

2024 Pacific Puddle Jump Rally

Fleet Letter #5

Meeting the Fleet

Ahoy Pacific Puddle Jumpers! This is a quick note to report that we had splendid gathering March 11 at Mexico's Vallarta Yacht Club, where we met many PPJ fleet members who seemed to be super-excited about making the big jump in the next few weeks.

We also met others who are trying to decide if they are "ready enough" to go this year, despite having unfinished projects on their "to-do lists." Those are tough decisions. We would never encourage anyone to head offshore with an unsafe or ill-prepared boat, but many boat owners would probably agree that their job lists tend to get longer, not shorter — making it easy to procrastinate about casting off and heading west.

In addition, as you have probably experienced firsthand, one of the biggest challenges to making such an ambitious voyage is creating a "window of opportunity" when the demands and obligations of family, work, and health issues are all in sync. As hundreds of would-be passagemakers have learned, when that window closes, it is often extremely difficult to open it again.

We write this also knowing that, based on proposed legislation, cruising French Polynesia is likely to get more tightly regulated next year, not less.

Fleet Contact List

Because everyone values their privacy, we never share your personal info with marketing organizations or other businesses. But many fleet members have assured us that they would be happy to share contact info with other Puddle Jumpers. So the attached form gives you basic info on all boats that have registered to date, including several ways to contact them.

Please be aware that many boats keep their satphones turned off most of the time due to the expense of operat-

ing them. Also, before attempting to trade photos, be sure that your intended recipient is eager to receive them.

Taking on Crew?

Over the years a high percentage of Puddle Jumpers have made the crossing as what you might call "a mom-and-pop operation" — that is, with no additional crew. But sailing several thousand miles with a three-on, three-off watch schedule can not only be exhausting, but also potentially dangerous. So some boat owners become tempted to add crew shortly before setting sail.

If you find yourself in that situation, here's our advice: First, if possible, recruit reliable sailors with whom you've sailed before — preferably offshore. One of the most frustrating things that can happen on a long crossing such as this is adding a crew member that you don't know much about, then having him or her spoil the trip with their bad attitude — questioning the captain's orders, refusing to do certain boat chores, drinking in their cabin, and so on.

We have heard both positive and negative reports from boats that picked up additional crew in Panama (generally adventurous backpackers). If you're tempted to do so, we suggest that you at least take them out on a couple of day-sails before adding them to your crew list. Some skippers have reported that they prefer "trainable" beginners over highly-experienced know-it-alls, who might question the captain's tactics or navigation.

We think it's fair to ask potential crew for a list of ailments they have and what medications they are on. Also, confirm that they have enough cash to support themselves in the islands. Unless you know them, we suggest that you do not include them in your bond exemption, and instead require that they buy a plane ticket to their home country to present to immigration authorities.

Lastly, women who are seriously looking for crew positions should make it clear from the first interview that they're not interested in romance, simply a ride.

— Andy Turpin, PPJ 2024

At Huahine, in Tahiti's Leeward Islands, a favorite afternoon pastime is surfing the lagoon entrance at Fare.

