



ALL PHOTOS THISIDU EXCEPT AS NOTED



SARAH JEAN

'Thisidu' underway. Above left: Garrett arriving in Costa Rica in May after a literal dark and stormy night. Center top: It was great to finally get going after all the years of lessons and preparation. Center bottom: Departure day, 2019. Top right: Fortunately, the produce truck kept coming weekly when 'Thisidu' got stuck in Nicaragua.

lifestyle, but was still consumed with worry about leaving *Thisidu* behind.

In November 2020, Garrett was able to return to Nicaragua to relocate the boat to Costa Rica. Doing this in the middle of the pandemic was no easy feat, but it was a successful one. Garrett took two days to solo sail 171 nautical miles from Nicaragua's Marina Puesta del Sol to Costa Rica's Marina Papagayo; he arrived on Thanksgiving Day. We had a lot to be grateful for.

Our plans have changed, as they so often do when it comes to cruising. Instead of traversing the Panama Canal, we have decided to leave *Thisidu* in Costa Rica until spring 2022, and become commuter cruisers — traveling to the boat on holidays and vacations. Of course, the pandemic threw a hiccup into this plan, too. I was hesitant

to travel, but Garrett was determined to get back to the boat as much as possible. Between November and this past May, he would spend two to three weeks a month in Costa Rica, working remotely from the marina and going out to anchor on the weekends. I traveled there with him twice. We will return again after the hurricane season, then hope to ship the boat to the US East Coast on a cargo ship in the spring. Once she is in Charleston, our sea life and land life will at last be combined.

Cruising was the best — and hardest — thing that I have ever done. Garrett and I fared better than many others; we got a full season of cruising under our belts, which we are extremely thankful for. It ended differently than anticipated, but we adapted to the changes thrown our way as best as we could. I'll forever be proud of all that we accomplished.

— Audrey

www.thisidu.com

Audrey and Garrett met in college in Michigan and came out to the Bay Area for work. In 2014, despite the fact that neither had ever sailed before, they decided to go cruising. They took classes locally and sailed with lots of different people on lots of different boats. They acquired *Thisidu* ('this will do') in 2016.

Little Wing — Cross 42 trimaran Andy and Julie Turpin Return to the Pearl Petaluma

How would you define 'exotic'? For me, the lush green Tahitian Islands serve as a quintessential embodiment of that word. With their jagged, volcano-formed peaks descending into coral-fringed turquoise lagoons, Tahiti and her sister isles are not only off-the-graph gorgeous, but usually offer ideal sailing conditions — especially during the prime summer season (May to October).

Fifteen years ago I was introduced firsthand to this spectacular sailors' haven with an invitation to race in the annual Tahiti Pearl Regatta, and report on it for *Latitude*. Talk about a plum assignment! Back then, the regatta committee and event sponsors were intent on growing the

'Little Wing' — somewhere under the rainbow.



LITTLE WING

CHANGES

then-fledgling TPR into the biggest, most prestigious and most international regatta in the Central South Pacific. Sailing writers flew in from France, Australia, New Zealand and Japan, as did competitors, most of whom had chartered 'high-performance' 50-ft monohulls to campaign in the daily races.

Not only was the scenery jaw-dropping as the race courses wove through lagoons and out through reef passes to neighboring islands, but the nightly parties were unforgettable — especially the rapid-fire hip gyrations of female dancers in grass skirts, and the stunning theatrics of big, hunky guys performing fire dances.

Why the nostalgia? Because last month I finally did the TPR again, this time accompanied by my wife Julie on our own boat, *Little Wing*.

We had a great time both on and off the race courses. But due to ramifications of the COVID pandemic, this year's regatta was a substantially scaled-down event. We were among only a few off-islanders, and there were no bareboat entries, as international flight restrictions to French Polynesia had been lifted only the previous week. Nevertheless, we were quickly reminded that smaller events are inherently more intimate than large ones. And even though our ability to speak French is just a hair above abysmal, we found it easy to mingle with local racers. While many were, of course, French-Tahitians, born and raised on the islands, others shared a similar story: They'd sailed here from France or elsewhere in Europe to explore these storied islands, soon fell in love with them, and decided to stay.

One notable migrant to Tahiti whom we had the pleasure of meeting at the TPR was its 2021 celebrity patron, Frenchman Titouan Lamazou, winner of the first Vendée Globe race in 1989 (solo, nonstop via the Great Capes). Despite having mentored under the legendary Éric Tabarly, the first in a long line of French offshore superstars, and having eight circumnavigations under his belt, Titouan was as friendly and accessible as could be. Looking out at the starting line one day, I asked the silver-haired ocean racer which boat in the diverse fleet of monohulls and multihulls he would choose to helm, if asked. Without hesitation he pointed to a group of sleek, locally-built pirogues — double-outrigger canoes, whose design elements date back centuries. "One of those!"

But these days, Titouan spends a lot more time in his art studio on Tahiti than out on the water. Nevertheless, it was a thrill to hang out a while with him and his beautiful Tahitian wife, Tehei.

Julie and I will undoubtedly look back on the regatta as a highlight of a very



Above and below: Scenes from the 2021 Tahiti Pearl Regatta. Above right: This year's celebrity patron was famed French sailor Titouan Lamazou, who now lives in Tahiti and is best known locally for his paintings.



ALL PHOTOS LITTLE WING



TIRE-BOUCHON

unusual year of cruising — our third — due to the impact of COVID. As widely reported, the maritime borders of French Polynesia have been officially closed to most yachts for more than a year, but as you read this their status may have finally been switched to "open" — or soon will be.

Although it's getting awfully late to cross this year, we expect the Tahiti-bound fleet of 2022 to be a big one (and yes, there will be a Pacific Puddle Jump rally).

One lingering bummer for North American sailors, though, is that Mother France is no longer issuing Long Stay (one year) Visas to sailors or any other travelers. (By contrast, French citizens and other EU passport holders can stay as long as they like.) Americans, Canadians and others will be granted only 90 days upon arrival, although their boats can stay for up to 24 months. So if you intend to head west next season — late February to early June — and want more time in French Polynesia,

back surgery, they sold the boat. They are currently staying on Santorini, enjoying that island's spectacular views while Greg's back heals up and they ponder what to do next.

In the meantime, Greg took time to catch us up with what's going on as far as cruising with the easing of pandemic restrictions in

the Med.

"The American invasion is in full swing. Cruisers are headed back to Greece and Croatia, the first of the EU countries to open up, to re-commission their boats after having been locked out in some cases for nearly two years.

"We had a very nice dinner with Steve May and Manjula Dean of Pt. Richmond when we were home in the Bay Area. Steve has been tying himself in knots trying to get to France to take delivery of their new Catana 53, *Hanuman*. With little chance of that happening any time soon, they formulated a plan to have the boat delivered to Croatia by a factory crew. When they heard France was opening on June 9, they quickly formed Plan C: Fly into Croatia, rent a van, and wait at the French border until they can go meet their new boat.

"Meanwhile, Craig and Cory Rowell and their boat partners Rick and Ruth Moe, all of Santa Cruz, are en route to Greece to re-commission their Hallberg-Rassey 53, *La Perouse*, which they haven't seen in nearly two years. Cory and Craig noted that when they landed at Heathrow they had to clear the border authorities well armed with proof of both vaccinations, and negative PCR test results uploaded to the Verify app and the passenger locator forms. Heathrow requires the negative PCR even if you have had your vaccinations. Rick and Ruth were set to follow the next week, although they were scheduled to transit through Frankfurt, where we had so much trouble gaining permission to transit on our flight. To show you how quickly things change, they had absolutely no problem transiting through Frankfurt.

"Once back in Greece, Debbie and I shared a couple of delightful dinners with cruising friends Louise Wollman and Gary Strutin of Manhattan, who are back for their 20th season of cruising Greece on their Oyster 61, *Lulu*.

"We all use Lavrion as a base since it is only 30 minutes from the Athens Airport and home to Olympic Marina, a very good place to store your boat on the hard for the off season. In their case, it had also been nearly two years since they had seen *Lulu*.

plan to fly home when your visa expires for a visit of at least 90 days, before returning to the islands to restart your visa clock.

Farther west and south, the Cook Islands and Tonga are still closed to all, but Fiji has a special procedure that lets foreign yachts in — and once in you can stay a year. New Zealand marine industry advocates are currently lobbying to open up by March 2022. But don't hold your breath.

— Andy 6/8/21

Boatless in Santorini
Greg Dorland and Debbie Macrorie
The Med Report
Lake Tahoe

Greg Dorland and Debbie Macrorie are back in the Med. Regular *Changes* readers will remember them as the cruisers who spent five years enjoying the 'wine-dark sea' on their Catana 52 *Escapade* before sailing back to the Caribbean in 2019. From there, they started heading for Rhode Island via Bermuda in early 2020, but when a nasty northerly reared its head, rather than fight it, they just cracked off and doublehanded back to the Med, beating their crewed time in 2015 by two days.

This time, though, they're not aboard *Escapade*. After returning home to Lake Tahoe so Greg could get some long-delayed

Readers — Former Latitude Managing Editor Andy Turpin is currently our Editor At Large, or as we like to think of it, the "lucky son-of-a-gun at large." He is also the main organizer of the annual (with the exception of 2020 and '21) Pacific Puddle Jump. For more information on that, check out www.pacificpuddlejumps.com.