

Latitude 38

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WE GO WHERE THE WIND BLOWS



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CHANGES

With reports this month from the traditional Polynesian cat **Manu Rere** at Makemo in the Tuamotus; a long report from **Geja** on cruising Italy, Slovenia and Croatia; a long report from **Toucan Tango** on buying a cat in Malaysia and cruising to the Med via India; from the **Blue Water Cruising Club** luau at Catalina; and a full helping of **Cruise Notes**.

Manu Rere — 38-ft Catamaran Glenn Tieman Makemo Atoll, Tuamotus (Oxnard)

I stayed at Makemo Atoll in the Tuamotus for five weeks. In retrospect, it was preferable to spend the month-long Bastille Day celebrations there than



Glenn, looking shady.

at the more crowded and more expensive Papeete, the capital of French Polynesia. At Makemo there were sporting contests during the day, and competition between two traditional *heiva* dance groups at night. Each group made their own music. Their instruments were mostly a variety of elaborate drums and hollowed ringing logs. I really enjoyed it. The famously sexy Tahitian dancers were, of course, also a pleasure to see. Even their costumes were beautiful. When the celebrations wound down and I prepared to depart, a small cut in my finger became viciously infected. It required antibiotics — free from the dispensary — and a couple more weeks to heal. My traditional Polynesian voyaging cat has no mechanical advantages, so I couldn't sail with a messed up hand.

Once I finally raised the hook, I sailed 20 miles across the lagoon to anchor near the other pass. The coral patches were so brilliantly colorful on the way over that they were easy to avoid. Since I was then away from town, I was able

'Ontong Java' in Polynesia. If she looks like a yacht you might like to own, contact Hans at gowest@yahoo.com.

to stock up on coconuts — which are a regular part of my diet now — without having to worry about ownership issues. I then rode the ebb tide out the pass and set sail for Tahiti.

After sailing past several atolls the first day, then through a stretch of open ocean, I hove to for the night while still 25 miles short of the narrow passage between the last of the Tuamotus. The current has long been known for being strong and unpredictable in the so-called 'Dangerous Archipelago'. I would have to for most of the other nights on the passage to Tahiti as the weather was so stormy. After this, I was happy to see beautiful Tahiti come into sight, and to anchor in the quiet shelter of the headland and breakwater at the small town of Tautira.

After several pleasant days at Tautira, I sailed for Papeete, expecting it to be a pleasant and scenic daysail. Instead, I would learn firsthand about the *maramu* winds, which accelerated around the island. At first I dropped all sail to await the passage of what I took to be a squall. But when I analyzed the wind direction, it appeared to be blowing me toward the nearby shoals. So I hoisted a storm sail — which laces on the main mast — for the first time ever. Powered by this tiny sail, I made my way behind Venus Point, off Papeete, and into the lee of the island the next day. I was glad to drop the anchor again.

The way I see it, Papeete is for buying things you can't find elsewhere in French Polynesia. It serves that function well. Every day for a week, I hiked into town to discover where things were and to buy food, propane, boat parts and finally a French language textbook. I also did take time to visit some beaches on the way.

My sail from Tahiti to nearby Moorea was also stormy, with the wind coming in too strong after a long morning calm. It reminded me of Hawaii. While at Moorea, I met Hans Klaar on his one-of-a-kind 73-ft traditional voyaging double canoe *Ontong Java*. Hans was one of the first Westerners to use crab claw sails — such as I have



ALL PHOTOS BY ANDREW VIK

on *Manu Rere*. He used them on his Wharram catamaran and is using them on his current boat — which is probably the only yacht more radically stone age than mine. Although Hans does use a 5-hp outboard engine on his cat, she was built on Polynesian lines from big planks cut from two trees in West Africa. The gaps between the planks are sealed with strips of rubber tacked over the planks.

There are some people on Moorea who appreciate Polynesian vessels such as my *Manu Rere*, and they kept me entertained with dives, tours and meals. When I later returned to Papeete, I got an email from Hans saying he was at Moorea, had one too many girls aboard, and hoped I could take one. The women were beauties, too. Unfortunately, I'd already cleared out of the country, so I was moving on to Huahine and Bora Bora, my last stops in French Polynesia. Despite its drawbacks, Bora Bora looks like the Matterhorn jutting out of the sea and mist. While in Bora Bora, I again crossed



GLENN TIEMAN



goon, we spent a night tied outside Trattoria da Lazarini in the town of Burano. This town is the colorful little cousin of Venice, where the beautifully painted buildings are reminiscent of Mexico's most colorful villages. At sunset we experienced the wildest hailstorm that this San Franciscan has ever seen. One-inch diameter hail pelted *Geja* for 20 minutes, with thunder and lightning crackling just overhead. By the time I had set out the cocktail glasses to harvest the ice, the hailstorm ended. Mariners definitely must keep an eye on the weather when cruising the Med — even in the middle of summer.

Great times in the Med. Spread; beautiful Ist, Croatia. Top, left to right. Andrew near a bridge at one of the smaller canals in Venice. A strange ultra-modern, Russian-owned motoryacht, said to have cost about \$300 million. Croatian girls just wanna have fun. And lovely but quiet Piran, Slovenia.

paths with *Ontong Java*. I've already met up with the crews of several other Wharram traditional catamarans.

From Bora Bora, I have a 1,500-mile passage to Wallis Island and possibly Samoa. Then I'll sail north through Tuvalu before the start of the South Pacific tropical cyclone season.

— glenn 09/01/09

**Geja — Islander 36
Andrew Vik
Another Summer In The Med
(San Francisco)**

I can't believe that my second summer of Mediterranean cruising aboard *Geja*, the '76 Islander 36 that I first learned about in a September '06 *'Lectronic Latitude*, has come to an end. I covered some 1,500 amazing miles in the Adriatic Sea, visiting Italy, Slovenia and Croatia.

As of my last update in the August issue, I'd reached Venice, far north

in the Adriatic. I splurged and stayed six nights in the Sant'Elena Marina, a scenic 30-minute walk from St. Mark's Square. The highlight of my first ever trip to Venice was zipping through the myriad of canals, both large and small, on *Geja's* nine-foot Zodiac tender. I even made several passes under the famous Rio Alto Bridge in the Grand Canal. The first day wasn't so smooth, however, as crewmember Lars and I managed to get busted for entering a forbidden military zone, and collided with a gondola full of tourists. Who knew that one must pass a gondola starboard-to-starboard instead of the normal port to port? By day two, however, we were navigating harmoniously with the gondolas, sometimes becoming stuck in huge gondola traffic jams to the sound of accordion music and singing gondoliers.

Before leaving the Venice La-

Leaving through one of three exits from the Venice Lagoon, we observed the massive and controversial construction project intended to seal the lagoon from the Adriatic Sea. Unlike the rest of the relatively tide-less Med, the northern Adriatic has a tidal range of three feet, and it can be reinforced by strong southerly surges in the winter. Venice itself now floods more often than

Despite some language barriers, Andrew made many friends, including lovely Tamara, the second runner up in Austria's 'Next Top Model'.



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ever. Many yacht harbors in the region already have built their own flood control gates to deal with the surge.

Italy's nearest coastal neighbor to the east is Slovenia, the only E.U. member



From Ibiza, Spain, to Zrce, Croatia, Med girls love to party.

from the former country of Yugoslavia. The highlight of its 20-mile coastline is the wonderful harbor town of Piran, where the architecture and winding streets reminded me that this entire region was under Venetian rule for hundreds of years. But Piran is a quiet town with little nightlife, and even the neighboring party town of Portoroz had little to offer at the height of peak season. When young Slovenians want serious summer fun, they head south to Croatia, which was the next and final country of my journey for the summer.

Croatia is not part of the European Union, and the check-in procedure, though not horribly inefficient, still requires stops at multiple agencies and purchase of a 200-euro cruising permit that's good for a year. (The Italians, on the other hand, couldn't be bothered that a U.S.-flagged boat entered their waters from a non-E.U. country). Once checked in, we had great sailing down the Istria Peninsula, stopping in Porec and Rovinj before reaching Pula, site of an amazing First Century Roman coliseum. It's said to be the best preserved Roman coliseum in the world. Boats may anchor just in front of the coliseum, providing a backdrop possible only in the Med.

Nordic friends Henriikka and Johanna joined me in Pula, and we continued

The spectacular view of Hvar, Croatia, from the castle above the town. The eastern Adriatic couldn't be more different from the western.



to have great sailing among the islands of Croatia's Kvarner Gulf. The gulf is known for its tricky weather and sudden storms. In fact, it's where you find Senj Bora, which is the Croatian version of The Slot on San Francisco Bay. The waters between the islands of Rab and Krk are subject to offshore winds that tend to funnel strongly from the mainland town of Senj at the northern end of the Velebit mountain range. These winds have completely stripped the nearby islands of vegetation, and in winter often blow in excess of hurricane force. For us, the wind gradually built to about 30 knots, with stronger gusts. It was a wild but safe beam reach, particularly after Henriikka climbed on top of the house and reefed the main.

As nice as an all-female crew can be, we split up for the next two weeks. I left the girls at Riviera-like Opatija, which is a posh resort town that was developed in the 19th century for Austrian aristocrats. As for myself, I was joined by wingmen Ville and Sven. We sailed south to the island of Pag in the notorious Santa-Ana-like bora winds. We made several great stops on the way, and even transited a centuries-old canal, the 20-foot wide Osor Canal. It was dug by Liburnian tribes prior to the Roman settlement! But our two weeks revolved around the island of Pag and Zrce, its 24-hour party beach. It's Croatia's answer to Ibiza.

When we got to Zrce, we couldn't believe our eyes, as there were thousands of young people filling several open-air nightclubs on the beach. Papaya, one of them, attracts top DJ's from around the world. The parties at the clubs start in the afternoon, with beach-clad hotties dancing and splashing in the pools while sipping supersized cocktails from one-liter carafes. Come sunset, everybody heads home to eat and rest, returning again at 1 a.m. to start to party.

As more and more Italians made their usual August migration across the Adriatic, Zrce became more a sausage fest, somehow attracting more Italian males than females. It was time for a bit of detox anyway, so with new crew Maggie and Lukas, I set sail for calmer shores. As we arrived in obscure Olib, a local port official caught our lines. He didn't just ask how long we planned to stay, but asked it in English with



a perfect New York accent! Islands like Olib and Susak have strong ties to the U.S., as folks have been migrating back and forth for more than a century. Some even have an Americanized Croatian dialect. Vacationing American families dominated tiny Olib, so it's there I heard the most English all summer.

Heading farther south among the outer Croatian islands, we visited Kornati National Park, which is a dense archipelago that's been deforested over the years by Venetians, shepherds and fire. The starkness was in great contrast to Croatia's typically forested islands, but the lack of trees and brush made for excellent hiking and vistas. With aft winds, we had a blast broad-reaching a zig-zag course, using the numerous islands as a slalom course, while chicken-jibing between the outer and inner waters.

We continued south to the mainland party town of Vodice, where we caught some late-season action at high-profile clubs Hacienda and Aurora. Croatian

IN LATITUDES



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY GEJA



Smashing Melissa, one of Vik's 16 crew.

flawlessly. The Islander 36s are so nice to sail, as they are steady, well-behaved and have a light helm. And unlike 'modern' boats with flat bottoms, they don't pound when sailing upwind. *Geja's* Yanmar diesel is solid, her sails are more than decent, and she has all the coastal cruising equipment one needs — such as refrigeration to keep the beer cold. *Geja* proved to be a popular boat in every port, with countless people inquiring about her San Francisco hailing port.

I'm now back in Split near *Geja's* winter home, where I'm spending a final week anchored for free just in front of the 'Riva' of this lively student town — which happens to be on UNESCO's World Heritage list. Live bands perform for me nightly on the promenade, and there is still plenty of nightlife despite the premature end to summer weather. How can I go wrong in a town where even the local tourist brochure describes the "fine lookin' ladies" of Split as having "amazing height and ample bosom?" I'll be hauling out in a couple of days. It will be sad, but with all the recent crappy weather, the water temperature dropped from 80 to 70 in just one week.

For those who might want to cruise here, most Italians speak only Italian, while Croats and Slovenians speak great English. It makes the Italian experience more exotic, but getting things done in Italy can be very frustrating. The main mechanic in my winter boatyard in Croatia speaks both English and German at a very technical level. The low *'Geja'* anchored at Zavrtnica, Croatia. It sort of looks like the Sea of Cortez, but with twisting fjords. The water temp was 80 degrees.

From lower left: Five gals for every Vik in the dinghy. Italian summer hail. The coliseum at Pula. Lovely crew Maggie channels Hollywood. Andrew with the girl band Eni. The falls at Krka National Park. Delicious fresh fruits and veggies. Outside a sub pen. 'Geja' tied up at the fortress at Sibenik.

girls never ceased to impress me and my crews with their amazing good looks. The girls on the Dalmation Coast are tall and lean, and they love to flaunt their figures with short skirts and high heels.

After an exhausting weekend at the clubs, new crewmember Alex and I took *Geja* 10 miles up the Krka River into the fresh waters of Skradin, gateway to the Krka National Park. The Krka River cascades down countless waterfalls on its way to the Adriatic. The park is a great — but crowded — place to spend a day soaking in fresh water.

My final crew of the season were Anja and Melissa of San Francisco. Ten of our friends got so jealous that they chartered a 51-ft Elan, which was a bit of a slow boat. We buddy-boated for the week through the now familiar-to-me waters near Split, and I showed them my favorites spots, such as Hvar Town and the

Blue Cave. We experienced mostly ideal early-September weather, with breezy afternoons and calm nights. The water temperature was still near 80 degrees.

In all, I spent about 80 days actively cruising during my second summer in the Med, and made 60 stops. My crew — I had 16 different people over the summer — and I spent about 34 nights at anchor, 25 in marinas (blame Italy), 11 on town quays, and 10 other nights 'creatively' moored. We sailed half of the 1,500 miles, and put another 200 hours on the engine.

Despite being 33 years old and having suffered the wear-and-tear of being sailed two-thirds of the way around the world, *Geja* performed



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winter rates and English proficiency make Croatia a *much* better place to have work done — and meet girls. Although



Vik's new friend Marija at Solaris Beach.

I wouldn't accuse either of being very punctual!

What are my plans for next summer? Well, Greece is just down the road, isn't it? I hadn't planned on making a habit of these extended summer vacations in the Med, but I love the cruising over here so much!

And I've yet to tire of the cruising experience — at least as long as the weather is good. Last night's thunderstorm, while I was on the hook, was intense. This morning I had to pump six inches of water out of the dinghy. But yes, I'm certainly thinking of coming back next summer.

The thing I enjoy most about cruising is sharing the experience with my international assortment of friends and acquaintances, while exploring a continent where people truly know how to enjoy life.

— andrew 09/15/09

Toucan Tango — Catana 47 Cat Marvin and Ruth Stark Malaysia to Turkey (Folsom)

When I was 59, my wife Ruth and I did the '97 Ha-Ha with our F-31 trimaran *Noor*. When we got to Cabo, Ruth said, "If we're going to do this again, you'd better

A young girl from one of the hill tribes in Thailand. Doctors are mystified at why she complains of a chronic sore throat.



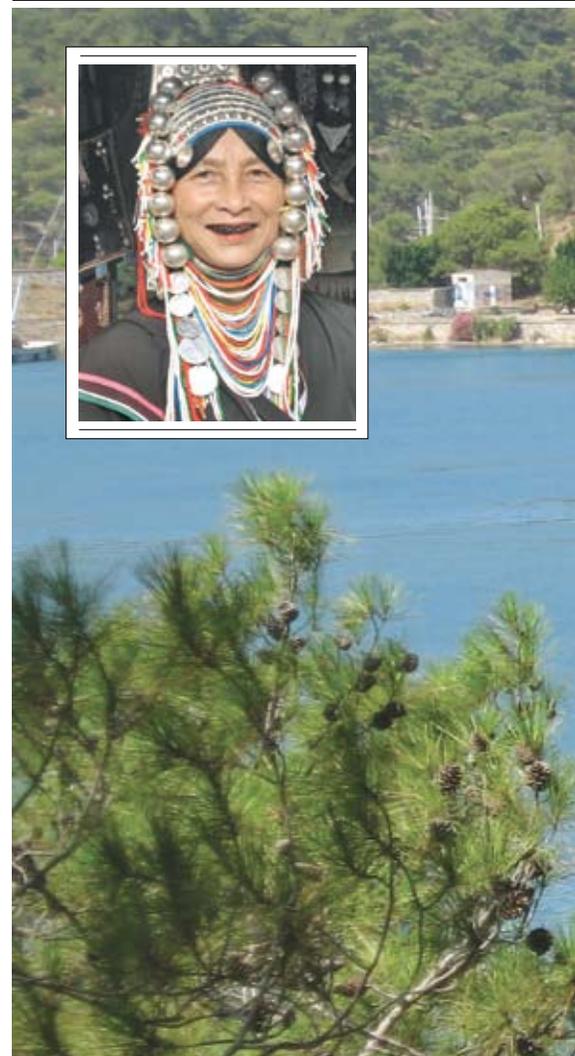
TOUCAN TANGO

get a bigger boat." So three months later we bought a used Catana 44 in France, and christened her *Chesapeake*. During the next six years, we would sail her 25,000 miles to San Francisco Bay, where we sold her in '04. So *Latitude*, a fine magazine, is partly responsible for our laid back lifestyle. By the way, I'm glad to see that the magazine and the publisher still have the same attitude.

In '08, at age 71, with my new titanium hip, Ruth and I decided to make one more sailing trip. So last year we flew from Sacramento to the island of Langkawi, Malaysia, where we bought *Toucan Tango*, an '01 Catana 47, which is one of the best cruising catamarans made. She has a 200-liter fridge, a 100-liter freezer, a washing machine, watermaker and king-sized beds. The eight bimini-mounted 75-watt solar plates handle all the power requirements on a daily basis. We run an engine or generator only if we're on a long passage and are using lights, the autopilot and navigation equipment. With her daggerboards down, she sails really well to windward — at least for a catamaran.

We spent our first six months — meaning the summer of '08 — cruising Malaysia and Thailand. Summer is the wet season, so there was lots of rain. Squalls tested our ground tackle and anchor a couple of times with winds to 40 knots. The Northeast monsoon winds started kicking in around December, at which time the weather became drier, so we set off on the 1,500-mile passage across the Andaman Sea to India. It was great sailing, with mostly light winds and smooth seas. We even flew the spinnaker for a couple days. We had a maximum of 22 knots of wind until we rounded the tip of Sri Lanka. Based on poor reports from other cruisers, we did not stop at Sri Lanka.

When you turn the corner at the tip of Sri Lanka to head 240 miles to the southern tip of India, you pass through the Gulf of Mannar, during which time you'd better damn well be hanging on! Most boats that passed through there encountered headwinds to 35 knots and ugly seas. We spent one day and two nights with triple-reefed everything. We could not sit at either steering station without getting a fire hose shower from every second wave. We huddled in the cockpit behind the cabin, clutching the remote control for the autopilot. *Toucan Tango* bashed, smashed, crashed, twist-



ed and torqued through the mess. But boats sure are tougher than humans. A smaller Leopard catamaran lost her entire bow tramp during the maelstrom.

When you reach the southwest tip of India, you have it made. We had smooth sailing the rest of the way into Cochin. Our clearance was handled at Willingdon Island next to the Taj Malabar Hotel, after which we were directed to anchor in the river near Bolgatty Island. Water was available at the island for a small fee by jerry can, and we could get Wifi — but at a high fee.

The Indian people were friendly, and the women wear beautiful saris. The Indians have a way of moving their head sideways back and forth when you ask a question, such that you don't know if their answer is yes or no. If you ask the tuk-tuk driver, "Do you know where Kingfisher Airline office is?", all you get is a wobbling head, no matter how many times you ask. It can mean yes or no. If you get into the wholesale district of the