise a boat 150 miles off the coast also experienced adverse currents. If we were to do it again we would stick with the 100 miles offshore route. Of course having said this it would probably be just the reverse!

After rounding Madagascar there was much discussion about what our route should be to Richard's Bay, e.g., how far north of Richard's Bay should we set our first landfall waypoint. We decided to head for Jimmy Cornell's landfall waypoint, 28 30S 34 00E, and then for a waypoint 10 miles north of Richard's Bay and 15 miles offshore. As it turned out this route allowed us to experience far less adverse current than boats that were 5-20 miles north of us. We did experience periods of slight adverse currents but nothing like the boats further north. As always one experience doesn't mean a whole lot but it does support the Cornell recommendation.

This leads us to the last segment of our passage, the crossing of the Agulhas and the entrance to Richard's Bay. Like everyone before us we had heard so much about the Agulhas and how to cross it. Our single experience provides 3 takeaways which may or may not be relevant for future cruisers:

Follow the obvious recommendation of not entering the current in a SW wind.

There was no need to enter the current any further north than 7-10 miles north of Richard's Bay. The current flowed W/SW with very little southerly push. The boat was easily able to hold its westward course even in a 30-35 Northerly wind.

The current did not start until very close to shore, 7-8 miles off shore, and continued all the way to the 175 foot contour, e.g., just about to the entrance to the Richard's Bay jetties.

Once we entered the current 7-10 miles off shore, we were safely able to head southwest for the entrance jetties and ride with the current. We never felt any concern about being swept south of the entrance jetties to Richard's Bay and as mentioned in 2 above, we did our crossing in a 30-35 Northerly wind.

**Three Ships – October 2014:** On 21 October, feeling much fitter, we departed La Réunion in radio company with OCC yachts Kite, Sula and Hokule'a, bound for Richards Bay, South Africa.

Our passage plan took us to a waypoint about 120 miles south of Madagascar before hitting the rhumb line for our destination – a recommendation which proved somewhat unfortunate, since it put us into a 2 knot adverse current for a time, whereas vessels further north had positive current as indicated on the charts.

Such phenomena are, of course, a moveable feast, and together with the varying weather conditions provide us with the uncertainties that make ocean passages such compelling experiences.

Three days out, and just south of Madagascar, a slow-moving trough had us huddled in the cockpit as thunder, lightning, torrential rain, 40 knot gusts and disorganised seas filled the blackest of nights – and of course there was the confounding variable of a ship on collision course to add to the excitement.

Next day we ran under headsail for a while, before the wind dropped and once again we found ourselves in an adverse current, motoring in order to reach Richards Bay before the next southerly blow arrived up the coast.

About 120 miles out and 20 miles north of the rhumb line we felt the first pull of the Agulhas Current, and 12 hours later were making 10 knots over the ground.

Needless to say, as we headed for the fairway into Richards Bay at 2000 on 30 October a black bar of cloud appeared to the southwest, and within 30 minutes we were motoring into a 20 knot southwesterly – the front had arrived three hours early – but with just three miles to go we had beaten it in.

We tied up in a vacant berth in Tuzi Gazi marina, where checking-in was easy

**Gryphon – October 2014: 7<sup>th</sup>:** Progress has been miserably slow with a very occasional burst of decent wind but predominantly light or none at all. We have had to motor twice now and the currents are variable, sometimes with us or, as in the case of today, frustratingly 1.5 knots against us.

Early this morning we were bowling along in a breeze under the cruising chute which had to be taken in as 20 knots of following wind sprang up but it came with counter current. A few hours later the wind dropped and we were just squeezing 4½ knots out of it only to be knocked back to 3 knots by this wicked current. The swell has gradually increased so comfort levels are decreasing proportionately with the swaying and slamming as we hold out against using the

engine. Not great for sleeping so we've had to take G2 way off course to fill the genoa just to get some peace overnight.

Yesterday we discovered that we are not alone on this crossing. Australian catamaran Sanctuary left Reunion from a different port the day after us and spoke on the radio after the call up to the Peri Peri Net in Sth Africa. Although some 100 miles behind us they are experiencing the same weather pattern. The weather files that we download once a day using the satellite phone show this trend is likely to continue at least for the next two or three days. Consequently our hoped for 140 – 150 miles a day is a bit of a pipe dream at the moment and we would be lucky to make it a 12 day passage. But hey, this is the Indian Ocean and this particular stretch is renowned for strong winds and changeability so we could well be wishing for things to calm down in the not too distant future.

Other than that the tropics have been left behind as we pursue our SW course. There is some drizzle at the moment, the tail end of a squall off toward Madagascar but the weather has been generally balmy during the day and cool at night which is perfect.

**8<sup>th</sup>:** The brisk start has given way to a steady 18 knots, swell has come up a bit but still very comfortable and after the snailish pace we had yesterday it feels glorious to be sailing nicely and on course. We are hopeful that these conditions will continue today as we need to stack some miles on if we are to meet our 12 day target. So far our day's runs don't look promising for that; first day we did just 105 miles, then 133 followed by yesterday's low of 103 which was dispiriting. Of course, we want everything: fast speeds in good winds, moderate swells and no squalls just for starters. Last night we had a good old lightening display as a storm threatened, the thunder got quite near and we had some rain but that was it – lucky.

There have been 2 or 3 ships a day either crossing our route or steaming a parallel course. Last night we had one on the horizon that was a nuisance as it was on the same course and heading our way. Despite several attempts to call it up on VHF it maintained silence, this was at 0200 hours so a guess is that the radio officer was snoozing off duty or was elsewhere which is worrying. We kept a careful watch ready to change course, don't know if they ever saw us but the ship passed by within 1½ miles which feels too close for comfort at night.

Listened to the Peri Peri South African radio net. Reception not good enough yet to be really useful to us but Chris followed up with a call to Sanctuary, the Australian catamaran which is now only about 30 miles behind us. They are 52 feet long so a lot faster than G2. They will be in Richards Bay well before us but we shall maintain radio contact until then, its good to know someone else is out here.

The day has worn on with variable winds but mostly good, the lowest being 11 knots and the swell has largely been moderate. There is a fabulous full moon giving excellent visibility, just glowing up the sky which is patched with billowing clouds but no lightening tonight so far. Now there is a steady 19-20 knots of wind that has come with a following current of over 1½ knots jacking up our speed to 8½ knots, feels like a train and sounds quite like one too.

**9<sup>th</sup>:** Gryphon II has turned the corner and started crossing the Madagascar Plateau, less than 500 and more than 1900 feet deep in parts. The half way point for our voyage lies 108 miles almost due south (184°) from Cap St Marie, the southern most tip of Madagascar, we are desperate to get there but there are still 88 miles to go.

The day's run is recorded at 09:15 every morning and yesterday was a joy as 155 nautical miles was entered in G2's log, average speed of 6.45 knots – the sort of thing we had been hoping for. We had made good speed all night, perfect sailing and to ice the cake, the swell has been slight to moderate which is fantastic and helped us recover from the sleep deprivation caused by the slap and rattle of previous too light winds.

Having had that pleasure, the sweet sailing continued during the morning but by tea time winds were seriously deteriorating until by mid-night we couldn't make the course and so had 8 hours of motoring. We've lost time again and unhappily this morning's log entry recorded a miserable day's run of only 106 miles.

We are now starting our 6th day and hoping to pass the half way mark at about 04:00 tomorrow morning. Today we've had a great morning of perfect sailing weather, the sea has been so calm and G2 has been ploughing through it at 6.5 – 7 knots, sun is beating down, it has felt wonderful. The only fly in the ointment is an annoying counter current that is running across us at 2 sometimes 2½ knots pushing G2 south and reducing our speed over the ground to around 5 knots. A massive 30° has had to be added to make good the course, it looks as though we're off to Kenya on the electronic chart.

Later--Now, after lunch and a game of cockpit scrabble, the wind has eased so has the counter current and we've knocked off the 30° compensator. There seems to be a pattern of good morning winds that gradually trickle away as the day moves on. Today is a prime example of this as its now 15:30 and the engine has just been switched on. The sea is glossy flat and we are travelling under a huge cushion of thick, low, grey cloud often signalling a squall to come but beyond the cloud is sun and hopefully it won't be long until we're in it again.

Later Still--A big wind shift first to the South West and then gradually backing to the South East heralds the passing of a very minor cold front and with luck we will have more consistent winds. A big plus is we can now speak to Peri Peri radio in South Africa and get up to date forecasts from them and they promise us fair winds at least for the next day. The most remarkable aspect of the conditions has been the sea state which has been the calmest of any of our offshore passages with a low regular swell and little sea.

**9<sup>th</sup>:** Midnight and the winds are gone, we were bowling along heeling to starboard at around 7 knots but the annoying cross current came back and we were making only about 5 knots over the ground. So infuriating!7

We spent most of the night under engine with the dawn arriving over an oil calm sea. The forecast for today is for SE winds to 25 knots so hopefully we will not have to wait too long before we can turn off the noisy engine. At least our batteries will be healthy and as we have been making water the tanks will be full too. We are close to the route taken by ships rounding the Cape and heading off across the Indian Ocean. Fortunately our AIS works well and alerts us if there is a ship within 8 miles.

Recorded day's run this morning was 129 nm so better than most but we want more. That's not likely today, this morning wind is just 7 knots from the south so we are pootling along around 3 knots, cannot bear any more engine – at this rate we could be motoring to South Africa like the ships that are steaming past us at 12, 13, 14 knots.

**13<sup>th</sup>:** Tonight it definitely feels like the downhill run has started as we expect that we shall arrive in Richards Bay on the afternoon of Wednesday 15 October..

Of all our travels this voyage is the one that we have been most anxious about as it has the greatest potential for fierce weather. We have met people and read blogs of those who had nasty experiences with torrential winds and seas, had their boats damaged or worse and, of course, those who had no problems. Any part of this journey can be difficult as there are no protective land masses between here and Antarctica other than a few Southern Ocean islands. The area below Madagascar, we have read, can be problematic and there are different opinions on how to tackle it but the South African east coast Agulhas current in particular, is one of the most renowned in the world where gigantic waves can start if there are strong southerly winds against it. If strong southerlies are forecast then the only way to tackle it is to keep out of it, ships have been lost here so it needs treating with the utmost respect.

As always for long passages our greatest planning problem is weather information. This journey takes about 12 days but weather forecasts are only good for up to 5 and even then can change. We had a good 5 day weather window for leaving La Reunion and after that it has been essential to update everyday. So we have been approaching this trip with the utmost care: making sure the satellite phone was in good order to enable emails, having the services of a professional weather router emailing us with forecasts, downloading grib files (weather files) everyday through Mailasail our website provider, and watching the barometer's readings as an early indicator of change. One great asset as we draw nearer to Africa is the Peri Peri radio net based in Durban and we want to thank the guys who give their time to it. They provide contact via a short wave radio channel morning and evening and give weather information relating to the Mozambique Plateau and the Agulhas current which moves around and is ever changing. This has been very helpful in planning our approach to Richards Bay, providing local forecasts to use with our others and enabling us to manipulate our route to deal with the coming weather and current conditions!

The Madagascar Plateau is now over 250 miles behind us and we are midway between the Natal Basin, which we have been traversing for the last couple of days, and the Mozambique Plateau where we meet the notorious Agulhas current nearer to the coast on Wednesday morning. As Gryphon II emerged from the cover of Madagascar the placid seas became rougher and we had some 25 knot winds that helped us get speed on to cover the miles. Yesterday's run was our second best at 143 nautical miles. We motored through most of last night as the wind died away and we can't afford to lose time. Our latest day's run has just been recorded – 126 nmiles.

The big issue now is that strong southerly winds (known in S Africa as southerly busters) are forecast to begin this afternoon continuing to tomorrow (Tuesday) afternoon when they weaken then become very light and give way to light easterlies on Wednesday. Wednesday is when we plan to cross the Agulhas so if nothing changes this is just right for us. Nevertheless, we shall have to cope with these strong southerlies out here hence we changed course yesterday to go much more south. This means that when these winds start we will be able to sail more with them instead of across them. We will be close hauled on a reach with the wind on the beam, it isn't going to be pleasant but sailing north west in a south-westerly blow will be a lot better than sailing west. If these southerlies fizzle out then we might end up going into Durban instead.

**14<sup>th</sup>:** The low which was forecast to change the winds to strong southerlies is upon us, we are in it and it is nasty.

The change happened at 11:00 this morning. First the barometer dropped and soon after the sails went floppy as the NE wind gradually disappeared. Lightening, rumbles of thunder then a heavy downpour. Winds starting but from the west not south as forecast – not good, up to 29 knots. Thank goodness we bent our course south yesterday else we would have these as headwinds, as it is they are driving across us throwing waves over the top whilst pushing the big seas to bash into our port side, lift us up and drop us down with a great crash. This has been going on for 9 hours now, very tiring, just about managing to cook hot food but even with the cooker gimballed there is the possibility of a pan being hurled so standing in front of the cooker whilst cooking is right out.

Midnight and we now have 30+ knots of wind from the south west. We have a triple reefed main and just a tiny bit of jib. With a bit more jib we can sail at 6 knots close to the right way, but with the big crashes and spray flying, so instead we are over reefed but it is much more comfortable and kind to boat and crew. The downside is that we are now sailing at just 3 knots and must wait for the wind to drop.

A rude awakening as a wave hit the hull of the stern cabin which is where we sleep on passage, sleep comes in snatches in these conditions. At the moment it seems relentless, the wind has just gone up to 33 knots. The noise is a bit scary, the surge of the slammers can be heard in advance warning of the next crash, the general rough sea and boat noise is topped by a constant low howling that sounds eerie and shrills upwards with each big gust then when the slam comes all the contents of lockers can be heard moving around and adjusting. It's at this point that one wonders if the lid of the honey was screwed on tight!

If we can't stay on course, and we can't just now, then things are the right way round. If we end up north of Richards Bay, which we probably will, then we can sail or motor back south to get in but if we fell south of it then it would be nigh on impossible to get north again. To add insult to injury progress is very slow, we hope to get in on Wednesday but we must get in by Thursday for on Friday an even more fierce low is forecast with winds in excess of 40 knots – these are the infamous lows that roll in to South African waters and keep things frisky.

We've just taken an almighty smack, the wind is currently peaking at 37 knots. Very oddly there is a lovely calm moon up there casting its glow over the heaving water, seems rather out of place and keeping with what's going on.

Morning--No change yet and the third massive crash has just caused another rude awakening. These monsters make the other slams seem like pussycats but they're not. Our poor boat! Despite all this we are grateful that we are here now and not on Friday when the next low is due because that forecast has got more severe showing 45-50 knot winds. Grib files always seem to underestimate, the low we are in was forecast at 25 knots but we have had 30 and upwards to 37 knots for hours and hours now. We hope no one is out in the next one.

This blow is moving slowly off east toward Madagascar, we shall be glad to see the back of it later today.

**15<sup>th</sup>:** The heavy weather eased and the crashing stopped as the wind went back round to North East. The low scooted off eastward eventually leaving us with a good wind but an ugly 2.5 knots of current against us so instead of the good old 6-6½ knots that Gryphon II was giving us we were only covering 3½-4 knots over the ground. This would not get us to Richards Bay in daylight which we really want, also we would like to cross the Agulhas current in daylight so we



resorted to the engine and motor-sailed for much of the night. We are both so tired that we slept through it all on our off-watches. These counter currents have been a thorn in the side, they have plagued us all the way across and knocked us back by a day.

We had no damage in the blow and nothing was lost overboard so all good. There is going to be a lot of work once we've slept it off. Like the rest of the boat, the cockpit was continually awash and flooded 3 times so its sticky with thick salt, anything we have to touch has been washed down but that's all we can do at the moment. The inside of the bimini canvas, 2 metres above the cockpit is rimed with white salt rings; the ropes are sodden and salty and when the sails dry they will be crisp with it. Annoyingly, because we have to be in and out of the cockpit, plenty of salt has been trodden inside, keep wiping it up but it can get a bit slippery.

The grib files are forecasting 15 knots of NNE wind and we have 51 miles to go, we are unlikely to get in during daylight hours, it gets dark here at 18-18:30. We've got all the canvass out and are going as close to the wind as possible to get all we can out of it.

Three hours later--We're going through some 'what the h... is going on' moments in this 18 knot forecast area because the barometer has dropped and the wind has increased rapidly, we've peaked at 42 knots but mostly getting 33-35 knots. New gribs have been downloaded, not without difficulty having to hold up the Sat phone to get a signal and balance a laptop to take the info. Madly these new gribs are little different to last night's and are forecasting just 20 knots of wind. We're going through all this again but now on starboard tack, well it's only fair I guess but so much for rinsing off the salty cockpit instruments! We've been bashing along with a boat speed of 8-9 knots which would get us in the bay in about 4 hours but, of course, we have the counter current. Still we could make it in daylight but frankly we're wondering what it will be like in the Agulhas current. The winds are not from the south so thankfully this blow is not the next low that was forecast for Friday coming in early. Unpleasant as it is, we are comforting ourselves that the wind is from NNE.

This is crazy, the area we are in now is forecast for 15 knots but the wind is registering at 39-42+ knots, it is like sailing through a waterfall punctuated with thuds and crashes. The counter current has moved across us so our boat speed and speed over the ground have evened out at 7-8 knots. Unfortunately we are being pushed south but are sailing as close to the wind as we dare so there is nothing we can do about that. The Agulhas current, which is a bit of a movable feast, should start in about 8 miles from here and according to Peri Peri Net yesterday is about 10 – 15 miles wide. The theory is that there shouldn't be much difference to present state as the wind will be going with the current; that's over an hour away, we can only hope for the best.

To ease the tension, well the little recreational radio was switched on and to our surprise we got some nice African music, no dancing of course but we could jig at least one arm around. A one armed juggling trick with a tomato prior to cheese and tomato sandwiches was quite fun and writing this blog is quite a good distraction.

15:00--Difficult to believe, the wind dropped rapidly within a matter of ¼ of a mile of seeing 27 knots on the clock. Lo and behold it is has gone round more to the north and has subsided to 8 knots! Bizarre but wonderful, the smiles are wide. We're now in the Agulhas but suffice to say that we have had so much current anyway that with this breeze it feels much the same. We are being pushed south but once we come out of it around the 200 metre contour line we should be okay.

17:10--Ha, another twist on us, perhaps just to add a bit more flavour to the ending of our voyage we are currently thrashing through rough sea toward Richards Bay in a thunder storm with a pair of hump backed whales putting on a great show of acrobatics, breaching and tail slapping as they pass us by. Fantastic, what next?

The last 3 days have been hard, today in particular because despite all best efforts to get weather information, it finally took us by surprise. It must be said after all this that Gryphon II has performed brilliantly, we're impressed with our boat and very thankful that Neptune himself didn't appear.

We tied to the quarantine dock at 17.30 tired but happy to be in Africa!

**MV Egret – October 2010:** The usual sailor's wisdom is to stay 125 miles south of Madagascar before turning towards Richard's Bay. (RB is the preferred choice to land on South Africa's east coast these days because Durban is not as safe.)

This is the route the sailors in our small group took, and they left a few days before Egret with a fair wind. Egret doesn't need wind to sail so we waited for the high to move in with light winds.

We looked at the C-Map charts of the area south of Madagascar to lay out a course, and ultimately went against convention. In a nutshell, at the southern tip of Madagascar there is a shallow area extending 45 miles southwards. From the drop-off there is 40 miles of very deep water, and south of that begins shallower water with a 'broken bottom'.

Being long-term recreational fishermen we look for broken bottoms mixed with current because that is where the bait is disrupted and the food chain moves in to take advantage.

Mixed with the southbound Agulhas Current and heavy wind from the south or southwest, however, the area can become super nasty. Of five boats leaving La Réunion within a two-day period, one singlehander arrived unscathed, a second singlehander was knocked down by a large rogue wave in just 25 knots of wind, a couple were knocked down several times and had their spray dodger and solar panels ripped off, and the fourth boat also lost their dodger and panels and was forced to run for Durban trailing warps. Egret arrived without spray on her pilothouse glass for two reasons: she left later, pushing through light and variable winds, plus she split the 40 mile difference in the deep water south of Madagascar\* and avoided the broken bottom.

Another advantage to this route was that she angled south towards Richard's Bay with a current push instead of beating into the Agulhas Current.

(The traditional route north of Madagascar is off limits these days because of piracy within the Mozambique Channel. We met several cruisers in Richard's Bay with very sad stories, including that of a crew taken hostage.)

### ***2.2.16 Mauritius to Durban***

Nine of Cups – December 2014:

### ***2.2.17 Mauritius to Madagascar***

**Wasatch – September 2016 (from FB):** Wasatch arrived in Hellville on 9 September, 10 days after leaving Mauritius. 4 days to reach the tip of Madagascar in 30-35 knots downwind with very big seas reefed down to just a tiny poled headsail. We picked up the northbound current at

around 14deg S as predicted and by sheer luck rounded the tip at slack tide as recommended. We spent a few days getting down to Nosy Be beating into 30 knots at first, then a gentle sail in 10knots for the last part, anchoring at night.

Checking in at Hellville was without incident, and much easier than anticipated; although the total cost of checkin was about 450,000Ariary (3,000 to the US\$) everything else here, including eating out at the lovely restaurants, is cheap.

We are anchored in Hellville for a few days, then looking forward to exploring. Only about 4 cruising yachts here in Hellville, nice protected anchorage.

### **2.2.18 Ile St. Marie Madagascar to NW Madagascar (330 miles)**

Anchorage on the East Coast of Madagascar between Ile St. Marie and Cap D'Ambre are covered in detail [here](#).

#### **Slip Away – September 2018 - Ile Sainte Marie around Cap D'Ambre to Cathedral**

**Anchorage** (Sept. 9 to 11, 353 miles, 56½ hours). From Ile Sainte Marie, we would be sailing north to round Cap D'Ambre, which is the northernmost tip of Madagascar, and this passage required careful planning. Because winds often accelerate around capes, we wanted a weather window with light winds and from a south to southeast direction. The trade winds generally blow from the southeast, so wind direction is generally not a problem, but it was important to confirm that there wasn't a weather system in the area that would change that. Finally, we wanted to time the rounding of the cape to coincide with slack tide again to avoid clashing currents. Was it possible? Yes!

It took us a little over 48 hours to reach Cap D'Ambre from our anchorage at Ile Sainte Marie. Winds were pretty light for most of the trip, and we sailed when we could and turned on the engine when we needed an extra push. We had a new moon, and the first night was cloudy so very dark, but the stars were nice on the second night. We didn't find as much northbound current as we had expected (a few reports from previous sailors compared it to a "freight train"), but it was good to have the extra push when it was there. We rounded Cap D'Ambre shortly after noon on a sunny afternoon with 18-20 knots of wind from the south-southeast and a slack tide - perfect! We were relieved to have yet another Indian Ocean challenge behind us!

After rounding the cape, we carried on another 25 miles to a small group of islands, and we enjoyed a sweet night's sleep at a beautiful anchorage called [Cathedral](#).

**Alba – August 2017:** I did some forward planning looking at anchorages around to the north-west coast of Madagascar. It's 330 miles, so we either do it in one passage with 3 nights at sea or we break it up and do three one night passages, stopping at a couple of anchorages.

We have to pass around the northern tip of Madagascar, which is an acceleration zone for the south-east trade winds. Not only are the winds higher, but big waves are generated and previous cruisers have been hammered as they head west, so we need to make sure that we get there when the winds are relatively light. The weather forecast seems to show reasonable winds in a week's time, so we're going to aim for that.

Day 1 – Day hop to Ansiaka

Day 2 – Overnight to Angontsy

We left Ansiaka in the middle of the afternoon for the 110 mile hope to Angontsy.

Unfortunately, the nice SW wind had disappeared and we ended up motoring for most of the way. When we cleared the north end of Ile St Marie, the north setting current disappeared and we had ½ to 1 knot of current against us for 45 miles as we crossed Baie D'Antongil. We picked up a very slight favourable current when we were north of Cap Masoala.

As the night went on, the clouds built up and we had a few “teasers” where the wind picked up to more than 10 knots, so we dragged out the genoa and turned the engine off, only to find the wind dying ten minutes later. There was a long 1½ metre swell from the north-east, but the motion was comfortable.

At dawn, we were still 20 miles away from our destination. It was a lovely sunny day, but the wind stayed less than 10 knots from the south-east, so we motor-sailed downwind. In order to stay out of the way of local fishing boats, we'd spent the night eight miles offshore in water that was over 1,000 metres deep. As we approached land and came into water shallower than 100 metres, the current picked up to 1 knot in our favour. We saw no fishing boats last night, so we'd have been faster if we'd stayed closer to the shore.

We were approaching Angontsy at 11:00. It didn't look very good – we had a 2 metre swell rolling in from the south east, which was pushing us towards the breakers crashing on the reefs. About ½ mile out, there was a very sharp line where the water became discoloured (sort of milky), which didn't help our nerves. We followed the Navionics charts, using the following waypoints and all was well.

[Details of Angontsy anchorage here.](#)

Day 4 – 2 Overnights Angontsy around N Tip to Nosy Hara

By 15:00, we sailed out of the anchorage at Agontsy. There was a SE 10-12 knot wind, so we were on a broad reach only doing 4 knots through the water, but with a favourable current, we were making 5.5 knots over the ground, which is fast enough to get us to the cape at the north of the island by dawn the day after tomorrow. In fact, I'm worried that we'll be going too fast and we'll have to heave-to while we wait for the optimal tides.

The tidal flow around Cap d'Ambre floods north at up to 3 knots. With 20-25 knot winds from the south-east, we want to make sure that we're rounding the cape at slack tide or when the tide is rising. Attempting it when the tide is falling (when the tidal current is flowing south), would be very unpleasant with the waves building up because of the effect of wind against current.

High water is at 08:00 and low water is at 13:30, so we have two choices – aim to round the cape at 08:00, which might be a struggle if the wind drops tonight, or aim for 13:30. We decided it would be safer to go around at 13:30 because it's easier to slow down than speed up.

I've created a waypoint, which is where we want to be at 11:00 on Saturday (12°03.45S 49°21.58E). This waypoint is the start of our planned route to round the cape – it's 10 miles from the cape and only ½ mile offshore, where we're hoping the waves will be smaller. Hopefully, we'll be able to adjust our speed tomorrow.

We started the passage with the genoa and the main out to port, but soon after dark, the wind had veered by 30 degrees, so I poled the genoa out to starboard, so that we were wing-on-wing. The wind continued to veer and by 01:00, we were being forced east of our route, so we gybed the main, so that both sails were out to starboard. The wind is 30 degrees more west than forecast.

We had a new moon, but it soon disappeared and left us with a clear sky with a brilliant display of stars. The temperature plummeted when the sun went down, so I spent the night wearing a fleece and a windproof jacket.

25 August 2017 Angontsy to Nosy Hara, Madagascar (Day 2)

By 07:00, we'd done 85 miles at an average of 5.3 knots. The wind had picked up overnight and we were doing 6 knots over the ground. We only had 130 miles to go to my Waypoint, so if we maintained 6 knots, we'd be rounding the cape 6 hours too early. We needed to slow down, so I rolled away the main sail and reduced the genoa to a tiny scrap of sail, which dropped our speed to 2 knots. The plan was to sail slowly during the day and then have an easily achievable speed over night.

We slopped along all day with a boat speed of 2 knots, but by 16:00, we'd still covered 34 miles in 8 hours – an average of 4.25 knots. There's obviously a 2-3 knot current pushing us along and the wind is going to increase as we approach the compression zone around the headland, so we realised that we're going to struggle to slow down any more.

Time to have a rethink. We had 90 miles to go to the Waypoint, if we could average 6.4 knots, which should be easily achievable with the 2-3 knot current, then we'd arrive at the Waypoint in 14 hours, at 06:00, which would put us at the cape just before at High Water. Sounds like a better plan than slopping around all night - the boat feels wrong going at 2 knots. We pulled out the main sail with two reefs; unfurled the genoa and set off at 6.4 knots speed over the ground. It felt so much better.

It always takes the boat a few minutes to get into the groove and settle down, so when we checked ten minutes later, we were doing 7.5-8 knots over the ground. Give me strength! We rolled away some of the genoa and tried again... By sunset, the wind had picked up to SE 20 knots, so we rolled away the mainsail and leaving us with just a heavily reefed genoa – it's so hard to slow down. We spent the rest of the night adjusting the genoa to maintain a constant speed.

26 August 2017 Angontsy to Nosy Hara, Madagascar (Day 3)

Glenys woke me at 05:30, just as the sun came up. We passed through our Waypoint at 06:30 – a little late, but we had 20-25 knots of wind and would make it to the headland in time for slack water. The seas were 2 metres and became steeper as we approached the headland.

We sailed around the coast, starting off at 1 mile offshore, but gradually sneaking in to ½ mile as we passed the lighthouse. There were some impressive looking explosions of water as the large waves pounded the fringing reef. We've seen Humpback Whales every day that we've been in Madagascar and today was no exception - we had a dozen sightings while rounding the cape with whales leaping out of the water and tail splashing, obviously enjoying the waves.

It wasn't too bad - we still had some current with us, so we were doing 6-7 knots over the ground until we passed the lighthouse. The wind continued to blow from the south-east, but gradually increased as we turned the corner and unfortunately, the current switched to be against us. It was frustrating to be battling against a three knot current - at times we were only doing three knots over the ground. As we headed south-west, the waves and the counter-current gradually decreased and we were able to make better time, but the wind picked up to 30 knots, so it was a wet ride.

It was only 4 miles to Mpaninabo Bay, where we dropped the sails and motored into the entrance. The Navionics charts show that there is a very narrow channel, but this proved to be wrong and we have 20 metres depth in a channel over 100 metres wide. The wind was still howling and we were motoring straight into it. To add to our woes, the tide was ebbing out of the large harbour and we had current against us, so we were only making 2.5 knots.

It was just over two miles to the place that I'd ear-marked as a reasonable anchorage, so it was going to take us an hour to go to have a look. The area around the bay was very bleak and if the anchorage was no good then the next good anchorage was 20 miles away, so we'd be having another long day. We decided to cut our losses and continue heading south, looking for a sheltered anchorage.

We were on a beam reach, with the wind gusting up to 35 knots, so we only pulled out the staysail, which was enough. We had a brief look at Nosy Hao but the island looked very low with little protection from the howling wind, so we carried on to Nosy Hara.

As expected, the wind dropped completely as we sailed into the wind shadow on the west side of the high, rocky island. However, as we sailed towards the bay, the wind switched to the south-west at about ten knots making the anchorage a little bouncy.

I'm guessing that this south-west wind is caused by the strong Sea-Breeze effect in this area. During the afternoon, when the land is hotter than the sea, the air rises from the land causing the lower air to flow in from the sea (a Sea-Breeze). At night, as the land cools down, the air rises from the sea and the lower air flows from the land to the sea (a Land-Breeze).

We can expect this effect all the way down this coast of Madagascar, it will be more pronounced in certain areas depending on the shape of the coast. In some areas, the Land-Breeze enhances the prevailing south-east winds, so there are strong off-shore winds at night. Other cruisers have recommended anchoring on the west side of any island, which will be bouncy and exposed to the Sea-Breeze in the afternoon, but in the evening, it will calm down and be well protected from the stronger Land-Breeze during the night. By seven o'clock, it was calm in this anchorage.

We dropped our anchor in the bay of Nosy Hara and as soon as we'd settled, a small boat came out from the beach with three guys, who wanted us to pay the National Park fees of 55,000 Ariary (£14) per person per night. We didn't pay. ([Details on Nosy Hara](#))

From Nosy Hao we day-hopped south to Nosy Be and Hellville.

## **2.3 Madagascar to Africa**

### **2.3.1 Western Middle Madagascar to Mozambique (Bazaruto)**

Note: coverage of Bazaruto itself is in the [Mozambique section](#).

**Slip Away – October 14-27 2018 - Baly Bay, Madagascar to Richards Bay, South Africa:** It was not without trepidation that we would be setting out on our passage to South Africa. With careful planning, sailors generally make it to South Africa safely, but it's often not an easy trip. What makes this passage particularly challenging are the severity of the storms that come up the coast from South Africa, combined with the strong south-setting Agulhas current.

Strong southerly winds against a strong south-setting current will generate incredibly big and dangerous seas. Ideally, one makes the passage from Madagascar to South Africa non-stop, but that rarely happens. Although weather forecasting is good, the passage is 1000+ miles, which for us means an 8-9 day passage, and weather forecasts can and often do change during that time.

Between Madagascar and South Africa, there are a few "bolt holes" along the coast of Mozambique, which can be used if bad weather pops up, but not all of them are particularly great anchorages. Fortunately, we had help with weather forecasting from a South African guy named Des Cason, who has sailed between Madagascar and South Africa a number of times, and who very willingly provides all sailors in the area with advice for this passage. Local knowledge is extremely valuable in a situation like this, and we were incredibly grateful for the assistance he provided.

Although the weather gods did not cooperate for us to make it to South Africa non-stop, they did allow us to make it with just one stop at the anchorage behind

**Bazaruto Island**, which is probably the best sheltered anchorage along the coast of Mozambique.

We left Baly Bay with three other boats. For much of the trip to Bazaruto, we stayed remarkably close to one another. (Remarkably close in this type of situation is within 10 miles of one another. With different sailing characteristics, it's easy for boats to become separated by 10 miles just in one day.) The four of us were often within VHF radio range, and since we all had AIS transponders, if we were within VHF range, we could see each other on our AIS receivers. It's comforting to have company on a passage like this, and of course there is safety in numbers. If we were out of VHF range, we could talk with Sue & Stefan via the SSB radio, and we could text or send emails to the other boats with our satphones.

The trip from Baly Bay to Bazaruto (738 miles, 5 days + 7 hours) went well for the most part, although we did have a couple of sphincter-tightening experiences. We followed Des Cason's recommendation to sail directly west from Baly Bay in Madagascar and then turn south when we were about 70 miles off the Mozambique coast, which allowed us to take advantage of some favorable currents and avoid some countercurrents (lots of strong currents in the Mozambique Channel!). Winds were a bit light at times, so we used the engine more than we would have preferred (a total of 37 hours of motoring), but we had sufficient fuel on board to do so.

Our first bit of excitement on Slip Away occurred in the afternoon of our first day on passage when we almost hit a couple of whales! We were beam reaching quite nicely in about 10 knots of wind, with Jan on watch and Rich resting below. Jan scanned the water around us and noticed two big black humps in the water ahead of us. She quickly disengaged the autopilot



and steered to avoid the humps which she then realized were mother and baby humpback whales. However, the mother swam in one direction and the baby swam in the other, and we ended up sailing between them. The mother was quite distressed, and as we sailed by her, she slapped her tail repeatedly - we assume to let the baby know where she was. The tail slaps were incredibly close - thankfully she didn't ram our boat! Several tail slaps later, we sailed clear of the two whales, and they were reunited off our stern. We focused on slowing our heart rates, called Lionel & Nathalie on s.v. Rokalo who were a couple miles behind us to alert them, and carried on. We love seeing whales, but this encounter was a little too close!

Our second heart-thumping experience was weather related. The day prior to our expected arrival in Bazaruto, we were alerted to a weather system coming up the coast. Emails from Des indicated that we wouldn't see much more than 20 knots of wind, and that it would be a "short burst." The weather forecast files which we downloaded via our satphone reflected pretty much the same, and it all seemed manageable.

The weather system arrived in daylight hours, which was a good thing (night time storms can be scary!), but the winds along the frontal boundary of the storm were much stronger than expected. The sky was an eerie shade of dark grey as the storm approached. We had a double-reef in our main sail, and started furling our headsail as winds started to build. We obviously waited too long to furl the headsail because we had it only half-way furled when the full brunt of the winds hit us. Rich finished furling the jib, and Jan eased the main as far out as possible, and then took the wheel to steer downwind. She looked at the wind speed indicator - 45 knots - yikes!!!! We sailed downwind for a bit, but then decided to heave-to (turning to about 30 degrees off the wind), which is a favored method for riding out storms. Our heaving-to skills weren't all that great because we had little experience with it, but with the help of the engine, we managed it (well, sort of!), and we felt much more in control and the boat was riding comfortably. We ended up heaving-to for about an hour, and the winds died down considerably during that time, although the crew was still a bit shaky!

Since the weather forecast indicated that we would have good sailing winds (high teens to low 20's) for the rest of the trip, we decided to douse the main and continue on with only the headsail, and that worked well for the remainder of the trip. We were only a few miles from two of our companion boats when we were hit by the storm, and a couple of hours after the melee, one called on the VHF to make sure everyone was OK. Another boat was about 10 miles behind us, and we spoke with them on the SSB that evening - they saw even more wind that we did - over 50 knots!! But, all boats and crews were fine.

Our group of four arrived at Bazaruto the following afternoon, and joined a fleet of 20+ other boats who were anchored there - all of us sheltering from a stronger storm coming up the coast in the next day or so. Some of the other boats had already been anchored at Bazaruto for over a week, but waiting for the right weather window for the next leg of the journey was imperative.

**Alba – Late September 2017:** I was able to get a brief internet connection, which was enough to download some GRIB files. It looks like there might be a good, long weather window on the 2nd October, which would enable us to start our passage down to South Africa. It's too far in the future to have any certainty, but I think that we'll be keeping a close eye on it from now on. It's only 80 miles from Moramba Bay to Majunga where we will clear out, so I think that we'll aim to get to Majunga on the 28th and then quickly onto Baly Bay to wait for the weather.



We're feeling a little apprehensive about the 1,200 mile passage because the weather systems come through every 3-5 days with the potential for strong southerly gales against the south-setting Mozambique Current, which can produce very steep and high seas.

I read various blogs and articles giving advice on the passage. The most common strategy (and the one that we will follow) is to head directly west from Cap St Andre towards the Mozambique coast. About 80 miles from the coast, we should encounter the Mozambique Current - a strong south setting current that will boost our passage speed.

As we head down the coast, we will be keeping an eye on the weather forecasts. If a southerly gale is forecast, there are three "bolt-hole" anchorages along the Mozambique coast, where we can go to hide until the bad weather passes. We can then hop 250 miles down to the next anchorage or, if the next weather window is long enough, go straight to Richards Bay. If you want to know more, I've concatenated all my research into one article called "Passage to South Africa".

There looks to be a good weather window around the 3/4/5 October, so we're going to stay one more day in Moramba Bay and then start heading down to Majunga to clear out.

**Alba – October 2, 2017 – Baly Bay:** We had a strategy session with "Red Herring" and "Luna Blu". We all have similar ideas on the best route and our overall plan is to leave early in the morning at 2 or 3 o'clock, to catch the easterly land breeze; get around Cap St Andre as best we can and then head roughly on a course of 245° until we catch the Mozambique Current. I'll be using qtVIm to plan my route using GFS and RTOFS Grib files. You can read more about Route Planning or qtVIm in the Cruising Information section of this website.

All of us are hoping that we will be able to make it to Maputo (25°57S 32°59E) before the southerlies on the 9<sup>th</sup>, otherwise we can stop at Inhambane (23°47S 35°31E) or if we are really slow we can stop at Bazaruto (21°39S 35°26E). We'll be keeping a close eye on the conditions and modifying our plans accordingly.

**Alba - Madagascar to Mozambique (Day 1)** - The alarm went off at 03:00 and after downloading the latest GRIB files, we were soon pulling up the anchor. "Red Herring", "Mowana" and "Luna Blu" were already 10 miles ahead of us as we motored out of the Bay with hardly any wind. Out at sea, we found ourselves beating into a 5-10 knot wind from the southwest. The sea was surprisingly choppy, making it difficult to sail with the waves stopping us regularly - we turned the engine on several times during the next few hours.

At 09:30, the sea-breeze finally arrived giving us 8-12 knot winds from the Northeast, so I poled out the genoa to starboard. By noon, the wind had backed to the North and dropped to 5-10 knots, so we dragged out our asymmetrical spinnaker, which added a knot or two to our boat speed. We had blue skies all day, so it was lovely sailing.

The wind gradually backed more, moving forward of the beam and slowly increasing to 12 knots, so mid afternoon, we dropped the spinnaker and pulled out the genoa again. The remorseless rotation of the wind continued and by sunset, the wind was back to SW - dead on the nose, so we were forced to sail more and more south.

At the start of my 7-10 watch, we were on a course of 200° - a long way from our desired course of 245°, so anticipating the wind to continue backing, I tacked onto a course of 310°. By 01:00, it increased to 20 knots from the SSW, so we were back on course again with one reef in the

mainsail, beating upwind at over 6 knots. The seas were fairly flat, with 1 metre waves and we had a full moon with scattered clouds so it was pleasant enough. Unfortunately, we had a current of 1 to 2.5 knots against us which slowed us down a lot.

It was a hectic 24 hours, using all of our sails on all points of wind. Let's hope that the wind speed and direction stays more consistent for the rest of the passage and that we can find more favourable currents.

#### **4 October 2017 Madagascar to Mozambique (Day 2)**

Our position at 07:00 was 16:27S 043:12E.

The wind gradually dropped, so at dawn Glenys turned on the engine. The others in our little fleet have encountered the same counter currents, but "Red Herring", who are 25 miles ahead of us, said that the current seems to be slackening off as they are approaching Ile Juan de Nova. We have our fingers crossed – it's a little depressing to be motor-sailing at 6 knots and only doing 3.5 knots over the ground.

After breakfast, I downloaded new Grib files and plugged them into qtVlm. It generated a route that passes to the north of Ile Juan de Nova and then heads roughly south-west. The RTOFS grib file shows a 150 mile diameter, anti-clockwise rotating current centred around 19°06S 39°10E. This current is up to 3 knots, so the routing algorithm is taking us around the top and down the west side of this "eddy". Hopefully, we'll be in a favourable current tomorrow.

We were 20 miles short of our planned target yesterday and only did 117 miles in 24 hours. We will have to exceed our projections to get to Maputo before the strong southerlies on the 9th. This seems to be very unlikely, so I've changed our planned destination to Inhambane. We have 665 miles to go and qtVlm is forecasting an arrival on the afternoon of Sunday 8th – the southerlies arrive at Inhambane on the morning of the 9th.

Other than that, the grib files showed E/NE 8-10 knots today and then lighter NE/N/NW winds tonight. It looked like we'd be doing a lot of motoring, so I checked our fuel - we have about 390 litres of diesel in our fuel tank and 63 litres in jerry cans. Our average fuel consumption is 2.5 litres per hour, so we've enough fuel to motor for 182 hours, which is 7 days, so I'm not worrying yet.

Mid-morning, the wind picked up to NE 10-15, so I poled the genoa out to starboard and we were able to roll along at 5.5 to 7 knots, albeit still with a 1.0 knot current against us. We had a great sail for the rest of the day, with blue skies. After sunset, the wind backed to the NW and dropped to 5-10 knots. We slowly sailed at 4 knots for a while, but we still had 1-2 knots of current against us, so I cracked up at 20:00 and started the engine.

By midnight, we had variable wind (less than 5 knots) and a current against us between 1.5 and 3 knots. We're heading on a course of 250° to try to get west and find the elusive Mozambique current.

I've been using the RTOFS current data, which so far, has not compared well to the actual conditions encountered. I downloaded a Grib file containing OSCAR Current data and the currents are very different to RTOFS. For example, at our present position (17°23S 42°00E), the RTOFS file says that we should have 1.2 knots setting North and the OSCAR file says that we should have 1.2 knots setting South – in reality, we are heading West and have 2 knots against us. It's three o'clock in the morning and I feel like screaming in frustration.

If the current data is unreliable, then the routing produced by qtVIm is also unreliable, which is a problem. As an experiment, I produced three routings in qtVIm – no Current data, RTOFS Current data and OSCAR Current data. Without any Current data then the routing is a rhumb line – not very helpful. Interestingly, despite the differences in the data, the two routings produced using RTOFS and OSCAR data follow roughly similar paths, crossing over each other with a maximum difference of 20 miles.

When I plot a route that averages out the OSCAR and the RTOFS routes, then I get a route that roughly follows the 2000 metre depth contour about 100 miles off the Mozambique coast. This seems like a logical thing for a ocean current to do, so I'm going for that.

In retrospect, I think that we should have headed straight west until I picked up the Mozambique Current, which is what Des Cason originally recommended. I thought that using the Current data would enable me to “cut the corner” and give me a more efficient route. Sometimes traditional experience is better than new technology.

### **5 October 2017 Madagascar to Mozambique (Day 3)**

Our position at 07:00 was 17:30S 041:36E

Dawn brought us a nice ENE 10-15 knot wind, so Glenys was able to turn the engine off and sail on a broad reach. Even better, was that after motoring for nine hours, the damn counter-current finally disappeared.

When I woke up at 07:00, I downloaded new Grib files and plugged them into qtVIm. I created two routings to Inhambane – one based on RTOFS and one based on OSCAR Current data. I imported these routes into my OpenCPN chart plotter and then created a route that was an average of the two. It was more or less the same as the one that I created in the small hours of last night, so I'm using the new route for the next 24 hours and we laid a course of 250°T. At 07:00, we had 524 miles to go, but in the last 24 hours, we had only done 115 miles over the ground, which is a pathetic 4.8 knots.

Strong south winds are still forecast to arrive in Inhambane at 01:00 on Tuesday 10th, so we want to arrive there at 12:00 on Monday 9th, which will give us a 12 hour safety margin in case the front arrives early. We have 4 days to get there. This is an average of 5.2 knots or 125 miles per day, which should be easily achievable, provide that we do not encounter any more unfavourable currents. I'll be keeping a keen eye on our progress.

During the morning, the wind gradually backed to NE 10-15, which allowed us to pole the genoa out to starboard on a broad reach. It was a glorious blue-sky day and we bowled along at 5.5 – 6.5 knots with no noticeable current.

The wind started to drop in the late afternoon and at sunset we started to motor, and we had less than 5 knots of wind all night. At the change of watch at 01:00, we encountered another slight counter-current of about half a knot. This was really frustrating because I knew that the Mozambique Current was somewhere to the west of our position - we'd chatted to Wairima yesterday on the SSB and they had 2 knots of good current on their track 35 miles west of us.

I did a little experiment to see the effect of our heading on the speed over the ground and I was surprised to find that a 20° change in heading caused a 0.4 knot change in speed over the ground (7.5%). Our speed through the water was 5.9 knots.

Heading	COG	SOG
255°T	270°T	5.8 knots
235°T	248°T	5.4 knots
215°T	226°T	5.0 knots

I wondered whether it would be better to cross the adverse current rather than fighting it? I grabbed a piece of paper and did some basic trigonometric calculations. Wairima's track in the south-setting current was roughly 225°T, so if we continued to head on a course of 248°T then it would be 70 miles until we crossed their track. If we headed west, then we would cross their track in only 35 miles.

The extra distance doing this dog-leg track would be only 6 miles, but if we picked up the 2 knot current sooner, then I calculated that we would take 11.4 hours instead of 13.1 hours to reach the same waypoint. I altered course to take us straight west - it felt much better to have a faster speed over the ground.

#### **6 October 2017 Madagascar to Mozambique (Day 4)**

Our position at 07:00 was 18:22S 039:25E

The wind picked up at dawn again, so Glenys was able to get us sailing on a port broad reach. Last night's cunning plan didn't go as well as I expected – we had a favourable current this morning, but it was only 0.5-1.0 knot rather than the 2 knots that we were expecting. Still, mustn't grumble.

Interestingly, at 08:00, we had small "puff ball" cumulus clouds, which are caused by the convection rising from the warmer south-flowing current, but by 10:00 we were back to solid blue skies. We're only 6 miles east of the position where "Wairima" reported 2 knot currents, but we can't find these elusive strong currents.

The weather forecast this morning shows that the strong southerlies, which were expected to arrive in Inhambane at 01:00 on Tuesday 10th (Monday night) are not going to arrive until 18:00 on Tuesday 10th. This gives us an opportunity to try to get to Maputo, which is 210 miles further down the coast. To achieve this we're going to have to average 6 knots over the next 4 days, which is achievable if we continue to get favourable currents.

Mid-way through the morning, the wind backed, going more behind us and reduced in strength, so I poled the genoa out to port. This worked for a couple of hours, but the wind dropped even more to 5-8 knots, so we dragged out the spinnaker, but even with the main sail and the spinnaker, our boat speed dropped to 3-4 knots. We took advantage of the calm conditions to run our water maker.

At 15:00, our water tanks were full and we needed to get a move on, so we dropped the spinnaker and turned on the engine. In these calm conditions, our boat speed was 5.7 knots at 1700 rpm and we were doing 6.7 knots over the ground. Maputo here we come...

By sunset, the wind had picked up to SE 10. We pulled out the sails and set off on a close reach, which in these calm seas, gave us a boat speed of 5.4 knots. The current has picked up

to 1.5 to 2 knots so we were doing 7.0 knots over the ground - I'm so glad that we've found the current.

With nothing else better to do on my night watch, I did a little analysis of our performance compared to "Wairima", which is a similar sized monohull.

Alan and Vicky took the "classic" route by heading west until they found the Mozambique Current at about 16°15S 41°10E and then followed the current along the coast. They had 1 knot of against them for 130 miles from the drop off at Cap St Andre across the Mozambique Channel, but after that had 1 to 2 knots of current with them.

We "cut the corner" trying to go a shorter distance and use the Current data in grib files to make the best use of the currents. This strategy didn't work very well because we had adverse currents of between 0.5 to 3 knots for 250 miles from the drop off at Cap St Andre. Our route was only 20 miles shorter than "Wairima's".

"Wairima" left Baly Bay 24 hours ahead of us, but at 0800 this morning, they were 250 miles ahead of us. Assume that for the last 24 hours, they have done 6.5 knots average with the current, then they have gained 94 miles in 3 days (and shortened their passage by 14 hours.) If I ever do this passage again, I will definitely be heading west until I find the current.

After a beautiful sunset, the first half of the night was idyllic, sailing in flat seas with a full moon, clocking speeds of up to 8 knots over the ground. After midnight, the wind increased slightly to ESE 15, so we were screaming along at 9 knots. In the 12 hours up to dawn, we covered 95 miles, which is an average of 7.9 knots over the ground – probably one of the best overnight sails we've had in ten years of cruising.

Unfortunately, just after dawn, the wind suddenly dropped to 6 knots and backed to the East, so we had to turn on the engine.

### **7 October 2017 Madagascar to Mozambique (Day 5)**

Our position at 07:00 was 20:29S 037:28E

With very light winds, we spent the morning motoring south, achieving 6.5 knots over the ground.

Today's weather forecast shows that gale-force southerly winds are expected in Maputo on the 10th at 15:00 - a few hours earlier than forecast yesterday and the low pressure system causing the southerlies has also deepened bringing stronger winds.

Des Cason has been sending me an email every day and today he said, "The small cut-off low which would have brought light SE to Inhambane/Maputo on the 10th has intensified. A high pressure has ridged in behind it bringing some pretty hectic SW/S winds along the coast. 40+ knot winds are expected off Richards Bay on the 10th. This will spread up the coast to Bazaruto and persist up to the 13th at least in the 25kts range. At 21:00 on the 10th, the low will be at 30S 37E, 1007 Mba with SSW/S 40kts at the epicenter. By the 11th it has moved to 29S 42E, 1003mba, SSW/S 30 kts."

Our plan was to head for Maputo and then dive into Inhambane if we thought that we weren't going to make it before the front. However, Des has warned us that after a few days of NE winds, the outside anchorage at Barra Point, Inhambane will "not be fun with 1.5 to 2 metre swell". The inner anchorage at Linga Linga doesn't sound good either because there's a

shallow 0.4m sand bar at the entrance, which means that we can only enter and leave at 2 hours before high tide, which is very restricting.

So, we had two options:

1. Head for Maputo, which at 07:00 this morning was 430 miles away. If we give ourselves an 8 hour safety margin and aim to get to Maputo at 07:00 on the 10th, then for the next 3 days, we will still have to average 6.0 knots (143 miles per day). We have averaged 150 miles per day for the last two days and the last 24 hours was 168 miles. If we retain the favorable current and have good winds, then we should make it.
2. Head for Bazaruto, which is 115 miles away. We could be there tomorrow morning without any problem. We then hide there, leaving after the system goes away, probably on the 13th.

The risks of heading for Maputo are that we may lose the favourable current and the low pressure system may develop faster. If we have light winds, we'll have to motor hard for up to 3 days and if the engine has a problem, we're doomed. If something doesn't go as planned, then we will be trapped at sea in a serious storm (up to 40 knot winds and 6 metre waves) for several days.

The only disadvantage with going to Bazaruto is that we'll be delayed getting into Richard's Bay by at least a week, but we're in no hurry – our son isn't coming out to visit until the 17th October, so we have plenty of time.

So, we either have three days of stress, racing to beat a big storm or we chill out in a secure anchorage for five days with some other cruisers. It was a no-brainer - at midday, we turned west towards Bazaruto.

I chatted to "Red Herring" on the SSB radio and they have also turned back to Bazaruto. "Luna Blu", "Continuum", and "Mowana" are already on their way. "Wairima" are now south of Inhambane, so they will make it to Richards Bay. My only concern is that we might not have enough beer.

We had a very relaxing afternoon, sailing along at 3-4 knots in the light north winds, which carried on into the night. After midnight, with only 40 miles to go, the wind picked up to NE15, so Glenys rolled away the main and we ran on a reefed genoa at 3 knots until dawn. Unfortunately, we had confused, sharp 1.5 metre waves, which made us rock and roll all night.

We encountered some strong currents in this area, which would suddenly change direction and alter our course through the water by 20 degrees. There were also noticeable changes in the sea state as we went from wind-with-current to wind-against-current. I guess that these are eddies being generated at the edge of the continental shelf.

### **8 October 2017 Madagascar to Mozambique (Day 6)**

Our position at 07:00 was 19:43S 061:27E (036-27E??)

At dawn, we had light north winds, so we were only able to sail at 3-4 knots. This was okay because we wanted to wait until midday, when it was low tide and the best time to start to negotiate the channel through the sand bars. Unfortunately, the sea was still very confused, making us bounce around unpleasantly for six hours.

We had a bit of confusion with time zones. Our Ship's Time was UTC +3 with all our clocks set to Madagascar time. Our normal source of tides is the Navionics Chart app on our Samsung

tablet. It told us that low tide was at 12:00, but indicated that the tide was in the “Central Africa” time zone, but what was that? Was the low tide really at 11:00, 12:00 or 13:00 in Madagascar time? The last thing that we want to do after five nights of sleep deprivation is wrap our heads around the conundrum of time.

Fortunately, technology came to our aid. We configured our tablet to automatically set the local time zone and it used its GPS position to work out that we were now in the Central Africa time zone (UTC +2) - an hour earlier than all our other clocks. Phew! So low tide was actually at 13:00 (Ship’s Time). To avoid any more confusion, we turned all our clocks back one hour, so Ship’s Time is now UTC +2 and low tide is now at 12:00. (I think!)

We started our approach into the channel at 11:00 (UTC+2), following a set of waypoints published by Des Cason. They were spot on, but we were eye-balling the water depth all the time, using the colour of the water. There are many sand banks along the 12 mile route, but the water is clear and the lighter colour of the shallow spots is easy to see. We had to do a bit of a dog-leg around one shallow sand spit - 21°35.711S 035°24.441E and 21°35.930S 035°24.819E gets you around it.

All the way points are: 21°30 00S 35°25 00E; 21°32.50S 35°23.40E; 21°35.50S 35°22.40E; 21°35.90S 35°24.10E; 21°35.711S 035°24.441E; 21°35.930S 035°24.819E; 21°38.77S 035°25.60E.

“Red Herring” and “Luna Blu” came in with us and there was much debate about where to anchor because the normal anchorage north of Ponta Gengare was very gnarly in the NNE15 winds, which had picked up as we came in through the channel. Eventually, we all headed to the south of the point and anchored at 21°40.39S 035°25.87E in 12 metres, which was much more sheltered.

Once settled to anchor, we had a shower, an afternoon nap; a few cold ones; dinner and early to bed.

Today’s weather forecast shows that the low pressure system is not going to produce very high winds, but the south winds are hanging around the coast for longer (until the 15th.) This means that we won’t be able to start heading south for a week - at least our time here in Bazaruto will be pleasant without any storm force winds. Of course, that could all change tomorrow.

### ***2.3.2 Western Middle Madagascar Direct to Richard’s Bay***

**Alyosha – September 2018: (50 ft St. Francis Catamaran)** On our first attempt, we tried- unsuccessfully-to cross the Mozambique Channel and were promptly scared off by an “armegeddon” type forecast for when we would reach Mozambique or South Africa.

It would be difficult for me to do justice in words to how depressing it was to turn Alyosha back after 50 nm at sea towards our goal. But we did, and had to wait for the next weather window to cross.

After our first aborted attempt at crossing we left even earlier than the weather forecasters suggested, the idea being that there was absolutely no way we were going to allow this next weather window to close on us before reaching Richards Bay. Most cruisers make a pit stop in Mozambique to wait for the next window, my sense was an early start would allow us to skip

this. In the end, it did work out for us, and we arrived in Richards Bay exactly 5 days after we left Baly Bay, Madagascar.

The passage was notable for three things: rough seas, a crew member going down, and an unbelievable greeting from South Africa. Our early departure ensured us about 36 hours of rough, almost “on the nose” winds, seas and swell. Not the best time to be on Alyosha. The boat and crew handled things well, except that during the worst of the conditions Blake developed flu-like symptoms and became very, very sick. This lasted for several days and made everything a bit tougher (one can imagine how lame it would be to have the flu while underway in rough conditions- just miserable!).

There were two spectacular memories from the passage. The first was a fleeting glimpse of Mozambique during sunset after the sea conditions had improved, a phenomenal sunset on the African continent that I had been looking forward to for weeks.

The second was our arrival in South Africa and the 4-5 hours we spent along the SA coast before pulling into Richards Bay.

We were greeted by hundreds (and frankly probably thousands) of humpback whales frolicking along the coast. At first, we simply thought the coastline was reflecting some significant sea swell as we were seeing magnificent crashes of water along the coast. Soon, we realized that we were actually seeing huge whales breaching! And then, within an hour, there were whales everywhere, as far as we could see. They flashed their tails, they breached, and at one point we had to make a hard turn to starboard to avoid a collision! It was an amazing show of nature, all with the backdrop of a beautiful South African coast and the realization that our real “sea time” was coming to an end. Awesome.

We pulled into Richards Bay first, to avoid another cold front coming up from the south. It was a nice place, and the customs dock where we stayed was free of charge and right in the middle of a number of bars and restaurants. We were able to watch Croatia beat England in a World Cup qualifying match, and fuel up the boat for our coastal run. Interestingly and not at all conveniently, we had to both check into the port AND completely check out of the port (with customs, immigration, the whole bit) which took a bit of time. We ended up leaving Richards Bay in the evening and motoring overnight to Durban to position ourselves for this final run.

**Keyif – October 2016:** Keyif arrived in Richards Bay on October 11, after an eight day three hour crossing from Madagascar's Baly Bay. We were aiming for Durban, but the arrival of the southerly wind changed our plans, and well it did, because we are very happy here in this friendly environment, in Zululand Yacht Club. After minor boat repairs and some field research, we now have some time to give you some helpful info on the passage and Richards Bay.

For those of you planning to leave Madagascar from the northwest coast, better avoid **Baly Bay**. It is wide open to the west, quite unprotected except for a small corner in front of the village that can be entered only on the low tide rising, between many invisible sand banks (anchorage entry coordinates are available upon request:)) Moreover, it is a long way in and out, motoring against the prevailing winds for approximately ten miles. Also, coming to and after leaving Baly Bay, it is necessary to get well offshore, because there are many large sailing vessels that travel at night without any lights and do not show up on the radar as they generally are all wood and have no metal. This causes much anguish in the crew who have by now



become accustomed to the happy life on anchor. So we think leaving from **Moramba** or even **Russian Bay** direct as a better option if possible.

On passage, it is generally difficult to find a weather window that will give a boat enough time to make it to Richards Bay all in good northerlies, so it is good to be prepared for some southerlies as well. For this, download the latest current charts and try and meet the approaching southerly front in a no current zone. This will make the passage much more comfortable even if it means going a bit far out.

There is quite a bit of shipping on this route, so it pays to be alert. Not as good fishing as we had hoped for, but as we heard other friends who had some good catches, maybe it was our bad luck this time.

Finally, Richards Bay. Contrary to prior information, Richards Bay Port Control does listen and respond to VHF Ch 12, and requires that you call and get permission before entering the harbor. They also call immigration for the arriving boats. The immigration, as of a couple of weeks, flatly refuses to go to Zululand Yacht Club to clear boats in, and demands that all boats tie at the international jetty in front of Tzu Gazi to check in. The second step, visiting the customs office is extremely difficult to find, even for English speakers, so do get a taxi to take you there, you will not regret.

Finally, Zululand Yacht Club is the best place to be, with its friendly and efficient staff and members, its clean and peaceful environment, its beautiful garden and surroundings, clean toilets and showers, very inexpensive washing machines and dryers (Yes, one needs dryers because it rains so often in RB that the laundry cannot find time to dry) and its agreeable prices. The docks seem to be in good condition, there is water and electricity in all berths and 24 hour security. After seeing the marinas in Durban, we are extremely pleased to have left Keyif in ZYC, as we go traveling in Africa.

Apart from these minor comments, we agree with all the information provided in 2015 by Jason Trautz of SV Yolo.

**Onverra – October 2016:** Our passage was not the most ideal but not bad considering that we wanted to leave earlier than the normal time. It was an 11 day passage from Moramba Bay where we had a good push off the coast with 25 knots but soon died away as the afternoon sea breezes kicked in.

We headed roughly due west from 15 degrees south on the Madagascar side trying to cross the Mozambique channel as soon as possible. It was mostly light winds and adverse current in places. At times it was 12 knots of wind with nice spinnaker sailing with flat seas. About 90 miles east of Mozambique we picked up a 3 knot current, wheeee! But lost it as the mainland curved west.

When off of Inhambane we found the current again but also got a 30 knot northerly wind for 7 hours. The forecast was for much less, but no problem since it was behind. Going into Maputo we got another 30 knots but from the south. The lighthouse anchorage at Maputo is not ideal, 2m swell rolling in. No current from Maputo down to Cape Vidal. We had almost no wind so had to motor sail the whole 180miles, that is until we got too much wind from the SSWEST. The seas became very nasty quickly . Winds were higher than forecast but started at exactly 3 pm as predicted. We were 27 miles out, so close yet so far. The current was much stronger in the last 20 miles but also found a countercurrent very close to shore within the 30 metre line.

Entering Richards Bay harbour at night is fine, all well marked, but lots of shipping traffic. We went to anchor behind Navel island at **28-47 83** , **32-04 80** in 27 feet.

Today we moved to the free wall next to the Tuzi Gazi marina. No officials have arrived yet and port control did not answer the radio. There is an ATM, mini market with SIM cards, bars and live music. Not much has changed in 14 years since we were here last.

**Totem – October 2015:** Below taken from their blog here (illustrations on the blog were left off this account for size and brevity, so be sure to go look at the blog post if you have internet).

<http://www.sailingtotem.com/2015/10>

Ocean currents have been a significant factor for our Indian Ocean passages this year, and our upcoming passage to South Africa is no exception. On this morning's SSB net, one boat after another chimed in about the strong foul current they're experiencing off the Madagascar coast as they head towards South Africa. Most entered the Mozambique channel at a point off the western 'bulge' called Cap Saint Andre. It's 220 miles east of the Mozambique coastline, making it shortest point between Madagascar and Africa. One of the first boats reporting by SSB described two to three knots of foul current overnight – another said they had to start motoring because the current had them sailing backwards!

Why fight it? In choosing a channel crossing strategy, Cap Saint Andre looks good because of the shorter distance to getting coastal again. Winds tend to be light, but there is little chance of getting whacked by big weather – at least until the final approach to South Africa. Advice was passed around, written by cruisers that have done this crossing 7 times with preference of heading west from Cap Saint Andre until turning southward some 70 miles from Mozambique with the south flowing Agulhas current.

It's a conservative strategy that makes sense – except when the very dynamic Mozambique channel currents become strong from the wrong direction, just as the group of boats that set out westward over the past few days are now reporting. Unfortunately for them, this strong, foul current was showing on the current models when they departed, and will continue for more days to come. That short 220 miles is probably feeling like 500 about now.

For all accounts, these former cruisers incredibly helpful and giving folks who share a wealth of valuable knowledge with boats in the region. But this is a good example of a couple of things: first, that "local knowledge" from past experiences doesn't always work with here and now situations. It's easy to fall into a routing strategy and then put the blinders on. Second, that it's a really good idea to back up any advice with your own research. The advice may have been great previously, but it's not working for the boats out there right now!

Routing for many passages is easy – watch the weather and go when good. This stretch of ocean takes more. Southern Africa is a weather machine: Atlantic and Indian Oceans colliding, hot winds from the Namibia desert and cold winds from the Southern Ocean, and the freight train of hot water called the Agulhas current. It's this south flowing current that can build mountainous, ship smashing waves when pushed up by strong southerly winds. In the stretch of the Mozambique channel we're facing, winds are lighter and the Agulhas current not yet a full strength, but there is there is enough water flow to keep changing the patterns. It's not enough to look at just wind velocity and direction.

There are a few options for getting ocean current data. These three are accessible through internet during pre-passage planning or a satellite and HF radio connection underway.

**PredictWind Offshore Routing:** Our primary tool to make the best use of (or avoid) currents is with the routing optimization in PredictWind's Offshore app, which uses TideTech.org data.

Plugging in routing closest to what these boats have done- leaving from around Mahajanga, destination Richards Bay – all four models (each based on a different wind GRIB, but the same current model) avoid this area of foul current. This routing took about a minute to download on our Iridium GO! this morning.

PredictWind has done the heavy lifting by baking wind and current information into four recommended routes, each route based on a different source model GRIB. Smart users will look at the factors behind the split in these models, and then make their own decision. It's also a good idea to update the route underway as changing weather forecasts may revise the optimal route.

Efficient routing can shave not just hours, but DAYS off a crossing. With the nasty weather systems that roll up from the south in this area, a fast crossing is a safe crossing.

**RTOFS model (Saildocs):** HF radio users can use the GRIB request screen in Airmail to get RTOFS models through the catalog. Just go to the GRIB area map, choose RTOFS from the multi-select dropdown labeled 'Model' at the bottom left corner, and then select your area from the map.

**OSCAR model from SV Sarana:** Eric & Sherrell are long time cruisers and data nerds (this is an accolade!) who have created a set of tools to convert the massive ocean current simulation data from NASA-funded Ocean Surface Currents in Real-Time (OSCAR) into bite-size files that can be accessed via email. It's been around for a couple of years, but we only found about it recently, through a ham radio operator in South Africa who has been really helpful with information for our voyaging in this region (thank you Colin!). Jamie does most of our weather analysis, and he likes the finer details in OSCAR better than what's available in RTOFS.

Full instructions for getting OSCAR data by email – it's easy, really – is available on their website at [www.svsarana.com/oscar/index.php](http://www.svsarana.com/oscar/index.php). The file for our data above was all of 11k.

(Note: Saildocs now also supports OSCAR using the normal Airmail/Viewfax request mechanism: `send OSCAR:03N,03S,137E,151E|0.33,0.33|0|CUR` )

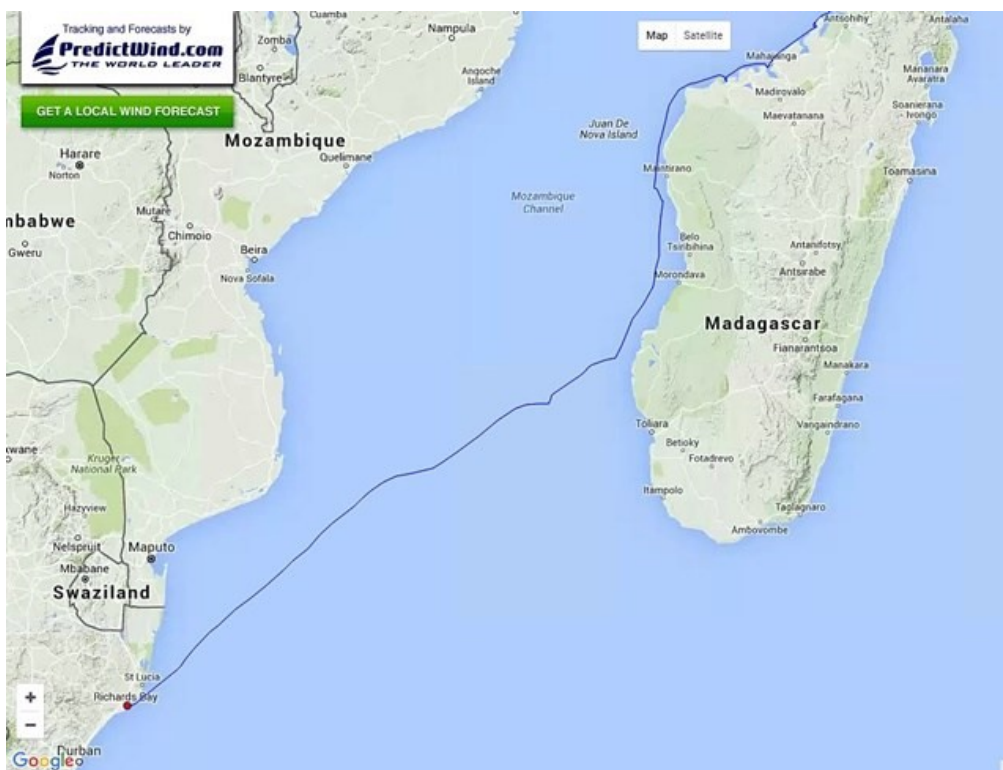
**High bandwidth users:** A truly beautiful visual of ocean currents is available from Earth ([earth.nullschool.net](http://earth.nullschool.net)), but it's impractical to use on a passage unless you're a big-budget boat with offshore broadband (I'm looking at YOU Johnno!). On the site, click that 'earth' text on the bottom left to open up a menu: you want mode-> ocean and animate -> currents.

The animated globe is a good way to internalize the big picture of weather events and patterns. Ocean current data is based on the same OSCAR model you can request by email.

It was looking at this beautiful data visualization that first really impressed on me how "the current" everyone talks about in the Mozambique channel, how important it is to avoid wind vs current in our North to South path, isn't some kind of monolithic uni-directional force. It is a complicated swirling mass that moves east and west as much as it moves north and south.

What's critical to know, however, is that the current data used for this model is only updated weekly, so it's really only a big-picture guide and not a true weather tool. Maybe this is why the boat mentioning they had checked earth.nullschool just before departure is puzzled that they're finding different conditions than what the site showed.

Well, hopefully we don't get nailed, and manage to skirt the worst of the current along the route from here to Richards Bay. Routing here requires tough decisions. In the last few weeks, we've changed our channel crossing strategy four or five times as we learn more, read more, and shape an opinion. But we don't have the hubris to imagine we can have perfect information or be the experts. We'll keep absorbing information until we go and try to make smart decisions along the way. We update our routes on PredictWind as our passages progress, so that changes in weather (and the more accurate, nearer forecast) can be taken into account and we can adapt our route as needed.



### ***Totem's Eventual Route***

**Recap from after the passage:** Here's where I'm glad to be married to a guy who has a pro racing background, as a navigator no less! Jamie's focus for routing Totem was to find the most efficient (/safe/comfortable) path from A to B, balancing all the wind and current factors. And we were racing: not other boats, but racing conditions to make it into port. We have no interest in being spanked by the weather, as that's bad for boats and bad for people.

Routing fundamentals this passage (Madagascar to South African arrival) have three parts:

- a) getting across the channel (whether you do it first, or second)
- b) getting south (whether you do it second, or first)
- c) the last few hundred miles

We did our southing first, along the coast of Madagascar, where the daily land/sea breeze and flat water has provided some of the best sailing conditions we've ever experienced. We hung a right near the bottom of the Madagascar to find a good angle on the breeze bending around the south end of the island to get across the channel to South Africa. Ultimately, we had a really good crossing and arrived in just under seven days.

Jamie's racing experience came into play repeatedly. We played wind shifts to keep up VMG (velocity made good). We altered course to avoid foul current. WE TACKED. We tacked three times, even. I don't remember the last time we tacked once on a passage- it's probably been years! There were multiple course changes of 90+ degrees – because they made sense. Definitely not the typical cruising passage.

But the forecast along the way changed constantly, and we had to adapt: we frequently checked GRIBs, current, and updated the PredictWind Offshore app's routing twice a day. Complicating that third part- the last few hundred miles- when we were a few days into the passage, a system started to appear that offered the possibility of a really bad scenario as we narrowed the distance to the coast of Africa.

To beat that system's arrival, we shortened the total distance by changing our anticipated landfall from Durban to Richards Bay, and continued to play for efficiency to get into port. It paid off when the system arrived hours earlier than the earliest time forecast; we were nipped, but it could have been much worse. Those six miles of wind-vs.-current made for an unpleasant slog, but that was only about an hour and a half out of a complicated, nearly weeklong passage.

The fundamental alternative route, to cross farther north and making our southing along Mozambique, appealed to us when we thought we'd be able to linger and explore there for a while. I'd love to have been able to walk around the old Portuguese fort and buildings on Ilha de Moçambique! But we ran out of time to include playing tourist in our plans, so wrote it off in favor of this strategy, which looked like a better option when weighing conditions with our priorities.

One of our favorite quotes from racing days is "I'd rather be lucky than smart." For all the thought that went into planning for this passage, we were lucky too.

**Solstice – 2015:** I only know of two boats that sailed far south along the western coast of Madagascar last year, myself on Solstice and Totem. We didn't sail that far south as the weather shifted and sent us across the channel sooner than our original plan. In hindsight I wish we had gone further south before heading west, though we went further south than any other boats that crossed last year.. The sail south is very protected and offered many places to duck in and anchor should things get rough. It worked great for us and we still ended up taking refuge for 3 days waiting for weather in Madagascar before going west. After talking to locals who had dozens of crossings to SA from Madagascar the further south you go before heading west the better. That was their opinions then and one I tend to agree with.

### ***2.3.3 Southern Madagascar to Richard's Bay***

**Gryphon 2 – October 2014:** We opted to go the direct route around the southern end of Madagascar. We chose to do this for a variety of reasons. Firstly the route north of Madagascar is within the area classed as a piracy risk (see comments above).

The most problematic part of the whole trip across the Indian Ocean is the last 75 miles. The Agulhas current runs southward at up to 6 knots close to the African shore. Its position, speed

and width vary but it is fastest at about the 200m contour and may be only 10 or 20 miles wide. Periperi radio were a great help in advising on its strength and location. Our experience was that we started to pick up a SE flowing current at up to 2 knots when still 100 miles offshore, which gradually turned to a more southerly direction. The total width of the current was at least 50 miles to a maximum close to the 200 m contour from where it declined to 1 knot off the harbour entrance at Richard's Bay.

The problem comes when a southerly buster comes up the coast. These are cold fronts associated with depressions further south and can come on very quickly. A southerly gale against a southerly current is a recipe for disaster for any small boat. For Brits think Portland Race on a spring ebb with a westerly gale....on steroids. The good news is that Periperi radio can advise on the likely conditions in the current. It is recommended that yachts heave to outside the current if conditions are not right and wait.

We just got in in time. 18 hours later a frighteningly powerful storm hit the coast, lasted nearly 48 hours and at its peak had 60 knot winds and 7 metre swells. An English singlehander behind us just failed to reach the harbour and had to heave-to and eventually had to call for help from the local emergency services who went out at the height of the gale and towed him in.

## **2.4 Mozambique (Bazaruto) to Richards Bay**

### **Slip Away – October 2018: Bazaruto Mozambique to Richards Bay**

We ended up spending 5 days anchored behind Bazaruto Island - the first couple of days were fairly pleasant, but the last three were quite windy. We saw 35 knots of wind in the anchorage, and it was likely more than that out on the open ocean. The anchorage was quite large so there was plenty of room for all the boats, and the holding was good, so there were no issues with anchors dragging. There was lots of radio chatter among the boats as our weather window for the remaining distance to South Africa approached, and the excitement grew as Des Cason confirmed that the window looked good for us to make it the rest of the way to South Africa without making another stop.

Our departure day arrived, but departing Bazaruto was no small task. When we arrived, we followed a 10-mile channel from the north end of the island to the anchorage - a few shallow areas but not too difficult. Departure via the south end of the island required navigating some very shallow areas for about 15 miles and then crossing a sand bar that runs between Bazaruto and Santo Antonio Islands. Ideal timing would have us departing the anchorage at Bazaruto on a rising tide to arrive at the sand bar exit at slack high tide. However, with over 20 boats departing at the same time, not everyone could take advantage of that ideal timing. We would need to pretty much follow in a line and go one-by-one. With only a 5-foot draft, Slip Away had one of the shallowest drafts of the fleet, so we were an ideal candidate to go early so we could report depths to boats with deeper drafts following behind us. And, so it was that Slip Away became the Grand Marshall of the parade of boats departing Bazaruto for South Africa. We held our breath as we transited some of the more shallow areas on the way to the exit, and the bar crossing was a bit choppy for us since we were ahead of the slack tide, but all went well, and all boats departed Bazaruto without any problems.

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being lousy and 10 being the best passage ever, we'd give this one a 9. The only thing that could have made it better would have been a bit more wind from a good direction so that we could have sailed more. Our total passage time from Bazaruto,

Mozambique, to Richards Bay, South Africa, (506 miles) was 3 days + 12½ hours, so a total of 84½ hours, and we motored 76 of those hours. On our first night at sea, we had 10-15 knots of wind, but the south-southeast direction was just a bit too far south for us to sail efficiently, so we motor-sailed. The better-sailing boats were able to harness the wind and sailed, and many of them passed us. Our only opportunity to sail came on our second night at sea when we had 10-15 knots of wind from the southeast. Seas were running only about a half-meter, and there was a full moon - it was a stunning night! The lack of wind on this passage, however, was a very small complaint as far as we were concerned because we were quite happy to make it all the way to South Africa without running into severe weather. We had enough fuel to motor the distance, we rode the Agulhas current which got us there faster (an extra 1-3 knot boost), the seas were calm, skies were clear and we had a fantastic full moon, so no complaints!

Another aspect of this passage that could have been better was the timing of our arrival in Richards Bay. We generally don't like to enter an unfamiliar harbor at night, but our timing was such that our ETA was well past sunset. Fortunately, the charts of Richards Bay are quite accurate, and with a good moon and calm weather conditions, it was do-able. We needed to tie up at the International Wharf at Richards Bay, and with so many boats arriving near the same time, there was an opportunity for chaos. But a couple of guys in the fleet who arrived earlier than us - Dale (s.v. Sukha) and Rowan (s.v. Wakanui) - organized the group. Boats which arrived earlier tied up to the wharf and those which arrived later rafted up to the earlier arrivals, and Dale and Rowan did a great job of matching similarly sized boats for rafting. We pulled into Richards Bay shortly after 11 p.m. on a Saturday night. There are a number of restaurants and bars lining the international wharf, and there was loud music blaring and lots of confusing lights, but we inched our way in slowly, following the charts. Dale had advised us via radio where he wanted us to tie up, and when we pulled up to our spot, he and Rowan were there to take our lines, rafting us up to s.v. Altair, a French boat, which was tied to the wall. Our debt of gratitude to Dale & Rowan for their assistance was immense.

We settled in, sat in the cockpit and this "landing beer" was especially sweet (the champagne was in the fridge for the next day). Over the past six months, we had faced a series of challenges, and we had successfully conquered them. There were so many emotions running through us - excitement, elation, relief, gratitude and even a little pride. We were in South Africa!!

#### **2.4.1.1 Ponta Gengare to Benguerra Island, Mozambique**

**Alba - 12 October 2017** Ponta Gengare to Benguerra Island, Mozambique

We had blue skies at dawn with a light South 5 knot wind - a beautiful day. At midday, the fleet of 5 boats set off for Benguerra Island, 15 miles south. The route was a little torturous passing through a shallow area, where we did a dog-leg west, but the minimum depth that we saw was 4.5m at low tide (3.2m LAT).

Our waypoints were: 21°42.96S 035°25.02E; 21°44.78S 035°23.33E; 21°45.46S 035°23.28E; 21°46.73S 035°23.12E; 21°46.49S 035°22.19E; 21°47.07S 035°21.83E; 21°51.20S 035°23.75E.

The entrance into the anchorage was very shallow. There's a 0.4 mile long channel leading to a deeper "pool", which went down to 2.4m (1.0m LAT) at one spot. "Red Herring" and "Luna Blu" anchored in the 7m deep pool, which is ¾ mile from the shore and exposed to the south, so we

went further to see if there was somewhere closer to shore to anchor. Unfortunately the depth dropped to 2.1m (0.7m LAT), so we turned around and anchored back with the rest of the fleet. We slowly dragged (on weed?) a couple of times before settling at 21°51.29S 035°24.42E in 8 metres of water.

It's not a very good place to be. We're ¾ mile from land and exposed to SSE winds; the "pool" that we're in is only 200m wide and surrounded by very shallow water. I'm not a happy bear. If the wind picks up from the south tonight, then it will be very, very unpleasant. The plan is to go to another anchorage tomorrow morning. High tide is at 09:00, so we're planning to weave our way through the sand bars starting at 07:00.

As it was Graham's birthday, we all piled into dinghies and went ashore hoping to be able to buy a beer or even have a meal at the holiday lodge ashore. It was actually an up-market resort catering to honeymooners, so we weren't allowed to buy anything. After a short walk on the beach, we retired back to "Red Herring" for a rum or three.

#### **2.4.1.2 Benguerra Island to Benguerra Sand Spit**

**Alba - 13 October 2017** Benguerra Island to Benguerra Sand Spit, Mozambique

We had a restless night. The wind swung to the south before we went to bed. It was only 5-8 knots, but we were worried that it was going to pick up and make the anchorage very uncomfortable. It was also annoying that when the wind veered, we ended up a couple of boat lengths directly in front of "Continuum", but it was so dark that we couldn't re-anchor.

We were up at 05:15, with the wind at 10-15 knots from the south bringing 2 foot waves into the anchorage. There was a discussion on the VHF and the consensus was to move at 06:00 - three hours before high tide. We had some waypoints through the sand banks to our next anchorage, which were a mixture of some waypoints from previous cruisers; information from a local boat; and inspection of Google earth images in KAP Charts.

The route looked deeper than 5 metres for most of the way, with the shallowest point being at the beginning. A local boat had told us that there's a channel heading NE from our anchorage, but it didn't look promising with wind waves and overcast, early morning skies. I dropped our dinghy into the water and picked up Graham from "Red Herring" to go and look at the "channel" using our portable depth sounder.

It wasn't good. We recorded depths of 2.1 to 2.4 metres and it looked shallower further on. We were at half tide with a tidal depth of 2.5m. We're approaching neaps at the moment and high tide is only 3.2m. Graham and I agreed that it was too risky to head off across uncharted sand banks especially because the wind would be pushing us forward and making it hard to stop. Not that I'm superstitious, but it's also Friday the 13th...

There was a rapid change of plans. "Continuum" and "Mowana" with their shallower drafts, elected to stay at an anchorage a little closer to shore (at 21°51.27S035°24.90E in a depth of 2m LAT). Meanwhile "Red Herring", "Luna Blu" and we headed back north, re-tracing our route and then looping back south along what looked to be a much deeper and safer channel. It was 15 miles, but we were hoping that our destination would be a well-protected anchorage and it's close to the pass that we will use when we finally go out to sea.

The start of the route south goes over a shallow sand bar and we were unsure what the depth would be. Fortunately, there was a local sport-fishing boat going out ("Big Bob") and he told us



that he had a minimum depth of 3.4m over the bar. We put a trace on his AIS and followed his track over the shallows and then down the channel - I love AIS. The minimum depth that we saw was 3.4m (0.2m LAT) and most of the route was over 7 metres deep.

#### **2.4.1.3 Stuck at Benguerra Sandspit**

The anchorage is close to a long Sand Spit and there's a shallow-looking sand bar to the west of it, so we sailed very close to the end of the sand spit and then along the shore. The minimum depth that we saw was 7 metres (3.8m LAT), so we'll be able to get out of the anchorage and into the pass at any state of tide.

(Our waypoints were: 21°44.68S 035°24.03E; 21°44.95S 035°24.76E; 21°45.44S 035°25.22E; 21°46.63S 035°25.23E; 21°47.23S 035°25.50E; 21°48.31S 035°26.62E; 21°48.48S 035°27.59E; 21°48.67S 035°27.60E; 21°48.92S 035°27.51E.)

We anchored at 21°49.03S 035°27.48E in 10 metres on good holding sand. It's a huge anchorage about 0.5 miles long by 0.2 miles wide. The sand spit is a beautiful set of sand dunes - white coral sand, tufts of grass and nothing else. By the time that we arrived at the anchorage, the wind was blowing 20-25 knots from the SSE, but we were very comfortable with just 1 foot wind waves and no swell.

The weather forecast was not good reading. The SE winds will reduce tomorrow and then we will have north-east winds for 48 hours. If we left here tomorrow, we wouldn't quite make it to Maputo before 25 knot winds arrive on the afternoon of the 16th. We could go down to Inhambane, but we'd then have to spend 36 uncomfortable hours in the strong southerlies in a poor anchorage and then wouldn't be able to get to Maputo in time for the next southerly on the 19th.

Our only hope (Obiwan Kanobi) is to wait here until the afternoon of the 20th when we should have five days of favourable East and North-east winds to get us directly to Richards Bay. Such long range weather forecasts are inaccurate, but all we can do is wait and see what develops - at least it's a beautiful anchorage.

After lunch, we had a quiet afternoon, catching up on some sleep and reading. Our relaxation was interrupted by some Park Rangers stopping by, wanting us to pay park fees. We produced the receipt from the rangers at Bazaruto and they were happy. So it is an official fee...

We had a quiet night, hunkered down below watching a movie. It's very cold in this strong south east wind and we're wearing thin fleeces in the evening. I guess that cold air is being brought up from the Antarctic by the low pressure system that is trundling eastwards below us. We'd better get used to it; it's going to get colder as we head south.

14 October 2017 Benguerra Sand Spit, Mozambique

The wind blew at 20 knots all night, but the anchorage is well protected from the south-east, so we slept like logs. I downloaded the latest weather forecast, which now shows a small chance of leaving in the late afternoon on Wednesday 18th. The southerlies that arrive in Maputo on the afternoon of Friday 20th build up slowly, so we might be able to sail on a reach into Maputo with 10-15 knot SE winds, before stronger 20-25 knot winds arrive on Saturday morning. We'll wait and see.

The sports fishing boat, "Big Bob" arrived and anchored close by us, so Graham and I went across to have a chat. He told us that this is a good anchorage in NE and SE winds, so we'll stay here until we leave for South Africa. I asked if he had any fish and was delighted when he dragged out a couple of kilos of frozen Spanish Mackerel and didn't want any money for it. The skipper told us that there's a freshwater lake over by a large sand dune to the south of us that has Flamingos.

In the afternoon, we went for a walk with "Red Herring" and "Luna Blu", aiming to find the flamingos. It was tough walking on the soft sand and after an hour or so we'd only walked 2 miles and had reached some buildings on the island at the beginning of the sand spit. This turned out to be a conference centre with two beautiful buildings constructed from traditional wood and reed. It was deserted apart from two guards who were very friendly and told us that the flamingos were normally on the sand flats, but weren't there at the moment.

We decided to head back to the boat and, on arriving back at the dinghies, found that the beach had been invaded by 20 or 30 tourists that had been brought from some of the lodges. The guys from "Big Bob" were having a beer on the beach as well and told us that the sand spit is often busy being a popular day trip from all the lodges. Apparently, we should have walked a mile further along the east shore to find the flamingo lake. It's something to do another day.

15 October 2017 Benguerra Sand Spit to Ponta Dundo, Mozambique

We had another settled night and woke to 10 knot NE winds. I have a morning routine now - I post yesterday's diary to our "At Sea" blog ([blog.mailasail.com/yachtalba](http://blog.mailasail.com/yachtalba)) and then get the latest weather forecast. Today's email from Des Cason gave a glimmer of hope:

"The latest grib shows a nice big fat high pressure system developing at 32S43E next Saturday 21/10 which will bring mainly E/NE conditions down the channel all the way to East London, south of Durban. All things being equal and if the forecast holds this indicates possible departure Bazaruto 18/10 00:00UTC with E15 or 19/10 06:00UTC with ENE10.

On Friday 20/10 06:00 you will get SE25 just south of Inhambane, but it doesn't come up the channel due to being blocked by a 1016mba High at 21S40E. By Friday 20/10 18:00 this SE has turned to ESE20 and then drops off and turns E and progressively NE as you get closer to Richards Bay. Let's keep our fingers crossed for the high to set in and open the gap."

This sounds very good. If we leave at dawn on Thursday 19th, we will have 12 hours of beating/heaving-to on Friday in SE25 winds, but we should be able to sail well from Saturday morning and arrive in Richards Bay at 18:00 on Sunday 22nd. The next southerlies arrive in Richards Bay on Monday 23rd at midday - a nice 18 hour safety window and, if the window closes up, we'll have plenty of time to get to Maputo.

We did some chores in the morning. Glenys baked some bread and I topped up our fuel tank with the 63 litres of diesel from our three jerry jugs. I reckon that we now have 320 litres of fuel in our tank, which is enough to motor for 106 hours i.e. 586 miles, so we could motor all the way to Richards Bay if we need to.

The North-east wind picked up through the morning and, by lunch-time, we had 20 knots, which was raising 2 foot waves in the anchorage. There was a quick discussion on the VHF and then we all left and headed across to the south west corner of Bazaruto to Ponta Dundo. There's a

deep water channel quite close to the shore next to some trees and the least depth that we saw while going across was 7 metres.

(Our Waypoints were: 21°48.22S 035°27.56E; 21°47.87S 035°27.44E; 21°47.72S 035°27.20E)

We anchored at 21°47.61S 035°27.12E in 12 metres (9m LAT). We're only 80 metres away from the shore, but it felt like good holding sand when we backed up on the anchor. There's a swell hooking around the corner making it a bit bumpy, but it seems much more protected from the North-east winds than the previous anchorage. Ashore are some huge sand dunes that are obviously a tourist attraction, judging by the number of local boats and tourists milling about.

By the end of the day, it was low tide at 18:00, so the bouncy waves reduced and we had calm conditions for our dinner. However, by 21:00 the tide was coming in at full flood, so the boat turned to face south with the wind from the north-east, making our rigging rattle and shake. It didn't bode well for the night.

16 October 2017 Ponta Dundo to Benguerra Sandspit, Mozambique

It was a turbulent night as the tide pushed us back and forth. When the tide was ebbing we pitched into the wind; we rolled when we were sideways; and we were slapped up the sugar scoop when the tide was coming in. However, the wind was only 20 knots, so it was just very uncomfortable and not dangerous.

After breakfast, we went for a walk with "Red Herring" up the huge sand dunes. It was fabulous walking along the wind-swept ridges of pristine sand. It was very reminiscent of walking along snowy arêtes in the Alps, but we were blasted by sand instead of snow by the strong NE winds. From the top, there was a good view of our proposed route out to sea, which goes over a sand bar, but it was hard to see the best route through the many sand banks, some of which were breaking.

After a short stop overlooking a small lake packed with Herons and Ibis, we walked down to sea level and strolled back along the shoreline. When we arrived at the anchorage we could see mayhem as the boats were all pirouetting around in the strong current against the wind. Alba looked very close to "Luna Blu" and we couldn't see whether or not we'd dragged, so we rushed back to the dinghy.

We hadn't dragged, but it was very unpleasant on board. We were bouncing about, lying side onto the wind and "Luna Blu" were sailing around on their anchor - sometimes they were 100 metres away and within five minutes they'd be 20 metres away. I didn't fancy the prospect of another boisterous night being only 80 metres from the shore, so we upped anchor and headed back to the sand spit anchorage.

We had a bouncy trip across, but it was only a mile or so. Once in the anchorage, the waves settled down and it seemed okay. We reported back to the rest of the fleet and they all decided to come over to join us.

Unfortunately, by 15:00, the tide was going out and once again, we had strong tidal currents pushing us against the wind. The afternoon was gnarly with the boat pointing sometimes downwind and sometimes sideways with NNE 20-25 knot winds hitting our stern. At least this anchorage has more space and we're not close to a rocky shore.

The wind is forecast to continue from the NNE until tomorrow afternoon, when it will slowly veer to SE - I can't wait because this anchorage will be nice and flat again. The SE wind will continue at 20-25 knots for 36 hours and, by the morning of Thursday 19th, the wind will have reduced to E 10-15. Fingers crossed, that's when we will start heading south towards South Africa.

On passage we're expecting E to NE winds for 24 hours and then the wind will come around to S20 - straight in the nose and not really what we want, but it's fairly light and will only last 12-24 hours before backing East and then we'll have NE winds to carry us to Richards Bay, hopefully arriving Sunday 22nd.

17 October 2017 Benguerra Sandspit, Mozambique

The weather forecast looks even better today. The south wind expected on the second day of the passage to Richards Bay is looking to be very weak and quickly passed, so we're all planning to leave Thursday 19th at 14:00 which is just before high tide, which will give us the best conditions for exiting the bar.

The wind blew at NNE 20 all night which was OK until the tide started to go out at 03:00. Our bow turned south into the strong current and the waves remorselessly slapped our stern. The boat would turn slightly and then sail across the wind, heeling over 5 degrees. A few minutes later we would gybe, with some resounding slaps up the sugar scoop and then slowly sail the other way, heeling over degrees to the other side. It was irritating.

We dragged ourselves out of bed at 07:00 and all the boats were still pointing downwind with waves hitting our sterns. After breakfast, we went for a long walk with "Red Herring" - the other boats in the anchorage politely declined when we started talking about making sandwiches and taking lots of water for the hike.

Our aim was to walk 3½ miles along the windward beach to the huge sand dune at 21°52.17S 035°27.20E and hopefully find a lake that has Flamingos. We had a pleasant walk along the beach and after a couple of miles after a small pine tree wood, we headed up into the small sand dunes, where we could see a path leading inland. A local guy shouted to us and said that he would show us the Crocodiles, so we went with the flow.

Our guide led us along narrow paths which eventually came out to the south end of the larger of the three lakes. On the way I enquired about palm trees that had been chopped down to a few feet, the tops of which were covered by Small Baskets. He showed us that they were extracting sap from the palms, which was then fermented, turning it into palm wine - an alcoholic drink. He gave us a taste of the finished product which was quite pleasantly bitter, reminiscent of lemon.

We were then led around the west side of the larger lake, but alas the crocodiles weren't to be seen. Our guide led us to the smallest lake, which is directly below the huge sand dune, where there was a solitary Flamingo, so I took some photos and we said goodbye to our guide. We hadn't expected to meet any one, so we hadn't taken any "gifts" with us, but Karen gave the guy an old pair of sunglasses, which he seemed pleased with.

Our next objective was the huge sand dune, which I guess is a few hundred feet high. The first section up the face was very steep, but once on the ridge it was easy going. The sand dune is a bizarre geological formation, isolated and high above the rest of the land - I have no idea how it would have been formed. We had our sandwiches on the summit, staring at the fabulous view.

After a long walk back along the beach, we arrived back at the boat at 13:15 - a 4½ hour trek, so we were shattered. However, no peace for the wicked - it was high tide at 14:30, so we had slack tide at 14:00 and had to jump in the water to scrub the hull and replace the anode on the propeller. As well as the usual green slime, we'd picked up an impressive collection of goose-neck barnacles, which had to be scraped and scrubbed off.

By 14:40, the tide had changed and there was a significant out-going current, which brought the job to an end. We'd managed to remove most of the barnacles, but we need to have another go tomorrow. We chilled out for a few hours and went ashore for a sunset beer or two.

18 October 2017 Benguerra Sandspit, Mozambique

Overnight the wind veered to the south-east and picked up quickly. Just after midnight, I was woken by the uncomfortable motion and found that the wind was blowing 25-30 knots with the tide against the wind, raising 2-3 foot waves. Yesterday afternoon, "Fortuna" arrived and anchored near to us. When the wind picked up and swung us around, they've ended up only two boat lengths from us and at times they were less than that directly behind us.

We couldn't raise them on the radio, so I resorted to shining our powerful search light at their hatches and blowing our little fog horn. They'd just arrived after a long passage, so it took a while to wake them up. Being the last boat to anchor, it's their responsibility to keep their distance, but it was bad conditions to be trying to re-anchor in the dark without a moon, so they agreed that they would keep an anchor watch until the tide changed at 03:00 and hopefully conditions settled down.

Glenys and I didn't sleep well and I got up half a dozen times to check that "Fortuna" were still clear of us. I'm annoyed with myself for not telling them to move yesterday afternoon, but if this was a normal anchorage, then they would have been fine, so it was difficult to tell them that they were too close.

By dawn, the wind was blowing hard from the SSE at 30 knots gusting to 35 knots, so it was gnarly and "Fortuna" were only 20 metres to our starboard side. Thankfully, after a bit of persuasion, they re-anchored at 10:00 at low tide, slack current, 100 metres away from us. I'll sleep better tonight.

The weather forecast looks good. These strong SSE winds should start to abate this afternoon and then will back to ENE 10 by morning. We're still planning on leaving at 14:00 tomorrow and during the first night we should have ENE 10. The second day looks like NE/ENE 10 and the south winds just don't reach north enough to affect us. After that it should be NE to E winds at 5-15 knots, which will be good for our south-west course to Richards Bay. With the lighter winds, we expect to arrive at dawn on Monday 23rd. The next southerly hits Richards Bay on the 25th, which gives us two days safety margin.

This weather never ceases to amaze me. The switch from NE to S happens within a few hours and it's interesting to watch the barometer. It reached a low point of 1005mb yesterday afternoon and then started to rise, which heralds the switch from NE to S. By dawn this morning, the barometer read 1015mb and at lunch time it was 1016mb. When it starts to drop again, then the wind will slowly back to the east and we start all over again.

I find it very strange that we get no rain with these radical changes in wind direction and strength. We haven't had any rain for six weeks and that was only a short-lived squall.

I drank my last beer on the beach last night, but Karen from “Red Herring” said that she could give me a six-pack. At midday, the wind was still blowing a hooley, so I couldn’t get into the dinghy to go to collect it without getting soaked through. At 14:00, I cracked up, donned my swimming shorts and a cagoule; and set off into the 30 knot winds. I spent a couple of hours on “Red Herring” sorting out some computer stuff and chatting about the plan for the passage.

The wind remained strong, but at sunset it had dropped to 20 knots and the sea state was much calmer.

#### **2.4.1.4 Underway to Richards Bay**

Alba – October 2017: Mozambique to South Africa (Day 1)

At dawn, the wind was 10-15 knots and then slowly backed to the NE. We spent the morning tidying up, running the watermaker and getting ready for sea. There wasn’t much to do, so we were ready to go by 11:00 and then had to wait for the tide, so that we could get over the sand bar in the pass.

We were planning to leave two hours before high water at 14:00. This would ensure that we had an incoming tide which would flatten the incoming swell from the east. The worst time would be to try to leave in an out-going tide, which would mean that the current was against the swell and would cause steep “overfall” waves. The other factor in our timing was that, just before high tide, the tidal current would be less and we would have more water over the bar.

“Luna Blu”, “Continuum” and “Fortuna” cracked up early and left the anchorage at 12:00. The least depth that they saw was 5 metres and the sea was fairly calm, but they had to battle against a strong current over 3 knots. “Fortuna” have an engine problem and can only run at low revs, so they were only making 1.5 knots over the ground.

We were good little bears and stuck to the plan, pulling up our anchor at 14:00 together with “Red Herring” and “Mowana”. There was still a strong 3 knot current against us in the narrowest part of the channel between the two islands and the water was very turbulent, pushing us around. However, it calmed down to 0.5 to 1 knot after that and we made good progress - the waves also settled down to a smooth 1 metre swell.

Our route went along a channel to the south of the shallowest sand bar - the lowest spots were 6.5 metres (2.5m LAT) in a few places after 21°48.10S 35°29.05E. (Our way points were: 21°48.23S 35°27.55E; 21°48.05S 35°28.09E; 21°48.10S 35°29.05E; 21°47.56S 35°30.21E; 21°48.06 35°31.02E.)

Once clear of the bar and in deeper water, we turned SSE and reached away from the reefs. There was a smooth 1-2 metre swell from the east; east 10-15 knot winds; and we had current with us, so we made good progress doing 6.5-7.5 knots over the ground up to midnight.

On our 19:00 SSB radio net, Luna Blu was 13 miles ahead of us, with the rest scattered about, going in slightly different directions trying to find the best current. Our strategy was to slowly creep away from the shore to a point 15 miles off Barra Falsa and then maintain that distance off shore. It seems to be a reasonable plan because we had at least 2 knots with us at midnight.

“Jackster” came up on the radio – they left Madagascar four days ago and are only 70 miles behind us, so they’ve had a good passage. They are 53 foot long (10 foot more than us), so

they are much quicker and, despite the fact that they left Madagascar 10 days after us, they will probably beat us to Richards Bay...

We encountered several trawlers on our route, moving at 3 knots in surprisingly deep water (>300 metres). They were well lit, had AIS and a very consistent course, so they were easy enough to dodge.

At our 01:00 watch change, we altered course more south, which put the wind at 50 degrees to our port aft quarter, so we gybed the genoa and poled it out to port. Unfortunately, an hour later, the wind dropped and we were only doing 1-2 knots of boat speed, so I turned on the engine and we motored for the rest of the night.

20 October 2017 Mozambique to South Africa (Day 2)

Our position at 07:00 was 23°28S 35°52E.

As the sun came up, the wind picked up to E 10-15, so Glenys dragged out the sails. Again, it only lasted a few hours before the wind died again. The weather forecast shows light winds until tomorrow, but there's a chance of sailing later today providing that the wind veers to the ESE (in front of the beam) as forecast.

There are at least nine boats heading for Richards Bay all expecting to arrive about the same time, so it's going to be chaos in the port. There's very little space in the two marinas in Richards Bay and they refuse to take advance bookings, so it's first come, first served. To add to the problem, the marina at Durban, which is only 80 miles away, sustained damage in a big storm 10 days ago and cannot accommodate any visitors at the moment.

It maybe that we can't get a marina berth at either port, so we might be stuck on a concrete visitor's wall in Richards Bay. Normally this wouldn't be a problem to us, but we have our son Craig coming out for a holiday starting on the 18th November and we want to be sure that we have a confirmed, safe berth, so that we can go land travelling with him for a week.

To add to the complex planning, we want to haul-out to replace the cutlass bearing. One solution is that we haul-out for 5 or 6 weeks, so I've been trying to arrange something by email, but it's slow going with their reluctance to commit to dates. I sent off another load of emails this morning to the boatyards in Richards Bay and Durban, so hopefully, I'll get a reply today. Today is Friday, so if I can't resolve it today, I'll probably have to wait until after the weekend (when we've arrived) to sort it out. It's so frustrating.

We continued motoring until 13:00, when the wind picked up to 8 knots, which was enough to fly the spinnaker. It was a nice afternoon of sailing. The wind gradually increased to 12-15 knots and at 17:00, we pulled down the spinnaker and switched back to the genoa. By dark, we had E 18-22 knots and were romping along at 6 knots on a port broad reach with a reef in the main; a reef in the genoa; and at least a knot of current with us.

The strong winds lasted for a few hours and then slowly dropped. At midnight, we were back to motoring for a couple of hours; and then we had 10-12 knots from the east; and then the wind backed, forcing us south; and then a trawler was passing by just when I wanted to gybe; and then after I gybed the main, the wind veered, forcing us further north... It's tiring stuff this sailing lark.

21 October 2017 Mozambique to South Africa (Day 3)

Our position at 07:00 was 25°35S 34°56E.

A couple of hours after dawn, the wind died and Glenys turned on the engine. At 07:00, we were halfway with 250 miles to go. If we average 5.2 knots, then we will arrive at Richards Bay at 07:00 on Monday 23rd.

I downloaded two GRIB forecasts – at 1 degree and 2.5 degree resolutions. Worryingly, the low resolution forecast showed pleasant, light 10 knot ESE winds for the day, whereas the high resolution one showed strong S 20-25 knot winds 50 miles ahead of us. There was a very defined north-south line between the strong southerlies and the lighter north-easterlies.

Des Cason sent me an email saying “If you go west of 34E you will cross a shear line between two systems – the southerly component on the coast and the outer west edge of the high pressure south of Madagascar generating the NE/E conditions. By 1800UTC, it’s back to SE10.” We changed from our south-west course and headed south down the 34°50E longitude line.

The other worrying change on the weather forecast is that the next strong southerly will now hit Richards Bay at midnight on Monday 23rd instead of the morning of Wednesday 25th. Our current ETA is 07:00 on Monday, so we now only have a 18 hour safety window to get to Richards Bay – the race is on.

I had another flurry of emails about berthing and haul-out - it’s great having email via our satellite phone. I contacted Jenny Crickmore-Thompson, who is the Durban representative of the Ocean Cruising Club (OCC). We’re planning to become members of the OCC when we get to South Africa and, despite us not being members yet, Jenny has taken up the gauntlet and contacted the various people at Durban marina and boatyard.

The admin office at Durban marina contacted us and offered us a berth in their marina from Monday. Unfortunately, Durban is 80 miles further than Richards Bay and the strong southerly winds are due to get there only three hours before we could make it, which is too tight for me. Perhaps we’ll spend a week in Richards Bay and then head down to Durban to haul-out and be on the hard when Craig arrives from the UK.

We continued motoring south with zero wind until 14:00, when I cracked up and changed course to south-west heading directly for Richards Bay. The nil wind conditions continued for a couple of hours and then, within the space of 10 minutes, the wind increased to 15 knots from the south. We put a couple of reefs in the main and sailed hard on port tack heading WSW rather than SW, but at least we were sailing again.

The wind was fluky for the next 3 hours, varying in speed and direction. We had steep 2-3 metre waves from the south, so in the lulls, we were being stopped dead by the waves. It was frustrating – I had to turn engine on a few times because I didn’t want to keep reefing and un-reefing the sails.

Eventually, by 19:00, the wind settled down to SE 15, so with all the sails out and a single reef in the main, we were able to sail along at 5-6 knots with enough power to get through the waves. Our route took us along the 1000 metre contour towards Jesser Point and, at 26°31S 34°15E, we had 2.5-3 knots of current with us.

On our radio net at 19:00, everyone gave their positions and our little fleet is spread out over 100 miles. Alba is roughly in the middle, with the faster boats 40 miles ahead of us. Some of



the boats that are ahead of us crossed the 34°E shear line early this morning and had tougher conditions with 20-25 knot south winds all day, so I'm glad we headed south this morning.

However, the weather wasn't going to let us off lightly and a persistent drizzly rain set in. The wind picked up to 20-25 knots from the SE for a couple of hours putting us on a very bouncy close reach. I had to reef a few times, ending up with 2½ reefs in the main and just the staysail. Even with that small sail area, we were cracking along at 6.5-7 knots, which combined with the strong current was 9.5-10 knots over the ground.

On Glenys' 10-1 watch, we passed through some kind of localised weather system. The wind backed and died off to 8 knots from the north-east and it rained. Despite changing the sail plan to wing on wing, the wind and sea was so confused that she had to run the engine for an hour before it settled down to SE12-15. The seas calmed down, so the remainder of the night was pleasant, but very dark with no moon.

22 October 2017 Mozambique to South Africa (Day 4)

Our position at 07:00 was 27:14S 033 19E.

Dawn brought us 100% cloud cover; SE 10-15 winds and more than 1.5 knots of current with us. At 07:00, we had 120 miles to go, so there was no way that we would make it to Richards Bay before sunset. If we average 5.5 knots then we'll arrive at dawn tomorrow. Once again, we're having to slow down to arrive in daylight.

Entering the main port of Richards Bay at night is not a problem, but visiting yachts have to go alongside a concrete wall next to the Tuzi Gazi small boat marina and it looks like a tight place to manoeuvre. Some of the bigger, faster boats will get in about 21:00, which will be okay as long as there's someone around to help find a berth and tie up, but I don't fancy attempting it in the pitch black after midnight.

The weather forecast is for the SE winds to back to the NE and increase to 20-25 knots overnight. This won't be too bad because the wind will be directly behind us. However, with the Agulhas current pushing us south, we might struggle to slow down tonight, so we dropped the main sail and spent the morning bobbing along at 3-3.5 knots through the water (still 5 knots over the ground).

It was a very pleasant morning, the sun came out and the motion was comfortable. We even had a pod of dolphins pass by. It was a huge group and they were in hunting mode, leaping out of the water as they pursued their prey at high speed. They didn't bother to come and play in our bow wave.

At midday, we were surprised to hear an announcement on VHF 16 for a weather broadcast from Capetown Radio. There are repeater stations all the way along the South African coast and we picked up the weather transmission on VHF 03 (other channels in the area are 01, 24 & 25). We were 20 miles from the coast and it's nice to know that we're now within radio range of the authorities. Just after lunch, Glenys spotted land and we turned south, with only 80 miles of coastal sailing remaining to Richards Bay.

The wind slowly picked up during the afternoon and, by 16:00, we had NE 25-30 knots and 3 metre seas throwing us around. Our sail plan had been reduced to a tiny 3 sq.m. of genoa, but we were still doing 7 knots over the ground, pushed along by a 3 knot current. Fortunately, the wind dropped to 20-25 knots at sunset, so we were able to slow down a little bit.

Our friends on "Jackster" had been gradually catching us up and, when they were within 20 miles, I was able to have a chat with them on the VHF. Jacqui had the GPS coordinates of an anchorage that "Yolo" reported (at 28°48.2S 32°04.7E, 8m deep), which is just next to the main channel inside the port. "Jackster's" plan was to sail comfortably and anchor at this spot if they arrive at night.

I had not seen this anchorage when researching into Richards Bay and was uncertain whether the Port Control would allow visitors to anchor there, so I fired off an email to various cruising friends. Des Cason came back and said that the Port Control don't care where you go once you have entered the port. Tom from "Adina" replied with GPS coordinates and depths, suggesting that we anchor a hundred metres further north than "Yolo's" position to keep further from the main shipping channel.

Glenys and I discussed this additional information and decided that we might as well sail at a comfortable speed and if we arrive at night we enter the port and anchor. We let out all of our genoa, our boat speed picked up to 5 knots and the boat's motion became much more stable. I wish that I'd done my research a little better because we've wasted our time fighting to slow down all day.

By 21:00, the wind had dropped to N 15-20 and the motion was pleasant, apart from the occasional monster roll when a wave caught our stern. With a speed over the ground of 8 knots and only 40 miles to go, we'd be there in 5 hours. The sail just got better and better, the seas calmed down and we made good time, approaching the outer port limit at 01:30.

#### **2.4.1.5 Arrival at Richards Bay**

Before I could call the Port Control, they must have spotted our AIS because they contacted us and asked our intentions. They took basic details port of registration, number of people on board, etc and then gave us clearance after one huge tanker exited and another smaller boat entered. It's a very busy port specialising in coal and there were a score of ships at anchor waiting their turn to pick up cargo.

On AIS, Glenys watched "Nathape" go into the Small Boat Harbour, so she called them up. They said that the harbour was brightly lit and there was a space for us on the concrete Visitor's Dock. The wind had dropped and it was very calm in the main port channel, so we went past the anchorage and directly into the Small Boat Harbour, where we managed to dock in front of "Red Herring" without any dramas.

We collapsed into bed at 03:00. We're in South Africa...

23 October 2017 Richards Bay, South Africa

Neither of us could sleep past seven o'clock because we were too excited and wanted to experience this new country. The Health inspector turned up at 08:00, quickly followed by the Immigration officer, who dealt with all of the seven boats who have arrived in the last 24 hours. We had to get a taxi to the Customs office which is a few kilometres away, but we all shared a couple of cabs, which were very cheap at 70 Rand (£4) each way.

Meanwhile Glenys walked to the Zululand Yacht Club and managed to get us a space in the marina for a couple of weeks until we get hauled out on the 7th November. The damn ARC World Rally has a load of berths booked and is clogging up the system, so we're lucky to get a

spot. There was a forecast for some bad weather arriving later this afternoon, so we told them that we would go in tomorrow.

With our administration done, we had a cold beer with lunch and then chilled out in the afternoon – well actually, we fell into an exhausted sleep. A strong south-westerly arrived at 17:00, accompanied by lightning and rain – we're so glad that we are here and not trying to race to Durban.

The large group of newly arrived cruisers went out for a meal at a restaurant next to the dock - it was a loud evening with lots of tall stories.

24 October 2017 Richards Bay, South Africa

We had a slow start to the day, waiting for high tide, so that we could go around to Zululand Marina. Glenys had her hair cut for the first time in three months and picked up two big bags of laundry. Meanwhile, I sorted out my photos and brought my blog up to date. I entertained myself by working out a few statistics. Since we left Thailand 9 months ago, we've visited 9 countries and sailed 6,200 nautical miles with 450 hours of motoring.

For lunch, Glenys went to local shop and bought some "Vetkoek" with a chicken mayonnaise filling. This is a traditional Afrikaner fried dough bread, which is like a savoury doughnut. It was very greasy and probably contained my saturated fat limit for a week.

We finally moved at 16:00. I was a little worried about getting out of the corner where we'd tied up, but it all went well. There was no wind and with the help of a few touches on our bow thruster, we glided backwards out of the harbour in complete control.

There's a shallow spot at the start of the channel to Zululand Yacht Club. It's next to the green buoy where you exit from the main channel. One of the locals told us to cut the corner and the minimum depth that we saw was 6.5 metres until we entered the "dredged" channel to the marina. Our waypoints were: 28°48.24S 032°04.93E; 28°48.19S 032°05.08E; 28°47.84S 032°05.01E; 28°47.80S 032°05.01E. The shallowest spot was at 28°48.064S 032°05.052E, which was 2.2 metres LAT.

We were soon safely tied up in the marina. Initially we went in bow first, but the French guy next door said that we'd be better off pointing south, so that when there is bad weather from the South-west, we take it on the bow and don't get slapped up the sugar scoop. As usual, backing into a marina berth was a trauma, but with a lot of pushing, we got in without a single bump.

As darkness fell, we wandered to the Yacht Club bar where we met some of the club members and had a good time. A bottle of beer or a big glass of wine is £0.60. They do meals in the evening that are also very reasonable - a huge curry and rice was £2.00. We're going to enjoy it here.

#### **2.4.2 Madagascar to Tanzania (via Mayotte)**

**Paseafique – September 2018:** Paseafique has arrived in Kilwa Tanzania after a very comfortable three day sail from Mayotte, so I guess that officially completes our Indian Ocean crossing.

We left Honey River, Madagascar in early September 2018, and motored most of the 190nm to Mayotte which took us about 36 hours. After a convenient four day break there, we set sail for Tanzania. Our initial plan was to make landfall at Mtwara (350nm), but we kept going for an

additional 75nm to Kilwa Kisiwani instead, as we wanted to avoid a night time arrival. It was a pleasant five day passage, and check in was relatively straight forward, although we did have to wait out the weekend before we could check in.

Checking in at Kilwa was relatively smooth. Merlon, the port captain, telephoned immigration and customs and the officers came down to the port. Merlon can be found in a small office at the wharf gates on the left hand as you walk up from the shore. We needed the following documents: ship registration, crew list, last 10 ports visited, clearance from Mayotte, and of course our passports. The port required us to fill out a form which they provided. We received a three month visa for \$USD 50 each (for which we received a receipt). Customs insisted on issuing us a transire covering the areas from Kilwa to Mafia Island. We were not asked about yellow fever vaccination. All of this was done on a wooden bench seat under a tree. All officials were very friendly and welcoming and all spoke good English. If you arrive on a weekend you will have to wait until Monday to check in.

## **2.5 Tanzania / Kenya to South Africa**

### **October 2020 – Tanzania to South Africa Direct:**

Mtwara – Mikindani Yacht Club (Tanzania) to Richard's Bay (South Africa)

9 October 2020 – 18 October 2020

9 days and 4 hours.

We left Mikindani Yacht Club on 9 October 2020 @ 16:30 in 12 kts wind. Once out of the bay, we were heading in a NE direction on a starboard tack for about 7 hours.

At around 23:30 we altered course to a heading of 144 degrees T, as we would then have a good line past the Northern Mozambican coast. We were advised to stay well clear due to the trouble there. While sailing past this area we had our lights and AIS on, and at no time did we see anyone approaching us.

On 12 October we rounded the coast into the Beira Bay area (south of Lumbo).

Quite a bad blow was predicted and we decided to head for Bazaruto to sit it out behind the island as we didn't feel like beating into the swells.

At sunset on 14 October we arrived at the Northern tip of Bazaruto in winds that by now was blowing consistently in the high 30 kts and often reached over 40 kts. The wind, swells and tidal pull together were too bad and we couldn't anchor at the recommended anchorage to the north.

We proceeded in the dark, with no moon and the wind howling, at a snail's pace to our anchorage and eventually dropped anchor 30 minutes to midnight! (I believe all sailors have something they wish not to repeat – “feeling” our way to this anchorage is one of those for me...)

We found that the depths on Navionics were fairly accurate except for one area where the sandbank had shifted and we struggled to find a way through. In the pitch black night the bit of light from our mast head light reflected off the sandbanks if they were getting too shallow, and this assisted us...

After 17 and a half hours of blissful rest, on 15 October at 17:00 we lifted anchor and proceeded as we came in, leaving Bazaruto's Northern tip to starboard.

While at anchor, officials motored past on a skiboat but didn't visit us, only waved. Our friends on SV Kokomo (Peter and Donna) were visited by officials some days later, and they tell more about it in a post on this group.

The wind was initially 12 kts SSE but quickly turned to around 20 kts ESE, giving us a better sailing angle.

It dropped for about 6 hours to around 8 kts on 16 October, then picked up again and was consistently above 20 kts, often over 30 kts. (This was also consistently higher than predicted.)

We had huge swells crossing Maputo Bay, but because our sailing angle was good, the huge swells and high wind was not a problem... well, nothing we realized then...

A number of the huge swells pushed into our cockpit and water got into our fuel tank's breather hose... Of course we were sailing and didn't realise it at the time, but when nearer to Richard's Bay we started our engine to make hot water to shower. The water from the breather hose had worked its way into our fuel tank, to the extent that it completely overwhelmed our filters and got into our injectors...! We contacted the Maritime Mobile NET, who in turn contacted the NSRI in Richard's Bay. They were busy with training exercises and just too willing to give us a tow into the Marina at Zululand Yacht Club, where we safely tied up on 18 October @ 20:17.

We'd arrived (sailing) at the entrance to Richard's Bay just barely ahead of a front coming past, so when we were tying up, the wind had already switched and was blowing a storm out in the open. We were, and still are, very grateful to Kevin and the Maritime Mobile NET participants as well as the NSRI.

We are also grateful to have been able to chat with Des Cason who gave his advice on the weather in the channel. If you have chatted with Des, you will know he ends his msgs with "It is the captain's call". What Des said to us after hearing of our entry to Bazaruto, I can't repeat here, suffice to say we are in agreement and we would not recommend that anyone enters Bazaruto under the conditions we did.

**Brickhouse – December 2018:** We are in Tanzania and strategizing the route to work our way from Tanzania to South Africa. I have now done a ton of research, and here is the result of my research. [Full blog post here.](#)

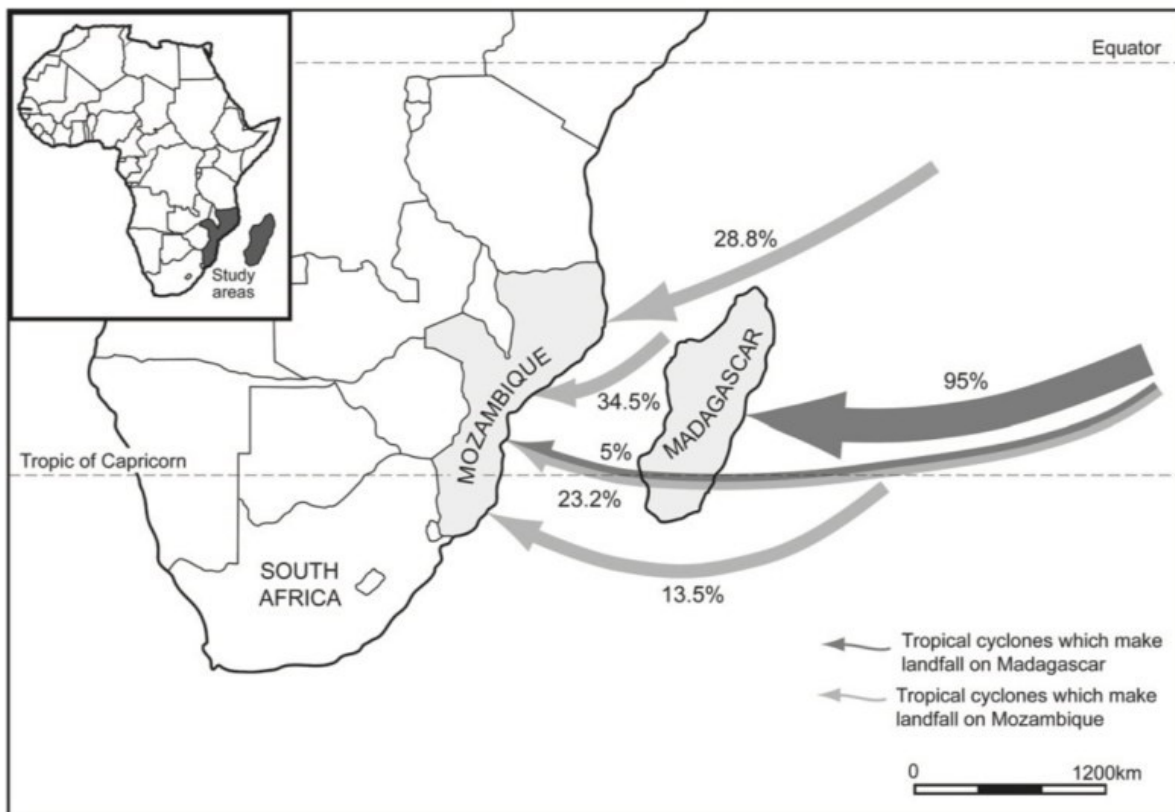
I have looked closely at the cyclone patterns since 1972 on the climatology plugin on Open CPN. Again...May is in the clear...

During the passage, my Iridium GO and Predictwind will be activated again so that I can get updates every 12 hours to see the details of what may be stewing...This will be very important not just for early cyclone warning, especially the ECMWF model, but also for the all important currents.

I have consulted with a local weather guru, Des Cason down in South Africa, and have talked to and will continue to talk to local sailors who have gone up and down this coast more than once or twice. There is some conflicting information here so I need to keep talking to them! It may be my understanding of what they are saying...or it may be a difference between months traveling. It could also be the effects of cocktails while the sun sets.

I have closely examined Jimmy Cornell's Ocean Cruising Pilot Charts, and April looks very mildly risky while May looks to be totally in the clear.

Some things are very clear to me after all of this research, and while they are still clear to me I thought I would document them for future sailors considering this route, straight down the Mozambique coast in the April, May or early June timeframe.



1. One MUST get down to Mtwara on the Tanzania/Mozambique border by mid March or risk going against wind and potentially current too to get around Capo Delgado just over the border in Mozambique. Des Cason and local sailors give conflicting reports in regards to where the current splits as it hits the Mozambique coasts. Pilot charts agree with the local sailors...Predictwind, as we get closer to that time will give us a very good idea as to where it splits and if we will have a helping or hurting current as we found this Cape.
2. March is still a very strong chance of a cyclone, and though they don't hit this coast often, it's still a chance. So we won't go much past the border until April. In April there is still a very minor chance of a cyclone, and it will NOT have much notice to us since the ones that hit in northern mozambique either develop just northeast of Madagascar, or develop near Mayotte...so we have to be prepared to sail fast one direction or the other to escape it. We need to stay as north as possible until mid to late April to be totally in the clear.
3. May is ideal. The Southeast winds have arrived, but they aren't strong.the current down the Mozambique Channel is a helping Southerly flowing current. The Southwesterly busters...periods of very strong south and Southwest winds only happen a few times a

month, unlike the traditional October/November Crossing from Madagascar, so you have much longer weather windows (which a slower boat like ours needs).

4. Late June until mid September is a bad idea since you can get Winter Storms, and who wants to sail when it's cold anyways, never mind in a storm?
5. From the chart above, if we can get one third of the way down the coast, we have escaped the short notice cyclones late season cyclones, and then only have to watch carefully for the cyclones developing in the central Indian Ocean which end earlier.

We will get to the Tanzania/Mozambique border by middle of March and then hold up there for as long as possible. And then fly down the coast as fast as we can in late April/ early May. We have heard mixed reports about clearance in to Mozambique so we aren't sure yet if we will spend time there. I guess it will depend on weather.

## **2.6 South Africa to Red Sea**

**Anthem – October 2019 – Kenya to Djibouti:** Anthem arrived safe in Djibouti 4 days ago and we would like to share with you some information about our sailing from Lamu (Kenya) to Socotra (Yemen) (*coverage of the rest of their route is included in the Red Sea Compendium*).

Before leaving Kenya we registered Anthem to UKMTO and MSCHOA (as already explained in this group) following their instruction.

Since day one we started sending once a day to UKMTO their official "daily report" format; we always received back an automatic confirmation email. One day we received a phone call on the satellite, hard to hear clearly but they just wanted to know everything was OK.

The second day of sailing we received an email from Lieutenant Wim Planke of MSCHOA and we started to correspond twice a day with him.

Every day a Japanese aircraft overflew us releasing a general message on VHF16. A couple of times they called us on our satellite phone to be sure we were ok (we guessed they saw our zigzagging around at very low speed tacking into light winds and strong current).

So the anti piracy coalition system works very well and we felt pretty safe. Plus, as soon as we reached about 150nm from the African coast, we crossed many merchant ships on the similar route (most of them with armed guard on board).

We left Lamu, Kenya on October 1<sup>st</sup> heading east to gain our 200nm from Somali coast but either wind and current didn't allow us to go any further than 170nm and not for long. We encountered a strong SSW current since we reached the line of 170nm from the coast, we tried to go back west a little bit (closest distance to Somali coast has been 120nm) but the current was also increasing going north, from 2,5 to 3,5 kn against us. It has been very hard to cover more than 120nm a day. Apart for this inconvenient current, the downwind sailing has been quite good, the sea never rough (never more than 1,5 m of swells and waves).

The strong current loses strength around 08° 38'N 052° 40'E (about 1kn against us).

For few days we had wind thanks to the several tropical storms building up during the day, we caught every breeze we could from any direction.

We arrived in Socotra on October 11th after 11 days (of which 5 of them motoring).

We left Kenya in a hurry because it seemed to us that the NE monsoon had already started, all of the sudden, and indeed it did. Leaving Kenya a week before would have given us stronger southerly wind for a faster sailing (even with the strong current we encountered).

**Ocelot – Richards Bay to Red Sea:** You want to avoid the Agulhas Current, so you probably want to hug the coast going north. Some shoot straight across right away, but When we left Richards Bay, we hugged the coast up to Maputo, running up the 30m line (& actually caught a slight counter current), then just N of Maputo headed NE across the current, as that looked like where the current was the narrowest. We met 1 boat who'd hired an idiot captain & they went up the middle of the channel & had a horrible trip. This link will give you the details up to Mayotte:

<http://svocelot.com/Landfalls/Newsletters/Mayotte/MayotteLetters.htm>

## **2.7 Crossing West to East (S Africa to SE Asia)**

**FB Group – March-Sep 2019:** We did it in hops. Tanzania-Seychelles-India-Sri Lanka-Lankawi.

This was our schedule and conditions:

**Tanzania (Dar es Salaam) - Seychelles:** March, 8 days, winds variable 5-25 knts @ 45-60 degree apparent, squally, short chop. Went S of rhumb line first days to get a decent angle to the wind.

**Seychelles - Cochin:** mid June, 12 days, first squally through the ICTZ, then steady 15-25 knts @ 120-180 apparent, following waves to 3-4 m. From Victoria due N to cross ICTZ asap, then rhumb line as the SW monsoon winds filled in.

**Cochin-Galle early Aug,** uneventful 2.5 day broad reach.

**Galle- P. Weh (N Sumatra)** early Sept: 6 days, wind 15-25 knts @ 70-100 degree apparent, sea all over the place.

**P. Weh – Lankawi,** Malaysia: mid Sept 3 days of mainly motoring across the strait.

All in all this W-E crossing was less hectic and drier than we'd expected based on sailing guides (we timed all passages to coincide with the drier phases of the MJO oscillation, perhaps that helped). All check-ins no problems and noonsite info was adequate.

If you leave from SA I assume you'll be on a different schedule to avoid cyclone season.

**Ocelot – 2009 - Africa to India:** We left Richards Bay, South Africa, in mid-July. Spent some time in Mayotte & Madagascar before sailing to Seychelles (Aug) & on to the southern Maldives (Addu Atoll, Sept) & Malaysia (Oct). This is probably about the latest you want to leave it. You want to run the SW monsoon, which runs from about June through October. If you want the blow-by-blow, it's documented on our site in a series of newsletters (passage notes) but the top page of each destination gives the overview. Start at Mayotte

<http://svocelot.com/Landfalls/Newsletters/Mayotte/MayotteLetters.htm>

then select Madagascar, Seychelles, Maldives, & Malaysia from the link-bar on the left.



### 3 Myanmar

Myanmar (previously known as Burma).

#### Notes from Sep 2018 Discussion on Sail SE Asia FB Group:

- I've just been told the cruising permit costs about \$2000 and you need to have a local pilot on board all the time, at your own expense 🙄
- The fees are in many parts basically some for each department the total of the fixed fees for a cruising permit is 1,505 USD then the variable fee is 20 usd per person per day. Plus the guide fee minimum 5 days 175usd plus 45USD per day, this includes a local agent fee of 20 USD. I expect if you use a Ranong agent, as suggested, it will cost a bit more than that.
- We contacted the Myanmar government tourism office direct and suggest you do with your enquiries. They are very helpful, no getting around having to pay and follow their rules. We decided to avoid the bureaucracy headache and travelled on land, maybe it will be easier in a few more years.

This was the info from April 2018:

Well received your email and noted that you would like to visit the Myeik Archipelagos by your private yacht. In this regard, the prior permission will be required.

There are some foreign yacht companies, based in Ranong, who get licenses from our Ministry in order to operate yachting tours around Myeik archipelagos. So we would like you to contact one of them to be able to apply for permission for you.

Moreover, you can also contact the branch office of Directorate of Hotels and Tourism in Kawthoung as per following contacts to get more information.

Directorate of Hotels and Tourism(Kawthoung Branch)

email: mtt.kawthoung@gamil.com

Tel: +95 059 51578

- For 2000, you can share a commercial license with a company. They pay for 3 boats 3 times this sum. And, if they have one free, they can sell you back one.
- You can catch a ferry from Koh Phayam to the mainland and do a visa run to Myanmar.
- I heard to contact Michael at Burma Boating at +66 6-5628-7987. I heard the Burmese required on board could be like a tour guide that shows the best places and also works as crew.

**Soggy Paws – 2017:** The consensus seems to be that it's expensive to get approval and very restrictive, and the cruising there is so-so. Cruisers asked on Facebook (Women Who Sail SE Asia) recommended flying to Myanmar for a visit from Thailand. There are some very cheap flights.

But I found this posted:

<http://www.mountocean.com/2017/02/04/cruising-info-mergui-archipelago/>

**Cruising the Mergui Archipelago:** The Mergui Archipelago (also known as the Myeik Archipelago) consists of over 800 islands and is certainly one of the more remote destinations for cruisers. We feel incredibly lucky to have had the opportunity to cruise these islands because it is not an easy task for regular cruisers.

To begin there is an application process. The application is filed with Myanmar's MTT (Ministry of Tourism and Transport). It takes at least two weeks to receive the permit. There is a one time entrance fee that is roughly \$2000US. The alternative is to pay \$2000 for a two year multi entry permit. While this sounds like the better deal, the catch is that you must file the application with a Myanmar Company.

The second obstacle deterring cruisers is that upon setting sail for the Mergui Archipelago, an MTT guide must be on board. These guides are local (usually male) who comes on board for the duration of your Mergui cruising. They have university degrees in addition to the six-month long guiding course. Their role on board is essentially to tell you where to go and where not to go (i.e. military zones). They can offer anchoring and snorkelling sites. The guide fee is not included in the entrance fee. The cost: a \$175 MTT fee plus the guide's wages which is about 600baht per day. The guides themselves are hit or miss. Unfortunately, our first guide was a miss. He refused to do anything the captain asked (ie. help with dishes, grab dingy lines or assist with sails). He gave us tips on snorkelling and pointed out a couple reefs. But his unwillingness to do anything beyond pointing out good anchorages, assisting to navigate unsafe passages between islands and good snorkelling sites was a bit frustrating for the rest of the crew and their morale. Cruising the Mergui Archipelago

Despite these obstacles, the islands are beautiful and worth experiencing if cruisers have the funds available. Gorgeous karst topography, white sandy beaches, dense jungle and postcard perfect blue water. Depending on the time of year and the tides for visibility – snorkelling can be amazing. In some areas dynamite fishing was common place and the reefs are recovering. There are some beautiful dive sites, but watch out for strong currents! MacLeod Island boasts a great dive shop at the Andaman resort where fresh water is also available on the beach and cruisers are always welcome at the restaurant and bar.

At night, green lights would dot the horizon as the squid fishermen begin their nightly routines. Navigation at night can be tricky (and at times dangerous – see video) as many of these fishermen are cruising without the normal navigation lights. A few of the islands are inhabited by the Moken people, also known as sea gypsies. Each time we found ourselves anchoring in one of their tiny fishing villages we were greeted with friendly smiles.

Unlike the Thai islands less than 40 nm south of the Mergui Archipelago, there are not countless speedboats “puking” tourists onto the beaches from sunrise to sunset. We often found ourselves to be the only boat at an anchorage. If you have both the means and patience to jump through some of the hoops required to cruise the Mergui Archipelago, you will not regret visiting this unique, far off destination.

## 4 Andaman Islands (India)

Wikipedia: The Andaman Islands form an archipelago in the Bay of Bengal between India, to the west, and Myanmar, to the north and east. Most are part of the Andaman and



Nicobar Islands Union Territory of India, while a small number in the north of the archipelago, including the Coco Islands, belong to Myanmar.

Location: 12°30'N 92°45'E

Official country website: <http://www.and.nic.in/>

On 26 December 2004, the coast of the Andaman Islands was devastated by a 10-metre (33 ft) high tsunami following the [2004 Indian Ocean earthquake](#). Strong oral traditions in the area warned of the importance of moving inland after a quake and is credited with saving many lives. In the aftermath, more than 2,000 people were confirmed dead and more than 4,000 children were orphaned or had lost one parent. At least 40,000 residents were rendered homeless and were moved to relief camps.

**Air Service:** The only commercial airport in the islands is Veer Savarkar International Airport in Port Blair, which has scheduled services to Kolkata and Chennai and Delhi, Bangalore and Bhubaneswar. The airport is under control of the Indian Navy. Only daylight operations are allowed. A small airstrip of approximately 1000 metres is located near the Eastern shore of North Andaman near Diglipur.

Due to the length of the routes and the small number of airlines flying to the islands, fares have traditionally been relatively expensive, although cheaper for locals than visitors. Fares are high during peak seasons of spring and winter, but fares have been decreased over the time due to expansion of the civil aviation industry in India.

## **4.1 Approach, Arrival and Formalities**

### **4.1.1 Getting a Visa**

**Liberte – December 2018:** If you are serious about the Andamans then contact Mr Rathnam, the agent we used in 2017. He is organising a rally there in early 2019 and should be able to help with visas. Other than that contact Surin at Sunbird Yacht Services in Lankawi at the building behind the blue floating jetty. She may be able to help you.

Sureen's telephone number is +60 17684 5762. She's on Whatsapp, and is able to help with loads of things visas included.

**Crystal Blues – 2017:** First step is to get an Indian Visa, which will entitle you to 30 days in the Andamans. Make sure they don't issue a less valuable Andamans Permit, which would only give you 14 days there. We always applied for Indian visas without mentioning the Andamans - that way you get a proper Indian visa.

Crystal Blues has a list of forms useful for the Andamans. See their list here:

[http://svcrystalblues.blogspot.com/p/blog-page\\_10.html](http://svcrystalblues.blogspot.com/p/blog-page_10.html)

You will also find the full Tui Tai Andamans Cruising Notes downloadable there (excerpts are included below)

**Tui Tai & Crystal Blues – 2008:** The bureaucracy of the Indian government can seem very painful on paper but in reality, and taken with a degree of humour it is not that bad. It is rumoured that it will also be getting easier. Allow a couple of days at each end of your trip for formalities.

### **Before you leave:**

- Get Indian Visas for all those going. Emotion Travel in Phuket Town offer a very efficient service in 7 working days for about Baht 3000 per passport. Contact Nui on 076 222320. The visas are valid for 6 months and give you 30 days stay in the Andamans.
- Prepare an inventory of equipment (GPS, radar, computer etc) you have on board. Make it reasonably thorough but not excess. If you have 'sonar', list it as a 'fish finder'. The authorities seem to get nervous about any underwater related equipment. Make numerous copies.
- Prepare a list of food and first aide items. Again nothing excessive. Make numerous copies.
- Get copies of passports, crew lists, seamanship certificates if you have any, and an itinerary.
- Make sure your HF and VHF are in good working order, you will need them.
- Email or fax the harbour master ([hmpmb@and.nic.in](mailto:hmpmb@and.nic.in) , tel: 232 834, fax: 237 804) advising him of your visit. Give details of boat including weight, crew, ETA and length of stay.
- Know you radio alphabet or have a crib sheet close by!
- Get a boat stamp unless you like sore wrists from signing papers.

### **4.1.2 Arrival**

**Alba – January 2017 (from FB Group):** Alba is now in the Andamans. Had a good 3 day passage. Cleared in through customs, immigration and coast guard within one day (dropped immigration off at the dock in the dark).

Sat Phone caused a fuss, but customs sealed it in a plastic box, which we had ready.

Went to see Harbour Master next day. Not allowed to go to lots of places, but enough places to keep us happy for a month. Everyone is polite and friendly.

Bought a Sim card with 1GB data, but internet is desperate - if you can get it at all, it's slower than a sat phone, so sort out your Sri Lanka agent before you get here.

Won't be bothering to post on Facebook - too slow, but have posted our diary for the last few days on

<http://blog.mailasail.com/yachtalba>

Here's their arrival day blog post:

Port Blair is in the top ten of natural harbours in which we have anchored. Apart from one entrance channel, it's totally land locked and is deep in most places - the Indian Navy has a big naval base here with a couple of warships at dock.

After breakfast, we headed for the dock between Chatham Island and the mainland, where we were met by Umopeti. There's no really safe place to leave a dinghy because there's quite a surge around the concrete dock. Our man, Umopeti, has cornered a niche market and looks after yachties' dinghies while they go ashore. He always seems to be there and is very helpful.

He takes your dinghy off to a mooring line away from the nasty, sharp concrete dock and then brings it back to you when you're ready to go back to the boat. For this service he charges a small fee. This is a negotiation, which started at 300 rupiah (£3) for a full day and 150 rupiah for

½ day. I negotiated him down to 200 rupiah, but later found out that I'd been weak and other people were paying 100 rupiah. I've now beaten him down to 150 rupiah for tomorrow and no doubt could beat him down to 100 Rupiah, but I think that he does such a valuable job that I might just pay him 200 rupiah. I think I'm getting soft in my old age.

We caught a tuk-tuk to find the Harbour Master. The driver spoke hardly any English and had no idea where we wanted to go, but after much pointing at Google Maps on my phone, we were dropped in the general area at some port authority. Fifteen minutes later, after many confused conversations, we discovered that we were in the wrong place and walked back to the Port Management Board.

At every entrance into any government building, there are guards with serious looking weapons and it took some explaining to get us into the compound. The guard spoke hardly any English and didn't understand "Harbour Master". I said I needed to pay "Port Fees" (which I didn't), but the concept of me wanting to pay something seemed to override any fears of me being a terrorist and he let us in.

Once in the building, we asked for the Harbour Master and were pointed upstairs. I went into the Harbour Master's Assistant's office and they asked if I wanted to clear in or out - phew! - found the right place. We were shown into a palatial office, the size of a half a tennis court, where the Harbour Master sat behind a desk the size of two table tennis tables.

He was extremely pleasant, spoke excellent English and we started to go through our planned itinerary asking questions about where we were allowed to go. There are many restricted areas in the Andaman Islands either for nature conservation or to protect the Indigenous Andamanese people, who live in reserves. I gleaned this information:

The Andamanese people are the original aboriginal inhabitants of the Andaman Islands.

The Andamanese are pygmies, who lead a hunter-gatherer lifestyle and have lived mostly in isolation for thousands of years. They arrived at the Andaman Islands around the latest Ice Age about 26,000 years ago.

By the end of the eighteenth century, when they first came into sustained contact with outsiders, there were an estimated 7,000 Andamanese divided into five major groups, with distinct cultures, separate domains, and mutually unintelligible languages. In the next century, they were largely wiped out by diseases, violence, and loss of territory. Today, there remain only approximately 400–450 Andamanese. One group has long been extinct, and only two of the remaining groups still maintain a steadfast independence, refusing most attempts at contact by outsiders.

The most isolated are the Sentinelese who still live in their original homeland on North Sentinel Island, which lies only 20 miles to the west of the main Andaman Islands. They are largely undisturbed and have fiercely resisted all attempts at contact, to the point of firing six foot long arrows at anyone who approaches their island. In the summer of 1974, the Indian government organized an expedition to the Andaman Islands and produced a film about the native peoples of these islands - they weren't welcomed. <https://youtu.be/kib-ZI3dQdk>

The Andamanese people on the main island are being threatened by a trunk road that has been constructed through the middle of their reserve. This has allowed access to tourism. It is

forbidden to have any contact with the Andamanese, but there have been many interactions, so the Andamanese are now wearing western clothes and their culture is rapidly being eroded.

The Harbour Master told us not to go to Twin Islands because of conservation issues and not to go through the Andaman Straits, which is a winding causeway that cuts the main island in half. We were hoping to sail up the west coast and then navigate the Andaman Straits to the east coast and then explore the islands on the east coast. However, the Andaman Straits passes between two indigenous reserves and there is a chance that we might have contact - this would cause major bureaucratic complications.

Other boats have raved about the wonderful experience of negotiating the Straits, but it will only be a short "river" passage and we've already had long excursions into the Darien and Orinoco deltas, so we're going to be good cruisers and avoid the place. In my humble opinion, the Andamanese people need to be given the chance to decide on their future and need to be left alone.

After a fifteen minute chat, the Harbour Master summoned another guy (called Das); ripped a strip off him saying that he didn't have time to handle the detail of changing a yacht itinerary; handed him our papers; and then, nice as pie, asked us to take a seat on one of his couches and read the newspapers while our documentation was being sorted out.

Fifteen minutes later, Das returned and we were escorted down to the ground floor. Das was not happy because we'd bypassed him and gone straight to the big boss. He politely asked that in future we go and see him first. Das is the Signal Superintendent in charge of Vessel Related Charges. All cruisers should ask for him first. (He's on the ground floor - from the main entrance turn immediately right through a door and proceed past some small booths to his office in the corner.)

We apologised profusely and told him that the reception desk had directed us upstairs and the assistant had taken us directly to the Harbour Master (God). Das seemed to be placated by our apology and had one of his minions take photocopies of our other documents and we were finished.

One cannot but marvel at the bureaucracy of the Indian Government. Paperwork is king. While we were in the Harbour Master's office there was a constant stream of civil servants bringing him documents to sign. Every transaction seemed to have at least four documents. While we were with Das, we looked in awe at a pile of paperwork piled in the cubicle of one of his staff.

Having completed our clearing in process, we walked into town, which is a riot of people, colour, traffic, smells and noise. There are hundreds of Tuk-tuks and motorbikes crowding the streets, with people weaving their way through the traffic. Every other vehicle seems to be tooting a horn and there's an all pervading smell of curry. It's glorious.

Yesterday, the Immigration officers told us that the best telecom provider is BSNL, which is a government controlled telecom company. Unfortunately, SIM cards can only be bought at the main BSNL office, so we caught a tuk tuk up there. Expecting a paperwork nightmare, it was actually very simple - I supplied a copy of my passport & visa plus a passport photo, paid 230 rupiah (£2.30) and we were handed a sim card with 1 GB data.

After a short walk back to the Aberdeen Clock Tower in town, we had a curry at the Gangan restaurant, which was good - our first real Indian Curry. We spent the next couple of hours exploring the town, then caught a tuk tuk to the National Park Authority in Haddo.

There are a lot of Salt Water Crocodiles in the Andaman Islands, which have been known to occasionally grab tourists and drag the bodies off to their lairs. We're obviously keen to avoid this, so the plan was to ask the National Park Authority where the safe and dangerous areas were. They told us to go to an office on Chatham Island, but after we'd walked fifteen minutes to get there, they were either closed or we'd been sent on a wild goose chase - very frustrating.

### **Tui Tai & Crystal Blues – 2008:**

#### **On arrival**

- Try to time your arrival at Port Blair for first thing in the morning and early in the week (we have heard not to arrive at night) - it gives you the day to clear the boat etc
- Call up Port Blair Radio 48 hours prior to arrival on HF (8.294Khz or 6.224KHz). Chances are you will not get a reply but they will know you are coming (we were shadowed by the navy for about 40 miles).
- Call up Port Blair Port Control (PBPC) on VHF Channel 16, 2 to 4 hours from Port Blair. They will move you to a working channel (12) and will ask your arrival time, last port, details of your vessel, departure date, number of crew, reason for visit etc. They will tell you to call again when you get to the entrance of Port Blair.
- Call again at the entrance to get permission to enter the harbour. PBPC will clear you and tell you the vicinity to anchor (see our waypoint). They will ask you to call again once you have anchored and supply GPS coordinates.
- Call PBPC again once anchored and give them GPS coordinates and ask them to advise customs, immigration and the coast guard of your arrival.

#### **Clearances**

- Clearances are relatively quick, if not a little bureaucratic. Most can be done in a day but sometimes it slips into a second day. Be persistent but polite to keep the process moving. No coffee table money was requested although a can of tonic seemed to be a popular request whilst filling in paperwork.
- Collect customs from the jetty near Chatham Island (PBPC will advise when they are there) and take them back to your boat to do formalities. Do not be afraid to chase through PBPC if people are late. The VHF network is open for all departments it seems so no one likes their department to have to be chased! Some people chose to hire an agent – we found absolutely no need to do this.
- Once you have returned customs contact PBPC for immigration and again pick up from the jetty.
- Coast guard will come alongside your boat. Their boat skills are good. They will photograph you and complete a series of forms. Have a picture of your boat available as their camera does not always work.

- Once you have cleared these three, head for the Harbour Master in Phoenix Bay. You will find many willing taxis at the jetty. Ravi is popular with cruisers but all the others have cottoned onto this and call themselves Ravi or his friend. To be sure his mobile number is +943 426 2030. You can leave your dingy at the jetty and the boys their look after it for a nominal fee (50Rps a day, 100 Rps now). The Harbour Master will look through your itinerary and amend as appropriate. Other cruisers had the Homphrey and Andaman Straits included and had this crossed off by the Harbour Master. We included anchorages at each end but refrained from mentioning the Straits directly to get around the problem. This seemed to work.

We had a fair few 'national park' islands included (Cinque, Sisters etc). The Harbour Master advised not to take the list to the Forest Department as it would cost too much but just declare we need a permit to land at North and South Cinque Islands. The Harbour Master was emphatic that we should not use the Homphrey or Andaman Straits or there could be trouble with the police.

- You then go to the Forest Department on Haddo Hill to get the relevant Permits and pay the relevant fees (another building again) – about 2000Rps (No fee in 2008). This was the one department which was a pain. However we were very determined and politely forced them to do the paperwork in 4 hours by saying we were leaving the next day and they pulled people in from home to make it happen.

If the right person is not there, this can be painful, that said we found Port Blair to be a delightful town if you have to stay an extra day. The Harbour Master will advise where to go. To apply for your permits it is best to have a letter detailing your requirements.

- Once these permits have been done you have to return to the Harbour Master to hand over the documents and discuss when you will leave Port Blair to start cruising.

#### **4.1.3 Whilst cruising.**

##### **Tui Tai & Crystal Blues – 2008:**

- Leaving Port Blair for your cruise is similar to when you arrive. Call PBPC before you hoist your anchor and when you are on the move.
- Once you are travelling you should call in twice a day (8.00am and 17.00pm) on the HF radio (8.294 for AM and 6.224Khz for PM, but they do switch if reception is poor). We were pretty rigorous but did miss a few slots without any issues.

Sometimes you just cannot get through. One yacht at an anchorage can call in all the yachts there. After a few days the radio operators get to know you so you do not have to spell out your name each time! They will require your position and your movements (if any) for the next 24 hours.

- Keep a log of your trip. The Port Authority will and it will be the basis for your charges when you leave. Discrepancies can cause delays.

- You do not have to keep to your itinerary. We did not although we kept to it in broad terms.

#### **4.1.4 Checking out**

##### **Tui Tai & Crystal Blues – 2008:**



- Go first to the Harbour Master with copies of your actual itinerary. We also took our log book which turned out to be useful. They will calculate your fees based on you weight, length and number of days in managed harbours. The definition of a managed harbour is rather amusing but the fees were less than USD 50 for 30 days. You will be expected to produce a letter requesting permission for port clearance on settlement of harbour dues including boat and crew details. Getting Port Clearance should take an hour or so.
- Once complete head for Customs House on Haddo. They will give you a PCC number which is important to keep safe. Customs has started charging on clearing out, 780Rps in 2008. This sometimes requires going to a bank to do a TT which can add an hour to your checking out. A letter requesting permission to clear customs will be required.
- After customs head for Immigration at Aberdeen Bazaar. They too will require a letter and your PCC details. Once you are stamped you have 24 hours to leave although your PCC will typically run out at midnight the following day. We found it easiest to state the time we were leaving the next day. In 2008 Immigration came down to the pier to stamp us out 2 hours before we were due to leave.
- Once you are ready to leave call PBPC. They will ask for your PCC number and check if you are allowed to leave. This can take an hour or so. Once clear call again when you are underway

## **4.2 Cruisers Services**

### **4.2.1 Money**

**Tui Tai & Crystal Blues – 2008:** International ATMs are available for cash.

### **4.2.2 Diesel and Gasoline**

**Tui Tai & Crystal Blues – 2008:** Port Blair was fine for clean diesel. You will have to jerry can it from the local petrol station but the taxi drivers are used to doing this.

### **4.2.3 Propane (Cooking Gas)**

**Tui Tai & Crystal Blues – 2008:** Gas is not easy so bring what you need. If you do run short then Ravi now knows broadly what to do! You can only get a gas bottle if you are a 'member' so Ravi will borrow one. You will need to decant the bottle. Do take your own fittings as we had to drill out a regulator. Decanting is illegal so Ravi will take you to a quiet spot and probably leave you for a few hours!

### **4.2.4 Groceries/Provisioning**

**Tui Tai & Crystal Blues – 2008:** Port Blair had almost anything you could need in terms of basic provisioning although we found butter difficult to come by in large quantities and also tonic water. The bread was pretty average. A good selection of fresh fruit and veg was available although not everything was available everyday.

Outside Port Blair the larger towns had a reasonable selection and the small villages some things. We never went short. Do bring anything remotely unusual with you.

For meat we caught such a huge amount of fish that we still had meat from Thailand on the return leg back to Phuket. We did not look for meat in Port Blair. We would recommend bringing

as much as you need and a good selection of fishing equipment (although they were a couple of good fishing stores in town).

#### **4.2.5 Water**

**Tui Tai & Crystal Blues – 2008:** Crystal Blues arranged with the Harbour Master to get water alongside the jetties.

#### **4.2.6 Boat Parts & Repairs**

#### **4.2.7 Laundry**

#### **4.2.8 Medical**

#### **4.2.9 Getting Around**

### **4.3 Communications**

#### **4.3.1 Telephones & Cell Phones**

**Tui Tai & Crystal Blues – 2008:** You can get a local SIM card but we found it pretty unnecessary

#### **4.3.2 Internet Access**

#### **4.3.3 Mail**

### **4.4 Things to See and Do**

#### **4.4.1 Restaurants & Bars**

#### **4.4.2 Diving & Snorkeling**

#### **4.4.3 Land Touring**

#### **4.4.4 Hiking**

#### **4.4.5 Other**

### **4.5 Cruising and Anchorages**

**Tui Tai & Crystal Blues 2008:** Tui Tai's Itinerary furnished to the officials during the Cruising Permit process:

Day Destination (Proposed) Destination (Actual)

1. Port Blair Port Blair

2. Port Blair Port Blair

3. N Cinque Island North Cinque Island

4. S Cinque Island North Cinque Island
5. Sisters Island South Cinque Island
6. Passage Island Rutland Island
7. Rutland Island Chiriatapu Village
8. Twins Islands Chiriatapu Village
9. Twins Islands Ross Island
10. Macpherson Strait Port Blair
11. Port Blair Port Blair
12. Havelock Island Havelock No. 7
13. Long Island Havelock No. 7
14. S Reef Island Havelock No. 7
15. Interview Island Havelock No. 7
16. Interview Island Henry Lawrence Island
17. N Reef Island Henry Lawrence Island
18. N Reef Island Inglis Island
19. Interview Island North Button Island
20. Havelock North Button Island
21. Havelock Long Island
22. North Button Island Long Island
23. Middle Button Long Island
24. Outram Spike Island
25. Inglis Havelock Island
26. Havelock Havelock Island
27. Neill Island Havelock Island
28. Port Blair Port Blair
29. Port Blair Port Blair
30. Port Blair Depart the Andamans

### **Tui Tai's Anchorages**

	Waypoints		Comments
Port Blair (18m)	11-41'.309N	92-42'.924E	Beware shelves quickly north of this point.

North Cinque (12m)	11-18'.198N	92-42'.051E	Highlight anchorage. Super fishing. Deer, turtles, huge fish, great coral, lovely beach.
South Cinque (12m)	11-15'.690N	92-41'.546E	Bit rolly. Pleasant beach but nothing compared to North Cinque
Twin Islands	11-23'.700N	92-34'.000E	Day anchorages.
	11-23'.150N	92-33'.450E	Great snorkeling at slack tide. Strong current
Rutland Island (15m)	11-25'.272N	92-36'.694E	Nothing special. Just overnight here.
Rutland South Bay (10m)	11-21'.17N	92-39'.26E	Great fishing. Manta Rays at west end of bay. Fresh turtle tracks on beach with nests and eggs. Very protected. Lovely beach.
MacPherson Strait (10m)	11-30'.131N	92-41'.490E	Pleasant anchorage opposite village. Maybe better one in next bay east.
Ross Island (10m)	11-40'.373N	92-45'.500E	Amazing history. Highlight. Can get rolly if wind up so just go into Port Blair.
Havelock (10-12m)	11-58'.765N	92-57'.123E	Delightful beach. Elephants washing on shore. Great little samosa stores. Some good snorkelling. Highlight. New Italian restaurant with some excellent food.
Henry Lawrence (15-18m)	12-04'.987N	93-04'.178E	Anchored off reef. Great snorkelling the reef wall. Good beach.
Inglis (8 – 12m)	12-07'.977N	93-06'.440E	Tucked in behind headland. Fishing great in next bay north. Ok beach.
North Button (15 – 18m)	12-18'.774N	93-04'.073E	Little rolly if wind up as swell comes around either side of island. Nice beach.
Long Island (8m)	12-22'.000N	92-54'.90E	Lovely protected anchorage off village. Take ferry into local town (M?) for day. Very friendly. Good take off spot for Homfray Strait.
Homfray Strait	12-18'.399N	92-53'.331E	Entered at high tide and lowest reading was 5m at entrance. After high tide current heading west (2 to 4 knts). Overhead cable about half way down. We are 21m and well clear if keep to south bank. Given current difficult to slow down anyway!
	12-18'.399N	92-52'.768E	
	12-18'.500N	92-52'.200E	

	12-18'.399N	92-50'.998E	
	12-18'.122N	92-49'.994E	
	12-18'.819N	92-48'.500E	
	12-18'.538N	92-47'.997E	
	12-18'.416N	92-47'.500E	
	12-18'.789N	92-46'.499E	
	12-18'.494N	92-46'.134E	
	12-18'.070N	92-46'.002E	
Between Homfray Strait	12-17'.602N	92-45'.499E	
and Andaman Strait	12-17'.300N	92-45'.000E	
	12-17'.498N	92-44'.640E	
	12-17'.697N	92-44'.231E	
	12-17'.502N	92-43'.909E	
	12-16'.497N	92-43'.486E	
	12-15'.496N	92-43'.305E	
	12-14'.994N	92-43'.200E	Once this far down hug the left hand shore (heading south).
	12-14'.001N	92-43'.116E	
	12-12'.992N	92-43'.191E	
	12-11'.995N	92-43'.231E	
	12-11'.496N	92-43'.134E	
	12-11'.267N	92-43'.054E	
	12-10'.998N	92-43'.376E	
	12-10'.929N	92-43'.997E	

Not for the faint hearted as charts are useless. First bit out of Homfray heading west is a little tricky. Andaman Sea Pilot very useful.

Once through the islands gap you are faced with island not on charts. Head over the north of it and then turn south being aware of reef in middle of channel half way down.

Danger waypoints given to us were:

12-17'.400N	92-44'.200E	(Keep north, uncharted island!)
12-15'.200N	92-43'.500E	(Keep west, reef)

One boat anchored at

12-13'.400N	92-43'.200E
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Andaman Strait	12-10'.872N	92-44'.499E
	12-10'.760N	92-44'.834E
	12-10'.909N	92-45'.499E
	12-10'.725N	92-45'.843E
	12-10'.495N	92-45'.812E
	12-09'.997N	92-45'.636E
	12-09'.494N	92-45'.477E
	12-08'.501N	92-45'.103E
	12-07'.496N	92-44'.720E
	12-06'.494N	92-44'.513E
	12-05'.493N	92-44'.292E
	12-05'.003N	92-44'.336E
	12-04'.344N	92-44'.997E
	12-03'.997N	92-45'.495E

Once in the Andaman Strait the depth is consistently over 15m. When turning south do not cut corner as it gets very shallow.

Anchored just past village in 18m at:

12-09'.494N 92-45'.477E

Allow room for ferry.

Entrance to mangrove caves at:

12-06'.069N 92-44'.345E

Be sure to get ticket (free) at village otherwise no entry!

One boat anchored at:

12-04'.300N 92-45'.300E

Given two way points by another boat and told to steer south of these on exit as they were rocks. Did although seemed odd. Min depth about 5.5m at reasonably high tide.

Rocks were at:

12-03'.600N                      92-45'.750E

12-03'.520N                      92-45'.940E

12-03'.599N                      92-45'.715E

12-03'.463N                      92-45'.975E

12-03'.509N                      92-46'.201E

12-03'.771N                      92-47'.198E

Middle Island 12-16'.283N 93-01'.424E

Lovely snorkeling. Day anchorage unless very calm.

Sisters Island 11-08'.441N 92-43'.682E

Very clear water and some good snorkeling. Difficult for anchor to hold so only really a day anchorage.

## 5 Sri Lanka

### 5.1 Agents

Here are the agents people have used to clear into Sri Lanka. Noonsite has a much longer list but these are cruiser reports.

#### 5.1.1 Windsor Reef

**Tregoning – January 2023:** The use of an agent is required in Galle. Windsor Reef charged US\$300 for their services, dockage, and all of the customs and other fees for 30 days. We heard that some other agents were cheaper, but we were very satisfied with Uresh and considering all the things that we needed help with, particularly repairing the sails and getting diesel, we felt that he certainly earned the fees.

Windsor Reef Contact Information:

No:6/1

Closenberg Road

Magalle

Galle, Sri Lanka

Phone: (+) 94912248804

Fax: (+) 94914380737

Email: [windsorreef@yahoo.com](mailto:windsorreef@yahoo.com)

VHF: 16

**Sherry Scholer – February 2015:** We were in Galle and used Windsor Reef as our agents. The total cost for everything was \$225 USD.

#### 5.1.2 Tango Shipping (Galle)

**Jan 2023:** We are in Galle. The agent we are using is Tango Shipping, [tangochatura@gmail.com](mailto:tangochatura@gmail.com)

#### 5.1.3 Zodiac DBS

**Lachin Turner – Feb 2018:** S/Y AraKai utilised Zodiac DBS as our agent in Galle, Sri Lanka. Both Chamara and Naweena were excellent. Fast, efficient service. No bribes asked. Email: [kithsir@zodiacdbs.com](mailto:kithsir@zodiacdbs.com)

#### **5.1.4 GAC (Trincomalee)**

**Aug 2023:** I am using Nuwan of GAC services in Trinco. They mostly handle big ships but Nuwan himself is very attentive, other staff less so.

**2020:** We used GAC for our agent. In Trincomalee there are no marinas, or at least there weren't in 2020. There is really only one place to anchor, near their concrete jetty, where you have to land to go ashore.

### **5.2 Visas**

#### **5.2.1 Getting the Initial Visa**

**Brick House – Feb 2018:** Just received our Evisa for Sri Lanka. Application easy...though on iPad the form wouldn't work. On laptop it was fine. Received approval back within an hour, late at night so it must be automated. \$35 pp. Good for entrance within 90 days, stay for 30 days before extending, and double entry so no new visa if fly out and come back in during that period. American...could be different for others.

**Totem – January 2015:** The agent we are working with in Trincomalee would like to make sure that all boats are obtaining a Sri Lanka visa online BEFORE they arrive. Details here:

<http://www.eta.gov.lk/slvisa/>

<http://www.eta.gov.lk/slvisa/visainfo/shortvisit.jsp>

**Mary – 2013 – Galle:** It is ten times cheaper to get a visa on arrival, and there is a big price difference between the different agents.

#### **5.2.2 Renewing Visas**

**Leslie Day (FB) – March 2018:** As we decided to bypass the Maldives and go straight to Chagos from Sri Lanka, we needed to extend our initial 30 day tourist visa. Our agent had quoted USD50 per passport, plus the visa extension fee of USD30 each payable on an Australian passport. We decided to go to Colombo and do the extension ourselves and attend to a few other errands while we were there.

We caught the 8am "semi luxury" bus from the bus station at Trincomalee which does actually go past the stop at the harbour so we could have got on there and saved ourselves the walk. There was nothing even partly luxurious about this trip. We had booming Sri Lankan music blasting at us for the whole 8 hours with the bass so low that it was vibrating through the floor of the bus. The seats were covered in thick plastic so one ended up almost sitting in a puddle of sweat. The driver seemed to have some sort of death wish as he overtook other vehicles at high speeds in some very dangerous situations. There was no toilet on the bus. There was one toilet stop about 50kms out of Colombo after we had been on the bus for about 6 hours. The roadside stop sold some drinks, small eats and some egg rolls. We did make it to Colombo without incident and found our way to our Air Bnb in Nawala, which is not too far from the Dept of Immigration.

We arrived at immigration just after they opened at 8.30. Even before we got out of the tuk tuk we were mobbed by guys wanting to do our passport photos for us. We entered the grounds and kept asking for visa renewals until we found our way to the correct building, and then up to



the 4th floor, where you start the process in area C. You can get a blank renewal form here, and also get your passport photo for 250 SLR. You can even pay to have someone complete the form for you (150 SLR). We had obtained the form previously and had already completed it (very straightforward) and attached a standard passport photo. I also had a whole bunch of supporting documentation including bank statements (I had read somewhere we needed to show enough funds to support ourselves), ships papers, etc. but in the end none of this was required. I did have a letter that I had asked the agent to give us to verify that our boat was in the Trinco harbour etc. We were not asked for any of this but we did give them the letter as we thought it might smooth the way through a glitch we had. I have no idea if the letter made any difference at all.

Once you have your form and photos you can start the process which is fairly well organised with helpful signs. First you obtain a slip with a number (couples are processed together) and then go and get that slip scanned and this gets you into the queue (see photo of process). You then go to area B to await a short interview. There is a screen here that displays your number and which door you are to enter. When called you have a short interview with a very bored official who takes your form and passports, and then go back to area C to the payment waiting area. Again your number will be shown on a screen when it is your turn to pay the fee at the cashier (see photo of fees). Then you take the receipt and move to the visa issuing counter. Eventually batches of passports and visas are returned to the applicants by officials who just call out the number (screen did not seem to be working).

The whole process apparently takes approximately 4 hours from when you submit your form. We submitted ours at 9.30 am and we had our visa by 11am. There was one hitch in our case that delayed submitting our form by about 45 mins. We were missing a sticker in our passport which should have been put in our passports in Trinco as well as the stamp. We were sent upstairs to port control to sort this out -it seems that the sticker machine was not working the day we cleared in as the port control official found out when he rang Trinco.

I recommend that you get to immigration right on opening time as it just got more and more busy as the morning progressed. There is a small cafeteria in area C that sells hot and cold drinks and the ubiquitous small eats. Bring a book to read or something else to occupy yourself while you wait. I took the opportunity to inquire as to whether it is possible to do the renewal in Kandy which it is not any longer.

Overall the process was fairly smooth and we were pleased to be finished before lunch, leaving the afternoon for other errands.

After having tried the semi-luxury of the bus we decided to try the train for our return to Colombo. We would have got the night train but the sleeper compartments were well and truly booked out for weeks ahead so we opted for the 6am morning train for which you can't make a reservation. We arrived in sufficient time to get a seat next to the window and spent the next 8 hours again in less than comfortable conditions. The train was quite rocky and noisy with the window open and the seats became uncomfortable fairly quickly. Even if we could have got a sleeper on the overnight train, I doubt that any sleep could be had due to the rocking. There was no shortage of vendors selling all sorts of food and drinks. Unlike the bus, the train does have a toilet if you are game to use it with all that rocking to contend with. We had to change trains at Galoya. We had thought we would have a couple of hours break there but it turned out to be only 15 minutes.

The whole exercise did end up costing us more than the USD100 that the agent wanted. Our two nights accommodation at a comfortable AirBnb was USD120, and we spent 1400 SLR and bus and train fares, 1200 SLR on tuk tuks/Uber, plus meals. However as we took care of a few other matters in the same trip, it was worth it for us.

## **5.3 Galle**

### **5.3.1 Approach, Arrival, and Formalities**

**Kurukulla – February 2023:** On the 31<sup>st</sup> of January we arrived and tucked in alongside a rather bedraggled looking boat named “Test of Time”, in the “marina” at Galle. For marina read a small basin with no pontoons and large black fenders randomly secured around the walls! That said some berths had access to power and water so not all bad.

Surprisingly there was swell entering the marina causing all the boats to surge to and fro on their mooring lines, not great. We stuck it out alongside Test of Time (ToT) for the first week we were there but then, when a much calmer berth became available, sought approval to move.

It was frustrating that everything needing doing in the port requires letters in triplicate to all of the authorities, supply of power, water, taking a sail for repair were all subject to multiple letters seeking approval from various authorities; it was all designed to keep numerous otherwise underemployed Civil Servants in employment! That said it was hardly an expensive stay, the first 30 days were included in your agent's fee!

**Tregoning – January 2023:** Once inside the breakwater, we were directed to the "New Jetty". This instruction was not very helpful on our first visit, but we were told to look out for the dockers who would take our lines. We hoped it might be a new floating dock which would be very much better than the concrete wharf mentioned in other blogs.

Instead, we realized that the dock-dudes were waving at us from huge wharf intended for big ships. Apparently, we would not go into the inner yacht basin for a couple of days, after the tenders from the cruise ship no longer needed the space. These parts of the "New" harbour were within a Navy Base which meant that it would be very secure and vessels of the Sri Lanka Coast Guard and Navy were nearby on another dock.

The large "bumpers" on the wharf were intended to keep big ships from rubbing on the concrete. However, with Tregoning moving back and forth in the surge, their size and spacing made it difficult for us put our own fenders in a good place to hold us off the bumpers. Once our lines were tied, one of the dock-dudes was hoping for some cigarettes or cans of beer. We had neither. A packet of cookies was accepted but with obvious disappointment. The other dock-dudes were more friendly and less demanding, but I made a note to buy more packs of cookies before we moved to the inner harbour.

(Most boats are directed to the yacht wharf..., this was an unusual case).

During this time, two Navy personnel had arrived to greet us, along with Uresh, our agent from Windsor Reef Navigation. They clambered aboard over the bumpers. While Uresh, our agent, started the reams of paperwork, the Navy chaps took photos of each other with us. A biosecurity person stopped by briefly to give us the Certificate of Pratique (health) for the vessel. Two immigration officers also came but they did not want to try to board the boat over the bumpers. I

took our passports to them on the wharf so that they could peer at the photos and at us before they left.

Uresh had plenty of forms for us to sign and stamp and, yes, Sri Lanka is a place where they love to use the ship's stamp. We then followed him to the on-site Immigration Office, Base Security Office, and Customs. Once the appropriate papers had been submitted, we received documents allowing us to pass in and out of the Navy Base through the security checkpoint. Uresh also agreed to look into the options for getting our sails repaired.

A few days later, we moved from the New Jetty into the yacht basin, in the place where the tenders for the cruise ship had tied up. It was much easier to get on and off Tregoning here. Once we had secured the dock-lines and fenders in the best positions to keep us off the concrete wall and black rubber "fenders" hung on the wall, it was a relief to be inside the inner basin. There were a few other cruising boats in this harbor.

**Bird of Passage – January 2020:** We arrived outside Galle before dark on the 24th of December.

Galle Harbor lies inside a naval base. It took us almost a day to get clearance with all the authorities before we were tied up and free to move on land. Another day to get water and electricity and everything has to be handled through an agent. Very old fashion you might think, but with the recent history of civil war and terrorist attacks it is understandable that security is a big issue.

The harbor is well protected and we were offered a berth alongside a concrete quay next to a small park with trees, flowers and lots of wildlife.

Original post with pictures: [http://www.toan.se/Webtoan-2/2020/Sri-Lanka\\_Web/Sri-Lankaindex.htm](http://www.toan.se/Webtoan-2/2020/Sri-Lanka_Web/Sri-Lankaindex.htm)

**Pauline Wilkinson – Feb 2016:** Update on conditions in Galle harbour. The new marina is still not open, the port authority have a little more dredging to do before putting in the floating pontoons (which may be plastic lego, but will have power and water I understand).

ETA for opening now mid March 2016.

Conditions where yachts are currently moored are much better than reported on Noonsite as the floating lego has been relocated to just by the new marina and is very sheltered and comfortable - no power and water but water can be jerry jugged and is potable and diesel jerry canned from the service station or the agent will arrange for bulk delivery.

Walk to the main guard station 5 minutes, then either walk to town (20 minutes or tuk tuk about US\$1). The officials here are lovely, things have either definitely improved since the last reports on Noonsite, or perhaps the inconveniences were overstated or only applied to SW monsoon - hard to know, but we love it, and have no complaints except for the wobbly lego dock, which you have to walk like a drunken sailor to keep your balance.

We have arranged a round island trip with Marlin for US\$80/day including hotels, car and driver and will get to Trincomalee that way, as well as all the other important places to visit. Will need to get a proper report to Noonsite to update for everyone who is trying to decide which way to go.

**Ingvar Hellmalm – February 2015:** When we arrived the pontoon was a mess, but have been approved now. Windsor Reef is as I see it the only agent the use. They are very helpful!

Galle is a naval base and very well protected. In my view little too much. You have to show your entrant paper every time you pas the gate and you can not take you hired car or a tuk tuk in but Windsor Reef is very helpful and they drive you (it's a walk of 700m from the gate).

Sri Lanka is very well worth a round trip and specially Yala National Park don't miss. One very big draw back is that Galle is a big commercial harbor and we had the big unfortunate to be there when they unloaded cement ships and the dust spread all over the boat.

**Maurice Wainright - September 2014:** At the risk of promoting one agent over another, I would recommend yachts to use **Windsor Reef**. Firstly they are probably the most organised and knowledgeable and secondly their offices are not more than 100 metres from the harbour entrance. The other agents tend to be in town which can be a long hike in the heat and humidity of the island. Windsor is no more expensive than the others. Yachts should be wary of agents' boats coming out to sea to meet them to sell their services. Windsor can be reached on VHF Ch 69.

**Diane Boles – May 2014:** I agree with most of the comments regarding the state of the harbour and the necessity of using an agent, but my experience with **Tango Shipping** (April 2014) was very different. First off the price is standard, \$225, but Chatura went way beyond just handling our formalities. There appears to be much more available to cruisers in Galle than people are aware of, and without Chatura we would not have been able to carry out some critical repairs. He drove us to a facility building sailing catamarans close to Galle, which also has a loft producing North sails and does sail repairs. They also build RIBs, and the friendly people of the facility helped us with supplies to fix our Hypalon RIB. Chatura also helped us with an underwater hull repair (at no cost) and taught me a trick or two from his salvaging experience that changed my approach to underwater hull repair forever. From our experience, the intentional bad press dished out to Tango Shipping is unwarranted.

Galle is a lovely town, worthy of a visit, and there is talk of a marina being built. In the meantime, there may be a possibility to use the harbour at Merissa, which should be a better experience than Galle Harbour. Do contact Chanaka the boatyard manager on 0773667969 to enquire about this option if you plan to stay in Sri Lanka for longer than just a short stop.

**Waipiti – June 2013 - Visas and Agents:** It is legally required to use an agent and we used Tango Shipping and were charged US\$325 Other yachts used Windsor Reef, successors to Don Windsor, and were charged US\$225. We had no problems with authorities and no requests for extra payments or "gifts" of cigarettes or alcohol. We had obtained electronic visas in advance as per official advice at a cost of US\$30 each for 1 month but other yachts got visas on arrival, apparently much cheaper. The current situation is worth checking with the agent.

**Mary – Early 2013:** We just spent three weeks in Galle, Sri Lanka. The harbour might not be very nice – it is dusty, noisy and quite dirty. However, the old town is beautiful, the fruit and the curry taste great, people are lovely and the country is interesting in so many ways. We loved our stay in Galle, but here is some information we wish we had known before we got there.

#### **Clearance procedure:**

You should preferably have established contact with an agent before arrival so they can arrange for your permission to enter the harbour. You can arrive any hour or day, no overtime charges

apply, according to our agent. Upon arrival you call port control on VHF16 approx 1,5 NM outside the inner harbour. They will ask you to anchor outside the pier, to wait for Navy who will look at your passports and escort you to a place where you can moor and meet up with your agent to finalize the paperwork. After clearance procedure is finished you can move the boat to another position in the harbour as long as harbour master approves.

**Agent:**

You must use an agent to clear into Sri Lanka, for what reason we do not understand. We had to do all the paper work ourselves and every official came on board anyway to ask for cigarettes and liquor. There seem to be many agents to choose from. We ended up using Windsor Reef ([windsorreef@wow.lk](mailto:windsorreef@wow.lk)), who appears to be the cheapest option at the moment. They charged us USD 225.00, which includes everything (agent fees, harbour fees, custom fees etc) but the visa. While Tango Shipping charged other boats USD 100 more for the same service.

**Visa:**

No matter what information you find on the internet, you do NOT need to apply for a visa in advance at this moment (April 2013). But please check this with your agent to get the latest information. We used the online service and ended up paying almost ten times more than we would have if we had waited until arrival. But the price also seems to differ upon arrival, depending on which agent you use. Windsor Reef only charged USD 10 for each crew, while we have heard other yachties who have paid USD 30 to other agents.

**Bebe – January 2011:** Clearing into Sri Lanka on a yacht is different than other places we have visited.

1. One must receive permission from Galle Harbour Control to get near the outer breakwater. Port Control will not allow you to approach until your agent contacts them first. So arriving boats must have a method of contacting their agent, either email or satellite phone (or VHF radio once you get within radio range).
2. Next a Navy gunboat comes out and directs you to a spot to anchor just inside the breakwater. You might wait there 10 minutes or many hours.
3. Normally the next step is that the gunboat returns and tells you to raise the anchor and move to a large rusty mooring and tie off. We lucked out and skipped having to tie off to the nasty mooring. The naval officer (only 1 for us) came to our boat at anchor. I think this happened because there was a huge sailboat tied to the mooring; there were 7 boats waiting to be cleared in; and the officer wanted to get on with his work, finish with us and get us out of his area.
4. When your boat is secured to the rusty mooring, a couple of Navy officers arrive to conduct your "interview" and search your boat. Again, the wait for the officers might be only a few minutes or several hours. The interview is very informal. For whatever reason, our boat was not searched. We were the only boat cleared in that day which was not searched. Have no idea why.
5. The Navy officer really liked Bill's polo shirt with BeBe embroidered on it. He said he needed a size small. Bill gave him a size XL shirt; the last new one Bill had. The officer said he has a collection of boat name shirts filling up an entire wall at his home. He did not ask for cigarettes or booze, just the boat name shirt.

6. Then a small Navy skiff guides you into the main harbor. Galle Harbour is a Navy harbor. During the years long war with the Tamil Tigers this harbor was mined. The Tamil Tigers were finally wiped out a couple of years ago. One assumes all the mines have since been removed. The small skiff guides you to one of several options to berth, depending on what is available.

The 25 boats participating in the Bluewater Rally are now in Galle Harbour. Add to that number the normal annual cruising yachts, and this little harbor is completely filled with visiting yachts. There are 2 remote floating plastic docks on either side of the harbor, and a primary floating plastic dock in the rear of the harbor. We were guided to the primary floating plastic dock -- right next to our friends Bill & Amy on S/V Estrellita!!! What a surprise!! Ending up being berthed right next to them. They were leaving the next morning to press onward to Cochin, but at least we had a day to visit. This "dock" is really stretching the meaning of the word. It is just a bunch of blue plastic cubes interlocked together and floating in a long strip. It is barely secured to some very lightweight underwater concrete blocks, which move as boats bump up against the "dock." The whole arrangement is very unstable. Everything was wiped out during the big tsunami in late 2004, and this is the best they have been able to come up with as replacement facilities. There obviously is no electricity or water available on this "dock."

7. After your boat is tied off on this "dock" then you wait for your agent to appear, accompanied by the Customs officer; another wait of several hours. This official is an absolute total jerk and makes his job a joke. He makes no pretense of doing his job as a Customs officer. He is simply on a personal shopping trip. As instructed by our agent, prior to arrival we had prepared a printed list of all tobacco, spirits, wine and beer. Bill handed the list to the Customs officer and the man said to show him the cigarettes. We have 4 cartons of Marlboros that will be needed to give to the pilots in the Suez Canal, plus 6 packs of French cigarettes purchased back in Trinidad in September 2006. Don't you know those old things are dried out and disgusting. The Customs officer came right out and said "I will take a carton of the Marlboros." To which Bill replied, "No; those are gifts for our friends in India. You can have the 6 blue packs, but you cannot have the Marlboros." They went back and forth several times, but Bill refused to give up a carton of the Marlboros. Next the official wanted to see the spirits on our list. I showed him the bottles and mentioned that I thought all the bottles were opened. He found 1 bottle of rum which was still sealed and said, "I will take that bottle of rum; it is still sealed." I told him that he could not have that bottle of rum because it was our only bottle of rum. So next he wanted to see the wine. Bill opened the floor locker and showed him the stacked bottles of wine (several cases). Again, with the "I will take a bottle of wine." At that I turned around and said most emphatically that this was my wine and it had to last until we get to the Mediterranean and that he could not have any of my wine. Bill spoke up at this point and said we wanted to bond all alcohol and cigarettes. Our agent jumped right up and whipped out the paperwork to start the bonding process. The Customs officer was not at all happy with this course of events. It would require him to process a lot of paperwork for us to bond stores aboard our boat and then to refund the bond upon our departure. Suddenly he decided that accepting the 6 blue packs of cigarettes was going to be all he was going to get off our boat, so he took those and left without processing our bonding request. Great! Navy done; Customs done; only 2 more officials to deal with and we would be officially cleared into Sri Lanka.

8. BTW, the only other docking option in Galle Harbour is a high rough concrete quay. There is electricity on this concrete wall. That is where we hoped to be berthed so that we can leave the boat for a few days to travel around the island. We would not feel that the boat would be safe left on the flimsy blue plastic floating docks.
9. You still cannot leave your boat until all the officials have visited you, accompanied with your agent. We wanted to go to lunch with our friends but were stuck on the boat for several more hours. Eventually the **Practique (Health) Officer** arrived with our agent. This was a very nice guy. He wanted to see our Yellow Cards (the International Vaccination forms) and our "de-ratting" (fumigation) certificate. Hey, guess what! Neither of those are a problem! We do each have International Vaccination forms, last updated with boosters in New Zealand in March 2009. All our yellow fever, typhoid, tetanus, hepatitis, etc., vaccinations are all up-to-date. And we also have a proper fumigation certificate. We prepared one in Panama in March 2008 because we knew the Galapagos Islands would want to see one. Sri Lanka did not care that this certificate was more than 2 years old; the official was just delighted that we had one. Only 1 official remained to clear us in!
10. Shortly after 13:00 the **Immigration Officer** arrived with our agent. Remember we started this process with the Navy inspection around 07:00 so already this has taken the better part of a day. The Immigration guy could not walk on the flimsy floating blue plastic dock. Someone had to hold his arm to keep him from falling. Bill helped him step aboard our stern steps from the dock. He came downstairs and we processed more of the umpty-jillion forms required. In addition to all their forms we also had to provide a total of 9 crew lists and 9 copies of our passports and 6 copies of our boat documentation. The officer gave us each a blue piece of paper and said these were our passes allowing us to move around Sri Lanka. We would have to come to the Immigration office with our agent and have our passports stamped (he did not have the correct stamp with him; it was only at the office); then we were free to walk out of the port and go wherever we liked on the island. He warned us that we must keep both our passport and our blue pass on our persons at all times while in Sri Lanka.

And then he asked for a bottle of rum to take back to his office. No hinting around that he would enjoy a gift from us; just flat out asked for a bottle of rum to take back to his office. Bill whipped out a glass and said that he could not have a whole bottle but that he was welcome to a drink if he wanted one. Well, yes; as a matter of fact he would enjoy a rum and Coke. He then proceeded to drink 6 rum and Cokes! I had thought he was drunk when he arrived and couldn't walk straight; he was most definitely drunk by the time he stepped off our boat. He also asked for cigarettes and I told him that we do not allow smoking inside our boat. Around 14:30 he said we were finished except for coming to the office and having our passports stamped, and he finally left.

We walked with our agent over to the Immigration office and accomplished that final step and were finally free to walk outside the port. The guards are armed with German made semi-automatic 12-gauge shotguns. There are guys with guns all over the place inside this naval port. Each time we leave and return the guards record our information and check our passports and passes. Probably the safest docks we have ever stayed at.

**Discouraging Bribes:** While the gate guard was recording Bill's information I read the sign posted on the wall behind the guard. As I whipped out my camera to take a photo of this sign,

the other guards standing nearby starting laughing. They know what goes on around this port and the officials demand bribes to do their jobs and clear in boats. Here is the sign posted at the port entrance guard station:



Get better resolution photo here:

<http://svbebe.blogspot.com/2011/01/Sri Lankan-clearance-dance.html>

We printed a copy of this sign and gave it to arriving friends the next day. They placed it on the table when the Customs officer came to process their clearance. When the Customs officer started to ask for things, our friends just tapped the paper. He quickly gave up and finished their paperwork without further hassle. I recommend that all future cruisers do the same

**Arjuman – March 1999: (from their Survival Guide posted on SSCA website)**

Galle Harbour approaches met us with a squall, but that was nothing compared to the nest of negativity awaiting us inside--out of character for cruisers who are usually so positive! A number of things had happened which had seriously colored their vision. But being forewarned and thus armed enabled us to see the beauty of the country and the warmth and friendliness of the people in this very worthwhile stop. We really enjoyed our stay in Sri Lanka--thanks in large part to Mike and his team at Mike's Yacht Service. Warnings follow!

On approaching Galle call Galle Harbour Pilot on VHF 16--preferably an hour before arrival. They will inform the Navy of your intended arrival. Hover around the harbor entrance without going inside until the Navy comes out, boards you and checks your boat both above and below water for weapons & Tamil terrorists. The Navy is a bunch of delightful young lads, but the underwater chap swam back to the surface after checking another yacht and asked the skipper for a knife. "Why?" says he. "Line around the prop!" says the diver. "Hm!" says he. "Didn't notice anything when I stopped my engine!" He disappears below, returns quickly with face plate and fins and dove over the side. Guess what?! No line!! Wonder how many times and how successfully they'd pulled that before?!

At any time during this procedure you can call your yacht clearing agent. Don Windsor Yacht Agents are on VHF 69. In March '99 they were the only authorized agency which could clear in



yachts (which we understand must be done by an agent), but that could change in the future. Mike has done it in the past but was not authorized as an agent during our stay. The fee was US\$100 for immigration (which must be in US funds), \$50 for Windsor and \$20 for customs (both can be in local funds). Your agent will inform customs of your arrival (customs officers come out to your boat) and the rest of the paperwork will be handled after a visit to your agent's office. Customs does not have a boat so they bum rides off the yachties. If you're lucky you'll be able to get tied up, talk with other yachties, and have your wits about you before they board you!

There are a dozen or so mooring buoys in the harbor which were used for fore and aft moorings by most of the yachts. It made rather a spider web of lines but didn't seem to cause any problems. During a blow the boats on moorings stayed put while the ones on a bow hook & stern tied to a mooring were more likely to drag. Another reason to moor is that the growth on the chain left in the water was incredible and required quite a chipping exercise for those who opted for anchoring--even in just a couple weeks! Tie or anchor so that your bow faces the entrance to avoid rolling.

Next comes the challenging part! The customs agent is a master at the Sri Lankan salute (arm extended forward from the elbow, palm up)! Except that instead of wanting a palm full he wants an arm full--often cases with accent on plural to be exact! He does everything in his power to intimidate and get it despite seeming pleasant at first! Their goal is to get as many unopened bottles (or cases) of liquor & wine, cases of beer, cartons of cigarettes and/or anything else of value they can get their hands on! They get these things either by a direct request or more often by threatening the yacht captain with criminal sanctions--which can be overlooked of course by giving the agent the items he's indicated that he wants. Galle has had this problem for years. Customs has tried to change it by rotating and limiting their agents to short stays but the situation remains despite a large lettered sign over their office door which says that asking for, taking, or offering bribes is a punishable offense!

The scenario is this: The agents come aboard your boat and hand you a form to fill out stating numbers of bottles of spirits, wine, beer, and cartons of cigarettes. He pressures you to write and sign quickly, then proceeds to go through your boat looking where ever his imagination tells him you might be hiding the extra--yet he's not used to boats. He looks for a discrepancy. Be accurate because he confiscates anything extra! And he'll try to take an extra case (or three if you've got it) as a penalty! If you have open bottles and count them in the total tally with the unopened bottles it's a very "grave" offense and requires a stiff penalty! (Opened bottles are OK--we always did like the idea of opening and transferring liquor to more innocuous looking bottles!!)

If the agent can't find any discrepancies he'll tell you that you have more than allowed--which of course requires a stiff penalty!! Allowances are written on the back of the form and are rather liberal depending on number of crew and length of stay (claim 1 month). Anything over the allowance can be bonded--but the agent may not readily offer you that option. Even people without alcohol or cigarettes were hassled relentlessly until they came forward with items for his "take". If you have an open jar of sweets he'll scoop out a handful for himself without even asking.

To our knowledge every one of the 2 dozen yachties in Galle during our stay was hassled by customs. A few were able to give up nothing saying that they refused to pay bribes, but most caved in, to varying degrees, due to the pressure. Those forewarned fared the best. There didn't

seem to be any repercussions on leaving Galle regardless of how much or little was "pilfered" from us, or our resistance to their efforts!

Once you're ashore you'll find Don Windsor's straight out the road about 75 meters beyond the security gate. They offered a free drive around town--if the van was available. Don's son, Santosh, drove us around and was a likable chap--seemed straight with us, but others were less convinced due to their own experiences. Marlin, who used to hang around the security gate, now works with Windsor's--at least part time. Many other hangers-on and tuk drivers loiter around. We trust some people were pleased with their services but many felt that a number of the guys were less than forthright, and that their word regarding everything from delivery times on fuel & water to fees & prices seemed unreliable.

Even the Windsor sister across the street may be afflicted by the same m.o. She quoted us R100 for the plain flags we ordered and R130 for the more complicated ones. Yet when we picked up the flags she wanted R130 each. A friend ordered a large number of flags then paid for them on delivery of the majority of them. They were leaving Galle, so the remainder, already paid for, were to be picked up by us when they were completed. When we collected the flags, sister Windsor insisted that there had been no payment. These are two easy & possibly innocent errors to be sure--but coupled with all the rest of the grievances in the yachting community, it makes one wonder!

The Sri Lankan economy is in trouble and it is difficult for the locals to make a living. Kickbacks, corruption, excessive fees, dishonest statements and the like are commonplace in the harbor area. An active role by the Windsor's to correct the situation and to be a strong & positive influence at the harbor, part of the solution rather than part of the problem, would be most welcome. They are very proud of their past SSCA association.

In two instances the immigration official, an Inspector of Police, affixed the passport stamp on shore and then asked to visit the yacht. During the visit, the inspector asked a variety of general questions and then began to inquire about the sex activities and sexual preferences of the people on the yacht. He was clearly beyond legitimate police inquiry. The inspector invited them for dinner at his house, and it became clear that he had more than food on his mind.

Galle is infested with guides boys--but they're mild relative to Viet Nam we're told! A guide (also known as a mosquito by the locals) either drives someone in his tuk to a store, or walks with them, or even behind and unbeknown to them. He then tells the store owner--often unnoticed by the customer--that he's responsible for the person's business and demands a percentage of the sales.

One yachting forgot Mike's price list and went into a store with a nephew of one of the above hangers-on because she'd been told that the store's prices were much less than Mike's. She proceeded to buy groceries which on later inspection were sometimes 2-3 times what Mike charged! The guide boy walked away with R870--but the disgusted yachting's 3 hour tenacity at the police station earned it back! We were told that this chap changes his name every year or two so his reputation as spread by the yachting doesn't ruin him!

The entire street from the security gate to the buddha junction is the stomping ground of these helpful "gentlemen"! Yet occasionally there's a good one! People liked the chap with the metallic blue tuk. Serenade & First Choice highly recommend the tuk driver named Susil, brother-in-law of Marlin.

Mike and his people, on the other hand, are a breath of fresh air! To find his office walk past Windsor's to the junction, make a slight jog to the right, and continue walking away from Windsor's another 5 minutes or so. Mike or his brother, Lal, will sit you down and tell you the fair price of things--R40 to town on a tuk, R150 for an hour in a tuk, R35 for a pineapple, R40-50 for a papaya, R2 for a small banana, etc. Lal drives a tuk and will take you around town for the easiest provisioning you've ever done! When you need the inevitable boat repair bits, Mike & Lal know where to go, and they have a small store with a small but amazing selection of yachtie groceries.

Lal dropped us back at the harbor one day free of charge, then the next day drove us around for half an hour. When I handed him a R100 bill he said, "Oh no! Too much!" and handed me back a R50! He took us around town on a provisioning run for 2 1/2 hours yet only charged R200.

A note of caution: On entering Galle a visa is issued for 30 days. If you enter in the month of February, 30 days is not 30 days! Some people were caught out thinking a simple count would lead to the proper exit deadline. Not so! In February 30 becomes 28 (despite the stamp in your passport) and no amount of reasoning changes it!

Although we have been critical of several things in Galle which we did not like, we still feel that it is a convenient stopping place with a very interesting culture and history--well worth a visit.

### **5.3.2 Cruisers Services**

**Tregoning – January 2023:** Outside gates, as our agent Uresh had warned us, were a few people hoping to provide us with services or tuktuk rides. Marlin, a facilitator who was quick to approach new yachtie arrivals, was quite helpful, getting us a Dialog SIM card for our phone.

It was quickly apparent that Marlin and his colleagues would love to organize everything for us, including day tours all over southern Sri Lanka. We have to firmly keep telling him that we will let him know what we want and when we want it. When we needed to go to an ATM to get some Sri Lankan rupees, Marlin arranged a tuktuk driver for us, Pahan, who we have used ever since. After visiting an HSBC Bank ATM, he gave us a quick tour of the town, proudly showing us the international cricket stadium, the Fortress, and main shopping street. It was our first experience of using a tuktuk and seemed much better and safer than renting a moped as we had done in Indonesia. Our 20-minute trip cost 500 rupees or about US\$1.50.

**Bebe – January 2011:** Marlan is a guy who usually stays just outside the security guard station at Galle Harbor. Marlan can handle just about anything one might want. If it is available in Sri Lanka, Marlan is the man to see. We arranged to bring him several loads of laundry the next morning, and will use him to arrange a tour of Galle.

**Mary – Early 2013:** Just ask the tuk-tuk drivers who are waiting at the gate, for whatever you need. One of them, a young man called Ekka ([www.ekkatours.com](http://www.ekkatours.com)), speaks excellent English and has specialized in helping yachties with anything from organizing laundry and repairs to guided tours.

#### **5.3.2.1 Getting Around**

**Bebe – January 2011:** The normal mode of transportation is Tuk Tuk. The ones here in Galle are sort of like a 3-wheel small motor cycle with a bench seat passenger cab that will seat 2 adults. We rode in 2 tuk-tuks this day and each ride was 150 rupiah, about \$1.35 USD.

### 5.3.2.2 Shipping Stuff In

**Kurukulla – February 2023:** The other purpose of a three week stay in Sri Lanka was to try to get hold of replacements for my missing credit cards and to receive a book and some spare parts from various suppliers. Having cancelled the cards sent from UK to Australia (for my daughter to bring out at Christmas) which have never arrived (Thank you Royal Mail!) I arranged for new cards to be sent to my UK address and then DHL'd to Sri Lanka via our agent.

- The cards arrived within 4 days
- A spare part from China arrived via UPS in 3 days
- A book from UK arrived in 3 days, again via DHL.

Then came the saga of a spare part demonstrably used for a boat--such items apparently come under "special regulations" and although it was in Colombo Airport DHL Bonded Warehouse within 3 days of despatch they steadfastly refused to release it without it passing through the hands of an Inward Shipping Agent. The value of the item (a GPS Repeat) was £94, the Inward Shipping Agent, Sujith, (recommended by Windsor Reef, our agents in Galle) wanted the equivalent of £208 to handle it, and DHL were no help whatsoever!

After 10 days of getting nowhere I was on the verge of telling them to "Keep the b\*\*\*\*y thing!" but decided to have one last try by going to the airport myself, aided by Sanjeewa.

Thus it was Yiorgos and I set off for Colombo again on the 0700 train, 1st Class! Air conditioned splendour! 130 km / 81 miles cost ~£7 per head! Later that day, our return was 2nd class (1st was not available) but notwithstanding this we still had to stand for half the journey; there is no shortage of passengers on Sri Lanka's railway system!

Sanjeewa met us at the station on arrival and we then drove to the airport. After an hour of security checks, form filling and much shaking of heads we were finally allowed into the DHL Bonded Warehouse where our arrival was not met with universal acclaim. From here started a five hour saga where we refused to move without the part and they pretended to be helpful whilst doing very little!

Eventually I was escorted in to meet the Inspector of Customs (who could not have been less interested) to declare that the part I was expecting was not "unique to seagoing vessels". After my writing another hand written letter to this effect he seemed to be satisfied that it could be released. It was then we bumped into another DHL employee, a manager in the facility, who Sanjeewa recognised as the daughter of Vinney, the owner of Windsor Reef Ltd, our agency in Galle! She did not seem pleased to see us! It was then the "penny dropped"!

My suspicion is that there is a scam going on between her and her father where goods are deliberately delayed in the DHL Bonded Warehouse and they pass you on to their "Recommended" Inward Shipping Agent who then charges exorbitant rates for his service knowing that ships and yachts all have a deadline for departure. A good scam!

After a further two hours, we finally received an invoice for "Dues" before the package could be released. The invoice showed that No duty was payable but there were charges for "Port and Airport Development Levy - 6000Rupia = £15, and "Social Security Contribution" - 1800Rupia = £4.50: a bit different to the £208 the agent demanded! Even then I was not convinced of the legitimacy of the charges but by then I had lost the urge to argue!

Interestingly, on return to Galle, Vinney (owner of Windsor Reef Agency) almost fell over himself in his haste to greet me and let me know I had met his daughter

### **5.3.2.3 Money**

**Tregoning 2023:** One of the tuk-tuk drivers took us to an HSBC ATM.

2011: According to Bebe, there are ATMs.

### **5.3.2.4 Diesel and Gasoline**

**Tregoning – January 2023:** One item we had to attend to was replenishing the diesel that we had to use unexpectedly. Our agent, Uresh, organized this for us because there were limits as to how much fuel most people can buy at once, and to be brought into the Navy Base it inevitably needed Customs paperwork. It cost us 63,000 rupees for 120L (about US\$1.50 per L or US\$5.80 per US gallon) which was not cheap, but we were glad to get it.

**Waipiti – June 2013:** Diesel can be bought using jerry cans and going to a filling station by tuk tuk then carried into the port. There was no objection from port security. Agents can supply larger quantities at a price.

**Bebe – January 2011:** This afternoon a truck delivered diesel. After our last passage experience, we want to always be certain that we are fully loaded with diesel each time we set out to sea. We burned about 600 liters of diesel during that last problem-riddled passage. Cochin is less than 500 miles and fuel can be purchased there, but we still want to be totally loaded with diesel before leaving Sri Lanka.

### **5.3.2.5 Propane (Cooking Gas)**

**Waipiti – June 2013:** We obtained cooking gas from Mike's Yachting Services and it cost 4000Rp for a 9kg bottle (actually the bottle was dangerously overfilled with over 10kg) This was about the most expensive gas we have ever bought.

### **5.3.2.6 Groceries/Provisioning**

**Bebe – January 2011:** We used Mike's Yacht Service Center -- which turned out to be his home as well as his shop. We arranged for cases of Cokes, Diet Cokes and many other items to be delivered to our boat on Thursday afternoon. Might as well have the heavy items delivered right to the dock. Mike even handles fresh produce but who knows what the quality will be. I ordered a kilo of potatoes, a kilo of onions, 500 grams of green beans and a kilo of tomatoes -- half red and half green. Plus one small bunch of lemon bananas. I also ordered a couple kilo of frozen boneless chicken breast and ham deli meat for sandwiches. Hope there is room in the freezer for it. I like this delivery service!

### **5.3.2.7 Water**

**Mary – Early 2013:** Tap water is potable, and available from taps ashore. Your agent can also organize someone to deliver water to the jetty.

**Bebe – January 2011:** This morning a ton of water was delivered to our boat. We certainly cannot operate our watermaker in this filthy water, so we opted to purchase water. It was delivered in a truck and pumped into our tank. We stopped them at 700 liters and tried to get them to give the rest to our neighbor on the port side, but that was not allowed.

### **5.3.2.8 Sail Repair**

**Kurukulla – February 2023:** Whilst in Galle we made use of the local sailmaker to repair our No2 Genoa (which is by now getting very long in the tooth!) and to make, by hand, three spare Royal Naval Sailing Association burgees; my stock from UK was running out. The burgees came out as very good copies at £5 per flag, slightly different to the £45 asked by the RNSA. I should have bought some more!

**Tregoning – January 2023:** Once we finished our clearance and got moved to the yacht basin, we were ready to take the jib to Padmini, the sailmaker. Her shop was just down the street and Uresh was able to carry the sails in his truck and take care of the customs paperwork both going out and coming back into the Base. While she worked on the jib repairs, we got the mainsail down and swapped the sails when she was ready. She also made us courtesy flags for Sri Lanka, Maldives, Djibouti, Turkey, and Greece. The flags and work on both sails cost about US\$100 and was finished within a week, so we were very satisfied.

**Mary – Early 2013** - North Sails has a repair loft 45 min east of Galle, the manager is very helpful. There are no chandleries, but most repairs can be done.

### **5.3.2.9 Laundry**

**Kurukulla – February 2023:** We also put two bags of laundry through the system. The first was a great success and very economic. Sadly, in the absence of our regular team of TukTuk drivers, I trusted the second bag to Bennett, another TukTuk driver, who I later found out had a reputation for ripping off his customers! He overcharged us by a factor of x5! Be warned, never use him for anything!

Ekka, our regular TukTuk driver (+94 723 371 116) was as honest as the day is long, thoroughly reliable, and made our life very much simpler. He also offers tours although we didn't take him up on this, we had our own guide in Sanjeewa who had been brought up in the area before moving to Colombo!

**Tregoning – January 2023:** We gave our laundry to Marlin, a facilitator who was quick to approach new yachting arrivals, without inquiring about the price. This was a mistake!. The laundry proved to be very expensive as the laundry was priced per item. It was my mistake for not asking the price before I gave it to him. I would not have been quite as irritated if it were not for several items feeling quite damp when they were returned.

Marlin arranged a tuktuk driver for us, Pahan, who we have used ever since. After visiting an HSBC Bank ATM, he gave us a quick tour of the town, proudly showing us the international cricket stadium, the Fortress, and main shopping street. It was our first experience of using a tuktuk and seemed much better and safer than renting a moped as we had done in Indonesia. Our 20-minute trip cost 500 rupees or about US\$1.50.

#### **5.3.2.10 Medical**

### **5.3.3 Communications**

#### **5.3.3.1 Telephones & Cell Phones**

#### **5.3.3.2 Internet Access**

#### **5.3.3.3 Mail**

### **5.3.4 Things to See and Do**

#### **5.3.4.1 Restaurants & Bars**

#### **5.3.4.2 Diving & Snorkeling**

#### **5.3.4.3 Sightseeing & Land Touring**

See also the Trinco section on Things to See and Do.

**Kulukulla – February 2023:** Part of my reason for wanting to visit Sri Lanka was that my father had taken over his only command of WWII, here at Trincomalee, in 1945. Following his partaking in the D Day landings in Normandy he was redeployed to take command of another Tank Landing Craft; it had been converted at Trincomalee to lay moorings which were to be laid off the coast of Burma ready for the resupply vessels sent from UK when the planned push, to oust the Japanese from Burma, started.

Fortunately, as a result of the USA dropping the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, such moorings were never needed. He finally delivered his ship to Borneo, following its purchase by Burma Oil, and after training the company crews he was finally given a passage back to UK and demobbed in 1946.

The other reason for wishing to visit Sri Lanka was to revisit the places I visited in 1971. I made my first visit to Colombo in what was then Ceylon, when serving as a Midshipman in HMS Arethusa.

We were fortunate in that we had been introduced to Sanjeewa, a Sri Lanka resident, through a mutual contact at Pangkor Marina. Sanjeewa was to become the essential element in all our plans! Our plan was to head overland, initially to Colombo and spend four days there before catching the train to Trincomalee.

**Colombo:** At Sanjeewa's insistence he came down to collect us from Galle and delivered us to our first hotel for a pair of days of unwinding before he again picked us up and took us to his home outside Colombo; this was before giving us a comprehensive guided tour of Colombo the following day.

**Trincomalee:** On leaving Colombo, we had an 0400 start and a 30 minute TukTuk ride to Colombo Fort Station where we all three boarded the train to Trincomalee, departing at 0600.

There being no 1st or 2nd class available, we travelled 3rd class at a cost 500 Rupia = £1.25 – good value! The journey was an interesting experience and certainly an opportunity to get to know some of the locals! The bench seats were three abreast. Food was available continuously

through a never ending series of vendors jumping on at one station and off at the next to catch the next train back to their base. The only slight hiccup was that the train was not going to Trincomalee! For reasons we never did find out it was diverted part way, at Habarana, and we had to get a bus for the final 50km. For anyone who has not travelled on a Sri Lankan bus suffice to say it is a “White knuckle ride”;

If you are lucky the driver might have a drivers licence and all of them drive as if they are in charge of a formula one racing car, the only difference is that they hang on the horn all the time to clear their path!

After another TukTuk ride, this time from the bus station to our hotel, we arrived there in the late afternoon. The photographs on the internet made it look quite swish; in reality they were struggling to get back trading again after a prolonged, 3 year, shutdown caused by a local terrorist attack followed by Covid. The photographs were obviously taken before the closure! That said they were welcoming and willing to provide whatever we asked for. All was not lost! After a night's sleep we set off again in the same TukTuk to explore Trincomalee.

We started with the Maritime Museum where we were given an escorted tour, including views from the roof, despite the museum being closed for renovations. Interesting but no much on Trincomalee's wartime role.

From here we went to view the Fort protecting Trincomalee Bay and here we met up with a young Army Lieutenant, (manning the drinks/ice cream stall; the Armed Forces don't miss any opportunity to make money) and he introduced us to the Curator of the Fort Museum. They had a selection of personal, family, photographs from the Naval Families who had been stationed in Trincomalee during the war but little else. I promised to scan and forward to them some of my father's photographs once I get back to UK. The next day we did a rather more touristy programme including a trip to a “private” beach, where the beach access, resort and cafes were almost all run by the Air Force!

Our last call of the afternoon was to the train station to obtain tickets on the “Night Mail” back to Colombo. This time we were lucky enough to score 2nd Class tickets. Airline seats but no air conditioning (there were however more roof fans per carriage!).

**Back in Colombo:** Our overnight train ride brought us to Colombo at 0330; 266 km at an average speed of 32 km/hr (20 mph) and on some of the tracks that felt quite fast enough! From Colombo Fort Station it was another TukTuk ride back to Sanjeewa's house for what was left of a night's sleep. Next morning his wife, Nisha, very kindly provided us with an abundant breakfast before we said goodbye to her and their daughter, little one year old Zoe, and set off with Sanjeewa in his car to visit Kandy (another of my visits in 1971).

**Kandy:** En route by car from Colombo to Kandy, we stopped off at the elephant orphanage to let my crew Yiorgos get his first introduction to an elephant and followed this with a visit to Sanjeewa's mothers house for tea and to meet his older daughter, Daisha (who was staying with her grandmother), and his younger brother. A great family!

Kandy is a spectacular city hosting the most revered temple of the Buddhist faith in Sri Lanka; the Temple of the Tooth. Although we arrived late in the afternoon we were able to tour the temple and witness the opening of the inner sanctum where the tooth of Buddha is kept. It is an amazing spectacle.



My memories of my previous visit were slightly tainted by being greeted, on arrival, (in a bus with only bars at the windows), by sufferers of leprosy begging alms at the windows. For someone who had never seen leprosy in its advanced stages before it was heart rending to say the least; this visit I am glad to say there was not a leprosy sufferer in sight!

**NuwaraEliya, up in the highlands:** After supper in Kandy, late in the evening, we set off southwards to NuwaraEliya where a friend of Sanjeewa has a hotel. It is on the slopes of the second highest peak in Sri Lanka and the area has a very Alpine appearance.

The peak is guarded by the Air Force and of course you need a pass and to make payment to get access.... we gave it a miss when informed getting the passes might take up to two hours!

**Back to Galle:** From NuwaraEliya it was a slow drive on mountain roads to descend to the coastal plain; en route we also visited two of the highest waterfalls in Sri Lanka; again spectacular! By 2300 we were back in Galle and searching for fuel for Sanjeewa's car.

With the current crisis, citizens are restricted to 20 ltrs of fuel per month and each driver has a unique QR Code through which this is monitored (although bribery seemed to circumvent this restriction). Unfortunately the security guards at the port were not prepared to allow Sanjeewa to enter at that time of night (security is relatively tight after a successful Tamil Tiger attack on the port some years back) and, unlike in Colombo, we were unable to find a "flexible" forecourt attendant in Galle.

The net result was Sanjeewa having to head back to Colombo late that night; fortunately he successfully refuelled at a motorway service station along the way.

**Tregoning – January 2023:** We were able to take a bit of time to do some sightseeing. The two major goals for us were to see Galle Fort and to go inland to one of the National Parks or Forest Reserves to look for wildlife. So, on Friday morning (27th January), we asked Pahan to take us in his tuktuk to the entrance of the Galle Fort. We enjoyed an excellent day exploring the Fort, including lunch followed by delicious homemade ice-creams at Dairy King!

The oldest of two gates into the Fort was completed by the Dutch in 1669. Over the gate is the elaborate coat of arms of King George III with a stone dated 1668 and a small VOC (Dutch East India Company) emblem.

Tregoning's tour of the fort: <https://www.sailblogs.com/member/tregoning/499489>

Our second sightseeing outing was on Sunday (29th January), and it gave us a chance to see some of the countryside outside Galle. Randall had looked at the options for wildlife tours to the nearby Yala National Park where it is possible to see wild elephants and, perhaps, leopards. However, we decided that our greatest chance of seeing more species was to go on a guided birding tour in Sinharaja Forest Reserve.

After searching online, I phoned a guide expecting that he would not have any openings until later in the week. I also asked if he could arrange transportation for us from Galle, about a two-hour drive. Amazingly, he not only arranged it all that evening, but did so for us to go the following day. We contacted the driver, Amila, on WhatsApp to show him where to pick us up, and there he was at 4 am the next day.

Of course, we drove most of the way in the dark, so we were not going to see much of our surroundings until the return trip. One thing that did intrigue us was a couple of signs on the

highway warning of peafowl crossings...strange! Once we left the main highway and headed northward into the highlands, we were on incredibly twisty roads, steadily climbing.

Our guide, Achi, was a very amiable young man. His father had been a bird guide, so Achi had been learning to recognize the sight and sounds of the local fauna all of his life. We walked with him for at least six hours along the narrow road that led to an Ecolodge, some communication towers, and a very small plantation village.

While much of the area we walked through was forest, some parts were through the tea plantation.

We had good sightings of 25 species, of which 7 were endemic to Sri Lanka, and several to this particular upland area. All but four were new species to us. We got glimpses of another four species which Achi identified but I did not see well enough to confirm for myself.

**Bird of Passage – January 2020:** Close to the harbour lies Shahana Beach, used by local fishermen with traditional long and narrow outrigger fishing boats with only one pontoon.

On the south side of the beach is the Peace Pagoda. Built by Japanese Buddhist monks. A beautiful landmark.

The north side of the beach, close to the harbor is used for surfing. Mostly young westerners. A real tourist ghetto with many bars and restaurants.

Further south, Habaraduwa beach is used by turtles for laying eggs. Local people pick the eggs for eating but some eggs are preserved by a turtle hatchery to help the turtles survive.

We also visited a silk factory. Interesting to learn about how they grow silkworms and carefully unwind the thin thread from the cocoons.

Sri Lanka (former Ceylon) is perhaps most famous for its tea. We visited a tea plantation and saw the plants grow and learned about the process. The tea plant is like a bush, about one meter high. To give them shadow and protect them from too strong sunlight, small trees are grown among the tea plants. From the tea plant you pick the fresh young light green leaves.

The tea plantation we visited claims to produce the worlds most famous (and expensive) tea, the "Virgin White Tea", which is only served in a very exclusive tea salon in Paris. The price was said to be 1.500 USD/kg.

Another strategic product from the old colonial times is rubber. The method of production today seems not to have changed very much. The white milk, also called Latex, is collected from the rubber trees, rolled into sheets and cured. Then sold on an international market that sometimes still needs natural rubber. Most rubber today however is synthetic.

We made a two day tour to the interior of Sri Lanka. First day we visited Sigiriya, an old historical site where kings lived on a high spectacular formation called the Lions Rock.

The Lion Rock is surrounded by beautiful gardens and here we found a colony of Ceylon Macaques.

The second day of our tour we started early in the morning for an elephant safari in Hurulu Eco Park, one of Sri-Lanka's big nature reserves.

We spotted the first elephants after about an hour. Our driver took us quite close without frightening them. It was a family of five. Two adult females, two "babies" and one "teenager".

An hour later we found another group of elephants and on our way back we also found a Peacock sitting in a tree. Animals that we had only seen in cages before. These were the real, live ones and that felt nice.

On our way back to Galle our driver wanted to show us the "Golden Temple" in Dambulla. A very nice Buddhist temple with an interesting museum.

Original post with pictures: [http://www.toan.se/Webtoan-2/2020/Sri-Lanka\\_Web/Sri-Lankaindex.htm](http://www.toan.se/Webtoan-2/2020/Sri-Lanka_Web/Sri-Lankaindex.htm)

### **Waipiti – June 2013 - Touring the Island**

On arrival outside the harbour we were met by Ekka, a tuk tuk driver, who was very helpful in taking us around and finding places we needed. He also organised freezer storage for our frozen food whilst we travelled. However we arranged a tour of the island and he supplied a van, driver and guide. The guide was useless – we knew more than he did - and at US\$150 per day for 2 people including accommodation and meals plus admission fees etc we felt we could have got better value travelling independently, particularly with regard to hotels and meals.

Tourism in Sri Lanka can be expensive as nearly all tourist attractions charge foreigners many times the local fee – in the case of famous places such as Sigiriya, up to 75 times what the locals pay. It is still a fascinating place to visit with a huge variety of history and Galle and Colombo are both interesting towns.

**Bebe – January 2011 – Around Galle:** We walked around the old Dutch area of Galle. I think this might have been declared a UNESCO site because it appears that renovations are underway on every block. The architecture is interesting. This is the type of area where one can spend days peeking into the shops. There are lots of small jewelry shops, many wood carving shops and several old mansion museums. We wandered around one of the museums and watched a man polishing stones and jewels with an old-fashioned wheel and water tray. If one enjoys jewelry, this is a good place to find it.

Another day, we decided we wanted to take the afternoon off and do some sightseeing. We called Marlan, the local "go to man" and told him we wanted a tuk-tuk to take us to lunch somewhere and then just drive around for a few hours.

The tuk-tuk driver took us back to the same beach we had visited earlier in the week. Pretty scenery even if the food was only mediocre,

Soon we were off on a long ride eastward from Galle along the shore main road. We stopped at a sea turtle hatchery farm but decided to skip it because the entrance fee was higher than we were willing to pay to see more turtles. Alongside the road was an elephant, just to remind us that we are in Asia.

Just as we were about to tell the driver to turn around and head back, he did exactly that and then pulled over to an area where men fish each day in the surf. This was a lovely small seaside park. I thought by now we had seen every manner of fishing known to man, but I was wrong. These men don short loin cloth garments and wade into the surf; climb poles and fish with tiny bamboo poles and very tiny fish hooks. Very picturesque but I am not so sure about how productive this manner of fishing is. The men blamed the wind for causing them to not catch any fish. I am just not so sure how many fish are feeding as the surf crashes in towards the beach. After about 10 minutes they climbed down and came back ashore, asking for

payment for their efforts. Bill gave them 300 rupiah; they wanted 500. Bill told them that if they wanted 500 then they should have said so before they tried to fish. After all, we had not asked them to go try to fish; they had volunteered.

Nearby there was a spot where a lot of people were playing in the water. These were the only people we had seen in the water during our long ride along the shore. I could understand why, because the surf really does come crashing in and swimming would be dangerous. The water is quite deep right up to the beach. I asked the driver why the people were in the water here and he pointed out that there were large flat rocks about 100 meters offshore that created sort of a pool of seawater. The people could not be washed out to sea from this pool area. He said this spot gets very crowded on Sunday mornings as the Sri Lankan people come to bathe in the sea.

The next stop on our return route to Galle was a Spice and Herb Garden. This was an ultra nice facility; the nicest structure and grounds that we have seen since arriving in Sri Lanka. A river ran alongside the garden and it was beautiful setting. Our guide had been studying to be an herbalist and was soon to graduate. The Spice and Herb Garden specializes in Ayurveda, a/k/a Ayurvedic medicine.

I realize many people believe in this stuff, and I do grant that some of it does work. But it was all I could do to keep my mouth shut when this guy was telling me that rubbing a mixture of clove oil, lemon and other spices onto my scalp each day would prevent Alzheimers. Or that rubbing my face with sandalwood cream and sandalwood oil each day would prevent wrinkles. Or that by taking 2 spoonfuls daily of a clove oil mixture would cause me to lose 5 kilo of weight in one month. If these natural products did all these claims, this place would be a multi-billion dollar industry. The guide offered us massages with the natural products for a modest fee. We declined. With all the skin allergies I have, the last think I would want is to have any of these natural products rubbed into my skin.

This was not a productive day for our tuk-tuk driver. We understand how this works. The driver receives a commission based on what the customer buys or spends at each shop or tourist stop. We did not buy any spices or herbs and did not have massages, so no commission to the driver. We later made sure that he was paid appropriately for his time.

We had done enough sight-seeing for the afternoon.

And a 3<sup>rd</sup> trip around Galle: Michael & Linda on S/V B'SHERET arrived Thursday afternoon. On Friday we shared a van with them for another half-day tour around the Galle area. We visited the fort, the museum, the stick fishermen and a search for printer cartridges for B'SHERET.

We ate lunch at a "local fare" buffet place. All the food was pretty spicy, but tasted fine to me -- except a local specialty of banana flowers and peppers that contained a lot of that dried fish powder. Way too strong a fishy flavor.

At the fort I bought a simple cotton dress from a sidewalk vendor. Bill was already in the van, so I borrowed the money from Michael. It was supposed to cost 1800 rupee, but Michael gave her 18,000 rupee. He had just arrived and wasn't yet familiar with the currency here. The woman took the money and hurried away. Luckily, the tour guide saw what had happened and quickly confronted the old woman and got the money returned. The tour guide and driver were pissed off and lectured the old woman about ripping off the tourists that are their livelihood. They were

really angry that she did not immediately return the money and instead tried to keep it. No kidding. \$180 USD for a simple cotton shift would be absurd!!! That is probably more money than that old woman makes in 6 months. Poverty does not excuse dishonesty.

Linda was a good sport and tried the stick fishing. She even caught a fish!!

**Bebe – January 2011 – Side-Trip to Colombo:** At 05:45 Wednesday morning we climbed over our neighbor's boat as quietly as possible, climbed the ladder and soon met our tuk-tuk at the security gate for the short ride to the railway station. The 06:30 train is the express and takes a little over 2 hours from Galle to Colombo. Bill had hoped to make it to Galle on Tuesday in order to have time to meet with someone at the US Embassy, but that didn't work out. We would have time for only a one-day visit with our friends.

Andy & Melissa sent a driver to meet us at the Colombo Fort Railway Station. Wasn't that so very nice of them! Andy & Mel love Sri Lanka. They have been coming here for years and were married here last year. And after seeing how they live in Colombo, it is very easy to understand why they love Sri Lanka so much; as they live a very privileged lifestyle in this country. Their condo is at one of the most prestigious addresses in Colombo. They are very, very close friends with all the top cricket players, especially the cricket team captain. And they also have close friends who are highly placed in national government. Andy & Mel have opened a tea packaging factory in Colombo, and they are currently shopping for beachfront real estate where they will build a home.

They gave us several options of things to do in Colombo during our one-day stay. There was a cricket game that afternoon, but it was not an important game so would not be the best example of the sport. We decided not to attend. There was shopping. Okay, maybe a little. And we could visit their tea packaging factory. That sounded the most interesting. We enjoyed a marvelous lunch in an upscale popular restaurant. Dessert was strawberry and red wine ice cream. Sounds strange but it was astonishingly delicious! Then we shopped a bit.

Next was the trip out to the tea packaging factory. We were required to don caps because the factory was in the process of a production run.

After the short tour we adjourned upstairs to visit with Andy's business partners in this venture and to enjoy a cup of the tea that was being packaged that day. (Isn't that a pretty tea set?) This particular day the factory was packaging Scottish Breakfast Tea to be shipped to Russia. The factory does not buy tea or own any inventory except the machines. They basically take packaging jobs from any company that needs tea packaged into bags – using the customer's bag material, customer's labels and strings, customer's boxes and customer's cartons. They might be packaging Scottish Breakfast Tea for Russia today and English Breakfast Tea destined for Poland or Australia tomorrow. Whatever the customer needs.

On the way back to the condo we stopped at an old hotel on the beach for drinks. This was a setting straight out of a Hemingway or Somerset Maugham novel. Lovely place. A wedding party was being photographed. The women looked so beautiful in their golden saris. The white wedding sari was gorgeous.

Dinner was at a southern Indian restaurant in Cinnamon Hotel. Again, a very upscale restaurant for Sri Lanka. Andy ordered a variety of dishes and all were delicious. Love spicy Indian food. Then we returned to their condo and watched their wedding video, which Melissa had just received that day.

The next morning the 4 of us took the train from Colombo to Galle. The train tracks run right next to the shore at some places and well away from shore at other places. I think around 5,000 people died on Sri Lanka during the big tsunami in December 2004, and there is a lot of tsunami damage visible in some areas. The property along the train tracks varies a great deal. Some of it is true poverty; other areas have very nice homes with large landscaped lawns. Then again, some areas are very picturesque, as seen by the photo below.

Andy & Melissa had tickets for the Galle Literary Festival. Bill & I had not bought tickets because we thought we would be long gone from Sri Lanka by now. (We are getting well behind schedule and need to get our butts in gear in order to get as far north as possible in the Red Sea before the winds start coming strong from the north. We should be in Egypt by mid-March and that is a long way.) Two of the events conflicted. So Andy asked me to attend a cooking class with him, and Bill was to go with Mellissa to have lunch with Candace Bushnell, author of "Sex in the City." I did make it to the cooking class with Andy; but Bill was detained by the port people and never made it to the Literary Festival that day. Oh well, he likely would have been the only male in attendance anyway.

The dish prepared in the cooking class was a traditional Sri Lankan specialty called Lampraise (pronounced Lamb-pree). This is a Dutch-Sri Lankan dish. It was quite involved and time-consuming; definitely something one would prepare only on special occasions. It involved cooking 6 different things; then assembling all on a banana leaf or plantain leaf; wrapping into a packet; and baking. Each packet was a large meal in itself. I don't know if I will ever have occasion to cook Lampraise, but now I know how to do it. I definitely would modify it to better suit our tastes. Sri Lankan food often contains dried fish powder or dried shrimp powder. We do not like either of those; the taste is too strong. I would definitely substitute roasted ground peanuts instead of the ground roasted dried shrimp.

**Arjuman – March 1999:** We used Mike for our 11 day trip inland. He provided a driver and his own van for R6 per kilometer. Our 11 day trip cost US\$140 for van & driver!

Delightful home stays can be had for about US\$10—our favorite places--or first class hotels for US\$70-80, and many other places fit somewhere in between. We really enjoyed Yassa, our driver. He's a wonderful, gentle man--but a pleasantly aggressive driver. We directed him to many sights or homestays where he'd never been. His cheery response was, "I not know. I find out. I can do anything! I Sri Lanka man!"

Kirk & Gisela Hall on Serenade recommend Panitha, a licensed tour guide who speaks excellent English. Vuela & Antares II recommend George with excellent English who works out of Columbo.

Sri Lanka has a wealth of antiquities--the cave temple at Dambulla (1st century BC), the fortress palace at Sigiriya (5th century AD), and the ancient city of Polonnaruwa (11-12th century AD) with it's excellent new archeological museum being the top three. For those really into antiquities don't miss the even more ancient city of Anuradhapura which is heavily protected against Tamil mischief.

By reading the Lonely Planet and having a well detailed map, you can get off the beaten track and more onto a discovery trail--and see the people more like they really are--without the Sri Lankan salute!

The hill country is a big attraction with most people seeing the very crowded city of Kandy nestled on the hills surrounding a lovely little lake graced by the Temple of the Tooth and its glittering golden roof. Then its on to Nuwara Eliya at 6200 feet elevation with miles and miles of tidy tea plantations along the way. It's wonderfully cool in N. Eliya and the added bonus is the street vendors who sell name brand polyester fleece jackets for US\$3-8 a piece! Be sure and buy some if you're doing the Adam's Peak climb--a great challenge up the well lighted miles of stairs to the top to view the sunrise and the locals paying respects at one of the most revered shrines in Sri Lanka. It's an arduous climb to 7400 feet yet young mothers carry their babes and young fathers carry their toddlers all the way to the top! Even grannies & gramps with a limited number of teeth slowly make the ascent! You can't believe you'd ever be cold, but it's such a sweaty trip up to the top, then a wait for the sun while the drummers solemnly beat their drums in the dawning hour, that the breeze really does a number on your goose bumps! After that a trip back to Nuwara Eliya and a stay in the Hill Club (late 1800's) is wonderfully decadent! There you can soak your tired muscles in a big tub and dine with white gloved waiters attending very attentively to your wants! The Hill Club is still a functioning club and is quite busy on weekends so plan your stay for a week day to avoid disappointment.

Yala National Park was a treat. A dawn trip took us to the reserve where wild water buffalo and peacocks were numerous with regular sightings of alligator, deer, wild boar, mongoose and dozens of birds, often very close to the jeep. But the real spice was a family of elephants that strolled majestically through the jungle, stopping to hose up great quantities of water not 50 feet away from us, then top it off with trunkfuls of grass. Baby elephant wasn't into grass so he ran toward mom to nuzzle in for some fresh, warm milk. She let him nurse a bit and then the entire family of 8 crossed the road about 30 feet from us--after giving us a very awesome 20 minute viewing!

Addresses/Phone/Email:

Mike Yacht Service, 252 J. E. Perera Mawatha, Magalle, Galle, Sri

Lanka Ph/FAX: 94-934-054

(Perera St. is also known as Circular Road).

Right Connection, 244 Circular Rd. (30 meters beyond Mike) FAX & email:

<tenten@slt.lk>

Another email location: On main road toward old Galle beyond small post office--?10 minute walk

Don Windsor & Co., 6 Cloisenberg Rd, Magalle, Galle, Sri Lanka

Ph/FAX: 94-934-592

Susil Malwathage, 39/11 Gaucarama Rd., Magalle, Galle, Sri Lanka

Panitha--email: goldhawk@slt.lk or contact through Susil

George--hand phone 072-264-857; Columbo residence 715-242. Will drive to Galle for pickup.

---- In a different SSCA Letter

The Lonely Planet Guide to Sri Lanka was indispensable!

We spent 3 weeks in Sri Lanka, 11 days of which was on tour, but could have spent a month except that our time was limited--it was late in the season. Most of the antiquities are found in the northern half of the island which is rather flat with occasional hills. Cooler temperatures are found in the mountainous south central portion with Adam's Peak reaching 7400 feet in elevation.

Cost of travel using Mike's Yacht Service was about US\$150 for van, fuel & driver for 11 day. We opted to stay in guest house/home stays for US\$10-15/night which we found generally delightful & usually acceptably clean. Others chose the other end of the scale at US\$60-90/night.

Mike felt Colombo should not be on our itinerary because of the unrest at the time. We drove through but did not stay overnight--others did & enjoyed it. Yet there were 3 bombings in Colombo during our Sri Lanka stay.

If seeing antiquities is your thing the following itinerary might be interesting. Each paragraph is a one day agenda unless otherwise noted.

From Galle (via Colombo) see the Pinnewala Elephant Orphanage near Kegalle then stay overnight in Kurunegala. We stayed at the Madonna Inn (to north of town) which was previously the home of a judge. Five rooms (2 quite large) & very friendly hosts.

See Panduvasnavara, ruins of the 3rd city of Sri Lanka. Then drive north to Yapahuwa, a fortress & Singhalese capital on top of a rock. Tour Anuradhapura--1-2 days depending on interest--a huge complex with very few standing building, but miles of foundations of interest. Excellent guide is W.P.S. Anuradha with 35 years experience. He also gave us a great tour of the museum. Most items are not labeled so a walking commentary makes them meaningful. Mike advised us not to stay here but in retrospect we would have stayed. Also of interest, Mihintale.

Take back roads to Aukana, a large stone carved Buddha which is best in early morning light, near the banks of a huge tank. The father of the King of Sigiriya spent much of his fortune building it assuring the future of his people with the water provided by the tank--also had the Buddha carved.

Proceed on to the seldom toured mountain hideaway of an early king at R\_\_\_\_\_ west of Habarana (listed on the Cultural Triangle multi attraction ticket). Elephants were creating havoc at the next door park reserve when we were there. The caretaker rides in on a bicycle and was frightened--would only go if we followed in the van! Stay in Habarana (we stayed at the slightly dumpy Habarana Inn run by a lovely young couple) or Polonnaruwa (Sri Lankan Inns Tourist Hotel out of town is great--a judge's place, huge rooms on a courtyard garden, friendly).

At Polonnaruwa see the outstanding newly opened archeological museum first. A guide for the ruins makes them much more meaningful. We missed Medirigiriya but wished we hadn't.

Sigiriya also is better by far with a guide. Choose guides who have been around a while! And who speak English which you can understand!! Eden Garden seems the best of the inexpensive set, the Rest House is superbly located but musty and not for us. We stayed at the pleasant Flower Inn, but they have no room for drivers & he got a raw deal--and our host was an



alcoholic. Our driver was offered a room but it was taken away at bedtime for another guest! So...would not recommend it.

Sigiriya Village is the best at the other end of the spectrum. See the cave temple at Dambulla (it's closed at ?10:15 for 15 minutes to feed the Buddhas lunch!), but we'd skip the rock monastery at Aluvihara as well as the gedige at Nalanda. Enjoyed the spice & herbal remedy tour. Had a great lunch at the Clover Grange Hotel in Matale. In Kandy we stayed at McLeod's perched on the side of the hill with a million \$\$ view of the lake and golden roofed Temple of the Tooth. Friends say the Stonehouse Lodge is not to be missed at US\$43. The daughter of the Polonnaruwa judge has a nice place with 3 rooms (but no accom for drivers) beside Kandy Lake, #49 Louis Peiris Mw., ph/fx: 94-8-232142 <jmcsu@nmu.pdn.ac.lk>. The judge's son has the Windsor Castle Hotel, a former planters club, for US\$35-40, at 40/2 Ampitiya Rd. ph: 0094-8-224386. A walk through the temple of the tooth is interesting--we had a guide--if only to observe the dedication of the people. Also enjoyed the Kandyan dancing. Small binoculars are good in case you sit in back!

From Kandy to Nuwara Eliya is the scenic drive up through the tea plantations. Don't miss a tea factory tour. In Nuwara Eliya we stayed at the not to be missed Hill Club for US\$35--complete with fire places in each room, white gloved waiters at dinner & a hot water bottle in your bed at night! It's an old club for the "good old boys" and although she's showing her age just a bit it's a wonderful stop. If you choose to climb Adam's Peak (we did!) arrange it so that you stay at the Hill Club afterward to soak in their magnificently huge bathtubs (we blew it!). The Hill Club is quite busy on weekends with members so to avoid disappointment go there during the week. Avoid puja days (religious day off every month at the full moon) when the crowds throughout the hill country can be much more dense, especially if it's near a weekend. The hill country can be quite cool. Don't miss the fresh market in the village as well as the alley way vendors across the street who sell polyester fleece jacket seconds etc. for US\$2-10! The same items we pay US\$65-180 for at home!

We were gluttons and did the Adam's Peak climb leaving the Wathsala guesthouse (a dump but beautifully located on the river--not much choice!) at shortly after the recommended time (?3 am) to arrive at the top for sunrise. Our ascent took 2 hours 45 minutes--right in there with the kids in their 20's. It's 7 kilometers of which more than half are stairs! The path is well lit with many pilgrims--old folks whose knees must surely give out on the way down, young mothers with newborns in their arms as well as young fathers carrying their toddlers. You don't walk with the agility of a gazelle for the next couple days!!! We drove back to Nuwara Eliya afterwards & stayed at the ex British Governor's mansion called Cey Bank Rest (on the main road near the Grosvenor).

Rooms were a bit tatty but delightfully huge at about 15X25 feet--but no bathtubs! . Had we known we would have done it the other way around with the Hill Club coming after Adam's Peak! It was our most expensive stay after the Hill Club at US\$17. Restaurant was quiet but very good.

The next morning it was up departure at 5:30 am to drive to World's End to start our walk at 6:45 am for a viewing before the morning haze closed off the scenery. The drive was great with sunrise showing Adam's Peak in the distance and a herd of elk grazing in the early morning light on the high plains. Entrance fee into the park is a bit much at US\$12! Even if you opt not to do the walk the drive there is worthwhile as well as the journey on to Hapatule via a paved and very

scenic twisty road. We drove backroads as often as we could with a detailed map of Sri Lanka and loved it. We actually drove on to Tissamaharama to go to Yala West & stayed at the Lakeside Hotel--good size rooms, clean & friendly. But a stay in the mountain tea town of Bandarawela at the Bandarawela Hotel, a former planter's club—with bathtubs--for US\$35 would have been fun.

Another early rising found us jeeping to Yala West where we saw numerous animals & birds--a bit reminiscent of Kakadu in Australia. The highlight was a family of elephants hosing up water & feeding about 50 feet from the jeep! After a late breakfast we drove back to Galle visiting several sights along the way.

We took 3 cases of water with us as well as food & juices for picnics along the way if lunch time came without any restaurants in sight or for a quick energy boost when we could see our driver was fading from the long day. The Sri Lankan salute seems to be the arm extended from the elbow with the hand held palm up! But by getting away from the heavily touristed areas we saw very little of the "give-me" attitude. The people were lovely--and we enjoyed our visit to Sri Lanka immensely.

#### **5.3.4.4 Hiking.**

#### **5.3.5 Clearing Out**

**Kurukulla – February 2023:** We set our departure date for the following Saturday with Sanjeewa insisting on driving down to say goodbye and wave us off. We re-victualled etc, with the help of Ekka our TukTuk man, on Saturday morning before departing at midday for the Maldives. The departure formalities went smoothly, with no delays, thanks to Uresh at Windsor Reef.

**Tregoning – January 2023:** We had left Sri Lanka at exactly the time we predicted, 8 am on Sunday (5th February). Our agent Uresh had come to the boat at 7:30 am and we followed him to the Immigration Office to get the exit stamps in our passports. He then kindly waited to help with our docklines, although several neighboring sailors, were keen to assist. There was no wind, so it was easy to have the lines released from the dock, our bow was given a good shove, and we could simply clear the boat in front of us and maneuver out of the small yacht basin.

Our four fenders had made a valiant effort in the trying circumstances of the surge and assorted rubber buffers on the concrete wall. Our only ball-float had started to deflate in the final couple of days, but we think that Randall may be able to patch it with dinghy repair equipment. Three of the fender covers were completely destroyed, and one I was able to salvage, although it now looks as though it had been a test dummy for make-up artists for a Frankenstein movie...the artists who were rejected... The covers are not intended to protect the fenders but to prevent them from grinding dirt into the hull's paint.

**Bebe – January 2011:** We stopped by our agent's office to inquire about clearing out. It normally takes over a day to get cleared out of here and we hoped to leave either Saturday or Sunday morning. Unfortunately, can't do that. It is not possible to have the electric meter read and an invoice for electricity prepared on a weekend. So it now looks like we will be leaving Monday afternoon – as long as the weather forecast remains favorable. Even the best weather is a beat up to Cochin (wind against us for you non-sailors); we sure do not want to attempt it in less than favorable weather.

## 5.4 Trincomalee

Trinco seems to be the best harbor, if you want to leave your boat and go inland for a tour of Sri Lanka. However, it's a 48 hour trip up current to get down to Galle from Trinco.

### **Sail SE Asia – Aug 2023 – Agents: Who have people used as agents to clear in Trinco recently?**

A: I am using Nuwan of GAC services in Trinco. They mostly handle big ships but Nuwan himself is very attentive, other staff less so.

A: We used GAC for our agent. In Trincomalee there are no marinas, or at least there weren't in 2020. There is really only one place to anchor, near their concrete jetty, where you have to land to go ashore.

**Tiger Lilly – May 2019:** Along with our fellow Indian Ocean Cruisers, we have been following the horrific events of Islamic terrorism in Sri Lanka. The northeast port of Trincomalee is very secure, and the Controlled Customs Anchorage which all visiting international yachts are required to use is adjacent to a large Sri Lankan Naval Base. The harbour is actively, and aggressively patrolled by both the Navy and the Harbour Police. Knowing what we know about Trincomalee, and notwithstanding the current terrorism threat, if we were in Sebang (and if Trincomalee is still open to visiting yachts) we would still consider a stop in Trincomalee. But then TIGER LILLY cruised 50 miles south of the Somalian boarder, we also cruised the Amazon Delta - based on credible information - and first-hand experience.

Last year we sailed direct to Trincomalee, Sri Lanka, from Sabang, Indonesia. It was a slow but steady 900 mile passage with the wind abaft the starboard beam all the way. From the E coast of Sri Lanka we sailed south close-hauled on the starboard tack (the wind was W at 18-20 knots) until the SE Trades filled in, then we tacked and beam-broad reached west on the port tack all the way across on 9 and 8 degrees S to East Africa. The passage from Trincomalee to Tanga, Tanzania took 29 days and covered 3750 miles.

**Brick House – Feb 2019:** Warning to anyone going to Sri Lanka. You should not miss Sri Lanka..it is an awesome stop...BUT...

DO NOT involve the agency (your port clearance agency) if you are NEEDING A TOW! They are charging exorbitant prices for the tow, and apparently the agent cannot help to reduce the fees imposed by his agency. Refuse all services from Agency for distress calls of any kind. Instead, call on 16 for Sri Lanka Navy and/or Sri Lanka Coast Guard. It is said by people in the know that they will not charge, but I can't personally promise you that. Or anchor outside and have a buddy boat help. Unless \$1000 is nothing to you considering the bad situation! Or sail in.

Even an email to the agent personally COULD make it so he is obligated to send someone...REFUSE AGENCY HELP IN . Here are 4 photos I found on internet for the contacts to call. Make sure to make note of all of them before departure...or sail with a buddy boat to help out if any problems. If I were you, I wouldn't even admit you have an agent...do everything to get help from Navy or Coast Guard rather than the agency.

**Another boat commented:** It is a sad and costly story. To give a full picture, let me add the following: we were called by Sarafina in the early morning hours the 13th. When we passed him, and asked to relay to the agent that his engine didn't work, that he was low on power, and wanted assistance for entering the harbour at 08:00 the 14th. We did that and at the same time

gave our ETA at 20:00 the 13th. We were told that the harbour was closed after 16:00, and slowed down and waited outside the harbour, and gave a new ETA at 08:00 the 14th, same time as Sarafina. We also told the agent that we would try to get in contact with Sarafina, and offer to tow him into the Anchorage. He then thought this was going to happen according to his response. The problem was however, that we called Sarafina in the evening and also in the morning of the 14th, with no answer, and we didn't see him outside the harbour at 08:00 either. Then we entered, was checked by the navy and proceeded to Town Bay. Trincomalee is a large harbour with little traffic, and the weather conditions were fine for sailing into the Anchorage.

**Liberte – January 2019:** When arriving in Trinco you head into the port from the harbour. We tied up on the town jetty, which was marked on our charts as a passenger jetty, next to the boat "Commander 7". The coordinates were 08deg 34 045n, 081deg 13.900e. Commander 7 is the white hulled boat on the starboard side of the jetty.

**Brick House – Feb 2018:** For those going to Sri Lanka. My communication with GAC agent (supposedly an agent is required) has been responded to with the following: (\$310 one month, presumably \$450 for two months)

"Port Charges Per Month 30 Days = 100.00 USD

Garbage Removal Charges ( USD 10 Per Week) = 4 WEEK X 10.00 = 40.00 USD

Custom Service Charges = 20.00 USD

Attendance Fee = 100.00 USD

Bank Charges For Remittance = 50.00 USD

Estimated Cost = 310.00 USD

Please send us following documents for pre-arrival formalities with port authorities (Docs you have).

(We did not know what #2 or #3 was and he came back saying those are not required. I told him we do not have #6, and stated that the information can be seen on the USCG documentation, as well as depth, but stated it separately as well. Our insurance doesn't state anything specifically for or against coverage for Port property. I asked him to please let me know when this is approved so I can procure visas if we are accepted to come to their port.)

1. Duly filled ISPS Questionnaire (refer the attached and fill in full)
2. ISSC
3. CSR
4. Crew List
5. Registration Certificate
6. Hull and Machinery Certificate
7. Yacht Draft
8. Whether arms & ammunition available onboard for usage

Also please send us Full Protection and Indemnity (P&I) Cover for the vessel, which should include following but not limited to:

1. Oil Pollution
2. Wreck Removal
3. Damage to Port Property

Please send us the P&I cover as we have to get same endorsed by local correspondent and also the Port Authority.

**Yolo – Feb 2015:** Trincomalee, Sri Lanka is on the NE coast of the island nation of Sri Lanka. It has a huge natural harbour and was once considered one of the best ports in the world. The British based themselves here during skirmishes. Unfortunately, the civil war between the Sinhalese and the Tamils and Muslims closed the northern part of this island off for many years and is just now being reopened to tourism. We are the first group of yachts to arrive in years. As such, we are part of a learning curve for the officials here and we get a little annoyed by some of the bureaucratic bullsh\*t at times. But we persevere.

**YOLO – Feb 2015 – First Impressions:** Good news, Trinco harbor and city appears to be clean and well managed. Unlike Lankawi and Phuket, you can actually see your keel and rudder in the water. Clean clear air abounds.

Given the large tourist area north of Trinco, and the fact that schools now require all students to study English, many locals speak some English.

Cost of living: The average person gets a wage of about \$1.50 USD per hour in Sri Lanka. A few citizens appear to earn much more than this amount, and most locals appear to be earning much, much, much less.

So far, a brief shower or two hits the bay every day. And, the temps are slightly lower and more comfortable than Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore.

Still enjoying the five-a-days...call to prayers. Thank goodness the volume has been turned down significantly when compared to Malaysia.

You are going to like Trinco, so far we love it.

#### **5.4.1 Approach, Arrival, and Formalities**

**IO Crossing FB Group – Feb 2020 (Different Boat):** We had a good stay in Trincomalee. The security guards were OK although always on the lookout for a handout. We had purchased new sails manufactured in Sri Lanka and delivered to the port. Customs demanded unheard of documentation and ultimately a blatant bribe from the manufacturer. We were held up from leaving for a day because of it. Sandeep tried his best but could not do much about it.

**IO Crossing FB Group – February 2020:** Hi Everyone! Just a quick heads up for anyone following in our wake to Trincomalee port. We just finished up a great sail from Phuket to Trincomalee. All went according to plan, except as we neared port the authorities needed a medical documents confirming the health of passengers aboard before we could be admitted anywhere inside the port, as they were especially concerned about the coronavirus. We do not have the ability to download documents at sea (our Iridium is not set up on that plan) and so we had a bit of concern about what we could do.

Luckily, there are many cell towers right on the shoreline and we were able to use ORoaming (an electronic SIM card service on our OPPO phones) to buy a SIM and pull in the documents while hove-to just outside.

If you are heading this way and you don't have an Iridium plan that allows downloading of documents, you may want to ask the agents to send the documents ahead of time and set up a system to be able to get internet in Sri Lanka while just offshore so you can fill out the document and email to the agents as you approach. Other than this, check in went beautifully smoothly and we were very happy with a warm welcome to Sri Lanka.

**Liberté – January 2019:** When arriving in Trinco you head into the port from the harbour. We tied up on the town jetty, which was marked on our charts as a passenger jetty, next to the boat "Commander 7". The coordinates were 08-34.045N / 081-13.900E. Commander 7 is the white hulled boat on the starboard side of the jetty.

Some notes on our passage:

3. Indian Coast Guard over flow us several times just north of an island. Even though we were more than 12nm offshore they made radio contact and very were polite. They just wanted our details.
4. Fishing fleet East of Trincomalee. From 40 to 60 nm East of Trincomalee we encountered a substantial fishing fleet. While many vessels including nets and buoys had AIS, many didn't. There were also unmarked floating drift nets! I would suggest only transiting this area during daylight hours.

#### **Brick House – Feb 2017: NIGHT TIME ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE**

Be advised that entrance or exit in or out of Trincomalee Port is NOT allowed at night. There will be no circumstance that will permit entrance at night. There are no lighted buoys, and harbormaster is not willing to be responsible for your night time entrance/departure. You must heave to or drift until morning if you arrive at night. Plan your arrivals accordingly.

**CUSTOMS CLEARANCE TO PORT:** Be advised that It is a big problem if you arrive to Trincomalee with clearance to a port of "Maldives" or anything besides "Trincomalee, Sri Lanka" or "High Seas". GAC agent Sandeep worked hard for many hours today to get the problem cleared up with customs, and it is now resolved, but be aware that common practice elsewhere is not common practice here.

**Laragh – Feb 2016:** Laragh arrived in Trincomalee yesterday after a fast passage from Lankawi of 6 days 21 hours. Fishing boats present from 100 miles off Sri Lankan coast but none approached us. We went through the great channel north of Sumatra and encountered some shipping both before and after the channel but we were north of the shipping lane and so clear of trouble. We caught a nice 150 cm Spanish mackerel en route.

We arrived early so port authorities weren't expecting us and it took a few hours for the navy to allow us into the port but once tied to the pier we cleared in without any fuss.

One point they were clear about - water is available but should be ordered from the port control NOT taken from the police tank on the pier. Some yachties have abused this facility in the past. Very nice people and lovely natural harbour.

**Laragh – Feb 2016: Sri Lanka, Trincomalee, Clarification of port authority dues:** after four days of negotiations Laragh has finally established that the port authority dues are \$US 100 per 30 day period and not per calendar month as we were originally quoted. (Ie we were originally invoiced for \$200 for a stay of 24 days from 28th January to 20th Feb now revised to \$100).

Make sure to advise your Sri Lankan agent of departure/ clearing out at least 4 business days in advance!

**Totem – February 2015 (after Yolo):** We got into Trinco yesterday.

We anchored at 08 33.85 N / 081 13.68 E.

The process for clearing in seems to change with every arrival since they are now becoming more accustomed to yachts (8 now in the harbor). Port did not ask for any information over the radio. Agent had us tie at the town pier for clearance, all of which was done in about 2 hours. The ONLY documents we had to produce were our passports and our Malaysian clearance: nothing else was requested.

When we went ashore in town, we weren't asked for passports by security.

**Yolo – February 2015:** YOLO arrived in Trincomalee at sunset Feb 1. Saol Eile arrived the next morning, too. We specifically asked to anchor out, not to tie up to a pier, and were told we could drop anchor very near the Town Pier (which is on the Navionics charts). The Port Control gave us permission to do so and the Navy vessel that had stopped us from entering the harbor until then allowed us to pass into the high-security harbor.

We think yachts must specifically ask to anchor versus tie up to a wharf or they may direct you to a barge in Mud Cove with giant truck tires as fenders on the wharf. Mud Cove is inconvenient for doing anything in town. Being tied up to the wharf makes it easier for the agent to reach you as there is nobody with a VHF except the Port Control folks. Even the Navy boats didn't respond to our VHF calls and they were within shouting distance of YOLO. The GAC Agency rep, Ravi Yogaraja, contacted the only other boat anchored here via cell phone when we arrived and they contacted us by yelling across the water. He'd set a time to meet us at the Town Pier.

First priority for the agent is to get you a SIM card so he can contact you (and you him) by phone. He arrived with SIM cards in hand but they were highly marked up in price as compared to what you can buy on shore. We just arranged specific times to meet him at the Town Pier to deliver and pick up documents. We later obtained 102 minutes of talk time and 5GB of data for a total of 900 rupiahs, about \$7 USD, versus the \$10-20 that Ravi wanted to sell them for and we don't know what volume of data his might've included.

Ravi told us the Customs officials would come out to the boat, but when we took the dink in at the specified time, he just came out and brought all the required paperwork with him. We provided the boat documentation, the passports, ETA visa info or copies, the last port clearance, and signatures on the mostly empty forms. He filled in the paperwork, and in our next meeting, about an hour later, he provided us with stamped passports with visas attached and all was well; we were free to roam the country.

However, yachties beware. The Customs and Police are at the end of the dock and we had to show passports/visas and submit to bag searches when we pass the end of the dock. We are not allowed to take garbage ashore! Ravi insisted they are very strict and will fine us heavily if

they know we are dumping garbage ashore. He would arrange pickup on the dock for a 'small consideration'. That small consideration ended up being \$20 USD! to have a contractor come by every other day to collect garbage from the pier/yachties. So we are still working on how to throw away trash here legally for a reasonable cost.

We were the 4th boat to clear in here in years, the other three ahead of us clearing in just a few days before us. So dealing with yachts is still new here and we hope we can convince Ravi to keep prices low to encourage more visitors. We have yet to explore Trinco, but hear that ice doesn't exist and there are no washing machines--you pay for laundry by the piece, not weight and it comes out pretty expensive.

**Yolo – February 2015** - The following clearance and cruising information is provided to help sailors visiting Sri Lanka. This information is based on two U.S.A. citizens on the 42 foot catamaran

## APPROACH

Most yachts visiting Sri Lanka depart from Lankawi, Malaysia or Phuket, Thailand. From Phuket you sail almost due west to get to Trincomalee, which many people call "Trinco". When you leave Phuket you will typically encounter a few local fishing boats. The biggest surprise when sailings towards the Nicobar islands are the rivers of currents you encounter running north or south. You will certainly feel their counter current chop of over a knot and notice that your boat sudden changes it's heading, by 30 degree or more in some cases. These streams of currents were encountered every 5 or so nautical miles between Phuket and the Nicobars regardless of the depth of the water. After passing through the Nicobars using the Sombrero Channel between Great Nicobar Island and Katchal Island, the mid-ocean rivers disappeared. FYI, we sailed through the very deep and wide Sombrero Channel between Great Nicobar and Katchal at 0200 without any issues. No boats or fishing equipment was seen.

During late January and early February steady winds from the northeast were encountered in the low to mid-teen range. Seas for the most part stayed below 1.5 meters, often lower. With the winds on the aft quarter, per normal for this time of year, you should expect a comfortable 1,100 nm passage of around 9 days. Several brief rain showers were encountered during our passage and the wind did come out of the northwest for several hours. You can see the squall lines forming and the winds ahead of them stay favorable.

Dolphins and whales were about the only thing spotted between the Nicobars and Sri Lanka by most yachts.

About 65 nm from the west coast of Sri Lanka you may see a few fishing floats in very deep waters. About 35 nm from shore you will encounter a few fishing boats. These boats frequently approach yachts from all directions at full speed, with a cast of characters using flailing hand signals. Net, net, they want clothing, food, booze, or tobacco products, despite the crashing waves and winds. Wave them away and proceed west as fast as possible. Don't be surprised if you have to bear off or start an engine to avoid them.

Per normal, approach the port with your yellow Q flag flying.

Trinco is a military and tourism town with an air force base and a large naval base and dockyard. It is impossible to sneak up on this port without encountering several naval vessels, who will approach you in or near the open ocean 24/7. When you get near Elephant Island



(08.31.0 N and 081.14.0 E) give Trinco Port Control a call on VHF channel 16. In most cases, Port Control will already know that you are approaching their port, as informed by the Navy, and will hail you on VHF 16. VHF Channel 10 is used as the port working channel. The port controllers are very professional and speak perfect English. He will ask you several questions before giving you permission to pass into the port via Elephant Pass. The questions are:

1. Verify the name of your vessel.
2. Length Over All of your vessel (LOA)
3. Last port of call
4. Flag
5. Number of people on board
6. Gross tonnage of your vessel
7. Draft of your vessel
8. Port Control will ask you if you have the specific navigational charts for these waters and whether you want a pilot boat's assistance to enter the port. Our Navionics electronic charts were spot-on in terms of port navigational aids and surrounding hazards. This is a deep water, well-marked port, which I believe can be entered day or night by experienced sailors. A pilot boat is/was not required.

When speaking with Port Control it is important that you specifically request permission to "ANCHOR IN TOWN BAY NEAR THE TOWN PIER." The Town Pier anchorage is located at 08.33.8 N and 081.13.8 E, and has good holding in about 24 feet/8 meters of water. This port appears to be bullet proof in terms of avoiding high winds and seas. The Town Pier anchorage gives you nearby and safe access to the "Passenger Pier" which in now in reality the Customs and Police Station pier. The security force on the Passenger Pier is 24/7. This anchorage and dinghy dock is in the heart of Trinco. FYI, the Town Pier has basically been reclaimed by the sea and is hard to identify. The "Passenger Pier" which no longer serves as a passenger dock is less than 100 meters north of what remains of the "Town Pier."

If you do NOT request and get permission to anchor in Town Bay, Port Control will probably send you to China Bay, Mud Cove. This location is at the north end of Trinco harbor near several military bases. This location requires you to tie up to a large barge with huge black tires fenders. This location is way out of town and requires a cab, bus, or tuk-tuk to get to Trinco. It is hard to believe that a safer location in Asia for a yacht could be found than Mud Cove.

Tides appear to be less than 1 meter.

After you anchor, or tie to the barge, you must call Port Control. If you want to move your boat while in port you must get permission from Port Control. They are keen to keep track of where visiting yachts are located and to control the movements in this "high-security" port.

## CLEARING IN

Shortly after the anchor is down, or you tie to the barge, one of the many small navy boats will tie up next to you for a "security inspection." Expect about 6 extremely young men to board your boat with their large dirty black boots. If you insist they will remove their boots when entering your boat. The leader of their pack speaks good English, has you sign several nearly blank pieces of paper, and puts a check mark next to the only thing of substance they did during their long and boring daily duty assignment. Go Navy!!! Their inspection was just a quick look around the inside of the boat. Inspection done, paperwork signed, and they were gone. They left us no papers. Perfect.

Most yachts appear to be using GAC as their clearance agent, with prior e-mail correspondence required. Their local representative is "Ravi" Ravindran Yogaraja, Executive. His contact information is [trinco@mclarens.lk](mailto:trinco@mclarens.lk), or cell phone (+94) 077 767 3472. Unbelievably, neither he nor his company have a VHF radio. So to contact Ravi hail Port Control or one of the yachts anchored nearby and ask them to contact "Ravi" via phone and make an appointment with him to clear into Trinco. Then put your dinghy in the water and go to the Passenger Pier at the appointed time. The captain should go alone to the pier with all passports, a copy of the ship's papers, crew lists, and the outbound clearance form from your last port of call. Look for Ravi, the guy wearing the blue GAC baseball cap.

At this point Ravi will try to sell you a SIMs card for your cell phone so that he can communicate with you. Historically, his quoted prices are 3 to 10 times higher than local Trinco prices. We declined his SIMs card offer and made an appointment to pick-up our completed clearance paperwork one hour later at the Passenger Pier. Ravi is a wealth of knowledge, very friendly, born locally, speaks perfect English, and has worked for GAC for 7 years. I assume he lives nearby the pier since we have seen him riding his motorcycle down the streets several times with his 6 year old son on the back. Ravi can arrange just about anything in Sri Lanka, for a price.

Recently four yachts pulled into Trinco and the related clearance agencies/departments don't appear to be consistent with the handling of yachts. We (yachts) are kind of a new things...so to speak. So, the clearance procedures appear to be a work in progress. To streamline things I strongly encouraged GAC to do what they are being paid to do. That is, handle all of the officials and paperwork. Ravi followed this approach for the last several yachts. However, he did note that the Customs and Immigration officials were NOT visiting our vessels and hinted that this might not be normal routine, if one exists. I'm guessing the officials are more than glad to sit in their comfortable offices and stay on land, per the norm. Anyway, Ravi did soft sell me on donating \$20 for each official for not visiting our vessels, etc., etc. When pressed with, "Is this an routine official charge for clearing in?" He replied, no it was a suggestion, for "consideration"...optional...not required...and he would distribute the donations for me/us. Net, net, no funds were exchanged, or will not be donated in the future unless required, and receipted. I do not want to set up the expectation that future yachts should backhanding a \$20 USD here, there, or the other place...for agents and/or governmental employees.

**Sage – January 2015 (reported by Totem):** First boat into Trinco is Sage! Here are pertinent facts they sent along, to help boats in their wake.

They arrived at 2000 on Tuesday

Navy vessels (unlit, not using VHF) approached them in the outer harbor, but port authority responded on VHF16 and allowed harbor entry.

Once inside the harbor, the Port sent a pilot boat (!) to lead them to a large wharf.

Clearance took 2 days, with a parade of officials on board, led by Ravi- the GAC agent assisting. He does have "an understanding of yachts" and was able to diffuse the stranger Port requests (like, wanting IMO declarations).

The only problem has been immigration, which is only granting them 2 weeks travel in the Trinco area. However, Sage did not do the advance visa request online. That may be the reason, but it's not clear. They're working with immi to change this.

They feel the vessel is secure at the wharf vs anchoring off town, especially without the company of other yachts. Currently the Port doesn't want boats anchoring off anyway- although that may change (last year a boat was permitted to anchor off town)

Passage notes: 10 days, slow, squally. N swell and NE winds, mostly 10-12 knots...but a nice tuna and delicious sashimi!

**Totem – Nov 2014 – Negotiating with an Agent Before Arrival:** Trincomalee is not accustomed to having private yacht visit (my info says only 2 since the civil war ended), so arriving at an agreement with an agent took several weeks and many emails. The initial quotes I received from a couple of different agents were in the range of US\$2,000! GAC was convinced (after I sent them photos of our boat and the family on board) and they brought their fees in line with Galle agents... a little over \$200.

To request agent services from GAC, send an email to this list (yes, they asked to have ALL addresses included with an enquiry). It wouldn't hurt to mention Totem and me (Behan Gifford) as I've done all the correspondence recently (Sept – Nov 2014).

chinthaka.wjsdr@gac.com

michael.jansen@gac.com

ops.trinco@gac.com

nilan.jayawardana@gac.com

agency.lk@gac.com

You will be asked for the following:

- Crew list
- Copy of Insurance cover

You'll have to fill out an ISPS form for the port (they'll send a blank; our completed form is in Dropbox, SriLanka-ISPS-Totem.doc).

After that, we just have to provide notice prior to arrival: they request "96 / 84 / 72 / 48 / 24 / 12 hrs prior to arrival OPL Trincomalee." Sounds like commercial traffic policy not "oh you're a little boat!" but not really worried about it.

## **5.4.2 Cruisers Services**

### **5.4.2.1 Money**

**Yolo – February 2015:** Currently 132 local rupees gets you about \$1 US dollar.

Good news, the ATMs at the local banks have a very low fee when compared to the bandits in Thailand and Malaysia. Most charge a flat fee of 200 rupee (\$1.50 USD) for using the ATM regardless of the amount you withdrawal. This does not include the typical 1% foreign transaction fee charged by your bank which is sometimes itemized on your monthly account statement, and for some people not listed, but always added to the withdrawal amount by the bank's back office.

As in Thailand a pile of 1000 rupee notes is of little world value. It is kind of fun to see the ATM just keep on spitting them out until it reaches a couple hundred USD.

### **5.4.2.2 Diesel and Gasoline**

### **5.4.2.3 Propane (Cooking Gas).**

### **5.4.2.4 Groceries/Provisioning**

**Yolo – February 2015:** There is a good local fresh market in Trincomalee. It is on everyday and the earlier the better. By five in the evening the place is empty and the stalls all closed up and the concrete swept clean.

There are onions, shallots, potatoes, peppers, eggplant, carrots, turnips, tomatoes, lettuce, green beans, cauliflower and squash were veggies I recognized. There are always some greens that I have no idea what they are (they look like the weeds cut from the side of the road sometimes). Few people speak enough English to tell me what they might be called or how to use them so I leave them on the tarps. If I get an answer, it's usually to "cut it up and cook it" and that usually means in oil.

Bananas are 70 rupees/kilo and the weight of these were written on the stalks (big stalks). At about 30 kg. each, these bananas would cost about \$6-7 each large stalk.

### **5.4.2.5 Water**

**Brickhouse – April 2018:** If you ever need water in a real pinch in Trincomalee SriLanka... +94 773 851 678. I just call them Water SriLanka. The water is good drinking water from Kandy in 20 L bottles at 250 rupees per bottle. About \$1.80 usd, delivered, and no bottle deposit. And they work with the port authority to allow it in. Cash on delivery.

**YOLO – February 2015:** No drinking water out of the tap in this city. Ice and cold drinks are a rarity.

The water supply for Trinco comes from a huge reservoir that we passed on the way to the park. Some of the floodgates were open and the water was sluicing down the river below. Our driver claims the water is filtered many times and should be safe to drink from the taps in town, but we don't see many locals drinking it. Bottled water is still very popular.

### **5.4.2.6 Boat Parts & Repairs**

Brickhouse – April 2018:

#### **5.4.2.7 Laundry**

**YOLO – February 2015:** If a local shop does your laundry it is charged per item, wash, dried, and ironed. Per load it is about \$30 USD! We are seeking alternatives at this point for laundry services.

#### **5.4.2.8 Trash Disposal**

**Totem – Later Feb 2015:** There is a yachtie-organized system for garbage collection, about \$1/boat when boats organize to bring all garbage to shore (set up by SY Sage at the town hall). Radically different experience from the first boats to arrive. Of course, this could all change tomorrow!

**YOLO – Feb 2015:** Garbage is a study in progress: Ravi would like the yachts to sign up for an every-other-day garbage pick-up service, costing \$20 USD per pick-up at the Passenger Pier. A local explained to me that a city truck picks-up the bagged or boxed garbage sitting at the curb on Tuesday mornings for free. We will try the later option and see how it goes.

#### **5.4.2.9 Medical**

##### **5.4.2.10 Getting Around**

**YOLO – Feb 2015:** For most cruisers everything in Trinco is within walking distance. If you like, take a tuk-tuk and pay the skin factor rate of one or two USD to cover the fare.

When you leave the Town Pier area and go into the adjacent city you might be asked to show your ID (passport) to the security guards. They may look for a valid visa stamp in your passport and search you bags/backpack. The same procedure might be required upon return. Being typical governmentals, this attention to detail will probably vanish with more yachties.

#### **5.4.3 Communications**

##### **5.4.3.1 Telephones & Cell Phones**

**Yolo – February 2015:** Data/voice SIMS cards are cheap \$7 USD for one month of voice and 5 GB of data using a 3G network. Time will tell if it is truly a good deal, given all the fine print and hidden details typically associated with a cell phone agreement.

##### **5.4.3.2 Internet Access**

##### **5.4.3.3 Mail**

#### **5.4.4 Things to See and Do**

##### **5.4.4.1 Restaurants and Bars**

**YOLO – Feb 2015:** Non-locals should expect inflated tourist prices. Few cafes and stores have posted prices. Shopping around per normal will get you a fair local price. For example 70 cents US will get you a kilo of bananas. A dinner at the best of restaurants will set you back \$15 to \$20 USD. A can or bottle of Coke is 70 cents US. A large loaf of white cut bread is 75 cents. A large cold beer at the best of cafes will be a little over \$2 USD.

#### **5.4.4.2 Local Museums & Temples/Churches**

**Yolo – Feb 2015:** The Maritime Museum has a wraparound veranda on the second story. Makes for great views out towards the ocean. This museum was refurbished in 2008.

We went to a Hindu temple in town in Trincomalee, They are always so garishly colorful. We see lots of folks with dots and dashes of different colored ashes walking around. A heavy Indian influence here. Many women are in saris.

The men use coconuts as offerings. They light a bit of oil on the coconut and back up to this fenced in stone while praying. Then they throw the coconut down to smash the coconut on the stone on the ground, splashing the coconut water all over. Someone comes along and collects the broken coconut pieces. I don't get why, but the man I asked didn't speak English.

#### **5.4.4.3 Day Trip to Hurulu Eco Park (Elephants)**

**Yolo – February 2015:** *Ed note: This post on Yolo's blog was mostly pictures, and no facts about how they arranged this trip or what it cost. It appears that a group of yachties hired a driver from Trinco to take them to the park, and then at the park, hired 2 4WD vehicles with drivers to spend a day in the park.*

I wanted to see wild elephants and there are numerous wildlife areas here in Sri Lanka where elephants and leopards, sloth bears, monegeese, several types of deer and such still roam freely. We took 4WD vehicles into the park and bounced along the muddy trails through the low jungle growth.

We got to see elephants. The drivers are good--they don't get too close to disturb the elephants and they don't let people out to get closer, so you need a good zoom on the camera.

We bounced around for hours standing in the back of a 4WD

There is a sign at the entrance to the Hurulu Eco Park, with a map of the trails in the park. We drove most of them looking for the herds of wild elephants, but only saw two inside the park.

While we missed the big herds of elephants that supposedly live around here, we did see hawk eagles, a mongoose, a golden jackal, a chameleon, storks and other assorted birds.

There is an observation tower built on a mountain of granite in the park. We climbed to the top for a great view but didn't spot any elephants.

We had a good weather day and got scorched in the sun from standing and holding on in the vehicle as we bounced along the muddy trails.

Along one of the trails we stopped to see a cist burial site that is 2-3000 years old, dating from the Iron Age. The burials are in holes in the ground covered with slabs of rock.

#### **5.4.4.4 Train Trip to Colombo**

*Note there is another Colombo trip described in the Galle section.*

**Yolo – February 2015:** We decided to see a bit of this island country before leaving. Jason insisted on riding a train in Sri Lanka. So we took the teeth-rattling sleeper berths to the capitol of Colombo on the overnight train. We didn't get much sleep as the jarring of the start/stop was enough to almost throw me off the bunk. We should've had seatbelts for the beds! And noisy!

But it only cost us about \$8 for the sleeper and we finally made it to Colombo about 4:30 AM and went in search of breakfast.

Some early morning vendors were already opening at the Pettah, the big market area where it's stall after stall of clothing, shoes, junk, plastic, and food items. A giant bazaar. The shoe stall is advertising shoes for 350 rupees, less than \$3.

Nobody paid any attention to the spotted cow wandering down the middle of the road. A lot of Hindus around so the cow is sacred and has free rein of the areas. Buses and the tuk-tuks ( those 3-wheeled motorcycle taxis) make their way around it.

Thousands of birds lined the wires and ledges of the buildings on one corner, but nowhere else. Very strange.

Things to see in Colombo (*extracted from their extensive blog post*)

- Old Dutch and British colonial type buildings
- Mosques, Hindu shrines, Buddhist shrines, old Dutch colonial churches
- The port and river

Colombo is a commercial port so we couldn't really come visit by boat, but other than the architecture from the Dutch colonial era, we really didn't see much to hold our interest.

Our one day in Colombo was enough. We caught the oncoming train to Mount Lavinia, a few miles south for our night's accommodation.

A cold brew was found and we enjoyed them in the afternoon after getting settled in Mt. Lavinia. Rooms are not cheap here. Food is reasonable, but decent rooms and services seem very expensive to us.

Our room was not quite finished; the bathroom wasn't tiled, but it was the only option we had at this point, so we didn't really mind. It looked worse than it was, since it was functional and it was only for one night. It goes with the bathroom above for \$20/night.

We took the train back to Colombo so we could catch a bus out. It was packed with workers going to work and we barely got squished onto the train. We literally had to push our way in. We had to remain standing at the door as the inside of the carriage was packed. Jason barely cleared the entry but had a good view of the ocean on the way back.

From Colombo we went to Rathnapura to go visit the gem mining area of Sri Lanka.

#### **5.4.4.5 Rathnapura Gem Mining (by bus from Colombo)**

**Yolo – Feb 2015:** *Note: Lots of pictures in this blog post, go see their blog for the pics.*

Rathnapura is the gem mining center of Sri Lanka. We arrived in Rathnapura with a room reservation for \$40/night but felt we should look for something cheaper. Myra and I took off after a light breakfast near the bus stand and went hunting for rooms. Lots of people, tuk-tuks and stalls selling stuff, but no rooms to be found.

The demand for rooms outstrips the supply here and especially on weekends. It's a Sunday and we couldn't find rooms near the bus station.

We stumbled onto the Orchard Villa and decided to check out the price and availability as it was the only place we found to stay in our mile-square walk. Several young men showed us two

rooms that we could have for 12 hours. They agreed to let us stay overnight as long as we were gone by 9:30 the next morning. They claimed the rooms were reserved for the next night, but we think they were a little shady. These nice, brand new rooms were huge, but pretty empty and they let us have them for 1500 rupees/night, about \$12. We think they were renting the rooms before the place officially opened up, but we don't really know.

The second night in Rathnapura, we stayed at an inn on the top of the hill above the bus stand. Nice views.

On the street as we were walking around, Jason was dogged by a man until he relented and listened to his proposal. Mr Master offered to take us to see the sights of the area for the whole day for 1500 rupees and his bus fare and lunch. We discussed it at the inn and agreed it sounded good. He met us at 9 AM and took us to a gem mine where all the work is done the traditional way. We stepped through a fence and headed down a dirt track to the mine.

The mine hole was about 20 feet deep and was shored up by rubber tree logs and ferns. The hole fills with water and they must pump it out to dig during the day.

The miners have built an earthen oven and a pot of rice and hot water for tea were hot on the cracked mud hearth. Miners get 3% of the find's profits generally. If the mine shaft gets very deep or goes horizontal at the bottom, they might get up to 5%.

The water pump empties the water into a foaming splash that drains down into the river nearby. The owner of the water pump gets 10% of the find as does the land owner. All other shareholders share equally in the profits.

Now we see the gem-bearing sands/mud. The miners scoop it out by the shovelful and toss the wet mud mix up to be dumped onto the "wash pile" that will be washed and sorted for sapphires, rubies, spinels, tourmaline, and other precious gems that are all found in these mines. Only diamonds and emeralds are not found here. One mine can produce a rich mix of valuable stones.

The workers get a rhythm going where they toss up the basket of mud/sand to the next guy up the line. There is one digging on the bottom of the shaft, and two intermediate guys tossing the full basket up to the next guy. The final guy dumps the contents out and returns the basket to the man who then drops the empty basket down just as he's catching the next full one coming up. Pretty coordinated!

This is the "wash pile" where the diggings are dumped until wash day, about every 2 weeks. Nobody is allowed to go through the diggings until all the shareholders and owners are present on wash day. The workers can keep the small stones, but big, valuable ones are bundled and word sent out to the gem dealers to come see what's been found. Dealers write their bid on paper and roll it up and put it into a sealed box. The highest bidder wins the stones and the money is then divvied up amongst the folks entitled to a share.

This guy dug out some old tailings to demonstrate the traditional way they wash the gem gravel in the water hole here. They use woven reed baskets and swish and break up the mud with their hands. The technique is a lot like panning for gold as the gemstones are heavy and sink to the center of the basket.

One basket turned out 4 colored stones that they let us keep for souvenirs. Myra kept a purple one and I got a chip of tourmaline and 2 "dead stones", the ones they feel don't let the light



through enough to be valuable. But they were bigger than the sapphires I mined myself in Australia so I was thrilled with the whole process and the results. I could've spent all day here!

We had a buffet of curries and for a little man, Mr. Master could certainly pack in the food. After lunch, we went to a gem museum and jewelry maker. Myra bought some earrings, but the gems here still aren't cheap and I just couldn't justify the prices, so I came away empty-handed except for a large chunk of quartz that the miners gave me (said it was a good sign) and the small stones they found in the junk wash and gave us.

After the gem museum we visited a tea factory here. They wouldn't let us photograph the production process, but it was ok to take pictures at the end of the tour where these women scooped the processed tea into the large paper bags to be sent to auction.

We had to wear paper booties and hair nets as we walked through the factory. We saw where they dumped the tea leaves in to be dried. Then the leaves are conveyed to a shaker/sorter where the leaves are sorted from the stems. Broken Orange Pekoe (BOP) was the primary tea they produced here.

One person hand stencils the date and type of tea onto the paper bags.

They didn't even offer us a cup of tea! But they showed us to the collection of caged parrots outside the office.

We rock-hopped up to a waterfall for the final event in the day. Along the creek, lots of boys and young men were frolicking in the water and washing themselves. The waterfall was not much to write home about, really, but it was pleasant.

Our rooms at the inn were pretty shoddy. A slug was crawling across the wall near the ceiling while Jason took a shower. The ceilings were barely high enough for him to stand and the paint was peeling badly.

We enjoyed the mining area of Rathnapura and spent two nights here. With Mr. Master's help, we saw a lot in a single day's tour. We could never have seen all the stuff we did without a local's help. We never had to wait for a bus, except coming back from the waterfall. Since it was Saturday, there was only one bus and it was an hour wait. But a tea factory employee bus came by and we were welcomed aboard to get back to the main road to catch a bus back to town. Jason showed the driver the tea I'd bought to convince him we were worthy of the free ride.

#### **5.4.4.6 *Bushwalking in Nuwara Eliya Area***

**Rise and Shine – Feb 2016:** Info for those coming to Sri Lanka who might be interested in bush walking into the interior, the forests, the small villages, and the tea plantations in the Nuwara Eliya area. We can confidently recommend RAJA who works out of Nuwara Eliya town. He speaks excellent English and is very knowledgeable about local customs, plants, (including folk medicine plants) birds and animals. The people in the remote villages know him and welcome him and his guests.

Raja offers half-day, full day, and overnight (home stay) treks for groups from one to twenty. He charged the two of us 10,000 rupees for a very full day of hiking. Bring your own lunch. He is quite in demand so three or four days of lead time might be necessary to book a trek with him.

He can be contacted at [nuwaraeliyatrekkingclub@hotmail.com](mailto:nuwaraeliyatrekkingclub@hotmail.com) or on 077215983. Tell him that Nick and Bonnie on the yacht "rise and shine" recommended him.

### **5.5 Mirissa Harbor (15 nm East of Galle)**

**FB – Nov 2017:** I have been in touch with Upali from Isle Shipping in Sri Lanka about acting as agents for us next year. He told me that the authorities no longer allow use of the pontoon in Marissa which is where we planned to leave the boat while we do some land travel. Quoted US\$325 for port fees (30 days), check in, check out, custom fees and his agent fee.

**Adina - March 2016:** Adina has arrived in Mirissa, Sri Lanka. We've spent the past few days here and are really enjoying it. Sail Lanka Charter have two small private floating concrete pontoons in the fishing harbour here. They are more than happy to accommodate cruisers.

You will need to complete check-in formalities in Galle (we tied up to another boat and had this all done in three hours) and it is then 15nm east to Mirissa.

Sail Lanka Charter provide water, electricity and security and will look after your boat while you go travelling - Mirissa is well located for exploring the interior. We received a very warm welcome, were driven into town to get cash, a sim card and were given a quick tour with recommendations. There is laundry, small shops, good restaurants, etc. Sail Lanka Charter provided a friendly tuk-tuk driver on hand who charges local prices. There is a growing boatyard that can do various repairs. Diesel and gasoline available.

The only downside is the surge caused by fishing and whale watching boats that sometimes charge in and out of the harbour but they are trying to get this addressed by the coast guard.

Be warned that agents GAC and Windsor Reef told us and others we cannot come here which is completely untrue; we used Isle Shipping who made all of the arrangements – contact Upali [ops@isleship.com](mailto:ops@isleship.com) . Alexandre Seux, a Frenchman who sailed here himself is the very helpful general manager: [alexandre@sail-lanka-charter.com](mailto:alexandre@sail-lanka-charter.com) +94 (0)7 19 51 52 80. We are happy to answer any questions from anyone who is interested in coming here.

Mirissa is first and foremost a fishing harbour with local fishing boats, whale watching boats and a few pontoons for coastguard and charter yachts away from the other boats. Don't expect a full blown marina. The main advantage is you can get water, electricity and security. Showering/toilet facilities are only available in the sailing club and basic - a long walk/dinghy ride from the pontoon. We chose Mirissa so we could leave the boat and go travelling for just under 3 weeks. All in all we like it there!

**Totem – December 2014:** Other alternatives to Galle: there's also a small "marina" being developed with a few pontoons already in place, a bit south of Galle in Mirissa Harbour. You still have to check IN at Galle, but you don't have to STAY there (unclear if you have to go back to check out). Manager, Alex Seux, quoted: "December to March prices are 0,7USD/ Ft/ Day or 18USD/ Ft/ Month." Arthur Hoag pointed out you can see the facility in Google Earth- Alex sent this photo. Interested? Contact Alex at [alexseux@hotmail.com](mailto:alexseux@hotmail.com). Got a picture here... if our not-so-great internet access lets me upload it.

**Rose Erore – December 2014:** We met two boats that stopped at Mirissa and sang its praises, but I am not sure if you're

allowed really, and this anchorage is not tenable once the monsoon changes to SW

## 6 India (Kochi / Kochin / Cochin)

### 6.1 Approach, Arrival and Formalities

**Red Sea FB Group – Feb 8 2020 – Corona virus quarantine:** As of today, Just to let everyone know ANY boat coming here that has been in Thailand in the last 28 days will be subject to Quarantine and not allowed ashore for 14 days. Your passage time will be counted in the 14 days.

Malaysia is currently OK.

#### 6.1.1 Obtaining Visas Prior to Arrival

A visa is required in advance for all nationalities. You can apply for a visa online. See this website to start:

<https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/>

**Soggy Paws – June 2023:** A quick read-through of the visa website shows that the costs and procedures for obtaining an Indian visa are still pretty much the same as pre-Covid. The website seems very clear and straight forward. Cost of a 30-day visa is USD \$10-25. Cost of a 1-year visa is \$40. Because the visa begins the day it is issued, cruisers are recommended to pony up for a 1 year multiple entry visa.

**Joana – FB December 2021:** You MUST have a visa prior to attempting entry at Cochin. Normally, you can get an e-visa online. But be warned - the visa starts on the day IT IS ISSUED. If you are able to, it would be better to get a visa that lasts longer than 30 days, in order to give you more time to "get there" and the possibility of more time in country.

To find out more detail, I recommend you contact Nisam by WhatsApp, and he can answer you directly. +91 97464 62686 I have no current contact information for the marina, but it is still there.

**Liberte – FB November 2019:** Indian e-visa update: the 60-day e-visa has been replaced with a 30-day or 1-year e-visa.

30-day visa: you can only apply for this visa 30 days before you arrive. Cost is \$25 USD.

1-year visa: can be applied for up to 90 days before you arrive. Cost is \$40 USD.

Both visas are booked online. There may be a 2.5% fee for paying for the visa by credit card.

**1 Year Visa:** Here are the details I received today when my 1-year e-visa was granted.

e-Visa Validity period is 365 days from the date of issuance of this ETA.

Activities Permitted : Recreation/Sight-Seeing

Continuous stay during each visit should not exceed 90 days.

Multiple entries will be granted within the e-Visa validity period stamped on your passport.

Note : Please carry a copy of this ETA at the time of your arrival in India.

e-Visa is non-extendable, non-convertible & not valid for visiting Protected/Restricted and Cantonment Areas. If you intend to visit Protected/Restricted/Cantonment areas, you would require prior permission from the Civil Authority.

For EU-citizens the one year only permits 90 consecutive days!

With the one-year visa, Americans and Canadians can stay in country for 180 days at a time, multiple entry, for up to one year.

**Liberte – FB March 2019:** An update on Indian e-visa I received today.

"The validity of an e-Visa will be for 365 days from the issue date with multiple entries. On 1st entry they can stay for 90 days or 180 days then they can take exit on or before 90th or 180th day to the nearby country and take their another entry and stay for 90 days or 180 days and so on only for Tourist visa.

And for e-Business visa they need to contact to the nearest FRRO/FRO office within next 15 days on or before 90/180 days stay.

Note :- The people holding nationality USA, UK, JAPAN, CANADA can stay for 180 days on their every stay. And for rest country is 90 days.

[The validity of e-Tourist Visa and e-Business Visa will be one year from the date of grant of ETA. Multiple entries will be permitted on e-Tourist Visa and e-Business visa. In case of an e-Conference visa, validity will be 30 days from the date of arrival in India. Only single entry is permitted on e-Conference visa. In case of e-Medical and e-Medical Attendant visas, validity will be 60 days from the date of first arrival in India. Triple entry will be permitted on e-Medical and e-Medical Attendant visas.]

e-Tourist Visa (eTV) is non-extendable , non-convertible in any condition."

Hope this clarifies the new changes.

More info here:

<https://www.zeebiz.com/india/news-visiting-india-e-visa-rules-modified-heres-all-you-need-to-know-86167?>

**Anthony Swanston – FB Feb 2018:** For the avoidance of doubt the Indian E Visa Scheme works perfectly for yachts arriving in Kochi.

**Tony & Karin – Visa Application for India in Johor Bahru – January 2017**

1. Go to [www.indianvisaonline.gov.in](http://www.indianvisaonline.gov.in) and fill in the form on the screen (tourist visa) and follow instructions carefully about uploading passport photo and PRINT this form. You get a number so if you like to print later you can do that with that number but be aware....if you want to CHANGE something in the form after you have submitted it you have to start all over again (and get a new number).

On your printed form is another number and that is the number you can use to see your status (on the indianvisaonline website)

You need to supply an address in your home country and a phone number in your homecountry for emergencies. Have that info ready.

2. Go to [www.indianhighcommission.com.my/visa\\_service](http://www.indianhighcommission.com.my/visa_service) You get a page with information about visa application but the most important thing is a link to get a form for Non- Residents of Malaysia (and Non-Malaysians) This link is halfway down the page and difficult to see. This link gives you a new form. Print it out and fill in, sign and TAKE WITH YOU to the visa centre. It is separate from the online form.
3. You need TWO passport photos but they have to be exactly 2"x2" !!! They can make them at a photo studio on the ground floor outside the Indian Visa centre. Costs 20 RM for 4 pictures.
4. You go with all the forms (printed visa application, non resident form, 2 passport photos and MONEY), to the Visa Centre in Johor Bahru, open 9 am-2 pm

Unit M-03 Mezz. Floor MENARA TJB building #9, (This is close to the Istana- JB Central)  
 Jalan Seyd Mohd Mufti 80000 Johor Bahru  
 Tel.07-221330

The visa is then sent to the High Commission in Kuala Lumpur and the cost depends on your home country. We had a Dutch passport (198 RM for 3 months) and an UK passport (594 RM (!! )for 6 months)

It took 11 working days to get confirmation (by phone from India!) but that was the period around Christmas and New Year. Then we have to go back to the Visa centre in Johor Bahru with our passports and then it takes 4(?) working days to get the visa "stamped" on the passports. Then we can pick them up. We agree it is a long wait.

We can't guarantee that if you do it this way you get a visa. We don't take responsibility for that but... it was the way we got our visas so maybe it works for other people as well.

**Rise & Shine – Feb 2016 – Obtaining a Visa in Kandy, Sri Lanka:** Good news. It seems to be quick and easy to get an India visa in Kandy, Sri Lanka. ( we are told that Colombo is a nightmare) get a tuk-tuk to the "India embassy". (Actually the India visa center) when you face the building with the visa center in it. Walk to the right about four or five little store-fronts and you will find the "visa application service". 30 minutes and 350 rupees (\$2.50 US) later you walk out with the perfect application they have prepared for you. You go to the India visa center on the third floor of the building the tuk-tuk dropped you off in front of. There may be one or two people in line in front of you. You fill out one more form, give them 15,000 rupees and they tell you come back in seven working days and present your passport to have the visa inserted. Piece of cake.

**Pauline – Feb 2016 – Obtaining Visa in Colombo:** We lodged our application in Colombo, very easy, nice modern building, no wait. We filled our own forms (both the online application and reference form) online before going in (no charge) on the IVS website, and then printed it out. US passport holders pay 13,000 Rp each for the visa normally for both 3 or 6 month double entry.

We collected our Indian visa from the IVS in Colombo yesterday - no fuss, straightforward lodgement of application then collect visa 7 days later. We had a recommendation letter issued by Bolgatty Marina in Kochi, I am not sure if that was necessary, but it is easy to request one, and the marina is keen to assist us to get there.

The drive to colombo takes about 2 1/2 hours on the toll road, or about 2 1/2 hours by train from Galle, so easy and we fitted it in with our trip around Sri Lanka. We travelled by road to check

out Colombo, Trincomalee, Kandy, Sigira Rock, Adams Peak climb (really hard), tea picking and all places in between - great trip, lovely island, smiling people and our Indian visa collected.

**Q from Facebook 2014:** We have tried, without success, to contact Divinity's or Gaia for info. So we are throwing our questions out to the group:

1. how long can a boat stay in India?
2. Can you renew a visa in India?
3. can you get a visa in Maldives, Nepal, or Sri Lanka?
4. how long do you need to be out of the country to renew an Indi...
5. Can you cruise SW India? ie anchorages, security etc.
6. Any problems using ATMs in India?
- 7 what about clearing in? Need agent? Bribes? Red tape?
8. any problems leaving boat unattended in marina?

**Sisiuti – December 2014:** I believe you can get your visa in the Maldives. There is an Indian consulate there. For some of the rest you might want to contact

Simon Murthaty

Vice President – Marinas & Projects.

M: +91 99675 55742 | E: [simon.murthaty@oceanblue.in](mailto:simon.murthaty@oceanblue.in)

**Sam Coles – December 2014:** I am planning to get Indian visa in Bangkok. The following answers I believe to be true (last visit to India 2007)

2. No
5. difficult you need to check-in and out at every port.
6. no problem with ATMs in 2007
- 7, lengthy check in procedure but no agent needed or bribes taken.
8. believed to be no problem. Simon Murthaty is the marina manager and has replied to my emails.

Jamie Furlong and Liz left Esper in Cochin for 2 years or so - so answer to 1. may be unlimited - visa may be the limiting factor - 6 month limit and then a gap before next visa can start - Jamie and Liz are in PSS Satun at the mo see their site [followtheboat](http://followtheboat)

**Davinity – December 2014:**

1. Indefinitely.
2. No.
3. Yes....See More
4. Restriction has now been lifted.
5. No.
6. No.

7. No agent needed. No bribes. No problems. Easy but long winded. Our advice is to contact Nazar, an auto rickshaw driver who has been helping yachties for many years and his tel. no. is 0091 989 516 4090 who makes life very easy. ( His son, Nisam has an email address - nisam\_sam@yahoo.co.in )

8. None. We have done it many times

#### **Ted Berry – December 2014:**

3 yes, got one in Nepal, takes 3 visits to the consulate so we went trekking in between visits.

6 no, mostly ATMs work, we struck some out of money.

**Bob Bechler – February 2015:** I just received a call from the Indian visa application center that our application cannot be processed because we are in Malaysia on a visitor visa. I need to go to the US to get one or find another place that does not have the same rules as Malaysia.

**Rose Eroze:** You need to go to Phuket and get them through Emotion Travel, who send your passport to Bangkok, or go to Bangkok yourself. Emotion Travel was very reliable.

#### **6.1.2 Satellite Phone Restriction & Drones**

**Sisiutl – February 2019:** Satellite phones are forbidden in India. They will be sealed by Customs if you declare them. Yesterday Customs came to the marina checking sat phones to insure the seal had not been broken. They were tipped off by the Navy that a satellite phone had been detected in the marina. Do not try their patience or test their detection system. Security is taken very seriously by authorities.

I could not import a sim for IridiumGo. It was the use of IridiumGo that was detected by Indian Navy.

**Chris:** How to get an Inmarsat satellite phone authorized for use in Indian waters

Currently, a No Objection Certificate (NOC) can be obtained from the Indian Department of Telecommunications for INMARSAT-B, INMARSAT-C, INMARSAT-M, INMARSAT-Mini M, INMARSAT- Multimedia Mini M (M4).

**Wade:** In reality, portable satcom devices are not prohibited, but highly regulated. If you bring one in, it is easier to declare it, seal it in a locker, and then unseal and use again on departure. All of the commercial ships coming in and out of India have satcom devices. If you have one, and don't declare it, and use it in Indian waters - they will find you within hours.

**Philip:** Last year (2018) we declared our Inmarsat on arrival in both Sri Lanka and India .They were satisfied and said it was OK .The Andemans were the same, whilst another yacht with an Iridium had lots of trouble.

But I know they can enforce different regulations from year to year or even boat to boat.

Also, be well aware of Albert's drone experience in Egypt.

Drones: Drones are not forbidden, but highly regulated. If you arrive with one, don't use it.

#### **6.1.3 Arrival Kochin**

From the [Cochin Port Control Website](#) (July 2023):



All ships on approaching Cochin are to contact Cochin Port Control on VHF Channel 15 / 16 and report their E.T.A. to receive instructions on Pilot boarding / anchoring. Cochin Port Control is equipped with Radar / A.I.S. based V.T.M.S. and monitors the approach of vessels towards the fairway buoy. Open anchorage is South of the Channel with clay and sand bottom offering good holding ground. Pilots board ships in the vicinity of the Buoys no. 3 & 4 (Deep drafted vessels - about 0.5 n.m. West of buoys 1 & 2). Pilot ladders are to be rigged on the lee side 1.5 m above the water line. The Pilots embark from Pilot boats with white superstructure / red hull with 'PILOTS' marked on the sides.

VHF Channel 15 / 16

Telephone + 91 484 2667105 / 2666468.

**Crossing the Indian Ocean FB Group – July 2023:** Get a visa in advance. Then anchor off at designated spot which is horrid. Small and not good holding. Clearing in is very old school - lots of paperwork and stamping walking from a couple of buildings. Takes most of the day. Then move on to the marina. Shallow water everywhere but easy to get there. Marina is small with a strong tide, so timing is important on entry. The marina which is on a beautiful old palace island but because of catastrophic management in bad condition.

**Sail SE Asia FB Group (Jeroen Elout) – September 2021:** I sailed in to India Cochin with a business visa. In my case, my Indian business partner and I plan to sprout a freediving community. But any sailboat could consider a chartering business with the help of an Indian business partner. The Online business visa took 4 days to obtain during which me and my business partner received phone calls from the authorities. They kind of cross examined our intentions simultaneously.

From 60 miles out I started meeting fishing boats. Often 2 boats have a net in between. And often they drag a long net behind them.

I was not able to reach port control until I had anchored in the harbour already. The next day they came with a coastguard boat and told me I should not have anchored without control room permission. I apologized and was not fined.

Arrival in Cochin India is pleasant, the authorities are friendly and methodic. So far I've been charged 1247 Rupee (17\$) and 1000 rupee for a COVID test.

The use of a clearance agent is not mandatory.

Vaccination not required. Upon arrival a COVID test is needed before being allowed in to the city.

Satellite phones are not to be used in Indian National waters. Customs placed a stamped seal on mine. I've been told that since the bombings in Mumbai they don't take chances. Any electronic communication has to be connected to a passport or ID.

Everyone is happy to see a foreigner since they haven't seen new visitors for the last 2 years.

Notices on the wall remind to report any form of corruptions. So far all officials seen to do their jobs and no one is asking for bribes.

The bottom is muddy and perfect anchorage holding.

I met a few scuba divers that work on the boats. They dive 3 times a week in the harbour and consider the water safe to swim in.

There is a Marina that charges around 100 Euro a month. In front of the Marina boats can anchor for free.

Many mosquitoes in the evening but no Malaria. One reason for me to stay out of the marina while living on the boat.

**Red Sea FB Group – Feb 8 2020 – Corona virus quarantine:** As of today, Just to let everyone know ANY boat coming here that has been in Thailand in the last 28 days will be subject to Quarantine and not allowed ashore for 14 days. Your passage time will be counted in the 14 days.

Malaysia is currently OK.

**Bird of Passage – Feb 2020:** We left Galle, Sri Lanka on the 8th of January 2020, anchored outside Cochin in India on the 10<sup>th</sup>, and cleared in with the authorities the next day.

From Sri Lanka to India during the North-East monsoon you have very little wind to begin with. We motor-sailed for 8 hours. Then you enter the funneling monsoon between Sri Lanka and India with winds constantly over 20 knots and rough sea against you. We sailed with two reefs in the main and only half the jib and seasick crew for 20-30 hours. Not fun, but the speed was good, 7-8 knots in average and we like that.

We arrived outside Cochin as the sun went down and decided to anchor outside the harbour and wait for daylight before we proceeded. As the sun came up the next morning we were soon surrounded by fishing boats.

The **marina** in Cochin lies on Bolgatty Island, which is well protected but very shallow. Many yachts sit deep in the mud at low water. There was quite a lot of traffic. Small fishing boats, tourist boats with loud disco music and also a type of big house boats that I have never seen before.

In the marina, we met Nazar who turned out to be a very useful person. He helped us to check in, to get diesel, fuel filters, battery and many other things that would have been difficult to find without him. He was also a very nice person. One day he invited us to his home for lunch. To get there we had to take a ferry and that was an interesting experience in itself.

Nazar lives in a small apartment with only two rooms for his big family. We met his wife and one of his sons with his wife and children. They were all Muslims but very open minded to other people.

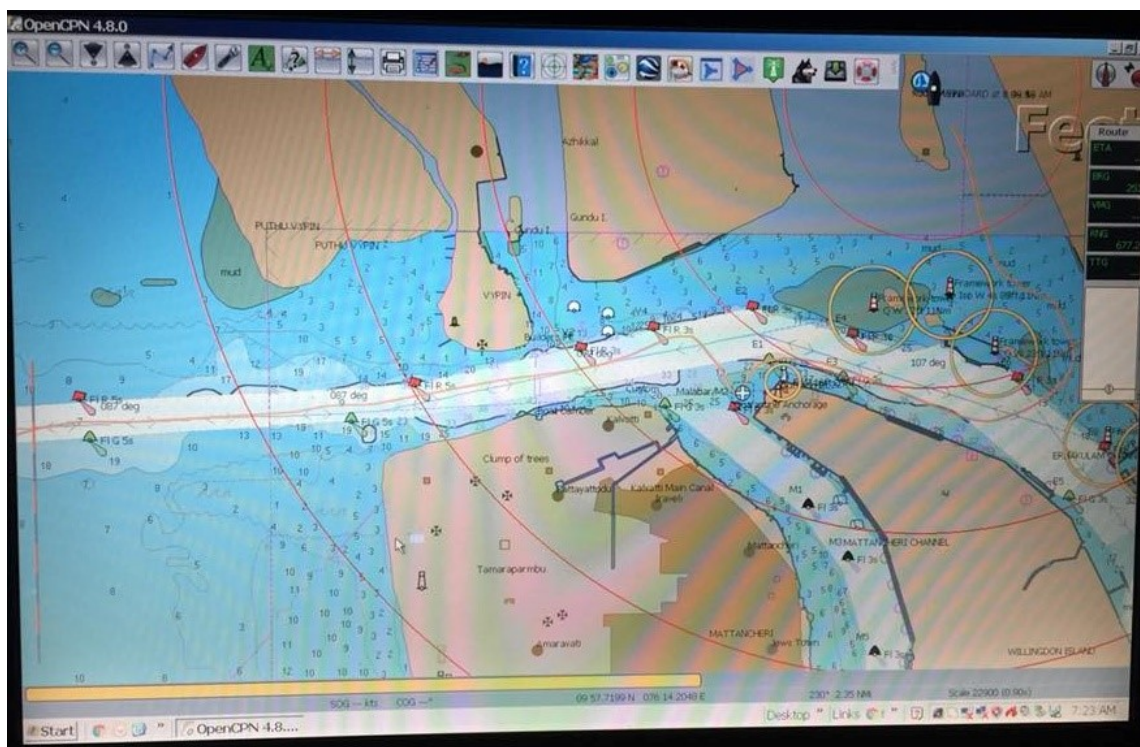
Lifted from Bird of Passage's website and condensed for use in this Compendium. Here is the original post: [http://www.toan.se/Webtoan-2/2020/India\\_Web/Indiaindex.htm](http://www.toan.se/Webtoan-2/2020/India_Web/Indiaindex.htm)

**Sisiutl – November 2017 - Approach to Cochin:** We stayed 3-5 miles off the coast from the southern tip of India to the harbor entrance. No particular issues except for fishing boats that display creative use of red/green or run in stealth mode-completely dark. We entered harbor in the dark with no difficulty.

There is an area up to some 15 miles south of the entrance with a depth around 20' so if your arrival is not comfortable you can anchor to wait for light.

We entered the harbor approach at 9 58N and 76 13E then followed lights to the quarantine anchorage at 9 58N and 76 15E. Drop anchor and an official vessel will come out for initial paperwork.

After you will take your dinghy to shore to complete formalities. A local, Nasar, will take you from Office to Office. After you are cleared go east down the waterway to approx 9 58N 76 16.5E before turning north. You will see the marina a mile ahead on the left side and lead-in markers off your port bow. Best approached at high tide. We tested the bottom with our keel because we went too far East.



#### 6.1.4 Checkin Kochin

**Equanimity – January 2015:** We got here just before dark on Thursday and then spent all day on Friday checking into India and Kochi port, more paper work than you can believe, all with carbon copies in triplicate, the old way. They say, and justifiably so, that the process serves the paperwork rather than the paperwork serving the process. It was like stepping back in time to the 1800's when the British ruled India in old colonial buildings and piles of! paperwork everywhere. We'll take some pictures when we check out, it's too funny.

#### 6.1.5 Kochin International Marina

<https://www.facebook.com/KochiInternationalMarina/> (2021: this looks very old)

**Sail SE Asia FB Group – December 2021:** It has always been a little difficult to contact the marina in Cochin. It was built with public funds, but quickly outsourced to Ocean Blue "to manage" about 14 years ago. At the moment, there is only one employee there, and he sometimes goes for months at a time without being paid (truth).

Contact info: Rahul (manager): +91 95266 92787 (WhatsApp)

**Sail SE Asia FB Group – Aug 2019:** The marina itself is a bit run-down but still serviceable. There are daily power cuts but the resort operates a standby generator that always kicks in, within 20 second.

**Elizabeth Coleman – January 2019:** We are here in Kochi. We have done some travelling around and have left the boat here. There is security on the 2 entrance gates and also a guard at the marina. We feel safe and secure and are happy to leave our boat here whilst we are away.

**Equanimity – January 2015:** After a full day of check-in procedures we hoisted the anchor and started motoring up the channel to Bogatty Island and the **Kochi International Marina**. We hadn't been underway more than five minutes when a Port Control boat pulled alongside us and called "papers". Good that we insisted on getting copies from the customs office who had taken all the papers! Then on we went up a narrow channel that was less than feet in places (and close to high tide!) to the marina. This could/should be a great little spot but it is suffering from extreme neglect. The docks are rotting out and it is generally unkempt and not all that clean in the facilities. Too bad because we like it here. The funniest thing was that the marina manager came out to greet us, being young and two months into the new job, was wearing a life jacket. I think that says everything about it. :)

Unfortunately, since we were both sick, we wound up spending the first two weeks in India on the boat, sick. I forged out for a visit to the clinic and to get a SIM card and some basic provisions, but not much beyond. Plans for taking a week's tour of Kerala or flying up to Delhi and visiting the Taj Mahal and surrounds were put on hold and then eliminated. We'll need to fly back to visit the northern areas of India at some point in the future. For this trip, we'll stay close to Kochi and see how it goes.

Since we were on the outside dock, we had a great view of the river and across to Ernakulum, the main city by Kochi. We were surprised at how many tourist boats pass by, especially at sunset, and to find that we were part of the tourist attraction. All the boats had loud and fun Indian music with people cheering, waving, rocking out, or just sitting serenely. We also watched ferries going up and down, and the most enchanting and captivating little round basket boats which the local gypsies use for fishing in the river. We give them water as they paddle by if they need any.

## **6.2 Cruisers Services**

### **6.2.1 Money**

### **6.2.2 Diesel and Gasoline**

### **6.2.3 Propane (Cooking Gas).**

### **6.2.4 Groceries/Provisioning**

**Sail SE Asia FB Group – Aug 2019:** Fruit and veggies - you can get everything BUT --- India is a bit weak on canned goods. Seriously, there is hardly anything on the shelves that is canned. Keep this in mind when provisioning before you get to India.

### **6.2.5 Water**

### **6.2.6 Boat Parts, Repairs, & Shipping Stuff In**

**Joana – December 2019:** I have been here in Cochin for 9 months and have received MANY packages by post, DHL, and UPS. The most I paid was 48%. The least I paid was zero (by post from AliExpress). If you can get the supplier to mark down the value of the item, as indicated in the invoice (which is on the box), it will be a great help.

You will pay duty (depends on the country of origin and the nature of the item) and taxes (same as most countries VAT) on both the cost of the item AND the shipping cost. India does not recognize "Yacht in Transit", period.

Also another comment by another yachtie on the same thread: On my experience exporting into India you will pay an import duty/tariff, vat, agents fee and handling/extras tax.

This could be up to 50% of the INVOICED value of the goods.

Also, you may even have to pay duty inside the country, between states, if the package arrives in Mumbai, for example, and it is trucked across state lines to Cochin. Any chance for revenue collection in India!

**Sail SE Asia FB Group – Aug 2019:** We have found a great upholsterer who replaced the leather on our Lazy-Boy reclining sofa and redid the settee fabric. Lots of very good fabric at low prices. We finally found the right people to do it.

**Sisiutl – March 2018 – Customs Duties:** It appears that the 'Yacht In Transit' incantation no longer works in India. Over the last couple of years I have received several shipments from the USA so marked. All came thru with no additional customs duty. Just lately shipments received here have all attracted customs duty. I just received one today with the bright orange Yacht In Transit label accompanied with a bill for customs duty equal to to about 50% of the value of the item.

### **6.2.7 Laundry**

### **6.2.8 Medical**

**Sail SE Asia FB Group – August 2019:** Medical and dental services are the best and cheapest in the world. I had a total knee replacement and am currently getting dental work done (1 implant, 4 crowns). We know the best dentist!

### **6.2.9 Getting Around**

## **6.3 Communications**

### **6.3.1 Telephones, Cell Phones and Internet Access**

**Sail SE Asia FB Group – Aug 2019:** Mobile phone network service is dirt cheap.

### **6.3.2 Mail**

## **6.4 Things to See and Do**

### **6.4.1 Restaurants & Bars**

### **6.4.2 Diving & Snorkeling**

### **6.4.3 Land Touring**

#### **6.4.3.1 Fort Kochi**

**Equanimity – January 2015:** We spent a day in old **Fort Kochi** and enjoyed the sights and surrounds. We began with the naval museum, which was packed with history and information. There were some old missiles and guns, but mostly there were plaques and photos detailing the evolution of the Indian Navy. From there, we visited the St. Francis Church. Built in 1503, it is the oldest European church in India and is where Vasco de Gama was initially buried (he died in Cochin in 1524) before his remains were eventually transported back to Portugal. We saw a few Hindu temples from the street, since non-Hindus are not allowed entrance. Later in the day we went to the Cochin Jewish Synagogue, also known as Paradesi Synagogue, which is the oldest active synagogue in the entire British Commonwealth. It is interesting and wonderful to see how so many religions (including something like 16 varieties of Hindu alone) are practiced in such close proximity with harmony and acceptance, where so much of the world cannot even manage tolerance.

We stopped by the Chinese fishing nets, pervasive in the area, which are manually raised and lowered by about six men. The cantilevered nets are counterbalanced with large rocks. Each net is raised and lowered about 250-300 times each day.

#### **6.4.3.2 Munnar in the Mountains**

**Equanimity – January 2015:** We decided we really wanted to see at least a small bit of the surrounding area in India before leaving and would hire a car and driver and head up into the mountains of Munnar. The car was small, the traffic in Ernakulam was terrible and the trip was long with narrow winding roads and continuous honking of horns, which seems to be the norm for driving in India. Munnar resembles a chaotic frontier town surrounded by lovely tea fields and mountains. It was cool in the late afternoon and we were all delighted to put on fleece and jackets to go out in the evening for dinner. There was a lovely little church, which was used in the filming of "Life of Pi", a tea museum and some hill station lookouts, but not much else there. Still, we were all glad to have made the trip and to have seen some of the beauty of the Kerala countryside.

India, even the small nook of it we visited, truly is incredible... you love it or hate it or a little of both in equal measures. Hopefully we'll get back to visit in the northern areas sometime to see Delhi, visit the Taj, Varanasi, Jaipur and more.

#### **6.4.3.3 East to Pondyerry**

**Bird of Passage – Feb 2020:** We wanted to see some of India so we decided to take a trip across the south of the continent to Pondyerry and visit a friend from home who spends his winters in Auroville, a few kilometers north of Pondy.

I found a sleeper-coach to Pondyicherry that left Cochin at 20.00 in the evening and arrived to Pondyicherry the next morning. No ordinary seats, only beds. First time I tried this concept. Very practical to travel while sleeping.

Auroville. Never been to a place like that. A social experiment backed up by the Indian government and the UN. The village has some 3.000 inhabitants, mostly people originally from western countries. No tax, no money, you do what you can to contribute. A dream village created by the late guru Sri Aurobindo and his successor the "Mother". A modern hippie village or just New Age ? Judge for yourself: Wikipedia about Auroville.

The city is built around a fantastic gold plated monument, the Mitramandir and here we found our friend from home. Krister works here as an artist during the cold Scandinavian winter months.

Krister showed us around and taught us about Auroville. It seems that the original dream of a village where everyone was equal is still just a dream. More than 5.000 poor Indian citizens live around Auroville and work at low salaries for the "real" Auroville citizens. Cooking, cleaning, gardening, driving taxi etc. To me it seems like the typical class society you would find anywhere in the world.

We made two stops on our way home. The first was in Kumily close to Periyar lake and Tiger Reserve, which is said to house some 40 tigers still living in the free. We took a 3 hour jeep safari and saw no tigers but I managed to get a wild Indian Buffalo with my 300 millimeter objective. Not my best picture but maybe the most exiting. Just a few days earlier a buffalo had been killed by a tiger close to the spot where I took this picture. The remains of the buffalo had been observed by a guide the day before.

Our second stop on the way back to Cochin was Allapppy. Also described as the Venice of India. Lots of natural inland waterways and also many man-made canals. We took a 2 hour boat ride and immediately recognized the nice feeling of canal life from our many trips on the Canals of Europe.

We saw models of Snake Boats but plenty of other old boat types are still used in the canals. Teak planks are sewn together with coconut fibres to form the hull. Similar technique as used almost 5.000 years ago by the Egyptians.

Lifted from Bird of Passage's website and condensed for use in this Compendium. Here is the original post: [http://www.toan.se/Webtoan-2/2020/India\\_Web/Indiaindex.htm](http://www.toan.se/Webtoan-2/2020/India_Web/Indiaindex.htm)

#### **6.4.4 Hiking**

#### **6.4.5 Cultural/Other**

**Equanimity – January 2015:** We happened to be in Kochi when the annual Shiva Temple Festival and Elephant Pageant took place in Ernakulam, and after leaving Nazar's home we took the ferry back across to see the elephants being bathed and dressed for the festivities. Unfortunately, the official start time was about three hours later than we thought, so we missed the majority of it... but the elephants were the highlight and I was content. They bring temple elephants, all "tuskers", in from all around the region for this pageant.

A few days later, we attended a demonstration and performance of Kathakali, Kerala's (the state in India we are in) classical dance drama. We were able to watch the performer apply his makeup, which took almost two hours... longer than both the demonstration and the dance itself! The performer is accompanied by a drummer and cymbalist, and he uses facial expressions and body movements to tell a story. His eye movements and facial expressions are so precise and descriptive it is no wonder that these performers have an 8-year training program.

## 7 Maldives

### 7.1 Information Resources

<http://maldivesyachtrally.com> There was a rally in about 2017, but it stopped when Maldives was having some unrest, and then came COVID. In 2022, they started a new rally, sponsored by the Maldives Government Tourism office. This rally is typically held in Feb or March each year (Feb in 2022 and 2024, March in 2023). The proposed itinerary for 2023 is shown to the left.

<http://visitmaldives.com/> Information for high-dollar fly-in tourists, mainly.

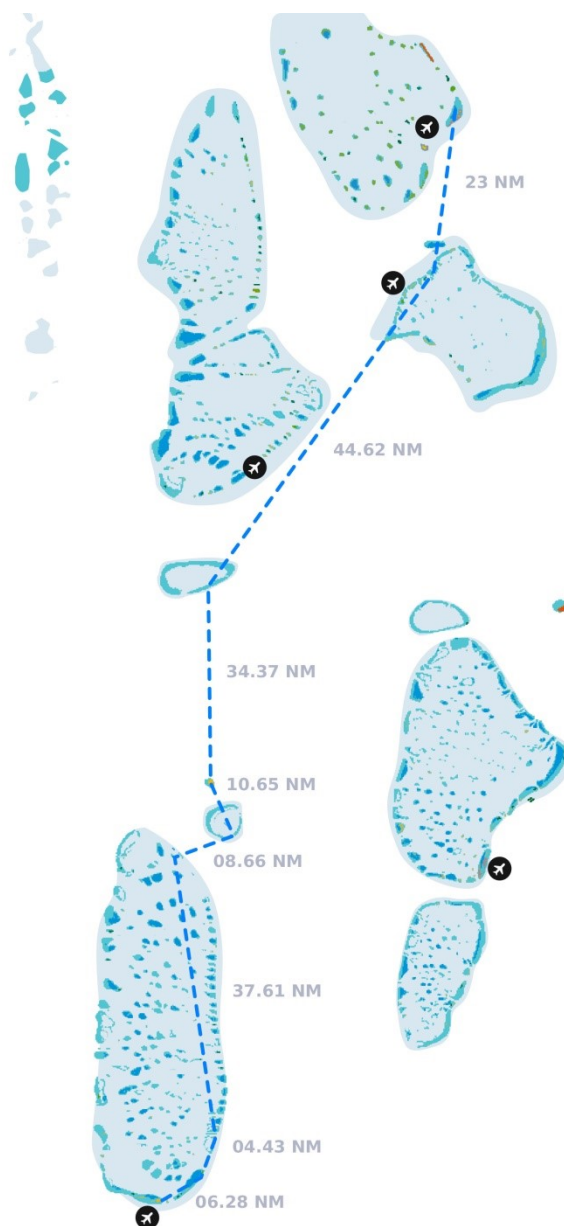
**Soggy Paws – January 2023:** We did a flying trip to the Maldives from Malaysia, to do a 10-day liveaboard drive trip. We took a Garmin handheld and marked all the anchorage and dive spots. You can find our trip report and other resources for cruising and diving in the Maldives here:

[http://svsoggyypaws.com/travel\\_Maldives.htm](http://svsoggyypaws.com/travel_Maldives.htm)

[Mr. John's Cruising Guide to Maldives](#) In 2014, several boats spent a couple of months in the Maldives. Yacht "Mr. John" documented their experience.

Note that someone in the IO FB group indicated that at least one anchorage was 1.5 nm out and depths were often not as claimed. As always, just be cautious!

**Waypoints and Sat Charts:** Terry on Yacht Valhalla has taken waypoints from various sources and compiled them into a gpx file suitable for import into OpenCPN or Navionics (app). He has also created satellite imagery for the anchorages and primary passes in the Maldives. You can download this info from here:





<http://svsoggypaws.com/terrystopics.htm> Download the Word doc from this location, and links to Maldives (and other) anchorage waypoints, plus sat charts, can be downloaded from the links in the document. The download site, Media Fire, is advertising-driven and spammy, but not dangerous. Just be careful which “download” button you click.

<https://www.noonsite.com/place/maldives/> The primary information site for cruisers.

## **7.2 Approach, Arrival and Formalities**

### **7.2.1 Time Zone & Country Code**

The Maldives are on Time Zone +5.

Country code is +960

### **7.2.2 Agents**

An agent is required to clear into the Maldives. Here are agencies that cruisers have used over the years.

#### **7.2.2.1 Real Sea Hawks (Asadhulla Mohamed)**

If you want to talk to me privately, please email to me: [assad@realseahawksmaldives.com](mailto:assad@realseahawksmaldives.com)

Contact: +9607934946 (Whatsapp) (Verified Dec 2022).

Very responsive.

**July 2018:** Be aware that Real Seahawks are fine if you check in/out at Uligan, Assad has an excellent reputation. But unfortunately their Male branch doesn't deliver the same service level.

#### **7.2.2.2 Ship Care**

**2019:** I emailed Ship Care and never heard back. I messaged Ship Care on FB and they said that email is not working. Their website is down too. Here's contact info for Afrah:

WA: +960 988-5511

Email: [alanyachtservices@gmail.com](mailto:alanyachtservices@gmail.com)

#### **7.2.2.3 Maldives Yacht Support**

**July 2018:** We are using Maldives Yacht Support who deal with all the super yachts. They really know their stuff and are reasonably priced for “normal” yachts. Be aware that Real Seahawks are fine if you check in/out at Uligan, Assad has an excellent reputation. But unfortunately their Male branch doesn't deliver the same service level.

#### **7.2.2.4 Antrac Maldives**

**March 2015:** For boats planning on visiting the Maldives, Equanimity would highly recommend Antrac Maldives Ltd as an excellent agent to use. We used Real Sea Hawks which was recommended by a fellow cruiser, and although check-in with Assad in Uligan was very good, but check-out in Male was a nightmare. We don't want to put out negative details here, but would advise anyone to steer clear of Real Sea Hawks in Male. When we had difficulties there and couldn't get them resolved, Abdul Hannan of Antrac was most professional and got us

sorted out immediately. They are located in Male and cover the entire Maldives. Contact info is ahannan@antracmaldives.com phone +960-331-0096 and www.antracmaldives.com. Abdul is the managing director. He speaks excellent English and is very experienced, knowledgeable as well as personable. Hope this info is helpful.

### **7.2.3 Clearance Ports**

**Noonsite – 2022:** You can clear-in or out at four Maldives ports, from north to south they are:

1. Uligan Island, Ihavandhippolhu Atoll
2. Kulhudhuffushi Island, South Thiladhumathee Atoll
3. Male, North Male Atoll. Most yachts anchor at nearby Hulhumale Island
4. Hithadhoo Island, Addoo Atoll. Most yachts anchor at nearby Gan or Feydhoo Islands

### **7.2.4 Fees**

**Asadhulla Mohamed (Maldives Agency, OCC Port Captain) – Dec 2022:** On being asked to confirm costs mentioned below (posted just before COVID), he said “Ya we have achieved most of those targets. we have achieved all except the following

- Sanitation cost: Still it cost \$65. But sailors will not have to pay this fee if they have a valid sanitation certificate on arrival. I heard that Malaysian authorities are charging only \$5 to arrange this certificate.

- Anchor fee: Not 30 days but now first 6 days free. This is especially for those who will stop in Maldives on transit.

- 72 hours stop for refuelling and provisioning : Still not free but very less fees as compared before and as compared to other countries.”

**MALDIVES**  
**DETAILS OF PORT CHARGES**

UPDATED: 26th AUGUST 2021

**FIXED PORT CHARGES ( For all Vessels )**

No	Charged by	Details	USD
1	Port Authority	Entry Permit	13.33
2	Port Authority	Port State Control Permit	13.33
3	Min.of.Transport	Light Dues	6.66

**FIXED PORT CHARGES ( charge based on vessel's lenght )**

No	Charged by	Details	Vessel smaller than 15.00M Length	Vessel Larger than 15.00M Length
4	Customs	Inward and Outward Clearance	33.33	133.33
5	Port Authority	Cruising Permit	Free	324.25

**ADDITION COST (Anchore Fee)**

Anchore fee will charge based on the duration of stay start counting from day of arrival and count till the date of departure

6	Min.of.Transport	First 6 days	No charge
	Min.of.Transport	7th day to the end of 45th day	USD 4.33 per day
	Min.of.Transport	46th day to the end of 90th day	USD 6.66 Per day
	Min.of.Transport	After 90th day	USD 10.00 Per day

**ADDITION COSTS (Sanitation Certificate)**

Ship Sanitation Certificate is require to arrange the departure clearance. This cost will be charge if the vessel does not have a valid sanitation Certificate onboard on arrival

No	Charged by	Details	USD
7	Port Health	Sanitation Certificate cost	65.00

**Asadhulla Mohamed (Maldives Agency, OCC Port Captain) – Feb 1, 2020:** I just want to inform that finally we made it!! I promise to many cruisers that we will make Maldives as a cruiser/sailors friendly country! Now I believe that you don't have to worry about putting Maldives on your 'places to go' list.

Please note that concerned authorities agreed to start implementing the following changes from 1st April onwards

Please check the below changes and let me know still if there is any other concern to visit Maldives. The government is very positive and I am here to work on behalf of you guys..

If you want to talk to me privately, please email to me: [assad@realseahawksmaldives.com](mailto:assad@realseahawksmaldives.com)

Contact: +9607934946

- Tracking device will not require if the vessel already has and AIS/Tracking device on board.
- No additional clearance is required to go Hulhumale' safe anchorage if the vessel is cleared from Uligan or from Addu
- Customs inward and outward clearance cost will reduce from USD130 to USD30

- Sanitation cost will reduce from USD65.00 to USD12.00 (didn't happen)
- No anchoring fee up to 30 days. (2022 only 6 days)
- Vessels less than 15m LOA can stay up to 72 hours (For refueling and provisioning) without paying any government charges. (2022, didn't happen, but reduced costs)

The Ministry of Tourism is expecting that they will start giving a free cruising permit for sailors from 1st May

(So we are expecting that there will be NO charges for cruising permit from 1st May)

**April 2019 – Tracking Devices Required:** A Tracking Device is now required for arriving yachts. Such a wasted expense. Started with the ex-president just before elections last year as he was paranoid about a foreign coup and was concerned they'd come in by yacht! With the result that we all had to get trackers!

Your agent gets it for you - costs about \$300, and then another \$200 a month onwards so that customs can track you. Just another money making racket basically.

**Island Pearl – Feb 2018:** To all those considering cruising the Maldives this season. We sailed in to Male on approx 10th Feb, spent at least 1 week there during the peak of the State of Emergency and were in & out Male city daily with absolutely no problems at all. Please don't be put off coming here for that reason. Also, although the initial fees are outrageously high (\$1540 for us & still up to US \$500 to pay at check out) we have spent very little at all whilst here for 3 weeks so far, as we stocked up big time for both Maldives & Chagos before leaving Phuket, therefore, overall we expect our cruising cost here to be similar to past countries.

We are sooooo pleased we came here and are absolutely loving it! Initially cruised north from Male to Baa and now turned south back towards Male for fresh fruit & veges, then slowly south to Gan and to Chagos mid April. Our agents, Ismail at Shipcare (and Asadhulla too) have been extremely helpful helpful and well worth their fee in assisting with the red tape. In fact, we would say that the check in process was the best yet of any country so far, even compared to Malaysia!, thanks to Shipcare who did and continue to handle all our cruising needs.

Two major issues you will encounter though are chain length (we had to anchor in 40m waiting for customs & will need to do so again tomorrow) and the complete lack of information regarding anchorages. We found SV Alba's blog great but, the only two other cruising guides (1998 & 2005) of no use yet at all as there were either new resorts or new protected areas in each of the suggested anchor spots so far. We eventually put a depth sounder on our dinghy & go ahead to find passes thru reefs to anchorages. All charts are out in places by quite a margin so you need to keep a good look out but the water is the clearest we have yet seen anywhere in the world so at least you can see reefs in good light.

In case it is useful to anyone following us we have our precise anchored positions & comments on our website below if you search under "Contact us" and then "Where are we now" and go to the clickable map.

Try to avoid Male on weekends as the entire city closes on Fridays and the Hulemale safe anchorage is packed full of Safari Charter boats from Sat till Mon am's with customers flying in and the weekly charter change over. It is awfully jammed n their on those days, but thins out nicely Monday till Friday.

Happy sailing from the crew of svislandpearl.com. We hope to meet many of you as we all head SW towards South Africa.

**Assad – Feb 2018:** We have a special package for those who want cross the Red Sea and want to stay only in Uligan just for refueling/repairing/provisioning. They can stay for a week and it will cost about USD250.00 including all charges by the government and agent fees.

# Local ferry is available to visit around the atolls (Island excursion)

Feel free to contact : "assad@realseahawksmaldives.com"

+(960) 7934946

**Nick Nicolle (FB Group) – Jan 2017 – Cruising Guide to Maldives:** IMPORTANT: A warning to anyone coming to the Maldives: we have found the "Maldives, a cruising guide of sorts" by Capt J.M. Wolsrenholme, to be very inaccurate. One of his waypoints was off by 1.5 miles and more importantly, of the four anchorages we have tried to use based on his book, all of them had far less depth than he indicates. One that he says has 12 feet has just over six at high tide. Use with caution. (*This is a free PDF file by yacht "Mr. John"*)

**Bob Bechler (FB Group) – Jan 2017 – Agent in Uligan:** Asadhulla Mohamed, the agent in Maldives passed this along to me today. If you want to take advantage of this offer contact him.

"We are providing special arrangements for those who want to cross the Red Sea this year. They can stop and stay in Uligan for one week and we will charge only \$50 for clear in and out arrangements."

**Katrina Emtage (FB Group) – Feb 2016 – Quick Stop in Maldives – No Cruising Permit:** We are currently in Uligan, Maldives. A 7 day stopover for provisioning, refuelling etc is possible without paying for a cruising permit provided that the boat stays in one harbour. We can recommend the agent Assad [assad@realseahawksmaldives.com](mailto:assad@realseahawksmaldives.com) Another boat here used a different agent and were billed for the cruising permit even though they also just stopped for a week. They are questioning this.

**Nightly – June 2015:** Cruising in the Maldives is great, but finding a good anchor spot is difficult. We were traveling late in the NE Monsoon April and May, but the winds were more from the NW. According to other cruisers who have been here 3 times before, you should start at least a month earlier.

Once you arrive in Gan (Addu) you can stay here without extending your cruising permit for 180 days, you only pay anchor fee (US \$3.33 or \$5.33 p/d depending on the time you stay here)

Before you leave for this last atoll, there is a very good anchorage in Thinadhoo, Huvaadhoo Atoll, you can wait here for a good weather window to cross the Equator channel. And you can stock up well here, food and fuel. When you leave straight outside of Thinadhoo, the angle to Addu is better. The current will set you east (in the SW monsoon) with 1,5-2 kn the same as in 1½ degree channel.

To help others we made a MaxSea layer with possibilities to anchor and dive.

**Brian Simm – April 2015 – Clearing Out of Gan:** I cleared myself out of Gan in about 2 hours. Here is what I did: Get the single correct form from customs at port and walk it round the 4 offices near the port in the correct order. (others reported it taking 3 days to clear out).

**Emerald Sea – March 2015:** We used RealSeaHawksMaldives as agents and so far have been very good to work with.

Maldivian **cruising permits**, at present, are valid for 30 days upon entry and if staying longer, then need to be renewed in Male for the extension. This requires a stop in Male so ensure your agent has representation here. This would be explained to you by your agent.

**Sea Topaz – February 2015:** We arrived safely in Uligam Maldives. We are very well looked after by the local agent Assad.

**Tamarisk – January 2015 (from Noonsite):** We used Assad as an agent in Uligamu in Maldives - excellent in every way for yacht services (very reasonably priced too) and was able to find a security contractor at the last minute and also arrange for a crew change there (which is impossible to do without advance paperwork). The weapons depot is in Male, so if going via Maldives, you will need to get down to Male for departure.

If you want to cruise the Maldives islands, the permit is expensive (around \$700), the remaining fees without the sailing permit were around \$300 (including agency fees).

Assad's contact info is:

Tel : [\(+ 960\) 3300794](tel:+9603300794) | Fax: [\(+ 960\) 3300794](tel:+9603300794) | Mobile [\(+960 \) 7934946](tel:+9607934946) |

Email: [Assad@realseahawksmaldives.com](mailto:Assad@realseahawksmaldives.com)

I suggest buying some fake guns from one of the shops in Patong Beach... the display of weapons we think is the most important thing to deter an attack, and an extra fake gun or two will help. Try to avoid going into any port while weapons are aboard, and if you do go into a port with weapons, follow all procedures to the T.

### **7.2.5 Clearance in Uligamu**

**Kurukulla – February/March 2023:** Before departing Galle we had made contact with, and sent all the necessary forms to, our agent in the Maldives. On advice from fellow sailors we had changed our intended port of entry from Male to Uligan, in the north, which we were told was much cheaper and very much more convenient. Asadhulla, at Real Sea Hawks Agency, proved very efficient and welcoming.

Two and a half days, 450 miles and many windshifts later we hove-to off Uligan at 0300 in the morning, waiting for daylight before entering. By 0800 we were anchored off the village on Uligan and in contact with the agent. By 1200, having had a visit from Customs and Immigration, we were cleared and into the Maldives; it was that simple!

Uligan is a small community with two shops, one café and a few dozen houses plus, of course, a Mosque. We stayed anchored here for four days, surrounded by several boats we had met in Galle, before departing for an overnight passage to Male.

After spending a couple of weeks cruising from Uligan to Male and back, it was time to leave, only 48 hours behind our planned schedule. With two days of calms forecast, we opted to plan for a departure on the 21st of March and settled for a quiet 48 hours of relaxation in preparation.

We departed Uligan in the Maldives on the 21st of March at midday.

**Tregoning – January 2023:** Our clearance into Uligamu was the antithesis of anxious. After arriving at 10 am, we sorted out the cockpit and went through our "Arrival" checklist. We had

been assured by our agent, Assad, that he would see our arrival (we had sent him a message with a fairly accurate estimate of arrival time), and we would be visited by the officials once we were anchored. By noon, with no sign of a visit, we decided to have lunch and then contact Assad by Iridium email.

He soon replied that the Customs Officer was detained with another vessel, and they would come to us at 3:30 pm. It was closer to 4:30 pm when a very smart launch appeared with six people aboard, including the boat captain. We tied it alongside and they all came aboard to fill the cockpit. Assad introduced himself and his associate, Hammad, and then handed over the delightful gift of 1.5L of Neapolitan ice cream...yum! As I said before, I am not sure if this is typical (and I hesitate to ask others in case it is not) or because we had waited so long. Either way, he had instantly won our approval.

Randall had sent him many documents by email and, for once, there was no need for us to produce these again. The security officer, in army uniform, had one form for us to fill out with the usual information, but everything else Assad had already completed, and all Randall had to do was sign and stamp. Again, it seems that the smaller the country, the happier they are with a boat stamp and a pile of papers. I was too tired to catch the names of the other officers, but the Health Officer signed and gave us the Certificate of Pratique. She also told us that we could take down our quarantine flag and we were permitted to go ashore.

We had been told that any alcohol on board would be confiscated by Customs, to be returned on our departure. The Maldives is a Muslim country and neither alcohol nor pork can be brought ashore. In fact, we checked the "yes" box on the Customs form to say that we did have some alcohol aboard (half a bottle of red wine and half a bottle of Sri Lankan rum) but it was never mentioned again. We were, however, given a half page of "Some useful information and advice (Port of Uligan)" which listed what we can and cannot do. This included dressing appropriately ashore (covering shoulders to the knee), and not taking any alcohol off the vessel. While this might seem a bit officious, we were very impressed and pleased that they had made clear all of the things that had been ambiguous or unclear in other Muslim places we had visited.

### **7.3 Cruiser Services**

#### **7.3.1 Fuel**

**Tregoning – January 2023:** Assad and Hammad arranged for us to get three of our jerry cans (60 L or 15 US gallons) refilled with diesel, and at US\$1.50 per L, it was no more expensive than in Sri Lanka.

**Starry Horizons – March 2019:** We used a ton of diesel in the Maldives! There was often no wind, so we were motoring from anchorage to anchorage. We refueled in Kulhudafushi and Gan at the wharf, and in Himmafushi via jerry cans.

### **7.4 Getting Guests In and Out**

**From Maldives Tourism Brochure ([visitmaldives.com](http://visitmaldives.com)) – 2017:**

There are flights to the Maldives direct from Europe as well as via the Middle East and from the main Asian airports with connections from the USA or Australia. Some airlines only operate seasonal charters and some have a code sharing arrangement with other carriers flying to Ibrahim Nasir Male' International Airport.

There are ferries running regularly between the airport and Male' at a cost of US\$1 per passenger. Other ferries operate on a daily basis from Male' in the afternoons to nearby islands, returning to Male' in the mornings. There are separate ferries on a regular basis operating from ferry terminals on Male' to Hulhumale' and Vilingilli.

Taxis can be hired to get around Male' and a bus service operates in Hulhumale'.

Resort representatives meet guests on arrival at Ibrahim Nasir International Airport and escort them to the jetty or domestic airport for transfer to their resort. Domestic carriers are Maldivian (Island Aviation) and Flyme, with Trans Maldivian operating seaplanes.

Guests are met on arrival at every domestic airport for transfer by speedboat to their resort or guesthouse.

Domestic airports are at:

- Dharavandhoo, Baa Atoll
- Fuvahmulah, Gnaviyani Atoll
- Gan, Addu City, Addu Atoll

(with facilities for international flights)

- Hanimaadhoo, Haa Dhaalu Atoll

(with facilities for international flights)

- Ifuru, Raa Atoll
- Kaadedhdhoo, Gaafu Dhaalu Atoll
- Kadhdhoo, Laamu Atoll
- Kooddoo, Gaafu Alifu Atoll
- Maamigili, Alifu Dhaalu Atoll

(with facilities for international flights)

- Thimarafushi, Thaa Atoll

## **7.5 Weather**

**Kerry Wright (FB Group) – July 2018:** We've been here for a year and a half and love it. We surf and fish, so it's a great place for that. DO NOT be here in May - it's start of monsoon season and weather can be horrendous. Jan-April is awesome. SW monsoon of May to Oct can have periods of great weather, but also be rainy/windy at times. For instance we've just had a full week of howling winds and rain. But the week before was bright sunshine and no wind.

## **7.6 Cruisers Services**

### **7.6.1 Money**

**Liz Coleman – April 2019:** Friends report NO ATM's in Uligan. You need to take sufficient US dollars with you to cover your stay. First atm they found was in Gan, just before they left.

**Another Cruiser – April 2019:** You are right,there's no ATM in Uligan!



We went to Ihavandhoo island via speed boat in about 20mins, where they have an ATM and we bought diesel. We were charged 95 USD. Transportation was included on that amount.

On our next stop was Kulhudhuffushi where we bought diesel (.78USD) plus they also have ATM. Male as well, they have many ATMs.

**Another Cruiser – April 2019:** Just be careful when trying to withdraw money with a Visa card. Sometimes they don't work in Bank of Maldives ATM's. No issues with MasterCard

### **7.6.2 Diesel and Gasoline**

**Kerry Wright – April 2019:** We are based in Maldives. Diesel is fresh and good quality. In Hulhumale you can get it delivered to you at anchor in the lagoon. Otherwise at some local islands you can go into the local port to fill up. Technically as a foreign yacht you aren't allowed in a local harbour but no one seems to mind if you pop in to fill up.

**Liz Coleman – April 2019:** I asked friends who are currently in the Maldives about diesel (cost and quality) and about agents. This is what they told me.

Cost of diesel: Just under US \$1.000 per litre (Same price for petrol)

Quality: Very clean

Agent: It's best to use an agent if staying for any amount of time or traveling around. Cost was US \$1,124 for 30-days plus US \$180 agent fee.

**Crystal Blues – April 2015 – Diesel in Gan:** - Take your yacht into the boat harbour at Feydhoo for fueling. There is no need to jerry jug the diesel. The tanker truck will come to the wharf.

**Emerald Sea – March 2015:** Diesel price is cheapest in Male as you won't have to pay for additional delivery topup charges. Its approx USD1.10/Liter where a fuel barge, arranged by your agent, will come alongside your boat in Hulmale anchorage (just north of Male).

**Tamarisk - January 2015:** Diesel is available in Male and provisioning is decent. Uligamu has basic provisioning and diesel is very difficult there.

### **7.6.3 Propane (Cooking Gas).**

### **7.6.4 Groceries/Provisioning**

**Sail SE Asia FB Group – May 2020:** This may be a year premature but something to file away.

Yachts in the Maldives may wish to consider coming to Male prior to departing for their next destination. Boats have posted their concern about departing the Maldives and potentially running perilously low on fuel or food while drifting for days. Albeit this may be the case if leaving from Uligan where the food supply chain is challenged, in Male food, fuel, medicine and parts are readily available.

In the course of 24 hours we were able to secure replacement batteries and quality fresh fruits, dry storage and meats. We were able to take on diesel

from a fuel barge who comes alongside and through our agent purchase additional jerry cans to have sufficient diesel to manage passage through the doldrums.

Wholesale suppliers who typically supply resorts are only too happy to source and deliver a variety of food (cheeses, meats, dairy and dry goods) in refrigerated trucks right to the jetty (including cases of juice and pop). Through our agent we were able to get last minute sundries, including restocking our chocolate stash.

The people here have been kind and helpful, easing the burden of our departure planning.

**Nightfly – June 2015:** There is a very good anchorage in Thinadhoo, Huvaadhoo Atoll, you can wait here for a good weather window to cross the Equator channel. And you can stock up well here, food and fuel.

**Crystal Blues – April 2015 – Provisioning in Gan/Addu Atoll:** After riding all over the four linked islands, we ended up purchasing the best produce here at nearby Feydhoo. The large 3S supermarket is there, along with many good smaller stores on the back streets.

- There are two good restaurants in Feydhoo, reasonable prices, aircon.
- Take your dinghy into the boat harbour at Feydhoo for shopping convenience.
- You can rent a motor cycle as we did for US\$25 per day, from "Shey", call him on 798-8435.
- A good taxi driver is "Hosman", call him on 990-0083.
- If you want to pay an extortionate rate you can call "Moosa" for a taxi, on 743-7957, though we suggest that you don't....

**Emerald Sea – March 2015:** Provisioning in the many of the atoll towns provides basics only. Male has a more varied selection including import shops (Fantasy, etc). There are also a markets for veg, fruits and another for fish. Tuna is priced at approx R50/kg.

**Tamarisk - January 2015:** Diesel is available in Male and provisioning is decent. Uligamu has basic provisioning and diesel is very difficult there.

### **7.6.5 Water**

### **7.6.6 Boat Parts & Repairs**

**Kerry Write – FB Feb 2018 – Lofrans Windlass:** I have just used the Maldives Lofrans agent to import a new Lofrans X3. They ordered from Italy and I received within 5 days. You can contact Asir on [countrymanager@lalizas.mv](mailto:countrymanager@lalizas.mv)

**Emerald Sea – March 2015:** During our walkabouts in Male we came across 4 chandlery shops and even more hardware shops. It's surprising the stock they have.

Flying/courier any parts in, as we did, was easily accomplished. This should be done via your agent who will collect the goods and manage custom clearances. If the goods are less than R6000 then there will not be any additional charges i.e. duties.

### **7.6.7 Laundry**

### **7.6.8 Medical**

### **7.6.9 Getting Around**

## **7.7 Communications**

### **7.7.1 Telephones & Cell Phones**

### **7.7.2 Internet Access**

**Emerald Sea – March 2015:** Pre-paid 3G internet and phone sims are available in Uligan and offer wide and fast coverage throughout the Maldives.

### **7.7.3 Mail**

## **7.8 Things to See and Do**

### **7.8.1 Restaurants & Bars**

### **7.8.2 Diving & Snorkeling**

### **7.8.3 Land Touring**

### **7.8.4 Hiking**

### **7.8.5 Other**

## **7.9 Cruising in the Maldives**

When you check in to the Maldives your agent will arrange a cruising permit that allows you to travel anywhere in the islands [so far as I know]. We have never been asked to provide any proof of this permit at any of the atolls we have visited yet but we haven't visited that many so far.

**Alba – April 2017:** Our six-week trip to the Maldives has come to an end, so I thought that I'd post our thoughts on the country.

Most of the anchorages and deserted islands are stunning – imagine crystal clear turquoise waters and tiny islands with white sand beaches and coconut trees swaying in the breeze.

However, following a major bleaching event in 2016, a huge proportion of the coral reefs are bleached and dead, especially the shallow reefs (< 15 metres) where there is almost 100% mortality. This means that the snorkelling is not very good. Despite that, we've been snorkelling or diving almost every day - there's always something new to see if you search for it. I hope that the coral will soon grow back to its former glory, but I fear it will take many years.

Ashore, the villages and small towns are uninteresting - the streets are hard packed sand and the single story buildings are dreary. The villages all have the same rectangular layout - there's no variety and no observable culture or history. The islanders are reserved and appear unhappy, but they are friendly and helpful once you start talking to them.

In my humble opinion, 100% enforced Islam is not good for the islanders. In the villages, women wear long robes and mainly black hijabs, with a minority wearing a total burka with veil and gloves. It's not a joyful way of life, especially in this heat. At least in Indonesia and Malaysia, the Muslim women have some freedom and can wear colourful hijabs & western clothes.

To add to this rather mixed picture, it's very expensive to clear in and out. It cost us just over \$1,000 USD for six weeks. You have to appoint an agent and we used Real Sea Hawks - who were very professional and helpful.

The rules for cruising are confusing. Each boat is issued with a Cruising Permit that "officially" only allows you to stop in four inhabited islands (Uligan, Kulhudhuffushi, Hulhumale and Gan). The Cruising Permit specifically states that "This permit allows visiting only permitted islands and places. Not allowed to anchor in local harbours & visit the listed islands only." This means that you are not supposed to stop at any "inhabited island". We were told by our agent that this is enforced by the Customs and a maximum fine of \$2000US could be imposed for breaking the rules.

In practice, cruisers visit many of the small villages and towns, seeking out provisions, fuel and hardware. As far as I'm aware, no cruiser has being fined, although there are reports of Customs being very annoyed by one cruising boat selling alcohol to locals and another who took a dog ashore. (Stupid acts like this cause problems for those following.)

We met up with the Sail Maldives Rally fleet half way through their 2 months and the rally sort of fizzled out two weeks later, so I don't feel that I'm the right person to give a critique about the Rally other than to say that it doesn't cost any more than cruising by yourself and it's a good opportunity to meet other cruisers.

So in summary, we think that the Maldives is an expensive proposition, given the poor state of the reef and the lack of anything to do or see ashore. However, it's a convenient stop on the way across the Indian Ocean and the anchorages are stunning. So if we had our time again, we'd still visit the Maldives, but only plan to stay for 3 or 4 weeks. In our opinion, it would be better to spend more time in the Andamans, North Sumatra, Sri Lanka or even India.

**Nightfly – June 2015:** Cruising in the Maldives is great, but finding a good anchor spot is difficult. We were traveling late in the NE Monsoon April and May, but the winds were more from the NW. According to other cruisers who have been here 3 times before, you should start at least a month earlier.

Once you arrive in Gan (Addu) you can stay here without extending your cruising permit for 180 days, you only pay anchor fee (US \$3.33 or \$5.33 p/d depending on the time you stay here)

**Emerald Sea – March 2015:** Maldivian **cruising permits**, at present, are valid for 30 days upon entry and if staying longer, then need to be renewed in Male for the extension. This requires a stop in Male so ensure your agent has representation here. This would be explained to you by your agent.

Charting in the Maldives—we recommend you use Google Earth. **E-charts/software are inferior** for any detailed navigation i.e. Navionics, Garmin Blue. These e-charts are detailed around the Male area but not around many/most of the atolls/lagoons.

There are a few Maldivian maps available which are a help. The one we picked up included the contact details for all the resorts, important if....

Many of the resorts charge a '**landing fee**' and we have been quoted anywhere from USD25-125 in addition of any charges for meals, spas, etc. This is just to plant your foot on their sand. There are a few exceptions where they welcome yachts without these fees. Call in advance.

Anchoring will be challenging as depths decrease very quickly and often into shallow coral reefs where your swing radius can put you into peril. You should always plan passages to arrive before 1600 while the sun can still provide you with depth visibility.

During the many times you will anchor in the Maldives, you will inevitably anchor into coral....and as such there is a likelihood of having your anchor or chain stuck, as happened to us. Having a scuba can be a saviour or plenty of boat manoeuvring. Be careful.

Currents in the channels are strong i.e. 1-3kts and entering and negotiating them is to be done with eyes wide open, particularly where they are narrow. Google Earth is a great assister here. There are slack periods but this seems not to corresponded to the Tide Tables.

You can apparently enter some of the island towns harbours and pull alongside or anchor med-style but permission needs to be asked in advance. We never did this ourselves, preferring to anchor outside the harbours. Do watch the entrance depths and they can be very shallow and once in beware of the submerged mooring lines from the local's boats.

### **7.9.1 Kullundhuffushee**

**Kurukulla – March 2023:** On the next morning we set off north again from Milandhunmadulu Atoll to make distance back towards Uligan for our departure from the Maldives. Our final stop was to be a night in Kullundhuffushee, where we would anchor in the southern section of the islands harbour. It is also one of the few islands that has an airport rather than a seaplane service. This is where fate killed my Surface Pro laptop charger. My trusty old Lenovo laptop came out of it's stowage and 10 minutes later we had charts and were navigating again but I was not prepared to launch out on the second part of the Indian Ocean crossing without a backup computer and charts.

Fortunately our agent in Uligan came to the rescue, recommending Link Serve who had a branch in Kullundhuffushee and a bigger store in Male. They had a spare in Male and 24 hours later it arrived by air freight. Very efficient and saved our programme. In the interim we also took advantage of the better shopping in Kullundhuffushee and replenished our onboard stocks ready for our upcoming ocean passage and replenished water from shore rather than "jerry jug" it when in Uligan.

### **7.9.2 Milandhunmadulu Atoll**

**Kurukulla – March 2023:** We again got an early start from Veyofushi, with 46 miles to go to our next anchorage at Dholhiyadhoo, Milandhunmadulu Atoll. This place was intriguing!

Our cruising guide on the internet described the resort as under construction (2010); well, as we drew closer, it became increasingly obvious that all construction had stopped long ago and the place had fallen into disrepair. Not all Maldivian Resorts make money, obviously!

The lagoon provided a delightful anchorage and we were able to anchor almost on the beach in front of a set of ruined villas. As a result of the unexpected peace and tranquillity of this anchorage, we again opted to stay two nights.

A walk ashore provided even more surprises, there were over 50 cabins on stilts, built above the water, and a further twenty five or so luxury villas (the signs describing them as such were still on them) in amongst the trees along the single road connecting all the facilities. It was only when walking along this road that we realized we were perhaps not the only people on the island! The road had obviously been swept recently to remove leaves and debris; why, goodness only knows.

All buildings, except for a few “Staff quarters” were in ruins including the bars, restaurants, spa facilities etcetera. Someone's dream had obviously gone horribly wrong!

Although we didn't see anyone on the island we did stumble upon a few buildings that were obviously inhabited. A very strange lifestyle living amongst the ruins!

### **7.9.3 Veyofushi**

**Kurukulla – March 2023:** We had another early morning start as we headed for the island of **Veyofushi**, 37 miles further north from Gaafaru. The anchorage was described as well-protected from the NE and with it's own small island on the reef.

On arrival we crossed the reef, again by reference to Google Earth, but the reported (and charted) island had ceased to exist! All we saw was a few coral outcrops sticking out of the water at low tide!

Notwithstanding, the water quality was crystal clear and the snorkelling again great.

With adverse winds the next day we opted to stay for two nights and enjoy the surroundings. The other islands around us all seemed to be busy with boats and seaplanes coming and going but we had our bit of reef to ourselves!

### **7.9.4 Gaafaru**

**Kurukulla – March 2023:** Eventually we managed to get away from Male and set sail in the early morning for our first anchorage for the night in the lagoon at **Gaafaru**, just north west of the Male archipelago.

The entry to the lagoon and passage from the entry, in the west, to the populated island, in the east, was clear and easy; that is until the last 1.5 miles. Try as we might, navigating between the coral outcrops by eye, we could not find a channel through to the anchorage nearer the island.

Later, as we were leaving, I noticed a motor vessel entering the lagoon from the south east. Not a channel marked on our charts and not visible on Google Earth but probably blasted through when the new harbour was built. Sadly we didn't have time to investigate. Notwithstanding the distance to the island from our anchorage, which was in amongst the coral outcrops, it was great for snorkelling so not all bad!

### **7.9.5 Addu (Gan)**

**Georgia (from Noonsite) – June 2021** - Notes on the Gan harbor anchorage from Georgia (svjeorgia.blogspot.com)

Outside cut: 00°41.0S, 073°08.75E

The cut into the Gan anchorage lies between Gan and Feydhoo islands and is in front of the causeway connecting these islands. The cut is not as apparent as the typical cuts further north and the water is often not clear.

There is a starboard side pole that marks the outer portion of the cut.

There is a starboard side inner pole on the inside of the cut that is not visible at higher tides.

The cut has about 10 feet minimum at low tide.

On the inner, starboard side of the cut is a shallow spot that sticks into the cut. It is often not very visible due to the water clarity. When you get toward the inside of the cut, stay a bit clear of the starboard side ( a little closer to the breakwater wall on your port). You can turn to starboard into the main portion of the anchorage once you have passed the steps that are in the breakwater wall to port.

Directly ahead of the cut as you enter is an open area with no moorings. This is in front of the tied off to the wall Coast Guard and Police boats. We were told we are not allowed to anchor in this area.

The anchorage is very tight, with the reef to the east and the existing local boats on moorings. These moorings are continually used, so don't expect an empty one to stay empty. The holding varies from good sand to somewhat scoured rubble. The scoured portions are where the current flows under the causeway.

You can't put out much scope as the winds come from all directions. The anchorage depths range from about 6 feet to 15feet. The anchorage is often roly at high tide.

Petrol and diesel are available in the Feydho harbour. Take the dinghy 5 minutes to the harbour and head to the back wall where the petrol station is to fill your jerry jugs.

Provisioning - there are 3 decent grocery stores within walking distance. The 3S store is just across the street and a little south of the petrol station. Its the best place to get eggs as they use a bright flashlight(torch) to check them before they put them in your container.

We anchored at 00°41.136S, 073°08.608E

**Andre Ruegg (FB) – Feb 2020** - We spent about one month during the beginning of Covid in Gan. The anchorage near the coast guard is very marginal, I don't recommend it. About 4nm Northeast you can find better anchorages. Near the uninhabited island Mulikholu.

**All supplies are available in Gaan. And fruits and vegs are as good as on other islands.**

**Crystal Blues – April 2015 – Gan & Addu Atoll:** After a very twitchy and uncomfortable overnight voyage south, Crystal Blues is anchored in 40 meters of clear water at Gan, in the Addu Atoll. Turtles and dolphins swim around us and the environment seems pristine.

We did manage to sail for the entire passage, a rarity in this part of the world. During the voyage we crossed the equator, sometime around the change of watch at 2:00am, but neither of us had the heart to celebrate - we were too busy just holding on.

We entered the atoll via the northern pass around 9:00am and were safely anchored within the hour, just before the first of many squalls bore down on us.

We have a 100 meters of anchor chain out here, but I'm always very watchful the first day or so after anchoring, specially when it repeatedly blows at 30 to 40 knots with little warning.

This is the most southern point of the Maldivian island chain, and will be our stepping off point for Chagos and then Mauritius.

Adoo Atoll is small, but heavily populated. The British military ran an air base here until the 1970's (see the airport in the bottom of the photo above). The old officers mess has been converted into the low key Equator Village resort, so we can go ashore for a beer if the need arises. Right now the original runway is being extended, and the airport has recently qualified for "International Airport" status, though the only international flights so far are private jets delivering the rich and (sometimes) famous.

Culturally this atoll seems more relaxed in its observance of muslim protocols - many more women are bare headed here, and wearing western clothing. We have a rental motor cycle, and are busy each day searching for fresh produce to replenish our stores onboard. Some supplies come by air, but the majority arrive on supply boats once or twice a week. There is a scramble at the supermarket when the fresh vegetables hit the shelves. Many local residents grow fruits and vegetables in small quantities and sell through local shops or via word of mouth - Ley has ordered two Papayas for delivery on Tuesday from one local grower.

Three other yachts are here in the anchorage. The boat crews have been gathering in the evenings for food and refreshments, sharing information, rumor and gossip as usual.

Authorities here have two designated anchoring areas for yachts, one in the north and the more popular location in the south, which is closer to provisioning and re-fueling sources. The southern location offers two choices - either inside or outside the lagoon that separates Gan Island from Feydhoo Island.

The lagoon offers shallow water anchoring and perfect protection, but the currents can run fierce and the flies and mosquitoes are a huge problem. Outside the lagoon, safe anchoring can be found in 30 to 40 meters of water. It is deep, but the holding is excellent and there are no coral heads to worry about.

For boats following our path, some simple local travel and provisioning advice :

- After riding all over the four linked islands, we ended up purchasing the best produce here at nearby Feydhoo. The large 3S supermarket is there, along with many good smaller stores on the back streets.
- There are two good restaurants in Feydhoo, reasonable prices, aircon.
- Take your dinghy into the boat harbour at Feydhoo for shopping convenience.



- Take your yacht into the boat harbour at Feydhoo for fueling. There is no need to jerry jug the diesel. The tanker truck will come to the wharf.
- You can rent a motor cycle as we did for US\$25 per day, from "Shey", call him on 798-8435.
- A good taxi driver is "Hosman", call him on 990-0083.
- If you want to pay an extortionate rate you can call "Moosa" for a taxi, on 743-7957, though we suggest that you don't....

Right now everyone is preparing their vessels and themselves for the next phase of the journey to South Africa, which involves a 300 mile run South to Chagos.

After that it will be a 1000 mile voyage South West to Mauritius. We plan to depart here early on the 29th - if all goes well in Chagos we'll be in Mauritius for our birthdays in June.

### **7.9.6 Male**

**Kurukulla – March 2023:** We arrived in Male just before sunset after an overnight from Uligamu. Being surrounded by heavy rain clouds was not quite what we had anticipated but even in these conditions, from seaward, it was obvious Male had changed out of all recognition, from my previous visit in the 1970's.

Our agent had recommended anchoring in the new harbour, built north of the airport on Hulule island, the adjacent island to Male. Both islands are now connected by the "China – Maldives Friendship Bridge" a dual carriageway bridge which now straddles the Male Channel.

The island of Hulule has been massively extended northwards by land reclamation and the "new" land is one massive building site. From the anchorage I can count 37, 20-story-plus, apartment blocks either recently completed or under construction.

Not quite the Male I remember. The other major difference is that Male and its adjacent islands have a serious refuse problem. The streets are festooned with piles of cardboard stacked in doorways, alleyways and alcoves. The roads are littered with plastic bottles, bags and cans; despite the efforts of the occasional roadsweeper there seems to be no public conscience and no refuse collection system.

Westwards, from Male, there is another bridge under construction to connect Male to the island of Viligili. Beyond this island, just to the west, on the next part of the reef, new port facilities are under construction; it's all very impressive but the bridge, we were told, is being donated by India. Whatever the nation is involved, there is an almost unsustainable amount of construction going on; everywhere there are Chinese or Indian construction workers en masse. How the Maldives Government will ever afford to pay for this concrete jungle goodness knows.

Away from Male (although not far away) almost every small island, on a coral outcrop, has a chic hotel consisting of a central facility with villas connected by a walkway running out over the reef; many charging around £1000 per day for the solitude. There almost seems to be a standard design!

The government has sold the islands to the developers and hence for us yachtsmen they have become, in many cases, almost no go areas. Nobody paying those sorts of prices wants to look at someone else's yacht parked on their doorstep! This combined with the paucity of anchorages in reasonable depths in most of the atolls (majority are 20 mtrs+ minimum) makes cruising the Maldives even more challenging!

Our plan had been to stay in or near Male for 3 days before slowly heading back to Uligan. To go to Male we were exempt a cruising permit but to leave, we needed it. Our agent had promised it would be issued within three working days and he would forward it on to us by e-mail. Six days later we were still waiting and having to put our plans on hold; stuck in Male. Frustrating! It was very much the old adage, never go back to places you fondly remember, it is better to keep your memories intact.

**Ken Montgomery (FB) March 2016:** **Antares** is at Boduhithi in N Male. We are "moored" [on a buoy] at 04:25N; 073:23E. Its a very nice place and has a North anchorage that is shallow and also mooring buoys to tie on too. The island is devoted to a resort and hence there is a "cost" to being here but for those wanting a place to go ashore and have a couple of beers in a bar with a nice meal its possible. Normally I wouldn't spend like this but with 2 kids onboard there it's difficult to keep them amused snorkeling. Asdhoo island is another resort that is cruiser friendly and they have a mooring buoy we were offered for free. They also have cold beer and its possible to order a meal for USD25 consisting of a buffet.

On our passage from Eriyadhoo to here yesterday we had about 8 knots of wind and they enjoyed sailing without the engine thumping away. We will be here until Friday and then head back to Hulehumale ( Renamed to Hellholemale on Sundays when the liveaboard diveboats fill the anchorage) to take the kids to the airport for for their flights out on Saturday. On the 12th we will sail south with an etd from Gan on May 2nd.

**Thomas Partridge (FB) – March 2016:** We've only recently arrived in the Maldives but enjoyed Rasfushi 06 43.03N 072 55.41. 23m coral and hard sand. You'll need a satellite image to get in as the charts aren't accurate. Very good snorkelling although it is an anchorage for settled weather.

### **7.9.7 Huvadhoo Atoll**

**Cadeuceus – April 2016:** We are now in the Huvadhoo Atoll

Firstly anchored at 00:50.978N 073:11.007E, near Kolaamafushi. We were approached at night by three men paddling a blacked out boat who wanted to exchange Ganja for alcohol. This was a little worrying as it was 2100, we were sitting in the cockpit and only heard the splashing of paddles coming our way. They were perfectly pleasant and went away once they were told that we were non drug taking temperance supporters; well the first part of that statement is correct.

Secondly we have been anchored at 00:40.598N 073:11.819E, near the small island of Fulangi, for three days. Yesterday whilst working in the engine room I heard a bump against the hull. On coming on deck I found two young men on deck and three more in a 6m open motor boat alongside. They wanted to sell lobster. On being asked (instructed) in a friendly manner to get off our boat and back into theirs they retreated and we had a friendly enough conversation. I explained to them that we were forbidden to have Maldivians on board and if caught we would be expected to leave the country. It was all friendly enough.

This is the first time in the Maldives that we have had this sort of experience and I wonder if it is related to the fact that this Atoll appears to have no resort development and be much more sparsely populated and also we are currently traveling on our own. Another issue with the sparse population is that getting a workable 2G or 3G signal is more problematical.

**Nightfly – June 2015:** There is a very good anchorage in Thinadhoo, Huvaadhoo Atoll, you can wait here for a good weather window to cross the Equator channel. And you can stock up well here, food and fuel. When you leave straight outside of Thinadhoo, the angle to Addu is better. The current will set you east (in the SW monsoon) with 1,5-2 kn the same as in 1½ degree channel. (Nightfly provided a Maxsea layer with waypoints to the IO FB Group).

### **7.9.8 Ari Atoll**

**Wikipedia – April 2016:** Ari Atoll (also called Alif or Alufu Atoll) is one of natural atolls of the Maldives. It is one of the biggest atolls and is located in the west of the archipelago. The almost rectangular alignment spreads the islands over an area of about 89 by 3 kilometres (55.3 by 1.9 miles). It has been divided in two sections for administrative purposes, Northern Ari Atoll and Southern Ari Atoll consisting of 105 islands. Ari Atoll is part of the zone designated for tourist development in the Maldives. It is roughly a 30-minute seaplane flight away from the Capital Malé.

There are more than 20 islands in the Atoll designated for tourist resorts. Each island resort is self-contained with accommodation and recreational facilities such as tennis court. Scuba diving is the most popular tourist activity in the Maldives. The diving in Ari Atoll is extensive and is often defined by location within the atoll, either North or South.

**Camomile – April 2016:** We are just north of Ellaidhoo island in Ari Atoll. The charts are out here. The entrance waypoint is 04 01.068N 072 57.295E if you plot that on the chartplotter it's in the middle of the sea but it's at the entrance to quite a narrow entrance. (You need google earth.) Approach carefully from the west. The channel is a bit scary but it had a minimum depth of 8metres of water. Once inside it's a corally bottom but we dropped the anchor on a patch of sand and we've got the chain buoyed so it doesn't drag across the coral. We are anchored at 04 01.171N 072 57.360 Lovely spot with beautiful coral on the outside walls. Also saw 2 reef sharks. Hope you can find it ok.

### **7.9.9 Not Sure Which Atoll These Belong In**

**From FB Group – 2016 - Camomile Bill Sue - Dhigurah island** is nice. We anchored at 03 32.070N 072 55.990 cross the reef north west of the anchorage. Heart in the mouth stuff but 4 metres of water minimum. Take dinghy into harbour at north of village on the island where there are 2 dive companies by the harbour. They will take you outside the southern reef for a dive or snorkel to see the whale shark. Need to be out there for high tide. We saw it just before a million people jumped into the water (well maybe 30 or 40) Wouldn't take your own boat big surf waves close to reef. Good luck with a sighting.

**From FB Group – 2016 - Thomas Partridge - Kadufushi** is also nice. 02 31.292N 072 58.644E. Anchor in sand 15m between big but well spaced out bommies. Good holding and protection from winds from North and West. Pass to the west of this anchorage point is wide and also some wonderful snorkeling. Lots of dolphins when we were here.

## 8 Seychelles

**From Wikipedia:** Seychelles (say-shelz), officially the Republic of Seychelles (French: République des Seychelles; Creole: Repiblik Sesel), is an archipelago in the Indian Ocean. The 115-island country, whose capital is Victoria, lies 1,500 kilometres (932 mi) east of mainland Southeast Africa. Other nearby island countries and territories include Zanzibar to the west and Comoros, Mayotte, Madagascar, Réunion and Mauritius to the south.

Seychelles, with a population of 90,024, has the smallest population of any African state. Seychelles is a member of the African Union.

Seychelles is located roughly 2/3 of the way between the Maldives and the northern end of Madagascar.

**Noonsite.com:** The sheltered port of Victoria lies at the northern end of Mahe's east coast. It is the capital of the Seychelles and the world's smallest capital city. There are 2 good boatyards here for hauling out and boat work/storage. Position 4°37'S, 55°27'E.

**From UK Government – Dec 2018:** The Seychelles

Seychelles experiences 2 seasonal changes during the year. The start and end of the seasons are less predictable than before, but generally the northwest monsoon season runs from December to March and the southeast trade winds make for a drier and slightly cooler season from May to September.

Currents and waves are affected by the monsoon seasons. Beaches which are safer at certain times of the year can be dangerous for swimming at other times. In general, the west coast is affected during the northwest monsoon and the east coast is affected during the southeast winds.

Beaches at the southern tip are not recommended for swimming at any time. You should exercise caution when swimming, especially with children. Currents can be strong and drownings occur.

Ask hotel staff about the conditions before you visit the beaches in Seychelles.

There is a problem with drugs in Seychelles, in particular heroin. Crime levels have risen as a result; there has been an increase in break-ins, robberies, burglaries and opportunist thefts against residents, expatriates and tourists.

There were robberies and attacks at, and around, Cote D'Or beach on the island of Praslin in late 2017. Police responded with increased foot patrols and lighting. They advise visitors to take care when walking in this area, particularly at night.

You should take sensible precautions to safeguard yourself and your possessions.

### 8.1 Cruiser's Comments

**Sail SE Asia FB Group - December 2021:** There is now a Seychelles Facebook Group called Seychelles Yachties. It is a visible but private group - request to join by answering the 3 questions.

**IO FB Group – April 2019:** We have been at Seychelles with our boat for about 10 months. In the end of your stay for sure you have to pay 8 Euro per day "Maritime Safety & Anchor Fee" ,

(only in CASH ) directly to the Harbour Master (Black Money) Even if you pay your Mooring in Eden Marina, you pay double. For the Outer Islands you pay extra, and for some safety anchor bays also an amount per person. Wonderful place, but not really good experience for sailors.

We paid 380 Euro's for import our boat. So it was all really expensive. But the beaches are beautiful, especially La Dique is perfect ... but a little fight with the Charter Boats at all the anchorages. But I'm sure you will like it there.

**Another boat said:** Temporary importation is not a big thing, just a lot of paperwork for yourself and a stamp on it from an official agent.

Customs will provide you with a list of agents, just ask who is the cheapest from the list and go with him. Last year this was Jimmy, nice guy, cleared some spare part shipments for us as well.

If you want to solve everything out beforehand ask Samantha from the customs office, she's also really helpful [samantha.marie@src.gov.sc](mailto:samantha.marie@src.gov.sc)

Enjoy Seychelles, you'll love it.

**Another boat said:** Yes Samantha is your best bet to contact. We were there for 8 months last year cost Sr3300 for entry. This is for health, customs and immigration who arrive on board. Sr 57 per day no matter where you are. Sr1600 for agent port permit if you stay over 1 month. Vegetables fruit a dairy product expensive as well as restaurants.

**IO FB Group – March 2017:** Please put out a warning on the FB forum that there is now a mandatory charge of approx \$225 "Launch fee" for customs to come out to a yacht entering Mahe Seychelles for clearance.

**Scraatch – May 2015 – Update on Seychelles:** Arrival anchorage is Outside the old Victoria light house and reef ( the reef here is now a row of wind turbines) just outside the channel by a port hand channel marker. Port control is channel 12.

All officials arrive together by pilot boat, 20 minutes and all done. Nowadays there is no anchorage room inside the reef or the old port, it is all either fairway, port or moorings.

Eden Island Marina 1 mile south is fully operational, dock master Keith on channel 10. The main Marina South of the bridge is now full of toy boats, from 10ft to 300 ft. A new section North of the bridge and accessed by entering past the Victoria lighthouse and then inside the reef is just now opening with Scraatch as almost first customer.

I find the rates of 500 euro a month for a 17m boat not bad and will leave Scraatch here for 4 months. A possible cheaper alternative is Angel Fish Marina straight opposite on the mainland side of channel, and also North of bridge, basically stern to on pontoons and a little disorganised, but reportable good prices available. Lonely here, as apparently I am the only cruiser here at present.

Anchoring: I expect smaller boats with people on board can squeeze in near the friendly yacht club.

## **8.2 Theft / Boarding Warnings**

**Nicki Swales – FB Feb 2018:** Anyone visiting Seychelles, please be aware. Our yacht was broken into next to Eden Island. Broke a 25 x 25 hatch crawled through and stole our computer and cell phone in broad daylight while we on shore. Our bigger hatches have burglar bars. Three other boats also broken into at Praslin in the past month.

**Wendy Aaron – FB Feb 2018:** When we were in Seychelles last year the security police boat told us not to anchor by Eden Island as it was high risk for theft because of all the traffic. they also said when in the main harbour not to anchor too close to shore. we were in seychelles for 3 months in 2017 without any problems. We also left the boat for 3 days at the main harbour at Praslin. We paid for a mooring and a boat guardian.

**Ceilydh — July 2015:** We have been anchored in the inner Yacht Basin in Victoria harbour, Seychelles, for 3 weeks.

About 2 weeks ago an unlocked French catamaran was boarded at night and a backpack containing an iPad and passports was taken.

At about 0300, 21 July 2015, our catamaran "Ceilydh" was also boarded by one or more swimmers. Our cabin door was open. The thief came inside and grabbed a mobile phone, backpack and purse and took them back into the cockpit and searched them. He only got the mobile and a small change purse with little money. He then stole our dinghy which had been tied alongside and paddled it to an another catamaran nearby. There the thief entered the boat through a small unlocked back cabin window and got a laptop and iPhone. The owner awoke and chased the thief back into our dinghy, the thief then paddled it to the nearby island in the harbour and abandoned it there.

We notified the local marine police boat which regularly patrols the harbour. They contacted the land police who sent 2 officers. They also sent a fingerprint technician aboard to check for fingerprints. And they made sure we went to the police station and filed a formal statement. A few days later the other catamaran's laptop was located and returned—it had had all the files wiped clean and there was no mention of the thief being found.

Now we are hoisting our dinghy at night, locking the door and hatches, and have downloaded some burglar alarm and motion detector apps for our tablet and phones. Let's hope we don't have them activated!

**Other Incidents:** A fourth catamaran anchored off Eden was boarded and robbed during the night a few days after our robbery. Their experience was much more alarming than the first three thefts. Two men swam to "SY Imagine" and opened the aft hatch where the owners were sleeping and informed them they were being robbed. The owner confronted the men and told them he'd shoot them with a flare pistol if they didn't leave the boat and slammed the hatch closed, but failed to lock it. One man reached inside the hatch taking a tablet, camera and e-reader while the owner went to grab the flare pistol.

With the flare pistol in hand the owner looked out his rear doors and saw someone trying to free his dinghy (which was up and locked). He opened the back door (which had been locked) and shot the flare pistol at the thief. The thief just laughed and pushed into the cabin, he grabbed a hold of the reloaded flare gun and shot it into the cabin where it started a small fire.

While the owner tried to put out the fire his wife grabbed pepper spray and aimed it at the men but the wind carried it away. One man hit her head against a winch while the other beat her with a broom handle they'd found in the cockpit. During this time the owner grabbed a machete to get them out of the boat. They jumped overboard carrying a few things (including the tablet).

The owner called on VHF for port control for help but when the police were alerted they were given the wrong location for the boat. The owner moved to the outer quarantine anchorage—which is unprotected in strong winds but too far for swimmers to reach. The police warned cruisers not to confront thieves because they are frequently on drugs (crystal meth) and more prone to being violent.

Police recommend cruisers lock their boats at night, lock and lift their dinghies and check their outside decks for anything that can be used as a weapon against them. The thieves are unarmed when they arrive--and it's assumed it is the same two thieves that have been attacking boats.

The Seychelles Yacht Club continues to be very cruiser friendly, with showers, a dinghy dock, good meals and a cheap(ish) bar for a nominal temporary weekly fee. They are also a good mailing address for packages and mail sent to you here. If the value of the package is < 3000 Seychelles Rupees, you should get it through customs without having to pay extra duty.

### **8.3 Clearance (Victoria)**

**Everything in this section is from [Noonsite.com](http://Noonsite.com) updated dated March 2017** (unless otherwise noted)

All vessels visiting the Seychelles are reminded that Port Victoria on Mahé is the only port of entry and exit, and both on arrival and departure for a foreign port, vessels must call at Port Victoria to complete clearance formalities.

**Arrival:** It is best to contact Port Control 2 hours before arrival and fly the "Q" flag. Port Control keeps a 24-hour watch on VHF Channel 16. Yachts are generally directed to the Quarantine Area in the yacht basin. Holding is good here.

The Health, Customs, Immigration and security officials usually board the yacht for clearance and will be brought out to your yacht in a pilot boat. There is a charge for this (see Fees section below).

The Entomological Department may require the boat to be sprayed (fumigated) on arrival.

If arriving at a weekend or public holiday, the captain must report to the Port Office, Mahé Quay, through the Port Security Gate on Latanier Road. An arrival form must be completed and the boarding fee paid. Three crew lists and the ship's papers should be taken, and the latter will be held until departure.

The captain must also report to the Immigration office, Independence House, Victoria, with crew lists and passports.

It is possible that the passports will be held until departure from the islands.

The authorities recommend having at least ten copies of crew lists, as other departments will also ask for it.

**Departure:** On departure from the Seychelles, first visit the Immigration office two working days prior to departure with all passports and permits. One day before departure, obtain port and customs clearance, the latter from the Customs office, Latanier Road.

Port clearance is needed to visit any of the other islands. There is a charge for this (see Fees below). Clearance must be made within working hours (08:00-12:00, 13:00-16:00 Monday to Friday).

Before leaving Victoria to visit other islands, port control must be advised on VHF Channel 16. Usually yachts are asked to come to the commercial wharf for a security check before being allowed to leave. The same operation must be followed on return, when a yacht is subjected to an incoming security check before being allowed to anchor.

On the other islands, one must check in with local police or the Island Manager, who will sign the clearance form which must be returned to the port office within 24 hours of one's return to Victoria. At weekends and public holidays the form can be left at Mahé Quay police station.

At the time of departure from the Seychelles, an official will likely visit the yacht. This means departure times must be kept to 06:00 - 18:00 on weekdays. The immigration officer will sign off on the departure, at which time the yacht must depart Victoria Harbour within one hour. The yacht should proceed to its next port (as declared) and may not stop in any other Seychelles port unless in case of emergency.

Not all these regulations are enforced, but it is best to be prepared.

### **8.3.1 Port Authority**

SEYCHELLES PORTS AUTHORITY

P.O. Box 47 , Victoria, Mahe , Republic of Seychelles

Tel:(+248) 4294700 Fax:(+248) 4224004

enquiries@seyport.sc

### **8.3.2 Immigration**

No-one needs a visa to enter the Seychelles but a passport, valid for the period of the visit is required by all. Passports may be retained until departure.

On arrival you will be granted a permit to stay for 30 days, this can be extended for up to 3 months at a time to a maximum of 12 months. This is done at the Immigration Office. It is worth asking for an extended permit initially if required, as some cruisers have reported that a 5 week permit was granted upon asking. (See Fees section below for additional information.)

Application for the renewal should be made at least one week before expiry of the existing permit. The application form can be downloaded here.

All crew must individually fill out a "Disembarkation Card."

Crew leaving the yacht in the Seychelles must first obtain an authority from Immigration. If crew are arriving by air to join a yacht, the captain must give Immigration written confirmation prior to their arrival.

Immigration Office



Independence House, 1st Floor , PO Box 430, Victoria, Mahé

Tel:+248 29 36 36 Fax:+248 22 50 35

<http://www.egov.sc/NonCitizen/Visiting.aspx>

Opening hours: 08:00-12:00, 13:00-16:00(Mon-Fri)

### **8.3.3 Customs**

A vessel may visit the Seychelles for 12 months and must then leave or pay GST of 15% and make a formal application for importation. The insured value of the vessel will generally be accepted. Yacht valuations by a local expert can be extremely expensive, of the order of \$2000. If GST has been paid the vessel may stay on indefinitely. The 12 month rule will be relaxed for reasons of safety, such as avoiding pirates. A vessel that has visited for 12 months and left without paying GST may not return for 36 months.

All arms and ammunition, including spearguns, must be handed to the police or Customs on arrival and a receipt obtained. The bonded firearms will be returned on departure.

Stores under bond will be sealed and are not to be used while in the Seychelles without payment of duty.

Customs officers may ask for a declaration of all food and provisions on board, but dutiable goods will not be charged duty, provided they are declared properly and are obviously for personal consumption.

There are restrictions on tea, seeds, plants, meat and meat products, flowers, fruits and vegetables.

It is forbidden to export unprocessed coco de mer (sea coconut), shells and fish. A permit is required for processed coco de mer.

Yachts in Transit are exempt from VAT. If ordering spare parts whilst in the Seychelles, a useful report (July 2015) by some cruisers who did just that can be found here.

### **8.3.4 Health**

Update August 2016: An outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease in Reunion and Rodrigues has resulted in strict food import restrictions. See this Noonsite report

Any meat or dairy products may be destroyed.

Cholera and yellow fever vaccination certificates are required if coming from a known infected area.

Immunization against hepatitis A and typhoid are highly recommended.

During the rainy season in particular, visitors are advised to take precautions against mosquito bites due to the risk of dengue fever and the Chikungunya virus spread by bites.

There is a risk of leptospirosis, and walking barefoot should be avoided on roads and paths.

Victoria Hospital and the Intensive Care Unit on Mahé: Dial 38 80 00

Praslin Hospital: Dial 23 23 33

La Digue Logan Hospital: Dial 23 42 55

Health clinics can be found in most districts - telephone numbers in local directory.

Medical facilities on the islands are limited, but there is a government hospital in Victoria and some private clinics.

Drinking water is chlorinated and it and ice are safe to drink. Bottled water is widely available.

### **8.3.5 Fees**

Launch Service for Arrival Clearance

Compulsory service provided on arrival.

R3000 (\$220)

The Master shall, within 2 working days from arrival of the vessel, report to Port Office to complete the arrival formalities. Failure to abide to this procedure may result in the liability of a penalty fee as per the Harbour Dues Regulations.

Harbour Dues

These are charged on a daily basis and vary in accordance with the length of stay.

For vessels less than 20 GRT, the fees range from R85/ day (\$6.30) for the first 5 days, R71 (\$5.25) /day for days 5 to 10 and R57/day (\$4.25) for over 10 days.

Larger vessels pay more.

Port dues must be settled on a weekly basis and must be settled before an extension to the visitors passes can be extended.

Marine Safety Dues

Up to 150 GTR: R200 (US\$14.70) per call to Port Victoria.

Marine Environment Protection Dues

Per 48 hrs or part thereof: R0.11 (US\$0.01) per gross tonne.

Health Clearance

R300 (\$22)

Local Clearance Fee

Clearance to visit local islands: R 50 (\$4.20)

Departure Clearance

R50 (\$4.20)

Visitor Visa Extensions

Beyond the initial (free) 3 months, cost 5000 rupees (US\$375) rupees per 3 months (or part thereof).

### **8.3.6 Restrictions**

Anchoring in coral is strictly forbidden.

It is forbidden to spend the night in any anchorage except for the following designated anchorages:-

Schedule A (islands within 60 miles of Mahé): Yacht Basin, Port Victoria; Baie-Ste-Anne, Praslin; La Passe (within one mile offshore), La Digue; Bird Island/Ile aux Vaches, Denis and Fregate, all within three miles from the shore.

Schedule B (islands 60 to 240 miles from Mahé): within three miles from the shore. No anchorage or landing is allowed around African Banks Island, Remire Island and Ile aux Cocos.

Schedule C (over 240 miles from Mahé): within three miles from the shore.

The authorities should be consulted concerning islands in schedules B and C.

National Parks: Shell or coral collecting and spearfishing in protected areas is forbidden. The environment should not be disturbed in these areas. Penalties can be a large fine and imprisonment. The protected areas, including the sea up to 400 m offshore, are as follows:

Mahé from Rat Island south to Pointe au Sel, also from North East Point north to the Carana Beach Hotel.

The Sainte Anne Marine National Park (the islands of Ste Anne, Cerf, Long, Moyenne, Round).

The islands of Cousin, Curieuse and Cachée.

Praslin from Anse Boudin east to Pointe Zanguilles.

La Digue: La Passe lighthouse north to Gross Roche.

Resist the urge to collect seashells along the beaches as many are used as habitation by hermit crabs.

Chartering is allowed with certificate of competence (ICC or similar).

Spearfishing is prohibited. Spearguns must be handed over to authorities on arrival and will be returned upon departure.

Garbage must not be dumped into the sea. Special arrangements exist for the disposal of garbage which must be compiled with e.g. garbage disposal facilities exist at the Seychelles Yacht Club.

Topless bathing is accepted on many, but not all, beaches but nudism is unacceptable.

Wearing camouflage clothing is prohibited.

### **8.3.7 Pets**

All cats and dogs entering the Seychelles require an Import Permit issued by the Veterinary Services. Such pets must have valid vaccination records including proof of RABIES inoculation as well as a Veterinary Health Certificate.

They will be obliged to undergo a quarantine period of two weeks to six months, depending on the country of origin.

Seychelles does not accept pets for a period less than six months and bringing bird species of any kind into Seychelles is not permitted.

The Seychelles are rabies-free so regulations regarding animals are strictly adhered to.

Yachts with animals on board will only be allowed to visit other islands if pets are not let ashore. They must be always kept confined on board in port. Only with special written permission from the Veterinary Section may animals be taken ashore. Illegal landing of animals can lead to a heavy fine, imprisonment and confiscation of the animal, which may be destroyed.

#### **8.4 Docking and Anchoring**

Whilst yachts can remain at the quarantine anchorage where they are directed on arrival, it is rather far from the Seychelles Yacht Club and a bumpy, wet ride ashore in the dinghy.

Alternatively, it is possible to anchor in the area around the yacht club safely, or close to Eden Island, once all the entry formalities have been dealt with.

Yachts can use the facilities of the Seychelles Yacht Club in Port Victoria's inner harbour, where visitors are welcome.

The anchorage in front of the club is well protected, but rather noisy in proximity to the boatyards (good if you need repair work done). In addition, yachts are anchored close to shore and in July 2015 a number of boats were boarded at night and burgled. See report [here](#). Local Police recommend cruisers lock their boats at night, lock and lift their dinghies and check their outside decks for anything that can be used as a weapon against them.

The club has a bar, restaurant and laundry; there is also fuel on an adjacent dock. The yacht club charges a monthly fee for the use of its facilities.

The **Eden Island marina** is part of the luxury hotel complex on the east coast of Mahe. The Wharf marina is opposite the island, on the mainland, just south of the bridge. Boats have also been boarded at night here too.

Eden Island Marina

P.O. Box 14, Victoria , Mahe, Seychelles , Indian Ocean

Tel:+(248) 346 300 Fax:+ 248 346 346

<http://www.edenislandmarina.sc> , [info@edenislandmarina.com](mailto:info@edenislandmarina.com)

Part of a resort complex aimed at super-yachts. All facilities, WiFi, bar and restaurant. Linked to the main island by a bridge.

**Angel Fish marina** is a smaller marina, closer to the harbour and north of the Eden Island causeway. It is a charter operation with a single dock and small bar/cafe. There is also a dive shop located at this marina.

The old port of Providence lies further down the east coast, about 3km south of Victoria and closer to the airport. Cruisers have reported a "small" marina here, where people can leave boats long term.

Angel Fish Bayside Marina

Roche Caiman , Mahe , P.O.Box 1079

Tel:+248 4345001 Fax:+248 4345002

<http://www.angelfish-bayside.com/>

A charter base for catamarans. All facilities, dive shop, bar and restaurant

## **Wharf Hotel & Marina**

Location 04° 38.73'S, 055° 28.58'E , Providence, Mahe , P.O. Box 740. Victoria, Mahe

Tel:+248 67 07 00 Fax:+248 60 17 00

<http://www.wharfseychelles.com/> , [thewharf@seychelles.net](mailto:thewharf@seychelles.net)

A new hotel and marina located on the East coast of Mahe, halfway between the International Airport and Port Victoria. Complex includes 60-berth marina, shower facilities, slipway, electricity and water, internet.

## **8.5 Yacht Clubs**

### **Marine Charter Association**

PO Box 469 , Victoria, Mahé

Tel:+248 32 21 26 Fax:+248 22 46 79

[mca@seychelles.net](mailto:mca@seychelles.net)

Use of the club house available to members; fuel and water also.

### **Seychelles Yacht Club**

5th of June Avenue, PO Box 504, , Victoria, Mahé, Seychelles

Tel:+248 32 23 62 / 77 01 54 Fax:+248 32 11 21

<http://www.seychellesyachtclub.net.sc> , [seyachtclub@seychelles.sc](mailto:seyachtclub@seychelles.sc)

Opening hours: Monday to Sunday 0800 - 2300

Clubhouse is situated in the yacht basin. Showers, toilets, laundry, WiFi, bar and restaurant. Visiting yachts are welcome and are given access to the club's facilities upon payment of a temporary membership fee (125rupees/week). Members of reciprocating clubs are eligible for free membership for one month.

It has a finger jetty which may be available to rent.

Good mailing address for packages and mail. If value of package is < 3000 SR, you should get it through customs without having to pay extra duty.

## **8.6 Shipping Parts In**

**IO FB Group – July 2016: Q:** Does anybody have an address in Seychelles to send boat parts to. We will be leaving soon from Gan, Maldives

A: Davina Hellewell Try Eden Island Marina. The office phone number is +248-434-6300. The marina manager is Keith Mellon, his mobile number is +248-252-0665 and his email address is [operations@edenislandmarina.com](mailto:operations@edenislandmarina.com). If they can't help you I'm sure they will be able to put you in touch with someone who can.

A: Arthur Hoag Eden Island is a good recommendation. An alternative is the Seychelles Yacht Club. Which is in main harbor in Victoria. Contact info below. Either way you will need to go through a minor hassle/dance with customs and pick up the items from Customs. ...See More

<http://seychellesyachtclub.net.sc>

Also, FYI we had parts shipped to Gan. If you use DHL you can get them pretty fast. You cannot get them fast via FED EX, in Gan. Maththi was very helpful ....

Marine MNS Maldives <marine@mnsmaldives.com>.

### **Pipistrelle – July 2015: Bringing in Spare Parts**

We had ordered various spare parts to be delivered to the Yacht Club. At the time of our visit, there was local ignorance – even at the Customs and Revenue level – regarding the position of yachts in transit, and VAT, which is levied at 15% currently.

Yachts in Transit are exempt from VAT. We have emails from Selwyn Knowles, Assistant Commissioner, Customs, and Mellen Volcere, Director Inland Revenue Operations, confirming the situation, and how goods for yachts in Transit should be handled.

Cruisers have two choices, either to employ the services of a shipping agent or do it yourself.

Clearing & Forwarding Agent

We can recommend Skyland Clearing and Forwarding.

Contact Dora Marie, MD.

Phone: +248 251 6082

Email: [dora.skyland@seychelles.net](mailto:dora.skyland@seychelles.net)

She has quoted :

Bill of Entry/IM5: 250scr

Handling: 200scr

Transport from the airport: 400scr

Total: 850scr

+ VAT: 127.50

Total: 977.50scr

### **Doing it Yourself (DIY)**

Await documentation from the courier to be sent to the Yacht Club.

Go to the Post Office in town in Victoria and request a Bill of Entry/IM5. This can take 2 days, but I asked them to input the data while I waited, (15 minutes), and then got the number of the document to take to the airport. Here you need to meet Simone, give her the number, and she will do all the paperwork, and now understands the rules relating to Yachts in Transit.

Cost

Post Office per package: 150scr

Paperwork at the airport: 25scr

Hire Car: 500scr or taxi approx. 300scr, or local bus 10 SCR

Max Total: 675scr

**Rose ERose – May 2015 – Shipping Parts In:** A few people have asked me recently about getting yacht parts sent to places in the western half of the Indian Ocean, northern route (Seychelles, Mayotte, Madagascar and Comoros). This is assuming you need the package before South Africa.

In our experience the Seychelles was the best option followed by Mayotte.

Madagascar and the Comoros are hopeless. Sailors who live in Madagascar told us it was worth sailing over 800 miles to the Seychelles to get parts, rather than trying to get them in Madagascar or Mayotte.

We got a package sent to the Seychelles yacht club, and did have to pay some duty, but it was definitely the best option. We also got an item sent to Mayotte, care of the yacht club. Both yacht clubs were helpful and friendly.

### **8.7 Haulout**

**FB Post – August 2019:** If someone like to lift the boat in Seychelles I can highly recommend Cascade Slipway Services. if you need more info just contact us. Here is some contact info.

<https://www.facebook.com/CascadeSlipwayServices/>

**Pipistrelle – 2015:** After dramatically going up on a reef, damaging our rudder and being rescued by fellow cruisers we arrived in Seychelles on Pipistrelle in July 2015 and were initially anchored in the quarantine area off Victoria, where a pilot boat brings out officials to clear you in. Whilst the holding is good, it is a fair distance into the Seychelles Yacht Club, and with the SE trades blowing, bumpy and wet. It is possible to anchor in the area around the yacht club safely, or close to Eden Island, once all the entry formalities have been dealt with.

We have found most people here to be incredibly helpful and kind. The Yacht Club is a great social place to meet, has a very good kitchen providing good food, and the Victoria market is a great value for local fresh food and veg. Cooking gas, we are told, is a mixture of butane and propane, and burnt well on our butane only cooker. It is also an incredibly good value. For European food such as French cheese and wine, ISPC stocks amazing food that we haven't seen for months.

#### **Hauling Out**

VAT at 15% is charged on a haulout, and also on any work carried out by a boatyard or contractor. It is not possible for a yacht in transit to reclaim the VAT.

Having heard indifferent reports about the services in Richards Bay, South Africa, we decided to be hauled out at Gondwana Marine Services, where the service provided by Rajen and his team is second to none. They have a brand new travel hoist, rated at 150 tons, which deposits yachts onto a remotely controlled trolley which takes the yacht to its storage place on clean concrete. All services are available, and the hoist is brilliant for catamarans, being wide enough for almost the largest afloat.

We also visited Naval Services in Victoria, which is a total mess, with surge affecting the trolley haul out area. In addition, we had an “out of this world” quote from Charles at Marzocchi & Sons in Providence, and a far more realistic quote from Cascade Slipway Services, who haul with a trolley. We believe that being lifted in a travel hoist onto clean and level concrete is infinitely preferable.

Rajen imports antifoul from NZ, so undercutting the extortionate prices charged in Seychelles. We believe that Gondwana Marine Services will become the No 1 haulout facility in Seychelles, and a credible alternative to a refit in Richards Bay, where we were unable to obtain labor quotes for the work we required. A further report will follow once our refit work has been completed.

Gondwana Marine Services  
PO Box 977, Gondwana Building,  
Wanetta Avenue,  
Providence Industrial Estate,  
Mahe  
Seychelles.

Tel No: +248 438 4747

Update Posted 7th September 2015

We had all of the antifoul removed from the hull, new epoxy and repainted, together with other work. The quality of the work was excellent, the rates good, and the yard can handle most work a yacht will need. We have no complaints and can recommend this yard for any yacht either wanting storage, or other work carried out. Working with Rajen Naidu, the General Manager, was a delight, as he knows the business backward. He can be contacted at

[Rajen.naidu@gondwana.sc](mailto:Rajen.naidu@gondwana.sc)

## 9 Mayotte

IO FB Group – January 2021 – Yacht Club Contact Info: [ach.mayotte@laposte.net](mailto:ach.mayotte@laposte.net)

Email address for the harbour master: [maitredeport@mayotte.cci.fr](mailto:maitredeport@mayotte.cci.fr)

### 9.1 Formalities

**Brick House – October 2018 – Formalities:** Here is a complete Guide to Clearance IN and OUT of Mayotte for two Americans October 2018. It has been sent to noonsite and will be available there too.

#### CLEARANCE IN

1. Get paper at yacht club to have stamped by Immigration and Customs, for whom you will go to the airport to see once you have this paper and have filled it out. It awaits two stamps at the airport.
2. Take taxi (all shared taxis and are \$1.40 euro pp each way) to the airport.
3. At the airport, go to Police officer or telephone at desk and dial 4002. This will call someone from immigration. Tell them you are there for ship clearance. They will send someone down to see you while you wait. They will want a crew list, your passports and the paper. They will disappear behind closed doors, stamp your passport and stamp your paper, and come back a few minutes later to hand them to you. We were given 90 days as Americans.



4. Go to the DUONE which is Customs in this French country. It is a glassed office front clearly visible across from restaurant at the airport, give passports, boat paper, and the paper to stamp. They then disappear, and moments later they hand the form back to you stamped, and return your passport(s). (This used to be done at the second ferry terminal, which we went to twice to find out we needed to go back to airport to have it done... that it's no longer done at their location because they are so rarely there... they are nearly always at airport.

Nobody comes to search the boat. In fact, no questions are asked, no words are hardly spoken during this stamping procedure! They don't want to know where you are. They don't want to know what you do or don't have on the boat. They don't want to see or have your last port clearance.

5. Taxi back to yacht club and hand in your duly stamped paper, and you are done. You are no longer required to take the ferry to Mamoudzou to hand it to the port captain. Either the yacht club hands it in to him or there is some cooperation between the two. Zero cost other than the taxi ride which is a good introduction to Mayotte.

Note: Another English cruiser with Filipina crew onboard left the Filipina onboard, went with passports to the airport, ready to ask for just 3 days to rest and get fuel. A Filipina normally needs a Visa ahead of time to enter Mayotte. He left her onboard so he would be able to say she did not come ashore in case they were alarmed. They didn't seem to care and stamped her right in. Mayotte seems to be very relaxed about legal temporary immigration via sailboats.

#### **CLEARANCE OUT**

1. Go to yacht club and get a Clearance out paper. Fill it in.
2. Take Taxi to Airport.
3. Go to Duone/Customs and say "Ship Clearance Out please". They take your paper, disappear, and come back moments later with it stamped. No other papers asked for. No fees
4. Go to the nearby telephone on the counter and dial 4002. Tell them "Ship Clearance Out please" They will send someone down to retrieve the paper and your passports. They disappear, and come back a few minutes later with your paper and your passports stamped out.

If you have written tomorrow's date, early on the paper, they will ask you to change it to today since they can only do same day clearances. We changed ours, and she came back a second time with everything stamped. And with a smile, she said come back again soon! No fees.

5. Taxi back to the Dinghy dock/first ferry terminal, and take the ferry to Mamoudzou. Exit ferry and walk to the small marine. There are two containers there. The Port captain is in the container closest to the water. Knock and enter slowly.
6. Present your stamped paper, and passports to the port captain, explaining you would like "Ship Clearance Out". He will disappear and moments later be back with your stamped form and a port clearance certificate for you...two in fact. He will confirm you

are leaving today. He will wish you a fair passage. No fees. Do the rest of your veggies or grocery shopping, get on the ferry, and go back to your boat.

7. Prepare for departure. Everyone seems to wait to the next day to actually depart which seems to cause no problem. The coast guard waved to us without concern on our way out of the lagoon.

We wish all countries were like this. The only easier clearance than Mayotte is Reunion, where they come to you. But the inexpensive ferry ride to and from the airport was a fine way to see a little bit of the island anyways.

We will return. Due to a perfect weather window to Tanzania we left earlier than we would have liked to. There are a few nice anchorages around the island, and a few fun things to do...none of which we got to do!

**Nick Nicole (FB) April 2018 – Check-in Process:** Go to the sailing club and tell the bartender you have just arrived. He will give you the form to fill out and tell you how to get a cheap taxi to the airport. At the tiny airport, ask at the little bakery. They will put out a telephone. There will be a number for immigration on the wall near the phone. Call the number and very soon an immigration officer will appear. He will stamp you in. Then go to the taxi stand,(or flag down a taxi on the nearby road) tell the driver you want to go to customs. He will take you there. After the customs guy checks you in, walk the half mile back to the sailing club and have a beer. Honestly, it is that easy.

**Brian Sim – August 2016:** I do not know who you have on board, but the French on Mayotte refused entry to my partner Kesini, Thai, when we arrived for shelter!!

The outcome was a special 72 hour carnet with no entry on passport.

## **9.2 Yacht Services**

**Camomille – August 2016:** If anyone else needs the dentist in Mayotte Oscar is a very nice young French man who put me out of my pain.

## **9.3 Shipping Stuff In**

**Rose ERose – May 2015:** A few people have asked me recently about getting yacht parts sent to places in the western half of the Indian Ocean, northern route (Seychelles, Mayotte, Madagascar and Comoros). This is assuming you need the package before South Africa.

In our experience the Seychelles was the best option followed by Mayotte.

Madagascar and the Comoros are hopeless. Sailors who live in Madagascar told us it was worth sailing over 800 miles to the Seychelles to get parts, rather than trying to get them in Madagascar or Mayotte.

We got a package sent to the Seychelles yacht club, and did have to pay some duty, but it was definitely the best option. We also got an item sent to Mayotte, care of the yacht club. Both yacht clubs were helpful and friendly.

# 10 Chagos

## 10.1 Resources

[RCC Pilotage Foundation Free Guide on BIOT \(2017\)](#)

<https://biot.gov.io/visiting/mooring-permits/>

## 10.2 Permits

This report is a collection of tips based on our visit in 2022, it includes sources of useful information and our own personal insights that might be useful to those who follow. While a few specific Cruising Guide notes are available, we've added some info here that others that follow may find useful.

A tropical paradise makes for a great hopping point as cruisers cross the Indian Ocean, just south of the Maldives. Pre-approval for visits is required, and a maximum stay of four weeks is permitted. Cruising boats are limited to two atolls (pretty much everything is a giant marine park). The only inhabited atoll (totally off limits) is Diego Garcia which is home to a USA/UK Military base (and obviously off limits).

Satellite imagery is really helpful here, making the bommies much easier to navigate. This is great for navigating within the atolls and for planning your snorkeling trips or dinghy landing sites. Use your app/method of choice; we downloaded lots - including within the Zulu offshore app so we had sat imagery to hand on our smart phones.

### Charts

Paper Charts are available - Admiralty chart #0003 (for overview of entire archipeligo) and #0725 for more detail of the atolls you can actually visit.

We had an Indian Ocean chart chip in our chart plotter (compatible), and used the Navionics App pre-downloaded with Indian Ocean data on our smart phones

### Abbreviations

BIOT - British Indian Ocean Territory

MPA - Marine Protected Area - created in 2010 [link](#)

SFPO - Senior Fisheries Protection Officer

### Time Zone

The official time zone is BIOT (UTC+5), however this doesn't really match well with local noon, so most visiting boats use Maldives time (UTC+4). Note Navionics tide tables also use the alternative UTC+4 (Maldives time). Hence it pays to be sure, when reporting/receiving times, that you clarify what time zone is being used.

It's a special place for wildlife - From the BIOT 'Invasive Species' Leaflet: Created in 2010, the BIOT Marine Protected Area (MPA) is one of the largest MPAs in the world and protects over 1% of all the world's coral reefs. It is a home for species found no-where else in the world, such

as the Chagos brain coral and the Chagos anemone fish. Reef fish here are on average six times more abundant than at any other location in the Indian Ocean.

**Zero Facilities** You need to be 100% self sufficient - no stores, drinking water, medical support, etc available. There are plenty of coconuts to collect and enjoy. Some limited fishing is acceptable (check regulations for details), also no collecting of mollusks or crustaceans is permitted.

**Water Ashore**, wells do exist (probably on most of the larger islands) but these will be hard to find (except on Boddam), and I would not consider them good for drinking (probably only for laundry water if you can be bothered to haul your laundry ashore to do it). The fresh (filtered rainwater) floats on top of salt water in the wells. Expect to find mosquitoes around them too. We were lucky enough to get a good couple of days of rain and could catch rainwater for our needs. We also had a small portable water maker to be certain we had sufficient drinking-quality water aboard during our stay.

**Prior Inhabitants** The history of the Chagosian people (also known as Îlois or Chagos Islanders) is relatively recent. The British officially purchased the islands from Mauritius and ejected/relocated all the locals to Mauritius and the Seychelles (over 50 years ago). Since then there is some international dispute over who actually owns the islands. This is always a distressing situation, and you may wish to read more about it before you visit so you can fully understand its recent history. [wikipedia](#)

**Rubbish/Trash/Refuse** Keep aboard until after you have departed Chagos and dispose of appropriately. Current regulations permit no burning ashore.

**Communications:** Absolutely No Cellphone services - due to there being zero population for 100's of miles.

We used our Iridium Go (satellite connection - slow, with ability to make telephone calls and can be used with a few select internet apps), along with Sailmail and PredictWind type apps to download weather on demand. It's expensive, but we already had all the equipment from our Pacific passages and a monthly (unlimited data) subscription.

If you carry an EPRIB (which we assume you do) - be sure it is registered and batteries are in date/test.

You can use your VHF radio in the usual way, but it can only be used to communicate with boats in your immediate area, if any exist.

Bring a hand held VHF for your dinghy too - just in case. It can also serve as a backup if your main unit fails in such a remote location.

If you have AIS/MMSI capabilities - be sure your MMSI number is registered to your vessel

Carry appropriate flares "just in case"

You should be able to contact BIOT patrol using the emergency channel if you have a SSB radio - see details in BIOT documents

**FIRST AID!** You will be very remote so take extra precautions in everything you do, bring sufficient of your medications and a good general first aid kit for any emergencies, knocks and scrapes.

**Photographs & Backups.** You are likely to capture many magical memories - be sure to bring your camera/batteries/charger/memory-cards etc. You are likely to taking up a LOT of data in your device from all these pictures (even if you can't use your drone, nor take movies). Be sure you have plenty of storage, and that you can backup your data regularly while you are offline with no access to the cloud; it would be crushing to lose these memories. If you are using your phone to capture these memories, then consider how you can back-up those pictures during your trip (just in case you lose your phone overboard, or have some other calamity). Brining a dry bag on the trip (especially for dinghy trips) would be useful too to protect your electronics.

Commercial Fishing is not permitted Any fishing boats should only be transitting the area (and even then are required to report in as are cruising visitors) - we were asked to share with the fisheries team if we noticed any fishing boats and were happy to do so.

**What Can you Do While there?** OK - so there are no inhabitants, there is no phone signal, no shops, nothing but nature. If you are still looking for ideas for when you arrive here are a few..

Beach walking

Collecting coconuts

Exploring inland (expect some bushwhacking, and clearing of spider webs)

Stargazing at night - no light pollution

Bird spotting - It's impossible not to see Boobies, Frigate Birds, Noddies, and Terns, and likely even tropicbirds. There are plenty of others to see along the shoreline and you can expect to see the pretty little Madagascar Red Fody if you venture inland (easily located by following its trill call).

Dolphin entertainment - regularly large groups of dolphins visit the atolls, and (especially when the spinners arrive) can put on quite a show.

Snorkelling - there are lots of amazing fish, but also turtles, sharks, rays (mantas aslo reported), soft and hard corals, moray eels, and octopus. We found the fish large and colourful - it's a magical kingdom below the surface. There is also the odd wreck to check out

Citizen Science - organize before hand if there is any group that would welcome your efforts while visiting

Socializing - we were the only visiting boat during our stay in Sep/Oct 2022, but historically there has regularly been plenty of socializing among boaters (check for any lingering COVID restrictions).

Fire pit - there are two locations where a fire is permitted (see BIOT documents. Also note, burning of trash is NOT permitted).

Bring your own entertainment - Books, movies, music, table-top games, etc.

Bring your own toy (Kayaks, Kite surfers, Frisbees, beach games etc).

Fishing - know the restrictions and catch limits (we didn't fish so I can't advise there)

**So where CAN you go once you arrive?** Only two atolls have permitted access - Salomon and Peros Banhos. Both had inhabitants at some point, although by the 1960s only Boddam Island in Salomon was populated.

Diego Garcia is a large Joint USA/UK military base and should be given a very wide berth (min 6 Nm - but verify that!). Some of the other islands have a special protection zone and you must keep 3nm from them. Be aware in particular of the restrictions associated with Peros Banhos if you plan to visit that atoll.

Anchorage/Mooring within the two permitted atolls is further restricted to a few identified areas (documented in BIOT and RCC reports). Note: Any moorings are laid by previous cruisers and should not be assumed safe to use without personal inspection. We preferred to anchor in sand, and therefore avoided those locations where water was deep or coral was to be found on the bottom.

Note: Many of the island names are used in multiple atolls, so be sure to clarify island and atoll where applicable when sharing a location.

**Details re Salomon Islands (atoll).** Note: Island marked as YAKAMAKA on Navionics is incorrectly named and should read Takamaka

The anchorage we used on sand patch between I. Takamaka and I. Fouquet - this seems to have a constant current (into the lagoon) and can get quite strong (especially at high water springs) - so be cautious if swimming / bathing off the back of the boat.

Most of the islands have dense vegetation and no clear/obvious paths (Boddam aside). Beaches are most easily accessible at lower tides and often non-existent at high tides

**Peros Banhos Atoll** - This is much larger than Salomon, but all the approved anchorages are on the western side of the lagoon offering little protection from the SE winds. Indeed the whole eastern 2/3rds of the lagoon are off limits (protected area, a strict nature reserve). We did not visit this atoll, so are unable to add much more. There are several potential passes to enter/exit the atoll clearly visible in the charts - HOWEVER the ONLY permitted entrance is the West pass (Passe Del Ile Poule) as the whole eastern 2/3 of the Atoll is a Marine Reserve and a restricted area: it is not permitted to be within 3nm of any of the islands and this rules out all the potential passes to North, East and South of the Atoll).

Manta Rays: areas of reported sightings at Peros Banhos include

SW Peros Banhos - S 6° 38.30, E 71°18.83

### **Ile Takamaka**

I've seen several reports that a well exists - but we never found it, and indeed penetrating beyond the beaches is bushwhacking and spider-web territory. (same for most islands)

Easy to circumnavigate at low tides, very little beach at high tides.

Ashore - plenty of birds and coconuts.

### **Ile Fouquet**

There is a catamaran wreck on beach, slowly being buried by sand - I believe the boat was the Black Rose (based on a note on a satellite picture I had). The wreck also has a string of debris in the waters off the beach if you fancy a snorkel in that area. The mast is most buried, but lays flat and but much of it extends into the water from the beach (easy to see at low water springs).

An additional (ferro-cement, mono-hull, Wreck is on lagoon side of Ile Fouquet is no longer visible above water at low tide, but is a nice snorkel. Actual location is S5°20.330', E72°15.862'.

When we were there in 2022 there was a small white fishing float was secured with old rope to the bow pulpit which helped make finding the wreck (even when snorkeling) much easier). Mostly we just swam over from our anchorage.

Ashore - plenty of birds and coconuts.

Ile Boddam

This was the most recent major population center until the mid-1960's. It is well worth a walk around where you will see nature clearly taking over and plenty of ruins. There are paths, but these too are getting harder to clearly see.

Just to the south of the jetty (position: S5°21.355, E72° 12.447), is the 'yacht club' area with a fire pit (permitted to light at this one location) - we found matches in a jar in the yacht club. Yachties seem to leave mementos of their visit in the building remains. Best access ashore is if you beach your kayak/dinghy immediately to the south of the jetty.

Expect to see plenty of Coconut Crabs here (once you get inland).

Visiting in 2022 we could still find and use some of the trails. The old buildings a visible but all have lost roofs and are well into the process of reclamation by the plant life.

There are several wells ashore, but the easiest one to find is just north of the jetty and besides has obvious clotheslines for laundry - although when we visited in 2022 the drying area was already starting to be overgrown by the foliage.

Worth exploring - old church (position: S5°21.378, E72° 12.349), cemetery (position: S5°20.91, S72°12.21), and other buildings of interest (in various states of ruin). We could not locate the school, plantation manager's house and other building that should be there (but we didn't explore extensively either).

Chagosians clearly still visit intermittently to pay respects to those that are buried here, and memorials to various visits can be found scattered about (e.g. just north of jetty and at cemetery).

In Mid-2022 an Indian fishing boat (?name) was wrecked ashore on the outer reef side of Boddam, it is likely still there if you can find it.

The RCC Guide has several suggested locations for moorings off Ile Boddam (based on moorings used in 2016).

Remaining Islands of Salomon We had time to visit all the islands with our dinghy and/or Kayak. They are generally similar. We were able to walk around them all at lower tides. The tiny Ile Diable was the most rugged with absolutely no beach at any tide (so beware if you have an inflatable kayak/dinghy).

Snorkelling on Salomon Snorkelling is possible from all the islands, a satellite picture will help you see clearly where bommies are.

Since we were anchored off Fouquet/Takamaka we regularly snorkeled the lagoon side of both these (our faviourites!). Each had similar offerings, but we preferred Fouquet since it was longer, and the currents there were less of an issue.

The Gap between I. Fouquet and I. Takamaka - we were advised that there were lots of endemic chargos anemone to be found here. We did drift snorkels from both Fouquet and

Takamaka, and also used the kayak to drop off deep into the gap and drift snorkel from there. It is a shallow area with scattered corals - we found no anemone at all (later we were told that was '20 years ago') so it seems that either we were very unlucky with our multiple visits, or that the anemones have long gone from this area.

We snorkeled (lagoon side) at Ile Takamaka, Ile Fouquet and Ile Anglaise.

Our favourite/regular was the long chain of coral along Ile Fouquet; there were always plenty of large fish, and quite a range of corals and topography. We didn't snorkel outside the reef at all, since our dinghy doesn't have much of a motor and we didn't want to risk finding ourselves stranded or adrift outside the atoll.

Manta Rays: areas of reported sightings at Salomon include

Lagoon side - off sand patch between I. Fouquet and I. Takamaka (common anchorage) - S5°19.88', E 72°15.80' Manta rays have been reported by several visiting boats, but we never saw any during our stay in 2022.

SW ocean-side of Île Boddam, Salomon Islands a large number of manta ray (*Manta birostris*) regularly seen in this area. - S 5° 21.61', E 72° 12.11'

Ocean side - between Mapou and Ile de passe - S5° 18.26', E 72°15.66'

Full Post: <http://sv-footprint.com/Cruising/Tips/2022-Chagos-BIOT.html>

Blog Posts on Chagos: <https://sv-footprint.blogspot.com/search/label/Chagos%2FBIOT>

**Crystal Blues – May 2015 – Background:** Cruising sail boats have been calling here for several decades. One of the main attractions was that you could live a "Robinson Crusoe" lifestyle without bureaucracy infringing on your freedom. With an idyllic climate, plentiful rainfall, sweet water wells, a sea full of fish and a never ending supply of coconuts, the Chagos Atolls were paradise. Many cruisers stayed for a year or more, living off the land and the sea, just as the earlier Chagossians did.

Chagos has had a chequered history, being "owned" by the Portugese, French and now the English via the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) Authority. It has been managed from Mauritius, Seychelles and now from London.

It had a well developed copra industry and an established population with schools, churches, shops and appropriate infrastructure.

Between 1967 and 1973 the main islands of Diego Garcia and Ille Boddam were "depopulated". England had leased Diego Garcia to the USA for 50 years, plus a 20 year option. Diego Garcia is now the largest USA military base on it outside the USA.

Cruising sailors then became the only people "allowed" to visit Chagos, with Diego Garcia strictly off limits. The Chagosians have continued their fight to return home in the courts and although they have won this right, the whole area was recently declared by the UK as the world's largest Marine Park in 2010. This allowed for no permanent habitation of the atolls. This declaration also had a huge impact on anyone sailing to Chagos. Cruising boats can now stay for only four weeks, and then only after satisfying BIOT's requirements including wreck removal insurance and medical evacuation insurance.



The old church, the school, bakery and many other buildings are in various stages of decay. There is a cemetery at the north western end of the island and many stone dwellings throughout the island, all struggling against the jungle of creepers and the invasive plantation coconut palms. We feel privileged to be here, though also saddened that the Chagossians are not yet allowed to return to their islands.

Alba – 2017: For further understanding of the plundering of Chagos see :

[www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chagos\\_Archipelago](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chagos_Archipelago)

Also view the award winning Granada ITV / John Pilger documentary "Stealing A Nation".

### **10.3 Approach, Arrival and Formalities**

#### **10.3.1 Getting the BIOT Permit**

**Begonia – Sep 2022 – Updates:** We visited with our catamaran (BEGONIA) for four weeks in Sep/Oct of 2022. Surprisingly, we were the only cruising boat for the duration of our stay. While this report offers a few tips to future visitors, if you wish to also see details of what we did (and pictures) then check out our blog.

Permits are hard to get as there are expensive insurance requirements, and emails and applications seemed to often go unanswered. While this was once a busy village of cruising boats, few boats now visit (we had permit number 6 for the year, issued in September of 2022).

Permits to visit are required and processing them can be frustratingly slow, so best apply many months in advance as you can (official paperwork suggests at least 7 weeks, but I would give much more notice if possible). We applied towards the end of April (2022) and only with extensive pestering (and some outside assistance) were we granted a permit in time for our arrival in mid-September. Details of how to apply and the relevant forms can be found on the BIOT Administration website at <https://biot.gov.io/visiting/mooring-permits/>

Once your application is approved you will be required to make the payment with a transfer to the UK bank used by BIOT (and evidence of payment made). We didn't need it, but I had pre-organized with a family member to make the payment on our behalf if we were away from internet once the request arrived. When we visited in 2022 the charge for a permit was 50 UK Pounds per week, with a maximum stay of four weeks. Payment must be made by bank transfer in UK pounds (credit cards not accepted). This must be paid before arrival. There is a small extra charge if you need to do an international transfer.

Requirements re Reporting your movements - During your stay (and on approach/ arrival/ departure) you will need to report your movements. First report is once you enter the 200nm military perimeter mark. You can report by various methods: Email, SSB, or phone, and Information regarding reporting is provided within the various documentation provided by BIOT. Note that within the various documents the actual emails are contradictory (we just sent to all until we could establish which was correct). Even if you intend to transit the area, it is advisable to report in and provide your plans.

BIOT Patrol Vessel The BIOT patrol vessel was changed in 2021/2022 from Grampian Frontier, to the larger Grampian Endurance. Grampian Endurance is a big red vessel and generally runs without AIS or lights (since one of its key roles is to enforce fishery regulations in the MPA). They may visit you using their RIBs (launched from the larger boat), board and ask to see your

permit. Ask for a stamp in your passport if you collect such things. All visits to us were friendly, and professional (and often included generous donations of fresh fruit/salads). We were visited by both UK Military and Fisheries inspectors (separate visits).

Lots of things are not permitted, it is your responsibility to be aware of these. Failure to comply can result in fines/arrests and even detainment of your vessel. Here is a selection of some of the things to be aware of:-

- No Videos can be made (!!!) - this is a blanket ban, does not specify above/below water or anything, and I assume is in place to avoid political issues due to the status of the islands ownership.
- No SCUBA diving is permitted (presumably since there is no hyperbaric chambers available).
- Possession and use of spearguns is prohibited.
- Fishing is only permitted by hand line (some documents say hand line only, some suggest rods are OK - I'm not sure which is newest/correct and we didn't fish so it didn't occur to us to clarify).
- Possession and use of drones is prohibited.
- All trash/rubbish/garbage is to be removed - not to be burned/buried ashore, nor tossed overboard. Organic waste can be discharged at sea but only once outside the 3nm range from any island, shallows or reef.
- No possession/collecting of shells
- No collecting/eating any molluscs or crustacean (including coconut crabs)

Etc - BIOT will provide a long list and provide fine details (and may add more in emails) - you should be sure to be familiar with this before you plan your trip.

**FB January 2019:** Has anyone here already received their permit for Chagos? If so, how much insurance coverage did you have to have for wreck removal and clean up? Lloyd's used to provide \$500,000 but now only provides \$250,000. Is that enough to get a permit for Chagos?

- Got mine a couple weeks ago. Wreck removal is covered up to 200% of insured value of boat. No specific amount stated on my certificate and it was sufficient. Submit it and see what the answer is.
- When I asked that question last year...they just said it must be enough to remove your particular boat. I'm not sure ours said an amount at all...but they accepted it. Also..before you send money, if the same girl is there from last year, she would look at your policy before you sent money so you would know if it was worth it to try. Zoey I think her name was.
- Zoë left a couple weeks ago, replaced now by Sarah. Sarah has been very helpful.

**FB – March 2018 – Getting Medevac Insurance:** The DAN Asia Pacific does not cover people living on yachts, World Nomads do not cover over 65, DAN Boater covers Americans only and Topsail is 180 pounds for people over 65. Geos international medivac membership is \$175 for 1,000,000 coverage and is eligible for people under 75, therefore we went with them.

<http://www.geostravelsafety.com/>

**March 2017: (FB Group – Dirk Aurin):** Our application for permits for BIOT/Chagos was just approved for the July/Aug time frame. The entire process took just 24 hours and was completely painless. Cost was GBP 207 plus the wire transfer fee (\$60). We also had to increase our insurance for medevac (\$61 for \$1M) above the \$50,000 pp we already had (\$100,000 min for Chagos), and prove wreck removal/recovery coverage in our liability policy. I was explicit that the stop-over purpose was "transit" and that it was our best, safest route considering the climatology and the fact that we are short-handed. I was asked to prove that our cats were spayed/neutered and to provide a statement that we were carrying no cargo. The authorities were friendly, responsive, and very efficient and quick.

**FB - April 2016:** Last night we received BIOT's consent to transit. It's been a long road since first applying on 7th December but I am well pleased as I have wanted to visit for many years. Our dates on our application are from 5th May for 30 days. We had several issues to overcome; the first was to clarify "transit", the second to submit a motivation why we wanted to do so, the third to present proof of wreck removal and casevac in our insurance policy. I suggest to others applying they present a check list on their covering letter showing where in their insurance policy it mentions the relevant clauses in support of wreck removal and casevac and that these clauses are highlighted in the policies submitted to BIOT. By doing this it could make it easier for BIOT's team to cross reference and eliminate ambiguity.

**Caduceus – March 2016 – Getting Approval to Visit:** We have just received our BIOT approval and made the payment so it is possible. We applied in early December and received an acknowledgement. We amended our dates at the beginning of March. About 10 days ago we telephoned the FCO in London using the numbers found on Noonsite. Thereafter things started to happen with one query about insurance, see pointers below which may be useful to others.

1. Our original application stated "Yacht in transit to wait for weather window for onward passage to Mauritius".
2. Yacht Insurance. We use Admiral. Their standard policy includes wreck removal (page 15 in our document). BIOT last week requested confirmation of this as it was not specifically mentioned on the summary schedule. Admiral reissued the schedule with wreck removal specifically identified. They also expanded the cruising area detail to specifically mention "Islands of the British Indian Ocean Territory". They also supplied a PDF of the full policy which we sent to BIOT with the revised schedule.
3. Medical Insurance. We have a Yachtsman Gold policy from Topsail. This was accepted without query. Our experience with this policy has been good with a couple of claims being handled sensibly.

**Adina – Mid-March 2016:** We have learnt that the BIOT admin team are continuing to decline requests for permits that do not have 'transit' as the reason for visiting. For anyone who has submitted such an application we'd highly recommended re-submitting your application as soon as possible stating the reason for visiting as 'transit'. Email it to [BIOTadmin@fco.gov.uk](mailto:BIOTadmin@fco.gov.uk) We'd suggest to keep your email short, simply saying you are resubmitting your application and request a response.

**Crystal Blues – May 2015:** Chagos has always been on our cruising radar - the place is big in cruising folklore. Recent administrative changes by the UK government have limited the permit

time to just 28 days, so the old cruising culture of three and four month extended visits has now gone.

It's taken 18 years since we first dreamed of this place, but we finally made it. Crystal Blues arrived in Chagos on Saturday May 2nd, after a three day voyage from Gan in the Maldives.

After crossing the lagoon we anchored off Ile Boddam, in around 20 meters of water. As the anchor went down we were welcomed by a curious 1.5 meter thresher shark circling the boat. Using our fenders as floats, we then buoyed the last half of the anchor chain, to keep it up off the coral bottom. As the last float went in a nice sized black tip reef shark came to visit - the shark population here is somewhat daunting !

The water is perfectly clear and there are about 10 other cruising boats here, from many different countries. The BIOT (British Indian Ocean Territories) patrol boat came to inspect our permit on arrival.

Yesterday we walked across the island to the southern shore on a track marked by fishing floats tied to trees. The original village and copra plantation are in ruins now, but the plantation coconut trees have spread like vermin and taken over the island, crowding out the native growth.

At sunset we shared cocktails on the beach with other cruisers, pondering the future of this beautiful place. The hermit crabs formed the land based reception committee, scurrying about at our feet and generally providing great entertainment. We're hoping to spend 4 weeks here, weather and provisions permitting.

**Diane Selkirk – May 2015:** FYI - British Indian Ocean Territory (Chagos permit person) has a new contact person (same email address) - Zoë is her name.

I have now taken over from Richard as Assistant Administrator.

Please find attached your updated permit for BIOT.

Kind regards and safe journey,

Zoë

Assistant Administrator, British Indian Ocean Territory

Email: [BIOTAdmin@fco.gov.uk](mailto:BIOTAdmin@fco.gov.uk)

Fax: 020 7008 1589

Overseas Territories Directorate  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
Old Admiralty Building  
London SW1A 2PA

**Someone on FB – Mar 2015:** Does anyone have a real person's email address for BIOT? I emailed our Chagos application off to the generic [biotadmin@fco.gov.uk](mailto:biotadmin@fco.gov.uk) on January 28 and have yet to receive a reply.

Answers from FB: Rose Eroze Do check for typos in the email address.

[Richard.Seedhouse@fco.co.uk](mailto:Richard.Seedhouse@fco.co.uk) worked last year although he was painfully slow. Having been there, I now would not be afraid to turn up there without the permit if I had printed out emails showing repeated attempts to contact them.

Brian Steel We dealt last year with [Richard.Seedhouse@fco.gov.uk](mailto:Richard.Seedhouse@fco.gov.uk) Very helpful.

**Karen Trautz YOLO** has also sent several emails since the end of Jan and haven't had any reply since Jan 30th when we left Thailand. Our follow up emails to the biotadmin have gone unanswered and we, too are concerned about timing to handle the bureaucracy before leaving Sri Lanka for the Maldives. We need a good internet to do the wire transfer and Sri Lanka internet and phone SIMS are dirt cheap, so we'd like to get this handled.

Also, has anyone found out what is required to alter the dates for our stay if we don't exactly match what we put on the application? Will just a simple email suffice? I know the dates cannot be changed once the permit becomes 'active', so we need to know what it takes to make a change under way.

**Rose Eroze** There is good internet throughout the Maldives so don't worry too much. However, I strongly recommend putting down the latest dates you think you will arrive as there is no problem with turning up early, and Richard Seedhouse is extremely slow to respond to emails especially when you are trying to alter the dates. Having said that, the people who check your permits once you're there don't seem to care about dates. In fact they never asked to see anyone's permit at all. I suppose they had a list of permits somewhere.

#### **FB Group – January 2016 – Questions on Insurance:**

**Don Turbeville** To the best of my knowledge, BIOT will not issue a Mooring Permit without proof of insurance with a "Wreck Removal" clause and valid for the Indian Ocean including Chagos.

**Stephen Poulson** Two requirements requested from BIOT for our 2015 permit included wreck removal insurance and medical evacuation insurance (on non-commercial flights). Im unsure of any changes for 2016.

**Pauline Wilkinson** Diver Dan is only available to US citizens, so no use to us. We have had no luck with the wreck removal insurance. Best bet was Edward Lumley brokerage in NZ who will arrange wreck removal as part of a 3rd party policy for \$US800 approx p.a. Full insurance with any insurer would require an out of water survey. So we are skipping Chagos.

**Camomile Bill Sue** We are with Top sail and in their third party section the wreck removal is covered. With health insurance if you go to the Topsail website it's possible to buy health insurance for the year but they also do single journey insurance up to 60 days with medivac. One month for the 2 of us cost £180. Have bought it and applied for BIOT permit, still waiting for confirmation that it's ok for them.

#### **10.3.2 On Arrival**

**Begonia – 2022:** The official time zone is BIOT (UTC+5), however this doesn't really match well with local noon, so most visiting boats use Maldives time (UTC+4). Note Navionics tide tables also use the alternative UTC+4 (Maldives time). Hence it pays to be sure, when reporting/receiving times, that you clarify what time zone is being used.

**Alba – August 2017 (from [Noonsite.com](http://www.noonsite.com))** The excellent RCC guide (<http://www.rccpf.org.uk/pilots/151/Chagos-Archipelago>) is very informative. We followed the recommended entry waypoints and the minimum depth that we saw was 6 metres at fairly low

tide. The Navionics chart on our Android app was surprisingly accurate. We entered in poor light and didn't hit anything while travelling 2 miles across to Ile Fouquet...

During our three week stay, there were between 4 and 13 boats. Everyone anchored at Ile Fouquet rather than Ile Boddam - only two boats bothered to go to Ile Boddam and they only stayed one or two nights. Why this change in established practice?

### **Ile Fouquet**

Ile Fouquet is a well-protected anchorage in south-east winds. Some yachts were anchored in 5 metres of water around a sand bank at 05:20S 072:15.8E, while others were anchored in 20 metres away from the reefs. The water was clean; the breeze was fresh; there were two lovely mosquito-free beaches; there were lots of reefs with plenty of fish close by; several hundred nesting Boobies; and there were six islands within an easy dinghy ride to explore, each crawling with Coconut Crabs.

Before you go to Chagos you have to watch the documentary called "Stealing a Nation" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PjNfXK6QpgY>), which is all about the evacuation of the Chagos Islanders.

### **Ile Boddam**

Ile Boddam is the location of the old settlement. We visited the island twice by dinghy. Our first trip was to check out the moorings. The "anchorage" at Ile Boddam is a labyrinth of shallow reefs and the sea bed between the bommies is coral as well. Hence it's almost impossible to anchor there.

Cruisers in the past have wrapped chains around bommies and created moorings. We found seven moorings in various states of disrepair. After free-diving down to inspect the chains, we thought that only two of the seven were in a fit state to pick up without major work. The moorings have been added to over the years and there is a confusing tangle of chain and rope on most of them, so it's difficult to see what is truly strong.

Most of the ropes are looking old and would need to be replaced or backed up; many of the lengths of chain are worn and need to be inspected link by link. On two of the moorings, the surface buoys were on dodgy, worn chains, but there were better condition chains submerged. The other thing that is very apparent is that you need excellent sunlight to be able to navigate through the numerous shallow reefs - to get in and out. You wouldn't want to be trapped here in bad weather.

On a second trip to Ile Boddam, we explored ashore. There are a substantial number of buildings, left behind by the Chagossians, which are now falling down and being slowly overtaken by jungle growth. We wandered around for a couple of hours, trying to imagine what life must have been like on such a small island with a tiny community.

We found a few fresh water wells, a small church, numerous residential buildings and what looked like a small jail with four cells. The place is over-run by coconut and banyan trees. The only sign of life is the constant rustling of thousands of hermit crabs, scuttling around the leafy earth and the occasional Coconut Crab. Oh, and mosquitos.

Many years ago, cruising boats were able to stay in Chagos as long as they wanted, which naturally lead to a group of yachty squatters staying for months on end. Not content with

enjoying the pristine reefs and uninhabited islands, these people then started to make themselves “comfortable” ashore. They converted one building into a “yacht club” and started to dump their stuff ashore - plastic chairs, old diesel containers, oil filters and we even came across a mast dumped behind a wall.

In previous years, yachts have picked up the moorings and spent all their time at Ile Boddam, but I can't see why. The anchorage is thick with shallow reefs, the water is cloudy, the reefs are dead, there are mosquitos ashore and the “yacht club” is a sad derelict.

### **Back at Ile Fouquet**

Here we chilled out, had sundowners on the beach and explored the islands and reefs. At low water, it's possible to walk around Ile Fouquet - a great two hour stroll. There's a wreck at 05°20.37S 072°15.74E, and the reefs to the north of the anchorage are all good with plenty of Grouper, if you're into fishing.

The reefs have suffered bleaching, similar to the Maldives, so don't expect pristine reefs, but there's some colour and signs of recovery, so fingers crossed. For the first week, we had clear water, but then we had a plankton bloom, so visibility reduced to five metres. This was bad for snorkelling, but brought in the Mantas that swam around feeding at 05°20.01S 072°15.85E, right alongside where we were anchored.

We had a magic three weeks. If you want more detail, see our blog:

<http://www.thehowarths.net/alba-chronicles/2017-indian-ocean/522-may-2017-chagos>

**April 2016:** When we arrived at Chagos, there was a boat at the Salomon Atoll that was denied permission to enter the lagoon because it arrived two days before the date on their permit, forcing them to anchor outside the lagoon

**Totem – May 2015:** Chagos bound boats: it seems BIOT is very strict with permit dates this year. I'm told that SV Manta was required to remain outside the atoll for a couple of days until their permit was valid. Possibly due to the boat(s?) that ignored their permit dates earlier this year? Regardless, better not to try cutting it close... just finalized our permit dates and are planning a longer window now, just in case.

If you need to change your dates, email Richard Seedhouse. I hear he's in a responsive mood, currently

**Crystal Blues – May 2015:** It's taken 18 years since we first dreamed of this place, but we finally made it. Crystal Blues arrived in Chagos on Saturday May 2nd, after a three day voyage from Gan in the Maldives.

After crossing the lagoon we anchored off Ile Boddam, in around 20 meters of water. As the anchor went down we were welcomed by a curious 1.5 meter thresher shark circling the boat. Using our fenders as floats, we then buoyed the last half of the anchor chain, to keep it up off the coral bottom. As the last float went in a nice sized black tip reef shark came to visit - the shark population here is somewhat daunting !

The water is perfectly clear and there are about 10 other cruising boats here, from many different countries. The BIOT (British Indian Ocean Territories) patrol boat came to inspect our permit on arrival.

## **10.4 Navigation**

Satellite imagery is really helpful here, making the bommies much easier to navigate. This is great for navigating within the atolls and for planning your snorkeling trips or dinghy landing sites.

Use your app/method of choice; we downloaded lots - including within the Zulu offshore app so we had sat imagery to hand on our smart phones.

Paper Charts are available - Admiralty chart #0003 (for overview of entire archipeligo) and #0725 for more detail of the atolls you can actually visit.

We had an Indian Ocean chart chip in our chart plotter (compatible), and used the Navionics App pre-downloaded with Indian Ocean data on our smart phones

## **10.5 Things to See and Do**

**Begonia – Sep 2022:** The anchorage we used on sand patch between I. Takamaka and I. Fouquet - this seems to have a constant current (into the lagoon) and can get quite strong (especially at high water springs) - so be cautious if swimming / bathing off the back of the boat.

Most of the islands have dense vegetation and no clear/obvious paths (Boddam aside). Beaches are most easily accessible at lower tides and often non-existent at high tides

Peros Banhos Atoll - This is much larger than Salomon, but all the approved anchorages are on the western side of the lagoon offering little protection from the SE winds. Indeed the whole eastern 2/3rds of the lagoon are off limits (protected area, a strict nature reserve). We did not visit this atoll, so are unable to add much more. There are several potential passes to enter/exit the atoll clearly visible in the charts - HOWEVER the ONLY permitted entrance is the West pass (Passe Del Ile Poule) as the whole eastern 2/3 of the Atoll is a Marine Reserve and a restricted area: it is not permitted to be within 3nm of any of the islands and this rules out all the potential passes to North, East and South of the Atoll).

Manta Rays: areas of reported sightings at Peros Banhos include

SW Peros Banhos - S 6° 38.30, E 71°18.83

### **Ile Takamaka**

I've seen several reports that a well exists - but we never found it, and indeed penetrating beyond the beaches is bushwhacking and spider-web territory. (same for most islands)

Easy to circumnavigate at low tides, very little beach at high tides.

Ashore - plenty of birds and coconuts.

### **Ile Fouquet**

There is a catamaran wreck on beach, slowly being buried by sand - I believe the boat was the Black Rose (based on a note on a satellite picture I had). The wreck also has a string of debris in the waters off the beach if you fancy a snorkel in that area. The mast is most buried, but lays flat and but much of it extends into the water from the beach (easy to see at low water springs).

An additional (ferro-cement, mono-hull, Wreck is on lagoon side of Ile Fouquet is no longer visible above water at low tide, but is a nice snorkel. Actual location is S5°20.330', E72°15.862'.



When we were there in 2022 there was a small white fishing float was secured with old rope to the bow pulpit which helped make finding the wreck (even when snorkeling) much easier). Mostly we just swam over from our anchorage.

Ashore - plenty of birds and coconuts.

### **Ile Boddam**

This was the most recent major population center until the mid-1960's. It is well worth a walk around where you will see nature clearly taking over and plenty of ruins. There are paths, but these too are getting harder to clearly see.

Just to the south of the jetty (position: S5°21.355, E72° 12.447), is the 'yacht club' area with a fire pit (permitted to light at this one location) - we found matches in a jar in the yacht club. Yachties seem to leave mementos of their visit in the building remains. Best access ashore is if you beach your kayak/dinghy immediately to the south of the jetty.

Expect to see plenty of Coconut Crabs here (once you get inland).

Visiting in 2022 we could still find and use some of the trails. The old buildings a visible but all have lost roofs and are well into the process of reclamation by the plant life.

There are several wells ashore, but the easiest one to find is just north of the jetty and besides has obvious clotheslines for laundry - although when we visited in 2022 the drying area was already starting to be overgrown by the foliage.

Worth exploring - old church (position: S5°21.378, E72° 12.349), cemetery (position: S5°20.91, S72°12.21), and other buildings of interest (in various states of ruin). We could not locate the school, plantation manager's house and other building that should be there (but we didn't explore extensively either).

Chagosians clearly still visit intermittently to pay respects to those that are buried here, and memorials to various visits can be found scattered about (e.g. just north of jetty and at cemetery).

In Mid-2022 an Indian fishing boat (?name) was wrecked ashore on the outer reef side of Boddam, it is likely still there if you can find it.

The RCC Guide has several suggested locations for moorings off Ile Boddam (based on moorings used in 2016).

**Remaining Islands of Salomon** We had time to visit all the islands with our dinghy and/or Kayak. They are generally similar. We were able to walk around them all at lower tides. The tiny Ile Diable was the most rugged with absolutely no beach at any tide (so beware if you have an inflatable kayak/dinghy).

**Snorkelling on Salomon** Snorkelling is possible from all the islands, a satellite picture will help you see clearly where bommies are.

Since we were anchored off Fouquet/Takamaka we regularly snorkeled the lagoon side of both these (our faviourites!). Each had similar offerings, but we preferred Fouquet since it was longer, and the currents there were less of an issue.

The Gap between I. Fouquet and I. Takamaka - we were advised that there were lots of endemic chargos anemone to be found here. We did drift snorkels from both Fouquet and

Takamaka, and also used the kayak to drop off deep into the gap and drift snorkel from there. It is a shallow area with scattered corals - we found no anemone at all (later we were told that was '20 years ago') so it seems that either we were very unlucky with our multiple visits, or that the anemones have long gone from this area.

We snorkeled (lagoon side) at Ile Takamaka, Ile Fouquet and Ile Anglaise.

Our favourite/regular was the long chain of coral along Ile Fouquet; there were always plenty of large fish, and quite a range of corals and topography. We didn't snorkel outside the reef at all, since our dinghy doesn't have much of a motor and we didn't want to risk finding ourselves stranded or adrift outside the atoll.

Manta Rays: areas of reported sightings at Salomon include

Lagoon side - off sand patch between I. Fouquet and I. Takamaka (common anchorage) - S5°19.88', E 72°15.80' Manta rays have been reported by several visiting boats, but we never saw any during our stay in 2022.

SW ocean-side of Île Boddam, Salomon Islands a large number of manta ray (*Manta birostris*) regularly seen in this area. - S 5° 21.61', E 72° 12.11'

Ocean side - between Mapou and Ile de passe - S5° 18.26', E 72°15.66'

**Crystal Blues – May 2015:** It is difficult to explain just how sensational Chagos is. Many people have asked how we occupy our time in a such a deserted place, when in fact the time flew by. We were up at dawn most days, and always busy. There were fresh fish, an endless supply of coconuts, stunning sunsets, jungle tracks, beach picnics and of course the nearby islands and history to explore. With fifty shades of blue surrounding us, including an international cruising community of a dozen boats, the time was never enough.

Living the life of "Robinson Crusoe" in a tropical island paradise is not for everyone, though we loved it. In fact if it wasn't for the BIOT regulations and watching for a weather window we could have stayed much longer.

Following the "de-population" of Chagos (see here), the many buildings have been left to slowly deteriorate. There is a church, school, hospital, copra factory, houses, piggery, cemetery and other buildings dotted through the jungle, even a network of railway lines.

We walked to the westward side of the island, following a track marked or blazed with old fishing buoys hanging in the trees. The cemetery was beautiful, with graves of those who lived, worked and passed away on the island. You can't help but feel the memories and the loneliness emanating from these buildings.

For visiting cruisers, life at Chagos includes drinks on the beach just before sunset each evening. Sometimes a pot luck dinner was organised, or a fish barbeque when a Wahoo was caught without a shark biting off the best parts first.

We had movie nights on board, Ley gave bread making lessons and Neil spent time maintaining Crystal Blues and assisting other boats with technology issues.

Toward the end of our stay most cruisers spent time looking for a weather window over a morning cup of coffee on one of the boats. Grib files, satellite images and weather forecasts were all compared and even though there were many boats bound for different destinations (Madagascar, Seychelles, Mauritius and Rodrigues), careful planning was necessary. The

Southern Indian Ocean has a well deserved reputation of wicked cross swells, big seas and big winds.

The island is populated by a large variety of sea going birds and many types of crabs. The most populous and by far the most impressive, are the coconut crabs, *Birgus Latro*, a land dwelling crab that is mainly nocturnal.

We would often see them late in the afternoon in the front of their holes, casually scanning for food opportunities. While coconuts do form a part of their diet they will eat almost anything. They can grow up to a meter in length from claw to claw and come in shades of red, brown/black and purple.

## **11 Mauritius**

### ***11.1 General Info and Background***

**Slip Away – July/August 2018:** Port Louis and the main island of Mauritius had a much different feel from the smaller outer island of Rodrigues. For starters, British influence was much stronger here, and the population was quite different too. While under British rule, Indians were brought to Mauritius as indentured servants to work on sugar cane plantations. The total population of Mauritius is approximately 1.2 million, and about 2/3 of that population is of Indian descent, while only about 1/4 were Creole (which was the vast majority on Rodrigues). The capital city of Port Louis is modern and busy, and the island has vacation resorts (two Club Meds), shopping malls and highways.

### ***11.2 Approach, Arrival and Formalities***

**Slip Away - Port Louis, Mauritius (July 23 to August 6, 2018).** Cruising yachts are required to check in at Port Louis. Although there is not an option for anchoring near Port Louis, one can stay at Le Caudan Marina, which is part of a modern waterfront development with hotels and restaurants.

There are only a couple of anchoring options on Mauritius - one at Grand Baie on the north end of the island and another toward the south end of the island at Riviere Noire. We opted to stay at the Le Caudan Marina because we liked the central location and ease of access to shore amenities. In addition to the waterfront development area, the marina was walking distance to the downtown area with additional restaurants and shops, bus terminals at the north and south ends of the city, and the fresh produce market, which offered an outstanding variety of fruits and veggies.

One thing about this marina that was a bit unusual (at least to us) was that it had no docks. Instead, it was a u-shaped basin with concrete walls and bollards to which we tied up. The tidal range was not huge, but it was significant enough that our fenders got quite a workout on the concrete wall. On one of our last trips back to the U.S., we had purchased three very large Megafend inflatable fenders (normally very expensive, but Jan found some pre-owned but never used on eBay), and they were a god-send in this situation.

It was a busy two weeks in Mauritius and we enjoyed our time here, but we were eager to move on to our next stop at Réunion Island.

**Alba – June 2017: 19 June 2017 Rodrigues to Mauritius (Day 3)**

Dawn brought us overcast skies with 20 knot South-east winds, so we were bowling along at 6 to 7½ knots. At 07:00, we had 75 miles to go to the channel between the islands at the north of Mauritius, so we were hoping that we'd make it through before dark. Once around the north of the island, it's another 15 miles to a roadstead anchorage to the north of Port Louis. We'd be anchoring in the dark, but it's a wide open approach.

At lunchtime, we still had good winds and Glenys spotted land. The seas continued to build over the afternoon and by the time we were approaching the northern tip of Mauritius, we had 20-23 knot winds and 2 metre seas. The headland is called Cap Malheureux - "the Unhappy Cape" and there are several small islands to avoid. The charts show many places around these islands where there are overfalls, which are large steep waves caused by strong currents against the wind. In the boisterous conditions, we wanted to avoid those spots.

The quickest route around the headland is through a channel between Cap Malheureux and an island called Ile Coin de Mire. The charts showed that there could be currents of 2-5 knots against us in a flood tide (low tide was at 15:30, so the tide would be flooding). We were hoping to get through the islands before dark (at 17:45) and we didn't seem to have any current against us, so I took a gamble and started to head through the Coin de Mire channel.

Everything looked okay at first, with no reduction in speed over the ground. However, by 16:45, as we approached the channel, the current picked up to 1 knot of current against us. I couldn't see any large waves ahead, but didn't relish the thought of being trapped in overfalls with a 5 knot current against us as night fell - it could take us a couple of hours to go the three miles to the other side.

So we gybed, did a 90 degree right turn and headed around the top of Ile Coin de Mire. It was a couple of miles further, but better for my peace of mind. We made it through the islands before darkness fell and then had a good close reach in gradually calming seas as we sailed into the lee of Mauritius.

At 19:50, we anchored a couple of miles up the coast from Port Louis at 20°06.41S 057°29.89E in 12m depth. The chain rumbled a lot, but held on something. It was pitch black, so we couldn't see where we were, but the sea bed shelved very slowly and it was a safe approach. I sorted out the deck and put the spinnaker pole away, while Glenys warmed up a lamb stew, which we ate with a nice bottle of red wine.

## **20 June 2017 Port Louis, Mauritius**

We slept like logs last night and woke to a pleasant day. Before we went into the port, we ran our water-maker for an hour and filled up our tanks, which will last us a week - I don't want to be running our water maker in the dirty water in a port.

By nine o'clock, we were ready to move, but had problems lifting the anchor - the chain was caught on something. We tried to motor around in different directions to un snag the chain, but couldn't budge it. I jumped in the water and snorkelled down 12 metres to find that the sea bed was thick with coral and our chain was wedged under a three foot high bommie. It took us twenty minutes of messing about to get the anchor up. Basically, I had to keep diving down and lifting the chain clear of the coral while Glenys lowered & raised the chain and drove the boat.

Once free of the sea bed, we motored two miles to the entrance to Port Louis. At the outer channel marks, we called Port Control, who gave us permission to enter the busy port and we

motored past large ships onto the Customs Dock. For some reason, I was expecting a dusty dock next to a warehouse, but it's actually the harbour wall, next to a line of restaurants.

We pulled alongside and found Gary and Jackie from "Inspiration Lady" standing there to help us with our mooring lines. There are no cleats, so we tied up to the very nice, shiny stainless steel railings. Other cruisers have reported a shallow rock near the customs dock, so we were very cautious as we approached the dock. The rock is now marked by a yellow buoy and is at least 100 metres from the dock, so I don't know what all the fuss was about.

It took us four hours to clear in. First we had to wait for the health officer to come to the boat. He refused to climb over the railings and didn't want to come on board, so we did the clearance sat on a restaurant table. There have been rumours of food being taken from cruisers because of a recent outbreak of Foot & Mouth disease, but he didn't ask about food.

I then walked 50 metres to the customs office where I had to fill in ten forms, all mostly nil return. Next stop was immigration. The Immigration officer refused to come to the boat, so I had to walk a mile to a ferry terminal to get our passports stamped. I could have got a water taxi, but the robbing b\*\*ard wanted to charge me 600 Rupees (£15), so I walked - my righteous indignation kept me going...

Finally, back at the customs dock, I obtained the clearance from the Coastguard and we motored across to Caudan Marina. This is more like a boat basin with overhanging concrete walls. It's not very big and there were already nine cruising boats in there, so I couldn't find a big enough space against the wall. I eventually had to raft up on "Relax" - I can't remember the last that I've had to raft up.

The marina is in the middle of a car park next to the huge Caudan Waterfront shopping centre, so it's not a peaceful place, but it's only a small car park and pretty (for a car park...). They only charge £10 per night and that includes water and electricity. In the evening, we went out for meal with "Inspiration Lady" and "Jackster" who arrived yesterday. I had my first burger with French fries for months.

**Sofia – September 2017:** Sofia and Dreamcatcher now in Port Louie Mauritius. The Caudan Marina is rather better than most reports suggest. Electricity water and wifi included. Constant security patrols. I am sure we are vulnerable to theft as we would be in the heart of any city. But all in all it's an ok stop.

**Noonsite – September 2016:** An outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in Rodrigues and Mauritius has resulted in a strict ban on certain products being exported from these islands and imported into other countries.

Foot and mouth disease is a highly contagious disease that affects animals, with severe health and economic consequences for farms. There has recently been an outbreak of the disease in the islands of Rodrigues and Mauritius.

Increased vigilance is required for travellers to and from these islands.

All meat and meat-related products (Including sandwiches and leftovers), milk and milk-related products and untreated hides from any of these countries will be confiscated and destroyed.

Yachts arriving in Reunion or Rodrigues will be thoroughly searched, and even any sealed, unopened products purchased elsewhere will be removed.

Similar searches of yachts are likely to be implemented in all the affected countries.

Foot and Mouth disease does not affect humans.

**IO FB Group – July 2016: Q:** When you completed immigration in Mauritius, did they use the visa you got in Rodrigues or was a new one issued on arrival?

A: It's a whole new check in but they take off the time for the visa issued in R.

Q: We've messed up then! They asked how long we were going to stay here in R. Will have to investigate an extension. Did you pay the health fee again?

A: No health fee. Don't think it matters if you stay in Rodrigues for the full length of the time given or not as long as you do not exceed 90 days in the 2 islands combined. Best to check with immigration though.

A: No fees necessary

A: Just remember that the skipper cannot fly out without permission granted from the central immigration office. Bertrand Hardy can provide the required letter.

**FB Group July 2016: Q:** Does anyone who's been to Marutius recently know if you get charged overtime fees for a weekend arrival? Noonsite says Yes but the YOLO write-up says No. Peregrine is in Rodriguez, heading that way soon.

A: There are no clearance fees in Port Louis, Mauritius.

(Kayiff): We did not pay anything, but 400 rupias a day for the so called marina at Caudan. Basically it is a carpark that the boats tie alongside. Clean toilet, clean showers, hot water, but not a place to stay long.

**Happy Bird – April 2016:** After 3 weeks in Rodriguez, we went to Mauritius, noisy, crowded, Big City People, we did the shopping that was necessary and left for Grand Bay in the north, blue water, golden beaches, palm trees, flowers and a very good public bus system, so we could go everywhere. The Botanical Garden in Pamplémousse, wow!

**Nine of Cups – October 2014:** We motor-sailed down the west coast and entered the channel at Port Louis, the country's only customs entry port. We received permission to enter from Port Control and proceeded past all the large container vessels and bulk carriers to a small Customs dock for yachts. We've talked about how each tie up is different. Well, this one was really different. No bollards or cleats to tie to. We tied instead to lamp posts and balustrades against a cement wall.

The wait for officials was long. After two hours, we called Port Control again and finally someone showed up and asked David to accompany him to the Customs office right around the corner. I waited aboard for a Health/Quarantine officer who was supposed to come first actually, before we left the boat. He finally showed up and asked if I was sick. I said no and he said "okay, take down your Q flag" and that was it. David returned shortly thereafter, having completed Customs, Immigration and Coast Guard formalities.

We walked ten minutes along the waterfront to the Caudan Marina to see if any space was available. Nothing along the wall was vacant, but rafting up was acceptable and we ended up rafted to Kittiwake, a British boat. So far, Port Louis looks absolutely wonderful. Vibrant and

exciting with lots to see and do. Tonight, however, a glass of champers, a quiet dinner and a good night's sleep.

**Three Ships – June 2014:** With fresh winds the passage from Rodriguez only took two days, and just before midnight on 15 June we motored through the ships berthed off the entrance to Port Louis and anchored in 12m, ready to enter port and check in the next morning.

In the morning, we tied up alongside the harbour wall next morning, and attached lines to the fence while watching the local business community take morning coffee in the dockside cafes.

Checking in was mostly by guesswork, as various officials turned up at their leisure and gave us more forms to complete – customs won with 16 – but a couple of hours later we were cleared, and motored over to Caudan Marina basin and tied up alongside an oily concrete wall next to a car park which served the adjacent plush marina shopping complex.

The next week was spent getting the rig surveyed and deciding on the safest berth for Three Ships while we returned to the UK. The choices were: against a rough concrete wall with oily water in Caudan marina basin, with wash from passing ships and uncertain security; hauling out in La Réunion, with no certainty of a haul-out date and reputed very poor security; or 15 miles further north at Grande Bay, on a mooring and supervised by a qualified Mauritian skipper (whatever that meant). In the end we chose the latter, largely based on guarded recommendations from Serranity and Moonfleet, who had spent time there the previous year.

Sunil, our 'skipper', agreed to check the boat on a weekly basis, loaned us a car, entertained us at his favourite restaurants and took us to the airport on time – so a good choice, which was confirmed when we got back on 28 September and found everything in good order.

On the flight back our luggage was crammed with replacement rigging, but with the help of Vendée Globe veteran Hervé Laurent we soon had the new lowers in place and the other T-balls replaced with Norseman swageless fittings. Finally, Herve came out with us for a tune-up sail prior to our departure for La Réunion.

We had also commissioned a new headsail, to be built by MU Sails in Mauritius, as well as asking them to put a fourth reef in our new Tasker mainsail. These were delivered on time, although the main had to be returned for the stitching to be improved.

We decided that the problems with the headsail were mainly cosmetic, however, and since the materials used were good quality deemed it acceptable and set off for La Réunion.

**MV Egret – September 2010:** Mauritius is interesting. Here east meets west. Arriving in the harbour, to starboard there were large fleets of Asian fishing boats that appeared to have been designed by a kindergarten committee, to port is the modern yard built by the Chinese to service their fleet, and at the far end is the Customs berth.

Clearing was quick and professional, and once cleared we backtracked to the small boat harbour and managed to find an alongside berth. We spent ten days in Mauritius exploring, rented a car for a few days, and had a good time. The best part, however, was meeting a group of westbound international cruisers. We felt Mauritius itself was okay, but nothing more.

### ***11.2.1 Stopping at Agalelga***

**The Nomadic Diaries – January 2014:** Francois, the captain, decided we'll stop in Agalelga, two islands – north and south – that are part of Mauritius. [Link to Blog Post](#)

With both Manu and Francois being of French origin and Mauritius being a former French colony, they enjoyed conversing with the French-speaking locals. Not one to be left out, English was also spoken (the native tongue is Creole).

The coast guard\police officers who were on rotation of 4 months (with the option to expand) were more than accommodating. These guys were the meaning of hospitality if you looked it up in a dictionary. With fears of encountering hurricane force-winds for the passage, our dinghy was deflated so we were provided with transportation from the sky-blue waters to the white sandy beach. Then they drove us the 7 K's to the larger of the only two villages on the island that had the only supply store.

There are no banks or ATM facilities on either island so I was surprised that the one post office was able to convert 50 Euros to Mauritian Rupees so we could buy basic supplies of rice, pasta, flour, some canned goods and beer. We were surprised that fresh produce was not in abundance, besides the papaya and coconuts that the villagers simply gave us and eggs.

The village, Vingt Cinq, has been around since the days of slavery. The French name actually translates to the number 25, the amount of lashes the slaves would receive by their masters back in the 1800s. The name stuck and is served as a reminder of how sweet freedom is.

The population of the village, and indeed the entire south island, is 200. The north is another hundred (mosquito population is over a gazillion).

From the village store the coast guards took us to the meteorology station so we could get a weather report for our Madagascar passage. Back at their station house they cooked and fed us lunch, noodles with spam chicken in a tomato sauce and rice. Not one to pass up an opportunity to eat in abundance when supplies are consistent, Manu and I had two mountainous servings each.

I suggested to Manu that in return we should cook dinner for these guys. He gave me a French look that said, 'Way ahead of ya' (it could have also meant, 'I will slap the stupid out of you'. My French isn't fluent). At 18:00 we kicked off what was soon to become a feast fit for royalty.

We had returned to San Miguel on a skiff provided (and piloted by) the guards. Thanking them in English (Manu in French), I towel-dried and laid in bed, stomach full, smile stretched thinking about how the best things that happen are the unplanned ones.

### ***11.3 Clearing Out***

**Alba – Late June 2017:** There was another yacht on the customs dock at Port Louis, so we had to go port-side-to, in front of them with our bow 5 metres from the corner – the depth dropped to 2.2 metres.

The clearance process took an hour, mostly waiting for the immigration officer to come to the boat, which gave me time to put our dinghy on deck. Customs and the coastguard were very quick, so we were able to drop our mooring lines at 11:00.

It was difficult to leave the dock in the windy conditions. I tried to back out, but our stern tucked in and I ended up peeling to starboard, straight into a 2.0m mud patch. We ground to a halt as we bottomed out, but I was able to use the bow thruster to spin us 120° to starboard, and powered off the shallow spot when we were pointing out into the harbour. It probably looked very professional to the tourists watching us leave...



## **11.4 Cruisers Services**

**Nine of Cups – October 2014:** Our first day in any port is usually spent getting our bearings and walking around. Port Louis, the capital city of Mauritius, is vibrant, high energy and offers lots to see and do. There's eye candy everywhere you turn. After small, laid-back places like the Cocos and Rodrigues, mooring in the heart of the city is a fun, pleasant change. They say the best view of the city is from the sea and we'd have to admit, it was a lovely first view.

We set out on foot mid-morning, walking down the Caudan Waterfront, a huge, modern pedestrian mall lined with lots of eateries and boutiques. A rainbow of parasols hung above the walkway screens the sun and provides both shade and a riot of color to passersby. Heavy, fast-moving traffic ... cars, motorbikes, trucks, bicycles ... along streets with heavy pedestrian traffic that rarely fits on the sidewalks and overflows into the streets. Wherever there is a bit of space, a vendor has spread his wares or offers street food or hawks his services.

We walked through the Market ... it's absolutely huge. Fresh veggies and fruits galore, spices and teas, all artfully displayed inside the market building. Upstairs on a mezzanine level, there are "crafts" vendors (souvenirs) and outside the market building, there are vendors set up under tents and tarps and with narrow paths between them selling everything from hubcaps to clothing to pots and pans to batteries. It's crazy and frenzied. Everyone is shouting their prices and promotions. People are darting in and out and around. A good place for a pickpocket and we were very mindful of our valuables. Saturday is the "big" market and we can't imagine how it could be bigger or more crowded, but evidently we'll find out.

We walked for hours checking out nooks and crannies of the city and planning our upcoming days for other points on the island. Today was a tiny taste of what Mauritius holds in store for us and we can't wait to see more.

### **11.4.1 Leaving Your Boat in Mauritius**

**From Noonsite – Nov 2014:** With this mail I wish to thank Noonsite and Lars & Erja Odmark of S/V Ambika for having named me to look after yachts in Mauritius, when the skipper is abroad. It has been an interesting period and I have met many fine sailors from the yachts.

In the future I will not be able to continue this service due to unforeseen circumstances.

**SY Gryphon 2 - October, 2014:** The only issue in Mauritius is that one needs special permission from the immigration department to leave the boat, this involves reams of paperwork and the appointment of a qualified skipper as guardian to look after the boat. For the record and any boats following in our footsteps, the procedure is to get a letter from the official guardian saying they will be responsible for the boat, together with copies of the skipper's passport, the boat registration, the contract with the marina and the flight bookings. These then have to be presented to the Immigration Office and he then prepares a letter that needs to be shown at the airport both on leaving and returning. Thankfully we can vouch that the system works.

Unfortunately Bo Ronn (see report below) was unavailable when we were in Mauritius having hurt his back earlier in the year. The other options were to leave the boat with a local "wheeler dealer" by the name of Sunil, or with the more professional Bertrand Hardy of Mauritius Yacht Services. The former is likely to find you whereas the contact for Bertrand is via the website [www.yachtmauritius.com](http://www.yachtmauritius.com).

As stated in the previous report, you must leave the boat with a local qualified skipper and present all the papers as outlined to the Immigration department. The logic of the qualified skipper requirement is so that if an unseasonal cyclone comes through there is someone who can move your boat to safety.

The 2 places to leave the boat are in the yacht harbour at Caudan or on a mooring in Grand Baie. We decided with the advice of our insurers to leave the boat in Caudan. Yachts moor to a quay with a nasty lip that could damage a boat with poor fenders or the wrong height of toerail, so it is a good idea to moor outside a larger boat if possible. The rise and fall is not great but there is some. Some amount of swell also enters the basin mostly from tugs and the Coastguard. It also feels more secure to be on the outside but we did not worry too much as the marina is in a rather up-market shopping mall separated from the rest of the town by a busy main road. The dock is surrounded by car parking with security cameras (pointed at the cars rather than the dock) and there is a 24/7 security presence.

Those leaving their boats on a mooring with Sunil were happy enough, but we were not keen on leaving the boat on a swinging mooring, nor were we impressed by Sunil's professionalism. When we told him that we were leaving the boat with Bertrand he became very unpleasant toward us. However other yachties found Sunil generous and polite.

One important point to note is that you need the letter from immigration when you clear out of the country but you may well need some documentation when you check in at the airport on your return to prove that you have a yacht. Fortunately we had our boat registration and a copy of the letter from Bertrand to prove this to the airline.

Our boat was safe and secure when we returned after 2 months. Cost for Bertrand's services was 3 Euro a day and the marina was about 10 Euro a day. Sunil's services are cheaper but not much so, although he does include taking you to and from the airport.

**Ambika – August 2013:** If you need to travel from Mauritius for a while and need a qualified, reliable and helpful person while leaving your yacht in Port Louis, Mauritius, Captain Bo Ronn is the perfect solution.

Very rigorous procedures apply if you want to leave Mauritius by air/ship and have your yacht stay in Mauritius in the meantime. The yacht skipper (not the crew) has to get a letter from the visa section in immigrations main office in Port Louis, permitting him to fly out.

To get this letter (which one has to show at the passport control at the airport) you have to:

- Employ a skipper who will be responsible for the boat while you are away
- Bring a letter from that skipper as well as a copy of his skipper's certificate and national I.D.
- Also needed are copies of your passport first page, the page with the entry stamp, a copy of the health check document, your agreement with the Caudan marina, or any other place you plan to leave the boat at, plus the receipt for the payment to it.
- Bring a copy of your confirmed airline ticket out and in again at specific dates. Some people say that the airport immigration officers may not enforce this rule but a possible penalty could be losing your flight, not something one would want to take a chance with

At arrival in Port Louis, Mauritius, we contacted Bo Ronn, a Swedish Sea Captain and Pilot living in Mauritius since forty years with his Mauritian wife. We got his name from the Port Captain in Rodrigues.

When we decided to leave Mauritius for eight weeks to visit our family in Sweden we found out that the authorities in Mauritius has very rigorous procedures when leaving your yacht while you are away. It came as a pleasant surprise when Captain Bo Ronn offered to help us out and look after Ambika in "Caudan Waterfront Marina" in Port Louis. Captain Bo Ronn has the right qualifications, is a known and honored profile in the island, he speaks Creole, French and English and he is also a very pleasant person to deal with.

We give Bo Ronn our best recommendations; your yacht will be very safe in his hands at a very reasonable price.

Qualifications, Captain Bo Ronn:

- Certificate of Competency as Master Mariner (Sweden)
- On retirement from the merchant marine and Port Louis harbour pilot services
- Mauritian passport holder, Mauritius National Identity Card

Contact information:

Email: [capboronn@gmail.com](mailto:capboronn@gmail.com)

Local Phone number: 4909773

Lars and Erja Odmark

S/V Ambika

[www.ambikasailing.blogg.se](http://www.ambikasailing.blogg.se)

### **11.4.2 Money**

### **11.4.3 Diesel and Gasoline**

**IO FB Group – July 2016: Q:** Mauritius cruisers. How much are you paying for diesel? It's 30 rupees a litre here in Rodrigues.

A: Diesel in Mauritius is about MR30 at filling stations. Don't know about the fuel dock in Grand Baie.

A: Nadire Berker We filled our jerry cans 29 rupias per liter. Vincent Chirié Diesel is 32 Rp at La Balise Marina fuel dock.

**MV Egret – September 2010:** Despite reaching Mauritius with 255 US gallons of fuel, we've learned over the years to top up the tanks whenever we can, because you never know... Mauritius was a perfect example. The commercial fuel dock would not sell Egret fuel – they said they were saving it for the fishing fleets, but in reality the price was going up and they were waiting for the increase. They suggested we carry fuel from the gas station – thanks but no thanks.

#### **11.4.4 Propane (Cooking Gas)**

**Sue Antifaof FB – July 2018:** So here in Mauritius we were looking to have a tank refilled and made a few enquiries. We discovered that fiberglass tanks are available here and are relatively inexpensive.

We stopped in at the local Shell filling station and purchased a fiberglass tank, light as a feather and no rust issue. The filled tank weights less than our empty steel one.

12 kg tank for 1800muv, 240 muv for the gas and 250muv for a regulator.

Grand total 2290. Now we can dispose of the old steel tanks! Hooray!

**Alba – June 2017:** The last time that we filled our cooking gas tanks was in Thailand in January, so we were getting low. There's a taxi driver here called Rashid, who has a nice little business ferrying yachties around and he knows how to get propane tanks filled. I rang him and we waited for a few hours until he came and picked up the tanks.

Our propane tanks came back full to the brim. The gas wasn't particularly cheap (60 rupees/kg + 600 rupees for Rashid). It came to £42 for two full tanks, which is European prices, but we've enough gas to get us to South Africa in November.

**IO FB Group – July 2016:** Pauline Wilkinson For the info of those who are following, LPG is easy to get here. Sunil, one of the local boat minders, helped quite a few yachties refill. You need a car to get to the LPG place. He has also helped me with many other requirements at little or no cost. Nice guy very helpful despite what one yachtie reported on Noonsite. Trouble with Noonsite is that a good or bad report by one boat influences the rest of the community forever, rightly or wrongly. Sunil's phone 57807626.

Ann Chris Robinson we also found Sunil to be very helpful - advise though to gather a few gas cylinders, otherwise he will charge delivery to individual boats. also be very specific about car requirements - some of them are a bit dodgy - he handles it all with good humour

#### **11.4.5 Groceries/Provisioning**

**IO FB Group – July 2016: Q: Mauritius** cruisers. How much are you paying for diesel? It's 30 rupees a litre here in Rodrigues. And what about getting non-fresh provisions in the supermarket? A couple of boats were wondering whether to do a big shop here or wait until Mauritius or Reunion.

A: There are some very large supermarkets in Mauritius and a huge fresh market close to the dock. Everything much more expensive in Reunion

A: I think there is a much better range of dry goods here, e.g. rice varieties, oats and bread flour, and canned goods are also slightly cheaper, as well as a huge range of French salamis, cured pork products and cheese at slightly better prices, as well as varieties of frozen stuff.

A: The Super-U in Gran Baie, Mauritius still rates as probably the best supermarket we have ever seen... By land or water standards! Rodriguez is a much nicer island though we thought... And the street food in Rodrigues is the best.

A: As far as provisioning is concerned, you will probably find anything you need at Jumbo supermarket (taxi needed).

A: The Super U supermarket in Grand Bay is huge and has everything, prices are OK, but not really inexpensive. You can find anything you want though.

**Nine of Cups – October 2014:** We've found a couple of small grocery stores in town ... a ShopRite and a Winners ... both within walking distance, but both lacking in stuff we're interested in buying. We haven't decided if we'll stop in Reunion yet, but whether we do or don't is irrelevant since prices there are very high and we're better off provisioning here. We'd heard of the Bagatelle Mall of Mauritius which is a bus ride away, and purportedly had two large hypermarkets. We decided to head out to forage.

Sure enough, the bus let us off right in front of a modern, full-size mall. We're talking Tommy Hilfilger, Ralph Lauren, QuikSilver and a multitude of other high end stores we weren't interested in plus two hypermarkets. We walked through MonoPrix first ... okay, but not great. We checked out Intermart, the other grocery store next and it had pretty much everything we wanted at reasonable prices. We opted for lunch before shopping for three reasons. First, better to shop on a full stomach. Second, it was lunchtime and we were hungry. Third, the name of the restaurant was called The Flying Dodo. How could we resist?

We had a fine lunch and returned to Intermart. Since we were transporting all of our provisions in shopping bags and backpacks, we needed to be cautious of how much we bought. We opted to take a small cart and when it was full, we called it quits. We just managed to fit all of our purchases in the bags and then tromped back to the bus station, rode the bus back to Port Louis, and walked from the Victoria Square bus station to the marina and unloaded. Whew ... time for a beer.

#### **11.4.6 Water**

#### **11.4.7 Boat Parts & Repairs**

**IO Crossing FB Page – July 2019 - Haulout:** We'd like to recommend Taylor Smith Boatyard in Mauritius as a good option for haulout for boats crossing the Indian Ocean. We thought we'd wait until South Africa for anti-foul but **Mauritius** worked well for our schedule. It's next to a shipyard so there is access to engineering and welding and the paint crew is really competent. English is the 'official' language for commerce so there was no language barrier. They haul catamarans and monohulls. Overall, a very good experience. You can work on your own boat. The daily hardstand rate is high but the labor is very reasonable. Reunion has cheaper daily rate but labor is expensive.

**Brick House – June 2018 – Shipping a Sail In:** I emailed ahead to the officials at Mauritius about having a sail shipped in, and what the process needed to be to claim "yacht in transit" status. Here is the response I got:

"Since you are leaving Mauritius after picking up your repaired sail, you may ask the broker (DHL) to process two Customs Declarations Regime 80 and 38 whereby no duty and VAT will be payable.

The transfer of the goods from DHL to your boat will be done under customs supervision.

Your broker will also need to submit a request to Customs for the escort of your sail by a Customs Officer.

The request is payable within office hours at Rs 150/- per hour. After office hours, the charges are Rs 400/- per hour. It might take approximately three hours to effect the transfer.

Please confirm whether the name of your yacht is Brick House and whether you had visited Mauritius any time.

Regards,

D.K Facknath  
Team Leader  
Port Operations Unit  
Custom House, Mer Rouge, Port Louis  
Tel: 2020500, Ext: 1001”

**IO FB Group – June 2018:** I was hit for a 8000 rupees fee yesterday for shipping in my Iridium Go here in Mauritius yesterday, via FedEx. The fee was about 6500 in Customs duty and then the rest were add-on processing fees.

**IO FB Group – July 2016: Q:** Does anyone have experience in importing items for a yacht in transit in Mauritius? We were hoping to continue on to S.Africa with our faulty mast track, but it seems that it might need replacing earlier.

A: We are trying to get a package in Rodrigues. If you can get to S. Africa, I would do that. I've had a package stuck in Customs for the past 3 weeks, while they sort out how to handle the Yacht in Transit for us. We did everything right, but are still having problems.

Q: Which shipper did you use? We and others have had enormous problems with Fedex

A: FedEx! Have your problems involved unintelligible "extra fees"?

A: Reading noonsite Reunion looks an easier option!

A: Fedex always charges extras and does not handle clearance as well as they should resulting in the need to pay an agent etc etc. I refuse to ever use them again. I used them in Philippines Malaysia Pohnpei before I learned that lesson.

Just returned from Customs office here in Port Louis. They recommend unofficially to use DHL.

A: Yes! DHL has offices here. FedEx, not so sure. I've been talking with their local "office" but nobody is willing to say that they work for FedEx. It seems more like a local courier that FedEx hands off to.

With DHL, I've actually seen trucks. that's always a good sign!

A: Hi Pauline, this is Nadire from Keyif, just across from you in Caudan. Profurl company delivered us a new roller mechanism to Caudan by Fedex in a week, with no problems, we just paid a small tax, so small that I forgot. They phoned us when our package arrived, and delivered all the way to the boat. So no problems.

A: If you can wait until you get to Reunion it will be much easier. Rodrigues/Mauritius are very corrupt - customs will try everything to get you to pay import duty and if that fails then DHL (the only show in town) will hit you for exorbitant 'local char...See More

A: We are the boat Tucker referred to; Jim and Helen sv GAIA. We got our parcel on board yesterday. Our total expenditure was 65 rupees as a handling fee to the post office and 150 rupees as an 'escort fee' to get the parcel to our dinghy accompanied b...See More

A: We had our Iridium GO and some SSB items shipped to Mauritius via a local agent. I just needed to go through all the steps and costs before signing up with them and then all went well. There were no surprises. When the goods arrive they will have a customs agent escort the goods to the boat to ensure that's where they end up!

#### **11.4.8 Laundry**

**Alba – June 2017:** We have been hand-washing essential clothes for the past three months and we've accumulated two large bags of laundry. We rang another enterprising guy called Mr Deodath who seems to have the monopoly on doing washing for cruisers. He was very keen and appeared on his scooter within ten minutes. He's very expensive at 125 Rupees (£3) per kilo, but the only other option was someone at the marina who was slightly cheaper at 100 Rupees per kilo, but couldn't do it until next week. We negotiated a 10% discount because we had 20 kilos of washing. Our laundry came back neatly folded and smelling fresh (and so it should for £57).

#### **11.4.9 Medical**

**Slip Away – August 2018:** Rich made yet another entry his "Healthcare in Exotic Locations" logbook in Mauritius. He had decided to install an additional shut-off valve on our watermaker system and had a previously used valve on board that would do the job. The valve had a bit of hard barnacle-like stuff encrusted on the inside, so he was cleaning it up before installing it. As he scraped it out, he managed to flick a piece of crusty-stuff in his eye - this, despite the fact that he was wearing glasses. When he blinked, it felt like sandpaper scraping on his eye. We flushed his eye with water, but that provided no relief.

We called the marina manager who recommended that we go to the City Clinic. We taxied to the City Clinic, and they too tried to flush it out with no success. They then administered some drops to numb his eye and called their staff ophthalmologist. The doctor drove an hour to the clinic (on a Saturday) to attend to Rich. It took the doctor a matter of minutes to find and remove the offending piece of grit which was embedded on the inside of Rich's upper eyelid. The doctor sent Rich home with some antibiotic eye drops, and he had no further problems with it. Never a dull moment, and once again, we found excellent healthcare services overseas.

**Alba – June 2017:** Glenys went to see an Optometrist. She had two Cataract operations done in Malaysia in October and thinks that she is now seeing more "floaters" in her eye. This could mean that her retina is degenerating, so she wanted some tests done. The Optometrist gave her a good check-out and thought that everything was okay, but advised that she should go to see a specialist eye doctor at one of the hospitals, so she's booked an appointment tomorrow.

While we were there, I had my eyes tested. Thankfully, everything is fine and my prescription hasn't changed for two years.

After lunch the next day, Glenys went for her eye check-up. Everything looks okay, but she has some thinning of the retina in one spot that she'll have to keep an "eye" on.

**Pauline Wilkinson – July 2016:** Recommendation: Anyone who has back pain or sports injury whilst visiting Mauritius, I can highly recommend Remedial Massage & Sports Injury Centre - Antish Lollchand the remedial massage practitioner trained at the Aust Institute of Sports Medicine and worked in Oz for 12 years. He is very skilled and dedicated to pain relief. Visit his FB page or phone him - really nice, humble guy, the clinic is reachable by bus from Port Louis or Grand Baie. (No I do not receive kick backs for this ad. I am just so grateful to be able to move again after flying across the cabin and landing on my back twice in the last few months) Ph. 58447429

#### **11.4.10      *Getting Around***

See accounts from several cruisers who hired a taxi for the day, and others who used the local buses, in the [Island Touring](#) section.

**Slip Away – August 2018:** The bus stations in Port Louis were convenient, and offered good transportation to other parts of the island. We used buses to go on several expeditions around the island.

We also hired a taxi for the day.

#### **11.4.11      *Telephones, Cell Phones and Internet***

**Alba – June 2017:** We were trying to book flights to the UK and having trouble with credit cards being rejected. I decided to try to Skype the Halifax help desk in the UK, but it appears that Mauritius Orange Telecom blocks international Skype calls. It always takes at least 30 minutes to contact a bank in the UK, so I wasn't prepared to pay a fortune for a normal international call. We were unable to clear our credit cards to book the flights - so frustrating.

We ended up using another cruiser's German phone to make a call and fix our credit card problem.

**Yindee Plus – Nov 2015 -** Many cruisers bought SIMs from Orange or the other provider. The internet service is not that fast, but it is useable and can be used in Mauritius too. Several steps are required to set up your SIM:

1. Buy the SIM at the main counter in the Orange shop next to the market. Register the SIM, with your passport, in the same office but with one of the customer service staff at their computers. Ask them for a 'package' print out so you see what your options are for data etc.
2. Wait a couple of hours for the SIM to be registered. You'll receive a text with the phone number on it when it's done.
3. Buy credit for the SIM, with a voucher bought either in that Orange shop or one of the many outlets in the town. They will apply the credit; a text will confirm it's on the device.
4. Then you have to buy your data. Check the package information sheet and send a text to the number at the top of the column, e.g. 'buy 3gb'. You should get a text to confirm purchase.

There's no automatic set-up on Android phones, so if your data is not working, check the set ups: Settings / More Networks / Mobile Networks / Access Point Names. The following should



be set: Name Orange; APN orange; Proxy not set; MCC 617; MNC 01; Auth none; APN type default. This should get it working: good luck!

#### **11.4.12 Mail & Shipping Stuff In**

See [Boat Parts and Repairs](#) section.

### **11.5 Things to See and Do**

#### **11.5.1 Cruise to Grand Baei**

**Alba – June 2017 – Shoals Approaching Grand Baie:** When we entered the bay a few days ago, the depth went down to a scary 2.3m. The manager of the yacht club told me that there's no official leading line, but "it's all sand". Another cruiser had C-Map charts that show two slightly shallower patches of sand at the entrance, which they went between - the minimum depth that they saw was about 3 metres. I took some waypoints from their chart and we took a slightly better line this time - the minimum depth we saw was 2.8m at half tide.

In my opinion, the best entry waypoints are:

- Leave the Outer Channel Marker (19°59.81S 057°34.26E) to starboard.
- The next waypoint (20°00.180S 057°34.462E) is between two shallower patches of sand - we saw 2.8 metres minimum depth with 0.4m tide.
- After the inner waypoint (20°00.29S 057°34.52E) the depth increases to over 5 metres in the anchorage.

**Alba – June 2017 – Cruise to Grand Baie:** With a feeling of relief, we escaped the hustle and bustle of the city and sailed up the coast to Grand Baie. It was a lovely 10 mile sail because the north end of Mauritius is very flat allowing the steady trade winds to blow, but the sea is calm in the lee of the island. The entrance to the bay is shallow and not charted very well, so it was a little fraught especially when the depth dropped to 2.3 metres.

Once past the entrance, the bay opens up and the depth increases to over 5 metres. Grand Baie is a well-protected bay and the holding is very good – we anchored at 20°00.68S 057°34.51E in 6 metres over sand. This is a very popular tourist town and there is plenty of activity with charter boats going out to the nearby islands.

We left our dinghy at the very nice Yacht Club, which gives visiting yachts free membership for a month, allowing the use of their showers and restaurant. The small town is packed with tourist shops and tour operators, but it has a huge Hypermarket, which is the best we've seen since Phuket.

We hired a car for a day trip around the island (see [Things to See and Do](#)), and to do some provisioning at the Hypermart.

#### **11.5.2 Horse Racing**

**Slip Away – August 2018:** Another outing which was really quite fun was a trip to the **Champs de Mars horse racing track** on the outskirts of Port Louis. Champs de Mars is the oldest thoroughbred horse racing track in the Southern Hemisphere, and the horses ran every Saturday from March through November. Another cruising yacht had provided contact

information for a gentleman named Lalah at the race track, and through him, we were able to purchase entrance to a private grandstand area that was less crowded than the general admission area. (A day at the races is very popular in Mauritius, and the general admission area was a madhouse!)

David & Agnes (s.v. Gostoza Tu) and Jens & Dorthe (s.v. Kigdlua from Greenland) joined us, and we had a really fun time. Jan was the big winner that day - winning every race but two. Her strategy: Bet on horse #3!

**Alba – June 2017 – Saturday Race Day:** Saturday in Port Louis is Race Day. The Mauritians love to gamble and they're lucky to have one of the oldest horse racing tracks in the world. Over 200 years old, the race course is in the city about a mile from the marina. It has a large grandstand containing private boxes overlooking the race track. Inside the building is a lovely, atmospheric courtyard with tall Banyan tree providing shade to the hundreds of people betting, buying food and drinking beer.

We stopped at an information booth and were told that tourists could use one of the private boxes for free, which was on the third floor with a fine view of the finishing line. It didn't take us long to find out where to place bets, so we had a great time betting on the eight races. It only cost 200 rupees (£5) to get into the grandstand (ladies are free). We broke even for the day, winning 7 out of the 8 small bets that we placed, which paid for our beer and Curry Rotis - a fabulous, fun day out.

**Nine of Cups – October 2014 – Horse Racing:** The racetrack at Champ de Mars in Port Louis (not Paris), is the oldest in the Southern Hemisphere. It celebrated its 200th birthday in 2012. The thoroughbred races run every Saturday from March thru December and since we're here and it was a Saturday, we thought "why not?".

It's a fair walk, but it was also market day in town, so we left around 10am and wandered through the marketplace. We thought it was crowded the other day when we went. Today was sheer bedlam. Elbows everywhere ... people packed tightly trying to get from A to B and maybe buy a tomato along the way. We passed on purchases, but enjoyed watching.

The horse-racing was great and quite a different excursion for the day. We were invited to share a Visitor's Box so we were quite comfy with great views. We also had a tour of the paddock area and met the GM of the racetrack. Not sure why we were afforded such amenities, but we didn't question it ... just went with the flow. Didn't win any money ... didn't lose. I'd call that a good day.

### **11.5.3 Museums**

**Nine of Cups – October 2014 – Museum of Natural History:** We were certainly cognizant of dodo birds (*Raphus cucullatus*) before we arrived in Mauritius. Dodos are probably the most well-known extinct bird there is ... bringing the phrase "dead as a dodo" to mind. I guess we didn't realize, however, that they were endemic here to the island of Mauritius. A large, flightless bird, the dodo had no natural predators on Mauritius, so the species flourished. Once the Europeans arrived with rats, dogs, pigs and other predators which attacked the dodo as well as its ground nests and eggs, the poor bird was doomed. The dodo became extinct sometime in the late 17th century.

Dodos were huge birds ... about 3 feet (1m) tall and weighing in around 30 lbs (14kg). That's a big bird...about the size of a big tom turkey. The Mauritius Natural History Museum was a good place to learn more about them. They have dedicated a room (albeit a small one) entitled "The World of the Dodo". They have some bones and a fabricated dodo under glass, based upon sketches by early Dutch visitors (1598). They named them as "walghvogel" meaning wallow bird or loathsome bird, referring to their taste. It only took about 60 years of man's presence to totally eradicate a bird that, in the whole world, only existed here.

On the fenced lawn in front of the museum, they have a "flock" of dodos reminiscent of the famous decorated Chicago cows, the mermaids of Norfolk, the boots of Cheyenne and the lobsters of Rockland, Maine.

The dodo bird might be extinct, but there's lots of evidence that it once existed here. It's a major theme throughout the island. From souvenirs and tchotchkes, to postage stamps, to matchboxes, to the Flying Dodo Brewing Company, and even the Mauritius Coat of Arms, there are iconic reminders everywhere of what once was. Still looking for a dodo on velvet to bring back as a souvenir.

#### **11.5.4 Island Touring**

**Slipaway – August 2018 – Island Tour by Taxi:** Earlier this week, the crews of Slip Away & Mahili hired a taxi for the day to take us sightseeing on Mauritius. We used a driver named Ehsan, and I wanted to pass on his contact information for boats following in our wake.

Ehsan charged us 3000 rupees total for the day (so 1500 per couple), and our day started at 08:30 and ended at about 16:00. He took us to a model ship building shop, a drive through the town of Curepipe, the Trou aux Cerf volcano, Grand Bassin, Tamarin Falls, Black River Gorge, Chamarel Falls, and the Chamarel 7-Coloured Earth. The Chamarel 7-Coloured Earth was the only sight requiring an entrance fee of 250 rupees per person. We reached the town of Chamarel at lunch time and since the area is quite touristy, we found the restaurants there to be pricey (minimum 450-600 rupees per person), so we passed on lunch at one of them. We did eventually find reasonably priced toasted sandwiches (200 rupees for a sandwich with frites) at the cafe at the Chamarel 7-Coloured Earth. (Another option would be to pack a lunch.) On the way back to Port Louis, Ehsan drove along the coast so we could see the bays of Petite and Grand Riviere Noir.

We enjoyed the day, and we really liked Ehsan. He speaks English very well, is a very pleasant and sociable fellow, and was happy to do what we wanted to do. He drives a nice car (only 6 months old), and it was very comfortable for four people. For the most part, we enjoyed all the sights, although the general consensus was that the 7-Coloured Earth was a bit of a let down.

We hope this recommendation will bring more business to Ehsan.

*(No phone number given, but Ehsan has taxi license plate #8057 C2 1U (or 14 or LU))*

**Slip Away – August 2018:** The bus stations in Port Louis were convenient, and offered good transportation to other parts of the island. We took the bus north to Grand Baie one day to meet up with Sue & Stefan (s.v. Charlotte) who were anchored there.

Grand Baie is a touristy beach town but was nice for a day visit.

Locals recommended that we also take a bus to **Bagatelle Mall** - the Mauritians are very proud of their shopping malls. Although shopping malls are not great attractions for us, this one did have a couple of very nice grocery stores, and the highlight of that day was lunch at the Flying Dodo Brewing Company (good local beers!).

**Alba – June 2017 – Car Tour:** We decided to cut short our visit to Mauritius so we could fly out of Reunion. To see a little more of Mauritius before we left, we decided to hire a car for tomorrow to do a quick tour of the island.

Unfortunately, it was the end of Ramadan and the start of the Muslim Idil Fitri celebrations, so today was a public holiday. There are lots of small tour operators in town, some of who rent cars and scooters, but many of them were closed. It normally costs about 1000 rupees (£25) to hire a car for one day, but the only place that had a car was Eurocar, who charged us over twice the street price. We had no choice - if we want to have a look at the Mauritius countryside then it has to be tomorrow.

After picking up the hire car, we had a great day touring Mauritius. It takes about 1½ hours to drive from the north to the south of the island, so we were restricted in what we could see, but we had a good insight into the island.

The first thing to strike us was that Sugar Cane grows everywhere – there are fields and fields and fields of the stuff. At the moment, most of the tall plants have a large delicate flower, which looks like pampas grass, swaying in the wind.

Like Rodrigues, Mauritius was formed by volcanoes. Although there are no active volcanoes on the island, the mountains are impressive, with several ranges jutting up steeply with the limestone worn into strange pointed shapes by the wind and the rain. The roads are good with dual carriageways between the jagged peaks.

Our first stop was at a Hindu holy site called Ganga Taloa, which is a renowned pilgrimage site. In February/March, there is a large festival called Maha Shivaratri when up to 500,000 of the island's Hindu community come to this site to pay homage to Shiva. (Legend has it that the lake was formed from two drops of water from the Ganges River, which Shiva was taking to India.)

The most devoted pilgrims walk from their village to the sacred lake carrying a kanvar, a light wooden frame or arch decorated with paper flowers. Others make their way by coach or car. Once there they perform a puja, burning incense and camphor at the lake shore and offering food and flowers.

It's a peaceful place, especially if you walk around the lake away from the main temple and all of the tourists. Unfortunately, it rained heavily while we were there, so we were soon back in the safety of our car. The rain persisted as we drove through the lovely, mountainous Black River National Park, so we only stopped at a couple of viewpoints, and had brief glimpses of the spectacular scenery as the clouds parted. We didn't visit the "seven earths" site, which is an area of multi-coloured earth, which we felt would be multi-coloured mud.

The sun came out as we descended from the mountains, and we stopped for lunch at a small cafe in the coastal village of Baie du Cap, where we had a couple of plates of creole curry and rice. It was a scruffy place, but the food was tasty and cheap.

Our whirlwind tour took us along the coast to La Morne, with is an impressive lump of rock, 550 metres high, jutting up from the sea shore. It was apparently to here that a group of escaped slaves fled in the early 19th century, hiding out on top of the mountain to remain free. They were known as Maroons.

The story has it that the slaves, ignorant of the fact that slavery had been abolished, panicked when they saw a troop of soldiers making their way up the cliffs one day. Believing they were to be recaptured, the slaves flung themselves from the cliff tops to their deaths in huge numbers, which explains the origin of the name Le Morne (Mournful One).

Although there are no historical records to substantiate the story, it's an important one for Mauritians as a reminder of the island's brutal history. There's a small, rather dull memorial to the abolition of slavery.

It was a pity that we didn't have time to do a trek to the top of La Morne. We found the trail head track, which is marked by a prominent sign on the road out of Baie du Cap (20°27.47S 057°20.42E). Until recently, the trail was only accessible to licensed guides, but in 2016, the route was opened to everyone. It's supposed to be well marked from a car park (20°27.60S 057°19.54E) and takes 2-3 hours to get to a cross on the summit. The last part is a steep scramble aided by fixed ropes. Sounds great.

On our way back to Grand Baie, we stopped off at the Botanical Gardens at Pamplemousse, which was very pleasant. It's mostly trees, with a few small formal ponds – the highlight is a large pond filled with Giant Water Lilies with huge 1 metre diameter lily pads. It was lovely to spend an hour strolling around the shaded paths. There's lots of small wildlife, we saw Red Whiskered Bulbuls, a Mongoose and a very greedy Striated Heron - trying to swallow a fish.

Taking advantage of the car, we called in at the Grand Baie Hypermarket and loaded two trolleys with heavy provisions, rice, tinned goods and drinks. A large Super Supreme pizza from Pizza Hut rounded off the day.

**Nine of Cups – October 2014 - Pampelmousses:** It was a play day today. There were numerous possibilities for heading out of Port Louis. The bus system takes you everywhere on the island. We could venture to Riviere des Anguilles (River of Eels), or Flic en Flac (??), Cap Malheureux (Cape Unhappy), Trois Mamelles (Three Udders) or Poudre d'Or (Gold Dust). In the end, we chose Pampelmousses (Grapefruits) because there were two places we wanted to visit there ... the Botanic Gardens and L'Aventure du Sucre, a sugar museum.

We walked to the North Bus Terminal and asked for a bus to Pampelmousses. A friendly fellow pointed to a bus that was leaving and we jumped aboard. We told the conductor where we were going, paid our fare (50Rps = \$1.66 US for both of us) and asked him to let us know when to get off the bus. It wasn't far away, less than 10 miles, but this wasn't an express bus and it took us about 40 minutes to get there. The bus dropped us off about 1km (.6 miles) from the entrance to the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanic Garden and we arrived just as the gates were opening.

The local guides were waiting and were very persuasive, but we managed to say no and extricate ourselves from their grasp and get on with our own self-tour. I photographed the map of the park and we chose the highlights we wanted to see. Ambling through the garden's forests, we got a kick out of the sign that asked us to refrain from walking under trees, especially when the weather was windy or rainy.

These gardens are certainly not the largest or most elaborate we've seen, and not much was in bloom though it's springtime here. Still, we enjoyed the peace and quiet as we walked along the garden paths. There was a pool of giant Amazon lily pads, but the delicate lotus blossoms stole the show.

There were lots of birds around, as you can imagine. We could hear the chorus of song all around us. Not many of them are endemic species or even native, but several were new to us, so we were content with what we saw. We'd love to see a pink pigeon, endangered and endemic to Mauritius, but we haven't figured out if we can get a bus to the area in which they're located. We think not.

The park has a small display of giant tortoises, but it wasn't very appealing after our Rodrigues adventure. The Dutch introduced deer back in the 18th century and there's a small captive deer herd in the park. Beyond caged animals, we saw a colorful skink and the most beautiful iridescent dragonfly. I'd hoped to see lots of butterflies, but there weren't many around.

I looked up at one point, trying to figure out the type of birds circling above us in a huge flock. Turns out, they were Mauritian flying fox, aka Mauritian fruit bats, and not birds at all. We were surprised to see them out in such great numbers during the day, but evidently these guys work during the day and the night when there's fruit to be "harvested".

We walked down the lovely Avenue Belle Eau lined with trees planted by visiting dignitaries including Nelson Mandela, Indira Gandhi and Francois Mitterrand.

At Chateau de mon Plaisir, an original sugar plantation manor house, there was an historic photo display dedicated to Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, a Mauritian politician, statesman and philanthropist, who led the movement for Mauritius independence and served as its first Prime Minister. Nearby was a lovely monument dedicated to Ramgoolam's memory as the "Father of the Nation".

We stopped at a little gazebo and just took in the cool, peaceful ambiance while sipping some water and eating snacks we'd brought along ... a lovely way to start the day. The walk to L'Aventure du Sucre is about 1.5 km (1 mile) away. Put on some comfy shoes and come along.

### **11.5.5 Hiking**

**Slipaway – August 2018 – Hiking:** For folks interested in a good hike while visiting Mauritius, we can recommend "Le Pouce," which is near Port Louis.

You could actually hike to Le Pouce from Port Louis, but it would be a very long uphill slog. Instead, we took bus #12 toward St. Pierre from the far end of the Victoria Bus station. Tell the money collector and/or the driver that you are going to Le Pouce, and they will let you know where to get off the bus. The bus will drop you off at the end of Le Pouce Road, and you walk up Le Pouce Road until you reach the trail head. Le Pouce Road and the trail are both shown on maps.me, so it's very helpful to download that app.

Additional information about the hike can be found on this website:

<https://www.atlasandboots.com/hiking-le-pouce-mauritius/>

The writers of this website rate the hike "easy to medium", but I am sure they are younger than us! I would rate it "medium" and the last 50 meters or so are a somewhat challenging (but not

unachievable) scramble to the top. As always, it was harder coming down than going up, but I did it, and I'm not great at that stuff.

After the hike, you can go back the way you came and bus (or drive) back to Port Louis. Alternatively, you can follow a trail back to Port Louis. We did the latter, and it was downhill all the way, not particularly steep, but the trail was quite rocky, so it was not easy.

It was a great day out, and the views from the top of Le Pouce were outstanding! Even if the scramble to the summit is too intimidating, the views along the trail to that point are quite beautiful too.

## 12 Reunion Island

### **12.1 Background and General Info**

Reunion Island has no Indigenous peoples. It was an uninhabited island until 1646 when a group of mutineers fleeing from Madagascar arrived. 20 years later, the French arrived with slaves. Around 1715 there was an economic boom, as a result of coffee exports. In 1763 the population was 22,000 total inhabitants – 4,000 whites, 18,000 slaves. 1796 brought the end to slavery in the Southern Hemisphere. Then in 1802 at the end of the French Revolution, Napoleon re-established slavery. 1807 brought floods and cyclones destroying coffee plants, then sugar cane became the popular crop. 1848 brought the end of slavery, again. 1870 there was an economic crisis with the opening of the Suez Canal, ending the desire for ships to stop at Reunion Island. March 19, 1946 colonialism ends, and Reunion officially becomes a French Overseas Department. The official currency is the Euro, 2013 population 850,000. Today the island is approximately 36% African, 30% European, 30% Indian, 4% Asiatic.

**Slip Away - August 7-30, 2018:** Réunion is a remote island in the Southern Indian Ocean, which gained notoriety when debris from Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 washed up on its shores in 2015.

This small island was colonized by the French in the 1600's because it was an important stopover on the East Indies trade route, and today Réunion remains an overseas territory of France. The island covers only 970 square miles (2,512 square km) - it is 39 miles (63 km) long and 28 miles (45 km) wide. It has a population of 850,000, which is a mix primarily of African and European descent, but there are also some Indians and Chinese.

The island sits above a hot-spot on the earth, and its Piton de la Fournaise is one of the world's most active volcanoes. The island also hosts the dormant Piton des Neiges volcano, which is the highest point on the island at 10,070 feet (3,070 meters) above sea level, as well as three calderas - Cirque de Salazie, Cirque de Cilaos and Cirque de Mafate. The calderas are covered with lush vegetation and numerous waterfalls, and the island is incredibly rugged and beautiful!

Cruising friends who had sailed this route the previous year raved about the hiking on Réunion Island, and we were psyched to explore it.

### **12.2 Approach, Arrival and Formalities**

**Slip Away - August 7-30, 2018:** Réunion does not have any good anchorages, so we booked a berth at the Le Port Marina. This marina has good docks, but the spacing was tight, and entry

was a bit nerve-wracking. With help from the marina staff and our dock neighbors, we squeezed into our spot.

Check-in with Customs and Immigration here was super easy. One official came to the dock, we spent about 5 minutes filling out some paperwork, and we were done.

We spent just over three weeks visiting this stunning island.

**Alba – End June 2017:** At dawn, we had 20 miles to go, with no sign of any FADs. As we approached the impressive mountainous island of Reunion, the wind dropped to 15-20 knots, so we let out all of the genoa. Thirty minutes later the wind was down to 10-15 knots, so we unrolled the mainsail.

Arrived off the port at 10:00 and called the marina on the VHF as requested, but received no reply. We just went ahead; motored into the small port and then into the Le Port Marina (20°56.39S 055°17.25E). It's a very well protected, modern marina with excellent floating pontoons.

A couple of the marina staff met us on the dock and told us that the customs would be clearing us in a couple of hours. In the meantime, they laid out a spongy mat and poured disinfectant on it, so that we could disinfect all the shoes that we'd used while on Rodrigues and Mauritius, where there had been cases of Foot & Mouth.

Two customs guys arrived just after lunch. They act as quarantine, customs and immigration and the whole process took ten minutes. Due to the Foot & Mouth, we knew that they'd be taking all meat, vegetables and milk products, so we'd cleared out our fridge and only had a small bag of cheese and a few vegetables. They looked at it and said that as long as we didn't take it off the boat, we could keep it and eat it, which was good of them.

We went for a walk in town. It's more French than France. There are small restaurants with tables out on the streets and most shops close between 12:30 and 14:30 - God forbid that you want to do anything other than eat and drink wine on a lunch time. When you finally meet a shop keeper, they are very polite, saying "Bonjour" and shaking your hand - very old fashioned.

We wandered to the Tourist Information, who gave us some good information on La Reunion, especially on the hiking which is a big thing here, with mountains stretching up to 3000 metres. We decided to hire a car next week and drive up to one of the three ancient volcanic craters to do some hiking.

After tramping around town for a couple of hours, getting quotes for car hire and failing to get a SIM card for our telephone, we lost the will to live and retired back to the boat to gorge ourselves on baguette, cheese and wine, and then early to bed.

**Noonsite – September 2016:** An outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in Rodrigues and Mauritius has resulted in a strict ban on certain products being exported from these islands and imported into other countries.

Foot and mouth disease is a highly contagious disease that affects animals, with severe health and economic consequences for farms. There has recently been an outbreak of the disease in the islands of Rodrigues and Mauritius.

Increased vigilance is required for travellers to and from these islands.



All meat and meat-related products (Including sandwiches and leftovers), milk and milk-related products and untreated hides from any of these countries will be confiscated and destroyed.

Yachts arriving in Reunion or Rodrigues will be thoroughly searched, and even any sealed, unopened products purchased elsewhere will be removed.

Similar searches of yachts are likely to be implemented in all the affected countries.

Foot and Mouth disease does not affect humans.

### **12.3 Checking Out**

**Alba – August 2017:** The weather looks best to go on Sunday 13th, so I filled in the Customs departure form and sent it off to Jerome in the marina who has organised customs for clearance on Saturday morning with a departure at dawn on Sunday. This will allow us to get duty free fuel on Saturday afternoon.

On Saturday, the Customs officer turned up at 09:00 (as arranged) and ten minutes later, we were cleared out. We motored around to the fuel dock and filled up with duty free diesel. With nothing else to do, we had a lazy afternoon, preparing for our dawn departure.

### **12.4 Cruisers Services**

**Keyif – August 2016:** Update on La Reunion: We love it here! Keyif is in the new marina D'arse Plaisance Titan, Port Ouest, it is super clean, quiet, safe. Compared to Mauritius, we are in Paradise! We pay 25 Euros a day, free water, electricity, super clean bathrooms, hot water, 24 hr security, locked doors at all time, car park, supermarkets and French baguettes and croissants within walking distance. One month car rental for 19 Euros per day, unlimited mileage. Free access to all national parks, hiking sites, beaches, even some concerts. Diesel is EU standards, and you can fill up at the dock compared to the dirt we jerry canned in Port Louis! Shopping at the Jumbo market costs the same as in Mauritius, and real champagne is at 29 Euros a bottle. We are so sorry we stopped in Mauritius instead of coming here earlier. Long live the French civilization!

**Happy Bird – April 2016:** We left for Reunion after 6 weeks in Mauritius. Reunion is a piece of Europe in the Indian Ocean, with European prices as well. Not so special, except for the mountains, they are spectacular, we made some treks to the top, first by bus, very cheap and regular, and further walking, walking walking, another bus homeward bound.

Roderick had to check the bottom of our sailboat, this was tricky, because there are a lot of bull sharks in the marina. Never expected that of course. But he is still here...safe and sound.

**Gryphon – October 2014:** The crossing to Reunion is only 150 miles and was pleasantly uneventful. We were soon tied up alongside a heavy steel yacht cum trader capable of carrying up to 9 tons of cargo. Our new neighbours Michael, an ex Scot, and Pache who is Thai, were kind and helpful and we enjoyed our stay alongside their boat.

**MV Egret – September 2010:** Departing Mauritius on an overnighter, Egret arrived in the first world French island of La Réunion. What a difference!

We LOVED La Réunion. It is a volcanic jewel in the middle of a very large ocean. Customs was quick and easy, unlike the usual friendly, laid-back but tedious bureaucracy to be found in French islands.

The markets were vibrant, with real French bread and fresh tropical fruit as far as one could see.

The island is a potpourri mix of tropical areas, volcanic fields of jet black lava, jagged mountains and flat agricultural areas covered by sugar cane. The population is a mix of natives, ex-pats from France and owners of vacation homes – French citizens enjoy inexpensive flights from France, and mainlanders own roughly half of the homes on the island. Of course where there is sugar cane there is rum, so we took advantage and loaded up with high quality grog as well as duty free fuel.

There are reefs on the windward side, backed by shallow bays. The local fishermen typically use skiffs around 20ft long, in which they motor out to the reefs with tiny outboards during the morning calm and ride the sea breeze back in the afternoon under a single jib. There are usually three or four fishermen to a boat.

On a rental car trip two days before departure we were with a group of yachties who thought it would be a good idea to hike to the top of a semi-dormant volcano which had last erupted a few years previously. So we did, and even walked half way around the caldera. The night before our departure it erupted, and red lava was flowing down the west side – we could see it from the marina. Yikes!

La Réunion was a treat and one of our favourite island stops anywhere.

#### **12.4.1 Money**

#### **12.4.2 Diesel & Gasoline**

**Brick House – August 2018:** Atalanta and Tala 2 left ReUnion this week. No duty free fuel was allowed even after clearance despite harbormaster saying it was possible. Cost approx \$1.74 us per liter for diesel.

**Alba – August 2017:** Duty Free fuel is available on checkout. Check with the marina manager to arrange the paperwork.

#### **12.4.3 Propane (Cooking Gas)**

**Mahili – September 2018:** We were able to refill our propane by buying a local tank at a service station. Yes we bought the whole bottle 44e and decanted on board then on return got 23e back.

#### **12.4.4 Groceries/Provisioning**

#### **12.4.5 Water**

#### **12.4.6 Boat Parts & Repairs**

**Alba – July 2017:** I called at the marina office and met the manager, Jerome, who speaks excellent English. He gave me some pointers on where to get various repairs done. I walked a mile around to the other side of the port to where all the marine businesses are based, but found them all closed on a Saturday. Later, in that area, we found a **stainless steel fabricator** to repair our bent stanchion. He will cut out the bent bit and weld in a new piece. When we

picked it up, they've done a reasonable job, but haven't polished it because they don't have the buffing gear, so I'm going to have to do it before I fit it back on the boat.

I dropped our intermediate shroud off at a rigger, who will get us a quote. He will be ordering it from France and couldn't guarantee the delivery time - holidays in France and strikes, so deliveries are apparently intermittent, which doesn't sound good. When we returned 3 days later, he still didn't have a quote, so I decided to take the shroud with us to the UK to buy what I needed there.

I bought some engine oil and alternator belts from a car parts place called Garden Auto on the way to St Pauls - they have lots of filters as well.

**Gryphon – October 2014:** The port (excitingly named Le Port) is not attractive or convenient for the shops but has the advantage of some good marine services and is good and secure. It was perfect for us as there is a sailmaker, electronics engineers, marine engineers, chandlery and dive shop all sited on the quay.

We were able to have our VHF radio repaired which has been receiving but not transmitting. We have also had an extension made for the spray-hood. The sail-maker used our design to make up a set of side wings that can be removed in calm weather but will keep us drier in the cockpit when it's really splashy.

#### **12.4.7 Laundry**

#### **12.4.8 Medical & Dental**

#### **12.4.9 Getting Around**

**John Saxena FB – September 2018:** I just rented a car for 4 days in Le Port and left it in Saint Denis at Garcia location... €19/d and they drove me from their agency in Saint Denis to the airport on Sunday evening... Call the Le Port agency and ask for Gilles Jaquet... This is a great alternative from my experience and I already booked again for my return... Hope it helps . 12 Avenue Du 14 Juillet 1789, Réunion +262 262 54 04 04

**Brick House – August 2018 – Car Rental:** We have rented and used and returned a car in ReUnion and can highly recommend this company. You do have to get on the bus to pick up and return, but there is some good money to be saved since I shopped every car company in Le Port, and the lowest one I could find was 25 Euros (\$28 usd) per day. Multi auto in St Denis was 19 euros (\$21 usd). If renting for a week or three that adds up).

Many cars advertised 19 euros but none ever had it. MultiAuto didn't have the smallest car upon arrival but honored the 19 Euros, and we even had a nice upgrade, and a nice car with no issues. They pick you up at the bus stop upon request there, and they are courteous, and professional, do not try to find problems, allow an additional driver for not cost, and all the way around try to do all possible to make it simple.

Multi Auto: [reunion@multiauto.fr](mailto:reunion@multiauto.fr)

St. Denis – 0692 703 703

St. Andre – 0692 320 303

St. Paul - 0692 405 554

**Alba – July 2017:** We tried to arrange a taxi to take us to the airport at St Denis, but there aren't many taxi firms around and the cost is astronomical - €60 for the one way trip. While chatting to some of the local boat owners in the marina, I found a young guy who works in Le Port, but lives in St Denis. He's willing to drop us off at the airport for €20, which we gladly accepted.

Coming back several weeks later, at St Denis airport, we caught a bus to St Paul, which only cost €5. There's a bus from St Paul to Le Port, but it doesn't stop anywhere near the marina and we didn't fancy lugging 20 Kg bags a kilometre across town. We were hoping that there would be a taxi rank at the St Paul bus station, but no joy. After buying a new SIM card, we were able to ring a taxi firm, who whisked us back to the boat for €15.

For land touring, we rented a car for a three day trip. It was from a dodgy looking place and was a bit of a wreck, but we had no choice.

**Alba – August 2017:** Getting ready to leave on the passage to Madagascar, we hired a car for four days and ran some errands. Cars are difficult to get at the moment because it's the French school holidays, so we're glad that we had the foresight to book the car four weeks ago. We did a big food shop in the afternoon, buying provisions to last us for a couple of months until we get to South Africa.

## **12.5 Communications**

### **12.5.1 Telephones & Cell Phones**

### **12.5.2 Internet Access**

### **12.5.3 Mail & Shipping Stuff In**

**Slipaway – September 2018:** We ordered a couple of smaller items from Amazon - a fresh water system pump and a handheld VHF radio. Amazon took care of all the details in terms of shipping and import duty. Items were delivered to the marina office, and we were notified when they arrived. Pierre and Jerome in the marina office were very helpful. No issues.

**Tinaprincess – September 2018:** We had some spare parts shipped in from Sweden. Our parts have now been picked up at the DHL office in St. Denis by Pierre Dalele, Marina Manager at Pointe ds Galets, Réunion and bring them to us tomorrow. As anywhere, some admin required to avoid import duties and VAT. Pierre kindly translated the meaning of "Yacht in Transit" and the benefit of zero customs/VAT charges when shipping intra EU (Sweden to Réunion/France). What I think is an important lesson/message is that some foreign sailors are making customs transactions more difficult because of fraud or stupid greed by not having a proper declaration of cost of goods, this behaviour added 4 days to our shipping timelines.

In summary, make sure the local marina/yacht club is aware of your shipment in advance. Make sure the goods are properly declared by the freight agent. Be patient and make sure your Google translate app is in good order. Tomorrow I'll take my bike and a nice bottle of red to Mr Dalele and get my spare parts.

**Brick House – August 2018:** We had parts shipped directly to a supplier here in Reunion. Bottom line, the supplier wasn't thrilled that they had the hassle of it with customs, but they

managed to get it for the import duty and no other extraneous charges...though I do question even the integrity of that.

Since my invoice was a warranty replacement it had no value on the invoice and Customs had trouble with that. They left it up to me to come up with a fair retail value for it and then charged me 25% of that value. But it seems SOMEONE will make some money out of anything you ship here over \$25 usd or so...the local supplier? Customs? Local shipper?

We did get 3 other packages that were all under the \$25 mark (eBay has lots of free shipping deals to here) and no hassles with customs...simply came to the marina. Another couple had Amazon ship their \$200usd part here and paid for the shipping which with Amazon comes with some kind of guarantee that THEY will hassle with and pay customs, not you, and will refund your card if it costs less, but you won't be charged more. They have another package for about the same value coming so hopefully they have good luck with that a second time too.

Definitely think hard and twice about how to ship anything of any value to Reunion...it could cost you a lot of time and money. You will most likely either pay import duty or fees equivalent for duty, if shipped yacht in transit, and it will take more time than you think once it lands here. But at least the services to and from here are dependable.

From my dealings, here is the contact information for the Customs agent in Reunion:

D.K Facknath  
Team Leader, Port Operations Unit  
Custom House, Mer Rouge, Port Louis

Tel: 2020500, Ext: 1001

I think one important lesson for sure is if you are getting warranty parts shipped in, that aren't costing you anything at all, the retail value should still be on your shipping invoice or it will cause delay. Counterintuitive...but unless you have a while in ReUnion, you want to be sure a believable value goes on your goods, even if the truth is 0\$ billed to you. Again my part wasn't shipped to me..it was shipped to the dealer here in case I needed. When the rigger confirmed that I did indeed need the parts we had specified, I paid the import duty to him directly, and all was well.

## **12.6 Things to See and Do**

### **12.6.1 Restaurants & Bars**

### **12.6.2 Diving & Snorkeling**

### **12.6.3 Land Touring & Hiking**

**Slip Away – August 2018 – Hiking: Hiking:** The <https://en.reunion.fr/organize/hiking-trails> website helped us plan some of the trails we wanted to hike. Us and Brick House [rented a car](#) and took a few days to drive completely around the island, stopping to do some hikes at the active volcano of Piton de la Fournaise, as well as Cirque de Salazie, and staying at a couple of guesthouses. We accessed hikes in Cirques de Mafate and Cilaos in day trips. We lost track of the number of times we exclaimed "Wow!!!" - the scenery was spectacular!

**Alba – August 2017 – Day Trip to St. Denis:** It was our last day with a car, but the weather wasn't looking good enough to do a long hike in the mountains, so we opted for a leisurely day trip to St Denis, which is the capital city of Reunion. It's a nice town with lots of impressive colonial buildings and has very relaxed atmosphere for a capital city. Other than the architecture, there aren't many tourist attractions and the only one that we wanted to visit was the Natural History Museum, which was closed for renovations - good planning to do it in the middle of the school holidays...

We had a nice, cheap Creole meal at a food stall on the sea front, where the wind was so strong that the occasional gust would blow the rice from our forks. St Denis is on the north coast and subject to the full force of the south east trades - very different to the sheltered life in the Le Port Marina, where it was flat calm when we drove back. After some more last minute provisioning,, we dropped the car off in the evening.

**Alba – August 2017 – Day trip to Volcano:** We were up at the crack of dawn and set off on a tourist trip with Karen and Graham from "Red Herring", with our rental car. Unfortunately the weather was terrible - we had low scudding clouds and rain as we headed towards the active volcano at the south end of the island. The volcano erupted a couple of weeks ago, so we were hoping to walk around the outer rim of the volcano, but the weather got worse and worse as we ascended.

Despite the grotty weather, we persevered and drove up the winding road to the volcano. The road turned into a muddy dirt track with large potholes causing us to reduce our speed to 5 miles per hour. The rain was lashing, the clouds were swirling around us and after ten minutes of bouncing about, we decided to abandon and run away. It was a pity because it's supposed to be an impressive view.

As we drove down, we parked to visit the Volcano Museum, but everyone else was doing the same, so there was a huge queue stretching out of the entrance - run away! We headed for the south coast, which is where the lava flows when there is a large eruption. There are some impressive lava flows which have run down to the sea and destroyed the coastal road many times. We stopped off at a couple of tourist spots and had a pleasant, short hike along the coast.

Heading back north, we ran into terrible traffic around the city of St Pierre, which caused us to abandon our planned visit to a rum distillery - bummer. Apparently, the chaos was caused by Cane Sugar workers blockading the roads protesting that the government won't increase the subsidies that the industry receives. France really needs someone like Margaret Thatcher...

We arrived back at the boat just before last light - a disappointing day and I was knackered after ten hours of driving.

**Alba – August 2017 – Hiking Cirque de Mafate:** We're planning to go for a three day hike into the Cirque de Mafate, so we spent the remainder of the afternoon and all evening working out a reasonable route with three, 5 hour hikes.

We finalised our route in Mafate and Glenys booked accommodation for two nights. We're going to get a bus up to Dos d'Ane, then walk to Aurore which should take six hours. The second day will be a five hour hike to Ilet des Latinniers and the third day we'll walk out of the Cirque along an impressive looking exposed trail called the Canalization de Orangers.

We're looking forward to spending time in the Cirque de Mafate because there are no roads. Everything is brought into the valley by foot or by helicopter. There are a number of small villages dotted around the slopes of the ancient crater, so it will be interesting to see how the villagers lifestyle compares to the hustle and bustle of the coastal towns.

**Day 1:** We caught a bus from the Le Port bus station up to Dos d'Ane (pronounced Doe Dan) and walked down to the river at a place called Deux Bras (Two Arms). The trail starts about 100 metres past the church and winds its way, 800 metres down a very steep slope, but it's all in shady forest and the path is good.

After crossing the river at a ford, we walked along the river and then up the southern lower slopes of Piton Cabri, which is an impressive rocky hill with a fabulous looking ridge. It would be a great climb along the ridge to the summit, but would involve a night camping half way up, so is out of bounds to us.

As we progressed higher along the lower slopes, we had some great views of the Cirque de Mafate and the trail became steeper and steeper. The final push was grinding up hundreds of steps zig-zagging up a gully to the flat plain of Aurore. After a short rest to ease our quivering thighs, we strolled down to our accommodation at Aurore, arriving at 15:00.

Gîte le Fanjan was a pleasant place with two, 4-bed rooms in a new building. They had a dining room and a small well stocked shop where we were able to buy a few beers and a nice bottle of red wine, which cost only €5 - amazing considering that everything has to be carried or helicoptered into the valley.

It soon began to get cold in the late afternoon, so we climbed into bed and had an hour's nap after our 6 hour hike. The Gîte had no common room and it was obvious that there was no heating anywhere, so we put on ALL of the clothes that we had including our down gilets and waterproof jackets and lurked in the dining room.

There was a family of four Austrians staying in the other room, so we had a pleasant dinner with them. The food was excellent - a chicken curry, a sausage curry, rice, salad and the obligatory lentils. It was enough to feed fifteen people, so we all tucked in with determination, but only managed to eat half of it.

The owner produced a bottle of Rhum Arrangé (Arranged Rum), which is a kind of liquor. The base ingredient is 70-proof white cane sugar rum into which is placed various herbs and fruit, such as orange, ginger and aniseed. It's sweet and very strong, so we slept well.

**Day 2:** We left Aurore at 09:00 and walked for six hours to Ilet des Latinniers. Our route took us through a few villages - Ilet a Malheur, Ilet a Bourse and Grand Place. It was a good hike mostly through forest with some steep drops into river valleys and a few gruelling ascents. We stopped for lunch in Grand Place at a convenient picnic table - they are well geared for hikers in this valley.

From Grand Place, we had a steep descent down to a river and then an equally steep ascent to the village of Ilet de Latanniers, finishing along a narrow ridge - the village is perched on a small plateau beneath some impressive cliffs.

The Gite Cernot Jean Pau was a huge disappointment. Allegedly they have 40 beds, but the place is tacky, cramped and run down. The two toilets had no seat, the two showers barely functioned and the rooms were grim. Our private double room had the family chest freezer

shoved in the corner. There was no storage space in our room and the evening meal was barely adequate for the four people at dinner - sausage curry, with rice and lentils. They still charged the premium price of €45 per person - obviously no pride in their establishment.

Day 3: Breakfast was grim - packaged dried toast, with butter and jam. They didn't provide any hot milk for hot chocolate, instead we had a flask of hot water, with a tub of powdered milk and Nesquik. We didn't hang around and quickly set off for the Canalization de Orangers.

The route goes from the Ilet de Oranger to the village of Sans Sousi perched on the slopes overlooking Le Port. The trail is carved out of the steep-sided valley leading out of Mafate and was created along the route of a huge 18" diameter water pipe bringing mountain water from Mafate to the coastal population.

After a steep 20 minute hike from Ilet de Latanniers up to the trail, the remainder of the walk was on a very level path with some stunning views of the Mafate valley. There is very little shade, so we were glad that we had lots of water. The path goes under a waterfall, through a tunnel and is interesting for the first 4 hours. The last 40 minutes is boring, dropping down from the hill along a dirt road towards the bus stop at San Sousi.

There's a bus stop at the end of the dirt road and we only had to wait for 30 minutes before a small bus stopped and took us down to St Paul. From there we caught a bus to Le Port and we were back on the boat by two o'clock - tired but happy.

**Alba – July 2017 – Hiking Cilaos:** In researching things to do, I found an excellent website: <http://www.randopitons.re/randonnees/carte>. There are so many options, but we decided to go up to Cilaos for two nights. Glenys booked us into self-catering house, which has three bedrooms, but seems to be the cheapest accommodation available at €40 per night.

We picked up the hire car the next day. It was from a dodgy looking place and was a bit of a wreck, but we had no choice. Before heading off into the mountains, we did some running about for repair work. We managed to get on our way by eleven o'clock, taking the motorway heading south. We had lunch at a road side eatery near one of the many sea-side towns and then headed up the fantastic winding road to Celios.

Reunion is a volcanic island and has three, huge, ancient volcanic craters called Cirques, which form the mountainous centre of the island. The Cirques are called Salazie, Cilaos and Mafate and it's possible to walk from one to the next. The Cirque de Cilaos is about five miles in diameter with the crater rim stretching up to an impressive 3,000 metres with very steep sides. The inside of the crater is covered by dense vegetation and there are a plethora of marked trails both inside and grinding up to the crater rim.

Glenys had booked us a three bedroom house, which was much cheaper than staying in a Gite or Bed & Breakfast. The house is a bit basic, but it's clean and self-catering, so we can chose where to eat in the evening. Best of all it has a log fire, which we lit later in the afternoon, when it started to get cold.

We walked around the small town, which has some quaint, old-fashioned general stores. In the evening, we went out for a meal and had traditional mountain food - Pork Chop and Duck with Vanilla, both served with rice and lentils which are locally grown speciality. The meals were huge and very tasty.

4 July 2017 Le Port, Reunion



It absolutely threw it down last night and the sky was very grey in the morning, so we donned our waterproofs and walked down to the car park next to the church. The trails are all well marked and we elected to walk on a route that circles the town. From the car park, we descended through pleasant forest going down to a waterfall called Cascade du Bras Rouge.

The **waterfall** that we could see from the path was unimpressive and the rocks were incredibly slippery, so didn't explore. The rest of the 5½ hour hike went up and down the sides of steep ravines and ended on a path over the top of Celios town. There are a few impressive views, but most of the hike was in the rain forest, so we were a little disappointed - we like exposed ridges and walking up to peaks.

We made it back to the house by 14:30, time for a beer, a Tarte de Pomme and then a quick nap. In the evening went out for another traditional meal - again served with lentils.

5 July 2017 Le Port, Reunion

We woke to a beautiful blue sky day. Unfortunately, Glenys injured her knee yesterday and didn't feel up to a long hike, so we drove up to a look-out point called La Fenetra, which is on the upper edge of the volcano rim. There was a fabulous view across the Cirque to the town of Celios. We were glad that we headed up there early because by 11:00, the cloud had rolled in and the view was gone.

After a short hike and lunch sitting on a rock admiring the view, we drove down to the coast road and stopped off at a couple of places, but it was too damn hot, so we headed back to the boat and ran some errands before dropping the car back.

**Gryphon – October 2014:** The real attraction of Reunion is the interior with absolutely stunning scenery and what must be some of the best walking terrain anywhere in the world.

Birdsong fills the air and waterfalls stripe the mountainsides plunging down 1,000s of feet, some with wonderful names like bridal veil waterfall.

There are flowers, fruits, shrubs and trees everywhere, some thousands of feet up the mountains, many that we had never seen before such as the takamaka and guinea fowl tree; goyavier fruit which is used to make confiture as well as eaten straight from the tree, and many blooms which line the upland paths in froths of colour.

Reunion has retained more of its natural forest than most other Indian Ocean islands because much of the land is impenetrable. Consequently the endemic fauna has fared quite well but large species of flightless birds, similar to the dodo and solitaire, have disappeared as their lowland forest habitat gave way to agriculture as well as providing an easy source of meat for the permanent human settlers who arrived in 1646. There never have been terrestrial mammals or amphibians on Reunion and of the known endemic reptiles just two colourful species of gecko survive. So no worries about poisonous snakes or infectious monkeys. Even the nettle species we encountered had no stings.

The centre of the island comprises three cirques with the highest peaks reaching over 10,000 feet. We got up to 8,000 and were able to look down into the cirques where tiny isolated hamlets can be seen.

These remote dwellings are the homes of the descendants of runaway maroons who escaped the slavery of the French sugar cane fields in the 18th and 19th centuries. The terrain is so

difficult and the abodes so well disguised at that time that the bounty slave hunters never found them. Now they are still wild, extremely isolated and rather mystifying places. Life for the inhabitants is spartan as there is no electricity, mains water, sewerage or other services; there are no roads and it is said that the people who live in these cirques have never seen a car. They have seen helicopters though, which take in medical supplies and other essentials. These days one can walk into these areas using the 100s of kilometres of mountain footpaths that straddle the island and some walkers camp in the valleys which get very cold overnight, for others there are gites en route. There are rumours of witch craft and ancient rites surrounding some of these isolated communities and there have been murders in the distant past – all adds to the mysterious nature of the cirques.

On the coastal plain sugar cane predominates but in the mountains a wide variety of vegetables and fruits are grown particularly more tender vegetables and salad crops. In this case young pineapple plants cling to a tiny valley.

In the centre of the island there are still some of the original forests, thick with prehistoric tree ferns, it is like the land of the dinosaurs and here the understory was full of arum lillies.

Of course, one of the most atmospheric places on La Reunion is the volcano Piton de la Fournaise which has formed the island over the years and is one of the world's largest shield volcanoes. It still erupts regularly and apparently over 20,000 people came to see the 1998 eruption which devastated one small town. We didn't get to the crater as the weather was too bad but reached the moonscape area just below it.

We also walked across the lava flows at sea level but didn't linger.

Now our little hire car has gone back, we have a good 5 day weather forecast for starting the voyage to South Africa and Customs have just checked us out. Provisions are stowed and our harbour dues paid, all that remains is to collect our duty free fuel and a good night's sleep, then its off for the next round in the morning.

#### **12.6.4 Other**

## **13 Madagascar**

### **13.1 Background and General Info**

**Slip Away – Sep 2018:** Madagascar sits in the southwestern Indian Ocean 250 miles (400 km) off the coast of East Africa. Madagascar is the world's second largest "island country" (Indonesia is the largest), and the main island of Madagascar is the 4th largest island in the world. Until the late 18th century, Madagascar was ruled by a fragmented assortment of shifting sociopolitical alliances. The island became part of the French colonial empire in 1897, and then gained independence in 1960. Madagascar's main economic resources are tourism, textiles, agriculture and mining, but it is one of the least developed countries in the world. Almost 70% of the population (estimated at 26 million in 2018) live in extreme poverty, surviving on less than \$1 per day. Madagascar was long isolated from neighboring continents, and as a result, approximately 90% of all flora and fauna found there are endemic. The most well-known native

animal of Madagascar is the lemur (over 100 species of them!), and this island is also home to two-thirds of the world's chameleon species.

### **13.2 Security Warnings**

**IO Facebook Group (??) – November 2016:** Please be careful when visiting Mahajanga. On 30th October Goivanni and Marina of the sailing vessel Eutika were held at knifepoint by 3 men who robbed them. They were unharmed but left and are on their way to Richards bay. When they arrive I will speak to them to find out more details. Meanwhile exercise extreme caution in Mahajanga.

**IO Facebook Group (Arthur Hoag) - July 2016:** Some friends of ours who reached Nosy Be about a week ago had their boat broken into and robbed today. The boat was robbed in Crater Bay (after spending a few days in Helleville), while they went out for dinner. They were only away from the boat for about two hours. They lost two kindles, a laptop, mounted speakers, a camera and a few other things. The boat was locked, but the thieves found a way to open a forward hatch. This information is not meant to scare you away. Just to inform you so you are careful. We, and many others who were there last year, had a fantastic time in the area, and would not want to scare you away. And, we would gladly spend further time in Crater Bay as well as Nosy Be and the rest of the places we visited in Madagascar generally. Last year saw a bit of trouble as well, but not much -- we are aware of a few dinghy/outboard thefts. We know of one in Crater Bay, one in Honey River, and one off Sakatia. We would recommend carefully locking up, hoisting dinghies, and availing yourself of local guards.

### **13.3 Approach, Arrival and Formalities**

#### **13.3.1 Getting a Visa in Advance**

**Q:** Some of my sources indicate sailing into Madagascar as a Canadian (or American) requires a visa obtained in advance for a normal stay of 30 days. Another source indicates no such advance visa is required, one being issued on arrival by boat.

**Alba – January 2018:** It's not worth the effort to get a visa in advance. We cleared in at Ile St Marie and were given the choice of 30,60 or 90 days - a 90 day visa was 140,000 Ariary (£35). The fees for the visas were all official and the same as getting one prior to arrival. We were also asked to pay 50,000 Ariary (£12.50) cash per boat for "the formalities for Immigration".

**Norm Facey (FB) – January 2018:** I had a mixed crew (Canadian, British & Danish) enter Madagascar at Hellville in Nov 2017, all granted visas on entry, no issues. Had a great time, would cruise NoseyBe area for a couple weeks if I was to do it again.

#### **13.3.2 Clearing In – Ile St. Marie / Ambodifototra**

**Brickhouse – September 2018:** We cleared in today and just about the same as above. We found customs to be negotiable (40,000 instead of 60,000) and when I only had 22,000 left in my pocket to pay for clearance to next port, port captain was nice and discounted it from 35,000. All in all, it was 200,000 for customs, coast guard (why do we have to go to this office I don't know), port captain, port fees for a month, and clearance to the next port. Police/ Immigration was my choice of 45 euros for each 60 day visa, or 140,000 Ariaries which was the better deal by a few bucks, so I paid Ariaries. I will reportedly have our passports back at 10am

tomorrow morning. Have only a picture of Roseann with my passports and my money in hand, as my receipt for now. A little chaotic with 3 cruisers clearing at the same time, but overall the officials were cheerful and efficient. Not sure which fees were actually official and legit but got receipts for all, and overall it wasn't a horrible price, and the visas were in line with what they were offered for in Mauritius, so not feeling too rooked. Have gotten my money's worth in whale sightings already, and in the next few days, hope to swim with them!

**Slip Away – September 2-8, 2018:** We arrived late morning, and dropped our anchor off the town of Ambodifototra on the west coast of Ile Ste. Marie. Another boat (Aussies) arrived shortly before us, and both of us went ashore to do our clearance paperwork with the officials. We were acquainted with the folks on this boat, and we knew that the woman could be a bit abrasive, but her husband is super nice, and we never anticipated that doing our clearance with them would be such a terrible experience.

There had been quite a bit chatter on social media about what to expect when clearing into and out of Madagascar because their officials have a reputation for "overcharging" and slipping the extra fees into their own pockets. We have always managed to avoid any unpleasant confrontations regarding these issues and fortunately never felt like we were ever taken advantage of.

Clearance fees are not published in Madagascar, so it's hard to know which fees are valid, and how much is going in their pockets, but several boats arrived at Ile Sainte Marie prior to us and had provided information with regard to which offices we were required to visit and how much each one charged. Jan had noted the numbers, and they were consistent and not outrageous, so we felt like we knew what to expect.

Our first stop on the clearance circuit was the local Police Station, which would handle the Immigration aspect of our clearance. The information Jan had, told us that a 60-day visa cost 40 Euros each (about US\$50 at that time) and that the Police preferred us to pay for our visas in Euros because the local currency (Malagasy Ariary) fluctuated too much. Since Réunion also used Euros, it was not a problem for us to bring Euros to Madagascar, and we did so. If one wanted to pay in Ariaries, the exchange rate offered by the Police was generally not favorable. A boat that had arrived just a few days before us did pay in Ariaries, and shared with us the very favorable exchange rate that they had received, but that seemed to be an exception, and we were not counting on it.

When we arrived at the Police Station, we and the Aussie couple were escorted into a room to meet with a young officer who quoted us 40 Euros for the 60-day visa as expected. "NB" (the female half of the Aussie couple) inquired about paying in Ariaries, and the officer quoted an unfavorable exchange rate. "NB" told the officer that she wanted to pay the exchange rate offered to the other boat a few days ago, and he refused. Jan handed over our Euros and passports (the officer needed to take the passports to the airport to get the visas - not an ideal situation, but that was their system), and we then watched with horror as "NB" continued to argue with the officer, the argument escalated and tensions grew.

In hindsight, we should have left the room, but we sat there shocked, watching the exchange. "NB's" husband finally took charge and tried to diffuse the situation, handing over their passports and Euros too, but as the officer took them, "NB" snapped a photo of the officer with her phone. This totally incensed the officer, who gave passports and Euros back to all of us, told us that he did not appreciate the fact that we did not trust a policeman, and advised us that

we would need to come back in the morning and meet with the Chief of Police. "NB" and her husband were seated next to the door and left the room, while we lingered a bit and Rich apologized to the officer. The officer was visibly upset and would not talk with him, so we also left the Police Station.

Upon reaching outside, Rich gave "NB" a piece of his mind. We had never before experienced anything like this in all our years of cruising. With the rare exception, our previous interactions with officials have always been good. Even when they did not treat us well (as we experienced with Mauritius Customs), we treated them respectfully - it is their country, after all!

The two of us were not only incredibly embarrassed by her behavior, but also concerned that the Chief of Police could deny us entry into their country (which would have been a HUGE problem!). "NB's" husband apologized profusely, accepting blame for what had happened. After leaving the Police Station, we had several more officials' offices to visit, and "NB's" husband visited those offices without his wife. We completed the paperwork with the rest of the officials without incident, while "NB" had a time-out in the dinghy.

We visited the Police Station the next morning, making sure that we went separately from the other couple. Our reception from the Chief of Police was rather cold, but she did accept our passports and Euros, and our passports were returned to us later that day with 60-day visas. Big sigh of relief!!

After a rocky start, we had a good week in Ile Sainte Marie. This island's economy is buoyed by tourism, and although the local people are quite poor by our standards, most are not as destitute as in other parts of the country. Due to the tourist industry, the town Ambodifototra had a couple of good restaurants, and we patronized them. We spent a day with a local guide who took us for a walking/hiking tour and ate lunch at the home of his sister - she had been trained as a chef for a local hotel, and the food was outstanding! We saw chameleons, had our first encounters with lemurs and saw more whales.

**Sue Antifaof – August 2018:** We arrived in Ile St Marie on Saturday and did not have a visa in advance. This was not a problem, just required one more step as the police officer needs to take your passport to the airport at the south end of the island, to have the visa placed in your passport. The 60 day visa was 40 euros. And they prefer to be paid in euros as the local currency fluctuated too much. (90 days - 50 Euros).

Thank you to Margret for the excellent write up, she is spot on regarding the process. The police copied our passports for us, no charge, so we could complete the check-in process that day. We will return Sunday to pick up our stamped passports.

Got the passports back on time and no additional charges! Officer was very good. It is a new electronic visa so it looks a little different than the ones in other's passports. It is a single entry, fine for us because we don't plan to leave and return within our 60 days. Visa time with double entry does not stop on exit, same as India, unlike the Schengen Visa.

**Unwind – August 2018:** We arrived Sunday night in Ile Sainte Marie, Madagascar. The entrance is quite clear to get in at night. I think we were lucky with no whales on our path during our last 10 Nm. Next day we saw lots of them from the anchorage.

Coming back to the clearance--we arrived with a 3 month visa organised in Mauritius. First we visit the police who wanted copies of boat papers, passport, visa and crew list. We didn't have a

copy of our visa so he made one. He asked Ar20.000 administration fee. After this Customs (Douane) and he wants 2 copies of your exit papers which he stamps and you receive 1 back. Fee Ar60.000. Last one: Coast Guard, he just wanted to see our boat papers and passport. His fee is Ar60.000. From all we got a receipt and all friendly smiles. What I know is that all boats we know (4 this year) paid the same amount except 1 French boat who argued the fee of the police and got away with it. As our French isn't that good we left it how it was. The only thing that needs to be done is a visit to the port captain when we leave. Cost ? It seems you get a domestic clearance.

**Tereva – August 2017:** For the port and navigation we paid 76000 Ar for one month ( you can pay before or when you leave) and we have to pay 35000 Ar for the clearance to leave Ste Marie.

Very nice place and good anchorage ..

**Alba – August 2017 – Ile St. Marie:** After a quick breakfast, we dropped the dinghy in the water. It was half past nine before we headed into town with “Red Herring” to tackle the clearance procedures. We entered the small boat harbour and took our dinghies to the north side of the stone ferry jetty, where there are some sturdy iron hoops to lock our stainless steel chain painter. As expected a local came up and offered to watch our dinghies for us, but we politely declined because we were in a very public area in the middle of town.

My initial impressions of the town were that we're definitely back in a third world country. The main street has chaotic small traffic - motor bikes, Tuk-tuks and bicycle taxis. Off the “main road”, the small streets are lined with small ram-shackled shops selling a plethora of items - rusting hand-made hinges; foam for mattresses; woven baskets; charcoal cooking stoves and iron cooking pots to put on them. Other stalls sell charcoal; snacks; and piles of second-hand clothes.

Our first stop was at the **BFV Bank** to get some cash – the currency is called the Malagasy Ariary and has an exchange rate of 4,000 to £1. Thankfully the ATM handled both Visa and Mastercard and dished out our cash. We took out 600,000 Ariary (£150) which was dispensed in 10,000 Ariary notes, so my wallet was bulging. Interestingly a guard at the bank made me take off my hat and sunglasses while I was using the ATM, so that the camera on the ATM could take a good image of me - first time that I've had to do that.

After a few false starts, we found the **Police Station**, which is on a small street just to the south of BFV Bank, heading away from the coast.

The police station is a small, scruffy white building partially hidden behind market stalls. We found a bored police officer sitting behind a rough wooden desk, who directed us into a small office with two people sitting at desks laden with paper. It took 25 minutes of muttering and writing on forms for them to complete their paper work. Our passports were stamped with the visas (90 days for us and 60 days for “Red Herring”) and we were told that the Commandant had to sign everything. Unfortunately, the chief police officer was away from the station, so we had a lengthy 90 minute wait until he came back.

The Police Commandant turned up at noon and the visa process continued. We knew that the official cost of a 90 day visa was 140,000 Ariary (£35) and the clerk had already filled in a bill that we had to take to another office to pay. Now a photocopied receipt appeared and we were asked to pay 50,000 Ariary (£12.50) cash per boat for “the formalities for Immigration”. The

receipt was stamped; the cash placed in an old fashioned "signing" book with the other documents and whisked away to the Commandant.

After the signing, we were handed our passports; the bill to be paid at the government cashier ("Le Consideration") and the signed receipt for the "Formalities" cash. I'm guessing that the cash went straight into the Commandant's pocket.

All government offices are closed from 12:00 to 14:00, so there was nothing to do except retire to a restaurant and have lunch.

Suitably fortified, we dinghied over to Ilot Madame to complete our clearance formalities. We locked our dinghies to a concrete railing at the east side of the small island and found the **Coast Guard** in a small building nearby. They took us to a smaller office and called the customs officer, who apparently lives nearby.

The Coast Guard filled in a form, taking the details of boat and our intentions. The form said that we had to pay a fee of 60,000 Ariary (£15). Karen from "Red Herring" started to argue that this wasn't an official payment and that we shouldn't have to pay it, but she didn't speak any French and so Glenys had to try to translate the arguments, which was difficult. We eventually gave in and paid the cash over. More troubling than the back-hander was that we were unable to get any Domestic Clearance from Ile St Marie to Mahajunga (or even Nosy Be).

Our next stop was at the **Customs**. The customs officer is an unpleasant man (think short, fat, sleaze-ball toad) who was only interested in getting his grift. He spoke a little English and the first order of business was to make it very clear that we were going to have to pay a fee - something along the lines of "I clear you, you pay money". Karen was still smarting from the encounter with the Coast Guard, so she laid into Mr Toad demanding proof that we were supposed to be paying him a fee.

Mr Toad actually asked "How much did you pay the Coast Guard?" We refused to tell him so he said that the Customs fee was 60,000 Ariary (£15) and produced a very badly photocopied receipt. Karen persisted and said that this was obviously not an official receipt. Mr Toad responded with "we pay him and we don't have to pay any more to customs". I thought Karen was going to hit him when he called her a "difficult woman"... After a stressful ten minutes, we caved in and paid him his pound of flesh.

The psychology is interesting. We needed him to stamp our clearance and he wanted us rich westerners to pay him. The negotiations were severely complicated by our lack of French - it's difficult to be eloquent when your French is limited to "Can I have two beers, please". I guess that we could have haggled his fee down by using persuasive arguments, but with only £15 at stake, it's hard to be motivated.

The other aspect to the process was to show us that he was powerful - at one point, he actually said "Owning a (rubber) stamp is Power in Madagascar." Another thing that he did was to insist that we counted out the 10,000 Ariary notes onto the table, which I think, to his small mind, extended his victory as we humiliated ourselves by showing him our money. (I have heard that the locals throw the money onto the floor when they are forced to pay bribes.)

At the end of the customs process, we walked out with a stamped copy of our clearance from La Reunion and the tatty receipt, which didn't even have the amount paid written on it - again no domestic clearance to the other side of the country. Karen hung back outside the door and was

incensed to watch Mr Toad sweep up his ill-gotten gains and stuff the notes into his back pocket.

With a bad taste in our mouths, we wandered over to the government payment office which is unfortunately called “Le Consideration”. We were relieved to find that they were very professional, taking our bill; our cash and sticking a very official looking receipt in our passports under the rubber stamped visa. I think that was the only honest part of clearing in.

For Passage notes between Ile St. Marie around to the NW Coast of Madagascar, see [this section](#) in the Passage Notes chapter.

For information on getting “Domestic Clearance” from Ile St. Marie to Nosy Be / Hellville, see [this section](#).

### **13.3.3 Clearing In – Nosy Be**

**FB Group (Tom Service) – Sep 2019:** We recently entered Madagascar from Mayotte. We made no advance notifications to Madagascar, and we did not check out with the Port Captain in Mayotte. Upon arrival at Nosy Be we simply submitted our passports with French exit stamps, and the French Customs Exit form, and that was it. It seems like everyone gets two months on arrival in Madagascar, and the offices we visited did all record keeping with paper and pencil.

#### **FB Group (Thomas Partridge) – Aug 2016 - Hellville, Nosy Be check-in**

If checking into Madagascar you need to visit the police who act on behalf of immigration and can be found in the port in a small porta cabin (13°24.462S 48°16.834E). They are corrupt - they show you a hand written note in a book stating check-in is now 80,000Ar (26USD) for a ‘droit d’arraisonnement’. We saw in their receipt book they were charging yachts in 2016 anything from 60,000Ar to 240,000Ar (20 to 80USD).

You need 2 copies of your last port of clearance, plus 2 copies of your crew list. You pay them the fee plus standard visa costs and then return to collect your passport at a time they tell you.

After this you need to clear in with the Port Captain (13°24.4201S 48°16.7349E). Walk out of the port gate, follow the road that bends to the right, they are on the corner on the right. You need a cruising permit for Nosy Be and surrounding islands, we were told the minimum length issued is 1 month, we paid 59,310Ar for this 1 month permit. They didn’t ask for any extra fees and used official documents.

If you don’t speak French it may help to use one of the ‘boat boys’ like Jimmy and Cool who will charge you 30,000Ar (10USD) but to note they do as the officials tell him. Jimmy and Cool are helpful for looking after your dinghy at the port (5000Ar half day/10,000Ar full day), getting fuel and any other information. Jimmy wears a red Mount Gay Rum baseball cap.

Tuk-tuks to town are cheap at 500Ar per person, good fresh market, Champion supermarket and assorted restaurants – Nandipo is where yachties hang out and Oasis Café for coffee and cake fixes!

**Adina – August 2016:** Adina is now in Madagascar and to confirm visa fees are as we received on an email from a Madagascar Consulate “The fee is Ariary 80.000 for a stay not more than 30 days, Ariary 100.000 for a stay between 30 days and 60 days and Ariary 140.000 for a stay between 60 days and 90 days”.



**FB Group (Ken Bryce) – 2015:** Hellville is definitely the safest place to anchor. Jimmy and Cool the local boys who organise your paper work, and will look after your yacht whilst you tour. The both told us of the dangers of anchoring or mooring in Crator Bay.

**Zephyr – August 2015:** First impressions of Madagascar. WOW, what a nice country. The people here have been great. While French is the primary language, some English is spoken so with some patience and that both Tracy and I took a good bit of French back in High School and College, we are getting along as long as everyone speaks slowly and numbers are written down.

Once we dropped anchor, we were immediately greeted by a boat "trader". He wanted line and not just any line. He wanted 30 meters of braided line but he was willing to trade a stalk of bananas for it. First of all, I don't have 30 meters of braided line to spare let alone trade for a stalk of bananas. I dug down in the forward locker and found what I could, an old dock line that we could spare so I handed it down and got my stalk. I'll be sharing them with Morning Glory as there is no way possible to eat that many bananas.

Then over comes Jimmy and Cool his business partner. They come out and introduce themselves as possible agents to help us get through the maze of getting checked in. We'd been advised by both Night Fly and Morning Glory that he was great. We made an appointment to meet him on shore on Wednesday to get started. Right now, it was time to put Zephyr to bed after our 850 mile journey through 40+ knots of wind and 18 foot seas. We had lots to clean and lots more to stow and get covered.

We met Jimmy and Cool at the dock and turned over Puff (our dinghy) to Cool for proper dinghy management. He would watch it through the day and made sure it was kept away from other boats as they come and go at this busy dock. We met with Jimmy and headed to the Police hut on the dock. They spoke a little English so if they went slowly, we could understand most of what they said. To check in required payment of \$60,000A, about \$18.00US, plus a payment of \$100,000A for each of us (about \$37.00) to be paid later at Immigration.

Off we went, the three of us to find an **ATM**. For some unknown reason, my ATM card would not work but Tracy's would so we had plenty of money even though there is a limit of how much you can take out with each transaction. In the end, we walked away with \$500,000A, about \$152.00US.

Once Jimmy got us to Immigration, we waited and waited watching at least one clerk just sitting doing nothing other than play with the drawers of her deck and making phone calls on her cell. After a good hour, we were called into an office and told to come back at 1530 as there was no one there that could help us. It was just about 1000 so we had plenty of time to kill. We jumped in a tuk tuk (like a big oversized motorcycle with bench seating in back for three) and headed back to the Police hut to explain what was happening. The Police Officer (nice young woman) took our passports and told us to come back at 1600 and they would have everything taken care of, oh and "pay us the \$200,000A that you were going to pay them" (all said in French).

Jimmy said he would meet us then so off the two of us went to get more things taken care of (get internet and phone service). We walked slowly back farther into town headed for a **grocery store** to see what was available in Madagascar. While not a big grocery store, it was nicely stocked with lots of things, many from South Africa. We know there must other stores around the island but figure this is one of the biggest as this is the biggest town on Nosey Be (name of

the island we are on). They did have Raman noodles with Curry as the main flavor so I bought a bag of it to try later. It's one of my mainstays for a night time snack and I was just about out of what we had purchased in the Seychelles (at three times the price).

After lunch, we went up and down side streets that I'm sure few "white" folks have been on. While there is tourism, we were by far the minority. We walked up and down streets even where charcoal is sold. Charcoal is the primary way people heat their food as gas is too expensive for most households. People just sort of stared at us as we passed. We did get to see our first Zebu. If you want chicken, well it's sold live so you get the freshest chicken. Just can't see plucking a chicken on board. At least what we are used to for chicken is available in the main super market.

At 1600 we were back at the dock with the Police who had gotten our passports all taken care of us as well as much of the other paperwork. She asked us what we had been doing (now surprisingly in better English). When we told her we had been stimulating the Madagascar economy and buying gifts, she told us she had worked hard for us and could use a gift too. Our first instance of someone asking for a gratuity. I reached into my pocket and pulled out \$40,000A, about \$12.00US and handed it over quickly so no other officer would see it as they would want their cut.

With our papers now in hand, Jimmy took us over to the Customs office near by and we got that taken care of quickly and then off to the Harbor Master's office. Here, we were hit with another fee of \$114,439A (\$34.00US) for our two month cruising permit. Jimmy then guided us into a tuktuk and off to another Customs Office for our final paperwork. We had a fee of \$20,000A (\$6.00US) for checking into the country. We'd told him we wanted to also get the paperwork taken care of for checking out so we wouldn't need to come back to Hellville again. While we paid \$20,000, Night Fly paid \$80,000 to do what we had just done. No standardization of fee structure I guess.

We were finally done at it was just 1645. We jumped into another tuktuk and headed back to the dock. Jimmy's fee for all his work and interpreting for us? Just \$15,000-\$4.57!

Our dinghy-minder got another \$10,000A(\$3.05).

**SY Pélagie - May 2015:** We arrived safely in Nosy Be, North Madagaskar at 11th of May, after an easy sail from Chagos.

The prices for checking in are clearly marked on papers on the wall of the offices of the various officers. The cruising permit, around 40 \$, was new for us. We received good help from Sergio, a local on shore, who of course expected a payment. As does everyone else for small requested or more often not requested services. We seem to be back in the Caraiben. Every one is so poor here that we understand and donot mind paying.

### **13.3.4 Domestic Clearances**

**Alba - August 2017:** After completing our clearance in, I was concerned that we haven't managed to obtain a Domestic Clearance, so I did some serious research looking back at emails from friends and blogs from other cruisers who went through Madagascar in the past few years.

There's nowhere to get good information, but eventually I figured out that we need to get the Domestic Clearance from the Port Captain, who we haven't found yet. Our friends on "Keyif" were fined \$100US last year for not having one. There's also something called a "Permis de Circulation", which I think that we also get from the Port Captain.

After lunch, we went across to Ile Madame to look for the Port Captain. Mr Toad, the customs man, intercepted us, but he didn't have a clue what we wanted. I found the Coast Guard guys in their bar/recreation building and it took five minutes for them to grasp what we wanted and point us to the Port Captain's office which has a sign "Navires Gen de Mer".

The Port Captain's office building is small, but tidy and even has a little garden outside. The officer was polite and knowledgeable, taking a scan of our ships papers on his computer (yes, a computer!) and told us that he would issue a Domestic Clearance to Mahajanga when we are ready to leave Ile St Marie. We confirmed that he would be available on weekends, but we said that we would be back early next week.

When the time came, I popped out to obtain our Domestic Clearance from the Port Captain. He filled in various forms and I had to pay 30,000 Ariary (£7.50) for one month's port fees and 35,000 Ariary (£9.00) for processing the clearance. I was told that the port fees cover the whole of Madagascar, so I shouldn't have to pay any more for a while.

The Port Captain issued the Domestic Clearance from here to [Mahajanga](#), which is the last post before we head off to South Africa. I'm hoping that this strategy will mean that I don't have to see any of the authorities in Nosy Be. He also told me that I don't need a "Permis de Circulation" because he could only issue one for the Ile St Marie area and it's only necessary if we were staying in one area for a long time. I may get stung for one of these "Cruising Permits" in Nosy Be, if I'm not careful.

**FB Group (Nadire Berker) – September 2016:** All cruisers who check in to Madagascar in Ile Sainte Marie, beware! You need a domestic clearance paper from the port captain as you leave for another port, i.e. Nosy Be. We did not have it, and were fined 1000000, yes, one million Ar. After much negotiations we paid only 121000 as a fine, but they are very serious about this, so don't forget your domestic clearance papers from each port you enter in Madagascar.

### **13.3.5 Clearing Out – Nosy Be / Hellville**

**Brick House – Oct 2018 – Nosy Be:** Heads up to anyone clearing from Nosy Be. The Port Captain's office assistant asked for 35,000 Clearance Fee today. First we asked for a receipt...this did not deter him. We then asked him again..."are you sure it's right...no other cruisers paid this?" He politely insisted that it was absolutely right and we needed to pay it. We then politely asked him to get his boss because we were not sure it was right...that perhaps we were miscommunicating. He left to get his boss, but came back a couple of minutes later saying his boss said it OK...no fee. Surprise surprise.

This is exactly how fees become "official". One official asks for it. Gets it. Cruiser A tells Cruiser B tells Cruiser C...then it's suddenly official and accepted. We wonder if that's where the official fee of 80000 (\$24 usd) came from for putting departure stamps in your passport came from. We now all accept it as the gospel.

Told two cruisers we knew who were on their way in to clear out...about our experience...and contact with them afterwards...they had no issues...not asked. Best to perpetuate this than the alternative.

Such nice people in these offices. Always so likeable. Problem with paying extra to the officials is you've just made the government workers...some of the highest paid in these countries, richer yet. Distribute your kind contributions to the true poor people of this country...not the highest paid ones! It should NOT be those in powerful well paid government jobs that get your fistful of dollars!

**FB Group - Neil Schneider – 2015:** We cleared out of Hellville last year but made several stops along the west coast of Madagascar south of there, including a two-night stop in Mahajunga, where we took on additional fuel in jerry jugs. We were accompanied by a Hallberg-Rassy 39. We made our jump to Richards Bay from Baly Bay, just north of Cape of Vilanandro. Good luck, fair winds and calm seas.

### **13.3.6 Clearing Out - Mahajunga**

**Alba – Sep 2017 - Mahajunga:** After pulling our dinghy up on a beach in [Majunga](#), I showed our tuk tuk driver a photograph of the sign for the “Agence Portuaire, Maritime et Fluviale” (Port Captain) and he seemed to know where to take us. I had used Google Maps on my phone to work out the location of the Port Captain and Immigration, but the tuk-tuk driver went straight past the Port Captain and took us to the main port, which was okay because that's where the **Immigration** office is located. (15°43.60S 046°18.65E).

We wandered in through the port gate and a guy directed us to Immigration, who were very pleasant, put exit stamps in our passports and charged us 40,000 Ariary (£10). He gave us a small receipt, but shoved the money into his pocket - Hmmm! (Our friends on “Wairima” were charged 20,000 Ariary and “Luci” was charged 30,000 Ariary, so who knows if the charge is official or not...)

Lugging our empty diesel jerry jugs, we walked ½ mile back to the **Port Captain** at 15°43.64S 046°18.27E. It was an interesting walk, which took us past the small cargo boat dock, which was bustling with wooden boats unloading a wide variety of cargo. The Port Captain's office was very nice and the staff efficiently produced an outward clearance document and relieved us of 35,000 Ariary (£8). They didn't want to see any other Madagascan documentation, so I guess that we could have obtained our port clearance without paying Immigration.

**FB Group (Ken Bryce) Clearing Out - 2015:** We cleared from Mahajunga not an issue. The anchored was fine. Docking was a little precarious, although the locals helped. Shopping was fine in two destinations. All good for our last stop in Madagascar. It was our second time round and things have changed a lot in 30 years. Still nice French bakeries.

**FB Group – Totem – Clearing Out:** We cleared out of Mahajunga last year. I don't remember details, but it wasn't a big deal (I'll look in the log to find details). We found a contact to get diesel - easy and will look it up details when I get more time. We anchored in Mahajunga during the day only, at 15° 43.583S / 46° 17.937E and at Ketsepy for the night at 15° 46.179S / 46° 14.714E - lots of current but holding was very good. Gets very shallow on the run between, but the chart reflected this.

From there we went down the coast to Barren Islands before crossing to RB - The islands and people were interesting and crossing was fast/good.

More here: <http://www.sailingtotem.com/2015/10/the-not-so-perilous-port-of-mahajunga-madagascar.html>

**Crystal Blues – 2015:** We loved Mahajunga and stayed for 4 days. We had already checked out in Helleville, but visited the Port Captain and he was okay about us staying at anchor outside the main harbour. A great place to restock before making the crossing. The only trouble we knew of was a boat boy who minded the dinghies and helped himself to petrol out of one of the dinghy tanks of another cruiser.

<http://svcrystalblues.blogspot.com/2015/10/last-port-mahajunga-madagascar.html>

### **13.4 Nosy Be and Hellville (13-24S / 048-17E)**

Nosy Be and Hellville are not interchangeable terms - Nosy Be is the entire island off the Northwest coast of Madagascar, while Hellville is the main port on the south end of the island of Nosy Be.

**Alba – Sep 2017:** Other than the Dhows, there wasn't much to keep us at Crater Bay, so we motored the six miles to Hellville, the capital of Nosy Be - only 6 miles away. We anchored at 13°24.45S 048°17.10E in 8 metres of water over good holding mud. By the time that we were settled, it was 11:00, so knowing that the shops close for several hours at lunchtime, we jumped in the dinghy and headed for shore.

We pulled up to the dock and were waved over to a concrete slipway at the south side of the main pier. The legendary Jimmy and Cool met us on the slipway and immediately took control of our dinghy carrying it up to the top of the slip. These two guys have made a living out of cruisers for many years.

Jimmy, who wears a red Mount Gay hat, speaks a little English and can help you get anything. For 50,000 Ariary (£12), he will accompany you around the tortuous process of obtaining clearance. Cool, who always seems to be wearing a red shirt and a cowboy hat, will look after your dinghy for 10,000 Ariary (£2.50) for the day or 5,000 Ariary for a short time. When you look at the chaos of the port, it's worth the money.

As we walked away from our dinghy, we were stopped at a Police Post and a couple of seedy officers demanded to see our passports. We'd left them on the boat and so I showed them the photocopies of our passports and visas. They barely glanced at them and beckoned us into a small room, where they pulled out some US dollars and Euro coins and kept repeating "Ariary".

I wasn't sure whether they were asking for money or wanted us to change their ill-gotten cash, so I just kept repeating "I don't understand" and eventually with shrugs we walked out. I really hate that the police officials are corrupt. In the UK, we can trust the integrity of the police, but it seems every Madagascan official is trying to get some grift from us.

We wandered into town and found that the supermarket is open all day, which was good news. We decided to get some fresh vegetables from the market and then tackle the supermarket after lunch. The wet market was better than yesterday, but there were a huge amount of flies again. However, there was a better selection of vegetables, so Glenys filled her shopping bag.

We walked back to the Nandipo restaurant, where we found Paul and Monique from “Full Circle”. The meal took at least an hour to arrive and was very average, so we won't be going back there. After lunch, we went to the Champion supermarket and stocked up for two weeks. They have cans of Three Horses Beer, so we bought a couple of cases and then caught a tuk-tuk back to the port.

There's a port entrance, about 200 metres from the slipway where we left the dinghy and the tuk-tuk was stopped by a guard. When I asked to be let in, he put out his palm to be greased, to which I shook my head in disgust. We unloaded the tuk-tuk and had a little confusion about the fare, eventually paying 500 Ariary each and another 500 for the shopping - it's only 37p, so I didn't get too stressed out about it.

We just about managed to carry all of our shopping in one go, so we were glad that we had bought much more - otherwise I would have had to make several trips while Glenys guarded our shopping bags from the hordes of people milling about the port gates.

While lugging the shopping back to the dinghy, we were again stopped by the dodgy policeman, who beckoned us into the small office asking for our passports again. This time, once in the privacy of the office, he could see that we had lots of beer and was asking for a few beers. We pretended not to understand; kept telling him that our passports were on the boat and walked away.

After a few days visiting Nosy Komba and Russian Bay, we went back to Hellville for a final provisioning and a little more diesel.

We'll be clearing out in Mahajunga and expect to be buying more provisions there, but Glenys has bought enough drinks, dried goods and tins to last us for two months, so if we bypass Mahajunga, we won't starve on the way to South Africa.

In many places, the villagers paddle out and offer us Mud Crabs, but we've so far declined. In the market there was a whole section devoted to Mud Crabs. They were slavered in gloopy mud, presumably to keep them fresh, but they didn't look particularly appealing. Maybe someone should teach them about presentation.

## **13.5 Cruisers Services**

### **13.5.1 Leaving your Boat in Madagascar for Awhile**

**Question asked on FB Group:** Has anyone experienced the Yacht Club in Nosy-be for the purpose of leaving a boat on a mooring bouy for 3 months. or other opinions?

#### **Answers (consolidated):**

We have a friend with a yacht there since September. Says there have been no problems. Has a person sleeping on yacht at nite. Emergency skipper if needed.

Contact Jimmy and Cool. They have been looking after Yacht for years. Cool was in fact a Skipper of a private charter yacht. They have stayed on our and friends yacht for months. They stay in the cockpit every night. They did this for us for at least a month . Excellent and very trustworthy.

I have spoken to Jimmy and he is happy for me to pass his number.

+26 - 13 – 2847-9237

Give him your boat name and approx arrival time. I am sure you will be looked after. The recommend spot is Hellville. We were anchored there for at least a month whilst we travelled to South Africa. Never an issue. Anything we needed Jimmy or Cool fixed it up.

Please do not abuse their system of looking after your yacht. Although they stay in your cockpit, the weather is not always pleasant. please provide shelter and some comforts for them. All the best.

They also have security on shore. There is no club as such but there is an open air restaurant which sells good food and very reasonable. The yacht club charges you weekly if you stay more than 3 days. Rholand and Isabel are the owners.

**Another opinion:** I had a friend leave their boat in Nosy Be Madagascar for 3 months with a boat watcher. The watcher used the outboard motor without asking and broke it (damaged the impeller beyond repair). Other than that the boat was all intact when he returned to it. It was an easy process to find the watcher. But definitely need a watcher. In that same anchorages there were a handful of break ins and thefts before and after those 3 months. Specifically he was in Crater Bay.

### **13.5.2 Money**

**Alba – August 2017 (Ile St. Marie):** Our first stop was at the BFV Bank to get some cash – the currency is called the Malagasy Ariary and has an exchange rate of 4,000 to £1. Thankfully the ATM handled both Visa and Mastercard and dished out our cash. We took out 600,000 Ariary (£150) which was dispensed in 10,000 Ariary notes, so my wallet was bulging. Interestingly a guard at the bank made me take off my hat and sunglasses while I was using the ATM, so that the camera on the ATM could take a good image of me - first time that I've had to do that.

### **13.5.3 Diesel and Gasoline**

**FB Group – Sep 2018 – Nosy Be:** There are no fuel stations in Nosy Be. Jerry cans are the only option. We went to the Shell station in Hellville with our Jerry cans. Take a tuktuk back at AR 500/ per passenger.

**FB Group – Sep 2018 – Nosy Be:** We used Jimmy and Cool in Hellville. Just ask on the pier for them. They will help you.

**Lisa Dorenfest – Aug 2018:** Mada diesel AR 3400 and petrol AR 4000 (\$1 approx AR 3300).

**Alba – Sep 2017 - Hellville:** I arranged for Cool to get me some diesel, which worked out well. I dropped off three empty 20 litre containers and they returned them an hour later. The diesel cost 3,000 Ariary (£0.75) per litre and they wanted 20,000 Ariary (£5) for their transport and time, which was fair enough.

### **13.5.4 Propane (Cooking Gas)**

**FB – June 2018:** For those that are coming to Nosy Be there's no one here that can fill Australian or US LPG bottles. The only way to do this is to decant from one of their tanks to yours.

To do this you will need a connection for your tank and a connection for theirs, plus a hose.

You can purchase a gas cooker burner at the local shell service station, discard the burner and you now have a unregulated connector for one of their tanks, high pressure hose can be purchased there as well. You will also need a couple of barb fittings for the hose and a connection to your bottle.

If you don't have connection for your bottle you're not going to find one here.

### **13.5.5 Groceries/Provisioning**

**Alba – Sep 2017:** We wandered into Hellville and found that the supermarket is open all day, which was good news. We decided to get some fresh vegetables from the market and then tackle the supermarket after lunch. The wet market was better than yesterday, but there were a huge amount of flies again. However, there was a better selection of vegetables, so Glenys filled her shopping bag.

After lunch, we went to the Shampion supermarket and stocked up for two weeks. They have cans of Three Horses Beer, so we bought a couple of cases and then caught a tuk-tuk back to the port.

### **13.5.6 Water**

### **13.5.7 Boat Parts & Repairs**

**Lesley Day (FB) – August 2018 - Sail Repair:** If you need sail repairs or canvas work when in Nosy Be, Madagascar then you could try Profil Sailmakers. We had some work done to our genoa and were very happy with it and the price they charged. Speaking French would be an advantage but one of the women there does speak some English-obviously you need to make sure they understand what you want.

Directions to find the sailmaker. Head out of Hellville on the road to Crater Bay. You will go past Total Gas station on the left. A short way past you will come to the Gaia shop -it has high black fence with a large sign on it. That shop is on a corner. Turn left there onto dirt road and sailmaker is a short distance down that road on the left. No sign out the front, building has two doorways.

**Anthony Daniels (FB) – Haulout:** Some time ago I asked if anyone could suggest a good place to haul out and antifoul. For anyone else in a similar position, Crater Bay in Madagascar has a flat area by a wall and it is only 30,000 AR per day to lie against it and a couple of guys made short work of cleaning and antifouling. There is not much choice of antifouling, but at least you can buy it.

To buy the paint, there is a small chandlery in Da Es Salam which is at Crater Bay. You could probably get it in Hellville as well.

**Zephyr – August 2015 – Wood:** I needed a new board that got broken on the trip over. I got a new board from Jimmy, our "agent" and the go-to guy for any needs you have. Once I showed him the broken 2 x 6, he came back with a magnificent board made of rosewood! A wood almost too pretty to use to hold jerry cans to the stanchions. It weighs a ton.

Also see [Shipping Stuff In](#)



### **13.5.8 Telephones, Cell Phones & Internet Access**

**FB Discussion – Oct 2018:** Is there Telma network coverage in Nosy Mitsio, Radama islands and Moramba bay?

- Very rare and weak connection between Nosy Be and Mahajunga

**Alba – August 2017:** While waiting for an official to return to his office, while we were clearing in, we popped out to the local Telma Telecom office and bought SIM cards for our phones. The guy was very efficient and within 15 minutes we both had SIM cards installed and 5GB of data available for 85,000 Ariary (£21). This is 20% of the cost of the same service in La Reunion and the internet is 4G - ten times faster on this tiny island than in first world La Reunion.

**Zephyr – August 2015:** Jimmy had pointed out the **internet provider** office on the way back to the dock. Price for 5 gigs, \$22.85US!!! Less than a quarter of what we had paid in the Seychelles!!! I can go with that.

### **13.5.9 Mail & Shipping Stuff In**

**Chapter Two – October 2016:** Getting our repair part direct from Lewmar was a mistake. They sent it UPS despite requests to send it DHL. Due to this, it was then stuck in Antananarivo and we have had to get an agent to get it to Nosy Be. Time consuming and costly!

**Rose ERose – May 2015 – Shipping Parts In:** A few people have asked me recently about getting yacht parts sent to places in the western half of the Indian Ocean, northern route (Seychelles, Mayotte, Madagascar and Comoros). This is assuming you need the package before South Africa.

In our experience the Seychelles was the best option followed by Mayotte.

Madagascar and the Comoros are hopeless. Sailors who live in Madagascar told us it was worth sailing over 800 miles to the Seychelles to get parts, rather than trying to get them in Madagascar or Mayotte.

We got a package sent to the Seychelles yacht club, and did have to pay some duty, but it was definitely the best option. We also got an item sent to Mayotte, care of the yacht club. Both yacht clubs were helpful and friendly.

### **13.6 Things to See and Do**

**Zephyr – August 2015 – Touring Nosy Be:** Yesterday, we went on an all day tour in a hired taxi to see the sights of Nosy Be. We started out at 0800 as there was a good bit to see and travel.

First stop was "Lemurialand". An area set up to see not only Lemurs but other animals of Madagascar. Getting here required our cab to go over some rough dirt roads, all the while trying to not trash his suspension. We were greeted by a guide that spoke quite good English. He told us that the majority of the tourists they get are from Italy so while he spoke English, he was a bit rusty.

One of the sidelines or maybe the mainline was that the workers collect flowers (ly'ang) from one of the local trees and they are distilled to make an oil for perfume that is exported to France.

Since we were the only people there, we got a nice private tour. All the distilling is done in copper vats.

Once we finished that portion of the tour, we were off to see the animals. By far the highlight was of course the Lemurs. Soft cuddly creatures that come right up to you and want to be fed. Our guide got some small bananas and we were set. They would jump in your arms and try and get any food you had or hang from the tree limbs and put out their hands. It was so cool!!! We saw five different types of them all over the park. If you had nothing in your hand they would try and nibble on your fingers, never biting but just seeing if there was any food there.

There are other animals to see as well--Alligators, birds and ducks as well as chameleon of many different types. A good 90 minute tour that was well worth the trip.

As we continued on, I saw a hardware store and had the driver stop. I've been carrying a broken eye bolt around since we got here. As luck would have it, they had a bolt that will do the job.

We continued around the island stopping at times for pictures. Our driver spoke next to no English but he got his point across stopping when he saw something we might want to see. We stopped along the way for lunch at a restaurant that was near one of the tourist resorts. The food was decent though way over priced.

In the end, we returned to the docks about 1530. All this for a total of \$38.US. A good deal and we got to see the sights of Nosy Be. We were amazed how dry the country side was but it is the dry season. Some areas were quite green but the majority was brown. The rainy season starts in October

### **13.6.1 Restaurants & Bars**

**Alba – Sep 2017 - Hellville:** We went to the Nandipo restaurant, where we found Paul and Monique from “Full Circle”. The meal took at least an hour to arrive and was very average, so we won't be going back there.

**Zephyr – August 2015 - Hellville:** We went to a **restaurant** that Warren on Night Fly had recommended called L'Oasis for lunch. L'Oasis is a nice little restaurant that caters more to foreigners as locals can't afford to eat there. This is a poor country where the people don't make a lot. We'd heard of Zebu steaks and wanted to try them out. Zebu, also known as a humped cattle or Brahman is one of the primary meats available here. We've heard raves about it from other cruisers. Along with our filet came garlic and shallot sautéed potatoes and a salad. OMG!!! What a meal!!! It's the best beef we've had in a long time and the potatoes were great. The filet was huge! Price of the meal? \$17,000A, about \$5.18US!!! In total, we spent \$13.00US for the meal including drinks and a nice apple tart for dessert.

**Alba – Sep 2017 – Russian Bay:** In the evening, we went ashore to a small restaurant run by an Austrian guy called Andreas. We had to give him a few hours' notice and had no idea what we were going to get for dinner - “might be fish or might be chicken”. Andreas serves cold beers, so we went over at 17:00 for pre-dinner sundowners and fed five, wild Black Lemurs that show up in the evenings. These Lemurs are only found in this region of Madagascar - the Males are jet black and the Females are a lovely honey brown colour. Of course, I took far too many photographs.

Dinner was slow coming, but very good with two large grilled fish, a chicken dish, a bowl of beans, rice, and green Papaya salad - it was more than enough for the four of us. As well as a few cold beers, we drank a bottle of red wine (Andreas doesn't mind you taking your own wine) and, at the end of the meal, Andreas brought out some Rhum Arrange, so we had a very tipsy dinghy ride back in the dark.

### **13.6.2 Diving & Snorkeling**

### **13.6.3 Land Touring**

**Alba – August 2017 – Day Trip by Motorbike on Ile St. Marie:** Together with “Red Herring”, we hired motorbikes for the day. They weren't the best vehicles in the world - mine had a flat battery and the back brake was almost non-existent, but they only cost £12 for the day. Our first stop was to the petrol station to fill up with £5 worth of petrol. One of the guys from the rental shop followed us there to make sure that we completely filled up our tanks. Call me cynical, but I'm pretty sure that they syphon the petrol out of the bikes each night to make extra profit.

Just as we headed south out of town, we were stopped by a police checkpoint - I noticed that they were only stopping tourists. They wanted to see our vehicle papers and also our passports. We only had a photocopy of my passport and they wanted to see the original passport, in particular they wanted to see our visas. After a bit of arguing, they let us through, but warned that we should have our passports with us next time.

We drove south along the coastal road, which has a number of small resorts and some villages. After five miles, we came across the small zoo called Endemica, which is on a road junction. The sign is very hard to see and you have to look back to see the zoo gate. After paying the entry fee of 15,000 Ariary (£3.75), a lady guide took us around.

It's a pleasant little place, but very dark and damp being dominated by large trees and vegetation. They have some snakes, one species of chameleon, a terrapin, a baby tortoise and two species of lemurs. Despite the lack of animals, we had an enjoyable trip and the guide showed us other things like a Vanilla plant, a small 10mm long Small Frog and showed us how to eat the fruit of the raffia tree - unpleasantly dry and bitter.

The Lemurs were interesting - some are in cages and there are about six roaming free. We saw a Common Brown Lemur and a Black and White Ruffed Lemur. All of them are very attentive, waiting to be offered bananas and climbing all over you when you reveal one. They are quite gentle and I believe that they don't have claws, but have fingernails like humans.

Sadly, we were told that locals keep coming into the zoo and stealing animals - they've lost all of their 15 adult tortoises and three chameleons, which they believe were sold to foreigners.

Heading back north, we passed through town and were stopped by another police checkpoint. This time they let Graham and Karen through, but the policeman demanded to see our passports. After a little argument, he asked that we pay a fine now. I told him firmly that we wouldn't pay anything and would go back to the boat for our passports. We had a stand-off for a minute and then I snatched the photocopy of my passport out of his hand; we climbed back on our bike and heading back to town.

After collecting our passports and getting the battery fixed on our motorbike, we headed north again. By this time it was after 12:00, so the policemen had gone to lunch. We carried on along

the coast road passing through small villages. Some of the houses are concrete, single-story structures, but the majority are small wooden huts. I've been told that a family would have one or more sleeping huts and a separate cooking hut - they mostly use charcoal or dry wood for cooking. The walls and roofs of the Huts are predominately made from Travellers Palm.

We stopped off at a small hotel for lunch - Zebu and Calamari. The hotel is run by a local lady and is in a small fishing village, right on the beach in a very pretty spot. The owner's daughter was heading up a community association through which the local villagers make crafts and sell to tourists through various shops. Glenys bought some hand woven Raffia table mats.

After lunch, we carried on heading north, looking at the local way of life. We came across a quarry, where guys were smashing big chunks of rock into smaller pieces using a sledge hammer - looked like damn hard work. Later on, we came across some grass roofed shelters, where people were using hammers to break chunks of rock into gravel, which was being graded into piles - I can hardly believe that people are doing this.

By 14:00, we were just past the small village of Lokintsy and we weren't seeing anything new, so we turned back for town to visit the Pirate's Cemetery. Ile St Marie used to be home to 1,000 pirates in the 17th and 18th centuries. Situated close to the trade routes from South Africa to South-east Asia it became a haven for notorious pirates including Captain William Kidd. Many pirates are allegedly buried in a small grave yard situated on a small hill at the edge of town.

Tourists have to pay to gain entrance to the grave yard and for a fee of 12,000 Ariary (£3) each, we had a personal guide, who spoke reasonable English and was very informative. It's a good ten minute walk to the top of the hill and the little tour was interesting.

I chatted to the guide about the Madagascar way of life and he told me that the legal minimum wage in Madagascar is 133,000 Ariary (£33) per month, which is 6,000 Ariary (£1.50) per day. (The minimum wage in the UK is £56 per day - quite a difference.) Our guide said that if he worked for a tourist hotel then they would pay him twice the national minimum wage. Glenys tipped the guy 10,000 Ariary, which probably doubled his pay today.

#### **13.6.4 Hiking**

#### **13.6.5 Other**

### **13.7 West Coast of Madagascar Anchorages**

Be aware that to move around in Madagascar from your port of entry to other ports, you will need a "domestic clearance". [See details here](#).

#### **13.7.1 Mpaninabo Bay (12-01S / 049-13E)**

**Alba – August 2017:** (For passage notes along this coast, [see here](#)). It was only 4 miles to Mpaninabo Bay, where we dropped the sails and motored into the entrance. The Navionics charts show that there is a very narrow channel, but this proved to be wrong and we have 20 metres depth in a channel over 100 metres wide. The wind was still howling and we were motoring straight into it. To add to our woes, the tide was ebbing out of the large harbour and we had current against us, so we were only making 2.5 knots.

It was just over two miles to the place that I'd ear-marked as a reasonable anchorage, so it was going to take us an hour to go to have a look. The area around the bay was very bleak and if the anchorage was no good then the next good anchorage was 20 miles away, so we'd be having another long day. We decided to cut our losses and continue heading south, looking for a sheltered anchorage.

Approx anchorage position: 12°00.84'S 049°13.24'E

### **13.7.2 Nosy Hao (12-07E / 049-02E)**

**Alba – August 2017:** We were on a beam reach, with the wind gusting up to 35 knots, so we only pulled out the staysail, which was enough. On the way, we contacted "Red Herring" on the VHF and found that they'd anchored at a small island called Nosy Hao overnight, but they'd had 30 knots of wind and were bouncing about a little. They'd left for Nosy Hara, which we'd heard was a National Park and the park wardens were charging 55,000 Ariary (£14) per person per night, so we decided to have a look at Nosy Hao.

After negotiating our way through a channel in a reef, we found ourselves faced with a one mile bash directly into the wind. We rolled away the sails and motored directly into the wind, but it was hard work and the island looked very low with little protection from the howling wind.

About that time, "Red Herring" called us to say that the anchorage in Nosy Hara was very calm and well protected, so we turned 90 degrees and sailed 8 miles south.

Approx Anchorage Position: 12°06.83'S 049°02.32'E

### **13.7.3 Nosy Hara (12-15S / 049-00E) (Park Fees)**

**Kim Barton FB – August 2018:** We visited the island for two nights .it was a wonderful destination and very interesting for bush walking, swimming in beautiful clear water and BBQ on the beach. There were 3 on our boat, so if we had to pay the fee it would have been approx \$14 per night per person. A small price to pay for a lovely location.

There was another boat there with us and we had no issues.

There were fishermen on the beach when we arrived, but they left soon after - they were friendly.

**Tereva FB – August 2018:** TEREVA was the other boat. In fact the patrol boat was searching for an illegal fishing boat in the area. It's the reason why there were 2 militaries with guns on the boat.

They came inboard TEREVA and wanted 55000 Aryari per day and per person for the entrance in the national park. It was very expensive, so we asked to see the official papers.

They had to go back to the village to come back with the papers.

During this time they left on our boat the 2 militaries (with their guns ) and the man of APMF. (I think they were afraid we escape.) But these people were very friendly. We had a coffee together and they explain us that usually, the patrol boat come every 3 weeks (without militaries) we were unlucky... The boss of the park came back (very unhappy) with the official papers ... And we had to pay. It was not corruption, but I agree with Sue, it's too expensive. So it's better to stop in another anchorage ... Not in the Nosy Hara park.

**Sue Antifaof FB – August 2018:** We stopped in Nosy Hara. We had strong 20 knot E winds so anchored on the west side was fine. Good holding in sand/mud.

Big downside: apparently this is a national park, or at least the island is, but they come out to you at anchor and want 55,000 Ar per person per day. Wow I call that extortion!

That's \$44 a night to be at anchor here. Not worth the stop. You are not permitted to go ashore without a "guide".

Apparently the world's smallest chameleon resides here hence the "National Park" designation. There are no guides to show you this little creature, and they're pretty hard to find. You don't get anything for your 55,000 Ar. We were leaving and they chased us down ordered us back to the island, with guns! Definitely not a pleasant experience. They wanted to check all our papers, passports, clearance boat document. Satisfied that we had all the right paperwork to be in the country, but they still wouldn't let us leave. Said we had a problem because we were anchored here. We asked what the fee was to be here and they wouldn't give us an answer. So again we said we were leaving. We were then forced to stay until they could go to the Village on the mainland and retrieve the paperwork that stipulates that these fees are legitimate which means we would then have to pay. We assume the village in question is Courier Bay as it lies 5-6nm to the east. It's getting later now as it's about 30 nm to the next anchorage so we need to be going in the next 30 minutes, or risk coming in in the dark, which we don't particularly like.

Not the best welcome to this side of the island. I sure hope this is not becoming the norm for Madagascar!

My advice to cruisers coming in our wake, avoid Nosy Hara and Courier Bay as you will be charged to anchor off that town as well. The Windsor Castle may not be worth the nightly charge. I'm told Nosy Hao is the same, but we didn't stop there.

It appears the village has taken it upon themselves to police the area. I wonder what would have happened had we not already cleared into the country?

They have given us a lengthy document covering their "National Park" and it encompasses the entire top section of the country, from Cap D'Ambre to the north coast of the peninsula west of By Befotaka.

**Alba – August 2017:** (For passage notes along this coast, [see here](#)). As expected, the wind dropped completely as we sailed into the wind shadow on the west side of the high, rocky island. However, as we sailed towards the bay, the wind switched to the south-west at about ten knots making the anchorage a little bouncy. We can't win today...

We dropped our anchor in the bay of Nosy Hara at 12°14.51S 049°00.27E in 8 metres on sand. As soon as we'd settled, a small boat came out from the beach with three guys, who wanted us to pay the National Park fees of 55,000 Ariary (£14) per person per night. They didn't speak any English, so I argued in my very poor French that we'd just sailed from Ile St Marie and were just looking for shelter for the night. I said that we wouldn't be going ashore and would leave first thing in the morning, so I wasn't going to pay. They gave up and went over to see the other boats - "Jackster" bribed them with a case of beer and "Red Herring" were out snorkelling.

The next day, after we had left, "Red Herring" called us on the VHF radio and said they'd gone ashore at Nosy Hara and paid one person's ticket because they weren't carrying enough money. Apparently, the wardens were cross with us for not paying and have reported us to

their headquarters. We may get hassle from the Coastguard further down the coast at Helleville. Goodness knows what we might get fined, but I'll just have to argue that it was a misunderstanding and we thought that we didn't have to pay because we didn't stay long.

Apparently, the National Park stretches all the way from Cap D'Ambre to Cap St Sebastian, which is a 45 mile stretch of coast - a huge area. The Cathedral (our next anchorage) is also part of the National Park.

#### **13.7.4 The Cathedral (12-16S / 048-58E) (Part of Park)**

**Alba – August 2017:** After breakfast, we upped anchor and sailed from Nosy Hara over to The Cathedral, which is a set of small craggy islands only 2.5 miles from Nosy Hara. We anchored off a nice looking beach on a small island at 12°15.63S 048°57.68E in 16m on sand.

After getting the dinghy off the deck and starting the outboard, we headed off to the beach and walked on land for the first time in six days. On the other side of the narrow island, we found eight guys in a fishing camp, some were sleeping under bushes, but a couple were making breakfast cooking small fish in a frying pan over a wood fire. Not many of the locals around here speak French, never mind English, but we managed to find out that they come from Diego Suarez and stay out here fishing.

There wasn't much else to see on the beach and the steep hillside is covered with thorny bushes, so we gave up and went snorkelling. We wore our new 1mm full length wet suits, but we were getting a little chilly after 30 minutes. The Reef was in very good condition, with no sign of bleaching. The fish were mostly very cautious and I saw no sign of grouper, snapper or other "game" fish, so I guess that there's been lot of fishing here. I did see a few Clarke's Anemonefish and there were a lot of Moon Jellyfish around.

Once we found out that The Cathedral is part of the National Park, we decided to leave the area and sail past Cap St Sebastian to Andranoaombi Bay.

#### **13.7.5 Andranoaombi Bay (12-27S / 048-46E)**

**Alba – August 2017:** Our sail from The Cathedral was a pleasant sail, fairly hard on the wind and we arrived at 17:00, anchoring off a small village at 12°26.83S 048°46.25E in 7 metres of thick mud. We passed another three villages on our way in.

While we were anchoring, a guy turned up in his dug-out canoe. Interestingly, here they have a rough, but functional outrigger to give the boat stability. The guy came to trade with a bunch of bananas and some green coconuts. We weren't quite ready for trading, so I was dragging out bags and grabbing stuff. We eventually gave him a t-shirt and some fishing hooks and he promised to bring us some Mud Crabs tomorrow.

Three other boats then followed with bananas, plantains and not much else. Most didn't speak any French apart from one eleven year old girl, who spoke very good French. She was very good at negotiating and extracted a couple of t-shirts, fishing hooks, some fishing line, a pencil and a packet of biscuits for "Les Enfants". She had a beaming smile and is going to be a force to be reckoned with when she grows up.

We had some kind of squall go through in the middle of the night, turning the calm peaceful anchorage into a bouncy one as the wind picked up to 20+ knots from the south - straight up the

long harbour. I had to get up to check the anchor chain, but we had 40 metres out in 8 metres of water, so we had a good 5:1 scope. An hour later the wind suddenly switched off, but we had no rain - weird.

I was up at 07:00 and peeked out of the window to find a local guy hovering about waiting for us to appear. I lurked below for an hour, until Glenys had woken up and we'd had breakfast. The guy turned out to be Chief Jean Pierre from the main village, which is down at the entrance to the bay - a 1.3 mile paddle. We had a chat with him and he invited us to visit his village, to which we said we'd be there a bit later.

We spent the next hour putting together a bag of goodies to trade with them. When I say "Trade", I really mean "give" because these people are so poor that we are really donating much more than we are receiving.

The village is next to a sandy beach at 12°28.01S 048°46.73E. We pulled our dinghy onto the beach and wandered into the village, asking for "Le Chef" or "Jean Pierre", but it took us a couple of minutes to find a young man who spoke some French and finally twigged who we were looking for. (We were later told that the Malagasy word for Chief is "Fokotany"). He led us deep into the village past numerous grass huts, with ladies pounding grain in huge mortars and rice laid out on mats to dry.

We found Jean Pierre digging charcoal from his Charcoal Pits. The villagers create a fire using any type of hard wood and when it's roaring away, they cover it with something like a piece of iron sheeting or leaves and then pile on some earth. The idea is to restrict the amount of oxygen, allowing the embers burn without flames. The carbonisation process continues overnight and the next day the villagers can dig up the resulting charcoal, which they use for cooking. I guess that each family has its own set of charcoal pits.

Jean Pierre led us back to his house, which is rather grand for the village, with corrugated iron walls and roof. We met his wife and some of their seven children, who range from three years old to twenty. They gave us some honey collected from wild bees. It didn't look very appetizing, being in a scruffy, old Coca Cola bottle, but we graciously accepted it. They said that they would get us some duck eggs.

We chatted for a while and they asked if we had various things. The most unexpected item was an SD card for their mobile phone and a spare battery. There is no telephone signal in the village, but they seem to use their phones as a camera and a music player. I don't even have an SD card in my phone, so I couldn't help them.

After a while, we said that we wanted to give them some things, so we were invited into their small home. The whole building is about 5 metres \* 5 metres, split into two rooms by a corrugated iron wall. One room is a bedroom, full of bedding laid out on the floor and the other room is split again into two by a long curtain from ceiling to floor. One half acts as the living area and behind the curtain was a wood-framed double bed and some storage boxes.

The living room was only 2.5 metres by 2.5 metres, but it had a very grand looking sideboard and three arm chairs. I expressed admiration for the side board and Jean Pierre proudly showed us his DVD Player sat on top of the sideboard, insisting on playing a DVD, which attracted a small crowd of kids. The DVD player is powered by a 12V car battery and an inverter. They have a solar panel on the roof which charges the battery. They are obviously relatively wealthy.



It was fun handing out the various gifts - the room was packed with us, mum and dad, six little kids and three teenage lads hovering by the door. Jean Pierre nearly took my hand off when I presented him with a torch. He was delighted that it was a wind-up torch that doesn't need batteries. His wife was pleased with the few cans of food and powdered milk; the teenage sons liked the fish hooks and line that I'd packaged together.

The kids munched on a few biscuits that we brought out, while mum grabbed them to try on some of the kids clothes that we'd brought. Some old webbing, a screwdriver, tooth brushes and tooth paste quickly disappeared into willing hands. The piece de resistance was pair of £2 reading glasses. Jean Pierre tried them on and was delighted when he could read, so was his wife - there'll be some sharing going on.

Jean Pierre owns the village shop, which is a corrugated hut containing one set of shelves and piles of essential stuff like buckets, bowls, cooking oil, a few crates of beer, some tins of food and cigarettes. Occasionally during our visit, a villager or child would turn up and Jean Pierre would walk to the store to sell a few cigarettes or pour some cooking oil into the villager's container.

After a while, I showed Jean Pierre a photograph of a chameleon and told him that I'd like to see one. He then took us for a walk around the village into his large garden to search one out. We walked past Zebu pens, which belonged to Jean Pierre and then entered his fenced-off garden, which contained Banana, Coconut, Lime, Orange, Jack fruit and Mango trees. There were other trees with strange looking fruits - all in all an impressive garden.

We didn't find a Chameleon, but they spotted a small Madagascar Owl, sleeping in a low tree. I sneaked up and trying not to disturb it, took a couple of photos. One of Jean Pierre's older sons, then grabbed hold of the bird to give us a closer look - there's no concept of leaving wildlife untouched here. The poor owl had an abrupt awakening and looked suitably shocked, but we soon released it and it flew away to find a better perch.

On the way back to his house, Jean Pierre showed us one of the village's six Wells. The roughly dug hole was about two metres in diameter and two metres deep. The water level was about one metre below ground level and he told us that in the rainy season the well can overflow. He pulled out a bucket of water and it looked very clean - it's a good job because the wells are the main source of drinking water for the whole village.

Back at Jean Pierre's house, his wife asked Glenys if she had any moisturising cream. Glenys said she had, so after we'd said our goodbyes, Jean Pierre and one of his older sons followed us back to Alba. We invited them on board, gave them a cold drink and showed them down below. They enjoyed their visit, but soon set off to paddle the 1.3 miles into the strong wind.

By this time, it was nearly noon and the anchorage was very bouncy, with a 15 knot wind coming straight down the harbour, so we decided to head off to Nosy Mitsio, some 30 miles away. The wind was unkind to us for the first hour - we were hard on the wind and being forced 30 degrees off course. However, the sea-breeze veered as we left the peninsula and, after a couple of hours, we were able to hold a course directly to our destination.

### **13.7.6 Nosy Mitsio (12-54S / 048-35E)**

**Slip Away – September 2018:** Maribe Bay, Nosy Mitsio (September 12 to 16). "Nosy" is the Malagasy word for "island" so the Mitsio Islands are locally called "Nosy Mitsio," and Maribe Bay

was a lovely spot to spend a few days. There was excellent snorkeling off the small island of Nosy Ankerra with beautiful corals and fish life. Manta rays breed in Maribe Bay, and one of our fellow sailors saw a manta ray swimming around their boat, but we were not lucky enough to see them here. The locals here were friendly and eager to trade with us - fish, lobster, fruits and veggies for clothing and other goods. We had cleaned out our clothing lockers before arriving in Madagascar and were happy to see some of our older t-shirts and shorts go to folks who really needed and appreciated them.

**Tereva – August 2018:** Before arriving at Nosy Be in Madagascar, make a stopover at Mitsio (12 54 s-48 34th)

On the beach, go see Marcellin who is installing a small yacht club (he must open in the next few days)

You can leave your annex to discover the breathtaking view at the top of the hill

The Bay is calm and very well protected

The villagers will come and offer you lobsters for 25000 Aryari the kilo

**Alba – August 2017:** We arrived in Nosy Mitsio just before sunset and anchored at 12°54.48S 048°34.70E in 8 metres on good holding sand. We collapsed and had fried Duck Eggs for dinner, which were fabulous.

We spent a few days at Nosy Mitsio doing boat chores, and spent one day larking about at Nosy Ankerea.

The locals don't seem to be bothered to trade with us. We've had a couple of canoes call by asking for things, but not bringing anything out. We've handed out a few small items like pencils and paper for kids and one guy wanted a dive mask. He showed me a horribly scratched mask, so I gave him a good mask and asked him to bring us some lobster or bananas. He never came back and we found out later that he'd scammed a mask from "Red Herring" as well, so I'm a little cross with him.

After being here for four nights, we finally motivated ourselves enough to go ashore. We were met by a young man, who had been out to the boat and spoke a little English. We told him that we'd like him to show us around the village and then we wanted to go for a walk up the hills.

He didn't quite grasp what we wanted and just walked us through the small village and then started to walk towards the hills. He obviously didn't think that there was anything interesting about his village. We wanted to go walking by ourselves, so we parted company and asked him to get us some duck eggs and bananas. These never appeared. It's like the villagers just can't be bothered - so different to our experience in Andranoaombi Bay.

However, we had a pleasant walk up the small hills behind the village. The hillsides are covered with Satranas Palms (*Bismarckia Nobilis*), which are thriving in these arid conditions. The locals have a small industry of harvesting the leaves and drying them to sell as roofing.

There's a resort called "Tropical Fishing" on the long beach. We had a chat with the French owner, who told us that he caters for fishing trips, but is closed until the season starts in October. He told us that the village has about 80 people and that they don't do anything apart from fishing, selling him goats & Zebu and selling the odd bit of palm leaf roofing. They don't

even grow any vegetables - apparently the goats keep eating their vegetables and they can't be bothered to build a sturdy fence.

### **13.7.7 Nosy Ankerea (12-51S / 048-35E) (Day Anchorage)**

**Alba – August 2017:** We had a bit of a holiday today and sailed three miles to Nosy Ankerea anchoring at 12°50.73S 048°34.95E right next to a white sand beach in 8 metres of water on good holding sand. It was a bit rolly with a swell coming from the south-west and hooking around the island, but it we were only there for the day.

We went for a snorkel on the north side of the island, which was fairly good. The coral was in good condition, but there weren't many fish - obviously a good fishing spot for the locals. After lunch, we went for a short walk on the beach. There's the remains of a resort that closed down, but not much else of note. We then went snorkelling in a slightly different place while was similar to the morning

We sailed back to Nosy Mitsio for the night.

### **13.7.8 Tsara Banjina (13-01S / 048-33E)**

**Alba – August 2017:** The alarm went off at 06:30, so that we could get an early start. Unfortunately, the weather had other ideas and, as we had breakfast, a huge cloud system spread from the east with rain in the direction we wanted to go. It started to clear an hour later, so we headed towards Tsara Banjina, which was only 12 miles away. We anchored at 13°01.47S 048°32.77E in 7 metres on good holding sand - the water is so clear that we can see the bottom, which makes a change.

We're anchored quite close to the island and when the sea-breeze picked up during the day, we swung to face west, finishing up with a lee-shore only 30 metres behind us. Our strategy was to tuck in behind the island, so we would be protected from the strong land-breeze, which usually kicks in from the east at night. Nevertheless, it was very unsettling in the afternoon, when the sea-breeze strengthened to 15 knots, bringing 2 foot waves crashing onto the reef close behind us.

Tsara Banjina is a small private island with very attractive white beaches. We didn't go ashore, but they don't mind yachties going in to have a drink at their beach bar. They have a scuba dive operation, but at \$75US per dive we gave that a miss.

As soon as our anchor had dug in, we went snorkelling, Glenys explored the rocky shore line next to the anchorage, while I had a look at an isolated reef 40 metres to the west of where we anchored (right next to a boat mooring). Both places were very good, but the isolated reef was very good and I spotted three types of Nudibranches.

After lunch, I donned a scuba tank and did a 40 minutes dive on the isolated reef. I had a nice time poking about. It's only 8 metres deep, but there are thousands of fish, a couple of huge Grouper, hard coral, sponges, soft coral and I spotted more Nudibranches - it's a very healthy reef.

Later in the afternoon, we went snorkelling next to the rocky islands to the west of the anchorage. It was pretty good and we found some more Nudibranches; a Tiger Cowrie; and some Clarke's Anemonefish.

It went dark at 18:00, by which time the wind had dropped to 10 knots and backed to south-west, making it a more settled anchorage, but the expected strong land-breeze never materialised, so maybe we should have anchored a bit further away from the shore.

### **13.7.9 Nosy Sakatia (13-18S / 048-11E)**

**Slip Away – September 2018:** After a few days in Hellville, we headed around the corner to Nosy Sakatia (13 miles, 3 hours). There is a good anchorage near the Sakatia Lodge, and there was a lot to see and do on this island.

Just in front of their lodge is the Ambohibe Turtle Reserve, and we saw more and bigger green turtles here than we've seen anywhere. Although we had some whale encounters on our own, we decided to do a whale watching trip with a naturalist, and the experience was awesome! We also spent a day with a local guy named Salaz who took us on a walk all over the island.

**Alba – September 2017:** We upped anchor from Tsara Banjina at 09:00 and set off on the 35 miles trip to Sakatia. There wasn't much wind at first, so while we were motoring, I made a few fishing lures and put out two fishing lines. We caught a nice Bonito.

The afternoon sea-breeze kicked in and we were able to sail for a couple of hours. We looked at the bay where Sakatia Lodge is located, but there was a big swell coming in from the south-west, so we motored a couple of miles further north and anchored at the east side of Sakatia at 13°18.17S 048°10.74E in 8 metres on good holding mud. "Red Herring" and "Full Circle" are hiding here as well.

We had internet on the cell phone, but it was a poor connection.

### **13.7.10 Crater Bay (13-24S / 048-13E)**

**Alba – September 2017:** Crater Bay has a reputation for outboard theft, so before we moved from Sakatia, we swapped our 15hp for our 2.5hp.

We were able to get going by 10:00 and motored around to Crater Bay, with the light wind on our nose all the way. Crater Bay is a mass of yachts at anchor and on moorings, so we anchored to the east of everyone at 13°23.98S 048°13.25E in 12m of water on mud.

After lunch, we went ashore, where there's a small scruffy boat yard and floating dinghy dock owned by the "yacht club". There's also a small restaurant, which is a favourite watering hole for the local yacht residents and transient cruisers.

The bay has long been a port for local boats, so there are dozens of traditional Dhows moored along the shoreline. These wooden boats carry cargos of Satranas Palm leaves, sacks of river sand, wooden poles, gravel, etc., to the island of Nosy Be. The Dhows are predominately sailed and it is a joy to see them weaving their way through the yacht anchorage, using the sea and land breezes to full effect.

There's a dusty road leaving from the yacht club, which goes past a thriving community, handling the building materials off loaded from the Dhows. This isn't a port with warehouses and cranes, the people carry the goods from the Dhows, mostly balanced on their heads and store the materials under wooden shelters, waiting for distribution across the island.

We walked along the dusty road past wooden homes and small shops, until we came to a T-junction in the middle of the small town of Madirokely, which is spread along the main road. The

town is a strip of small shops lining the road, selling the usual range of items. Turning left took us to a tourist beach, which had little of interest.

Walking back past the T-Junction, we found the local vegetable market, which was very poor. The place was swarming with flies, settling on the dried goods and vegetables. One young lady was sitting outside on the floor with a huge bowl of whitebait fish, frantically swatting away the thousands of flies buzzing around her and the fish. The meat was crawling. We bought some tomatoes and ran away.

The small supermarket on the main road was surprisingly good, with a fair selection of items, including a refrigerated meat counter, which was fly-less, so Glenys bought some chicken. They had some nice bread and we stocked up on as much beer and drinks as we could bear to carry down the long dusty road back to the boat.

The next morning, an hour after sunrise, the Dhows started to sail into the bay, taking advantage of the off-shore easterly breeze. Alba was directly in the path of several of the large cargo boats and we had the pleasure of watching these skilled sailors heading directly at us, then veering off downwind to glide past our stern. The wooden boats are old and battered and the sails are full of holes - I wish that we'd kept our old mainsail and given it to someone here.

Watching the Dhows sail past, spurred me into going ashore for an hour to take some pictures of the activities. The cargo seems to be mostly building materials and is all offloaded by hand and head. I watched two young men carrying Sacks of Sand ashore. They were balancing FOUR, 20Kg sacks on their heads, and they just kept going and going. The sacks of sand were emptied onto the ground, where other guys shovelled it into a flat-bed truck. The sacks were returned to the cargo Dhow.

A few weeks later, we were back in Crater Bay for a Cruiser's Lunch. We used the excuse of the Cruiser's Lunch to buy a few more provisions that we couldn't find in Helleville. The little supermarket in Madirokely is surprisingly good and we were able to buy some cornflakes and a nice loaf of bread.

On the way back, we came across a large group of men stood in a circle shouting. It looked like a man-only thing, so Glenys walked a little way along the road, while I went to investigate - it was a cockfight. Two cocks were locked in combat, pecking each other's heads and occasionally leaping up, lashing at each other with their feet. Their handlers were coaxing them to fight by (bizarrely) splashing water on their feet.

The pig roast at the restaurant next to the yacht club started at midday and was well attended by a gaggle of cruisers. Much beer was consumed and we caught up with a few boats that we haven't seen since Chagos. Obviously, the afternoon was spent sleeping off the large lunch and alcohol, followed by Baguette Pizza and a movie.

**Anthony Daniels (FB) – Haulout:** Some time ago I asked if anyone could suggest a good place to haul out and antifoul. For anyone else in a similar position. ... Crater Bay in Madagascar has a flat area by a wall and it is only 30,000 AR per day to lie against it and a couple of guys made short work of cleaning and antifouling. There is not much choice of antifouling, but at least you can buy it.

To buy the paint, there is a small chandlery in Da Es Salam which is at Crater Bay. You could probably get it in Helleville as well.

**Facebook Group () - July 2016:** As a general "FYI" Some friends of ours who reached Nosy Be about a week ago had their boat broken into and robbed today. The boat was robbed in Crater Bay (after spending a few days in Helleville), while they went out for dinner. They were only away from the boat for about two hours. They lost two kindles, a laptop, mounted speakers, a camera and a few other things. The boat was locked, but the thieves found a way to open a forward hatch. This information is not meant to scare you away. Just to inform you so you are careful. We, and many others who were there last year, had a fantastic time in the area, and would not want to scare you away. And, we would gladly spend further time in Crater Bay as well as Nosy Be and the rest of the places we visited in Madagascar generally. Last year saw a bit of trouble as well, but not much -- we are aware of a few dinghy/outboard thefts. We know of one in Crater Bay, one in Honey River, and one off Sakatia. We would recommend carefully locking up, hoisting dinghies, and availing yourself of local guards.

Jimmy and Cool were helpful in Helleville last year, and they are still operating this year. They will guide you to all of the clearance offices, mind your dinghy when you go ashore (which is necessary since it is a working wharf and not a good place to keep your dinghy), and generally keep an eye on the harbour. More than one boat also had them sleep on board and keep an eye on their boats while they traveled inland or even to South Africa. Rates are very very reasonable. If you talk to Rudy, the owner of the "marina" in Crater Bay, he can guide you to what may or may not be necessary there. As you are probably aware, Madagascar is among the poorest countries in the world with a per capita GDP of only about \$470 per year.... Keep all this in mind, but don't give it a miss, it is fantastic -- enjoy!

### **13.7.11      *Nosy Komba (13-27S / 048-21E)***

**Slip Away – Sep 2018:** Nosy Komba (September 16 to 18). From Nosy Mitsio, we moved on to Nosy Komba (41 miles, 9½ hours). Although we weren't breaking any speed records, we were enjoying the sailing in the flat seas. We had a fun day on Nosy Komba visiting a lemur park with a local guide named Julian. The lemurs came running to us when Julian called them ("maki, maki, maki") because they knew we had bananas for them. We spent another day visiting the village of Antintorona, which has been transformed "from a state of survival to one of stability and growth" (quote taken from the blog of our friend Lisa Dorenfest) through the dedication of Stefano Palazzi and the We Work It Works project. It's been a long process - 26 years - but the progress made in this village is amazing!

**Leslie Day – August 2018:** If you come to Madagascar, a visit to the village of **Antintorona** on Nosy Komba will be one of the most inspiring experiences here. An Italian man, Stefano, has been working with this community since 1992 and their achievements have been extraordinary.

Not only has Stefano helped the villagers to build some critical infrastructure, he has given them a sense of hope and the children have self-esteem -both these things have been noticeably absent from other communities that we have seen here.

We **anchored** at 13 26.68S and 48 21.42E (note that this can be a very rolly anchorage). The entry to the village is just south of here at about 13 26.95E and 48 21.58S. Go up the stairs and turn right to follow the path a short way around the beach to Stefano's house.

If you have old sails, rope, extra tools then these would be gratefully received. Exercise books, pens, sewing material, medication and bandages would also be useful although Stefano does not expect visitors to necessarily make a donation. Everybody is welcome and Stefano will give you a tour. We bought bread and chocolate there. <http://www.weworkitworks.org/>

**Alba – Sep 2017:** We decided that we'd had enough of Russian Bay and headed for Nosy Komba. Once again, we were too impatient to go and instead of waiting for the afternoon sea-breeze, we left at 09:00 - we had very little wind, so we motored most of the 23 miles. If we'd have waited until midday, we would have had a cracking sail.

The anchorage at Nosy Komba is on the north-east corner at 13°26.54S 048°21.16E - we anchored in 10 metres of water. The village that we're anchored off is a bustling place with tourist boats, restaurants and at least one dive operation. We'll investigate tomorrow.

We had a quiet time for the remainder of the afternoon doing research into anchorages further south and downloading aerial photos into SAS Planet.

After beaching our dinghy at the Chez Yolande restaurant (13°26.60S 48°20.96E), we walked through the narrow sandy streets of the village. No cars, motorbikes or even Zebu carts are to be seen in the island, so everything is moved by hand.

Tourists come over to Nosy Komba for day trips and the village has scores of small souvenir shops selling wood carvings, Pandanus weaving, t-shirts etc. The villagers also specialise in making embroidered "Cutwork" table cloths that are hand stitched with parts of the material removed to give a lace effect. The streets and beaches are lined with a colourful display of the tablecloths rippling in the breeze.

Another item on sale in many Madagascan streets is the Cola Nut. This can be bought as a 1" diameter nut for about 500 Ariary (£0.15) and slivers are chewed as a natural stimulant - as one guy told me, "It helps If you need to do a lot of work".

Kola nuts comprise about 2% caffeine, as well as containing kolanin and theobromine. All three chemicals function as stimulants. The first taste is bitter, but it sweetens upon chewing. The nut can be boiled to extract the cola. The trees have yellow flowers with purple spots, and star-shaped fruit. Inside the fruit, about a dozen round or square seeds develop in a white seed-shell. The nut's aroma is sweet and rose-like.

Kola nuts were used as a form of currency in some West African people groups. They are still used as such today in certain situations such as in negotiation over bride prices or as a form of a respect or host gift to the elders of a village should one move to a village or enter a business arrangement with the village.

Kola nuts are perhaps best known to Western culture as a flavouring ingredient and one of the sources of caffeine in cola and other similarly flavoured beverages.

In the 1800s, a pharmacist in Georgia, John Pemberton, took extracts of Kola and Coca Leaves and mixed them with sugar, other ingredients, and carbonated water to invent the first cola soft drink. His accountant tasted it and called it "Coca-Cola". Cocaine (but not the other extracts from the Peruvian Coca Leaf) was prohibited from soft drinks in the U.S. after 1904, and Coca-Cola no longer uses either Kola or Coca in its secret recipe.

The next day we went ashore at 08:00 and strolled to the Lemur Park - we were advised to go early because the Lemurs don't bother to show up later when they've been fed by groups of tourists. There's a small park office tucked down a narrow side street next to a bigish souvenir shop. It's not very well signposted, so we just asked around. We had to pay 4,000 Ariary each (£1), which included a guide and his bananas.

Most of the walk is along a dirt track, which is lined with dozens of stalls selling the inevitable carvings, basket work and cut-work table cloths. There are only Black Lemurs on the island and they are wild animals, attracted by the bananas handed out. We've already seen this species of Lemur, but our attention was grabbed by a female with a one-week old Baby clinging to the mother's chest - very cute.

The guide spoke good English and was very knowledgeable, so it was an interesting little tour. He found us a Chameleon and showed us a couple of species of Tortoise that they are breeding. Along the way we bumped into Karen and Graham from "Red Herring", so we went for a walk together up to the top of the island.

The guides try to charge you 20,000 Ariary to show you the way, but there's no need - just get your guide to point you in the right direction at the end of the tour. We followed a well-used path which climbs steeply up to a few villages. There are a series of yellow and red paint marks on the rocks, which I believe are used for an annual mountain trial run - we followed the red marks.

The trail passes a few small farms and settlements and eventually comes to a Christian Shrine complete with a large white cross and a crucifixion - it was a surprise to see it as we rounded a corner. A little further on, there was a school off to the right and then, at a three way branch in the trail, we took the right hand path and walked into a very tidy looking village. The path started downwards at the village, so we retraced our steps and walked back down to our dinghy.

We didn't walk down through the Lemur Park, but followed the main path down to the village, which came out next to Chez Yolande. So, if you want to walk up by yourself, turn left outside main entrance to Chez Yolande and head roughly south until you come to a set of concrete steps leading up past street vendors. At the top of these steps, bear right and you will come across the main path up the mountain, turn left and keep heading up, following the red paint marks on the rocks.

Foolishly, we'd only taken 500ml of water and no food, so we were feeling dehydrated and tired in the afternoon, so we had a long siesta.

**FB Group (Thomas Partridge) – August 2016:** For those visiting Nosy Komba we recommend leaving your dinghy at Chez Yolande (beach at 13°26.5923'S 48°20.9577'E). Yolande is a colourful Malagasy lady married to a French man with whom she used to cruise so she loves cruisers! Yolande supplies free water, a free shower and will exchange Euro or USD for Ariary at good rates, do your laundry (she charged us 20,000Ar for a huge bag), have her boys look after your dinghy and get her grandson, Lancelot, to guide you to the Lemur Park. Also recommended are Yvonne's walks into the mountain, ask Yolande for details. Reciprocate and enjoy one of Yolande's great Zebu with green pepper sauce steaks and homemade pommes frites! Komba is touristy but fun with it! Good selection of handicrafts to browse around the village.



### **13.7.12 Tani Kelli (Day Stop, Marine Park, Diving)**

**Alba – Sep 2017:** It was another early start and we were on our way by 07:00 from Crater Bay, on our Way to Russian Bay. First we motored six miles to Tani Keli, a small island which is a Marine Park. We anchored at 13°29.24S 048°14.25E in about 12m on sloping sand, next to three small black moorings. The moorings might be strong enough for a yacht, but they were in 4.5 metres of water and possibly shallower, so we anchored. A Park Ranger boat arrived as soon as we dropped the anchor and we paid 20,000 Ariary each (£5).

We did a scuba dive on the east side of the island, tying our dinghy onto one of two black moorings off the main beach at 13°29.01S 048°14.35E. We dropped into the water and headed south-east down the sand to 20 metres, following the bottom edge of the reef heading south. When we had used half our air, we came up to 12 metres and returned back along the reef until we hit the sand, then back to the dinghy. We started our dive at 10:00 with light winds, calm seas and encountered no current.

It was a great dive despite the visibility being only 10 metres. There were lots of big snapper, groupers and blue-spotted sting rays who were very unafraid (until I stuck my camera in their face). We saw six nudibranchs (2 species) and a similar number of big tiger cowries. A Hawksbill turtle popped over to say hello and we spent five minutes with it – it was very unconcerned. The hard and soft coral was in good condition and sponges were dotted around the reef - shows the value of a Marine Park.

We were told that there's another dive on the west side at about 13°29.08S 048°14.00E, just off a small beach. A bit shallower, but we believe that this is the best place to see reef sharks.

When we arrived at 08:30, there was no wind and the anchorage was calm. By 13:00, we had 15 knots and 2 foot waves from the north, so we didn't bother to do another dive or snorkel and headed off to Russian Bay. We had a great sail, with 15-20 knots. The wind was hard on our starboard bow, but in the flat seas it was a joy. A Dhow that was sailing across our bow, changed direction and came straight at us, passing a few feet away from our starboard side. They'd just come over to have a look at us.

### **13.7.13 Russian Bay (13-32S / 048-00E) (Baie D'Ambavatobi)**

**Alba – Sep 2017:** We left Hellville at 09:00, but had no wind until 11:00, when the sea-breeze kicked in - I think that we should have waited until noon to leave. However, it was only 20 miles across to Russian Bay, and at least we were able to sail for a couple of hours.

When we were half way across, a pod of three Humpback Whales crossed in front of us - they were so close that we heard them blowing before we saw them.

After negotiating the narrow entrance into the huge bay, we anchored at 13°32.14S 047°59.90E in 10 metres on soft sand/mud. Russian Bay is a beautiful natural harbour and the first time that we've been ashore on mainland Madagascar.

We enjoyed cold beers and ate several times at Andreas' bar here.

On our return a couple of weeks later, we anchored in the same spot.

We spent the rest of the next day reading up on the anchorages south of here. It's time to move on now because we want to be in Majunga in the first week of October, so that we can prepare

ourselves for the 1,200 mile passage down to Richard's Bay in South Africa. It's about 150 miles down to Majunga and there are a lot of places to see, so with only two weeks left in September, we need to get a move on.

In the evening, we went ashore to Andreas' Bar and had a few beers with "Red Herring". The Black Lemurs showed up, but they're becoming common place now.

**Zephyr – August 2015:** It was time to see more of the area and we had heard about how quiet it is at Russian Bay so we pulled up our anchor and set off early this morning before the afternoon winds kick in.

Morning winds blow from the east and afternoon wind comes in from the sea (southwest). With these winds, the fishermen can sail out in the morning and back to shore in the afternoons. We wanted to morning winds to help get us there.

In the end, they were just about no winds and we had to motor the 20 miles to get here. It's quiet and peaceful with about 6 boats anchored near the entrance to the bay. We chose to go much further into the bay and have a nice cove all to ourselves. We have a nice ten knot breeze coming through but the water is perfectly calm, a nice improvement from being anchored off Hellville.

It was so quiet last night that I woke up. There was no breeze nor a ripple on the water. A vast difference from our time on anchor at Hellville.

We are about a mile up in Russian Bay and having a nice peaceful time getting a few more projects done.

Morning temp can be down in the mid to high 60s with afternoon temp in the low to mid 80s. Morning is the best time to work outside while nice breezes come along in the afternoon to keep it comfortable. By early evening, it dies off and everything goes calm. Night comes along and there isn't even any animal sounds or birds chirping. Certainly not the norm we have been used to.

We've only been approached by one fisherman and he wanted to trade for a nice papaya. We gave him some rice, a nylon strap as well as a set of flip flops. I think he got the better deal. We will see if more come now that word is out that we are here and will trade. Maybe a nice fish?

We've not seen another sailboat since we got in yesterday morning and doubt we will. We didn't stay near the opening to the bay as we wanted to be away from the crowd of half a dozen boats that are there as well as the fishing village that is there also.

There doesn't appear to be any roads near here so the only way around is by boat and we have seen several of them slowly gliding past us with either a small set of sails up or the fisherman rowing. We are enjoying the stillness of this Bay since there really is no swell to speak of.

As to what Russian Bay looks like, well it's almost like being back in New Mexico. Lots of low scrub trees since the big trees were clear-cut many years ago and never grew back. It's semi arid so there is a definite grey to brown tint where ever you look. The hills are low so the ocean as well as the land breezes come over them and sweep across the bay. By far, the most breezes come in the afternoon as the sea breezes start up helping the local fishermen come home after a day of sailing and fishing off shore. Most are in home made dug outs with many

using old plastic shopping bags sewn together to make sails. An amazing sight as they glide over the water with sometimes dozen crossing.

We pulled up the anchor this morning looking for another anchorage here in Russian Bay. Nothing wrong with the last one but we wanted to see more of this tranquil bay. We slowly motored around looking for a somewhat protected place to drop the hook that might have Internet as well a decent protection when the afternoon breeze shows up.

We dropped anchor in about 45 feet and dropped back to set the hook. With the snubbed lines attached we are all set for another day or so. Four boats are anchored about a quarter mile from us and that is close enough.

At this anchorage, we have intermittent Internet. Sometimes yes and sometimes it's off line so

We had another fisherman come by. He left with a pair of flip flops, a liter of cooking oil and a fishing lure. We got five limes and two papaya.

#### **13.7.14        *Nosy Antsoha (13-31S / 047-58E) (Day Stop)***

**Alba – Sep 2017:** The alarm went off at 06:30 and half an hour later, we were sailing around the corner to Nosy Antsoha (also known as Lemur Island). It was only six miles, so just after eight o'clock, we were anchored at 13°30.90S 047°57.72E in 9 metres depth. The anchorage was very bouncy with 2 foot waves rolling in from the open sea, but the holding was good and we were only planning to stay for an hour or so.

We dinghied ashore and landed on the small beach, where we were met by a guide, who charged us 10,000 Ariary (£2.50) each for a tour. The guide led us off up a steep rocky path calling "Maki, Maki" and within a few minutes, we had several Lemurs jumping around and onto us. After feeding bananas to some Common Brown Lemurs and a couple of Black & White Ruffed Lemurs, we headed up the path.

The guide changed his call to "Sifa Sifa" and after a while some Sifaka Lemurs appeared. These are smaller than the other lemurs that we've seen and look very cute. They leap incredible distances between branches and, when moving along the ground, they jump sideways, which is amusing. One of the Black & White Ruffed Lemurs had followed us up the path and several times bullied the smaller Sifaka Lemurs, trying to grab the pieces of banana that we gave them.

At the top of the small but steep island, there's a thatched shelter with a double bed. We were told that you can stay here for €120 per night. It would be an interesting place to stay, if you were here on holiday. The 30 minute tour ended next to a dozen plastic bowls containing baby Green Turtles, which they release when an appropriate size. It was a nice little tour.

#### **13.7.15        *Ankazoberavina (13-29S / 047-59E)***

**Alba – Sep 2017:** Back at the boat, the bouncy conditions at Antsoha hadn't improved, so we upped anchor and sailed a few miles to the small island of Ankazoberavina, where we picked up a mooring at 13°29.31S 047°58.70E in 8 metres of water. There are two white mooring balls to the north of a large steel buoy marking the edge of a Marine conservation area - it's not a National Park, so there's nothing to pay.

The moorings are chained to large bommies and the one that we picked up, close to the steel buoy had wrapped itself around part of the bommie, so I couldn't lift it out of the water with our boat hook. There was nothing else for it, I put on some swimming shorts and as Glenys manoeuvred us up to the buoy, I jumped in with the rope, passing the end through the mooring and back up to Glenys. I then snorkelled down to untangle and inspect the mooring rope - it looked very strong.

We'd been told that it was good diving here, but it didn't look that good to me, so we just snorkelled on the many coral patches. The visibility was about ten metres; the coral was in fairly good condition and being a "no fishing" area there were plenty of fish. This included a number of large Circular Spadefish that were hovering around the cleaning stations, with Cleaner Wrasses darting in and out of their gills.

We stayed for a few hours and after lunch, sailed back to Russian Bay where we chilled out for the rest of the day.

### **13.7.16        *Nosy Iranja (13-36S / 047-50E) (Rolly Day Stop)***

**Alba – Sep 2017:** We left Russian Bay at 09:00 despite the lack of wind because we wanted to visit Nosy Iranja on our way to Honey River. The wind picked up by 11:00 and we had a nice sail, even throwing in a tack as we approached the island.

We anchored at 13°36.13S 047°49.60E in 8 metres over great holding sand. It was horribly roly, with a swell coming in from the North, but we were only staying for a couple of hours. The water was nice and clear. The island is a major destination for tourists, so the beach and the village were lined with souvenir stalls.

We walked up to a small lighthouse on the top of the small hill, which was designed by Eiffel - it's made of steel and covered with rivets, so it looks vaguely like the Eiffel Tower. It only took us 10 minutes to walk up to the lighthouse and there wasn't much else to do on the island, so we were back on the boat within an hour and, in company with a couple of other boats, set sail for Honey River.

### **13.7.17        *Honey River (13-48S / 047-54E)***

**Alba – Sep 2017:** The on-shore wind gradually dropped off during the afternoon, so we didn't arrive in the anchorage at Honey River until 16:30. We anchored at 13°42.74S 047°54.10E in 10 metres over mud. There are a couple of villages nearby and a small fleet of dugout canoes came out to meet us, annoyingly hanging about close to us while we anchored.

One by one the canoes approached us offering the same things - Honey and Mud Crabs. We didn't want either and requests for Bananas and Shrimp were met with a shake of the head. They then asked for things - mostly fishing hooks, so we handed out a few sets, but we're rapidly running out of them one guy asked for soap, which we handed over. I know that the people have very little, but I wish that they'd turn up with something different to trade. It's difficult to know what to hand out when they are just begging.

It was a lovely peaceful night with no wind and flat calm water. In the morning, we pottered about enjoying the quiet place. In the afternoon, we put our 15hp outboard onto the dinghy and went exploring the huge river. High tide was at 16:00, so we had the current with us as we slowly pottered up the river.

The locals tell us that there are crocodiles in the Mangroves, so we kept close to the mangroves for a while, but didn't see one. In fact, there isn't much happening in the Mangroves - I expected to see lots of birds, but we only saw a few herons. We were soon bored of staring at Mangroves, so we roared up the river, passing a few small settlements.

Approximately four miles up the river, we came across a small village, where some guys were rebuilding a 10 metre long wooden boat, so we went ashore to have a look. They had removed a lot of old timbers, replacing them one-at-a-time to retain the original hull shape. One guy was chopping away at a log with an Adze, slowly shaping 25mm thick planks. The planks were fixed to the main timbers with Iron Nails, leaving 1 to 4 mm gaps that will be filled with caulking - they showed me that they use fibres from old sacks, so I guess it's hemp.

We spent a fun half an hour chatting to them and gave them some things that we'd brought along with us - the rechargeable torch, was a winner again and they were happy with some clothes and fishing gear. Waving goodbye, we zipped back to the boat to relax for the rest of the afternoon.

### **13.7.18      *Nosy Antanimora (14-07S / 047-46E)***

**Alba – Sep 2017:** A light sea breeze started at 08:30, so we pulled up our anchor and motored out to sea. Unfortunately the wind was very fickle and kept dying out. We're not very patient and I hate the sails bashing about, so we motored for an hour until the wind picked up properly at 11:00. The wind was coming from the west at 15 knots and with the flat seas, it was a joy to beat to windward.

We passed by Nosy Kalakajoro and carried onto Nosy Antanimora. We'd chosen an anchorage on the south side of a long sand spit, which looked very good from my satellite images and I thought that we'd have clear water and sand to anchor on. Unfortunately, the water was very murky and there are quite a few coral patches about.

We tried to go close to the shore, but retreated when the depth came up rapidly to 3.5 metres. We finally anchored at 14°07.04S 047°45.74E in 8 metres. I dived down to have a look and our anchor is buried in a nice, big sandy patch, but the boat is over a coral patch. With 40 metres of chain out, there's a chance of the anchor chain snagging, so I clipped a fender onto the chain at 25 metres to lift it off the seabed.

It was a bit bouncy in the anchorage because it is exposed to the west wind and waves, but that died down gradually as it went dark.

This stretch of coast is notorious for strong land breezes at night, which come from the south-east, so I had a restless night waiting for the wind to pick up and start bouncing us about. Fortunately, the wind was very light and we just had some choppy waves slapping on the side of the hull.

In the morning, there was a 5-8 knot land-breeze from the south-east, so knowing that the stronger sea-breeze wouldn't kick in until midday, we went for a walk on the island, with the aim of climbing the 150 metre high hill. We walked through the village on the north-east side of the island, which is very tidy, but no one seemed to be interested in talking to us or pointing us to a path up the hill.

We found a path that led us past a well and towards the south-east beach where we'd landed the dinghy where we came across a group of buildings that turned out to be very low-key (empty) tourist accommodation. The guys here were a little more switched on and one walked with us for a few hundred metres to show us a path that ran south-west parallel to the beach. The path eventually climbed out of the bush and onto more open land, where we could see the hill, but within a few hundred metres we were back into dense bush.

Unfortunately, the indistinct paths seemed to be circumnavigating the hill, with no path leading up the hill (why would the locals want to go up there?). We dived into the bush and weaved our way steadily upwards. Eventually, we came out of the trees onto a 40-degree slope heading up the hill. It was covered with long grasses and ferns, with no sign of a trail, so I just headed up scrambling through the waist high vegetation, wondering if there were snakes on this island.

After a long and sweaty climb, we arrived at the top of the hill, which gave us a good view down to the anchorage. The hilltop was covered in long grass and no paths, so we headed down a ridge on the north side of the hill, through some more bush and found a path leading to the village. From there it was a quick walk around the beach back to the dinghy.

Back at the boat, we went for a swim and I snorkelled on the reef that was just under Alba. The water was murky, but the reef was in excellent condition with lots of sea life - I spotted a couple of Lionfish and a Swollen Phylidia. The fender on the chain was doing a fine job of keeping the chain clear of the reef.

By midday, the sea-breeze had started, so we upped anchor and had a pleasant three hour sail to Nosy Saba

### **13.7.19      *Nosy Saba (14-22S / 047-39E)***

**Alba – Sep 2017:** We had a pleasant three hour sail to Nosy Saba, where we anchored in 20 metres of water at 14°21.86S 047°38.75E. It's an awkward place to anchor because the sea bed comes up steeply from 25 metres and there's a fringing reef around the island that is very shallow.

We motored close into the reef and went along at 6 metres, which gave us a track on our chart plotter showing the reef edge. This lets us work out how close we can anchor without the risk of swinging into the reef overnight, when the wind is likely to switch and put us on a lee-shore. We had a quiet night.

It was another calm night with no off-shore breeze. Past cruisers have reported strong south-east winds in this area at night, so we must be in an unusual weather pattern. There was no wind in the morning, so we went for a walk around the island, following a dirt track that circumnavigates and leads to the resort on the north-west corner.

The island is about a mile in diameter and mostly arid apart from a small forest on the west side. We strolled through the resort and chatted to the manager, who told us that they have 26 bungalows, but had nobody staying at the moment - it seems that it's a very quiet season. There was some interesting birds around including some very nervous guinea fowl, small green parrots and a few hawks. We also saw a large colony of Fruit Bats hanging in a tree.

Back at the boat, we donned our wetsuits and went snorkelling on the reef by the anchorage, which was very good. The visibility was over 15 metres and the coral was very healthy. This would be the last snorkelling for a while, so we spent an hour there spotting lots of Skunk Anemonefish and a large Porcupinefish. When we returned to Alba, I spent fifteen minutes trying to photograph the five Remora who are living under our boat, but they are quick little devils.

### **13.7.20      *Nosy Lava (04-35S / 047-37E)***

Again, we left our anchorage at Nosy Saba at midday and had a nice sail down to Nosy Lava. We initially anchored at 14°31.59S 047°36.48E in 6 metres in great holding sand, but the wind and persistent 1½ foot choppy waves were coming from the north, bouncing us about. “Red Herring” anchored further down the coast at 14°33.41S 047°37.81E, but they were still getting the chop. “Fortuna” and “Luna Blu” continued down to the south-east corner and found a place out of the wind waves, so we all herded down there.

Our final resting place was at 14°34.57S 047°37.39E in 12-14 metres of water. As usual, the reef came up sharply, but we appeared to be in good holding sand.

### **13.7.21      *Moramba Bay (14-53S / 047-21E)***

**Slip Away – Sep 2018:** Moramba Bay was a very nice anchorage - calm for the most part and very picturesque with a number of magnificent Baobab trees. We stayed a few days since the weather window to South Africa was not on the horizon, and the next stop (Baly Bay) was reportedly not as nice. There were several other boats anchored in Moramba Bay also watching for the elusive weather window to South Africa, and we enjoyed a couple of happy hour gatherings and walks ashore.

From Moramba Bay, there was an option to stop at the port city of Mahajanga for fuel and provisions, but since we had topped up and checked out in Hell-Ville, we bypassed Mahajanga.

**Alba – Sep 2017:** With 35 miles to go to Moramba Bay, we left Nosy Lava at 06:15, but there was very little wind. We motored for 30 minutes and then bobbed along in a light 5 knot wind while we ran the water-maker to top up our tanks. The wind then died completely, so we drifted around for a few hours waiting for the sea-breeze to arrive.

The wind finally picked up at 10:45 and we had a lovely sail as the wind freshened to 15 knots - it's amazing how you can rely on the wind in this area. Glenys put out a fishing line and caught a nice Spanish Mackerel - fish for dinner!

We sailed into Moramba Bay and anchored at 14°53.23S 047°20.50E in 8 metres of water. There were already three boats in the anchorage, so we swelled the number to seven. It's a lovely spot, so we'll be staying for a few days.

After all of our travelling for the last week, we had a quiet day on board pottering about. I spent most of the day doing research on the crossing to South Africa. [See passage planning and reports here.](#)

In the morning, we went ashore for a walk. We landed the dinghy on a deserted beach at the tip of the small peninsula, where there are some impressive Baobab trees. These trees have

massive cylindrical trunks which can be up to 3 metres in diameter and the branches stick out at the top looking like roots, giving the tree the appearance of being upside down.

The trunk consists of a fibrous wood, which is used to store water and actually swells up in the rainy season. The Baobab tree is slow to grow and will live for several hundred years.

Unfortunately, the Baobab tree is a critically threatened species in Madagascar, mostly due to the clearance of land.

We walked to a beach on the west side of the peninsula, where there is a very photogenic set of rocky islands made from (karst?) limestone and radically undercut by wave action. There's an anchorage here, but it is exposed to the open sea and can be bouncy during the day and early evening, so we didn't anchor there.

A lady called Bridget has a home on the beach and is planning to open a small restaurant and guest house there. While we chatted to her, we spotted a Coquerel Sifaka Lemur lurking up one of her trees. Bridget pointed us to a path that climbs up to the top of the little peninsula, which was a nice walk back to the dinghy.

### **13.7.22      *Mahajamba Bay (15-14S / 046-58E)***

**Alba – Sep 2017:** High tide was at 08:30, so we waited until 09:00 before we upped anchor from Moramba Bay, so that we could ride the out-going tidal current. Unfortunately, the off-shore land breeze wasn't very strong today and we had to motor most of the way out of the estuary. By 09:30, we were in clear water, so we ran the water maker for an hour to make sure that our water tanks were full.

The sea-breeze picked up just before midday and we slowly sailed along with just our mainsail up. We only had 20 miles to go and the anchorages in Mahajamba Bay are renowned for being rolly, so there was no point in getting there too early.

"Luna Blu" and "Fortuna" were also moving south today and there was much discussion on the VHF radio about continuing on past Mahajamba Bay and anchoring on the coast further towards Majunga. We prevaricated - anchoring on the coast would be an open roadstead, with the on-shore sea-breeze making it an unpleasant place until late in the evening. We eventually decided to go into Mahajamba Bay and make an early start for the 65 mile passage to Majunga tomorrow.

At about 16:00, we anchored in Mahajamba Bay at 15°14.16S 046°57.84E in 8 metres of water. The wind and swell were coming from the north-west and we tucked in behind a bit of a sandy headland, which made it a fairly calm anchorage. We had 3 foot wind waves as we crossed the mouth of the estuary, so I wouldn't have wanted to be on the east side of the bay. There's large fishing camp ashore, which tells me that this is a good place to be.

We had a very peaceful night until 03:00, when the wind picked up from the south-east causing some chop. We were planning to leave at 04:00, but both of us were awake at 03:00, so we dragged ourselves out of bed and left. We had a great sail along the coast in steady south-east winds allowing us to make 6-7 knots.



### **13.7.23      *Majunga / Mahajunga (15-44S / 046-18E)***

**Alba – Sep 2017:** After a quick breakfast, we pulled up the anchor and sailed the six miles across to Majunga city. We initially tried to anchor at 15 43.80S 046 18.44E in 8 metres, which is next to the main port. The plan was to leave our dinghy on a concrete ramp at 15 43.56S 046 18.38E, which is near the main port. Unfortunately, there was a 20 knot wind howling from the east, causing 3 foot waves and after dragging once in the soft mud, we decided not to leave our home there.

Instead we motored around to a breakwater where we anchored in 7 metres at 15°42.90S 046°17.80E. The holding appeared to be soft mud - we were slowly ploughing backwards with our engine at a stump-pulling 2000 revs. However, it was a very sheltered anchorage, so we risked it. The other four boats arrived shortly after us.

We pulled our dinghy up onto a small beach at 15 42.69S 046 18.10E, where there are a number of local wooden boats pulled up on the beach. A couple of people helped us trundle our dinghy up to a palm tree around which we wrapped chain. Our helpers wanted to guard our dinghy, so we chose a middle aged lady who appears to live in a shack on the beach. Everyone was very helpful and helped carry our three jerry cans up to the main road, where we caught a tuk-tuk.

Details of clearing out [in the Clearing Out section](#).

Flushed with success, we hailed another tuk-tuk to take us to the Leader Price supermarket. After leaving our empty jerry cans with the bag security guy, I left Glenys in the air-conditioned store and went out looking for an ATM. Majunga town is a scruffy, dusty place with a few nice colonial buildings, but it's mostly rundown, concrete buildings. The preferred mode of travel appears to be tuk-tuks, but there are also many two person rickshaws around, being pulled by fit young men running along the road, often in bare feet.

I withdrew enough cash to allow us to buy 60 litres of diesel and returned to the supermarket. Glenys only needed to buy enough food to last for a couple of weeks, so we were soon climbing into another tuk-tuk, who took us to a petrol station, waited for us and then dropped us back at the beach with our dinghy. The going price for a tuk-tuk ride seems to be 1,500 Ariary (£0.37) per person per trip, but we still had some Ariary notes left, so I gave the guy 10,000 Ariary (£2.50), so he was well chuffed.

Our lady guard helped us launch the dinghy and I gave her 5,000 Ariary (£1.25), so she was really happy. We were back on the boat by 12:00 - an efficient operation, run with military precision.

After lunch, we chilled out for a while and waited until the afternoon breeze picked up at 14:30 before we sailed back to Katsepy.

**IO Facebook Group (??) – November 2016:** Please be careful when visiting Majunga. On 30th October Goivanni and Marina of the sailing vessel Eutika were held at knifepoint by 3 men who robbed them. They were unharmed but left and are on their way to Richards Bay. When they arrive I will speak to them to find out more details. Meanwhile exercise extreme caution in Mahajanga.

**FB Group – Totem - 2015:** We cleared out of Majunga last year. I don't remember details, but it wasn't a big deal. We found a contact to get diesel. We anchored in Majunga during the day

only, at 15° 43.583S / 46° 17.937E and at Ketsepy for the night at 15° 46.179S / 46° 14.714E - lots of current but holding was very good. Gets very shallow on the run between, but the chart reflected this.

From there we went down the coast to Barren Islands before crossing to RB - The islands and people were interesting and crossing was fast/good.

#### **13.7.24      *Katsepy (15-46S / 046-15E)***

We were planning to leave Mahajunga at 04:00, but both of us were awake at 03:00, so we dragged ourselves out of bed and left. We had a great sail along the coast in steady south-east winds allowing us to make 6-7 knots.

As we entered the Majunga Estuary, hundreds of Dhows were sailing in from their day's fishing. They were running downwind and we were on a close reach, cutting across their path, so we had an enjoyable hour, dodging through the middle of the fleet, waving, laughing and taking lots and lots of photographs. It's an impressive sight to see these small boats with huge sails screaming along in 20 knot winds.

We arrived in Katsepy at 15:30 and anchored at 15°46.11S 046 14.72E in 7 metres. "Luna Blu" and "Fortuna" had just arrived. They anchored off the coast last night and had a sleepless, roly night until it calmed down after midnight.

Glenys and I jumped in our dinghy to go and have a look at what was available on Katsepy - we were interested in vegetables and diesel. The village is a score of shops and buildings on sandy streets. There were a few dreary looking vegetables for sale and a couple of small grocery stores, but the majority of the shops were selling food and snacks for the people who come here to catch a ferry across to Majunga.

A previous cruiser had reported a fuel station 200 metres along the road, but when we asked in the village, we were pointed to a small shop selling petrol in plastic water bottles and diesel in cooking oil drums. I didn't like the look of that and even if there was a fuel station along the road, there didn't seem to be any tuk-tuks in the village to transport our jerry jugs, so we didn't investigate any further. We'll get fuel and provisions when we go into Majunga city to clear out tomorrow.

#### **13.7.25      *Baly Bay (16-03S / 045-18E)***

**Slip Away – Sep 2018:** After almost a week at Moramba Bay, the weather window to South Africa looked like it might be materializing, so we carried on to Baly Bay (October 12-13, 143 miles, 24 hours). When we reached Baly Bay, we were quite happy that we had lingered at Moramba because the water in the anchorage at Baly Bay was brown and the bay was quite roly and uncomfortable when the winds and tides were running in opposition. Fortunately, for us, we spent only one night in Baly Bay before the window to sail to South Africa was open.

**Alba – Sep 2017:** The alarm went off at 03:00 and we were soon on our way, sailing the 70 miles from Majunga to Baly Bay. It was very dark, but we only saw a couple of fishing boats, which was a relief. The wind was behind us for most of the way, so I poled out the genoa to port and we made good time.

The wind dropped for an hour in the late morning, so we ran the water maker for an hour to fill up our water tanks. I'm not using the low pressure pump, so the high pressure pump is sucking the sea water up through the filters and is also sucking in air somewhere. I had to stop the pump several times to vent the air out of the filters, which was a damn nuisance. I'm going to re-plumb the whole system in South Africa - my job list is getting longer.

We arrived in Baly Bay at 15:30 and anchored at 16°03.42S 045°17.64E in 5 metres for the night next to "Wairima". We invited Alan and Vicky over for a beer and caught up on the gossip. They've been here for five days and are planning to leave tomorrow night, which is a little early for us.

The next day, Low tide was at 08:00, so we upped anchor and moved over to the east side of Baly Bay. There's a 4.5 mile tortuous route through sand banks to get to the anchorage next to a large village and we wanted to do it on a rising tide. We had a tide of about 2.2 metres and the minimum depth that we saw was 4.5 metres. The Navionics charts on our Samsung tablet were surprisingly accurate.

The waypoints that we used were: 16°00'.87'S 45°20'.06E; 16°01'.85S 45°20'.65E; 16°01'.94S 45°21'.13E; 16°02'.41S 45°21'.40E; 16°02'.79S 45°22'.14E; 16°02'.44S 45°23'.19E; 16°02'.08S 45°23'.40E.

We anchored 200 metres off the village at 16°02.04S 045°23.45E in 8 metres on good holding sand/mud. Within ten minutes a steady stream of dug-out canoes came to visit. Of the five boats, only one bothered to bring out something to trade - he gave us some tomatoes, so we gave him some good stuff in return - a wind up torch, a nice t-shirt, a rope, etc. The others were mostly kids, so we handed out writing pads, pencils and a couple of balls.

Then a guy called Domiye paddled out, who works as a tourist guide and spoke reasonable French. He said that the chief was away today, but he'd show us around the village. He asked us not to hand out any more things to people who paddled out, he said that it's better to take things ashore, so we agreed to meet him later.

After lunch the wind picked up and it was blisteringly hot, so we decided to have a chill-out afternoon and let the villagers have their siesta. We had one more visit from a middle-aged couple in the afternoon, who brought us two eggs and then had a row with each other seemingly about what gift ("Cadeaux" ) they wanted. We gave her some flour and him some fishing line and they drifted off still arguing.

Domiye paddled out just before dark asking when we were going into the village. He'd probably been waiting for us, so we made an excuse that we'd had some jobs to do on board and that we'd be going in tomorrow at 09:00. These villagers are so demanding.

At nine o'clock, we ventured ashore carrying six bags of things to give the villagers - it was everything that we had left to give. Glenys had sorted through all of her provisions and donated all her flour. We had glass bottles; plastic containers; clothes; hand tools; fishing line; wind up torches; penknives; etc.; etc.;

We were met on the beach by a score of excited kids, who enthusiastically helped to pull our dinghy up the beach. Domiye appeared and so did the Chief's wife. All of our bags of gifts were whisked off to the Chief's house, where we assume they were going to be dished out to the villagers. Our guide then led us on a tour of the village accompanied by a gaggle of kids.

It's quite a big village and slightly different to the others that we've seen in that each family has a fenced off enclosure for their huts. The fences are territorial and not for keeping animals out because goats were wandering everywhere. There is only one well for the whole village and we were taken into a couple of houses to be shown weaving and some of the vegetables that they grow - chili peppers and tomatoes.

The best bit of the tour was the children. They were fascinated by us and gradually became braver, holding Glenys's hand. I took loads of photographs and they loved looking at the camera display to see themselves. At one point, Glenys taught them how to play "Ring-a-Ring-a-Roses" and there were howls of laughter at the "All Fall Down".

At another place, I stopped and made a great show of rooting around in my rucksack. The kids gathered around and were aghast when a small hand puppet dog appeared. At first they didn't know what to make of it and I had several of the boys jumping backwards in the dirt when the dog lunged at them with a terrifying growl. They were soon laughing in delight and I gave the puppet to one of the little girls, who clutched it for the rest of the morning.

After our little tour, we went back to the boat, where I dug out all the odd lengths of old rope that I could find for Domiye – he's building a boat and asked me for rope. Glenys found a couple of half-full bottles of suntan lotion for one of the ladies and I printed out a dozen photographs of the children that I'd just taken.

I popped back the beach and had fun handing out the photographs to the kids – they loved them. While I was giving out the photos a large crowd of villagers had gathered around the dinghy including half a dozen young men, who were eyeing up the bag of rope – I had to stop one guy from taking some of it. I gave the whole bag to Domiye, but one of the gang of young men snatched the bag and ran off. The gang gave chase and a scuffle broke out while they grabbed lengths of rope. I was a bit annoyed that Domiye didn't get any.

I'm not too sure what to make of the villagers. The people are desperately poor and take anything that we have, but they have very little to give, so there is no real concept of trading like we saw in the Manamo River in Venezuela. We found it a bit weird to just give all our bags of gifts to the Chief's wife to be distributed, but having experienced the jungle rules on the beach, I think that if we'd have tried to hand out the items ourselves, it would have turned into a bun fight.

Back on the boat, I had an email from Des Cason from "Gambit", he's a cruiser who has retired to land and now lives in South Africa. He's done the passage from Madagascar to South Africa many times and has offered to give me routing and weather advice for our crossing. Des said that the strong SE winds, which I was concerned about yesterday, are not showing on the latest GRIB files.

I checked the Grib files that I downloaded this morning and the next strong south winds along the Mozambique coast are on 9th/10th, so it looked like a good idea to leave early tomorrow morning. "Red Herring" and "Luna Blu" arrived in the outer anchorage yesterday, so I chatted to them on the radio and they are planning to leave tomorrow. It only took us a couple of minutes to decide to get on with it, so we upped anchor and sailed back to the outer anchorage.

The rest of the afternoon was spent preparing for sea. Glenys cooked three evening meals and I stowed the dinghy on deck. We then pulled the Series Storm Drogue and spinnaker out of the

front berth locker and generally tidied up. By 18:00, we were ready to go and cracked open a cold beer.

### **13.7.26 Ile Juan de Nova (17-03S / 42-42E)**

Ile Juan de Nova is an island off the west coast of Madagascar, in the narrowest part of the Mozambique Channel, about 1/3 the way between Madagascar and Mozambique. The island is garrisoned by French troops from Reunion, and boaters are not allowed to stop. (however, with a mechanical breakdown or an emergency, you may receive permission to make a short stop).

Someone who stopped there a few years ago reported "The French Military will forbid you to stop there. They made an exception for me some years ago as I had a problem to fix. We spent 3 days there in the end. There is no anchorage close in. Up close to the reef still leaves you a mile off the beach."

The Herrick guide says this: ILE JUAN DE NOVA = CHART FR 6643

(17°03'S, 42°42'E.) lies about 110 miles WSW of Cap Saint-Andre; the island is low, sandy, and covered with trees, mainly casuarinas and coconut. A meteorological station having a white roof stands on the NW side of the island, but is seldom used.

A small vessel can obtain good anchorage in 10.1m (5 ½ fm), with the flagstaff bearing 194°, distant 1¾ mile.

Before letting go the anchor, it is advisable to look carefully to make sure the anchor will not come to rest on a coral head; these heads can usually be seen.

Note: Juan de Nova lies 3.8 miles ENE of its charted position on earlier charts.

## **13.8 East Coast of Madagascar Anchorages**

**Mairi Calder – 2017:** The east coast of Madagascar is extremely exposed. There are a few different beautiful anchorages on the west coast of Ile Saint Marie, but most yachts then go directly from the north tip of Saint Marie all the way to the Nosy Hara area. We explored anchorage on the East but deemed none to be protected nor safe.

It can be very tempting to go into Antisirana bay area but a yacht was boarded there by armed intruders not so long ago. We were advised to stay away. We had friends on a power yacht who stopped in Nosy Ankao who had to drop multiple anchors and tied lines to nearby palm trees to keep the boat in place. That entire coast is extremely rough and windy.

### **13.8.1 Angontsy (15-15S / 050-28E)**

See passage notes from Ile St. Marie to Angontsy [here](#).

**Alba – August 2017:** We were approaching Angontsy at 11:00. It didn't look very good – we had a 2 metre swell rolling in from the south east, which was pushing us towards the breakers crashing on the reefs. About ½ mile out, there was a very sharp line where the water became discoloured (sort of milky), which didn't help our nerves. We followed the Navionics charts, using the following waypoints and all was well.

The sea bed slowly shallowed from 20 metres to where we anchored in 5 metres at 15°15.07S 050°28.46E. The swell is blocked by the outer reef and the anchorage is relatively calm.

There's a slight residual roll, but it's very pleasant. There's a fishing village ashore, which we would like to visit, but I can't face getting the dinghy off the front deck and then having to put it all back.

When we were five miles out, I caught a nice Tuna, so my first job was to fillet it, so that Glenys could make us fresh Fish Butties for lunch.

Even in this remote place, we have a reasonable telephone and internet connection, so I downloaded a weather forecast. The wind looks like it will be a few knots more tomorrow, so we're planning to leave tomorrow afternoon and sail directly around the Northern Cape. It's 210 miles to the cape, so if we leave at sunset, we'll have two nights at sea and arrive at the cape at daylight on Saturday (25th) and will be in an anchorage on the north-west coast by midday. The weather forecast predicts 20-24 knots for the next 5 days, so there's no point in waiting.

We chilled out for the afternoon, having a nap and resting.

The anchorage became a little more roly in the afternoon when it was high tide and the swell was sneaking over the reef.

The wind dropped during the night, so we were swinging about, making it a bouncy, roly night with the swell slapping against the stern of the boat.

Meanwhile the villagers were getting on with their lives. Some were paddling about in their dugout canoes with a hand line, while others were out with nets. One group were laying nets in a circle from the shore and then hauling it in. Glenys had dug out half a dozen bags of things to give or trade with them, but we were surprised that no-one approached our boat.

We called one fisherman over and gave him the head and carcass of the tuna that I filleted yesterday – it will make a good meal. He was very reticent to approach our boat and didn't speak much French, so communication was difficult. I wish that we'd gone ashore now.

### ***13.8.2 Antsiaka (Ile St. Marie) (16-50S / 049-50E)***

**Alba – August 2017:** After leaving Ambodifototra, Ile St. Marie, we headed for an anchorage on the north end of the island. We had a nice downwind sail in the SW 10 knot winds. Unfortunately, the anchorage that we were aiming for looked to be exposed to the SW waves, so we looked for somewhere else to anchor.

A long spit of land sticking out from the mainland looked to be suitable, with a gradually sloping sea bed that looked like sand or mud on the charts. I quickly used the excellent internet on our phone to have a look on Google Earth and it looked good. Glenys changed course while I dived down below to create some KAP charts of the new anchorage (using the excellent GE2KAP utility.) Twenty minutes later, we were sailing into the anchorage with my new KAP charts displayed on our OpenCPN chart plotter – I love having internet at sea...

We dropped anchor at Antsiaka at 16°50.29S 049°49.63E in a depth of 7 metres on good holding sand. We were well protected from the south-west wind waves, but a big rolling swell was coming in from the north-east causing big breakers on the beach. It wasn't a problem in the anchorage, but we didn't fancy landing the dinghy on the beach. There's a village on the other side of the spit of land, but we couldn't visit.

### **13.8.3 Ile Aux Nates (Ile St. Marie) (17-06S / 049-49E)**

**Alba – August 2017 – Whale Watching Side trip to Ile Aux Nates:** We left the town anchorage at Ile St. Marie at 09:00 and spent an enjoyable three hours whale watching. It was a lovely day with calm seas and we had over twenty sightings.

There were half a dozen whale-watching boats around and their faster speed enabled them to get closer to the whales than we could with our pathetic six knots, but we still had many encounters. After a couple of hours, we'd had enough and headed for Ile Aux Nattes, where we **anchored** at **17°05.54S 049°48.56E** in 5 metres over white sand. It's a beautiful place with white sand beaches and swaying palm trees. There's a slight swell coming around the island, but it's only making us rock gently, which is not too bad.

The water is fairly clear in the anchorage, so I dug out my underwater camera, put on my new 1mm wetsuit and went for a snorkel for the first time in three months. The visibility was only about 5 metres, but there is coral on the reefs. There weren't many fish where I went, but I had a good time, poking about and looking for new photo subjects. Another cool thing was hearing the singing of the whales every time that I dived down. My enthusiasm only lasted for 15 minutes because it was chuffing cold and I was soon heading back to Alba for a hot shower.

Dawn the next day brought us grey skies and a south wind which was bringing bigger waves into the anchorage and making us pitch. We had a couple of long, heavy rain showers, so we stayed on board doing some administration.

The sky brightened up in the afternoon and the wind backed to the south-east, so the swell reduced. Even so, we couldn't motivate ourselves to get off the boat. All day, we could see whales just outside the anchorage - slow moving mothers and energetic males breaching.

Day 2 - Sometime in the early morning, the damn wind picked up from the south again and we started pitching. It was difficult to sleep, so I was up at 06:00 and started doing some forward planning for our next major passage – to NW Madagascar.

The weather was mixed with some showers, so we abandoned the idea of walking around the Iles Des Nattes and pulled up the anchor to head back to town.

As we were sailing away from the anchorage, a whale was passing by, being pursued by a local whale-watching boat. They're supposed to keep 300 metres away from the whales, but often approach to within 25 metres. This whale was moving quite fast. It turned away from the local boat and headed straight towards us. We didn't have our engine running, so I don't think that it saw or heard us until it was 25 metres in front of us at which time it turned left and swam down our starboard side. Glenys was at the wheel, hyperventilating, and I was taking photos.

### **13.8.4 Isle St. Marie / Nosy Boraha (17-00S / 049-51E)**

**Wikipedia:** Nosy Boraha, previously known as Île Sainte-Marie (and still popularly known by travellers as such), is an island off the east coast of Madagascar, to which it belongs. The main town is Ambodifotatra.

**Alba – August 2017:** Alba and several other boats cleared in at Ile St. Marie. [Read about it here.](#)

We anchored for clearance at Ambodifototra - the island's only town. By 07:30, we were anchored at **17°00.13S 049°50.85E** in 10 metres of water on sand/mud. The anchorage is a little rolly, but the inner harbour has moorings with no space to anchor.

**Eating Out:** We took the dinghies from dodgy town dock around to a beach just on the northern side of the small boat harbour and pulled them up next to a nice friendly restaurant called the **Terrasse Bar**. They served a nice meal for 10,000 Ariary (£2.50) and large 650ml beers were 4,000 Ariary. Most of us had Zebu, which is a type of cattle that is popular in Madagascar, not only for eating but as a “workhorse”, pulling ploughs.

**Other Services:** We found ATM's, and Telecom offices in Ile St. Marie. (details reported elsewhere under [Cruiser's Services](#).)

**FB Group (Gwynneth Anderson) – 2016:** Isle St Marie is very nice. It is a bit touristy, but also welcoming. The people are friendly, and we've enjoyed taking long walks out of the main town. Clearing in was fairly easy. Most of the officials were straight forward. We got three monthly visas. The visas cost 140,000AR each. The visas are given out by the police, and they demanded a 120000AR bribe, but in the end we were able to negotiate the down to 60000AR, which is apoximatly 20 US dollars. I recommend reading Yolo's write up on noonsite. The only thing that has changed since he posted this report is that you can now receive a three month visa.

## 14 Christmas Island (Southern Route)

Christmas Island is usually visited by those yachts setting out to cross the Indian Ocean via the Sunda Strait (southern Indonesia), and sometimes yachts coming from Australia.

**Wikipedia August 2018:** Christmas Island is an Australian territory in the Indian Ocean, lying south of Java, Indonesia. A national park covers most of the 135-sq-km island, offering rainforest hikes to wetlands and waterfalls like Hugh's Dale. Native wildlife includes nesting seabirds and the red crab, a land species known for its late-fall migration to the sea. The island is ringed with snorkelling and diving reefs.

**Christmas Island official website – yachts page – Sep 2018:**

<https://www.christmas.net.au/plan-your-trip/yachts.html>

The Port of Christmas Island and the community welcomes visiting yachts to call at Flying Fish Cove.

When arriving at Christmas Island visiting yachts should contact the Harbour Master on VHF Ch16 for mooring instructions. Call sign is “Christmas Island Port Control”.

Yacht moorings are available in Flying Fish Cove throughout the year. Generally 4 – 5 moorings are available at any given time. Please note that mooring fees apply.

Visiting yachts are advised to time their arrival during daylight hours for safety reasons.

The dropping of anchors in Flying Fish Cove may harm coral formations and is therefore prohibited. Exceptions for safety reasons may be granted with the express permission of the Harbour Master.



The large buoys of the main mooring systems are for commercial shipping operations and may not be used.

Flying Fish Cove is a multi-use recreational area for swimming, snorkelling and diving, canoeing and other aquatic activities. Yachts entering or leaving Flying Fish Cove must keep a look out for persons involved in these activities; and not exceed the 5 knot speed limit.

Yacht dinghies used to ply to and from the jetty must also observe the 5 knots speed limit and be aware of persons in the water at all times.

Yacht dinghies may tie up to the landward side of the landings and ramp at the head of the jetty. Dinghies are not to be secured to the aluminium stairs and landing on the eastern side of the jetty.

The jetty in Flying Fish Cove is an integral part of commercial shipping operations. The gantry crane is used to launch and recover the port work vessels. The jetty area under the gantry crane extensions must be kept clear of dinghies at all times.

The Marine Building, which fronts the jetty, contains the office of the Harbour Master; a courtesy call from visiting yacht skippers is always appreciated.

Located at the western end of the Marine building are public showers and toilets, open 24 hours each day, and provided for the convenience of visiting yachts. All you need is soap and a towel.

No garbage or galley washes to be dumped into the waters anywhere around the Island. Any food or waste is quarantinable and cannot come ashore. There are currently no facilities or arrangements for Christmas Island to accept quarantine waste.

All yachts arriving on Christmas Island require Customs and Immigration formalities conducted by the Australian Border Force (ABF). If you're travelling by boat, the master of a vessel arriving in Australia is required by law to give notice to ABF of impending arrival. Information relating to reporting periods and information on what you need to advise us can be found at <https://www.border.gov.au/Trav/Ente/Avia/Maritime/Requirements-for-yachts-and-pleasure-craft>. To advise us that you are coming you can:

Send an email to: [yachtreport@border.gov.au](mailto:yachtreport@border.gov.au)

Send a fax to: +61 (0)2 6275 5078

Phone: +61 (0)2 6246 1325

Departure formalities are also required.

**Linda Lindenau (FB Group) – Aug 2018:** In Flying Fish Cove on Christmas Island you are not allowed to use your own anchor, only their moorings. The mooring of another boat in the bay broke, the owners were not onboard, the boat drifted on the coral before the harbour people could rescue it.

We were of course concerned, asked the officials what had happened, and got some strange answers. He said they weren't sure if it was the mooring or their line that broke. I thought it would be quite easy to determine what rope that was cut off, but he gave a long speech about how their line might have cut the mooring?!

Then we asked if the boat was damaged, and got the answer that they had rescued it before it reached the coral.

A little later we met the owner who told us that the rudder was so damaged that they couldn't continue, there is no haul out facility on the island and that a diver should try to help them.

In a couple of weeks the world ARC will come there, I suppose that is why the harbour officials are trying to hide the truth about the event.

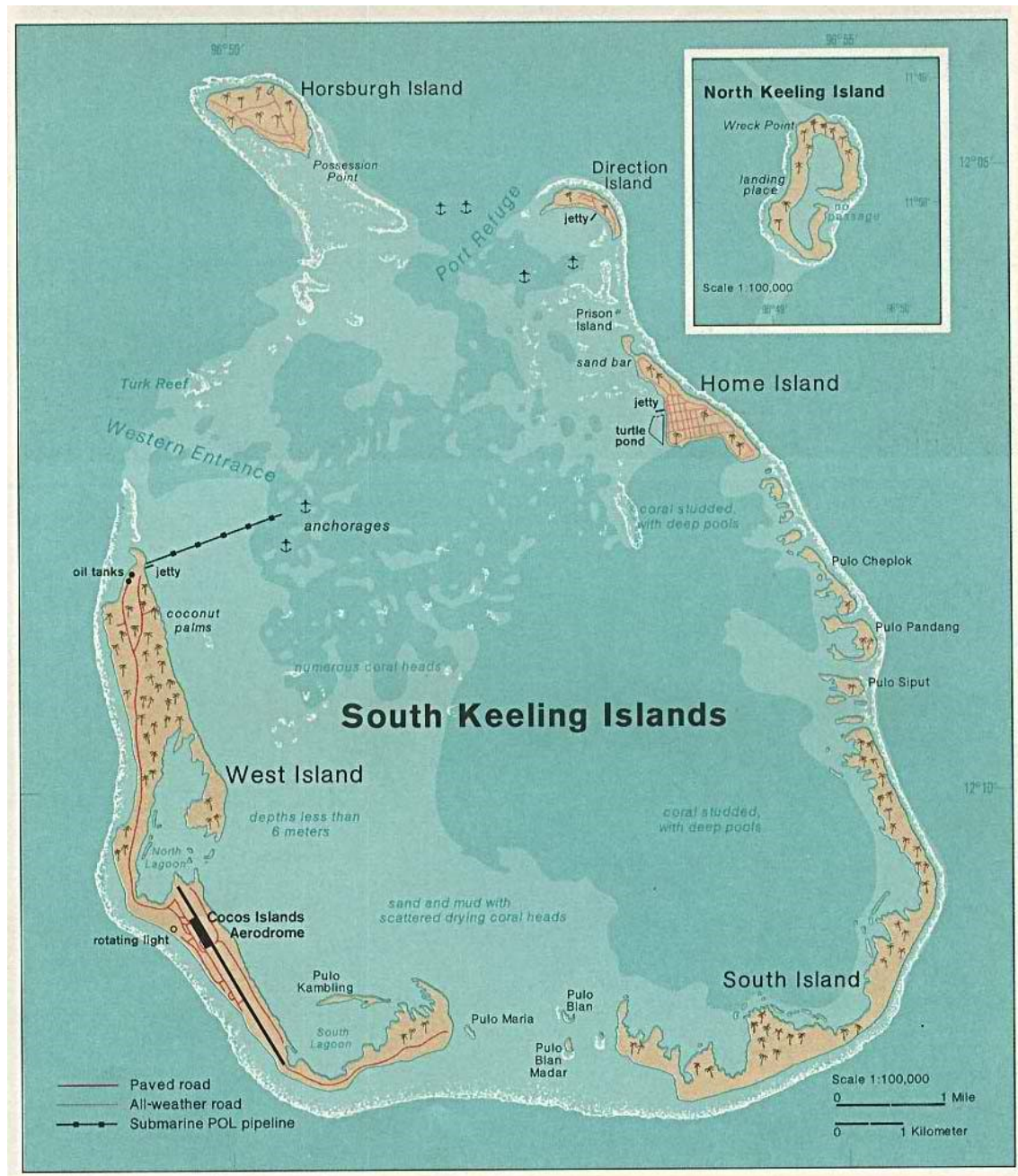
**Dale Tournier (FB Group) – Aug 2018:** The moorings are attached to large ship chain that runs from the shore, it's become part of the coral, I doubt there's any issue there, or by memory I couldn't see any issue with that part of it. The mooring that are closer in are quite shallow and the water is very clear. It's easy to dive and check the mooring line from chain to buoy.

**Sophia Partland (FB Group) – May 2017:** I finally talked to Christmas Island Border Protection this morning. We will be checking out of Australia via Thursday Island, sent details to get process started.

Christmas Island Border Protection deals with processing both Christmas and Cocos Keeling's Ins/outs. Fresh fruit coming from mainland Australia? not a problem into Thursday Island but they will check it. They will also advise us where to shop and what we can and can't take from Thursday Island, onto Christmas. Yay sorted!

**FB Group – Dec 2015:** Alcohol in Christmas Island is very cheap... cheaper and more accessible than Cocos... worth the detour if you want to stock up. Also fuel is cheaper and easier at Christmas than Cocos.

## 15 Cocos Keeling (Southern Route)



(Cocos Keeling Map Lifted from Nine of Cups website)

**Begonia – August 2022:** Cocos (Keeling) is a large, shallow atoll with an openings on the north and west sides. Most of the islands around the edge are uninhabited, except for West Island, the Aussie ex-pat administrative center (Population: 100, it has the airport) and Home Island (Population: 500), where most of the Malay Muslim population lives.

The only anchorage allowed for visiting yachts is at uninhabited Direction Island, on the far northeastern tip of the atoll. This is mainly because it is the only anchorage deep enough for anything except the super-shallow draught local vessels.

Once safely at the quarantine mooring we had the resident sharks come to welcome us!

With us at the Direction Island anchorage were two monohulls, each sailed by a couple. As soon as each awoke and saw Begonia bobbing at the quarantine mooring, they called us up on the radio to welcome us and give us the rundown.

<https://sv-footprint.blogspot.com/2022/08/passage-to-cocos-keeling-islands.html>

Firstly, if you haven't been there, you might be wondering about the name. When first charted the islands were called the Cocos Islands, after the abundant coconut trees. The first European to sight the islands was Captain William Keeling of the East India Company. Ninety-four years later, the name was changed to Keeling Islands in his honor. There then followed a period of Cocos-Keeling, then Keeling-Cocos, before eventually settling on the current version of Cocos (Keeling) Islands, making it one of the very few official place names with parentheses {Maryanne: A bit more about the Cocos (Keeling) Islands - They are currently an Australian external territory, and the full official name is the "Territory of Cocos (Keeling) Islands". There is a history of mostly Malay population (and those still make up the larger number of residents) in the Malay language they are called "Pulu Kokos (Keeling)". Of the twenty-seven coral islands, only two are populated: Home Island (primarily Malay), and West Island (primarily westerners, West Island also has the airport). The only permitted anchorage is at the uninhabited Direction Island}.

On Monday morning the Australian Federal Police arrived to clear us in as the wind and chop were returning to the Direction Island anchorage following our calm arrival. They were friendly and efficient and said that since we had come from mainland Australia, we could do the whole process by carefully handing forms back and forth between boats at each other's transoms. No, they did not need to board, No, we did not need to do a Covid test. All of our stores onboard were fine as long as we followed one rule: No food or plants could be taken from the boat to shore. If we wanted to have a barbecue on the beach, for example, it must consist entirely of food obtained in the islands. The fines are about one yacht per infraction, so don't even take a chance.

When Maryanne asked if it was okay if we collected coconuts and brought them to our boat, the officer in charge let out a big laugh and said, "Take ALL the coconuts you want!" That was the right answer. We've missed snacking on foraged coconuts almost as much as we missed snorkeling from the boat. We were now cleared to lower our 'Q' flag, leave the quarantine mooring and go anchor next to Sal Darago and Serengeti.

Although Direction Island is uninhabited, it is a popular spot for day-tripping locals and for lunch stops for tourist boats. As such, it looks more like a public park than a desert island. It has several different covered picnic areas, toilet blocks, barbecue pits and an interpretive trail complete with information boards detailing little vignettes of the island's history.

Before its current status as an uninhabited picnic ground, Direction Island housed a very important communications relay station in the submarine communication cable network connecting southeast Asia and Australia to Africa. Because of this, it was attacked by both

Germany (by boat) and Japan (by air) in WWII. Immediately behind the ferry landing is a gazebo with a memorial detailing the whole story.

Also among the amenities of the picnic area compound on Direction Island are several large tanks of rainwater (signed as non-potable). That we can use! We brought with us everything necessary to make a hand-operated bush laundry. We were just getting the last of it onto the drying line when Mia from Serengeti showed up, looking to stretch her legs with a beach walk.

After visiting the southern tip of the island with Mia she bid us farewell (she was barefoot) and we then completed a circuit of the entire island trails, while the building trade winds shook more than evaporated the water out of our rapidly flapping laundry.

One thing that was upsetting to see was that, like seemingly every leeward shore on Earth, the volume of Direction Island's beaches is 50% sand, 50% flip-flops, 50% plastic water bottles and 50% math. Nice job, Humans! The only windward beach on the island (Cossies Beach) is the one by all of the picnic areas. It is composed of lovely, soft sand, which is crisscrossed by very nervous-looking crabs. The local tourist office tell us it was Australia's most beautiful beach in 2017.

The weather deteriorated over the next few days. The wind climbed into the twenties, then thirties, with gusts ten knots higher. It also swung to the south, which put us out of the protection of all but the furthest island in the atoll, five miles away. I wanted to stay aboard, or at least near Begonia, until I was sure we were in no danger of dragging into the coral between us and the beach that was now right behind us. We decided to spend the day snorkeling among the bommies near the boat.

Despite being a little churned up from the weather, it was wonderful to be floating over coral bommies in warm, tropical water. There's lots of elkhorn-like coral here, which serves as a hiding place for the usual varieties of tropical fishes. Hi, guys! Nice to see you again! There were also a few turtles and Begonia seemed to have her own compliment of half a dozen Black-tipped Reef Sharks accompanied by occasional bigger White-tipped ones. They swam in lazy circles below. Sharks, pffff! As long as they are not crocs. Every time I swam down to try to pet the iridescent skin of one of them, they all scattered. I like them. They are like our little mascots.

Ferries from the other islands to Direction Island only run once per week from Home Island and once per week from West Island. The trips are scheduled to bring day-trippers out for a few hours and then return them back to their homes or hotels. The only same-day round-trip possible from Direction Island to anywhere is to go to Home Island on Thursday.

Unfortunately, our first Thursday in Cocos (Keeling) was during the very worst weather in the whole week. Our anchoring fees needed to be paid at the Home Island Shire office, and (according to our paperwork) within twenty-four hours of arriving, and Maryanne was also keen to get a few fresh provisions from the store there. I argued that maybe we should give it a pass today and try again next week, but she really wanted to try, so we decided she would go while I stayed behind looking after Begonia.

The wind was now consistently in the thirties. There was no way Maryanne would be able to row to shore in that, so I dug out the outboard and mounted it. Lowering the dinghy into the water was a bit of an ordeal. Getting aboard it was like climbing onto a mechanical bull. While the dinghy was still sideways, clipped into the davit falls, it was swamped several times by waves tunneling under Begonia's bridgedeck and breaking over the gunwales. When I was finished

and flopped back unto the relative calm of Begonia's deck, I was drenched and muttering to myself that next time I wouldn't bother with putting on dry clothes first.

Then it was Maryanne's turn. As she started the motor and headed into the chop, she was constantly drenched by waves coming over her bow. That was less of a big deal than it would normally have been, since it had just started raining anyway. At the ferry stop, she met Ted and Mia. They had ditched the dinghy idea entirely gone ashore on their paddle board, knowing they would get wet. I think Ted even swam in.

At the appointed time, the ferry was nowhere in sight. After half an hour, Ted called the police on his handheld VHF and asked if they knew anything about the ferry. They said they would make a few calls. They finally got back to him an hour later and told him the ferry wasn't coming because there had been no one on Home Island that wanted to go to Direction Island today. What? Nobody wants to play frisbee in a gale? This was especially frustrating because, Maryanne being who she is, she had called the police before we even lowered the dinghy and they told us the ferry was still running today. Ted and Mia were leaving the next day and would now not have the opportunity to pay their anchoring fee, which meant they wouldn't be given their outbound clearance. That could cause them a problem when they got to Rodrigues.

The picnic shelters on the island are mere sun covers and offer no protection from sideways rain. Maryanne was soaked through when she got home. As she dried off, I went through the reverse process of getting the dinghy out of the churning water and tucked safely back under our davits.

On calmer days, we would go to the far, southern end of the island to a pass known as 'The Rip'. It is the location of the best thing to do on the island. Here, you can do a high-speed drift snorkel past a colorful variety of coral that is populated by lots and lots different fishes from tiny, pinky-nail sized wrasse to big White-tipped Reef sharks. We quickly got into the habit of swimming it every day or two, often in the company of others. Almost every time we would leave the current and swim back to the beach, we would end up walking the path back and go in for a second or third ride through before calling it a day. Each drift past was different and since we were zooming by, the only way to see everything was to do it over and over.

Maryanne had figured out a plan to get to Home Island before next Thursday. The ferry schedule we had been given seemed to indicate that the Saturday ferry from West Island stayed at Direction Island all day with the day-trippers before taking them back. This didn't seem to make sense, so we decided to meet it when it arrived and see where it was going for the break.

It turns out they were going to Home Island. We asked if we could come along and they cheerfully agreed. Maryanne and I were the only passengers. When we got to Home Island, the guy told us to be back at 3:00 for the return. Maryanne said, "Don't leave without us!" to which he responded, "We won't if you're here by 3:00!" Alrighty then.

Home Island was mostly shut for the weekend, with the exception of the post office, the grocery store and, of course, the ferry. We were hoping one of the island's two restaurants would be open, but no luck. Our only lunch option would be to grab something at the grocery store and take it for a picnic. The selection there was pretty thin. They don't have a deli counter. We ended up with two very sad apples, a box of cookies and some soda. Our bodies are our temples.

So, with several hours to go before the return ferry, we took the opportunity to do a full lap of the island on foot. Most of Home Island is functional. There are no hotels or resorts, so most of the buildings are squat concrete houses, some on stilts, that are built to be able to withstand the full force of tropical cyclones. With the museum being closed, the only diversions available were a walk through the graveyard at the northern end, and stopping at the many picnic areas along the shore for a view of the turquoise water. There is one particular spot in the southwest where White Terns had a habit of hovering just out of reach in slow circles as if they were just a little too shy to land on our shoulders and start telling us about the adventures of their day.

We knew that as non-Malay, obvious westerners, we must be standing out as we walked the streets. Our novelty didn't turn out to be much of an ice breaker and mostly we were politely left to our own business. Every time we would wave and say hello to someone going by, though, big smiles and friendly waves were always returned. One lady clearly thinking we were lost was really helpful and went to great efforts to get us permission to visit the Mosque.

We finally wore through their shyness when we saw one of the local sailing teams de-rigging one of their traditional jukung racing boats. They seemed like they were prepared to let us have our look and move on, working around us, then we started asking them direct questions about the rig and the construction of the boat. Once they realized we had a genuine interest, they were happy to answer questions and give us the tour. The island has several teams, some of which have been together for years, and they race at least once a week. Our guys had finished third today. From that point on, when we saw a different boat and told them we had already met the third-place team, they instantly knew who we were talking about, which always jumped the conversation three or four steps in from if we had been complete strangers.

As our time ran out, we positioned ourselves at the park by the ferry terminal at a spot where we wouldn't be able to miss the crew heading back to the ferry, and vice versa. In short order, three of them came up the road on three motor scooters. We were waved aboard. Before we had even selected seats, the last dock lines were thrown off. It was 2:59:53.

Even though the air conditioning inside felt sooo good, I wanted to go outside on the top deck for the return, since this would be one of my few chances to enjoy the view. Maryanne stayed behind to cool off. From my seat at the rail, I could just see one of the crew-members sitting by the window on the bridge half a level below me. A few minutes later, I noticed he had put on a hat. That made sense. We were on the sunny side and he was probably getting cooked behind the glass. Then I noticed that he had the same kind of straw hat that Maryanne did. Ha! He might have even bought it from the same store. Also, his black and blue crew shirt was now just blue. Wait a minute, that's Maryanne! She had talked her way onto the bridge.

I went down below and found her happily chatting away to the Captain, Afendi (? not sure about the spelling), about boats and the islands and crossing the Indian Ocean. He welcomed me and we started talking about manly things like boats and the islands and crossing the Indian Ocean. From his instruments, I could see why we were restricted to Direction Island. The ferry draws 0.4m less than Begonia and there were several spots where even it barely had space between bommies. We went for miles with the depth sounder reading just above two meters, and it wasn't even low tide. We saw the supply ship arrive later in the week. It also anchored near Direction Island and then everything was transferred onto wide, flat, shallow-draught barges for the rest of the trip to either West or Home Islands.

When we got back to Direction Island, Afendi smiled when he saw that Begonia was flying the Cocos Islands courtesy flag instead of the more generic (and common) Australian one. He can thank Maryanne's excellent pre-planning for that as well as the guy in the flag shop in Darwin for getting it for us on relatively short notice. {Maryanne: for anyone following us, courtesy flags are available for purchase at the museum on Home Island}

The next day, another boat arrived. It was Lucipara2, from the Netherlands. We called them on the radio to welcome them.

Wow! It is generally easy to make friends while cruising. Many of us were drawn to the lifestyle for similar reasons, so there is a higher proportion of kindred spirits out there in the anchorages than we would just meet randomly while walking through town. Maybe once or twice a year, though, we run across someone who we get along so well with that it feels like we've already been close friends for a long time.

Ivar and his partner Floris are both just wonderful. Ivar is an industrial engineer; Floris is a human rights lawyer. They both got fed up with being in the rat race and decided to "walk the talk", as Ivar puts it, and live a low-impact, low-consumption lifestyle that focuses less on out-of-control consumerism and more on human relationships and environmental stability. We finally met someone else who thinks of motoring as something you do only when you've exhausted all other options.

As we were all having dinner aboard Begonia, a South African catamaran named Moondust arrived and tied to the quarantine buoy. The next afternoon, as Maryanne and I were coming back from a day in the kayak, we swung by to say hello. Peter and Carin immediately invited us aboard the next night for sundowners with them and Lucipara2. It's getting busy around here.

The next morning, as Maryanne and I were waiting for the ferry to have another go at Home Island on a day when stuff was actually open, Maia arrived. Dick and Laura are Americans who we first met in Suwarrow in 2018. We have each been to a lot of different places, but we have managed to meet up from time to time since then.

Once at Home Island, we paid our anchoring fees, visited the museum, made a lap through every store on the island and then had a disappointing restaurant meal where the food was so salty that it was almost inedible. Now we had literally done everything there is to do on Home Island and we still had two hours to kill before the return ferry to Direction Island. {Maryanne: To clarify, there is certainly more available at Home Island, but not around the ferry times available to us}.

We arrived back at Direction Island just as the police were finishing clearing Maia in, and Lucipara2 out. Maia said they needed a rest after the rough passage from Christmas Island, so the rest of us headed over to Moondust for what was supposed to be snacks and sundowners. Ivar is an amazing cook and he had brought such a generous helping of snacks to effectively make a dinner for everyone.

Being South Africans, Pete and Carin had a wealth of information about cruising in SA. We were all particularly interested in details about the last leg approaching the African continent, past



Madagascar and, of course, the potentially treacherous rounding of the southern tip into the South Atlantic after that.

In the morning, Maia kindly took Maryanne with them on their dinghy to Home Island for fresh provisions. The grocery store is restocked by supply plane every other Friday (then by boat from the airport on West Island). Several locals told us to be at the store first thing on Saturday or there wouldn't be anything left.

They weren't kidding. By the time they got there, it was barely an hour after they had opened and the aisles were already lined with boxes full of the most sought-after items that islanders had set aside. It looks like we will be eating okra and cans of pickled herring for a while. Okay, it wasn't that bad, but Maryanne was pretty sure that by the end of the day, the selection would pretty much be what it was the day before the supply plane.

In the middle of our third week at Direction Island, Maryanne and I finally got authorization to go to the Chagos archipelago from the British government (we applied in April). We worked backwards from the start date of our permit, checked the weather forecasts and narrowed down our departure to the next weekend.

<https://sv-footprint.blogspot.com/2022/09/cocos-keeling-islands.html>

**Expeditus - January 2018:** We spent a week in Cocos Keeling over this last new years eve whilst on a delivery trip from Lankawi to Fremantle.

Entry to the lagoon from the northern passage was easy, and anchorage was required to be taken on the southern side of Direction Island, west of the ferry jetty. We anchored in 5 metres on sand, about 100 metres off the beach.

Highlights were:

Swimming with 10 or so black tipped reef sharks under Pacemaker, and feeding them scraps of yellow fin tuna we caught on the way down from Ache.

The Rip is a fast moving current of water flowing off the south eastern tip of Direction Island. Take your dinghy up against the flow until it gets shallow, then roll into the water and get swept along the channel for 500 metres into the lagoon, hanging onto your dinghy. It is about 8 metres wide 5 metres deep, crystal clear water, with grouper, cod, sharks, moray eels, Napoleon fish and more...a great ride! Once the current slow to a passable level, hook your painter onto a rock and watch the fish life in the channel.

Local yachtsman Tony ferried us across the lagoon by speedboat to West Island for New Years Eve celebrations.

No rubbish of any kind is allowed off the yacht in Cocos. Our plan to deal with rubbish was to remove as much packaging as possible prior to leaving Lankawi, dispose of food scraps at sea as usual, and keep the rest bagged up until arrival in mainland Australia...where it cost \$100 for garbage disposal by Quarantine service. \$280 total charge...oh..and could we please double bag it in plastic bags!!!

Some expensive provisions are available on Home Island, expensive wifi too. Fuel cost AU\$2.70 a litre.

We departed the lagoon by the western channel to the north of West island.

We were the only yacht as it was cyclone season! Our friend Tony who has lived there for 8 years bought an abandoned yacht and keeps it there...with a lot of hurdles thrown at him by the administration.

I believe that in the season there may be about 20 or so yachts there at any one time.

It is a location also that keen bird watchers visit.

It is a long choppy ride across the lagoon to West Island from the anchorage on Direction island.

There are some water tanks on Direction Island with UNTREATED water. Also interpretive trails with information on early settlement, the signal station, and the WW1 naval battle Sydney vs Emden.

Not sure maximum time allowed at Cocos, but it would generally be early in the winter season for people crossing the IO.

We got daily sat phone weather reports from 3 yachties ashore to keep informed about potential cyclones.

**Gryphon – May 2014 - History:** Cocos Islands were discovered in 1609 by William Keeling of the East India Company. They have been visited by many explorers including William Dampier and Charles Darwin. The smaller more northerly atoll is an uninhabited National Park; we are at the southerly atoll. It consists of four large islands and one very small one, known as Prison Island, which enclose the lagoon. It became a powerhouse of Copra production with workers and settlers that included Malays, Papuans, Chinese and Indians. Home Island was developed for the early settlers and now their descendants live there in a society that has been together for 150 years with Islam as the main focus of their community.

In 1984 the people voted to become part of Australia and West Island is home to a small community of Australian and some British ex-pats. South Island is uninhabited apart from campers occasionally and Direction Island, which has the best swimming and snorkelling areas, is very well set up for recreation providing toilets, shelters with picnic tables, barbeque areas, hammocks, huge rainwater tanks and a heritage walk around the island, this is where we are based. During both world wars the islands were strategic targets as a cable station was based at Direction Island which upset the Germans no end, the island suffered as a result.

**Sapphire – August 2016:** Wind 25-30 kts but no problem inside the lagoon. A really neat place, clear water, no garbage, 4' blacktips hang around stern waiting of scraps but don't bother swimmers. I get to sleep with a blanket - not for security, for cool nights. This is a crossroad for cruisers going west, a hard core lot. "Balaena" had stories of Cape Horn, South Georgia, Labrador. I will leave in a few days for Rodriguez.

**Yindee Plus – September 2015:** As we approached Coco's 12 mile territorial limit on 29th August, in the pitch dark of a moon-less night, we were startled by the VHF radio coughing into life. Border control force vessel "Ocean Shield" had us on its radar and was monitoring our actions. We were back in Australia! Within seconds of the anchor being down, we were boarded by the small police launch and officially cleared in, with efficiency and smiles.

The comparisons between Indonesian and Australian formalities are stark: both countries require notification / permission to enter by private yacht pre-arrival, and visas in advance. For Australia, it takes about an hour to complete on-line, free-of-charge E-Visitor visa applications

for 4 British citizens and then 5 minutes to write a quick email giving ETA. In this little part of Australia there is no clearance charge on entry.

Cocos was paradise. We'd never heard of anyone disliking the place and we could instantly see why. We dropped the hook into turquoise water, just off the white sand beach of Direction Island. Visiting yachts get their own island here. There aren't many facilities: rainwater butts, clothes lines, a jetty, a way-marked heritage trail and as many coconuts as you can eat! What more does a well-stocked boat need?

The lack of diversions on the various islands of the atoll (and a completed boat job list) meant that we actually had a proper rest, with swimming, snorkelling, walking, and kayaking being the order of each afternoon, after school each day. The best bit of all was that we got to share this bliss with friends. A couple of cruising family boats we knew from the Pacific were already there when we arrived and we soon got to know the others too.

Most cruising couples will understand the maxim, 'happy wife, happy life', but for cruising parents it's the presence of other kids which often makes the difference between smiles and frowns on their offspring. Our twins, Wilf and Sid got to play with Sofia and Blake again, entertain baby Ivy, and then make a new friend in Dylan. They spent hours stringing up hammocks; building fires and sand-forts; making models out of coconut husks; racing hermit crabs; and building a raft. They even found a 'bottle top hermit crab' which none of us had seen before. It's the sort of total freedom that many kids don't get the benefit of these days and the memories of their pleasure will stay with us long after we finish this trip.

**Nine of Cups – September 2014:** The Cocos Keeling Islands are comprised of two atolls and 27 coral islands. The islands have been an Australian territory since 1984.

The atoll was discovered in 1609 by Captain William Keeling (East India Company) and named by a British hydrographer in 1805. A Scottish trader, John Clunies-Ross, visited the islands in 1814 and returned with his family and eight "sailor-artisan" in 1825, dug wells and planted coconut palms. Alexander Hare had actually arrived just shortly before Ross with a harem of 40 Malay women, but the women sought Ross' protection and Hare was soon driven out. The Clunies-Ross imported more Malay workers, built up his coconut plantations for copra production and prospered. Queen Victoria granted the islands to the Clunies-Ross descendants in perpetuity until they were purchased from the family by Australia in 1978. The Cocos Keeling flag reflects its history and heritage ... a coconut palm, the Australian southern cross plus one star and the Islamic crescent symbol of the Malay people on a field of green.

Interestingly, Charles Darwin developed his theory of atoll formation when he visited the Cocos aboard the HMS Beagle in 1836. His study of the coral reefs here, led to his theory of reef development and evolution as published in his 1842 scientific paper.

Only two of the islands, West Island and Home Island, are inhabited. A tiny, isolated society of about 500 Cocos Malay people live on Home Island, descendants of the original workers brought to the Cocos by Alexander Hare and John Clunies-Ross. The Cocos Malays also maintain weekend shacks, referred to as pondoks, on most of the larger islands. West Island is primarily inhabited by ex-pat Australians and is the location of a tiny airstrip (with weekly Virgin Australia service), administration, a supermarket, a golf course (which plays across the runway) and basic services (like intermittent internet). A ferry service operates six days a week between Home and West Island and twice a week between Direction and West Island.

There are reportedly over 1,500 species of marine life in the Cocos waters including the endemic Cocos pygmy angelfish. We've seen dolphins, but there are also turtles, rays and even a resident dugong (manatee), named Kat. Odd species like purple land crabs and horn-eyed ghost crabs are also critters for which we'll be on the lookout. There are several species of birds here, but only one endemic, the Cocos buff-banded rail. Several avian visitors stop here in their migratory flight and the area supports one of the world's largest and most significant breeding colonies for the red-footed booby. We've certainly seen lots of boobies flying around, but haven't had a chance to check out their feet. Much of the native flora was cleared for coconut palms and therefore, endemic plant life is nearly non-existent.

### ***15.1 Approach, Arrival, and Formalities***

**Slip Away –May 12 to June 4, 2018:** The Cocos Keeling Islands have been a territory of Australia since 1984 and are comprised of two coral atolls and 27 low-lying islands. The islands were discovered in 1609 by Captain William Keeling from the British East India Company. The smaller, more northerly atoll is an uninhabited National Park. The southerly atoll has three significant islands - Home, West and Direction Islands. Home and West Islands are presently the only inhabited islands in Cocos Keeling. Home Island has a population of approximately 500 people who are descendents of Malay copra plantation workers brought to the islands in the early 1800's. West Island has a population of approximately 120, primarily Australians who are part of the military and National Parks system.

We anchored off Direction Island, which is uninhabited but has an interesting history. In the early 1900's, Direction Island served as a vital link in a chain of undersea telegraphic cables, and a cable station was established on the island. In 1914, during World War I, the German battleship SMS Emden attacked Direction Island, attempting to destroy the communications link, but the Royal Australian Navy's HMS Sydney defeated the Emden.

Shortly after dropping our anchor, the Australian authorities arrived by boat to complete check-in formalities. The check-in process was efficient and the officer was very friendly. He provided us a 5-page list of rules and regulations for visiting yachts (Australia is king of rules and regulations!), told us to enjoy our stay and said we could call if we needed anything. Although there was no cell service here, the police could be reached via VHF radio, and there was a land-line telephone on Direction Island that we could use free of charge to call businesses or individuals on Home and West Islands, as well as a directory by the telephone listing everyone's numbers.

We were quite happy to be at Cocos Keeling. The sea and air temperatures were very pleasant (a relief from the heat and humidity of SE Asia), the water in the anchorage was an incredible blue, and stunning white sand beaches fringed Direction Island. Sue & Stefan (s.v. Charlotte) were in the anchorage when we arrived, so it was nice to catch up with them, and we also met Lionel & Nathalie (s.v. Rokalo), a French couple who arrived on the same morning as us.

Our tentative plan was to spend a couple of weeks in Cocos Keeling and chill out a bit. It was such a joy to swim in the clear blue water of the anchorage and snorkel on the numerous coral heads, as well as in "The Rip", which is a drift dive where big fish congregate in the pass between Direction and Home Islands. The corals at Cocos Keeling were healthy, fish life was

good, and we saw a number of green turtles, which nest on the northern atoll. Direction Island was quite flat and not very big - about 1 km long by ½ km wide - but it has a "Heritage Trail" on it with signboards depicting some of the history of the islands. The trail meandered through groves of coconut palms, and we walked across and back and from end to end numerous times just trying to maintain some muscle tone in our legs. Cocos Keeling gets a few tourists (but very few), and the tour operators bring guests to Direction Island. There is a shelter and picnic tables for the tourists on Direction Island, and water from the roof of the shelter is funneled into a big tank. We were able to use that water for laundry which was a nice convenience. Since the tourists were only at the island one or two days a week, we had Direction Island mostly to ourselves.

We could dinghy to Home Island (2 miles one-way) and did so a few times, and twice, we caught the ferry from Home Island to West Island (too far to go in our dinghy). All of the islands are flat and sandy, and there wasn't really much to see on them, but both Home and West Islands had internet access, which was expensive and slow. (There is normally a wifi signal broadcast from Direction Island, but it was not working during our visit, and the guy who needed to fix it was off island.) There were some small grocery stores on both Home and West Islands, also very expensive, but ice cream bars were affordable. We ate lunch at the Tropika restaurant on West Island (OK burgers and fish sandwiches), but the restaurant on Home Island was closed because it was Ramadan, and the Muslims fast from dawn to dusk during that time.

During the period of calm weather, we had a couple of new arrivals in the anchorage - David & Agnes (s.v. Gostoza Tu from Memphis, Tennessee), and Brian, Carol & Matt (s.v. Prince Diamond from Toronto, Canada). Since Rich would be celebrating his 70th birthday on our passage to Rodrigues, Jan organized an afternoon barbeque and birthday party for him on Direction Island with the crews of Gostoza Tu and Prince Diamond. Good fun!

After three weeks at Cocos Keeling, we saw what looked to be a reasonable weather window for the passage to Rodrigues. Although we enjoyed our time at Cocos Keeling, we were quite ready to move on. We'd snorkeled the reefs several times, walked the trails on Direction Island almost daily, and saw the few sights there were to see on Home and West islands.

We were pretty much out of fresh produce (only a couple of carrots and some cabbage left), and since fruits and veggies were crazy expensive here (\$12 AUD for a head of iceberg lettuce!), we bought very little and instead chose to eat from our stock of canned goods.

Also, our trash was piling up because no trash disposal facilities were available to us here, and burning paper trash on Direction Island and throwing fruit and veggie scraps overboard were forbidden. There were recycling bins for metal cans, glass and plastics on both Home and West Island, but we were not allowed to use them. In essence, the Australian Government was telling us to take our trash elsewhere, which for most cruising boats means Rodrigues Island, a more remote island with less infrastructure.

Australia charges \$50 AUD per week to anchor at Cocos Keeling, which is quite expensive for an anchorage, and especially one which offers such limited services.

**Facebook Group - December 2015:** Can anyone who left via Sunda Strait who stopped at Cocos Keeling let us know if there was any problem with food stuffs being confiscated. We want to stock up before we leave Malaysia but don't want to loose it all when we stop at Cocos. Thank you.

Ans 1: Stock up before you leave Malaysia and Indonesia. Food is more expensive on Cocos. Beer and wine are available. The cost of entry was I recall \$au50 for a Council fee. Fantastic place.

Ans 2: We stopped this year and no problem - officials not interested. Just thought - if you have time, Batavia Sunda Kelapa Marina is good at Jakarta and anchoring at Krakatoa opposite Anak Krakatoa is also good - you may know this already.

Ans 3 Its fine to take anything. Just remember there is no rubbish disposal and your not meant to dispose on the islands. Carrying your rubbish 2000nm across the Indian Ocean to Rodrigues is maybe the biggest issue. I believe Christmas island has similar rules to Cocos but you CAN dispose there.

PS - Alcohol in Christmas Island is very cheap... cheaper and more accessible than Cocos... worth the detour if you want to stock up.

It took us only four days making a fast, spray-splashed passage to Cocos Keeling Island from Sunda Strait.

**Yindee Plus – Sep 2015:** As we approached Coco's 12 mile territorial limit on 29th August, in the pitch dark of a moon-less night , we were startled by the VHF radio coughing into life. Border control force vessel "Ocean Shield" had us on its radar and was monitoring our actions. We were back in Australia! Within seconds of the anchor being down, we were boarded by the small police launch and officially cleared in, with efficiency and smiles.

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**Nine of Cups – September 2014:** Per instructions, we called the Australian Federal Police a couple of hours out to advise them of our arrival. All good, they'd check us in at 2pm tomorrow and we were free to leave the boat prior to that if we wished.

The Cocos Keeling are low-lying islands, but finally about 10 miles out, when we reached the crest of a wave, we spotted a long expanse of palm trees, seemingly growing right out of the ocean depths. We were still showing 6,000 (1,845m) foot depths and there, just in front of us a few miles, were islands lush with palm trees. We slogged our way into the wide atoll opening between Horsburgh Island and Direction Island, not quite enjoying the cold, wet sting of the waves as they now slapped the side of the boat and rose up, thoroughly drenching us each time.

It was dusk as we rounded the end of Direction Island and watched the depth meter go dramatically from “unreadable – too deep” to 40 feet (12m) in seconds. It was that dramatic. Our electronic charts seemed spot on and the flashing lights shown on our charts were functional. Hallelujah! A small ship was anchored in Port Refuge. We passed by and headed east towards a more suitable depth for Nine of Cups. There is an inner lagoon for sailboats, but the area is dotted with coral heads and negotiating this area at night was not advisable without knowledge of the waters. We were content to drop the hook in 22 feet (6.7m) and call it a day. Even though it was dusk, the water was so clear, I could see our anchor hit the sand on the bottom and coral patches seemed easily distinguished. Dropping the hook, seeing the anchor dig in and finally turning off the engine provided a wonderful satisfaction and relief. A few days R&R (that’s repair and regroup) were definitely in order.

We were close enough to the inner lagoon anchorage to count the boats at anchor there ... 20! How could this be? This late in the season, we were expecting to have the place mostly to ourselves ... perhaps a few other boats, but a whole fleet? Even after we were comfortably anchored, we noted two other sailboats arriving. One was flying a discernible burgee ... the ARC! We had checked weather, currents, regulations, things to see and do. We had not checked to see if there were any rallies scheduled to stop in the Cocos.

The ARC, a renowned around-the-world rally from hell, is one of those things that are fun for the those participating and directly benefiting, but definitely not enjoyable for those on the sidelines. They tend to monopolize the anchorages, the services and the locals wherever they stop, leaving non-rally boats at a disadvantage. We plan to find out where they’re heading ... this might be a passage-altering occurrence.

Back to the arrival ... it was pretty much dark when David finished tidying up the deck and I finished de-hurricaneing the saloon and starting dinner. We’ll have to await morning to get our first real glimpse of the Cocos Keeling Islands. BUT ... we’re here!

**Next Day** - We woke late for us (0715), early for Cocos Keeling (0545) ... we’ve grabbed the 1-1/2 hour time zone change without a hitch. After a remarkably calm and peaceful night, despite the howling wind, we were all ready to embrace our new surroundings and get to work on the to-do list. First things first, however ... I made a coffee cake and we sat in the cockpit to enjoy it along with our morning cuppa. We do have priorities on Nine of Cups.

The wind continues to scream, but still, sitting in the cockpit was a delight. We are surrounded by startlingly clear and vibrant turquoise blue water. It almost hurts your eyes, it’s that dazzling. We can see zillions of palm trees on Direction Island, in front of which all the rally boats are anchored. Home Island, the home of the resident Cocos Malay people is about 1.5 miles away and quite clear. West Island, the administrative center, airport and ex-pat Aussie hangout is quite hazy and about 5 miles away across the lagoon. We saw a pod of dolphins swimming near

the boat this morning. Supposedly the swimming, snorkeling and diving are great here on calmer days though the dolphins didn't seem to mind the wind in the least.

We had thought to move into the inner lagoon in the lee of Direction Island today, but at least four more rally boats have arrived and only one has left to our knowledge, which makes for an even more crowded anchorage. We decided we were comfortable enough where we were in Port Refuge for the time being. Besides, the wind was still blowing consistently near 30 knots and we wouldn't be launching the dinghy today ... more akin to flying a kite. We're content to be captive aboard Nine of Cups till the winds settle down (and maybe some of the boats leave the anchorage). There's definitely plenty to keep us busy.

The Federal Police never showed up today to check us in ... perhaps too windy even for them or too busy with all the ARC boats?

**3 days later...**After 10 days at sea and three days captive on Cups, it was time to make a break no matter how windy it was. We heard there was a ferry from Direction Island to West Island twice a week at 0830. We planned for the Thursday ferry and wanted to get to the island in plenty of time to catch it. The night before, we waited for what we thought sounded like a calm period and launched the dinghy which predictably wanted to fly away.

The morning was very windy ... how surprising... with a good chop on the water. David bailed remnants of torrential rains during the night from the dinghy and fueled up. We're still in the outer anchorage as no boats have left, so our trip was a 15-minute soaking wet one to the ferry dock. We had a dry bag packed with one of our laptops and a stick with photos to send to Gentry. No internet for two weeks has been a difficult challenge. The things we become accustomed to that soon become "necessities".

Once ashore, we beached the dinghy on a fine sand beach and got our first look at Direction Island. Oh my, the island was a sight to behold. Several covered picnic areas looked inviting. There were hammocks strung between palm trees, a large cistern for catching rainwater, paths in all directions and the familiar tropical sound of a feral rooster crowing somewhere off amidst the thick stand of palm trees. We were delighted to discover there was a pay-for-use internet hotspot right on Direction Island. We canned the ferry idea in favor of setting up our internet headquarters right here.

As always, things are easier said than done. We were able to access the Cocos Island Wifi system without a hitch. We filled in all the required info on the form and then it transferred us to PayPal to pay.

In the meantime, however, we took a good look at the anchorage area. We counted 28 boats, 18 with ARC burgees waving. We noticed a couple of boats had left ... one, in particular, from a primo spot. Maybe it was time to move into the lagoon.

We launched the dinghy and sloshed our way back to the boat ... much quicker with wind and waves behind us. We were so wet from the ride in, it made little difference. We had noted a couple of bommies on our way back and made a mental note to avoid them with Cups. As soon as we started the engine and began hoisting the anchor, the Federal Police showed up. They were cool ... "Go anchor and we'll catch up with you in awhile."

A 10-minute, .6 nm move into the lagoon and what a difference. We anchored in 14' (4m) of the most brilliant turquoise water there ever was with an unadulterated view of palm trees ashore. I



watched as the anchor dug in, I let out scope and the chain pulled taut. The friendly Federal Police showed up within a few minutes, apologized for the mix-up and completed paperwork in record time.

The best news of all? With our trusty old Alfa antenna, we can pick up the wifi signal on the boat AND I found the PayPal password. Life is good.

**A few? Days later:** The winds were down and the sun was bright as we dinghied across the lagoon to Home Island. We skirted around bommies in a zigzag pattern and finally connected with the channel into Home's little harbor. The shallow waters prevent supply ships from entering. We'd watched for two days in the outer anchorage while a ship had unloaded supplies with a crane onto a lighter and a barge and then reloaded empty containers.

We passed the ferry dock and jetty and beached the dinghy on the foreshore. We climbed up to the main road, a brick-paved, single lane thoroughfare which was perfect for the quads and motor bikes that everyone seemed to be driving here. As we approached the jetty, we saw the Welcome to Home Island sign and an info kiosk with an island map.

The map and several signposts directed us to the Shire Council's office. We needed to pay our anchoring fees to the shire ... \$50/week. Like many other small island communities we've visited, the pace was slow and things were laid back. That said, the payment process was computerized and they accepted credit cards. No complaints.

We had passed the island museum on the way in and inquired as to the opening hours.

"I'll give you the key", said the young Cocos Malay woman. And just like that, we had access to the museum.

Housed in an old white-washed brick copra storage building, the museum was small, one large room, in fact, but it held some interesting items and provided some background information on the Cocos Malay population. I was particularly intrigued with shadow puppetry which is an entertainment art they're working to revive here. The Clunies-Ross family, the owners of the old copra plantation, did everything possible to maintain the isolation of their workers, forbidding fraternization with visitors or even use of communications. Having left their homeland generations before, much of their culture, including their language, has morphed into a unique Cocos Island culture and only recently have they had the opportunity to explore their roots.

We had also asked the shire office for a recommendation for lunch.

"It's Friday ... nothing is open today for lunch", she explained. "On Friday, we only work a half day and everything closes. You might try the supermarket for some fruit."

Hmm ... all restaurants closed on Fridays and evidently throughout the weekend, because why would anyone want to eat out over the weekend? This is island life. We headed to the tiny Shamrok Supermarket. Though there wasn't much in the way of freshies and the frozen food section was pretty empty, I was glad to see that civilization had indeed come to Cocos ... there on the shelf were Hello Kitty and Angry Bird animal crackers. We passed on those in favor of a couple of apples for lunch.

We wandered along well-worn paths, past rows of pre-fab houses with antennas stuck on the roofs.

The Clunies-Ross family had built Oceania House during the heyday of the copra industry. The remains of the building still exist although a new Oceania House, which looks to be a luxurious place, is in the process of being built. The walls of the old estate are crumbling and little is left.

The cemetery was at the northern end of the island and we decided to dinghy north along the shore for a visit rather than walking. The graveyard was a beautiful, serene clearing, well-tended and cared for. Cocos Malay grave markers incorporate an Islamic motif on each grave. Many were draped with the traditional scarf worn by the women. Some had umbrellas and some tiny canopies to protect the graves from the sun and elements.

We also found the family burial site of the Clunies-Ross family dating from the mid-19th century.

The tide was low and we pushed and pulled the dinghy quite a ways offshore before finding enough water to set down the engine. We passed tiny Prison Island, the island to which Alexander Hare and his seraglio of women were relegated, and thought about a stop there, but the entrance was too shallow at the moment and decided to leave it till another day.

A 20-minute ride around those same coral heads and we were back at Cups, hot and dusty from our little excursion ashore. Once again, the turquoise blue water invited us to cool off and relax. A refreshing dip, a sundowner in the cockpit, dinner and a movie. Really ... it doesn't get much better. It really doesn't.

**Three Ships – May 2014:** The trade winds blew strongly overhead, but the holding was good and so was the company. The following day the French yachts Huahine, Alibi and Yovo arrived.

The Australian police arrived shortly afterwards and checking in proved to be unusually easy – considering we were in Australia – assisted no doubt by the fact that we had taken the trouble to obtain Australian visas in advance.

Cocos was a delightful place with excellent snorkelling in the rip at the north end of the island.

Provisions were expensive, since all **fresh produce** arrives twice weekly by air, and the Malays on Home Island should be treated with some circumspection.

One lady agreed to do our **laundry** – this is us trying to contribute to the local economy – and when it came back her husband tried to charge us \$200 for the 8kg load. Needless to say a long discussion, which nearly resulted in us calling the police, ensued before the matter was settled – but the lesson was learned.

**Gryphon – May 2014 – A Week at Cocos Keeling:** 09/05/2014 at 08:00 we arrived at this jewel of an atoll to a welcoming committee of 5 dolphins that raised our spirits after the long night watches. Frank from Tahina, who arrived last evening, welcomed us into the anchorage which we had carefully negotiated as the waters in the atoll are chock full of coral heads and reef. We anchored in 5 metres having found a spot between coral heads (bombies) and close to Direction Island. Our next welcome party was 3 black tipped reef sharks that quickly took up residence at the stern just by the swim ladder and have decided that Gryphon II is home.

We really wanted sun to highlight the kaleidoscope of colours here and the water which is every shade of turquoise in the palette but there has been little of that. The week has been plagued by prolific rainstorms and strong winds at a fairly constant 20 – 25 knots but sometimes reaching 34 knots. The decks have been well cleaned by these rainstorms interspersed with showers.

Swimming from the boat has been difficult as the water has been too rough for it to be enjoyable but we are just 5 minutes from the beach where the shallow water is calmer.

**Later...** The snorkelling is very good here as the coral is in good condition and there are plenty of fish. One of the most exciting places is The Rip which is a channel where the sea rushes through a low part of the reef between two islands and into the lagoon.

The water is gin clear. There is no litter on the islands or debris in the lagoon; there is some flotsam and jetsam on the ocean side of the Islands, mostly natural driftwood and coconuts with the odd flip flop or bottle but other than that Cocos is as clean as a whistle.

During hours of respite from the wind and rain we have managed to get to Home Island thanks to Frank and Karen whose catamaran Tahina can carry an 8 man dinghy with a really powerful outboard. The lagoon is sometimes so rough it would be dangerous to take ours so shopping would be almost impossible. From Home Island we were able to take a ferry to West Island but there is little there, in fact the total population of Home and West islands is less than 900 with the majority living on Home Island. Two of the days it was slightly less boisterous so our dinghy could be used to get diesel in jerry cans but only one person could travel in it, it was like a roller-coaster flipping off the top of the waves.

We have explored Direction Island a little more, it is largely coconut grove from previous plantation days but there is a healthy stock of chickens which wander about all over the place presumably having got here from Home Island and a huge population of hermit crabs. Each time we visit we swim from the beach, the water is warmer in these shallows.

Direction Island anchorage has provided shelter for yachties over many years and visiting boats have left their mark just as we have by carving their boat names into various materials from driftwood to a Formica shelf or a flip flop.

We checked out of Cocos yesterday and thankfully at 07:30 this morning had a high and rising tide to see us through the reefs.

Our waypoints for getting out, and in case anyone wants to use them in reverse for getting in, were:

- 12 05.441S 96 52.947E at anchor, then
- 12 05.470S 96 52.948E,
- 12 05.788S 96 52.660E leaving the triangular green marker very close to port where water is deepest over the reef,
- 12 05.554S 96 52.284E,
- 12 05.338S 96 52.109E
- 12 04.653S 96 51.524E - taking us out of the lagoon, passing Port Refuge between Direction and Horsburgh Islands and into open sea.

For those going in to the anchorage it is best done in daylight although we know a catamaran that entered at night but we also know a mono-hull that touched bottom during a daylight entry as the tide was too low. There is a place before the reefs to anchor and wait either for tide or daylight.

We knew it would be fairly rough out of the lagoon as the weather has been so poor at Cocos but the sea was in a furore and the wind was capping 28 knots as we left the land behind. By 10:00 the wind was down to 22+ knots and the seas settled slightly to give a 3 metre swell with lots of white horses from steep breaking waves and with heavy slapping at the hull.

## **15.2 Things to Do**

### **15.2.1 Ferry to West Island**

**Alyosha – June 2018:** Cocos Keeling is very nice, a great little community here, and we are anchored off “Direction Island” which has the very best swimming beach in the atoll. However, the logistics of Cocos are definitely a challenge- we aren’t even able to really get dinner anywhere because the last ferry to West Island (about 3nm and plenty of shallow reefs away) leaves for our island at 4pm. Additionally, we are resigned to multiple diesel runs today and tomorrow (always around high tide) and refueling Alyosha is going to take at least 5 trips!

**Nine of Cups – September 2014:** It’s almost time to leave the Cocos and we still hadn’t taken the ferry to the other side of the lagoon to visit West Island. It’s the ex-pat Australian side of the atoll, the Admin Center, the larger supermarket AND the place we needed to visit to check out and get our clearance papers. We consulted the ferry schedule and there were no ferries from Direction Island until Thursday, so we dinghied over to Home Island, tied the dinghy securely to the long pier and planned to catch the ferry from there.

As it turned out the Federal Police were on Home Island for the day and we were able to check out there which was quite convenient. It was a quick, efficient, painless procedure to get our clearance papers for Rodrigues and our passports stamped. Plenty of time to still catch the 10:30 ferry to West Island. We met up with some German cruising friends and boarded the ferry for the 20 minute ride, bought our tickets for \$2.50 each and enjoyed a very old Tom & Jerry cartoon en route.

I’m not sure what we expected West Island to be ... the big smoke of the Cocos, I guess. We caught a mini-bus at the end of the jetty for a 7km ride into “town”. The supermarket took up a small portion of the Cocos Shop pre-fab facility ... the other shops were closed. It didn’t offer much more than the Shamrok market at Home Island. I bought a couple of onions, a cabbage and some apples ... that was about it. We did see, however, “Bun Spice” which caught our attention. After a long passage, perhaps this might be considered an essential.

Though Wednesday was the big shopping day, nothing seemed open. We found the small Info Center and learned there were two places open for lunch ... from 11:30 to 1pm only. We chose the more casual (and less expensive) Tropika which was a basic burger and chips kind of place with a lovely covered porch out back facing the ocean. The views were great. The food was mediocre, but David’s “cheeseburger in Paradise” was just what the doctor ordered.

Other than a few souvenir items at the Info Center, there was nothing to buy. We indulged in a Magnum ice cream as we checked out the Cocos airport. The golf club is right next to the airport and evidently in order to play through all nine holes, the golfers must play across the runway.

After looking at a few more pretty views, we settled down to wait 1-1/2 hours for the return bus to the ferry dock. We’d seen pretty much all we could see that was open and available here. Most of West Island seems to be dedicated to tourism ... motels, guest houses, car and sports

equipment rentals, tours. Quite the disappointment. We had expected a bit more. Home Island with its resident Malay population offers more “village charm”. But, heck, you couldn’t visit the Cocos without at least making a trip to West Island to make sure you weren’t missing anything.

We watched the ferry arriving just as we got off the bus. We bought our tix and had an uneventful ride back to Home Island. The dinghy was just as we’d left it. We clambered down from the jetty and headed back to Cups. We had lots to do to get ready for our departure.

## **16 Rodrigues Island (Southern Route)**

**Slip Away –June 18 to July 20, 2018:** Rodrigues Island is part of the Mascarene Archipelago, a small group of islands which also includes Mauritius and Réunion.

Rodrigues is an autonomous outer island of the small Republic of Mauritius, located in the Southern Indian Ocean. It was discovered and named by the Portuguese explorer, Diego Rodriguez in 1528. It was originally settled and colonized by the French, but then ruled by the British from 1809 until Mauritius gained independence in 1968.

Although ruled by the British for over 150 years, French influence remains on the island, including the pronunciation of its name - "Rod Reeg." Most of the inhabitants are Creole - mixed African and European descent - and the population here numbers just over 40,000.

The capital of the island is Port Mathurin, and all cruising yachts are required to check in and complete formalities with officials at that location. Port Mathurin is essentially the only safe harbor for cruising yachts - a couple of smaller anchorages on the other side of the island are difficult to enter and don't offer good protection from the trade winds. The island is surrounded by reefs, but Port Mathurin has a well-marked, dredged channel and has a commercial wharf which is visited by a supply ship every week to 10 days.

**Noonsite – September 2016:** An outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in Rodrigues and Mauritius has resulted in a strict ban on certain products being exported from these islands and imported into other countries.

Foot and mouth disease is a highly contagious disease that affects animals, with severe health and economic consequences for farms. There has recently been an outbreak of the disease in the islands of Rodrigues and Mauritius.

Increased vigilance is required for travelers to and from these islands.

All meat and meat-related products (Including sandwiches and leftovers), milk and milk-related products and untreated hides from any of these countries will be confiscated and destroyed.

Yachts arriving in Reunion or Rodrigues will be thoroughly searched, and even any sealed, unopened products purchased elsewhere will be removed.

Similar searches of yachts are likely to be implemented in all the affected countries.

Foot and Mouth disease does not affect humans.

**Nine of Cups Oct 2014:** Rodrigues, pronounced the French way by the locals as Rod-reeg, was discovered and named by the Portuguese explorer, Diego Rodriguez, in 1528. It was originally settled by French Huguenots fleeing France to escape religious persecution. The

French subsequently colonized the island and, though it was ruled by the British from 1809 till its independence in 1968, it remains very French.

From the moment we passed through the port gate onto the street, we were charmed. We were reminded of the French Caribbean islands, especially Martinique, as we saw the colorful shops and French signs and narrow streets. There was no doubt in our minds, we were going to enjoy Rodrigues.

I think Rodrigues will be a photographer's heaven. There are neat old buildings along each narrow street, some hopelessly abandoned, others with colorful murals on them. It's a very third world place with lots of friendly, smiling faces and a laid-back attitude. Tomorrow is the big weekly market and we're looking forward to it.

### ***16.1 Approach, Arrival, and Formalities***

**Slip Away –June 18 to July 20, 2018:** Port Mathurin is essentially the only safe harbor for cruising yachts - a couple of smaller anchorages on the other side of the island are difficult to enter and don't offer good protection from the trade winds. The island is surrounded by reefs, but Port Mathurin has a well-marked, dredged channel and has a commercial wharf which is visited by a supply ship every week to 10 days.

Cruising yachts are allowed to tie up to the wharf for free when there is not a supply ship in port, or they can anchor in the turning basin off the wharf. When the supply ship came in, all cruising yachts were required to vacate the wharf and turning basin while the supply ship docked or undocked. During that exercise, the yachts moved to a temporary anchorage just outside the dredged channel.

Upon arrival at Port Mathurin, cruising yachts are encouraged to tie up to the commercial wharf to complete check-in formalities, but it was full when we arrived, so we anchored. The wharf is a concrete wall with big tires and other black rubber fenders on it. We were not particularly enthused with the idea of tying up there, so we were quite happy to anchor. Charlotte was the only other boat in the anchorage when we arrived, so there was plenty of room for us. A week prior to our arrival, there were a dozen boats (most of whom had arrived from the Chagos archipelago) in the anchorage, and space was pretty tight at that time, but they had moved on.

We arrived mid-afternoon, and shortly after we dropped our hook, the port police came out to Slip Away in their launch and brought the health and quarantine officer with them. We filled out some paperwork for them, and they asked us to come ashore as soon as possible to complete our check-in with Customs and Immigration. It was mid-afternoon, and we were pretty knackered after our passage and asked if we could complete our check-in in the morning, but they insisted that we come ashore that afternoon.

At that point, we should have asked the Port Police for a ride to shore - they were a couple of young guys who were very eager to provide assistance - but we were not thinking clearly. We let them go and set about launching our dinghy. Normally, launching the dinghy from the davits on the stern of Slip Away is a fairly simple operation, but we had deflated and stowed the dinghy on the bow for this passage because we were concerned about the possibility of a big wave ripping the dinghy off the stern. So, we unlashd the dinghy, cleared out the dead squid and flying fish which had accumulated on our passage, pumped it up, launched it over the side, put

the fuel tank and seat in place, and were about to put the outboard on it when we looked at the sky and saw very large threatening black clouds approaching.

We called the Port Police and explained to them that we felt it wouldn't be prudent to leave our boat at anchor with a storm threatening. A few minutes later, they called us back and said they would bring the Immigration Officer out to us. By the time they arrived at Slip Away with the Immigration Officer, it was almost dark and bucketing down rain. The Immigration Officer was a beautiful and sweet young woman, and the young police officers obviously adored her. They had her wrapped in a rain jacket and helped her aboard Slip Away. She had never been on a sailboat before, so while Rich filled out paperwork, Jan showed her around the boat. She needed to take our passports ashore to her office to stamp them and record some information, and when she completed that task, the police officers brought them back out to us - still in the pouring rain. We thanked them with a couple of cold beers. These young officers were really delightful.

The big rainstorm on the evening we arrived was perfect because it washed the accumulated salt off Slip Away. We sat in our cockpit in the pouring rain, celebrated our arrival with a couple of beers and slept like the dead that night. The next morning, we went ashore and found the Customs Officer to finish our check in - this small island sure required a lot of paperwork!

When we were finished with our paperwork, a local man named Harry introduced himself to us and offered to take us to lunch and show us around town. Harry is a tug-boat captain and a sort of self-appointed ambassador. He loves meeting the sailors who visit Rodrigues and makes it a point to welcome each and every one to the island. Rodrigues is known among sailors as the friendliest island in the Indian Ocean, a reputation which is well deserved.

Visiting Rodrigues is like taking a step back in time to a small rural island with a laid back atmosphere. The island boasts a number of hiking trails, a good fresh produce market and a bakery with fresh baguettes daily. For us, it was the perfect place to hang out for a while, and we stayed for a month.

During our first week on the island, we had opportunities to socialize with some of the other sailors who were here, but after that, most of them had moved on. A few other boats came and went during our time here, but s.v. Charlotte was the only other boat that lingered as long as us, and we really enjoyed spending time with Sue & Stefan.

Life was quite good here, but of course the day came when we needed to move on.

As friendly and helpful as the folks were in Rodrigues, the officials were sticklers about a few rules, which made life a little more difficult than necessary for the sailing community.

**Departure:** When we were ready to move on to our next port, once we completed our departure paperwork, we were required to leave Port Mathurin within an hour. Given the distance between Rodrigues and our next port of call - Port Louis on Mauritius - the ideal time to depart was at first light, so that one could arrive at Port Louis just before dark two days later. Leaving any later than first light essentially guaranteed an arrival at Port Louis in the dark. Also, the officials did not work on weekends, so if the perfect weather window appeared on a Saturday or Sunday, that was too bad.

Yachties have been lobbying the government officials for a change to these rules for years, but things are slow to change on islands like Rodrigues. (Most other countries give yachts 24-48 hours to depart after clearance paperwork is completed.)

**Brick House – June 2018:** We arrived at 730pm at night, about 10miles off of Rodrigues. We felt a little sad to end the passage so we didn't go to the outside anchorage...we just hove to 10 miles off, put on all our lights, and lots of alarms and went to sleep, sort of. At 3am we had a sailboat approaching us...Tina Princess...and we were not sure they saw us, so we then carried on the remaining 10 miles, communicated with the Rodrigues Coast Guard about our arrival details, waited 10 minutes or so before receiving clearance to come in to the harbor and in we went.

Clearance at the wharf was fast and efficient. Cost was about \$60 payable in local currency at our convenience (we paid about 3 days later). The wharf and anchorage is safe and secure...no issues with thieves or other. The locals don't swim because the port authority doesn't allow it due to Bull sharks in the past. So there are no kids swimming to the boat or other. At the wharf, no locals walk there due to 24 hour security at the gate. And it seems to not be in Rodrigues society to bother boats anyways--very nice welcoming people here. Mostly French and Creole are spoken, but plenty of English too.

The conditions in the anchorage ... well protected. Gets windy at time but anchors eventually dig in and everyone seems to hold. But plenty drag isn't he first few hours as it take a but for the anchor to settle in. The movement in and out of the harbor every week or so is kind of a pain in the butt...but it's worth it to be in this little gem...and at a wharf for no charge! We will be leaving next week, almost exactly 1 month after we got here!

**Alba – June 2017:** Alba is leaving Rodrigues tomorrow, heading for Port Louis in Mauritius. We've had a great 2-1/2 weeks here in Rodrigues, despite a week of very strong winds and squalls.

The main anchorage (19:40.72S 063:25.19E) is just off the commercial dock and is a dredged turning basin for the large cargo ships that visit the island every week. The anchorage is about 240 meters diameter, 10 metres deep and surrounded by drying reef, so you don't want to drag very far.

The holding is "interesting". I think that the sea bed is soft mud over a hard clay, so at first we had difficulty getting the anchor to hold because we were too aggressive in backing our anchor in. The sea bed has garbage in the mud, so if you "plough" your anchor, you are likely to pick up something. This happened to us on our first attempt when we picked up an old cement sack.

The technique that worked for us was to back the anchor in lightly; let it settle into the mud for half an hour; and then back it in hard. The anchorage is 10 metres deep and we always had at least 50 metres of chain out. Several boats dragged in the 30+ knot squalls, but we never moved.

We had strong 20-25 knot South-east winds for a week and the anchorage is subject to strong katabatic winds that howl down from the surrounding hills - the winds go from 10 knots to 30+ knots in seconds causing boats to veer about and snatch at their anchor...

When the ship is out, there's the option of going alongside the commercial dock. Only a few boats stayed there for more than a night or two. Apart from the normal problems of huge black



fenders and the one metre tidal range, the strong winds created quite a surge in the bay and boats were snatching at their mooring lines. Boats were also getting covered by black dirt blowing onto their decks.

The cargo ship comes in roughly once a week and all boats have to vacate both the commercial dock and the inner anchorage. The outer anchorage is at 19:40.09S 063:25.85E and is good holding sand about 15 metres. However, in strong south-east or east winds, a big swell gets across the fringing reef and it can be roly. As soon as the ship is docked, there is an undignified rush back into the inner anchorage - it's like the Wacky Races (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1cnit1irjY> ). The cargo ship stays for a couple of days and then you have to get out again...

Clearing in and out is a doddle. You can only enter the port in daylight. The coast guard will contact all the officials on your arrival. Health and Coastguard come out to the boat. Customs and Immigration will meet you in a small office in the port entrance. You have to pay about \$30US for Health Clearance and pay overtime on Saturday afternoon or any time on Sunday.

You have to clear out to go to Mauritius, where you will get another visa stamp in your passport - goodness knows why, it's the same country. Checkout is easy - arrange a time for Customs and Immigration and they will meet you in the small office in the port entrance.

The town and people are lovely - very friendly and the place reminds us of the French islands in the West Indies. We've done a couple of nice coastal hikes by catching buses which run every 30 minutes or so throughout the day. Locally, there's a pleasant walk up to the cross overlooking town and a longer hike up to the top of the island. We hired a motorbike for a day and visited the excellent tortoise sanctuary.

It's worth enduring the passage to Rodrigues. You've GOT to try the Dhall Puri on Roti which the street vendors sell and the local speciality of Dried Octopus is interesting...

Our blog gives more detail:

<http://www.thehowarths.net/alba-chronicles/2017-indian-ocean/527-june-2017-rodriques-mauritius>

**Flomaida – May 2016:** We arrived safely in Rodrigues on Monday, May 2nd, after 1360 nm from Gan. We were sailing about 70% of the distance, sailing first south from Gan, passed Chagos at the east coast and went down to 13°S. Here we found the ESE trade and turned SW rhumb line to Rodrigues. Coast Guard gave permission via VHF 16 to come in to the harbor. We moored at the main Jetty, administration was done in one hour, but with a huge amount of paper work. We enjoy the island, the friendly people and the civilization after 3 month of lonely islands and reefs. We are the first yacht here in 2016 and are planning to stay 2 more weeks to explore more of the island. The town is small, restaurants are available, super market and shops, also the harbor is safe.

**FB Group – August 2016:** From a friend in Rodrigues we heard the sad news of the foot and mouth disease detected on the island. More than 500 animals have been slaughtered, a real loss to many of the small scale cattle owners. What also upset us is the following comment by Mauritius Agro Industry and Food Security Minister Mahen Seeruttun. "The exact cause of the transmission of the disease in Rodrigues is not yet known", Seeruttun said, adding that "we suspect the virus was carried to the island through infected meat carried by travellers using

yachts.” We wonder on what he bases that suspicion? Hope it will not affect 2017 cruisers when checking into Rodrigues!

A few days later, several cruisers reported having all their meat and cheese confiscated on arrival no matter the origin of the products.

**Crystal Blues – August 2015:** *Ed note: Crystal Blues created a PDF file for the Rodrigues Port office and has posted it on their blog for you to download. But just in case you’re already at sea and haven’t downloaded it, I have included it below.*

We wish you a very pleasant stay on beautiful Rodrigues Island. Cruising sailors are very welcome here.

To assist with your orientation, this document provides some basic information relating to your visit.

Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact the Port Captain’s office, in the building at the western end of the quay. Security staff can direct you to the office.

Best wishes,

Port Captain and Staff  
Port Mathurin, Rodrigues

#### 1.0 Arrival Procedures

After anchoring or berthing at the wharf, you should stay on board your vessel until all formalities are completed. The Q flag should be displayed until clearance has been given by the health officer. Official inspections will be undertaken by Health, Customs, Immigration and Coastguard.

Visitors may request up to 12 weeks visa on arrival, though time spent here in Rodrigues is deducted from the allowance if you continue to Mauritius. Once all four services have approved you may leave your vessel.

#### 2.0 Berthing

Vessels may anchor in the harbor (turning basin) or lie alongside the wharf, with starboard side tie up only please. However all vessels must be prepared to relocate for periodic visits by the large supply ship from Mauritius, approximately every seven to ten days.

For the ship arrival, most vessels are required to move out into Mathurin Bay, but they may re-anchor in the harbor after the ship has berthed. This procedure is repeated for the ship’s departure. Once the ship has departed the wharf may be used once again. The Port Captain will advise the dates of arrival and departure.

#### 3.0 VHF Radio Watch

Please keep watch on VHF Channel 16 and use channels 9 and 17 for conversations. Do not use channels 18 or 74 – these are prohibited channels.

#### 4.0 Going Ashore

The port and dock area is a security zone, with 24 hour guard and extensive CCTV surveillance. Yacht crew may only enter and exit the port through the pedestrian gate at the western end of the dock. Security staff may request identification and personal details for port records.

Visitors to vessels in the port must have a security pass to enter the port area – this can be requested in advance through the Port Captain's office, before 3:00pm each day.

#### 5.0 Water Supply

You can refill your tanks from the white rain water tank on the quay, at the eastern end of the cargo shed. Please understand that water is a very scarce resource in Rodrigues. Do not waste water, do not use it for washing your boat !

#### 6.0 Garbage Disposal

Garbage bins are provided just outside the pedestrian security gate, close to the street.

Please note that supermarket plastic bags are strictly prohibited on the island, so you must always take your own shopping bags to market and the stores in town.

#### 7.0 Laundry

The lady cleaner at the port office can take in your laundry for personal attention. Ask for Adelle in the ground floor office.

#### 8.0 Fuel Supply

You can obtain fuel supplies by jerry can by taking your dinghy up the small estuary at the western end of the port. The fuel filling station is on the left hand side going upstream, just before the bridge. It is easier to do this at high tide. Bulk diesel fuel can be delivered by tanker truck to the quayside, for a minimum of 1000 liters.

#### 9.0 Shopping & Markets

Most stores and markets open early, usually by 8:00am, and are closed by 4:00pm. Many close earlier on Saturdays. Most are closed completely on Sundays.

#### 10.0 Banking & Cash

Four main banks are situated within 10 minute walk of the quay. Most have ATM machines for cash withdrawal. Money can be exchanged at the banks.

#### 11.0 Telephone Services

Two cellular telephone service providers are available. Both have offices in the Port Mathurin business area. You may purchase pre-paid SIM cards and also sign up for pre-paid 3G or 4G cellular data services.

#### 12.0 Church Services

Mass for Roman Catholics is on Saturday at 17:00hrs and on Sunday at 07:00hrs. There is also a weekday mass at 07:00hrs Monday through Friday.

#### 13.0 Departure Procedures

You must advise Port Control at least 24 hours prior to departure. Clearance procedures will require attendance with Immigration, Coast Guard & Customs. Vessels should depart the port immediately after clearance is completed.

#### Emergency Contact Details

Port Captain 831-1626 VHF CH16 (business hours)

Police Coast Guard 831-2182 VHF & HF, 24x7

Civil Police 831-0154

Immigration 831-0654

Customs 832-1339 or 832-1340

Hospital 831-1628

**Nine of Cups – Oct 2014:** We contacted Rodrigues Port Control about two hours out and received permission to enter the harbor. We'd heard another boat announce its arrival just before we set sail, so we wouldn't be the only new kids in town.

As we approached about 3 miles offshore, the island features began to take shape. Mangroves fringed the shore. Further up the hillside, a copse of trees contrasted sharply with large areas of tawny brown. The highest ridge of the island succumbed to black volcanic rock. We could see a small town close to the water, houses clustered close together, and several houses dotted the hills sporadically. A red and white tower sat upon the hill and wind turbines were busy churning out power for the islander.

The island is surrounded with reefs. We aligned Cups with the leading marks to enter the outer harbor, then caught sight of the red/green markers delineating the channel. The water changed color rapidly from dark blue to turquoise as we lost depth. We spotted masts, but had to maneuver through the coral ...a dogleg to the left and then to the right, before we reached the inner harbor.

The supply ship/ferry was docked and the harbor seemed quite small. Six boats were already at anchor and finding a good spot out of the channel took a couple of tries. Before we had even set the anchor, a dinghy of officials was hovering around us waiting to board.

After the officials all left, we were content to sit in the cockpit, drink a cuppa and get a feel for our new neighborhood. The big excitement of the day was that the supply ship/ferry, Mauritius Trochetia, had arrived just before we did and she was unloading. All of the yachts that had been tied up to the dock had been required to move off and leave the harbor while the big ship came in, turned around and docked. We arrived, it seems, shortly after six other yachts had returned to the harbor and anchored.

The next morning, the ship's crew had worked the whole night through and the emptied decks were now stacked with containers, huge propane tanks (presumably empty), livestock containers and one marked "luggage". The tugs moved into place and at 0800 sharp, Mauritius Trochetia sounded a blast and began casting off her lines.

As soon as she was in the channel, there was a mad dash by the anchored yachts to claim a space along the dock. We figured we were last in, so we'd wait to see if there was any space available. There wasn't, but no worries. We were happy to stay put.

**Nine of Cups – October 2014 – Departure Formalities:** By 10am, we hurriedly gathered all our paperwork together for our checkout scheduled at 10:30 at the Port Captain's office. Captain Gilbert Mallet has been unbelievably helpful and friendly to all of us cruisers. With the supply ship at the dock, all the cruisers tie their dinghies to Albion which is rafted to the tug, Solitaire. It's a scramble getting across the boats and onto land. Customs, Immigration and Coast Guard were waiting for us. Voila.. it was done in a flash.

Technically, once Immigration stamped our passports, we weren't allowed back into the port. Our bad... we should have been more organized and gone to the market early as we did last week. But we didn't and Captain Mallet gracefully forgave our faux pas and let us go to the boulangerie and the market to pick up some last minute things.

**Three Ships – June 2014:** After arriving with some broken rigging, we fixed up some jury-rigged lowers, with spare 8mm wire threaded through the mast secured by numerous clamps, and a few days later were able to continue the 350 miles to Mauritius without any problems.

In the meantime we hired a car and had a look around the island, which was not quite as high and rugged as we had been led to believe but nonetheless provided an excellent coastal walk and some nice touring scenery.

Our berth alongside the ship dock was always going to be of limited duration, and sure enough a day later the harbour master told us that a long-overdue supply ship was imminent, so we decided to leave for Mauritius the following morning.

This meant checking out with immigration, customs, quarantine and the local police – who had taken possession of our spear gun to ensure we didn't kill any fish or rob a bank. Late that afternoon, and with the spear gun safely back on board, we cleared the outer reef as darkness fell and were on our way once more.

**Gryphon – June 2014:** After a hard 2000 mile passage from Cocos Keeling or an even harder passage from Chagos, stopping at Rodrigues is a real tonic before setting out again. The islanders are largely the descendants of African slaves who came here once freed. The majority speak Creole and French but the official language is English so most people do speak some English too. Scenery is stunning and there is some good hiking to be had. The climate is perfect after the heat and humidity of SE Asia and you may even need a duvet at night!

**Approach and Entrance:** By day the approach is straightforward, although older C Maps have a big offset. Newer C maps and Navionics charts are both good. The outer reef can be passed either by the wider Western pass or in good light by the Eastern pass. The Western pass has leading marks that are reportedly difficult to make out, but according to the harbourmaster are lit at night. The entrance through the fringing reef is well marked and clear with lit port and starboard hand markers. The recommendation of the harbour master, if needing to enter at night, is to enter via the Western Pass and anchor overnight outside the fringing reef.

**Mooring/Anchoring:** Yachts are permitted to lie along the main wharf except when the supply boat comes in when they will be asked to move to anchor either outside the channel or if there are only few boats in the corner bounded by reef opposite the dock wall. (10m in mud over coral with good holding). There seem to be no security problems and there is a guard on duty all day but none obvious at night. There are no mooring charges and only a reasonable health fee to pay. The wall is not ideal for yachts but the wind tends to blow the boat away from the wall and the large ugly tyres that decorate it. There can be a little bit of swell at HW but it is not too bad. The water and the wharf are clean.

**Formalities:** One is expected to call the Harbour Master and/or the coastguard before arrival on VHF Ch16. The health, immigration, customs and port authorities will all appear and have you cleared in quickly if with rather a lot of form filling.

## 16.2 Cruiser's Services

**Brick House – June 2018 - Medical:** We went to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Port Mathurin Rodrigues today to have a skin thing looked at...and for dental checkup/cleaning today, since it is free of charge. Long lines but surprisingly fast to get through the lines. However, they do not really want to see anything less than emergencies. For the Skin thing, they told us to do it in Mauritius because the Dermatologist won't be back for 5 months..he comes there twice a year. Regarding the dentist, he told us both our teeth didn't need to be cleaned, and that the machine was broken and expected to remain that way for 3 weeks anyways. He gave us a prescription for some special mouth wash at the pharmacy. There was no charge for seeing the doctor or dentist, nor for the mouthwash. It was an interesting cultural experience to see how a system that offers free health care can be so efficient when there is so little paperwork or payments involved. The Hospital is easy to reach on the "Grand Baie" bus, and costs 35 cents usd. It's up a steep hill. But an easy walk back.

**Brick House – June 2018 – Shipping Stuff In:** Had some parts shipped to Rodrigues via DHL and there were no problems on this end. Value was under \$200. Had "Vessel in Transit/Spare parts" on package. It wasn't an overly big box...maybe a foot by 8 inches, so maybe not worth their while. But there was no insinuation or suggestion of any fees or import duties or other when we picked it up this morning at the DHL office here in Rodrigues. Very happy for that!

Address used was

Rebecca Childress/SV Brick House

C/O ROTOURCO/ DHL Agent

Place Francais Leguat

Port Mathurin, Isle Rodrigues

The phone is (230) 498 2777 or (230) 831 0747

Their email address is [rotourco@intnet.mu](mailto:rotourco@intnet.mu)

Phone number is wrong since Rotourco tried to call ME at the first number...but since traceable on DHL web site I could see when to go get it.

**IO FB Group – July 2016:** Dagmar Hartung: Rodrigues is probably the last hidden jewel in the Indian Ocean. If you like hiking, this is the place to visit. The island is still so unspoiled and people are welcoming and friendly. The whole island seems to live like in a healthy cocoon: no drugs, no alcohol problems, no beggars, nearly no rubbish etc.

Fantastic walkways close to the seaside are well marked. The most spectacular one is to take the bus to Gravieres at 10 am and walk to Pointe cotton (East coast) . Don't miss the grilled porc shops at Madame LaRose at Pointe de cotton. Last bus from there is at 4:30 pm going back to Port Mathurin. You can reach EVERYTHING by bus. Take a bus schedule and a map in the tourist office opposite the post office. The bus terminal is behind the market.

To get Data and a Telefon chip there is a computer shop (he speaks very good english) on the left opposite the street leaving the harbor ( emtel may have the stronger net), further on is also the supermarket and continuing the street you come to a place, where you see different ATM possibilities to your right. The bakery is open from 4:30am till 4pm EVERY DAY. The market is open from Monday to Saturday from 8am till 4pm. Saturday is the best day, specially if you want

to buy meat. On the side street from the market, back to the harbor you can have filled up fresh coconut water, if you bring an empty bottle ( 1,5 l for 75 MUR)

Good food in a very pleasant ambiance you can find " Aux Deux Frères" (closed on Thursday) close to the market. In the same building you can rent a scooter for 650 MUR per day or a car, but it is much more fun to take the bus. All shops close at 4 pm.

Meet Birgit in the Care-Co facility close to the fire fighters not far from the harbour. She has a work shop for the handicapped and loves to show you around. They also produce honey and do beautiful work out of coconut shells. Her husband can help you with computer problems, he is an IT man.

You also should have a look to the Boutique Artisanale close to the market at the corner of the street François Leguat and Paul Elysée. The owner Louis Leclezio will be happy to help you, if you need some work done on the boat. He knows very capable people who can do almost everything. He sells nice souvenirs and knows many lovely stories about the island. His brother is a famous writer and got the nobel price in 2008.

Absolutely a must do is to visit the François Leguat Giant Tortoise and Cave Reserve. This is such a beautiful paradise for Tortoises, far better than the Reserve we visited in the Galapagos.

Don' t miss to have a look to the prison with the nice paintings from the college kids. ( After Baie des Huitres, west of the harbour, you can see it from the anchorage) and walk along the beach towards Anse aux Anglais and see the well groomed grave yard on the way. You also can have a good meal at Blue Marlin or local snacks on the beach.

At low tide take the chance and walk on the reef in front of the harbor together with a fisherman to watch how they find the Octopus. The famous dish here is salade d' ourite ( octopus salad).

I just could go on telling you much more about this amazing island!

So go ahead explore and enjoy! I wish everybody the same great time, we had.

**Silver Girl – April 2016:** Following our dismasting last year we spent 5 months in Rodrigues waiting for repairs. It was a long time to be on such a tiny island but we were overwhelmed with its beauty and the friendliness of the 'locals'. It really is the land 'time forgot' and we would encourage anyone who has the opportunity to visit. We met some wonderful British expats, Tim & Liz Poole, who 'adopted' us - the whole fleet in fact. They are happy for us to post their contact details for anyone who would like to get in touch as they love company and can also provide information about the island, translate etc. Phone is +23057892715 and their email is [ltmpoole@yahoo.com](mailto:ltmpoole@yahoo.com)

### **Yindee Plus – Nov 2015 - Receiving DHL parcels in Rodrigues:**

The Retourco car hire office in Port Mathurin acts as a DHL agent too. Yachts in transit, by law, should be exempt from customs duties and VAT ("the appropriate procedure for the import of the replacement parts for the yacht should be Landing/Shipping under Customs supervision (Regime 80 & 38), whereby duty, if any, and VAT would not be payable" Mr Emamboccus, senior Customs Official).

However, DHL insist on collecting VAT of 15% on each parcel received for yachts. If you try to protest, DHL will send you a generic letter with intimidating suggestions of fines / charges for storage etc.

Mauritius customs have been made aware of the situation.

**Crystal Blues – June 2015:** Crystal Blues has produced an excellent list of cruiser's resources for Rodrigues, and made it into a downloadable PDF file. Here's a link to their blog post and their cruising services directory.

<http://svcrystalblues.blogspot.com/p/cruising-diretories.html>

There is a slipway in Rodrigues that can be used to haul cruising sailboats. The port authority also maintain a large slipway, easily accessed in the creek just west of the harbour.

The railway is used for servicing the local tugboats, so it has plenty of load capacity, though it is not quite deep enough for large keelboats. Metal work and welding can be done by local contractors, though (surprisingly) the site does not have an air compressor for air powered tools.

You would need to supply all your own parts and materials here - there is no local chandlery, any marine items or specialist paints would need to be obtained from Mauritius.

A small workshop at the wharf is kindly made available to cruisers when not in use by the tug crews.

**Hardware stores** in Port Mathurin can supply most common tools and fasteners, and we were able to purchase pop rivets to re-fasten our boom bag track.

**Fuel** is easily obtained in jerry cans from the nearby filling station, a short dinghy ride from the harbour. Larger quantities can be delivered by tanker truck right to the wharf, for a minimum 1000 liter order. We collaborated with several other boats to arrange a tanker truck, and pumped clean fuel straight into our tanks.

As confirmed "oldies" (I turned 60 just two weeks ago) we have our fair share of ailments. The aggressive sea conditions on our last passage left us a little battered, to the point of needing some treatment and physiotherapy.

Our enthusiastic friend, Port Captain Yvan Manuel, explained that this was not a problem - **medical care** is free in Rodrigues, for local residents and all visitors. Amazing - multiple consultations and numerous physiotherapy sessions, pharmacy drugs issued, and all at no charge.

**Nine of Cups – October 2014:** Rested, after a good night's sleep, we were ready to launch the dinghy and do a bit of exploring in Port Mathurin, Rodrigues' largest "city" and port.

We had our priorities. First, we needed to pay the port health fee ... 1,352 Mauritian Rupees (Rs) ... which necessitated finding a bank and an **ATM**. Barclays Bank was easy to find. We inserted our ATM card and voila ... out popped ten colorful, well-used 1,000 Rs notes. The exchange rate is currently 30Rs to \$1US, so we'd withdrawn about \$333US.

The port cashier made it very plain that no change was provided, so we needed exactly 1,352Rs which meant we needed to buy something to get change. No problem. We hadn't spent anything in two weeks, we were primed for spending.

Our second priority was figuring out **internet**, so we decided to do that first in hopes of getting some change, so we could then pay our port fees. We found the Orange building ... yes, that's the name of one of two phone/internet companies here ... bought a dongle so we could do internet on the boat and in doing so, got the correct change. Though we bought and registered



the dongle, it would take two hours for it to become activated, so we needed to return later to purchase internet time. Very complicated.

In the meantime, we found the port cashier and paid our fee. We stopped into the little Tourist Info office to get more info about what “to see and do” on the island, but there wasn't much info available. We'd have to rely on other cruiser's notes and my research. We did, however, find the name of a little restaurant for lunch and headed a few blocks away to Tirozo for a delightful lunch. David had crab curry and I had an encrusted chicken dish (think McNuggets with a French flair) and we both tried the local Mauritian beer, Phoenix, which was very cold and very good.

The streets are very narrow with no sidewalks. Motorbikes, trucks and cars whiz by, honking at pedestrians to move out of the way. Luckily, most of the streets are one-way and we quickly got into the habit of hugging the curb and walking up streets where we could face oncoming traffic.

En route back to the Orange store, we found the boulangerie (**bakery**) where we purchased two fresh baguettes for 20 cents each (oh, my!). We also found the post office and purchased a few stamps in anticipation of finding some post cards to go with them.

The local **grocery**, Rousetti, was just getting in all its new stock from the supply ship and the lines were long. We figured we'd wait to check that out later. The whole downtown area is probably only 6 x 4 blocks, so figuring out where we were and where to go wasn't complicated, nor were the walks much of a distance.

Saturday is the big **Market Day** in Port Mathurin. People from all over the island come to sell their wares or buy their fresh food for the week. It's a social time. Several people had advised us to get there early. Since the sun rises here around 0515 at the moment, it's not hard to get up early. In fact, with the sun so bright, it's hard to sleep in. We were up and in the dinghy headed to shore by 0630.

There was a definite buzz on the street. People were all heading in the same direction, chatting as they walked, stopping to shake hands or hug a friend or neighbor along the way.

The main marketplace is a huge covered hall with mostly veggie vendors inside who seem to be the “regulars”. Alongside the market hall, a pleasant pedestrian alley away, was a line of meat, poultry and fish vendors, all in their own little shops. We purchased some fresh chicken for dinner. We had seen what looked like strings of sausage drying on a rooftop on an earlier visit into town. Sure enough, today the sausage was on sale at the market.

A few vendors were still setting up when we arrived, but all the fresh fruit and veggie vendors had their wares displayed and were already conducting a brisk business. A slice of squash here, some tomatoes or apples there. We purchased onions at one stall, garlic at another and broccoli and tomatoes at yet another. We do our best to spread the wealth. Fruits included local papaya, bananas and small, sweet pineapples, as well as imported melons, citrus and Australian apples. We stocked up. As usual, figuring out the new currency was a challenge. 25 rupees for onions? Are you crazy? Oh, yeah, that's less than a dollar. Okay. Let's see which coins or bills make up 25 rupees?

Vendors were set up all along the street outside the market hall and the perimeter. One fellow had a mountain of coconuts and he was hacking off the tops for his customers and supplying straws for coconut water.

Behind the hall, women sold their **baked goods** ... beautiful tarts with papaya, pineapple, coconut or banana fillings. The crusts were golden brown and very decorative ... some even spelling out Rodrigues or the flavor of the tart. We couldn't resist. We chose a pineapple-papaya tart for our evening's dessert.

The two main **souvenir** items for the island are woven items of straw made into hats and baskets and small, colorful jars (they call them "pots") of spicy sauces in various flavors. We checked them all out, and bought three small pots to try. I also chose three small souvenirs that might be good mementos of our Rodrigues visit.

After wandering around for several hours, we found an open air "**food court**" for an early lunch. All the locals seemed to be gathering here for a bite to eat. Little kiosks offered different fares. Hot dogs, rotis, octopus delights. We tried a fried rice concoction that was very tasty ... two full plates for \$5 including Cokes in old-fashioned bottles. We sat at a nearby picnic table with some locals and chatted in a mix of French and English.

By Noon, the market was winding down. Vendors packed up their wares. Buyers, laden with their week's freshies, headed back home. All the local shops close at Noon on Saturdays as well. The buzz dissipated. The streets emptied for the weekend ... life in a small town on a small **island**.

**Gryphon – June 2014:** A Rodrigues SIM card has enabled us to have excellent WIFI.

**Water:** Water is in very short supply. There is rain water in a large tank at the South end of the dock but it is not recommended for drinking unless treated. The harbour master may be able to supply small amounts of potable water but has asked that we emphasise the shortage.

**Diesel:** Available by can from the garage 500 m away, or for large amounts delivery can be arranged apparently.

**Propane:** Refilling not available but can buy one of the local cylinders and decant yourself if necessary.

**Laundry:** Ask the harbourmaster and he will arrange. Currently it is very well done and a reasonable price.

**ATM:** There are a number; the closest is the Barclays Bank in the main street, which is the second left on leaving the dock gate.

**Groceries:** Straight up the road from the dock 100m on right is a good supermarket - Roustey's. Good quality fresh veg and fruit from market at South end of town every a.m. except Sunday. Bakery with excellent French bread is turn right off the main street at Barclays bank.

**Tourism:** Excellent Tourist Office open 6 days a week has maps etc. Car hire is cheapest from Mr Kong at shop in main high street opposite EMTEL shop. Motorcycles can be hired easily. Buses are cheap, easy to use and go over the whole island. Giant tortoise sanctuary is well worth visiting. There are many good and well-marked walks around the island. Plenty of good restaurants.

**Repairs:** Usual range of mechanics etc. but nothing much specifically boat oriented.

**Post:** DHL office in town for getting spares flown in. Post office in main street

**Health:** Hospital is 15 minute walk south of the town and has dentist and casualty etc. All free!

**Wi-Fi:** Simcard available from Emtel or Orange in town will work in Mauritius too. OK 3G signal.

**Contacts:** English couple Tim and Liz who are moving out here are very willing to offer support and local contacts if you need them. By 2015 they will have 2 nice two bedroom apartments for rent if you want to abandon the boat for a few days or have visitors coming out here: good facilities, location and panorama. They can also recommend some interesting places to visit. Liz is Rodrigues born and therefore speaks French and Creole too should you need a translator. They have excellent knowledge of the island.

Email: ltmpoole {CHANGE TO AT} yahoo {DOT} com Tel: 57892715

Harbour master: Capt. J. Gilbert. M. Mallet MNI, Master Mariner

Tel: +(230)8321121 Mob: +(230)57754134 Email: gilbert {DOT} mallet900 {CHANGE TO AT} gmail {DOT} com

### **16.3 Things to See and Do**

**Slip Away – July 2018:** Water temps were too chilly for snorkeling (at least for us), but air temps were quite pleasant for hiking, and the crews of Charlotte and Slip Away did several hikes together. There were a number of good walks near the port, and when we wanted to go further afield, we could catch a bus - public transportation was fairly easy and cheap.

The hiking trails were not always obvious or well-marked, but between Stefan's good eye for spray-painted patches on rocks or trees, and the Maps.me app on Jan's phone, we managed to find our way. Most of these trails were not developed as hiking trails for tourists, but were trails that locals used to get from place to place. We sometimes found ourselves walking through locals' backyards, but folks always smiled and waved to us.

The island of Rodrigues is not extremely high, but it is hilly, and a few of the trails and local streets were pretty steep. Our legs were a little sore at first, but after a month of hiking on the island, we were feeling pretty good!

Often after a hike, the crews of Slip Away and Charlotte stopped for an ice cream at the Point Chaud cafe, and we enjoyed meeting the French expats Georges and Nathalie who owned it. In addition to the hikes, we spent a day visiting the François Leguat Tortoise Park, where they are making great efforts to preserve their native tortoise populations.

#### **Yindee Plus – Nov 2015 - Visiting the Tortoise Park (Francois Leguat) by bus:**

Buses leave from the main bus station next to the produce market in Port Mathurin. Although you can get a free island map with bus times from the Harbour Master, it doesn't include the bus times to the airport, which is close to the Park.

Take the bus to Plaine Corail. When we took it, it left from stand 2. Ask at the kiosk in the bus station for bus times (ours was scheduled to leave at 11:15 but departed 11:35). The trip took about 1.5 hours as the roads are steep and it makes lots of stops.

Get off the bus when you see the sign for the Tortoise Park on the left side of the road, just a short distance before the airport. Take the side road to the left and follow the signs to the Park, a distance of about 3km on paved and dirt roads.

For the return walk, either return to the main road the same way or walk to the airport to catch the bus there: just outside the park, go through the tall, pink gate on the right and follow this

narrow fenced track through a gully, across a stream, and up to the airport fence. Turn right at the fence and follow to the road. There's a small shop there where you can buy snacks and drinks while waiting for the bus. Similar distance to the other route. Last bus is at 16:30 hrs.

**Nine of Cups – October 2014 – Sundays:** Sunday morning and we could hear the church bells ringing. Rodrigues has many religious sects, but the most prominent is Catholic. The church is right in the middle of town and the faint strain of singing voices wafted out to the anchorage.

No shops were open. No restaurants. The bakery opened at 0430 (but, of course ... people need their daily bread!), but closed right after the church services. There were a few people out and about, but not many. That is, until about 3pm when “Le Nightclub” opened. We had read about the “nightclub” from previous cruisers and thought we'd check it out. The name is a misnomer in that it opens from about 3pm on Sunday afternoons and closes about 8pm. It's more of an afternoon club ... a social club for Sunday afternoon get-togethers, a few beers and lots of loud music and dancing.

We showed up at the entry door around 3pm and were immediately turned away. David, and our friend James on Banshee, were in shorts. Long trousers were required along with proper shoes ... no flip-flops.

There was discussion as to whether the men wanted to change. I convinced them that they did, so we walked back to the dock, David dinghied back to the boat to change while I chatted with some other departing cruisers. Properly attired, we walked back to Les Cocotiers, paid our cover charge (125Rps for men; only 75Rps for women), and found a table. The Phoenix beer was cold; the music was loud; the place was dark and stale.

The locals were dancing up a storm. We sat and watched and enjoyed. I love dancing and was anxious to get out on the floor and strut my stuff, but I wanted to get a feel for the music and dancing first. A DJ kept the momentum going. A huge multi-faceted, mirrored disco ball hung limp, evidently having lost its spin sometime in the past. The music ranged between 1950-60s pop and country. We heard “Please Release Me” several times and “Sad Movies Always Make Me Cry” at least twice. No original artists were recognized, but the tunes were familiar.

All dancing seemed to be a simple country two-step to a calypso-type beat ... with a twirl thrown in every once in awhile by the more energetic dancers. Not my kind of music, but it was enjoyable to people watch and check out the dynamics of the local folks. Women outnumbered men and danced unabashedly with each other when no male partners were available. Women were decked out in their Sunday finest. Some wore high heels. All wore lipstick. When a new tune started, the men stood up, checked out the potential field and pointed at a woman, gave her the “come on and dance” high sign and that was it. Not much formality involved. I passed on my opportunity, preferring to watch rather than participate.

After a couple of hours, the music changed to an accordion-based, polka-style of music ... still with that pronounced calypso beat. Hard to explain. A younger crowd started walking in and the older crowd dissipated ... as did we. Enough nightclubbing for one Sunday afternoon.

**Another Day:** We had dedicated a couple of days to boat chores and so I didn't feel guilty about negotiating another day for seeing more of Ile Rodrigues. I'd read of two endemic birds that seem to hang out in the early morning near the Forest Station in the tiny village of Solitude, a quick bus ride from Port Mathurin. We confirmed what bus to take and were on our way by

0745. When the bus stopped at a tiny bus stop in the middle of nowhere and the conductor pointed to a path through the forest, we were a bit skeptical, but we got off and headed down the steep path.

Sure enough, after a couple minutes on a heavily rooted, dirt track, the path merged with a road and we spotted a bright pink building down the way which turned out to be the Forest Station.

We were looking for the Rodrigues fody and the Rodrigues warbler. No, we're not really twitchers ... birdwatchers, although we enjoy identifying birds. But there's something about seeing endemic animals that occur nowhere else in the world that's kind of a thrill. The Forest Station guy wasn't really interested in talking to us (could be my terrible French!). We asked the best place to spot fodies and he said "in the forest". No kidding! We continued along the road, two tracks of cement with mud in the middle, up a steep hill with forest on both sides. We saw a warbler. No pic, but we saw him.

We walked for several kilometers and saw lots of goats, a dead mouse, more huge spiders than I care to acknowledge, several feral chickens with chicks, several Madagascar red fodies, scads of ubiquitous mynahs and house sparrows, a sleeping pig, banana trees, several odd looking flowers and plants, but no Rodrigues fody.

When we spotted the Majestic King Lion Nightclub at a small crossroad, we figured we'd reached downtown Solitude. There were several rudimentary houses scattered here and there up the hill and the ground level of the nightclub seemed to offer some basic supplies like CocaCola and Phoenix beer and junk food.

We retraced our steps back to the Forest Station, standing under the dense forest cover during intermittent showers. We found the ranger guy again and lamented not seeing any fodies. He blamed it on the rain and gave us an "oh, well" shrug. We did spot some common waxbills, which actually weren't common at all to us and finally left Solitude, deciding to walk the two clicks back into town.

Our walk down the very steep, switch-backed road to Port Mathurin was a bit dodgy. There are no sidewalks and the roads are narrow and quite busy at this time of the morning. At one point, we climbed down a bank to avoid walking across a very narrow bridge with no place whatsoever for pedestrians. We had seen a lookout platform high above the town and found it on our way back. The views were terrific. We could see Nine of Cups at anchor and the whole town spread below us like a colorful mosaic.

It was mid-morning and we were back in town. Surely, this shouldn't conclude our day. What to do? Another cruiser had mentioned the tiny beach town of St. Francois. He had gotten there on a motorbike, but thought perhaps the bus went there as well. We checked, it did, and we boarded the next bus out of town. The bus chugged up the same hill we had just descended and finally headed towards the east end of the island. The views were great and different from what we'd seen on our way to the Tortoise Reserve.

We arrived in St. Francois just around lunch time. Our friends had bragged about a little thatch-covered beach resto that served fresh-caught grilled fish, lobster, chicken ... whatever was available for their oil-drum-cut-in-half grill. We spotted Robert and Soulangue's little place about a kilometer or so from the bus stop. They only had about six tables and, lucky for us, one was available.

The place was charming. We sat in plastic chairs at a plastic table, our feet planted in beach sand. The sun was shining and we could hear the sound of the surf not far away. Small sparrows peeked from the bamboo rafters of the thatched roof and swooped down every once in awhile for bread crumbs in the sand. Soulange put a fish on the grill for us, while Robert hacked at coconuts for other guests. The meal was excellent ... grilled fish and chicken, salad, bread, drinks, espresso and a coconut tart ... all for 500Rps (about \$17US).

We walked along the beach afterward. It was high tide and there wasn't much beach, but the view was stupendous on such a glorious day. We reluctantly headed back to the bus stop. It was a long walk back to Port Mathurin if we missed the last bus. All in all, a terrific day exploring a bit more of Rodrigues.

## 17 East Africa

**Tiger Lilly – May 2019:** Last year we sailed direct to Trincomalee, Sri Lanka, from Sabang, Indonesia. It was a slow but steady 900 mile passage with the wind abaft the starboard beam all the way. From the E coast of Sri Lanka we sailed south close-hauled on the starboard tack (the wind was W at 18-20 knots) until the SE Trades filled in, then we tacked and beam-broad reached west on the port tack all the way across on 9 and 8 degrees S to East Africa. The passage from Trincomalee to Tanga, Tanzania took 29 days and covered 3750 miles.

We did not stop in Chagos (we had cruised the beautiful Saloman Islands 30 years ago), but carried on to Tanga, Tanzania. We made the decision to dedicate a year to cruising East Africa, and have sailed the African coast from the Lamu Archipelago in Northern Kenya to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The Lamu Archipelago is what Zanzibar was like 30 years ago, and will likely be the highlight of this circumnavigation.

The quaint little old-colonial Tanga Yacht Club was our base of operations for cruising East Africa, and being close to the Tanzania-Kenya border it worked well for juggling the visa requirements. Customs and Immigration entry is easy, and US citizens can buy a one-year unlimited entry Tanzania visa (three months per entry); and the 2 hour bus ride to Mombasa, or an easy 30 mile sail to Shimoni "renews" your visa. Tanga is a safe place to leave your boat, and a good place to go on safari. Also, in spite of some previous negative reports, we found the Yacht Club at Dar es Salaam to be quite hospitable; and the great prices on food and drink make this first class facility a real value. By the time TIGER LILLY heads S for the Mozambique Channel we will have spent 11 months cruising some 300 miles of the East African Coast - immersed in an interesting culture, touring a beautiful land, and in friendly fellowship with Swahili people which most IO cruisers miss.

Cyclone season will be over soon, and in June we will continue south on the usual Mayotte, Madagascar, and South Africa cruisers run; we plan to spend Christmas in Cape Town.

TIGER LILLY's IO cruising plan has been different from the usual IO passage plan, but we are quite happy that we left the beaten-path to cruise East Africa. At any given time there are usually less than ten international (non-African) yachts cruising East Africa - but we never saw more than five. Hope this helps an adventuresome IO crew expand their horizons...

## **17.1 Mozambique**

**Jenny Crickmore Thompson – October 2021 – Mozambique in General:** (In response to a question about visiting Ilha Mozambique in the IO Crossing group).

I have now sourced several links and people/boats currently on the ground for advice on if/where or whether to stop in Mozambique.

The generalised answer is “Not unless you absolutely have to”.

Up North is a definite no-go area. Further south, it seems that unless you go into a recognised port such as Maputo, you are quite likely to meet with officials of one sort or another. Bazaruto seems to be a bolt hole at the moment, with several boats sheltering there as we speak. But this could change at any time.

Some reports are of friendly approaches but with requests for cash, some reports are of a far more aggressive approach with demands for payments of fines and threats of impounding boats. Park rangers will likely charge for one day stay.

The truth is the local authorities are not very familiar with clearing facilities or for handling visas, so expect anything. Also the Mozambique people are desperate: they are starving, hard hit by terrorist pockets, your fancy expensive boat is a huge temptation. Be very careful.

Unfortunately all reports are hearsay, or news links from April 2021 or before, except for that of Sunseeker who beached in a storm off Beira, were helped ashore but the boat then ransacked and burnt (latter not necessarily intentional but a total write off anyway).

So, advice - stay away from the shores of Mozambique if at all possible, try to make a direct run from up north to Richard's Bay.

### **17.1.1 Ilha Mozambique**

**Webik – October 2021:** S15°01.8' E40°44.1' Capitanje and immigracio are happy to welcome more sailors. You better clear in first in Immigracion, - we paid there 100mt (~1,5€) for the shore pass and 50USD for each visa, -visa can take some time to proceed, - we got our passports (entry) stamped with the promise that tomorrow the additional visa for us arrives from town... (!?) - passport is with us.

At the capitanje price is mainly depending on the gross tonnage and days spent on anchor. Webik, 8,6tons, 5days, paid here 5700mt, (~75€) pictures for all portuguese speakers with the pleasure craft protocols are below.

My outcome: Ilha mozambique could be a safe stop for everyone who considers to spend some days and some money in mozambique, people here will appreciate, - history and culture here is great. Restaurants and museums are open and happy to welcome guests. It is linked to some paperwork and adventure, but it seems that especially this stop could be a better option than trying to clear in at a cargo port. Be aware, that i am cleared in and here since 3 days, I do not know whats awaiting me when clearing out here, or most likely at Inhambane.

For everyone who wants to have English speaking help on the island i copy you the number of Abdul. [Abdul +258 84 666 9731] He gives museum-, fortress tours and can get you to immigration and capitanje. Hope seeing you all safe soon in South Africa.

### 17.1.2 Bazaruto

Bazaruto is a frequent stop for those who cannot make it all the way from Madagascar to Richard's Bay in one hop. Many take a breather at Bazaruto to let a low pressure go by, before making the last push down to Richard's Bay.

**Jenny Crickmore Thompson – October 2021:** Bazaruto, best to try to contact parks chief to avoid unpleasantness Chief Thomas Massane +258847920373. Head of law enforcement Pablo Schapiro may also be able to assist +34615559097. Mario Lebrato scientist on Benguera Island can help with fresh water and advice +34610677742 WhatsApp and Cel.

Ok so it is possible to shelter northern point of Basaruto or south of Basaruto pass to Benguera island

**Pete VD – October 2021:** A word of advice on entrance pass between Basaruto and Benguera! You should only enter on mid to higher tides on pushing tides only to avoid freak waves with wind over current! But once you're in it's so beautiful!

Lastly the parks rangers will likely charge for a one day stay but then leave you alone for the rest of your shelter period!

**Alba – October 8 2017 – Approach and Arrival at Bazaruto:** We started our approach into the channel at 11:00 (UTC+2), following a set of waypoints published by Des Cason. They were spot on, but we were eye-balling the water depth all the time, using the colour of the water. There are many sand banks along the 12 mile route, but the water is clear and the lighter colour of the shallow spots is easy to see. We had to do a bit of a dog-leg around one shallow sand spit - 21°35.711S 035°24.441E and 21°35.930S 035°24.819E gets you around it.

All the way points are: 21°30 00S 35°25 00E; 21°32.50S 35°23.40E; 21°35.50S 35°22.40E; 21°35.90S 35°24.10E; 21°35.711S 035°24.441E; 21°35.930S 035°24.819E; 21°38.77S 035°25.60E.

“Red Herring” and “Luna Blu” came in with us and there was much debate about where to anchor because the normal anchorage north of Ponta Gengare was very gnarly in the NNE15 winds, which had picked up as we came in through the channel. Eventually, we all headed to the south of the point and **anchored at 21°40.39S 035°25.87E** in 12 metres, which was much more sheltered.

Once settled to anchor, we had a shower, an afternoon nap; a few cold ones; dinner and early to bed.

We slept like logs and spent most of the morning pottering about, tidying up after 5 nights at sea. “Red Herring” called by and offered us a lift ashore - I went but Glenys decided to stay on-board and chill out. Oliver from “Mowana” also came with us.

**Alba – Oct 2017 - Bazaruto Ashore:** It was approaching low tide when we landed ashore and the water was very shallow a long way from shore, so we had to carry the dinghy 100m from the water's edge and left it high and dry to fend for itself. As we walked onto the dry beach, we attracted a lot of attention and a small crowd of adults and kids soon gathered, but mostly kept their distance with a few braver children approaching us.



Being low tide, the beach was a hive of activity. Kids were digging for lug worms for fishing bait and people were wading in the shallow water looking for clams, which they dry on platforms on the beach.

A couple of National Park wardens came over and chatted to us in broken English - they speak Portuguese, but none of us speak that language. The wardens were very friendly and nicely told us that we would have to pay \$10US per person (plus \$10 per boat) entry fee into the National Park. We said sure, but we had no money with us, so they'll have to come out to the boats later.

The island of Bazaruto is mostly made of huge sand-dunes and it was a very steep climb up to the village above the beach. The villagers live in round huts called Rondavels made from wood and some kind of cane - we're definitely in Africa. We walked around looking at the way of life on this barren island. The people appear to live in family groups with a few Rondavels for living/sleeping and one Rondavel for cooking. Each family had a rough set of shelving outside their cooking hut which held the pots and pans.

It was very arid, sandy ground, but we saw coconut palms and payaya trees growing. Each family has a garden area where they looked to be growing some kind of yams. The Park Wardens said that the villagers survive by exporting sea food to the mainland, which is used to buy rice and vegetables. It looks like a tough life living on a sand-dune.

Back at the boat, I found Glenys painting a Mozambique Courtesy Flag - we hadn't managed to buy one before we left Thailand and we were hoping that we'd not have to spend any more than a couple of nights here. There are rumours that the authorities are red-hot on having a courtesy flag and have even fined people for having a courtesy flag smaller than the boat ensign. Ridiculous I know, but the officials are even more corrupt than in Madagascar and will take any excuse to lever money out of westerners - we hope that we don't meet any officials.

The wind is forecast to be NE 15 tonight and tomorrow morning, but will then veer around to 20+ knots from the south tomorrow night. The plan is for our small fleet to move tomorrow to an anchorage at Benguerra Island 10 miles further south, which we hope has good protection from the strong southerlies.

We all moved a couple of miles further down the coast to an anchorage at Ponta Milixa at 21°42.56S 035°25.86E (7m LAT on good holding sand). The anchorage wasn't as good as the previous one and it was a bit bouncy in the NE20 winds at sunset, but at least we've probably escaped the \$30US park fee.

10 October 2017 Ponta Milixa to Ponta Gengare, Mozambique

The NE wind continued blowing strongly until the early hours of the morning and, to make matters worse, the current switched at midnight and turned us so that our stern was pointing into the wind and the waves. We have a "sugar scoop" stern, which is a low angle extension to the hull, designed to increase the waterline length and make the boat sail faster. Unfortunately, it's hollow and when waves slap underneath it, the loud bang is amplified and it sounds awful in the back cabin where we sleep. There's nothing worse than being "slapped up the sugar scoop" to keep you awake.

After breakfast, the Park Rangers arrived in a small power boat and we had to pay \$10US per person and \$20US for the boat - we didn't escape after all. I tried to negotiate them down and

didn't want to pay for the boat, but they produced an official looking receipt with the tariffs clearly shown, so I paid up. We're not cleared into Mozambique, so we want to keep a low profile and don't want any trouble with the local officials.

A cynic might say that the money we paid out will go into their pockets, but we're clean - we've paid what we should officially pay. I've heard that one scam is to put a piece of card behind the carbon paper, so that nothing is imprinted on the "office copy" of the receipt book. They then later write in lower figures on the "office copy" and pocket the balance. On the other hand, they may be honest...

I downloaded the latest weather forecast and the southerly winds expected after midnight have intensified to 25 knots and could possibly be slightly west of south. We were all planning to head down to an anchorage at Benguerra today, but the prospect of SSW winds made us rethink because Benguerra might not be so good in that wind direction.

After some debate, our mini-fleet upped anchor and sailed back north a couple of miles to anchor to the North of Ponta Gengare, which is better protected from the SW. We dropped our anchor at 21°38.66S 035°26.43E in 5 metres on a huge area of good holding sand. (There's a recommended anchorage closer to the point, at 21°39.13S 035°26.04E, but there seemed to be too many coral patches for my liking.)

As a matter of interest, if we'd have tried to out run the storm, hopefully we'd be approaching Maputo today. Gale force winds are forecast to hit Richards Bay at 14:00 and Maputo at 18:00, so the forecast that we had a few days ago was very accurate. The low isn't coming up north as much as the earlier forecasts, but at midnight, the winds 100 miles east of Richards Bay are forecast to be 40 knots with 6.5m seas - you wouldn't want to be out there.

At sunset, we had NE 15-20. It was a little bit bouncy, so we hunkered down below and watched a movie.

11 October 2017 Ponta Gengare, Mozambique

At 02:00, the wind veered around to the south and picked up to 25-30 knots, blew hard for a few hours and then settled down to 20-25 knots. As forecast, the wind was SSW and soon a swell was hooking around Ponta Gengare bringing in 2 foot waves from the south-west. This made it a bouncy, noisy night with the waves slapping on the side of the hull.

We've heard that there were 70+ knot winds in Durban and 50 knot winds in Richards Bay yesterday, which caused damage and flooding in the heavy rains. The BBC News is calling the storm that hit Durban a "Super Cell" - 3 cargo ships dragged closing the entrance to the port; harbour patrol corralled yachts that had broken free from moorings and yacht club pontoons were damaged. Richards Bay escaped damage (although the yacht club bar was closed last night.) This weather is not to be taken lightly.

The forecast for today is for the wind to drop overnight and become East 5-10 knots tomorrow. Our plan is to move to Benguerra tomorrow before the next set of strong southerlies arrives late tomorrow night. These winds look to be more SE, so we should be good at Benguerra.

Yesterday, it looked like we had a 4 day weather window on Saturday 14th, but that has now closed up with SE20-25 hitting Maputo on the afternoon of Monday 16th. These systems are very closely packed, so I think that we might have to do short hops to Inhambane - Maputo - Richards Bay.

It would be good to try for Maputo on the 14th. We would have to leave at 9:00 (high tide is at 11:00). That would put us out into SE10 for 8 hours, but we can cope with that if we know that it will turn East and then NE. That then gives us 56 hours until the SE 20 hits Maputo, which is 330 miles away - we'd have to average 6.0 knots. This is a very tight plan, but we'll see how the weather develops - with luck the southerlies will be delayed...

Apart from a brief route planning session on "Continuum", we spent the rest of the day on board, and left the next morning.

### **17.1.3 Maputo**

**November 2023 – Sheltering in Maputo:** Anyone have recent (this year) experience on entering Maputo, Mozambique. My hubby w/crew are under passage from Mauritius to SA, but the weather forecast for becoming Tue-Wed is not so nice - so I am wondering if re-routing to Maputo is feasible at all? *The bullets below are responses from different people.*

- I suggest you get in contact with Des Cason (Weather Guy)
- If you get caught In the Southerly and can make way for Maputo, then anchor behind Inhaca isl till it blows over . Don't check in at Maputo. The holding ground is not the best so make sure you have set your anchor with at least 40m chain.
- A friend (and half a dozen other yachts) took shelter up to a few days ago in the vicinity of Linga Linga (23° 44.41S 35°23.94E). It's almost 200M further north than Maputo but it's closer to the southern tip of Madagascar. Just prior to their weather event they re-anchored further up the river in 3-5m in sand. To cut a long story short, they were very well protected and had the most wonderful time making friends, shopping and eating ashore. I probably regret not stopping there myself. I don't know what they did with regard to entry clearances etc.
- Contact Des. He will have recent reports, as well as safe alternatives. Maputo is corrupt, and cruisers have been jailed and held hostage for doing nothing wrong. But there are other spots that are welcoming.
- From Mauritius, isn't Richards Bay easier than Maputo anyway? Mozambique it usually a stop coming from Madagascar.
- No need to go all the way into Maputo for shelter ... easy to anchor under lighthouse on Inhaca Island

**October 2021 – Clearance Assistance:** Victor in Maputo did all our clearing in and out for us. He arranged for Health, Immigration and Inamar to all be present at the same time at Club Naval. Victor's number +258 84 688 0573. In Maputo we anchored in front of Club Naval, about 150m out. At low tide it is a pleasure, at high tide we moved to Xefina an hour away for calm protected waters. It was 8800 for Health, 6000 Inamar and 6000 Immigration. This was for 5 people.

**September 2021 – Maputo and Club Naval and Clearance:** The yacht club, Club Naval is well worth visiting, but cannot offer any docking, no berths, dries out entirely with a harsh bottom, the club and its other facilities is great.

To clear in, proceed as far as starboard buoy 17 and drop the pick with lots of chain as the holding isn't great. If you look to the north shore on Navionics, you will note a small breakwater

termed nautical school. This is the present Maputo 'Marina'. They do have basic walk on docks and might have a berth available, however, beware the charges! The entire marina dries out, but the bottom is soft black mud, further to which, power and water are seldom available and at my last visit a while back the single room ablution featuring cold water when available and a loo, all shared with staff etc, not what you're likely used to!

Clearing in is fairly easy, Maritim and Alfandega are an easy walk in town and Migracao for passports is at the main harbour near the railway station.

Once cleared in, move over to Inhaca. The anchorage at Inhaca is pretty good holding and fairly pleasant. Lucas' bar/restaurant ashore has been favoured by yachties in the past.

Money changing is best done while in Maputo at the produce market, far better rates than banks

#### **17.1.4 Mozambique Weather Holes**

Some suggestions from FB for where you can stop briefly to wait out weather without checking in.

- In 2018, 3-Oyster Yachts sat just north of Inhaca for 1.5-days w/o receiving any interest. We team anchor-watched, and our biggest problem was a group of humpbacks that lead us slowly back out to sea.
- Q: Can you get as far as Ilha Casuarina, father south? We found fair protection there. Fishing boats used Ilha Epidendro immediately to the north. They're not inhabited. A: The problem with Casuarina is we are going to be in strong NE winds when we arrive and it does not appear sheltered. A couple days later when the SE comes in it looks nice. We are looking for a place to bail out halfway down if we don't think we can make Baz, but that means it will need to be an all-weather anchorage as there are strong NE before the strong SE...
- Cabo Inhaca is a good stopping point. It avoids the snoopy government official who lives above the anchorage in the better protection around the corner. He tends to shake down the boats who anchor under his gaze. Cabo Inhaca is an "ok" lee anchorage.
- There is a great anchorage called Linga-Linga, near enough to Inhambane to reach with a decent tender. The channel entrance is a bit tricky with sand bars, so it's best to get some local knowledge.

#### **17.2 Tanzania**

**Kokomo - June 2020 – Tanzania Works for Us:** We are in Tanzania for 4 1/2 months now. This is our experience being here in the country and you don't have to take my word for it.

We sailed in January 2020 from India to Tanga, Tanzania. You can read about that trip on my FB page. We arrived in Tanga on Feb. 13 checking in was no problem and customs, Immigration and health officials came to the boat or marina to check us in. We paid for our visa US\$ 50 for German citizen (3 month ) and a US citizen US\$ 100 (12month) . Immigration only accept US currency. You still have to leave the country after 3 month to renew your visa. We stayed in Tanga for 2 weeks in a very nice atmosphere. Stocking up with food is limited. We sailed from Tanga to Zanzibar and stayed there for one week. After, we headed for Dar es

Salaam and anchored at the Slipway anchorage. We dried out at the slipway shipyard and painted the bottom. The shipyard will be closed for good by middle of July.

The anchorage is good and has a dinghy service and drinking water available. For this service you have to pay TS 90.000/month for this service. Good and large grocery stores are nearby. Regular hardware stores are available but no marine stores as we used to see in the US and other countries. Bottom paint, SS hardware etc. is available.

After 3 months in Tanzania we renewed our visa (no charge) here in Dar es Salaam at no cost for another month (we did it twice so far because of the Covid)

Tanzania was not in lockdown like all the other countries around us. All safety procedures were in place and followed like everywhere else in the world.

Based on local information hospitals were not overwhelmed with COVID patients. Just a few days ago we went to two clinics (not COVID related) here in Dar es Salaam, no appointment and long waiting. Tanzania is opening up for tourist to come in, it is a slow process.

For us, we are waiting for Mayotte and Madagascar to open up so we can continue to sail south to SA.

So far we are happy that we stopped in Tanzania, we had no problems what so ever especially hearing other cruisers nightmares.

**Paseafique – June 2019 – Recap of Tanzania Visit (from Blog):** East Africa had never been on our radar as a potential cruising destination. It emerged as a northern detour to escape the cyclone season of the southern Indian Ocean, when we decided to delay moving on from Madagascar to South Africa until the end of 2019 so that Lesley could return to Australia for a few months. What an absolutely fascinating detour it turned out to be!

We left Honey River, Madagascar in early September 2018, and motored most of the 190nm to Mayotte which took us about 36 hours. After a convenient four day break there, we set sail for Tanzania. Our initial plan was to make landfall at Mtwara (350nm), but we kept going for an additional 75nm to Kilwa Kisiwani instead, as we wanted to avoid a night time arrival. It was a pleasant five day passage, and check in was relatively straight forward, although we did have to wait out the weekend before we could check in. Kilwa Kisiwani and the surrounding area was a medieval sultanate which at one time stretched over the length of the Swahili coast. It was sold by its Swahili owner to an Arabian prince and was populated in 10th Century by settlers from Arabia and Iran. This area eventually controlled all the gold trade from southern Africa and became the most powerful and important trading post in East Africa, controlling the Indian Ocean trade with Arabia, India and China. The Portuguese took control in early 16th Century after which the influence of the area weakened significantly. We took a day tour to the UNESCO World Heritage ruins of Kilwa Kisiwani. It was enthralling to be there imagining the bustling metropolis that it must have been. How thrilling to have been to living in an area where trade from such diverse regions converged, each ship bringing not only new and exotic things, but also new ideas in a time when communication across regions and between countries was very limited.

A short day sail north brought us to the town of **Kilwa Kinjove** about which we knew nothing. What a surprise when we went ashore! We found an ancient town full of old ruined houses in which people were still living. We wondered around and found that there was also a new

residential area built on the outskirts of the old town. Fishing is clearly the main industry here – many many fishing boats were anchored in the harbour, and everywhere there was evidence of fish processing – rows and rows of racks for drying fish, and several different establishments for cooking fish. We were of as much interest to the locals as they were to us – there would not be many tourists who would find their way here, and not that many sailing boats coming this way.

A stark contrast to the Kilwa area was the resort island of **South Fanjove**, our next stop as we gradually made our way north. This was the stuff of tropical dreams- white fine sand, clear turquoise water, and a small number of guest huts scattered along the beach. This was one of the few resorts where we, as yachties, were made to feel extremely welcome and we enjoyed sundowners with the six guests on the island at the time, along with the manager and some staff.

After one or two nights anchored off islands which are base camps for those fishing the area, we arrived at **Mafia Island**. This was also part of the Kilwa Sultanate and historically a safe haven for ships. It now promotes itself as a tourist destination offering snorkelling, diving, ruins, and traditional ship building. There is a marine park on the south and south-east coast for which the charge is US\$100 for 1 week plus \$15-20/day/crew member so on the advice of others who know the area well, we gave this a miss on the promise of equally good reefs and snorkelling in other areas where there is no charge.

Mafia Island is also famous for whale shark spotting, and this was our main reason for stopping here. Our friends Ian and Melian on Indian Summer had come down from Dar Es Salaam to meet us and so we joined forces to find some whale sharks. We had identified the reef not far off shore which is a known favourite feeding ground, and headed off early one morning on Indian Summer (a catamaran) to try our luck. We certainly did spot a number of whale sharks but so did the couple of tourist boats out there, and as soon as everyone got in the water, the whale sharks tended to dive deeper making it impossible to find them, as we did not have diving gear. We ended the day in a bar back on Mafia, disappointed but buoyed by the fact that we indeed got a good look at several whale sharks from the boat. We thought it worth one more try so we headed out again the next morning. It was an absolutely perfect day – clear sky and not a breath of wind, but alas we didn't see one whale shark the whole morning, despite patrolling up and down the reef edge. We decided to throw out the anchor and have lunch before heading back to the anchorage. As we finished lunch and Ian stood up to make preparations to weigh anchor, he looked over the side of the boat and there was a whale shark right next to us, just holding itself in position against the current! With a mad excited scramble, we hurriedly donned our snorkelling gear and slipped into the water. We spent a magical half hour or so swimming with this magnificent creature which was simply holding itself alongside the boat. The current was very strong and we were all grateful for the long floating rope that Ian had tied off the back of the boat which made it easier to get ourselves back against that current. Four very lucky and happy people headed back to harbour that afternoon.

During our stop over in Mayotte, we had met a Dutch cruising couple who had lived in Tanzania for about 10 years. They gave us lots of good tips about cruising in Tanzania, including the general location near Mafia Island of some underwater ruins hypothesized to be those of Rhapta, a lost 2,000 year old Roman market town believed to be one of first metropolises of the African continent. The partly submerged formation was spotted from a helicopter a few years ago by a scuba diver. Lesley managed to find his report on the internet and got the co-ordinates

and some pictures so we had some idea of where to look and what to look for. We found a suitable anchorage nearby and dinghied over when it was low tide. It was a bit of a rough afternoon so we didn't snorkel around the ruins but rather clambered over the exposed sections, curious as to what they might have once been, and again feeling lucky to be able to experience such interesting history.

And so on to **Zanzibar** – doesn't the very name of the place conjure up exotic images of the traders, adventurers, plunderers, and explorers who converged on this island that was such an important trade centre? The traders from Persia arrived here in 8th century for slaves, ivory, spices. The Portuguese conquered Zanzibar and it became part of their empire when they realised its strategic location around the 15th century. Several hundred years later, the Omani Arabs expelled the Portuguese and for a period of time Zanzibar was the base of the Omani Arab Sultanate. By the mid 19th century, Omani rule weakened. Zanzibar continued as a British protectorate until 1963, and independence was gained the following year with a revolution and eventual union with Tanganyika to form Tanzania.

We had a wonderful time in **Stonetown, Zanzibar**, soaking up the historic atmosphere, losing ourselves wandering through the narrow winding laneways, and admiring the many ancient doors, imagining the lives of the many people who passed through them. In more recent times, one of those people was Freddie Mercury, the lead singer of Queen.

Stonetown was the centre of the world slave trade, and it has a very interesting slavery museum. The museum comprises mostly display boards of written factual information about the slave trade, but these are interspersed with stories of the lives of actual slaves underlining the very harsh reality of this practice. We were surprised to learn that the market for slaves included many countries, so slavery was at one time quite widespread throughout the world. Of course it still exists today in a different form. The exit to the museum takes visitors through the inevitable gift shop underneath which is two underground cells where the slaves were held on market day, waiting their turn to be brought up to the square where the trading took place.

The waterfront area of Stonetown comes alive in the late afternoon with people coming to socialise and enjoy the cool of the afternoon and early evening. The adolescent boys, ever bursting with energy and seeking thrills, entertain themselves by diving off the wall into the water – but this is not just diving. It involves a run up and acrobatic leap into the air before the plunge into the water. Their athleticism, and sense of fun was a joy to watch. As the sun goes down, the local traders set up a bountiful night food market. Customers peruse the stalls, selecting kebabs of meat, seafood or vegetables which are then cooked and served with salad and drinks at the many tables available. Later there may be some form of street entertainment, depending on the night. It was a great way to mix with the locals and experience something of their life in Stonetown.

After the magic of Zanzibar, we returned to **Slipway**, an anchorage just north of the main port of Dar Es Salaam, where Lesley packed her bags for her trip back to Australia to visit friends and family.

Phil then ventured out on a trip to Ruaha National Park, travelling 500kms in a "delux" bus to Iringa, from where he organised a two day safari with a local company. As it turned out he was the only customer for this safari so he had his own guide and driver, and the 4WD to himself. He saw impalla, gazelle, buffalo, baboons, dik dik (the smallest deer), greater kudu, ostrich, serval cats, leopards, lions, elephants, giraffes, hippopotamus, python, crocodiles, mongoose, lots of

birds, and a range of smaller wild life. He had to spend another night in Iringa to wait for the bus back to Dar Es Saleem. This time he stayed in the Neema Craft guesthouse, which had been recommended to us. This place was set up to employ less abled people, providing the opportunity of employment and consequently a better quality of life. It was a fabulous place to stay-clean, tidy, big rooms, good food, very reasonably priced, and in a great location.

Back in Slipway, Phil re-stocked and started to head north again, feeling a bit flat without Lesley's company. **Pemba Island**, which had been highly recommended, was a disappointment. The locals were not friendly, and tried to charge anchoring fees when these were not legitimate. Although Phil was already checked into Tanzania, local authorities in another area insisted that he check in locally and pay the relevant fee. A trip to the capital Chake Chake, once again on an over-crowded bus, proved interesting with a visit to the museum.

The final stop in Tanzania was **Tanga**, a port on the east coast. There were several other boats moored at the yacht club and its always a party when there is more than one boat in port. Phil spent one month here exploring the local area and hanging out with his new, and not so new, friends. One of the highlights was doing a drift swim (more like a float really) with a group of others through the mangroves on the incoming tide. The day included a walk to an area where voodoo is practiced. Lunch and beers were provided back at the organiser's house. When the kingfishers started to use Paseafique as their fishing base, Phil decided it was time to move on to Kenya.

**Kilifi Creek** is a well known yachting bolt hole in **Kenya**, and Phil based himself there for several months. It was busy social time, with Christmas, New Year and 60th birthday celebrations, as well as significant boat work needing to be done. Our friends, Brett and Mandy generously included Phil at their Christmas table with four other guests on Leventia, and they spent a happy afternoon together. The traditional Kilifi Yacht Club New Year's Eve celebration consists of a short trip into the next bay in the creek, where all 30 or so boats rafted up together held by one anchor. There was much frivolity as everyone ate and drank their way into 2019 while hopping from boat to boat. Phil did not feel his usual perky self the next morning!

Another key new year celebration in the Kilifi social calendar is the annual music festival— an extravaganza that lasts for three days. A group of yachting went to just the first day. It was awe inspiring with three stages, art work, multi-coloured lighting, and African culture. The festival culminates on New Year's Day with the lighting of a huge effigy built in a dry creek bed.

But the time came for some serious boat work, starting with flag production for the next countries. The boat came out of the water, and several large boat projects were completed including repairing a bent rudder shaft, antifouling, roller furler repair, canvass repairs, and servicing all 11 winches. By early March, Paseafique was back in the water. Phil and Mike, and three other boats, sailed north to Lamu (still in Kenya) to wait for the right weather window for the next big adventure – sailing across the north Indian Ocean, through the Gulf of Aden and up the Red Sea.

**Tiger Lilly – June 2018:** Tanga is a nice size town, with a medium size commercial port. There are the usual industrial supplies one would expect available to serve a medium size town, but there are no yacht or even commercial marine supplies available (that we know of, but we have only 3 days experience in this town).



Dar Es Salaam and Mombasa, Kenya do have some limited yacht supplies, and they can be ordered by phone or email and delivered on the bus. We have found an automotive shop in town that can supply us with an LP gas high pressure flow-through fitting so that we can decant LPG into our American / Australian LPG tanks.

There are some nice facilities here at the Tanga Yacht Club, and the rate is about \$20 USD per week to use the club. There is a careening grid and sufficient tide to do UW hull work, a small work shed with a large vise, hand clothes washing sink, showers (cold), and toilets. The anchorage is quite large and well-sheltered, has good holding, and minimum criminal activity. We like it here.

The folks who cruise this coast regularly (mostly South Africans) assure us that the coastal regions of both Tanzania and Kenya are quite safe piracy-wise. The South Africans tell us (and the Pilot Charts agree) that the Tanzanian coast from Dar Es Salaam and north is safe during Cyclone Season; however, the Mozambique Channel and Madagascar is not. So we intend to stay N of Dar Es Salaam until Cyclone Season is over in May 2019.

### **17.2.1 Officialdom**

**FB Group - July 2023 – Clearance:** Question – how is it clearing into Dar el Salam?

**Answer 1:** It's Tanzania, nothing is ever really easy. We had DYC bringing the health and immigration officials in, and they wanted to go see the boat etc. We still had to go and find customs and harbour master the following day, and it was a quest!

We went in 2022 and they were still milking the whole Covid thing charging us \$20 per person for the test (hopefully not the case any more).

If you want to clear in through Dar, it's not a problem, but use DYC to help you. It's very hard to find where the officials are located, taxi drivers have no idea either. If you have a choice of where to clear, elsewhere will be easier and cheaper (for example Mafia island was a breeze to check out)

Customs were really nice, after we bought them coffees at DYC

**Answer 2:** Or come straight to us at Kilifi Boatyard/

**Answer 3:** Go to Mtwara. Dar es Salam is complicated

**Answer 4:** We cleared into Dar. It was ok but Tanga and Zanzibar are easier. If you are going to Dar then go to the yacht club or slipway and get an Uber or bajaji to the port (gate 2) and find the customs (tra) and immigration. Immigration first. Customs for your port clearance and transire.

**Answer 5:** M'twara or Tanga are Easy. So was Wete on Pemba island. Officials were corrupt and asked for a backshish on Mafia island when we checked out from there.

Another option is Kilwa and Zanzibar but I didn't do international clearance there.

**Peter Bernard – September 2021 – Transire Process in Tanzania:** We had an interesting discussion with the customs lady at Tanga port today about the correct process with the Transire.

Seemingly you must be issued a Transire by Customs when moving from any major port to any other major port in Tanzania. This is the case whether you have cargo or not.

(The major ports that came up in our discussion were Tanga, Pemba, Zanzibar, Dar es Salaam, Mafia and Mtwara, but it was not an exhaustive discussion, and I'm sure Kilwa would also require it, and perhaps others too)

Upon arrival at the destination port, you must visit customs and surrender your Transire form. If you don't do this, you will be subject to a fine. And then you must visit Customs again upon departure to get your next form.

There was no charge in Tanga, although we did end up paying 5,000 TZS (and getting a receipt) in Zanzibar a few weeks ago. Not sure if that was corruption or just a genuinely different set of rules in Zanzibar.

You can ask for your Transire to have your original port, and your departure port, and list all ports in between. But you still need to visit customs in those "in between" ports on arrival and departure, so there's not much benefit.

This is entirely a customs process, and has nothing to do with Port Authority, Immigration or Health. If officials from those departments say you don't need a Transire, they are incorrect and misinformed.

If you ask Immigration, Port Authority or Health during your check in process if you're finished (as we did on arrival in Tanga), and they neglect to tell you that you also need to see customs re Transire, it's still your fault, and you're liable to be fined (\$US 25).

We were let off with our fine in Tanga (the lady here was lovely), but she was genuinely shocked to discover that there was any ambiguity about the process, and was grateful when I said we'd spread the word.

**Matt TenEick – September 2021 – Stonetown Check In:** Quick note on checking into Stone Town, Tanzania and the need for a transire form.

Checking in with health (\$30 USD) and immigration (\$100 usd/ person for Americans) at the ferry terminal was relatively straightforward. Knock on the door to the small immigration office if the windows are all clogged up with arriving ferry passengers. They'll bring you inside and get you a seat while they work through the paperwork. The following day (we arrived late in the day), we went over to customs to see what paperwork they wanted and to figure out what was required to obtain the elusive 'transire' form that may or may not be required for yachts, depending on who you talk to and what source you read.

Customs is in the main port area just past the ferry terminal. Identify yourself to security as a 'seaman' requiring documentation from customs and they should let you in. Across the road from the security gate and BEHIND the building with the "Customs" sign on the door, is a row of large warehouses known as the "dhow sheds". Going into the first big shed opening you should see a couple of glass enclosed 'offices' along the back wall. You want the office to the far right. They took our port clearance from Seychelles, recorded some of the info into a journal, stamped the port clearance and handed it back to us (so this seems to confirm that there is no 'real' paperwork that should be expected from customs).

Now it was time to figure out the transire. Some friends had heard of the need for the transire in Pemba, so we wanted to make sure we were complying with the rules and had one. After a couple of blank looks in the dhow shed, we were directed to the big blue building a bit further into the port area. First office, more blank looks. Sent to another office, yet more blank looks. Finally was taken upstairs and ushered into a large room. The room was air conditioned, well kept up and had a nice desk and conference table in it. Ah-ha, now we're getting somewhere. This had all the hallmarks of belonging to someone with importance. Sure enough, it belonged to Cpt. Abdalla, the Port Captain for Zanzibar, who kindly asked a few questions about what we were trying to do. We explained about the transire and told him that we had been advised to get one. He asked who in Pemba was requiring a transire. I told him we didn't really know for sure, perhaps the Port Captain for Pemba? At this he laughed loudly, and translated my comment to his 2 staff members, who also laughed. Cpt. Abdalla turned back to me and explained, "I am the Port Captain for Pemba as well, so if there is someone claiming to be me or doing my job, I should find out who it is!" He then explained that the transire form is only for cargo, which yachts obviously don't have. He unequivocally stated that a transire was not required. He did suggest a port clearance before departing StoneTown, which could be easily arranged by his office (obtained no more than 24 hours in advance of departure).

One last note, Cpt Abdalla, did ask if we had checked in with Zanzibar signal station on our way in. We told him we had not (intentionally as we didn't want to be directed to the reportedly dodgy 'check in' dock). He didn't seem concerned that we had 'bypassed' this technically required step.

Follow-up: When we arrived in Tanga we were indeed asked for our transire, despite the assertions of the Stone Town port captain that one was not necessary.

**Beatie Nelson – 2020 - Transire for Coast Hopping:** we asked for our Transire to be issued "from Dar es Salaam to Mtwara". Otherwise they often want to name all the stops you make or only want to issue a transire to Mafia, but explain you are sailing (going slowly slowly- pole pole - sailing during the day IF the wind and weather is fine and sleep at night) and do not actually know where or if you will stop, except you know for sure you will end at Mtwara - and say it will take you 3 weeks, but maybe even 4, so you asking for 4 weeks.

Peter at Slipway will be able to put you in touch with an official to do your Transire.

You can either go to their office at the port, or you pay the official (towards his transport) to come to the Slipway office.

We didn't travel in Tanzanian waters without a Transire and we were required to show it at Pemba (2019), Tanga (twice 2020 - we had to hand it in), twice we've had to show it in Kilwa (2019 and 2020), the official at Dar took our old one when he issued a new one last year, and at Mtwara (they insisted on us handing it in on our arrival from the North last year). 😊

Perhaps they are a bit more cautious what with everything happening in Northern Mozambique, but I wouldn't recommend traveling without a Transire.

**Kokomo – February 2020 - Checking in from Tanga Yacht Club:** When we arrived we took the dinghy to the Yacht Club to get information about checking in to the country. We spoke to the Manager Mrs. Mercy. She made some phone calls and told us to go back to Kokomo because the health inspector does not allow us on shore before he checked us in. 20 minutes

later the inspector showed up on Kokomo. With his help we filled out some paperwork. He also checked our body temperature on our left ear.

He asked for vaccination paper. We had some old paperwork of vaccinations and he was happy. Then we met the nicest Immigration officer at the Yacht Club. Checking in was easy and US citizens get a one year multiple entry visa for US\$ 100. EU Citizens pay US\$ 50 for a three month visa. They have no other options. Make sure you have US \$ available because that is the only currency they accept. The friendly Immigration officer took us to town to the ATM to get Tanzania Shillings and returned us to the Yacht Club.

The next day we took a tuk-tuk to the Customs office which is located in town at the small Terminal area. The officer asked for copies of the boat papers, crew list, clearance paper from last port and copies of the passports. It was easy and painless and no charge.

Before you leave Tanga you need to go back to Customs to get clearance for your next port in Tanzania.

**Paseafique – September 2018:** Paseafique has arrived in Kilwa Tanzania after a very comfortable three day sail from Mayotte, so I guess that officially completes our Indian Ocean crossing. Checking in at Kilwa was relatively smooth. Merlon, the port captain, telephoned immigration and customs and the officers came down to the port. Merlon can be found in a small office at the wharf gates on the left hand as you walk up from the shore. We needed the following documents: ship registration, crew list, last 10 ports visited, clearance from Mayotte, and of course our passports. The port required us to fill out a form which they provided.

We received a three month visa for \$USD 50 each (for which we received a receipt). Customs insisted on issuing us a transire covering the areas from Kilwa to Mafia Island. We were not asked about yellow fever vaccination. All of this was done on a wooden bench seat under a tree. All officials were very friendly and welcoming and all spoke good English. If you arrive on a weekend you will have to wait until Monday to check in.

**Tiger Lilly – June 2018:** When we arrived off Tanga it was in the early hours of Saturday 23 June, we were tired and wet after a 29 day boisterous passage, we did not know if there were overtime charges associated with clearing-in on a weekend, and so we opted to go hide-out, sleep, and eat until Monday morning and regular business hours.

We entered MWAMBANI BAY (just S of Tanga Harbour) through the deep 1/2 mile wide pass at 5-09.0S 039-10.0E and anchored in the lee off the W shore on a clean sand bottom at 5-09.7S 039-06.8E. The local lateen rigged outrigger canoe fishing Fleet was out in full force on the bay, and it was such a joy to sit in the cockpit and watch the Tanga fishermen make their boats get right up on the brisk wind.

On Sunday afternoon we took advantage of the high tide to get across the shallows NW of YAMBE ISLAND and anchored at 5-05.2S 039-09.6E to stage ourselves for entering Tanga Harbour on Monday morning. During both days we were waiting to go into Tanga, the only vessels we saw were fishing boats.

Entering Tanga Harbour Monday morning and clearing-in was really a no-drama evolution. We called-out to the Port Authority to request permission to enter the harbour on VHF 16 as we rounded the point just N of the yacht club - but there was no response, so we just proceeded to the Yacht Club and anchored.

There seems to be a day to day difference on the sequence of clearance, and whether one waits aboard or goes into the Yacht Club to meet the officials there. We rowed into the beach only to be told by Mercy (the Yacht Club Manager) to go back to the boat and wait for the officials to come to us in their boat. About 30 minutes later two immigration officers showed up at the Yacht Club - with no boat. One of the other yachties brought them out to us in their dink and we cleared immigration onboard TIGER LILLY.

Since we are here in Tanzania for the entire Cyclone Season, and since we are from the USA, we bought One Year Multiple Entry Visas for \$100 USD each. Apparently, most other nationalities can only buy Three Month Visas for \$50 USD - and at least in our case they insisted that payment be made in Yanque Dollars thank you very much.

Even with One Year Visas we are required to leave the country every 90 days. Most of the yachties just hop on the bus to the Kenya border (1 1/2 hour ride N) and go through the gate at the border, check-in to Kenya, and then turn around and come right back into Tanzania. There seems to be a change in Tanzania immigration policy requiring foreigners to stay out longer. Once you get here ask around the anchorage for the latest on that issue.

We cleared Immigration aboard, Health and Port Authority officials were waiting at the yacht club, and we went into Tanga to the Controlled Port Area to clear Customs. The officials were kind and courteous, and they did their work quickly. There were no other charges other than the Visa fees. Lacking information to the contrary, we would recommend that arriving yachts go into the Yacht Club on arrival, and ask Mercy what that day's clearance procedure is...

After clearing Immigration onboard, we then went ashore and cleared with the Health Officer at the Yacht Club. She (Happyyness) started making some noise that we needed to produce a certificate of health for the boat. We put our UN International Health Shot Cards on the table and told her that was our International certificate of health. According to her reaction, apparently this Health Officer had never seen a UN Shot Card before. There was some resistance, but we stood our ground, and she then issued the standard free pratique - at no charge. She said we would have to come into the office, but since we then had a Tanzanian Certificate of Pratique in hand, we saw no need to do so. Another American boat cleared in with a male Health Officer a month or so after our arrival, and they were charged (and paid) One Hundred Yanque Dollars - US currency only accepted - thank you very much... (Same with our visa fees, only USD...)

A possible tactic is to have a camera ready when dealing with African officials. If you are asked for a "fee" that you believe is inappropriate, tell them you want to see the governing regulation in writing, you want a receipt, AND you are going to take a picture of them. This has worked for other cruisers here in Tanga. We were told by experienced East Africa hands that the picture is not a threat to the endemic practice of bribes and corruption, but rather that the individual would be required by his supervisor to SHARE his ill-gotten gains. The fact of the matter is that there is no set clearance procedure, or fees, here in Tanga. Although the visa fees are probably legit; but who knows how the wad of cash is processed - and the Immigration Officer told us that the Visa stamp in our passport was our receipt...

When Lilly recently returned to the DAR airport from the States with 9 boxes of boat stuff, she presented a letter from us declaring all goods to be exempt under YACHT IN TRANSIT exemption - which we are not sure exists in Tanzania. The Customs Officer told her she had to pay duty. She then did her Cyclone Lilly thing and argued with him for 30 minutes, then she steamed out of the secure Customs Security Zone, grabbed Tom-Tom by the arm, drug him

back through the security doors (past the drop-jawed guard), introduced “The Captain” to the Customs Officer, and then Tom started waiving our YACHT IN TRANSIT letter and quoting International law and UN regulations! (Maybe there actually are such international treaties - who knows?) At any rate, after another 15 minutes with “The Captain” the Customs Officer deferred to his lady supervisor (whom Lilly was trading FB friends contacts with while “The Captain” was quoting chapter and verse to the Customs Officer) - and the decision was made that we were just way too much trouble, so they told us to take our stuff and leave.

The fact of the matter is that EVERYTHING in Africa is negotiable - and the starting price is based on your skin color. It is not to your advantage to be walking around white... When we get in a Tuck-Tuck and ask the driver the price, usually a highly inflated figure is stated. Tom-Tom then tells the driver, “HEY, we may be white, but we ain’t DUMB! Then we start to get out and walk away, and immediately a more realistic price is offered. As far as we can tell (confirmed by the ex-pats who frequent the Tanga Yacht Club) all prices are on a sliding scale: There’s the Brother Price; The Cousin Price; The unrelated Fellow Citizen Price; And finally there is the Foreign Visitor Price - who are pretty much considered cash cows...

Gouging visitors is a way of life here. You can roll over and pay, stand your ground and argue, or not come - choose one. We stand our ground, and so far it has worked; at least for two months Lilly has stayed out of orange coveralls. The last time she was arrested (see our 14 June 2016 FB post regarding trading movies in Australia), she wore the Queensland cops down with her incessant talking, and after three days they wanted some peace and quite down at the cop station - so they sent her back to Tom-Tom the Sailor Man!

We like it here in Tanga. Hope this helps.

**Axiom – August 2018:** We checked into Tanzania 2017 in Mafia Island... everything was completely straightforward, 50\$ for a 3 month visa payable cash into the local bank account, no bribing possible... Customs office also no problems at all except they didn’t know which forms to use and just stamped our clearance papers from Seychelles and our crewlist... Nobody ever asked for money and everything was totally polite and friendly....

Nobody sent us the Health Office, I guess because there is not even one in Mafia... For us checking into Tanzania was nothing but a pleasure... Sounds like Mafia Islands is the place for that

### **17.2.2 Tanga Yacht Club**

**IO FB Group – February 2020:** We are anchored in Tanga, Tanzania at the Tanga Yacht Club. A friendly, family oriented yacht and sailing Club where visitors are welcome.

The Tanga Yacht Club was founded on 1st May 1944 and promotes boating, yachting and sailing at Tanga and the vicinity of Tanga.

The anchorage off the yacht club is very safe, security wise and offers good protection especially in southerly winds. During the summer months, when the kaskazi (northerly) winds blow strong, Tanga’s anchorage can be a bit uncomfortable. The holding is excellent, in soft-ish mud.

### **Brick House – July 2018 - Welcome instructions for Visiting Yachts**

#### **Introduction**

The Tanga Yacht Club (TYC) welcomes all visiting yachts that arrive from the “Seven Seas”, bringing with them new ideas and sailing experiences from around the world. TYC is a perfect location for sailors seeking a safe anchorage and provides the opportunity to relax, explore the natural beauty of Tanga and its environment and re-stock supplies from nearby amenities.

The TYC is a non-cash Club and the membership card is basically the only way to make purchases at the Club. But for those who are only visiting for a short period, coupons are available at the bar. The office can be contacted at [office@tangayachtclub.com](mailto:office@tangayachtclub.com)

The bar offers a relaxed atmosphere where visiting sailors can meet and socialise with existing members. Over the years this area has become a favourite meeting place where many sailing adventures have been recounted. We look forward to welcoming visiting sailors to TYC.

This document covers

Entry procedures

Membership

Amenities offered

### **Entry Procedures**

After anchoring at TYC, the visiting yacht should complete the official entry into Tanzania with the relevant authorities at the Tanga Harbour, unless they have done so at another port along the coast. The instructions for doing this and a map of Tanga can be found on a sheet in the bar area, or with the bar staff

### **Arrival Procedure for Foreign Yachts Visiting Tanga Yacht Club**

Upon arrival, visiting yachts can anchor on the outskirts of the TYC moorings

All yachts should wear the yellow flag to show that you are still undergoing clearance

Call Tanga Port Control on VHF Ch 12 or Ch16. giving your vessel's particulars and intentions.

Harbour Master is Captain Matillya ([amatillya@yahoo.com](mailto:amatillya@yahoo.com)) Telephone .....

Clear with

Port health, (Address ..... Telephone ..... )

Immigration, (Address ..... Telephone John +255713843030

Customs at Tanzania Revenue Authority (Address ..... Telephone ..... )

Complete the visiting yacht form available from the TYC bar.

Anchor at Tanga Yacht Club.

Go to the bar to get your welcoming drink on the house.

### **Leaving Tanga**

Clear with the port authority, finalizing any outstanding payment to receive sailing clearance.

Clear with immigration.

Clear with Port Control Tower (VHF Ch 12 or Ch 16)

## **Membership**

The first week for new visiting yachts is free, to enable yachts to sort out their affairs and to show that they are welcome.

The TYC welcomes visiting crews to access the yacht club as they sort out their affairs pertaining to their arrival in Tanga. As a rule, this welcome period lasts one day, although it may be extended depending on the circumstances. After this welcome period, membership shall be required for the visiting yacht for utilisation of Club facilities..

Once entry and clearance formalities have been completed, the Office will assist with club registration and the appropriate membership will be issued upon completion of the required documentation, payment of a refundable deposit and a subscription fee for the intended duration of the stay.

Deposits into the TYC membership account can be made in cash at the bank (Exim or CRDB) situated two kilometres from the Club, by bank transfer in advance of your visit or by credit card at the bar (5% service charge)

There are three possible types of membership for visiting yachts

Reciprocal membership

Daily membership

Temporary membership

### **Reciprocal membership**

Any full member of a reciprocating club, with proof of membership, is entitled to use the facilities of the TYC for a total period of up to thirty days in any one calendar year.

Reciprocal members shall pay a refundable deposit of TSH 100,000 into the club account and an advance for the bar bill. They can then enjoy all privileges of the club but have no right to vote.

### **Daily membership**

Daily membership is available to non-Tanga residents. Visiting yachts shall pay a sum of TSH 6,000 per day (40,000 per week). All purchases from the bar shall be by cash coupons available at the bar.

### **Temporary membership**

Temporary membership is available to visiting yachts for a period not exceeding three calendar months in any one year who are nominated by a member and approved by two members of the committee.

After approval, temporary members shall pay into the club account  
a refundable deposit of TSH 100,000 and  
a monthly subscription of TSH 100,000 a month  
an advance for the bar bill



Temporary members can then enjoy all privileges of the club but have no right to vote. At the end of three months (or before), temporary members have the right to renew their temporary membership or apply for ordinary membership if they fulfil club requirements.

### **Facilities offered**

The use of the TYC facilities is governed by the TYC Rules and By Laws. Visiting sailors will be introduced to the Club, including its rules and code of behaviour at the time of registration. At registration sailors will also sign the Guest Book acknowledging such rules and receive an appropriate membership card.

These facilities provide access to the following:

Fresh water

Space to anchor your vessel

Access to all restaurant and bar areas

Use of bathroom facilities

Use of the beach area and raft

### **17.2.3 Shipping Stuff In**

#### **Tiger Lilly – August 2018 – Mailing Stuff to Tanzania:**

YACHT TIGER LILLY

Tanga Yacht Club

PO Box 364

Tanga, Tanzania, East Africa

Substitute YOUR boat name - unless you want US to get your stuff...

If your mail is a package with Customs due, then a notification slip will come to the yacht club, and you go over to the Customs Office and pay it before your package is released. A very experienced German ex-pat who had been living in East Africa for 31 years (YC member Sybill, she owns an eco resort off Zanzibar) told us that a smart move is to go see the Tanga Customs Officer BEFORE your package arrives. Tell him what is coming and YOUR estimate of its value. Negotiate a number to be paid, and then pay that official directly in cash when your package actually arrives in Tanga. We have been told by multiple local sources that if you ship anything into Tanzania by air freight, that you are exposing yourself to some rather hefty “fees” (clearance agent, undefined excise and customs duties, “administrative costs”, and pretty much anything they think that they can get), PLUS long delays while all this is sorted out with multiple officials (and changing answers) over the telephone to DAR.

A very helpful fellow (Eric Allard, Tanga YC member) who owns a charter company in Zanzibar told us that we will be far better off financially (and actually get our goods sooner) if we ship right to the local Post Office in Tanga or Zanzibar (a semi-autonomous province) via the US Postal Service International Parcel Service - and avoid the air couriers like the plague.

Eric said that all air courier shipments - regardless of the ultimate address - are cleared in the Air Freight Terminal in DAR, and subject to the aforementioned vagaries of the resident

officialdom... He said that the local guys are much easier to deal with - and "deal" is the operative word...

When we asked Eric where he gets the necessary yacht supplies to operate his charter business (Extreme Blue Water Spearfishing in Paje Beach, Zan) he said that there are very few yacht supplies available anywhere in Tanzania, he gets the majority of what he needs from marine vendors in the States, and ships via the USPS. Currently he is working with MACK Sails in Stuart, Florida to get a quote on a new sail for a large dhow in his charter company. Eric said that his typical delivery time from the States via the economically priced USPS International Parcel Service is about ten days. Ask Fenton how long it took him to get his new main cleared through the DAR Air Freight officialdom...

Hope this info helps you and others headed this way. Don't be put off by our officialdom comments - these issues are endemic throughout Africa - and we like quiet little Tanga. The YC is very convenient, there are usually a few internationals in the anchorage for company and boat watching, the YC anchorage is sheltered and secure with good holding, and by all reports the waterfront security situation in Tanga is the best in Tanzania. For anyone desiring to tour inland in East Africa, Tanga is the most secure place to leave your boat.

**Shipping USPS:** When you ship to the TYC PO Box, you don't have to trek to town every day just to check on your package. Once it comes in, and you are notified with a slip to the YC, you will have to go to the PO to pick it up. We don't have a general delivery address for the Tanga PO, but the YC PO Box is a better option anyway. Note: There is apparently NO postal code for the PO Box, according to the TYC Manager.

**Fenton Hamlin – August 2018 – Shipping via DHL:** If you are coming to East Africa and thinking about importing stuff for your boat, Beware of Tanzania. No Yacht in Transit facility. I have just imported a new mainsail for Pateke and had to pay 25% Import Duty plus 18% VAT.

Despite being told that Kenya also does not have Yacht in Transit, now that we are here in Kilifi, Kenya, we have discovered that the Boatyard here can import sails etc., tax free, through the Yacht in Transit facility.

Be aware that corruption in Tanzania is rife and quite devastating when you are not used to it.

#### **17.2.4 Gas & Diesel Fuel**

**Eveline Geubbels – August 2018:** Tanzania (at Dar es Salaam fuel stations) diesel is around 1 \$ / liter, petrol slightly more. Mtwara (S) and Tanga (N) likely bit more expensive

#### **17.2.5 Propane**

**Bruce de Marie (FB Group) – Sep 2018:** We got tank filled while we were in Dar es Salaam. old screw in type through the guy in slipway at end of jetty. He took tank came back next day. We also filled one tank with adaptor in Tanga—it was a lot more hassle (Buy tank buy adaptor etc)

#### **17.2.6 Mtwara vs Mikindani**

Q: We're looking to spend about 5 days or so provisioning, bunkering and checking out of Tanzania, plus waiting for the right weather window. Should we do the whole thing from

Mikindani, or do we need to (or are we better to) have the boat anchored for at least some of the time in Mtwara.

A: Stay away from Mtwara Harbor, it's not safe to anchor there. Take the bus from Mikindani to town for provisioning. Can check out at the same time, nobody cares in Mikindani.

The market in Mtwara is full of goodies.

### ***17.2.7 Swimming with Whale Sharks at Mafia Island***

**Peter Bernard – October 2021:** Here's an update on our whale shark swimming experience.

After taking advice on this forum, we elected to hire one of the whale shark tour boats, rather than doing it ourselves.

We found the whale sharks at the second place they looked. With hindsight both places were obvious - the two navigation buoys closest to Kilindoni (one 2 miles from anchorage, the other 4 miles from anchorage).

It was the furthest one where we found them.

We were the second boat there (the first arriving 30 seconds before us) and by the time we left there were about 5 boats.

It's hard to imagine it would be easy to spot the whale sharks without following another boat, as they don't come to the surface at this time of year - it was only by knowing where to look and searching for dark shadows that they found them.

They were definitely attracted to the buoys, as were lots of other fish - it's obviously a nutrient dense area for the whale sharks, but are there other places they hang out ?? Who knows?

Once we were in the water, it was good having the guides as they were hovering in the boat, and the current was quite strong. We stayed in the water for about 1.5 hours in total, split over two sessions. So it's a long time to have someone sitting in the dinghy.

But, it's expensive for what it is, especially if you're paying for a family.

Best deal we could negotiate was \$50 pp, although a local whom we have befriended was aghast at the price we paid and said we should have paid no more than \$30 pp.

But I don't know how realistic that price is without a Tanzanian by your side.

Overall I thought it was the right choice for us to use the guides. However, we may do it again on our own.

### ***17.2.8 Coast-Hopping Tanzania***

**Kokomo – Sep-Oct 2020 – Tanga to Mtwara:** We crossed the Indian Ocean from Cochin, India to Tanga, Tanzania in January/Febr. 2020. We spent 2 weeks in Tanga and started our way down south. We visited Zanzibar Island and sailed to Dar es Salaam to paint antifouling for our upcoming trip to Mayotte and Madagascar when Covid19 and the lockdown of the world caught up with us.

After spending unexpected 7 month in Tanzania we are ready to head south again. Tanzania was good to us and we were happy to be here during the Covid 19 time, where most of the countries around us were in lockdown. We were lucky.

We left Dar es Salaam on 19th. of September in the morning for our trip going south along the Tanzania coast line to Mtwarra where we are checking out of the country.

Our first day was a short one, just 15 NM south of Dar es Salaam we dropped the anchor at **Ras Ngede**, S 06 51.330 , E 039 26.047. The anchorage was rocky and unpleasant, very different to the protected “slipway” anchorage in Dar es Salaam.

Our 2nd. day was from Ras Ngede to **Koma Island**, a 50 NM run. We anchored at. S 07 32.560 E 039 22.713. We had a light SE wind so we motorsailed almost all day. A good stopover when going either south or north.

Our 3rd. day a short 27 NM run to **Mafia Island**. We anchored at S 07 53.063, E 039 40.001 . It was quiet and we had internet. Not much more to report.

From Mafia Island we sailed to **Songa Songa** Island, a trip with lots reefs, small Islands and sand dunes along the way. We dropped the anchor at S 08 30.668, E 039 28.747 behind a big sand dune at low tide. The anchorage has good protection from the E to SE. During the night the wind shifted more to the south and picked up to 10 -15 kn and it got uncomfortable very quick. A few local fishing boats were anchored here waiting to start the night shift.

Songa Songa has several gas platforms and a gas processing facility to remove water and other hydrocarbon condensates on the island. It is then transported through a 225 kilometre pipeline to Dar es Salaam where it is used in Songas’ Ubungo power plant, the largest gas-fired power station in East Africa.

From Songa Songa we sailed to **Kilwa** a short 35 NM sail. We anchored at S 08 55.954 E 039 31.243 . The entrance channel appears to be wide and deep. There is a lot of current when entering the inlet. We had an out going tide and wind behind us which made the entrance a rough ride.

In the past Kilwa was one of the principal ports of trade on the Indian Ocean, trading gold, ivory and iron. The ruins in Kilwa are the best preserved in Tanzania.

Kilwa to **Mchinga Bay** is 55 NM trip . We had 10 Kn wind coming from the ESE and a current of 1-1.5 kn coming from the south. Very deep water along the coastline. It was a pleasant sail. We anchored at S 09 44.409 E 039 43.719 in 20ft. of water.

Next day we left for **Mikindani** (next to Mtwarra) which is 45 NM long trip along the coast.

The entrance to the full enclosed Bay is fairly narrow and you have to watch the depth coming in and in the bay.

Our Garmin chart plotter was accurate until now. Garmin did not provide any details to enter. We used our Navionics charts which were pretty helpful.

The anchorage is very well protected and flat calm. We anchored at S 10 16.674 E 040 07.829.

You can leave the dinghy at the “yacht club” and ask one the club personnel to call a taxi or Tuck Tuck for you or you can pick up transportation on the main road.

**Beatie Nelson – July to Sep 2020 – Tanga to Mtwara:** Anchorages in Tanzania we used in the latter half of 2020 - July, August, September ☺

We did day hops/anchored at night, and were not in a hurry.

We found the wind to be mostly SE but as we headed further south, it became more easterly.

We did some motorsailing, but could sail most of the way.

Our boat is a 42 ft monohull, with a draft of about 2.1m.

Our anchor used is a 25kg Rochna with 10mm chain.

**20 July 2020: Tanga to Tongani** - We took the "inside" passage ie to the west of Yambe Island. Some shallow sand banks, but "feel" your way around. Sorry, no waypoints.

**21 July 2020: Tongani to Kendwa** (NW part of Zanzibar). Sea was flat. Wind just forward of the beam. Pleasant sail. Kendwa anchorage: 05-44.931'S / 039-17.116'E

NOTE! Bommie at the following pos: 05-44.954'S / 39-17.167'E

**29 July 2020: Kendwa to Mkutoni** (Anchored @ Ras Uso Wa Membe - at the point)

Keep a VERY sharp lookout for divers and floating plastic drink bottles marking nets/baskets - they are almost impossible to see until you are on top of them ☺ Anchorage a bit roilly, but we slept well none the less.

Our anchorage at Ras Uso Wa Membe: 05-53.359'S / 039-11.543'E

**30 July 2020: Mkutoni (Ras Uso Wa Membe) to Stone Town** - We had to motorsail as the wind was too much on the nose. Anchorage at Stone Town to the west of the town opposite the Memba Hotel and Park Hyatt Zanzibar, right next to the local tourist boats. VERY roilly when ferries pass.

Our anchorage at Stone Town: 06deg 09.682'S / 039deg 11.148'E

**4 August 2020: Stone Town to Dar es Salaam (Slipway)** - The wind was initially from the west but predicted to turn SE and pick up quite a bit towards the afternoon. We left Stone Town and headed passed the western side of Chumbe Island. We then altered course for the south of Zanzibar in the direction of Pungume Island as the wind was slowly starting to swing. The swells started picking up considerably the closer we got to Pungume Island. Once past Pungume, we altered course for Msasani Bay, and we now had a pleasant sail to Slipway with a good 15 to 20 knot SE.

Keep a lookout for small fishing boats when you get closer to Dar as they are "hidden" by the swells. We also encountered a ferry without AIS, traveling at plus 20 knots, and you will be crossing their route between Zanzibar and Dar.

**7 September 2020: Dar es Salaam(Slipway) to Ras Ngede** - Very uncomfortable anchorage but it was a good spot to safely overnight before heading around the "bulge". No coordinates. We used the pilot and felt our way in.

**8 September 2020: Ras Ngede to Sukuti Reef** - This reef disappears at high tide with only trees visible. Approach with caution. It was quite a comfortable night as opposed to a previous time we've been there, when it was a bit roilly. We found it a good place to shelter. The wind was SE and we could sail most of the time.

Our anchorage at Sukuti Reef: 07-14.918'S / 39-28.611'E

**9 September 2020: Sukuti Reef to Koma Island** - We chose Koma as with the predicted wind we could sail there - beating, but with no swells because of protection from Mafia Island and shallower water between Mafia and the mainland, it was not uncomfortable at all.

The anchorage was quite muddy. Don't be surprised if someone knocks on the boat and invites you ashore. Approach Koma from the west as there's a sandbar to NW.

Our anchorage at Koma Island: 07-32.499'S / 39-22.999'E

**11 September 2020: Koma Island to Mafia Island (Kilindoni)** - We had to motorsail the first part as there was almost no wind.

Kilindoni is a noisy anchorage due to a jetty with wooden planks and tuk tuks/motorbikes etc driving over it. Try and dive with the whale sharks- it is unforgettable! There will be operators willing to take you on a sea safari.

Our anchorage at Kilindoni: 07-54.765'S / 39-38.469'E

**13 September 2020: Mafia Island (Kilindoni) to Songo Songo** - We left Mafia Island to port, after motoring across the shallows to the W of Kilindoni in the high tide. Thereafter the wind was just right for us to be able to sail to Songo Songo.

The anchorage is a bit uncomfortable, but was a safe stop for the night when there was quite a strong SE predicted. Fisherman made use of the anchorage too.

Our anchorage at Songa Songa: 08-30.324'S / 39-28.751'E

**14 September 2020: Songo Songo to Kilwa** - We sailed south until we got off the shelf, then we had a favourable wind to take us to Kilwa - it was predicted SE but ended up being more easterly. We saw beautiful whales.

Anchoring in Kilwa, near the jetty, might be a challenge as it drops off sharply. If they have military vessels tied up, do not take pictures.

You have to go ashore here and present your ship's papers and Transire to the Harbour Master.

We had good weather and slack tide for the entrance. It is worth visiting the ruins to take photos.

**15 September 2020: Kilwa to Kiswere Harbour** - You have to "feel" your way in as there are lots of shallows.

The swells do push in so you still have a bit of a roll, however we found it safe and not too bad.

Our anchorage at Kiswere Kiswere Harbour: 09-25.499'S / 39-34.699'E

**16 September 2020: Kiswere Harbour to Mtwara (Mikindani)** - We planned to sail to Lindi, however the predicted SE was once again more easterly and we made good time. We headed for a position further out from Lindi and figured if the wind turned SE, we could easily turn and still go to Lindi.

Since the wind held more easterly, and we had tracks in to Mikindani from a previous visit, we figured we could arrive a bit later (we normally aim to arrive not later than 3pm). We arrived close to sunset. I would not recommend entering in the dark as the fishermen and their nets fill

up not only the "channels" but the entrance to the bay as well. A fellow cruiser with decades of experience, hove to in order to enter during daylight, and picked up 3 nets which he had to dive on and cut off his rudder.

Mikindani is a lovely sheltered bay and we got well rested there for our trip to South Africa.

Our anchorage at Mikindani Harbour: 10-16.606'S / 040-07.881'E

**Lindi (from 2019 visit):** We anchored there in 2019 and found quite a tidal pull in the river, so ensure your anchor is well dug in.

There were also quite a couple of unmarked sandbanks and the anchorage marked on the pilot, was no longer suitable as it was too shallow.

"Feel" your way around and you should find a suitable spot.

### **17.3 Kenya**

**Keith Mueller (IO Crossing FB Group) – 2017:** I am from Kenya. Born, raised and have lived there (as well as TZ and Moz) for over 35 years. I was just there recently (4 months ago) as I finished up a work contract.

You are perfectly safe to go to **Kilifi**. The Boat Yard is still quite active and good fun.

Whilst in Kenya or TZ, do make a point of going on a safari. Don't want to come across a biased, but I feel this part of the world is so ruggedly beautiful. It catches all your senses.

With that said, East African is poor and locals struggle to make ends meet. You need to be vigilant, and keep a lowish profile. Petty theft is always there and if you leave a towel to dry on the life lines while your ashore, it will be gone when you get back.

As much as I am a patriotic Kenyan, if you're on a time line, I suggest making Dar your destination. Then sail up to Zanzibar and other cruising anchorages within the area. Tz offers fantastic inland excursions...Serengeti, Ngorongoro crater, etc. The main reason is that from Kenya you have long day sails, against the current and prevailing winds to your next destination.

When approaching the East African coast, aim south of your destination to compensate the north bound current.

Finally, I think East Africa is getting an unfair rap about security advisories from certain dominant western countries when they themselves are always having security issues. Like anywhere in this world, just keep common sense in the front and your good to go.

You will love East Africa.

#### **17.3.1 Formalities**

<http://evisa.go.ke/evisa.html>

**FB Group – January 2021:** If you have a current Negative test no quarantine is required. You must remain on board until Port Health arrives. Then Kenya Revenue Service in Kilifi get your transire. Then take a taxi to Malindi to clear in with Immigration.

Please NOTE there are no more visas on arrival. All electronic in advance

### **17.3.2 Kilifi Boatyard**

**Brick House – September 2018:** From the Kilifi Boatyard manager:

Our rates are;

Mooring; KES 500 per ft of length per month

Dinghy service and water are inclusive

Haul out Quote , I will need further particulars of the boat please?

We can assist with Customs and Immigration issues at no charge

These are Free of charge but you may have to take a ride to Malindi for Immigration.

Please ensure when you come from Tanga that you come with a crew list stamped and a TRA customs transire.

### **17.3.3 Anchoring Out Near Kilifi**

#### **Near the Boatyard**

**FB Group – Jan 2021:** If you can't get under the bridge, anchor off Mnarani Resort just before the bridge. It's still well protected. Use your own dinghy Or the Boat Yard's dinghy service

### **17.3.4 Other Anchorages Along the Coast**

**Keith Mueller (IO Crossing FB Group) – 2017:** 24nm south of Kilifi is the next creek inlet called **Mtwapa**. This is where I used to live. It's a very nice place, but you should only enter the pass during mid-morning hours (sun behind you). The pass has a dog leg entrance but all the markers are in place. It's a very sheltered anchorage when parked opposite LaMarina restaurant. Here you can arrange to call customs who will come to the restaurant and clear you in. You then take public transport to Mombasa to see immigration for a 3 month visa(50\$).

Do not enter **Mombasa Harbour** as there is a theft issue.

The next decent harbour South is **Shimoni**. It is a 65nm run. Shimoni is near the TZ/Kenya border. The main issue is the North bound Somali current (that can reach up to 4 knots Northbound), making it a bit of a challenge going South. However, keeping close inshore, that means close to the coastal barrier reef, you can get a counter current, or at least a neutral current. You need to make an early start though. Morning breeze is off the land until around 10Am when the Kusi winds kick in (South monsoon)' then it's a beat, but locals can tell you when to go or stay as the South monsoon fluctuates in wind strength.

From Shimoni, your next destination is **Tanga**. A beautiful well protected harbour with an active yacht club. (it was here when my sailing dreams flourished in the mid 70's when many cruising yachts visited).

From Tanga, you can sail across the Pemba channel to **Pemba**. Pemba, like Zanzibar is a semi autonomous island. They like to think they are separate from Tanzania. Get the latest information from the yacht club about procedures. Some years there is a cruising permit to buy, other years not.



Pemba to Zanzibar is a beautiful day sail. **Zanzibar** is an island not to be missed, although it has rocketed to high levels of tourism, it has its unique culture and History. After all, it was from here that the explorers Stanley and Livingstone explored the mainland of Africa. You can discover all this in Stone Town where this history is still preserved.

From Zanzibar, it's a day sail to the **Dar es Salaam** yacht club (don't sail to the Dar Harbour south). The Dar Yacht Club is big and is very active. It is a very nice place and super social. Many yachts sailed here and never left.

My suggestion is to seek a buddy boat to cruise this coastline. You can easily do it alone, but your ultimately safer with another boat anchored near by. Plus it's more fun.

### **17.3.5 Yacht Services**

Raymarine agent in Kenya is Andy Thomas of Capt. Andy's Fishing Supply In Watamu. Email [directors@captainandyskenya.com](mailto:directors@captainandyskenya.com) Tel: +254 723 471777.

### **17.3.6 Shipping Stuff In**

#### **Peter Bateman – September 2021 - Duty Free Importation of Yacht Spares for visiting yachts to Kenya:**

There is a legal facility to import yacht spares for foreign registered vessels that are on a short stay in Kenya.

These yacht spares will arrive Excise Duty and VAT exempt for Yachts visiting Kenya.

In the event that you decide to visit Kenya please contact me to explain the procedure.

The single most important facet of this procedure is that you only Ship with DHL EXPRESS.

If you decide to use this facility please do not mix personal Items or gifts in the yacht spares shipment. This will only serves to delay and negate the facility.

Do not use any of the other "CAPITALISED SHIPPERS". Freight charges may be lower but the unknown consequences in Kenya can be prohibitive.

We recently had a client shipping in a new 'Brand Name' prop who only ship with FEDEX and despite our urging he complied with the prop manufacturers suggestion.

This started a chain of events where the clearing agent for FEDEX, Delta handling services, failed to provide a bond, The Shipment overstayed in the bonded warehouse for a period over 21 days incurring statutory storage charges. When we were eventually copied in on the e mail chain and appointed to solve the issues we could see that Delta handling had very little idea of the correct procedure. Delta handling demanded a payment of USD 200 for their services and a further 35 USD for break bulk charges before they would release the paper work. They held us to ransom. After settling the ransom demand we obtained the documents and our clearing agent filed the correct customs entries. We were finally on track. Storage and statutory other fees and a further inland transport charge with a customs escort incurred a further cost and at the end this cost a further 300 USD.

At the end of the period unravelling the mess we had engaged our own clearing agent whose fee was USD 100.

Our clearing agent had to search the warehouse to find the shipment, carry out a 100 % physical verification with the revenue authority, and ensure that all storage and other fees were paid.

Then we had to pay for a customs officer to escort the shipment from Nairobi to the boatyard.

In the end the total bill for clear and getting the goods to Kilifi Boatyard came in at USD 600.....OUCH!!!

In the event that you use DHL Express, the shipping charge may be greater but the Clearance charges, Customs escort, Bond and release of bond are USD 44.

Please DHL EXPRESS!

**Brick House – September 2018:** I emailed the Kilifi Boatyard manager about shipping stuff into Kilifi. Here is what he sent me:

Yacht in transit No issue

Goods to Be Consigned to

Yacht in transit " SY 'Name of Boat"  
C/o Kilifi Boatyard Ltd  
Masha Road  
Mnarani  
Kilifi 80108  
Kenya

Contact Tel +254 722 442 334

At no stage should there be any personal name on the Documents

In addition, you or I will need the boat registration and a stamp for the boat.

If you use DHL express the goods are cleared at no Charge but we have to have a customs escort. Cost is KES 2500

Do not use UPS or FEDEX!!!!

The alternative is to use a Somali Courier

You have goods consigned the same way but you arrange to deliver to Kesom freight address attached

Collection of goods up to 400 kg at KES 4000 from Mombasa

**Fenton Hamilton (FB Group) – August 2018:** If you are coming to East Africa and thinking about importing stuff for your boat, Beware of Tanzania. No Yacht in Transit facility.

I have just imported a new mainsail for Pateke and had to pay 25% Import Duty plus 18% VAT.

Despite being told that Kenya also does not have Yacht in Transit, now that we are here in Kilifi, Kenya, we have discovered that the Boatyard here can import sails etc., tax free, through the Yacht in Transit facility.

Be aware that corruption in Tanzania is rife and quite devastating when you are not used to it. If shipped as Yacht in Transit, c/o Kilifi Boatyard, I have been told, It will come in Duty Free. Check with Peter Bateman, the yard owner/manager, first.

### **17.3.7 Lamu Archipelago**

**Tiger Lilly – December 2018:** The Lamu Archipelago is such a remarkable and unique destination that it will be a highlight of TIGER LILLY's second circumnavigation. THANK YOU S/V ZIZI for encouraging us to come here! We just posted an annotated pictorial post of this unique destination on our "Lilly M. Service" Facebook page - check it out. Experienced East African hands whom we have met along this interesting coast state that Lamu today is what Zanzibar was over twenty years ago...

As most mono-hull sailors know, there is precious little storage space aboard a cruising yacht for non-essentials; so we do not usually buy trinkets or souvenirs. However, after many trips through the back alleys of Lamu, and much haggling (the final purchase price was 1/3 of the opening "white guy" 1500 KES price), we have bought our very own hand-carved Lamu Star & Crescent. These good luck symbols - the icon of Lamu - are mounted as bow eyes on the dhows of the local fishing and work boat fleet.

To determine a fair price we asked the local fisherman what they paid, and then we set an acceptable price of about 20% more. As always, we are looking for the win-win value. We usually exclaim upon hearing the opening price on any negotiation here in East Africa, "Hey, we may be WHITE, but we are not STUPID!" and then we emphasize that we are seaman and not tourists. More times than not that produces a shared belly laugh, and then we can get down to brass tacks and determine the real value...

We also bought one for a Mate who through the vicissitudes of a past relationship lost his Lamu Star & Crescent in a custody battle. That should give you an idea how the memories of this unique Old African destination are valued...

For the more adventuresome of our fellow sailors heading to Africa, and looking for a unique cruising experience, give Lamu serious consideration as a port of call. In fact, we think that the entire coast of East Africa is worth a full season of cruising. Based on the number of fast track reports we are getting from South Africa (often the singular African experience for international cruising yachts crossing the Indian Ocean), it looks as though the friendly people, interesting ports of call, and safety of EAST AFRICA will be our principal experience with the Dark Continent for this time around. Smart sailors don't flaunt their luck by cruising in active Tropical Cyclone Zones, so consider East Africa as an off-season destination - we think that you will be glad you did...

## **18 South Africa (Moved to SA Compendium)**

See South Africa Compendium.

## **19 Red Sea Route (Moved to Red Sea Compendium)**

See Red Sea Route Compendium