

Latitude 38

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WE GO WHERE THE WIND BLOWS



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CHANGES

With reports this month from the new crew on **Cocokai** heading to Thailand; from **Geja** on Andrew Vik's latest summer cruise in the Med; from **Wind-song** on great and inexpensive medical care in Panama; from **Dolphin** on a passage to Hawaii and the good life in the Kewalo Basin; from **Zeppelin** on Costa Rica; **Moondance** on its passage to Polynesia; and a generous helping of **Cruise Notes**.

Cocokai — 65-ft Schooner Greg King and New Crew Oz to Thailand (Long Beach)

After five years and 25,000 miles of ocean sailing, boatowner Jennifer

Sanders and her daughter Coco are taking a break back home in California. So captain Greg has taken on two new crewmembers from the *Latitude 38 Crew List* to make the 3.5-month

Mora is starting a great cruising adventure.

trip from Oz to Thailand via Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia. The two crew are Joe, 62, a real estate professional from the Bay Area, and Mora, who would be me, a 44-year-old nurse from Northern California.

We met in Cairns, Australia, in the last week of August. *Cocokai* was looking good after all the work — new deck, new batteries, rewound genset, resolved rigging issues — Jen and Greg had done to her in Townsville. Joe and I both wondered at our luck, as we checked out *Cocokai* and became acclimated to life on the water. We're pinching ourselves, having been invited to sail on the schooner all the way to Thailand.

Since Greg's Australian visa was expiring on September 23, we needed to make our way up the Queensland coast

Why start with the easy stuff? Captain Greg let the new crew navigate through the Great Barrier Reef — and at night.

without delay. Southeasterly winds of 25 to 30 knots moved us up the coast quickly, although we got to enjoy stops at Lizard Island, Margaret Bay, Seisha and Gove.

My first-ever night watches were challenging, as we had to maneuver through the Great Barrier Reef and along the shipping lanes. But I have come to love the solitude and beauty of night watches. The Milky Way is so bright that it illuminates the opaque sail. And when we had wind, I found the sound of waves rushing by to be exhilarating.

Along the way we've met many friendly Aussies with warm smiles. The fishing has been great, too, as Greg has caught big mackerel and wahoo without much effort. In fact, his only complaint has been that he only gets to fish for five minutes every other day before we have all the fish we need! On the downside, we've encountered outrageous prices — the Aussie dollar is sky high, which is why Aussies are coming to California to buy boats — for everything from food to engine parts. Then there's the murky water, which, although we haven't seen any yet, is supposedly home to Australia's notorious human-eating crocs.

The Torres Strait featured big breaking swells and 'the hole in the wall', which is a narrow passage between interesting rock formations. We are currently in the middle of what probably will be a five-day passage from Darwin to Kupang, Indonesia. The seas are flat and there isn't a trace of wind. Our next stops are Flores Island, Komodo Island and Bali.

— mora 9/30/11

Geja — Islander 36

Andrew Vik Croatia (San Francisco)

When I first bought the 32-year-old *Geja* sight-unseen in '08 through an article in *'Lectronic Latitude*, I had no idea that several amazing summers of Mediterranean cruising lay ahead. I just wrapped up the fourth here in Trogir, Croatia, a UNESCO World Heritage Center. Unlike the three-month, five-country voy-



ages of past summers, this year's itinerary was scaled back to just six weeks of cruising along Croatia's Dalmatian coast. As an overly social cruiser who loves the southern European vacation vibe, I chose to sail during the peak of the peak season, which was July 9 to Aug. 21. The weather is more reliable than in June and September, and the quaint island villages are way too quiet for me during the shoulder season.

I typically bring along a second suitcase full of parts and other odds and ends, like fuel filters, ZipLoc bags, one-inch zincs, and other things that are either much more expensive or unavailable in Europe. The dollar was particularly weak this summer, trading at over \$1.40 per euro, so buying parts at home really paid off. We are spoiled in the U.S. by how easily and affordably we can acquire just about any consumer goods. It helps greatly that our sales tax is so low, and in many cases avoidable. Most Europeans pay well over 20% in value added tax (VAT).

COCOKAI



BARRIER SHOTS



IN LATITUDES



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY GEJA



Scenes from a fourth season in Croatia, clockwise from above: The falls at Krka National Park. "Andrew baby! So great to see you back again this year!" The latest in deck shoes for Croatian go-go dancers. Andrew and a couple of new Spanish friends help further international relations.

Joining me this summer were the usual assortment of friends and acquaintances, mostly Scandinavians, starting off with Sven and Neil, two skilled wingmen. Our very first stop was the lively student town of Split, where I'd spent many weeks at the end of previous summers. We anchored in front of the bustling waterfront.

We were awakened that first Saturday morning, slightly hung over, by a shout from a port official. "Give me your boat papers!" the expectedly surly official demanded. Starting last year, officials had begun to implement a 'no anchoring' policy in the huge harbor, as it "interferes with the large ferries". My ass it does, as I was floating in just seven feet of water. In any event, I was instructed to go to the port captain's office, and bring 1,000 kuna — 150 euro — to reclaim my boat papers.

I reported to the office with just 300

kuna and a plan to plead for a reduced fine on the basis of poverty. After some discussion, the boarding officer invited me for coffee at a café. I waited patiently through two rounds of drinks, but we never reached an alternate resolution. He paid the tab, and told me to come to the office when I had enough money.

Feeling out of options, I returned to his office with the full amount — only to be whisked away to the café again. But after being treated to yet another drink — or was it I who was paying, albeit indirectly? — I still had to cough up the full amount. It made no sense. I left Split thinking that if they really don't want to keep fining people, they need to enlarge

the tiny 'no anchoring' sign, and relocate it from the remote corner of the harbor. So continues my love/hate relationship with Croatia.

Heading north, Primosten, a lovely little mainland holiday beach town, is always a popular stop. We three from Geja took seats at an outdoor wine bar in the center of town alongside two attractive blondes. Imagine our surprise when one turned out to be a Croatian-born Oakland resident, the other a San Franciscan now living in Marin! A San Franciscan myself, we had plenty to talk about. We continued the evening aboard my anchored-out Geja, partying and swimming well into the night.

We unexpectedly ran into the girls again the next day, so we invited them to join us sailing to the next town north — with the customary swim stop along the way. Croatia offers so many anchorages that one can almost always break up a typical 20-mile daysail with a lunch stop. The girls were happy to join, and were great company. Is it me, or do boats just somehow smell better with women onboard?

One of the main highlights of the region is Krka National Park and its beautiful waterfalls. From the underrated mainland town of Sibenik, you sail nine miles up the Krka River, passing two bridges. You just need to watch for re-

The lovely Elizabeth, one of Andrew's many crew. "What do you mean there's a naked German man on the boat behind me?"



The young are on the loose in Croatia.



GEJA

CHANGES

duced clearance due to bungee jumpers at the first bridge! From the quaint river town of Skradin, excursion boats take tourists the rest of the way up to the park

area, where one — along with thousands of other vacationing Europeans — can spend hours admiring the cascading waterfalls. Anchoring and swimming in Skradin is a treat, as the water is fresh, a nice change from the Adriatic, which is unusually salty. The only

danger in the area is a family of swans. If you invade their territory, they will charge at you like a bull. Having had a fright, Neil can vouch for that.

When sailing in the Med, I see few American-built sailboats around, and they are mostly Hunters. I always figured that my Islander 36 must be one of very few California-made plastic classics around. But in Skradin, I was most surprised when an Italian with an Ericson 34 circled my boat at anchor. It was my first such encounter with another California-built boat, but we only had time for a few words.

Back downstream and into the sea, just north of Sibenik, Vodice, one of Croatia's better coastal party towns, just north of Sibenik, was our next stop. The guys and I arrived just in time for this summer's opening night at Hacienda, a large open-air nightclub on the edge of town. We began the night aboard *Geja* with a few cocktails of proper strength,

'Geja's name and hailing port may look a little tattered from the years, but the waters of the Adriatic are still crystal clear.

as the standard Croatian well drink includes not a drop more than an ounce of alcohol. Drinks aboard *Geja* usually involve Red Bull or some equivalent energy-drink knockoff, as parties in the Med usually don't end before dawn.

After a stop at Makina, a very entertaining although overpacked dance bar just along the waterfront, we finally made it to Hacienda at 1 a.m. The mostly-locals place was insane, with go-go dancers galore, and countless tall and thin Croatian girls parading around in skimpy dresses and sexy heels. Alas, even though many young Croatians speak excellent English, they tend to be leery of outsiders, so they stick to themselves.

Heading back to Sibenik to swap crew, we were enjoying an easy broad reach when entering the narrow channel near town. Since the 300-foot Turkish cargo ship *I. Sahinkaya* was coming out of the channel, I altered course upwind on starboard tack. Just as we passed the ship, I could see and hear its crew running around screaming that they had lost steerage. They soon grounded, the ship's bow rising as it came to an uneventful stop. Given all the traffic in the channel, things could have turned out much worse.

It was around this time that I experienced the worst breakdown of the entire trip. While I attempted to use Skype on my iPhone 3GS, the phone crashed and just wouldn't restart. Getting it running again required restoring it to factory settings, but that would also undo the special unlocked mode that I had applied long before. Without its being unlocked, I would no longer be able to use the local Croatian SIM card, one that provided phone service and internet all along the Croatian coast. Although I rely on MacENC navigation software running on my Macbook Pro down below, it sure is nice to have the Navionics charts available in the cockpit on my iPhone. I never was able to get the phone running properly again. Where are those cheap Craigslist hackers when you need them?

With new crew on board - a Swede, a Dane, and an Australian - we continued north from Sibenik, a day late due to unstable weather and blustery winds. Our first stop was the Kornati Islands, a dense archipelago of deforested islands that offer a stark moon-like appearance. The islands are uninhabited aside from some summer cottages. Restaurants

GEJA



"I'm bummed! Men seem to be more stimulated by my body than my mind."

GEJA



operate during the summer, and often provide free docks and buoys for their customers. With little vegetation, there is superb hiking among these islands. And sailing through the long, narrow island chain is a dream! The water is flat, and there is usually an afternoon breeze.

As we sailed along, the wind lightened and became fickle just when we needed to squeeze through a narrow passage. An Austrian-flagged boat had been sailing alongside for some time, and as they were but one boat length away and with their sails flapping, I motioned to the helmsman for room. Only when he stood up did I realize that he was naked. We exchanged a few words about our course, and kept on sailing. When you sail in the Med, you get used to people from German-speaking nations being naked.

After a wonderful couple of days in the Kornati Islands and Telascica Nature Park, we sought some civilization in the

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ALL PHOTOS COURTESY GEJA

the tragic terrorist events were unfolding in Oslo.

Heading north from Zadar, one begins to see the Velebit Mountains, the source of notoriously strong *bora* offshore winds. These mountains stand nearly 6,000 feet tall. On this day, the mountain range resembled San Francisco's Twin Peaks on a foggy summer day, as clouds draped from their peaks, an indication that the *bora* winds were blowing. *Boras* have been clocked at up to 90 knots, but the summer version blessed us with 20 knots on a beam reach.



GEJA

A narrow alley typical of the old towns and villages of Croatia.

One of the great elements of cruising is the surprise factor. With a crappy weather forecast, we pulled into the well-protected harbor in Rab Town on what just happened to be the final day of their Medieval Festival. It was an amazing evening, with thousands of folks enjoying exhibits of medieval culture along the narrow, crooked alleyways of a town that seems to have changed very little since, well, the middle ages. Fireworks followed, along with a wild thunderstorm during the night.

More Croatian adventures next month.

— andrew 10/08/11

Windsong, Islander Freeport 36 Frank Nitte and Shirley Duffield Passing Stones in Panama (ex-San Diego, now Panama)

In California, you could easily pay more to park for a doctor's appointment than the doctor's appointment itself

Either Shirely and Frank have the same thumb injury or they think medical care in their adopted Panama is a good deal.



WINDSONG



Clockwise from above; An elevated view of the beautiful Kornati Islands National Park. A small Kornati Island village. Andrew, doing the 8 a.m. 'row of shame' back to his boat. A 'cloud cap' suggests brisk offshore winds. Stunning Rab town. "I know it's 5 a.m., but am I still sexy?"

small town of Sali on Dugi Otok (Long Island). With a good WiFi signal from a nearby cafe, I stayed up quite late one night, catching up on emails. Then sometime after 2 am, there was a voice coming from outside. It was a girl shouting, "Hey San Francisco!" I came up to the cockpit to find a hot - and inebriated - blonde, wearing all white, standing at the quay. In this part of Croatia, many people have ties to the United States, and this New Yorker was spending the summer in Sali visiting relatives. She was surprised to see a U.S.-flagged boat moored in her little town. Unfortunately, our conversation ended prematurely, thanks to her overly protective brother.

The next crew change took place in the prominent mainland town of Zadar, where the only mooring choices are in one of several marinas. One night at

Marina Zadar cost 63 euro, or about \$90 at this summer's exchange rate. As is the case with most marinas in Croatia, the facilities are in great shape, and the bathrooms are super clean and open 24 hours a day. In addition the water supply is clean and plentiful. In fact, the primary drinking water aboard *Geja* is Croatian tap water. But still, \$90?! These were my only two nights in a marina this summer.

I prefer to avoid the heat of the cities during the height of the summer, but Zadar was a surprisingly fun place. It helped that we were there during an unusual cool spell, with daytime highs not even topping 80 degrees. My new crewmembers were two Norwegians, who arrived just as