

Latitude 38

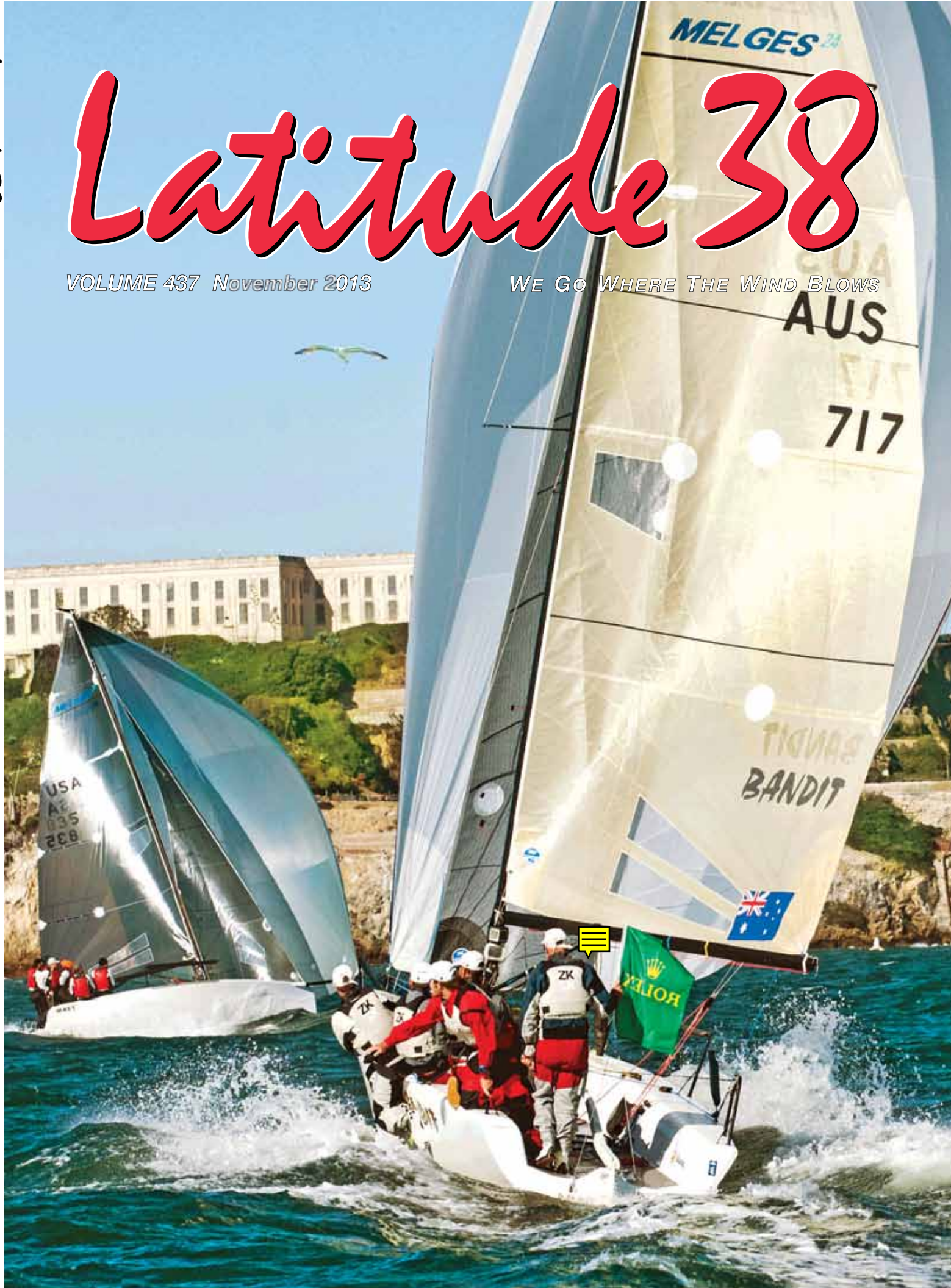
Latitude 38

VOLUME 437 November 2013

WE GO WHERE THE WIND BLOWS

NOVEMBER 2013

VOLUME 437



CHANGES

With reports this month from **Mintaka** cruising Costa Rica and Panama. From **Geja** on Andrew Vik's sixth summer in the Med. From **Marnie** on the history of a yacht the likes of which are hard to find these days. From **Second Chance** on cruising adventures in Nova Scotia. From **Ichiban** on low-budget cruising in the South Pacific. From **Murar's Dream** on an onboard fire in Fiji. From **Red Witch II** on careening in the Sea of Cortez. And **Cruise Notes**.



rope, this time for three weeks of high-season Mediterranean fun in the Adriatic Sea. *Geja* spends the winter on the hard in the town of Trogir, just minutes from the Split International Airport. How convenient is that?

As usual, I'd left the bottom job and engine servicing to the boatyard. There was still plenty for me to do to get her ready for action, which this year included installing a subwoofer and multicolor LED lighting synchronized to the music. I might have to rename my boat *Disco Geja*. I'd also maxed out a second piece of luggage with 50 pounds of boat gear. You can't acquire specialty products easily, quickly or affordably in Europe. We're pretty spoiled here in the U.S.

The marina in Trogir is a ridiculously pleasant place to do boat work, with church bells from the UNESCO World Heritage Town ringing throughout the day, and bikini-clad charterers from all

**Geja — 1976 Islander 36
Andrew Vik
A Quicke in the Med
(San Francisco)**

For the sixth summer in a row since buying *Geja* through an article in *Latitude*, I hopped onto a flight from SFO to Eu-

IN LATITUDES

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY GEJA

GEJA

nasty problem solved. By the way, *Geja* neither has a holding tank, nor has been asked about one by E.U. officials.

A few days later, with Stig and Silvie, my married friends from Petaluma aboard, we motored away from the town of Sibenik. Just as we reached the old fortress called Sveti Nikola, *Geja's* 20-hp Yanmar sputtered to a stop. It was such a horrible feeling! For five summers it had reliably pushed my boat and me through thousands of miles in the Med.



After 'Geja' dragged and hit a boat, the boat's owner towed her to a mechanic.

Luckily, there was an anchorage a quarter-mile upwind, so we tacked into the bay. We got the anchor down fine, but wound up bumping into a little Austrian-flagged cabin cruiser as we drifted back. Out came her owner — naked — in a hurry to help fend off. I apologized and explained the situation, so he agreed to relocate a bit. His companion — also naked — kept herself down below during the ordeal. Naked German-speaking people practicing F.K.K. — free-body culture — are prevalent throughout Croatia.

We traced the engine problem to a clog in the diesel tank, but limited clearance between the tank and the underside of the cockpit sole prevented me from removing the fuel intake 'straw'. Lacking the self-sufficiency of a real sailor, I arranged for a mechanic to meet us that evening at a fuel dock back in Sibenik. That left us some time to eat lunch, explore the fortress, and figure out how to bring *Geja* up the busy, narrow channel back to town.

Lots of cruisers cruise naked, but usually in private. Few Germans and Austrians have inhibitions about being naked in public.

GEJA



Scenes from Vik's three weeks on 'Geja' in Croatia, clockwise from above: A new friend checks Andrew out as he bathes in the cockpit in front of restaurants. The much-traveled 'Geja'. Croatian girls just wanna have fun. One of 777 anchorages. When in Croatia, bathe as the Europeans do.

over Europe strolling through the boatyard.

The last night before departing Trogir, my first crew Henrik and I stumbled upon something called 'The Yacht Week'. It's a one-week flotilla of over 60 charter boats with some 600 sailors — mostly single and under 30 — from all over the world. The organizers keep the gender balance to 50/50 to keep everybody happy. Every high-season Saturday, the entire fleet rafts up to Trogir's main promenade, or *riva*, for the first party night of the trip. The participants were totally amped, so Henrik and I fit right in. What a crazy scene!

As tempting as it was to follow the party flotilla to the next port, we sailed up the coast instead. It didn't take long to experience one of the worst mechani-

cal meltdowns in my time aboard *Geja*. Yes, the head clogged! I'd always bragged about how bulletproof *Geja's* Dutch-made toilet was, handling even two-ply toilet paper without a fuss. I'd never even had to service it over the course of five summers — although I do carry a rebuild kit.

After a few rather disgusting hours in paradise disassembling the pump, it turned out that the clog was at the 90-degree thru-hull elbow, which had just been serviced over the winter. My theory is that some of that calcified urine-seawater mix that lines the inside of our head hoses broke free and lodged itself in the thru-hull during servicing. A



CHANGES

Despite our having already interrupted his afternoon, the naked Austrian, now clothed, agreed to tow us. He later declined both

a full bottle of Jäger and cash for the extra fuel burned.

Just 45 minutes after the mechanic's arrival, we were back in business. It hadn't been dirty fuel, but rather some gasket material from the tank's inspection port that had broken loose and was floating around in the otherwise sparkling-clean diesel tank.

What was the attraction of Zrce for 'Geja's male crew? Take a guess.

To swap crew at the end of the first week, we took a spot in the marina in Zadar, one of Croatia's main coastal towns, at a whopping \$87 per night. And that's for my little 36-footer, which conveniently makes it under the 11-meter rate threshold by a mere inch. At least we could split the cost four ways. Sometimes it's really worth it to be able to step onto and off the boat, hose her down, and take real showers.

From this point on, we became an all-male crew, with Big Steve and Mats joining Henrik and me. With just two weeks remaining to make it back to *Geja's* base

Despite the overwhelming bad gender ratios at Zrce, Vik and crew did manage to outmaneuver the 'Italian Sausages' to make female friends.

near Split, we couldn't venture too much farther up the coast. But we all agreed that the island of Pag, with Zrce, its Ibiza-style party beach, would be worth a couple of extra-long sailing days.

To make things exciting, we elected to take a long detour up the dreaded Velebit Channel. It's known for having the strongest of the notorious *boras*, powerful winds that blow down from the 5,000-ft Velebit Mountains with violent gusts. The wind blows so hard across the channel, mostly in winter, that vegetation on the mainland-facing side of Pag is as barren as the surface of the moon.

Fortunately, we had a day of lake-like calm to transit the 40 miles between safe harbors. So calm, in fact, that we could nudge *Geja* to within a boat length of some cliffs and swim ashore for a few terrifying leaps. With the *bora* expected to kick in overnight, we cleared the Velebit Channel and took a spot in the town of Rab. It wasn't known as a party spot — until the four of us showed up.

Clear of the *bora's* wrath, we sailed back down the leeward side of Pag and anchored in Novalja, gateway to the party beach of Zrce. The various after-beach parties peak from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., with house music blaring, go-go dancers-a-go-go'ing, and a couple of thousand beach-clad partygoers dancing away in the outdoor clubs. The main event is actually much later, from 1 a.m. to 6 a.m., when the world's top DJs show up. Personally, I find the after-beach parties to be far more entertaining.

Mid-August, however, is a crappy time to visit Zrce, as Italian males overwhelm the place, sending an already too high guy-girl ratio through the roof. Seriously, an environment with 85% males does nobody any good. The guys become stupid and the girls get annoyed. Those with the Navionics iPhone app should read my note in the Novalja anchorage titled, 'Italian Sausage Fest'.

In the two days we spent sailing from Novalja back to Zadar, we visited the adorably Croatian village of Lucina on the island of Molat, swam in an old submarine tunnel embedded in the island of Dugi Otok, and had some great spinnaker runs in the reliable afternoon northwesterly winds.



GEJA

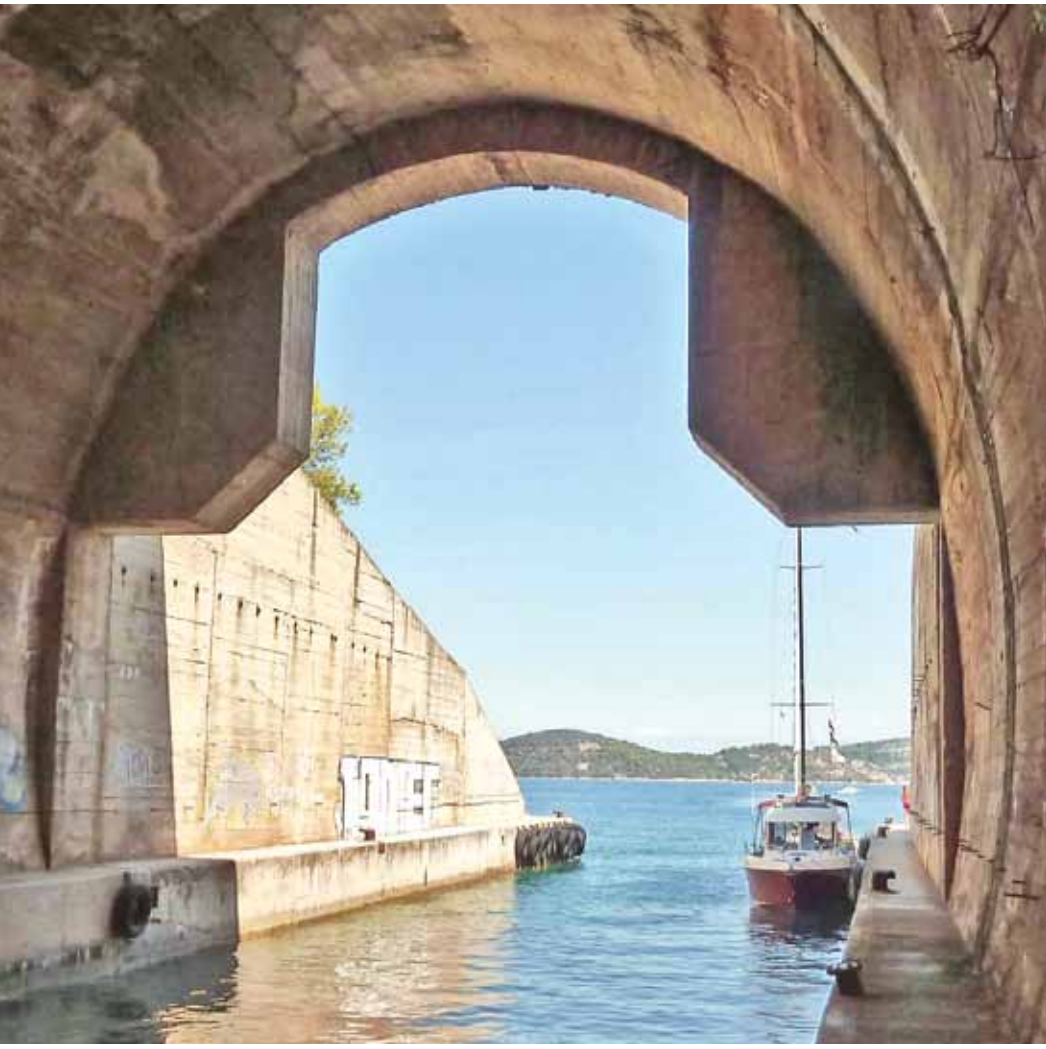


Back in Zadar, we changed crew once again, losing first-timers Henrik and Mats for five-time *Geja* crewmate Lukas from Switzerland. More on our adventures in the December *Latitude*.

— andrew 09/28/2013



GEJA



GEJA