

## **s/v Soggy Paws: Repairing Your Boat in Exotic Places**

St. Francis 44 (Now 46') Catamaran

Draft 3.5'

Home Port: Melbourne, FL

SSCA Members Since: January 1992

17-22 June 2019  
(Solomon Islands Version)

The below cruising summary is extracted from the blog of s/v *Soggy Paws*. It covers a haulout done at Liapari Island on the SE corner of Vella Lavella Island in the Northern Solomons below Bougainville Island in the Western Pacific. As was true with Morovo Lagoon described in our March and April articles it is not an easy area to get to especially for Milk Run circumnavigators or even those who have time and the finances to otherwise cruise in that area. All commercial charting is mostly worthless as they lack accuracy and shoreline/reef detail. You would never want to enter Liapari Lagoon using commercial charting alone. We prepared satellite imagery of the area in advance and used that with OpenCPN to provide the accuracy and detail we needed. Sherry's Solomons Compendium, available under the Destinations menu on the SSCA website or on our website, now has waypoints and information for entry into the lagoon. The controlling depth is about 7' at high tide over the narrow marked channel at the north end of the lagoon. If depth or charting is a concern Noel Hudson, the owner, should be contacted in advance for advice at [Noel.Hudson.Liapari@gmail.com](mailto:Noel.Hudson.Liapari@gmail.com).



We are currently in the Solomon Islands. The Solomons are a tiny island country of approximately 900 islands, located north of the east coast of Australia. They have had an interesting and varied history, but they are most famous these days for being the site of some major World War II battles (Guadalcanal being the most famous). They achieved independence from Britain in 1976, but still consider Queen Elizabeth II their queen (according to the [Wikipedia article](#)).

Like many other developing countries, a lot of the working infrastructure is created and maintained by foreigners. In the Solomons, it is mainly Australians who support the first-world infrastructure that can be found here.

After an encounter with a log in February on our way to PNG, and another encounter with a reef also in PNG, we needed to do a little repair work on our bottom. It wasn't urgent--we weren't sinking, but we had a few weeks with no commitments, so Dave decided it might be a good time to get hauled out. It was also about time to change the oil in the sail drives.

We discovered that there are actually 3 haulout facilities in the Solomons (that we know of). We contacted all 3 shipyards and got verbal quotes to haul our 44 foot (14m) catamaran, and have her out for 5 days while we did the repairs we need. The two shipyards in/near Tulagi (Sesape and Avi Avi) are commercial yards. Tulagi is an island that is about an hour (wet) outboard ride to Honiara, so getting supplies and repair materials is simpler. But neither location is very nice. Tulagi has a bad reputation for theft and boardings (though once up in the shipyard, there are probably guards/dogs).

The 3rd option, Liapari, is semi-commercial, but also a cruiser hangout. Noel and his wife Rosie have a nice area with a pavilion for cruiser happy hours and potlucks. With some forward planning, Noel can get stuff shipped in from Australia, or tell you where (if) you can find it in Gizo or Honiara. They do have some basic cabins on the property, so you can live aboard or in one of their cabins (at extra cost, of course). Noel runs a shuttle to Gizo at least once a week.

Liapari has 2 slipways, one set up for monohulls and a new one that Noel has recently commissioned for wider/bigger vessels up to 200 tons. The carriage on the big haulout is 24 feet wide, but there is a frame that can sit on the carriage and go under the bridge deck of a catamaran, to haul cats wider than 24 feet. Power is available (240v) and water is nearby, out of a rain-fed tank (we used buckets as we didn't need much, but you could rig some kind of a hose if necessary).

Noel also has space at his dock for a few boats, and also a few moorings (lots of anchoring space too). A number of cruisers have left boats in the water at Noel's dock for several months at a time. Liapari is above 8 degrees S, so theoretically out of the cyclone belt. The harbor is completely enclosed by 70% land and 30% reef, and would be fine to weather anything but a direct hit from a major cyclone (unlikely given its location). Noel provides a water taxi once or twice a week so cruisers can get needed supplies from nearby Gizo. Gizo also has an airport link that, via Honiara, can get you to Brisbane and international airlines.

Noel has an extensive workshop and can do fabrication and welding, as well as mechanical repairs.

If you are in need of a haulout in the Solomons, we can highly recommend Liapari. Our Solomon Islands Compendium, found under the **Featured Member Blogs** Section on the **Publication** tab at [ssca.org](http://ssca.org), is a free downloadable PDF File, which includes pricing and contact details for all 3 shipyards.



Dave surveying the haulout facility and approach from the anchorage



The 200 ton trolley- about 24' wide but extendable



Approaching the ramp with trolley down.  
The hauling winch house straight ahead



Up we slowly go at a very reasonable angle.



Fully Out!  
Noel is in shorts at the rudder

Because we opted to just sit on our keels, rather than on Noel's strong frame that would allow lifting under the bridge deck, we stayed at a minor tilt during our haulout. But if you haul out using Noel's frame, it is angled a little bit so that you end up with the boat level. Noel has, or can build, whatever structure you need to make sure your boat sits on its strongest part for the haulout.



Oops, just a small scrape!  
Unknown person at the helm.



Closer view of our small ding.  
We hit this reef doing almost 5 knots.  
Glad the hull is solid there.

Commodores and 2019 Seven Sea Award Recipients Dave and Sherry McCampbell



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