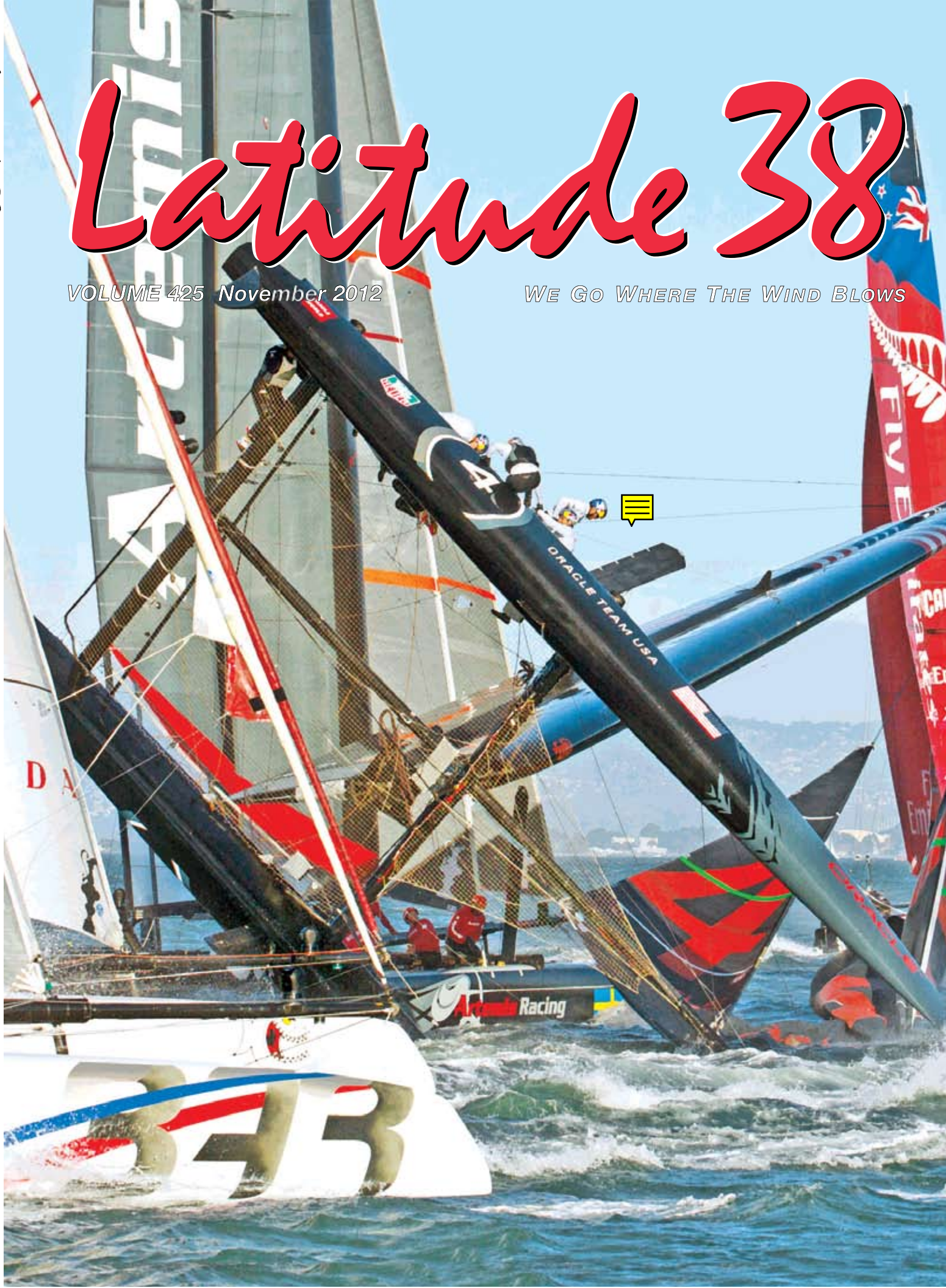


Latitude 38

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WE GO WHERE THE WIND BLOWS

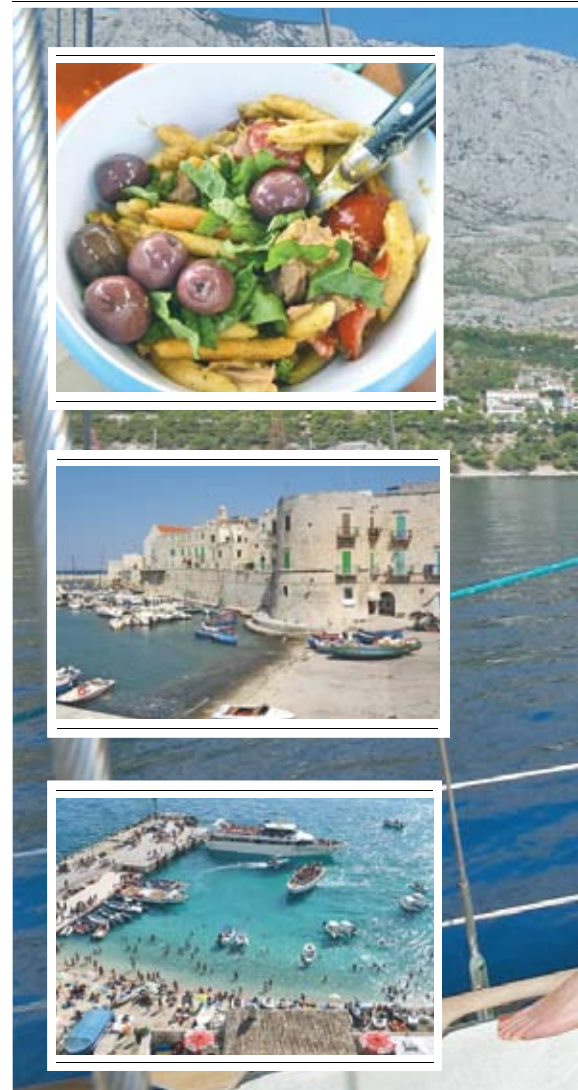


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CHANGES

With reports this month from **Sea Level** at Rodrigues Island in the Indian Ocean; from **Geja** in Italy and Croatia; from **Fleetwood** back in Amsterdam; from **Witch of Endor** on getting a dinghy ripped off in Costa Rica; from **Larrikin** on a summer in the Sea of Cortez; from **Harmony** on tropical storm Paul in the Sea of Cortez; and **Cruise Notes**.



specifically the Adriatic — my crew and I were thrilled to be back in Italy, where the people are so friendly and lively, and where the food is ridiculously delicious. On the downside, far fewer Italians are fluent in English than are residents of the former Yugoslavian countries.

After clearing in at Bari — no fuss and no cost to enter the European Union — we headed down the coast. It didn't take long before the horizon was a frothy white again, with 20+ knot winds and a nasty little swell. Once reefed down, it was an exciting and wet close reach. *Geja* rose and fell with the waves, sometimes taking a direct hit that sent spray back into the cockpit. We were soaked but satisfied, as *Geja* handled the conditions like a champ.

Unlike the steep-sided Croatian side of the Adriatic Sea, the Italian side is shallow with mostly man-made ports and virtually no islands. The approaches

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

When I left off last month's installment of my latest summer of cruising in the Med — more

IN LATITUDES



PHOTOS COURTESY GEJA

Insets left; Andrew Vik loves Italian food; loves little Italian ports such as Giovinazzo, where his Islander 36 was the biggest boat around; and loves Italian holiday playgrounds such as the Tremiti Islands. But when it comes to sharing his cruising adventures, he loves women of all nationalities.

to the harbors can have as little as 10 feet of water, which makes entering precarious when five-foot swells roll in. We entered little Giovinazzo with not much drama, and took an awkward spot at the end of a floating pontoon, which required us to partially raft to a resident powerboat. I discovered Giovinazzo by accident in '10, and it quickly became one of my favorite spots in the Med. It's a small harbor where *Geja* was again the largest boat — something I can't often say in this part of the world.

It was no accident that we arrived during *Ferragosto*, the period in August when most industries shut down and Italians flee to the coast to escape the inland heat. As the late afternoon *siesta* wraps up, Italians of all ages converge on the nearest town for the nightly

passaggiata, which of course includes a stop at the *gelateria*. There is often some kind of program being presented in the town *piazza*, and on our first night in Giovinazzo, it happened to be the regional competition for the Miss Italy contest. My all-male crew and I were quite happy to hang around and root for our favorites!

My plan was to end the week at Trani, just a couple of stops up the coast, but the sea had other plans for us. The onshore wind and waves just didn't let up, and the harbor entrance was closed by breakers. So *Geja* was

stuck in Giovinazzo's surging harbor for two additional nights, and I constantly worried that the metal gudgeons on the end of the floating dock would poke a hole in *Geja*'s hull. But what a great town to be stuck in!

With another new crew and calmer weather, we had a great sail up to Trani, its famous seaside cathedral visible for many miles down the coast. The bars around the large harbor really get going at night, with one offering its own liquid concoction called Rocket Fuel — a far cry from the standard one-ounce pours in Croatia.

A bit of rain and scattered thunderstorms kept us in Trani for an extra night before we continued up to Vieste in dreamlike sailing conditions. A bustling hillside holiday town, Vieste had an excellent outdoor food market. The town's location on the 'spur' of Italy, only 60 miles from Croatia, makes it a popular place to head back across the Adriatic. But taking the direct route means missing Italy's Tremiti Islands, which are gems of the Med.

Spoiled by another day of perfect sailing conditions, including a fast spinnaker run, we opted to take the detour to the Tremitis. Those who say that the Med lacks wind should have been there when I was. During the eight-day span from Montenegro to these islands, we covered some 250 miles, 90% under sail.

The Tremiti Islands lie 13 miles off Italy's relatively featureless southeast coast. They consist of a cluster of five islands housing about 500 permanent

The Tremiti Islands, 13 miles off Italy's otherwise featureless east coast, are one of Andrew's favorite nautical playgrounds.



Italian food — ridiculously delicious.



GEJA

CHANGES

residents, with visitors ferried in by the thousands during the summer months. One of the things to do there is to hop into the dinghy and do the four-mile circle around Isola San Domino, the coastline of which features coves, grottos, and sandy beaches. As a nautical playground, the Tremiti Islands are hard to beat. But you need stable weather, as the anchorages offer poor protection.

As we prepared to depart the Tremitis for the overnight sail back to Croatia, a dinghy pulled up for a visit. Two Italian men from a neighboring boat wanted to chat, and presented us with a nice bottle of white wine. *Geja*, thanks to her crusty looks and American flag, is no stranger to special attention. But then Italian hospitality never ceases to impress me.

Our overnight sail back to Croatia was for the most part sweet pleasure sailing, with 12 knots of wind on the beam in flat seas. I chose to check in at the town of Vis, where unlike Cavtat, these isn't a special customs quay. You just take a regular spot on the public quay and begin the three-step check-in process: harbormaster, police, and customs. The customs official seemed really cool at first, even suggesting that my crew get coffee while they wait. Take that, Cavtat!

While things began smoothly, slowly but surely, they started to go downhill when the beer-guzzling customs guy **Andrew found the Croatian anchorages — such as this beauty — to be more to his liking than the shenanigans of Croatian officials.**

asked me to run around town and photocopy some of my documents for him. Unable to find a place to get copies, I returned to his office pissed off. "If you really need copies, I'll email them to you," I stated angrily. Then I began to take photos of my documents with my iPhone.

"No, no!" said Mr. Customs man, but I kept snapping away. He then took my papers and walked away. I asked the policeman in the same office if the customs guy was normal. "Not really," he said with a confirming smirk. A few minutes later, the customs guy returned with photocopies, likely from his copy machine in an upstairs office. I chewed him out a bit before storming off, some two hours after beginning the check-in process. Mind you, my cruising permit from before was still valid. A Croatian bureaucrat had once again been a source of frustration. Hopefully some of this bureaucratic nonsense will disappear when Croatia is admitted to the European Union in '13.

Tired from the overnight sail, and pissed off due to the fat customs jerk, we continued on for another couple of hours to the Pakleni Islands — another of my favorite stops in the Med. Palmizana is a busy but relaxing bay with excellent restaurants lining the shore.

Just before weighing anchor the next morning, I was to enjoy one of the most pleasant surprises of all my time in the Med. An older Croatian sailor in a dinghy came alongside, and explained that 13 years before, he and his wife had invited Dick and Shirley Sandys, the Palo Alto-based previous owners of *Geja*, for dinner while their boats were anchored together in Palmizana. Unbelievably, he produced a note written by the Sandys from his scrapbook that read, "Hvala for dinner." *Hvala* being the Croatian word for 'thank you'. I often think of Dick and Shirley Sandys, and the crazy adventures they must have had while sailing *Geja* from California to the Med many years ago. This chance encounter blew me away!

Back in lively Hvar, my having closed the loop I'd begun four weeks earlier, my final crew of the season hopped on board. Though *Geja's* winter port near Split was just a day sail



The Adriatic may not be that warm, but the water is clear.



away, there were plenty of islands and attractions in between, which resulted in an easy and relaxing final week. Best of all, the weather forecast was as stable as I've seen, with clear hot weather — and none of the nighttime offshore *bora* winds that cause boatowners to lose sleep.

After overindulging once again in the town of Hvar, we relocated *Geja* to a nearby island, one that happens to be home to the Carpe Diem Beach Club. When the bars in Hvar shut off the music at 2 a.m., folks are shuttled to the beach club, where the festivities continue until 5 a.m. Anchored strategically near the club, we waited until folks began to arrive. At 2:30 a.m., we hopped into the dinghy, figuring that our stealth approach would save us the 20 euro cover charge. We had no such luck, as a guard intercepted us and led us to the cashier.

Halfway through the final week, having had several late nights out in a row, I sought out the quietest anchorage pos-



GEJA

GEJA

IN LATITUDES



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY GEJA



GEJA

When the social life became too hectic, Andrew would chill in the dink.

able rates by the boatyard crew. *Geja's* sails are hand-me-downs from the really nice members of the Islander 36 Association of San Francisco Bay. But they are quite decent. And what a sweet sailing boat the Islander 36 is!

As I mentioned in my last report, my fifth straight summer aboard *Geja* consisted of 37 days and 36 nights, with 27 different overnight stops and two overnight sails. I covered nearly 700 miles, 60% of them under sail alone — the highest percentage of the five summers. The best part has always been sharing the experience with friends, 10 of whom joined me this summer.

— andrew 10/15/12

Clockwise from above: Nothing gives us more pleasure than seeing other people have fun — Andrew hams it up with three of his crew. The Sandys' 'thank you', note, still treasured after 13 years. The anchorage at Hvar, Croatia. A beautiful but cloudy sky marked the end of Andrew's 5th season.

sible. Both of my pilot books led us to the east coast of the island Bra, and the sweet little bay called Rasotica. It was a great little playground for my crew — three fun girls and Big Steve, my buddy from high school.

The next night we were back to the bars in Makarska, a very happening place on the mainland. We took refuge before seeking quiet once again back on Bra at the adorable quarry town of Puiša. For centuries Croats built both streets and structures using their distinctive light-colored stone. In Puiša the art of stone-making is still very much alive. Even the White House in Washington, D.C. uses stone from there.

We enjoyed a wild Saturday night out in the town of Split before concluding the summer voyage at *Geja's* winter home of Trogir. We immediately rinsed and removed the sails just before a nasty little weather cell with 40-knot winds blasted

through the partially protected marina. It was the first truly crazy weather since I'd arrived four weeks before. Less than four days later, *Geja* was on the hard ready for winter, and I was on my way back to San Francisco.

Once again my 40+ year-old Islander 36 provided me with a trouble-free summer — aside from some propeller shaft bolts that mysteriously loosened on the rough overnight crossing to Italy, and a bilge pump check valve that didn't appreciate being submerged for hours at a time. *Geja's* old Yanmar 3GMF must qualify as ancient by now, yet it purrs along without fail, partially thanks to regular seasonal maintenance performed at reason-