

# AMERICAN SAILING

## ASA FANTASTIC FLOTILLAS FOR 2014 AND TAHITI FLOTILLA FUN

**F**rom the Scottish Highlands to the Land Down Under, ASA flotillas circled the globe in 2013. These sailing trips were guided by a local expert and combined the freedom of a bareboat charter with the comfort of group travel. So what can we expect this year?

For starters, expect a blend of old favorites and thrilling new destinations. Some of our most popular flotillas have become yearly traditions. To begin with, there's the Exuma Islands Flotilla (April 12-19, 2014), an adventure sail like no other. Our sailors will hop aboard Sea Pearl 21s and guide them through these unspoiled Bahamian islands and cays.



*Photo by David Kory*

*The Tahitian islands provided a beautiful backdrop to a relaxed sailing adventure for flotilla members sailing with Captain David Kory this past year.*

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## LIVING THE DREAM • FINDING A WAY TO LIVE THE SAILING LIFESTYLE YEAR ROUND



*Pam & Graham Coffee*

**A**re we living The Dream? If The Dream is defined by doing what we love, in a place that we love, with the person we love, then yes, we are living The Dream. Morphing from engineers working together in a high-tech field into stress-free sailors living in the Caribbean is our story.

Our careers in the 1990s and early 2000s were very demanding. My husband, Graham, was a project manager and chief mechanical engineer.

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## ASA UPDATE



The big news heading into 2014 is ASA's partnerships with two of the world's most respected boat builders. Expect more details in future issues of the *American Sailing Journal*, but here's a sneak peek at what's ahead!

### *The ASA First Trainer*

ASA is partnering with Beneteau USA, one of the leading names in sailboat building, to produce the ASA First Trainer, a monohull sailboat designed especially with the ASA curriculum in mind.

Some of the features of the ASA First Trainer include an extended cockpit to give students and instructors more room, a rig designed specifically for sail training, and ergonomic and safety innovations to ensure that every sail is comfortable and safe.

Known for their sleek designs and quality construction, the research and development team at Beneteau is using input from ASA instructors, students, and leading competitive sailors to perfect the design. The boat is expected to debut at the 2014 Annapolis Boat Show and will be available to ASA schools and the general public.

### *Special Edition Hobie Catamaran*

This summer, Oracle Team USA captured the imagination of the world with its stunning come-from-behind victory in the America's Cup on San Francisco Bay. Using this as a catalyst, ASA and Hobie are partnering to create a special edition Hobie catamaran and a new educational program utilizing this boat.

The Hobie catamaran is already one of the world's most iconic small sailboats, and with this redesign, featuring the distinctive black hulls and sail of Oracle Team USA, it will catch the eye even more. Known for their high-performance handling and ability to be sailed by one person "right off the beach," Hobies are synonymous with fun.

In the future, ASA will create a catamaran sailing program for use at ASA schools as well as yacht clubs, sailing schools and resorts around the world. The emphasis will be on bringing a whole new generation of people into the sport and lifestyle of sailing.

# The Charley Noble

Each spring excitement builds for the sailing season ahead. Many of our schools that are shuttered for the winter are now re-opening, and the sailing continues unabated in Florida, California, the Caribbean and other warm locations.

ASA concluded a hugely successful thirtieth anniversary year in 2013 by announcing two exciting new joint ventures with boat builders (see the ASA Update) and launching Find My Charter, our official boat-chartering partner.



One of the big things we're looking forward to in 2014 is the release of our new book, *Bareboat Cruising Made Easy*. Following on the success of *Sailing Made Easy* and *Coastal Cruising Made Easy*, *BCME* will accompany ASA 104, the

Bareboat Cruising certification.

The book will feature world-class photography, reader-friendly diagrams, and a water-resistant cover that makes it safe to take aboard with you. Topics covered include sailing skills needed for a successful and fun bareboat charter, as well as practical concerns, such as packing, provisioning, checking out your charter boat, and even choosing who to bring with you!

Look for *BCME* to be available from ASA sailing schools, retail stores, and ASA's online store this summer.

With that, we wish you a happy sailing season and can't wait to see you out on the water!

*"Charley Noble" is the old time nautical name for the smokestack over a galley ... So I'll try to keep any "hot air" in the American Sailing Journal confined to this column.*

## THE AMERICAN SAILING JOURNAL

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## FEATURE STORY

*continued from page 1*

There will be camping on beaches, grilling fresh-caught fish and investigating the local scenery and culture.

Then we return to the Greek Islands (May 19-31, 2014), for a trip through lands made famous by history and myth. And in summer, we head north and visit Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands, and the San Juan Islands (June 20-27, 2014). Spanning the U.S. and Canadian border, this trip combines the best of rugged Pacific beauty with brilliant sailing conditions.

We will also be returning to the country that is fast becoming one of the world's top sailing hotspots: Croatia (August 31-September 6, 2014). Explore the medieval majesty of the cities, swim in the Adriatic, and dine on delicious cuisine in a beautiful setting. We really can't say enough about Croatia, and neither can our members who go on this flotilla!

A couple of tropical additions to this schedule are the British Virgin Islands flotilla, an off-the-beaten-track journey through one of the world's greatest and most popular sailing grounds (March 21-30, 2014), and an autumn trip to Belize, home to world class sailing, snorkeling, diving and just relaxing (October 8-18, 2014).

More flotillas will likely be added throughout the year. Keep up to date with the latest at [www.asa.com](http://www.asa.com).

To get a taste of what an ASA flotilla can be, we asked flotilla leader David Kory to tell us about the trip in Tahiti & the Society Islands that he led in 2013.

### *Tahiti calling*

Stepping off the shuttle bus and onto the resort hotel property was like a step into a slow motion world, where everything around me became an alluring natural call rather than something I had to rush through to make the next deadline. My first footsteps onto the black sand beach were a warm welcome into another world. No more hustle and bustle – I was on Tahiti time.

Seventy-two ASA sailors from all corners of the U.S., Canada, Denmark and Korea, gathered to sail the fabled seas of French Polynesia in Tahiti. As we de-stressed at the beachfront resort, many old friends started swapping stories with each other and new friends.



*One of the most unique flotillas offered through ASA is the Exuma Islands Flotilla in the Bahamas. The 21-foot Sea Pearls carry members from one camp to another on the lovely little islands.*

Enjoying the warm tropical weather, some people relaxed by the infinity pool, gazing across the South Pacific ocean, while others took the opportunity to visit the downtown markets of Papeete, full of light and color and noise, fresh fish, fruit, baskets, flowers and more. Some small groups ventured to the north of the island, and hiked up to the rainforest waterfalls before trekking back to the beaches to refresh themselves in the warm ocean.

In the evening, everyone got together for a big Polynesian dinner, including Poisson Cru, a local raw swordfish in coconut milk, along with other local and international entrees, fresh fruit, salads, and even a chocolate fountain with dessert. ASA then raffled off a variety of local goods, including vanilla products, pareos, shell necklaces, and even a silver bracelet with black pearls. But despite the great food and camaraderie, the highlight was a fantastic show, sponsored by AVI Nautica, by an energetic native Marquesan troop, with two-dozen drummers, singers and dancers engaging the crowd.

After another restful night at the resort, we took a 45-minute flight from Papeete to Raiatea, enjoying the spectacular views of Moorea and Huahine along the way. Landing at Raiatea, we were met by the wonderful folks from the Moorings and Sunsail, who greeted everyone with a fresh flower lei (the traditional Polynesian greeting), then took us the five-minute ride to the harbor and charter base.

Native Tahitian singers and dancers welcomed us, along with a spread of fresh fruits, juices and cookies, getting everyone into the proper spirit. The skippers started their boat check-outs and chart briefings, and before long we were on our way, sailing the crystal clear and warm waters of Tahiti.

*continued on page 18*



## LIVING THE DREAM

*continued from page 1*

I was a software engineer, and we both worked for an industrial laser equipment manufacturer (wow – that’s a mouthful and too much to think about). Soon after we began dating, we realized we shared a dream of cruising in the tropics. Graham was a lifelong sailor but no longer had a boat. I had recently finished my first sailing classes. Since childhood, I have been a boater in Florida waters and had fallen in love with sailing. So, on a long plane ride to China (seriously), we devised “The Plan to Live The Dream.”

The Plan Part One entailed being completely out of debt and getting a weekender sailboat. Buying an Islander 30, we sailed around East Central Florida waters, as well as the Bahamas. Sailing almost every weekend just wasn’t enough; we wanted more. Part Two of the plan was to buy our cruising sailboat. On returning from a Bahamas trip in 2004, we spotted our next sailboat, a 1984 S&S Swift 40-foot ketch, sitting pretty in the local boatyard. Her name Hot LatteTudes is a fusion of our last name, Coffee, and The Dream. Many sailing trips, boat shows, projects and thousands of dollars later, Hot LatteTudes was ready. But were we?

Our rats quit racing in 2007. We moved aboard Hot LatteTudes. Our house sold quickly and we gave away, sold or donated our stuff. It was just stuff, having little sentimental value since it was standing in the way of the dream. We quit our jobs; we didn’t retire. No pension. No income at all. We knew we would have about three years before we would have to work again. Scary? Yes, but we had the dream.



*Playing guitar aboard or hanging out at mooring suited Graham and Pam Coffee just fine.*

We had achieved the plan, so we gulped and untied the dock lines.

“Whoo-hoo! We did it! We are cruisers!” Our first three years out we logged over 15,000 miles on Hot LatteTudes cruising the Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, U.S. and British Virgin Islands, as well as the southeast U.S. coast. Along the way we had many good times, made many new friends and learned a lot. We sailed, sailed, sailed and loved it all. We were living the dream.

With hopes of sailing to generate income, we both got our USCG masters licenses with a sailing endorsement in 2009. A year later, we returned to our homeport in Florida due to the serious illness of a family member. We also needed funds to repower Hot LatteTudes. Much to his dismay, Graham found himself back at his old job.

Cruising was over for now, even though we still lived aboard in Port Canaveral. We did a lot of soul-searching and thinking.

Refusing to succumb to the lure of a “real job,” I found some work as an eco-tour boat captain. Then a sailor friend persuaded me to qualify as an ASA instructor and teach at his startup school, Beachside Sailing in Merritt Island, Fla. After several months of success, Graham joined in the fun and became an ASA instructor. We both taught ASA 101 through ASA 104 with Beachside Sailing for a year and a half and loved it. I particularly loved teaching women to sail and developed a “Women on the Water” fun sailing session. But returning to the Caribbean was our desire.

In early 2012, we had an opportunity to manage a small eco-resort on Vieques, a small island off the southeast tip of the mainland of Puerto Rico. The perk was several months off in the winter to sail the Caribbean. So Graham quit his “real job,” and we untied the dock lines once again. We sailed Route 65 non-stop from Florida to Vieques. But once there, Hot LatteTudes was on a mooring ball and we were




*With a boat on the hook and an outboard to dinghy in, what more could a couple of ex-landlubbers want but a warm breeze and these turquoise seas?*

living on land for the first time in over five years. Eight months later, we sailed southeast to cruise the Leeward and Windward Islands of the Caribbean. For the winter months, we enjoyed the adventures of cruising once again.

Returning to Vieques after our winter cruise, we quickly tired of being CLODs (cruisers living on dirt) and began looking for opportunities as ASA instructors or captains in the Virgin Islands. Another sailor friend on Vieques encouraged us to contact SailCaribeYacht Charters in Fajardo, Puerto Rico. SailCaribe is an ASA sailing school and charter company featuring Jeanneau monohulls and Lagoon catamarans sailing the beautiful Spanish Virgin Islands. The timing was perfect since the fleet was expanding, and we were hired as ASA instructors and captains.

The Spanish Virgins offer a pristine cruising ground with secluded beaches, fun harbors, superb snorkeling and beautiful anchorages. The sailing area includes mainland Puerto Rico, Culebra, Vieques and several smaller islands. For the catamarans, Graham has qualified as an ASA 114 multihull instructor. I still have a special place in my heart for teaching women to sail and will enhance SailCaribe’s ASA program by offering women’s classes.

We love helping other people to realize their own dreams of sailing. A bad day mucking about on sailboats is better than a good day in a cubicle! Sitting here in the cockpit of Hot LatteTudes on a beautiful warm sunny January day, I realize that, yes, we are living the dream!

  
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*After docking each evening, your instructor departs the boat and students may stay aboard to begin experiencing the fun, privacy, and thrill of life aboard a yacht.*

The seven-day 105/104 ASA Basic Coastal Cruising/Bareboat Chartering certification is our most popular program. A typical day might include a 15-mile close reach in the ocean to Mission Bay, or you may set sail for South San Diego Bay where Glorietta Bay is located. You'll learn new skills like piloting, and sailing a yacht using a chart, the buoys, and the hand-bearing compass. You'll get practice at steering in waves, and gybing in the ocean. Heaving to, reefing, man overboard recovery, docking under sail and power are all taught in this class. Students will practice planning a sailing trip on the spot with various wind and tide conditions and pick the best locations for the day. Late in the afternoon, students will dock and the instructor departs the boat.

At the end of this class, students get to bareboat on their own for two days. You'll leave with an ASA Bareboat Chartering Certificate, two days of logged bareboat time and a confidence that can only be gained through experience.

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## CHARTER TIP • PROVISIONING A BAREBOAT CHARTER

**G**ood meals are integral to any gathering of friends or family, and especially so on a bareboat charter. Nothing rousts sailors from their bunks better than the aroma of fresh-brewed coffee and sizzling bacon. Later in the day, the cockpit table provides a lively social hub for tasty meals and sundowners. For the bareboat charterer, the provisioning spectrum ranges from fishing off the deck to dining ashore each meal. Let's explore the most popular options to ensure a happy, well-fed crew on your bareboat vacation.

It's a great luxury to arrive onboard to a fully provisioned charter boat, especially after a long international flight. Most charter companies offer provisioning that includes breakfasts, lunches, snacks and dinners; plans are priced per person, per day. You choose from available set menu selections that are designed for easy onboard preparation (e.g. bacon & eggs, tuna salad pitas, grilled chops with potato and vegetable) for each meal. Dietary restrictions can usually be accommodated, and you'll have the flexibility to dine ashore as desired. A charter company provisioning plan is extremely convenient; ordering is complete weeks before your charter, paid in advance, and provisions are loaded onto your boat before you arrive onboard. For many charterers, this convenience is well worth the price tag. Whatever plan you choose, be sure to verify your provisions before you leave the dock! Here's a breakdown of the most common provisioning plans:

- Full Provisioning is the most inclusive plan, and includes breakfast, lunch, snacks, dinners and desserts for each charter day. If you want to enjoy all your meals onboard, this package is for you. Choose your meals from pre-selected lists of menu items, and you'll receive prepared meals (or all the meal components), snacks and condiments. To reduce costs and waste, consider reducing the number of days for which meals are ordered. That gives you more options to dine ashore, too.
- Split or Partial Provisioning includes all breakfasts, lunches and snacks, but allows for about half of your dinners ashore. This option allows you to sample local cuisine on three to four evenings and gives a nice break for those on galley duty!
- Dinners Ashore is a great option if you want to have ALL your dinners ashore. It includes breakfast, lunch and snacks only. Before selecting this option, be sure you've got restaurants available at each stop on your itinerary!
- A la Carte provisioning allows you to order specific grocery items from a checklist (carte) that includes the price and quantity. This customized process requires the



*Photo by Lisa Batchelor Frailey*

*To lower costs and try new and exciting dishes, supplement your groceries with regional specialties from local markets.*

most planning, since you'll need to order each meal component or ingredient separately.

Beverages are normally purchased separately from meals. Package meal provisioning will often include coffee, tea, milk and breakfast juices – check to be sure. Don't skimp on drinking water: plan at least two liters per person per day.

Housekeeping Packages include sufficient paper products and cleaning supplies for the length of your charter, and supplement the basic "starter package" normally included with your charter.

If you enjoy browsing local groceries, exploring regional options, or if you prefer to see your groceries before purchasing them, consider Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Provisioning. Check the accessibility of grocery stores and markets near your charter base, so you don't waste vacation time! Prices and units of measure may be unfamiliar, so look carefully and carry a calculator for any conversions you may need. Options for DIY Provisioning include:

- On-site Provisioning allows you to browse and select groceries at a local shop. While this method is time-consuming, you're able to see exactly what you're getting, compare brands and prices, and purchase impulse treats – it's vacation! Build some flexibility into your meal plan; you might find regional specialties that are far better than the meals you planned!
- Order Ahead directly from local groceries with a la carte ordering service, available online or from a list.

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## FEATURED FACILITY • NARRAGANSETT SAILING SCHOOL

**N**arragansett Sailing School, outside of Providence, Rhode Island, has been in business for less than five years. Being a young business has given them the freedom to think freely and come up with an innovative and diverse way to approach teaching and getting folks on the water. In New England, the sailing season is short, but the cost of buying boats, renting slips, and maintaining staff is about the same as a year-round school. To make it viable they needed to think outside the box. The approach that has evolved is to offer a multitude of sailing products, not just teaching sailing.

### *The Rhode Island Sailing Environment*

Nestled in Narragansett Bay, Narragansett Sailing School has an excellent environment for a student to be exposed to a variety of nautical challenges. The wind is light almost every morning, builds up to 15-20 knots in the afternoon, and then backs off in the evening, perfect for teaching. The marina itself is nestled in a completely protected cove, but right outside the harbor is an area with a full set of navigational challenges complete with a working lighthouse, day marks, floating buoys, big ship channel, and special purpose buoys; all set in a picturesque New England backdrop. Plus, there is all of Narragansett Bay to play in, 30 miles by 15 miles of sailing delight.

### *Women's Program*

Narragansett Sailing School is blessed with six ASA-certified women instructors, all of whom have extensive cruising experience, both coastal and offshore. All the courses in this program are taught entirely by women. In addition to all-women ASA classes, they now have "girl's weekend retreat" where women get together with an instructor for an unstructured, but learning-intensive weekend sailing on Narragansett Bay. This is where the skills learned in the ASA courses can be practiced and polished. In addition to all that, they are introducing women-only docking courses and women-only diesel courses this season.

### *The Cruising School*

As Narragansett Sailing School is focused on cruising skills, it has created a division called "The Cruising School" which embraces advanced learning in specific aspects of cruising. It does this with a combination of classroom-based learning as well as multi-day trips. One trip The Cruising School offers is a five-day trip to Martha's Vineyard. Think lobster feasts, interesting shops, majestic bluffs, and villages that have escaped the advance of progress. Every season The Cruising School also sails a larger vessel from Rhode Island, through New York City, down the New Jersey coast, and then down the length of Chesapeake Bay to Norfolk. It then continues through one of the most interesting



*Narragansett's all-women sailing courses provide a fantastic opportunity for the girls to get out on the water together.*

sections of the intracoastal down to Beaufort, N.C. The trip down is divided up into three separate six-day legs, and then it turns around with three legs back. The trip runs from mid-June through end of July.

The Cruising School offers a diesel engine course, where students take a table full of parts and a bare engine block and build an engine system-by-system and piece-by-piece until it is fully assembled. The Boat System course teaches plumbing, rigging, winches, power generation and conservation, battery technology, pumps and many of the facets of boat system technology with an emphasis on how to adjust, maintain and fix the various parts.

### *Chartering and SailTime*

In addition to teaching sailing and cruising, a good sized bareboat charter operation runs with 12 boats from 30 to 42 feet including a 36-foot catamaran. The fleet includes a number of smaller and mid-sized boats in the 30- to 36-foot range to give school graduates opportunities to sail several different boats as their skills build. With a week's charter, you can head north to Martha's Vineyard and the islands, head south to Long Island Sound and historic Mystic Seaport, or just hang out in the bay to soak up the tranquility, history and quaint New England villages. Or there is a SailTime fractional sailing program to give sailors availability to a boat for the entire season, rather than the week at a time that bareboat chartering offers.

The Narragansett Sailing School has a lot to offer, all in the challenging environment of New England. They are serious about cruising, and they epitomize the confidence, self-sufficiency, and respect for the craft that a skilled cruising sailor embraces.

*For more information, go to [narragansettsailing.com](http://narragansettsailing.com) or contact Rob Lawnsby at [rob@narragansettsailing.com](mailto:rob@narragansettsailing.com).*

## OUR FAMILY CIRCUMNAVIGATION • ANDY AND LIZA COPELAND

A common question is “How did you make such a big decision?” The quick answer is “We didn’t!” Ours was a two-year cruising plan to visit the Mediterranean with our young family. If the boys were ready, we would then sail across the Atlantic to show them the Caribbean where Andy and I had lived for several years. Our finances would be stretched, and our families concerned, but we felt we could swing both. What allowed us to continue all the way around was a variety of variables that included an endless enjoyment of the lifestyle, confidence from prudent planning, and some lucky breaks.

Andy and I were fortunate in both having sailing backgrounds. We met as participants in a dinghy world championship in Venezuela. We subsequently ran charter boats in the Caribbean and completed an Atlantic crossing with friends. Along with our U.K. roots, this made us conversant with temperate, tropical and ocean conditions. With sons aged two, six and nine on board, being able to rely on each other for all aspects of navigation and sail trim while on watch, greatly contributed to our cruising success. We were also a team with Andy’s ability to fix almost everything on the boat if required and my organization both on board and ashore. Planning trips in advance to work within seasonal and local weather patterns, researching for safe arrivals, coordination with official requirements and advanced knowledge of cultural differences and sightseeing opportunities, along with having an adventurous attitude while cruising, helped greatly with every family member enjoying the lifestyle.

A manageable, comfortable performance boat built for ocean cruising with a good living interior was our criteria. With Andy a yacht broker, we considered a variety of manufacturers and decided Beneteau suited our needs and budget the best. In 1985 we took delivery of Bagheera, a Beneteau First 38S (at that time their performance moderate displacement cruiser), in the Bay of Biscay. Forty-foot long and a stable, fast, easily handled, roomy boat with excellent storage, it has proved the perfect boat.

After the usual adjustment of sorting out below (which lockers for spares and which could be spared for food, fundamentals and school books!) we quickly adjusted to life on board. The boys had vacation cruised all their lives, and we enjoyed the European Atlantic seaboard in the company of new cruising friends. Although initially a basic boat with a furling genoa, depth, wind and speed instruments, Autohelm and VHF radio; equipment was added as we extended our cruising plans with Satnav navigation, a windvane and a Ham/SSB radio. A bimini



*While gradually making their way around the globe together, the Copelands enjoyed family time together like this group swim.*

was installed, along with lifeline curtains by the cockpit as we found that sun was our greatest danger. A freezer was sectioned off the fridge, and radar and solar panels added in Australia when we decided to continue west.

By this time we were half way around the world, so it made sense to keep going downwind. After meandering across the Indian Ocean, we were struck by lightning after entering South African waters necessitating the replacement of substantial electronics and equipment – fortunately we had insurance. It was at this time that GPS was appearing on the market with fixes for just a few hours in the day. To know where one was even a few times a day was magic!

After six years, we crossed our outbound line in Caribbean Antigua, having logged almost 50,000 nautical miles and visited 82 countries and colonies. We celebrated with two other families. Our route had taken us east in the Med to Turkey, across the Atlantic in the Atlantic Rally for Cruisers, through the Windward and Leeward Islands in the Caribbean and Venezuela (sadly, not currently considered safe). We had to avoid Colombia (recently cruised with friends and now delightful), loved the San Blas Islands and the trip through the Panama Canal. Galapagos was a favorite for all. French Polynesia, the Cook Islands, Tonga, Fiji and New Caledonia were all enjoyable, although as with all places there were a few political issues that one needed to be aware of.

In all, we spent two years exploring Australia living aboard just north of Sydney for a year where the boys went to school and I worked as a psychologist.

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*Located on beautiful  
Galveston Bay 25 minutes from downtown Houston*



*We Survived  
Hurricane Ike!*




**Year round sailing**

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# SAILING DESTINATION

*Breathtaking Belize • Story and*



*A snorkeler free dives down to enjoy the company of a hawksbill sea turtle off Belize.*

Looking for an exotic sailing destination, but don't want to spend an entire day or more travelling just to get there? Unique and unspoiled, Belize is the hidden gem in our backyard, just a two-hour flight from Miami. With one foot in the Central American jungle and the other dipped in the Caribbean Sea, Belize boasts hundreds of miles of beautiful coral reefs, tropical rainforests, exotic wildlife and a rich cultural history. It has the world's second largest barrier reef, tropical weather, warm clear waters, soft sandy beaches, Mayan culture and ruins, diverse jungle habitats with jaguars, tapirs, monkeys, toucans and macaws, and to top it all off it is the only country in Central America where the official language is English.

Belize is just a bit larger than Massachusetts, as its mainland is about 180 miles long and up to 68 miles wide. To the north is Mexico and

to the west is Guatemala. The first people to develop Belize were the Maya around 1500 B.C., and the first European contact occurred in 1502 when Christopher Columbus reached the coast. In 1638, the first European settlement was established by England and for 150 years, many more English settlements were set up.

In 1840, Belize became a "Colony of British Honduras," and in 1862, it became a crown colony. For 100 years after that, Belize was a representative government of England; but in 1964, full self-government with a ministerial system was granted. In 1973, the region's name was changed from British Honduras to Belize, and in 1981 full independence was achieved.

Today, Belize is a diverse country with various cultures and languages amongst its 300,000 residents, including Spanish, African-based Garifuna, Maya-

Kekchi, Maya Mopan, Chinese Mandarin and German. And while English is the official language of Belize, Kriol is the language that most people speak. It's got a relaxed, Caribbean lilt, but you'll still understand everything. An example is a common Kriol greeting: "Weh di go ahn?" It means "Hello, what's up?" and literally, "Where are you going?" A few other oddities: The Belize Flag is the only flag in the world depicting humans in its design (two woodcutters holding axes); It's national motto is "Sub Umbra Floreo" meaning "Under The Shade I Flourish"; and its national tree is the mahogany.

One of the most remarkable features of Belize is the Mesoamerican Reef, the second largest barrier reef in the world, which stretches some 350 nautical miles along most of the Belizean coast, sheltering more than 400 islands and cays. Most are fringed with additional

## Photos by David Kory

### For more information

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reefs comprised of at least 50 species of hard and soft coral. Manatees, whale sharks, and roughly 500 species of tropical fish thrive in these waters, and all manner of seabirds as well.

Belize is also known for its extreme biodiversity and distinctive ecosystems. From coastal mangrove swamps to mountain hardwood forests, plus the largest cave system in Central America and the tropical rainforest jungles in between, most of the land remains wild and undeveloped. Unspoiled and less crowded than other parts of the Caribbean, Belize is a laid-back paradise very similar to the cruising grounds of the South Pacific.

One of the nicest things about visiting Belize is the weather. With an average yearly temperature of 84 degrees, it's always warm, yet comfortable. Water temperature averages between 79 and 83 degrees. Mix all of that with year round balmy easterly trade winds, averaging between 15 and 22 knots, and you are virtually guaranteed a wonderful sail every day in calm waters protected by cays and reefs. Passages are short and the navigation is mostly line-of-sight. A Belize yacht charter is well within the reach of sailors who have basic skills in coastal navigation.

A week of sailing from the charter base in Placencia could have an easy itinerary that looks like this:

Day 1, Base to Wippari Cay – 14 Nautical Miles

As you leave the marina, you motor into the heart of the exquisitely beautiful Placencia Lagoon, an almost landlocked finger of water running along the Belizean coast. Once you're clear of the



*Stunning natural beauty abounds, from waterfalls cascading into pools kissed by sunbeams shimmering through cave-like walls (above) to sandy island greenery in a sea of blue (below).*

lagoon, you set sail and head northeast to Wippari Cay, where you can pick up a mooring for the night, and enjoy good snorkeling to the northeast and northwest, and great fishing as well.

Day 2, sail from Wippari Cay to South Water Cay – 22 Nautical Miles  
 Heading north-northeast takes you up the Inner Channel to the Blue Ground Range. Practice your shallow water navigation skills through the passage to South Water Cay, gently meandering between patch reefs. Although South Water Cay is part of the Belizean marine preserve, there are three restaurants and great snorkeling, especially at the northern end of the reef near Carrie Bow Cay.

Day 3, sail from South Water Cay to Cocoa Plum Cay – 11 Nautical Miles  
 Sailing north just inside the barrier reef brings you to beautiful Tobacco Cay.

*continued on following page*



## SAILING DESTINATION

*continued from previous page*

Here, you can drop anchor and enjoy some superlative snorkeling. Later, continue on to the southern tip of Garbutt Cay before turning south to the moorings at Cocoa Plum Cay's Thatch Cay Resort, an excellent stop with a nice restaurant and Internet access.

Day 4, Cocoa Plum Cay to Lagoon Cay –  
16 Nautical Miles

It's an easy broad reach down the Inner Channel, with the picturesque and remote Belizean coast stretching out before you across the brilliant turquoise waters. Enter the Victoria Channel just south of Quamino Cay and make a short tack to the northeast to reach the anchorage at Lagoon Cay, great for fishing and bird watching. Ospreys, frigate birds, pelicans and cormorants roost on the trees of the inner lagoon.

Day 5, Lagoon Cay to Queen Cay (Silk Cay) –  
17 Nautical Miles

Sailing down Victoria Channel, round Little Water Cay and then proceed east to Queen Cay. The Queen Cays (locals call them the Silk Cays) offer unforgettable snorkeling and diving along the edge of the barrier reef. The best beach and anchorage is off the southern cay.

Day 6, Queen Cay to Ranguana Cay –  
just eight Nautical Miles

Sailing southwest across clear, open water to Ranguana Cay, an excellent overnight anchorage with an opportunity to go ashore for dinner at a small resort. An interesting detour to Laughing Bird Cay National Park for a day of bird watching and snorkeling will add another four miles to the passage, but it's an easy downwind sail, named for the laughing gulls that nest there.

Last day, sail from Ranguana Cay to No Name Point, or Placencia Harbour – 18 Nautical Miles

Situated just eight miles from Placencia Harbour, No Name Point is a well-protected anchorage and a good jump off point for a Monkey River Tour. Placencia Harbor has a delightful village, with many restaurants serving a variety of fare, including Creole, Italian, French and Indian.

What about the famous Blue Hole? Lying 60 miles southeast of Belize City in Lighthouse Reef, the Great Blue Hole is one of the world's most unique geological phenomena. The snorkeling and diving are superb and well worth a visit. Belize law when visiting the reef requires a guided excursion with hired skipper; so if it is on your "must-do" list, make plans to visit it before or after your sailing charter.

With a little extra time, you can also enjoy exploring inland Belize a bit, too. With only a small percentage of the ancient Maya temples uncovered, it's not uncommon



*Spectacular Mayan ruins dot the countryside of Belize. Many ruins throughout Central America still lie undiscovered or unexplored.*

to come across ancient pieces of pottery or hear that a distant hill is actually a temple.

Over 500 species of feathered friends call Belize home from time to time. Some of the best places to see migrant and resident water birds are Crooked Tree and along the seashores. Visitors can easily spot both spider monkeys and howler monkeys, peccaries, coatimundis, gibnuts, American and Morelot's crocodiles, and green iguanas. Be warned, though, that Belize's Black Howler Monkeys, locally known as "Baboons" are one of the top 10 loudest animals in the world.

If you want to eat like a local, a typical Belizean breakfast consists of Creole bread, corn or flour tortilla, cheese, fried beans, eggs, bacon and coffee, tea or milk. If you select Gibnut from a menu, you're about to dine on a rainforest rodent (Paca Cuniculus), which is a popular game meat in Belize also known as the Royal Rat, because the queen of England ate it during a visit to Belize and gave it the royal thumbs up.

Belikin is the national beer and comes in four varieties: Belikin Premium, Belikin Beer, Belikin Stout and Lighthouse Lager. One Barrel Rum is the locally distilled molasses-tasting rum. You can purchase rum in a variety of colors and sizes, up to a 70-gallon cask, but that may be more than you need for just a week of sailing. If you also like wine, very popular in Belize is the local cashew wine, ginger wine, sorrel wine and blackberry wine.

Sail the reefs, snorkel the coral, walk the beaches, explore the ruins and the jungles. Belize is exotic and enticing and closer than you thought. Don't put it off another year – go!

*David Kory is a lifelong sailor, USCG 100-ton master captain, and former owner of Tradewinds Sailing School on San Francisco Bay. He has owned a number of sailboats, which he raced and cruised throughout the Pacific, including Mexico, Hawaii, Alaska and Canada. His company, AVI Nautica, is a preferred charter broker for the Moorings, Sunsail, Footloose and LeBoat, and he has been arranging individual, group and flotilla charter trips for more than a decade, which allowed him, his wife, and six kids to sail a variety of charter yachts in almost every corner of the globe.*

## CIRCUMNAVIGATION

*continued from page 10*

We had entered the country as invited participants in the Tall Ships events, organized to celebrate the Australian bicentenary, which included working visas. This came from conversations at a lively rum punch breakfast party back in Turkey hosted by an Australian woman.

After East and South Africa and many safaris, it was time to return home to Vancouver via South America and the Caribbean for the boys to complete high school. As an educational psychologist by training, I felt the last few years important for their future lives. Immersion back into the real world went relatively smoothly for everyone except Andy who returned to work two days after our return. A week later, he was ready to leave again for the high seas!

Seven years later, we took to the sea again, this time planning to cruise from Vancouver to Nova Scotia via Central America. Predictably it didn't stop there and we continued on to the Med and Black Sea, then down the Atlantic coast of Morocco and other West African countries and islands before heading to the Caribbean via Brazil, adding another 65,000 miles. We brought the boat back to Vancouver in 2007 for extensive local cruising and in 2013 headed north to have Bagheera

surrounded by icebergs in Alaska. Our boat is now equipped with most of the modern conveniences including mainsail in-boom furling, watermaker, chart plotters, AIS, fish finder for the configuration of the sea bed when anchoring, a Pactor modem and satellite phone. For comfort in the relatively calm waters of the Pacific Northwest we have installed dinghy davits and a removable cockpit enclosure.

Buying a long-distance cruising boat and using it extensively has given us a wonderful life, a wider view of the world and its many cultures and special friends. With planning, we have found cruising to be far less expensive than anticipated, living mostly off the rent from our house when away, even including boat maintenance and extensive inland travel. The decision to buy Bagheera has stood the test of time. Currently she has logged 120,000 nautical miles and visited 114 countries. She is still loved and used by all of the Copeland family – although now when the boys take the boat themselves, they tend to leave their parents behind!

*Liza Copeland is the award-winning author of four best-selling cruising books that include her circumnavigation and North American trip, and a practical how-to text written with Andy, Cruising for Cowards. She writes for a variety of yachting publications and is a speaker at most major boat shows and for a number of other organizations. See her website [www.aboutcruising.com](http://www.aboutcruising.com).*

## CHARTER TIP

*continued from page 8*

Groceries are delivered to your charter boat, usually for a nominal fee or tip.

- Packing Your Own groceries is an economical and time-efficient option, especially if you can shop at home and drive to your charter destination. If you're flying to your charter, you may still be able to bring some provisions with you. Study local prices and availability, and then bring "right-sized" packets of items that may be unavailable or

expensive at your destination. Consider packing dry goods, spices, condiments and special dietary items.

- Open Markets are fun to browse and offer indigenous fruits, vegetables, spices, baked goods and meats to supplement your grocery choices. Browse market stalls, compare prices and selection, and make your purchases.

Find My Charter (FMC) is ASA's official charter partner, and will attend to every detail in your charter process at FindMyCharter.com. Your FMC agent will help you find a boat in the perfect destination, assist with travel details, and review the best provisioning options for your crew.

Provisioning for a bareboat charter can be an exciting and rewarding experience. In this electronic age, options abound for the most discriminating charterer – making provisioning easy, economical and just plain fun. Get ready for dinner!

*Capt. Lisa Batchelor Frailey is an ASA Instructor and co-owner of Sail Solomons Sailing School & Yacht Charters. Lisa is also an independent charter broker with extensive sailing and provisioning experience in the Caribbean, Mediterranean and Chesapeake Bay. Contact her at [lisa@sailsi.com](mailto:lisa@sailsi.com). Copyright © 2013, Lisa Batchelor Frailey. All rights reserved.*

### *Considerations in Provisioning*

*Consider these factors when making your provisioning choices:*

- *What services does your charter company offer?*
- *Are there local grocery stores, markets and restaurants?*
- *Can you replenish provisions during your charter?*
- *What are the regional specialties?*
- *Are there special dietary needs or preferences for your crew?*
- *How much effort do you want to spend on meal preparation?*
- *Does your boat have a stove, oven or BBQ?*
- *How much onboard fridge/freezer capacity will you have?*
- *Climate – how much do you want to heat up the cabin vs. grilling on deck?*

## FEATURED JUNIOR SAILOR • RYAN ZENHAUSERN

**D**espite living as far away from the sea as possibly imaginable, I love the thought of sailing. I was first introduced to sailing when my parents decided that they wanted to take classes in San Diego, Calif. I later took a basic ASA 101 class through West Coast Multihulls with Lance Botthof and Bobbi Rossini and started sailing the California coast, as well as Florida through a Boy Scout camp called Florida Sea Base.

Some of my fondest memories of the ocean involve cruising around the British Virgin Islands with my family, exploring secluded islands as if we were the first people to set foot on the land and the wonders of the place had never been seen before except by us.

On a sunny day in June of 2012, we set off on a plane heading to St. Thomas, U.S.V.I. All was abuzz with the excited chatter of experiences we hoped to have and the things we planned to see. Upon landing, the tropical air, and nearly fluorescent blue waters fueled these expectations. We went to the boat and met with all the staff who helped us check out the boat and do a run through with us as we dropped our bags off and got the feel of the boat, a 42-foot Lagoon catamaran. Everything seemed to work on the boat. Crew and provisions were aboard. All systems go.

### *Off to Norman Island*

We left for Norman Island the next day, as a small haze seemed to settle in the distance on the open ocean. Note that this was our first time in truly open water, unsupervised. The only other times that we had been sailing were through classes and as crew for friends who had their own boats. We sailed straight on course, attempting to open the sails and testing the autopilot as some of our crew tanned.

Very disciplined as you can see, but we managed to gain speed regardless. Norman Island started taking shape in the haze ahead. I noticed some weather coming in, but thought nothing of it as the day had been beautiful thus far. We approached the island and suddenly the boat came to life: people getting dressed, looking for maps and guides, and getting ready to moor the boat.

The problem was that the small storm I had seen before had grown to what felt to be the size of a tropical storm. Well, maybe less. Again, it was the first time I had been sailing independently.

We found a mooring ball and headed right at it. Missed – pushed by the wind. Another attempt. Boat hook? Check. Ropes at the ready? Check. My sister, the greenhorn,



*With his dad by his side, Ryan Zenhausern, enjoys sailing both calm seas and having the occasional “educational experience,” entailing more excitement.*

### *For more information*

*Do you have a junior sailor in your family that you would like to feature? Contact Kathy at [kc@asa.com](mailto:kc@asa.com).*

who until this point has never had any education in any form regarding boats, grabs the mooring ball’s rope with the boat hook. And drops it – into the raging waters, but by the grace of whatever god you subscribe to, it floated nicely along the hull and got stuck right at the back edge towards the engine. We snatch it out of the deep and turn around for another pass at the mooring ball. This time we manage to grab the loop and pass at least one of two ropes through before the boat was pushed back away from the mooring ball by the incessant wind.

Unable to pass the other rope through while on the boat, a brilliant idea was suggested, “What if we use the dinghy?” Spoiler alert: terrible idea.

### *Educational Experiences*

As I had never in my life operated a dinghy or even tried, getting it into the water was a task on its own. SPLASH. “Oops! Maybe we let it go a little too fast?” I sheepishly admit to my dad.

Next, we hop into the dinghy and start the engine, racking our memory to remember what the staff at the base told us to do to start it.

One minute later a loud “AHA!” and the roar, or murmur rather, of the engine coming to life. The boat shooting from side to side haphazardly because of the wind, eventually makes it to the mooring ball. I jump onto the side and attempt to get the rope through the hook as we shift from one side to the other, passing under the combative ropes, attempting to strangle us at every pass.



Eventually the rope is through, but in the process, stuck in the dinghy's propeller. My dad kills the engine and pulls it up to untangle it, unaware that in doing so he had set us adrift into the frenzied sea. Understanding this, I jump for the fenders that had dropped down and hold on to this refuge in the storm just as rain starts coming down in such large quantities that it's hardly discernable from the ocean. We slowly push ourselves towards the back of the boat, completely abandoning the thought of salvaging the motor and end up on deck and into the dry cabins. Laughing all the while, we all gather inside and discuss how spectacular the whole experience was.

The rain eventually subsides, but our amazement at the power of the ocean does not. That moment marks the beginning of all the memorable experiences I will have while sailing on that trip. It served as a reminder to me that this is the real deal, and that it's not classes or training anymore. While certifications taught me what I need to know, no other single event will ever teach me more lessons about sailing and the sea than that moment where everything went wrong at the same time.

The rest of the trip was less "educational" than that moment at Norman Island but just as incredibly fulfilling. We refined our sailing skills the next year in St. Martin, and since then we have planned another trip to the Grenadines, which, fingers crossed, will be just as



*Ryan enjoys a tranquil day aboard their charter boat in the BVIs with blue seas and lush, green hills for a background.*

enjoyable as our trip in the BVIs.

*Ryan Zenhausern is a sophomore in high school at BASIS Scottsdale in Arizona. He practices his sailing skills at SeaBase Camp in the Florida Keys. In addition he is an Eagle Scout and PADI certified advanced scuba diver.*

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## FEATURE STORY

*continued from page 3*

For most of us, the first stop was the small village of Uturoa, where two nice grocery stores sit across the wharf, making it a great place to provision easily. We squeezed through the stores, exploring the exotic fruits and veggies, loading up on fresh swordfish and ahi tuna, a few loaves of fresh-three-times-a-day baguettes, croissants and pastries (the French part of French Polynesia) and some beverages for the evenings. Then we were back on the boats and good to go.

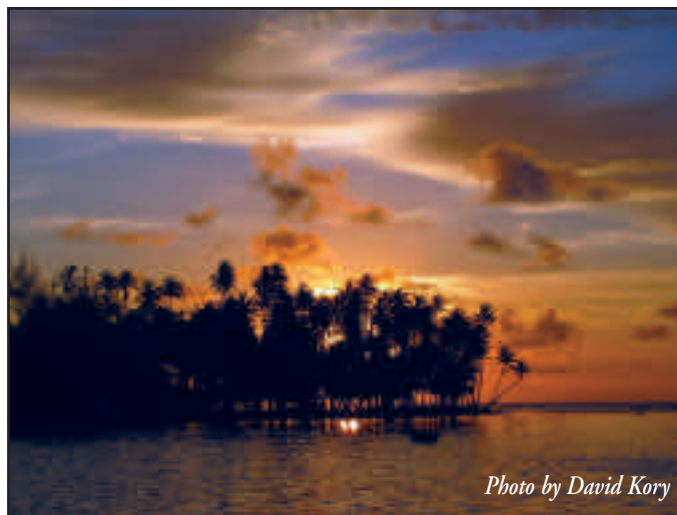
Our first night's stop was on the east side of Tahaa, anchored on the sandy bottom just inside the reef, and it took only a few moments for everyone to jump in the water and start swimming and snorkeling the shallow waters and corals heads, marveling at the variety and abundance of tropical fish. Back on the boat as the sun started to set, we snacked on prosciutto-wrapped pears and goat cheese, and toasted to a fabulous start to our holiday.

After a tranquil night in the warm breezes and calm waters, we sailed north along the lush island, always within the protection of the surrounding barrier reef, and anchored near another great snorkeling spot on the west side. Honestly, there were so many great snorkel spots, delicious meals, afternoon sails and excursions ashore that it's hard to keep them all separate.

We did so much! And yet always felt relaxed and unhurried. We sailed in the reef-protected lagoons surrounding Raiatea and Tahaa, and then reached across the 15-knot South Pacific trade winds in the low swells of the open South Pacific to Bora Bora. We were amazed again and again by the world-class snorkeling. We soaked up the tropical sun and made time every evening to watch the sunset. Some of us caught the sunrises as well, serenely watching the colors and light fill the sky as natives paddled their outriggers from their homes on the motus to jobs on the island.

We prepared simple, yet fabulous meals aboard and discovered some local family restaurants grilling the day's catch. We had cocktails and dinner at the iconic Bloody Mary's, feasting on perfectly prepared fresh local fish while wiggling our toes in the white sand floors – no shoes allowed in this restaurant!

We hunted for local bananas, including the one with red flesh, and toured a local vanilla plantation, taking vanilla beans, vanilla powder, vanilla extract and everything vanilla back home with us. We wandered aimlessly along deserted powder white sand beaches, and followed a jungle path to the outer reef of Bora Bora, where we walked to the edge of the reef, watching the waves crash and get absorbed by the coral just yards from where we stood.



*Photo by David Kory*

*Far from the ice and snow of the north, Tahitian sunsets glow over waving palm trees and rippling orange water. ASA members will have the opportunity to enjoy an upcoming flotilla in this natural, wild beauty.*

One tranquil morning, we made the long passage from Bora Bora to Huahine, a close reach, across thankfully and surprisingly flat seas. We anchored off the main town of Fare, where a festival was taking place as everyone prepared for the next day's start of the Hawaiki Nui Va'a races, a series of international outrigger canoe races between the islands. More than 70 teams had entered the race with their six-man canoes, all colorfully decorated and painted, and the atmosphere ashore was celebratory.

Early the next morning we enjoyed the start of the races from our front row seats aboard our yacht, cheering the local teams in their biggest national sport. As the crowds paddled and sailed towards Raiatea, we sailed to the south end of Huahine, and another easy push-button anchoring in the secure sand bottom. After a day of relaxing, snorkeling and wandering the beaches, we had dinner at a local family restaurant, serving the day's catch from the reef.

Another day had us visiting a black pearl farm, where a worker explained how the black pearls are farmed and harvested, as he demonstrated his technique. We later sailed to the south end of Raiatea, anchoring off the end of a motu with a hidden World War II airstrip in the middle, snorkeling the deeper coral heads near the pass, as well as the colorful shallow corals along the shore. Under the star-filled night sky, we took our flashlights and night-snorkeled around the motus of southern Raiatea. Throughout the long week, we saw dolphins, turtles, stingrays, sharks and more tropical fish than we could count.

When we finally, reluctantly returned the boats, we felt like we had been living a dream. The return was quick and easy, and before long we were hugging our new friends and saying our sun-kissed goodbyes. Already we were dreaming of our next sailing adventure ...



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## SAFETY AT SEA • CAPT. CHRISTOPH A. WINTER

A sailing vessel at sea presents a complex environment. Hardly anyone with a few sailing classes under their belt and extended time on board a vessel would disagree. How strange is it therefore that sailing magazines focus mostly on boats, the latest equipment and techniques?

Why not pay more attention to the simple human decision-making process that holds it all together? Oh, did I say simple? Hardly!

After many years of sailing and teaching students, I have my own challenging decisions to look back on. They include an abandon-ship situation in the North Atlantic and an air evacuation of a critically injured crewmember off Anegada.

Thinking back to many such events, I remain convinced that decisions made on board contributed as much to the safety of a vessel and its crew as the equipment we carried.

The boat, the skills of skipper and crew, and the adequacy and appropriateness of equipment are essential ingredients to a safe voyage. Competent sailors will do their homework, prepare and train well, and make sure they are in the best personal shape they can be. In most cases, that is indeed enough.

As we all know, most decisions made by trained individuals in an orderly, well-equipped onboard environment happen well below the level of criticality that truly tests the human decision process. We leave our slip, set sail, change course, reef, change watches and rarely need to use more than prudent seamanship to deal with the associated decisions.

Nonetheless, exceptional circumstances will eventually find everyone, and, since we cannot accurately predict the future, our challenge as sailors is to then make the best-quality decision given the situation at hand. The actual decision process has been studied by psychologists for many years.

For our discussion here, let's hone in on three critical ingredients that feed into that process: Facts, Timing



*Maintaining a good lookout and understanding the situation at hand, Capt. Andrew (left) is creating a safe and enjoyable sailing environment. Picture courtesy of Capt. Andrew Seligman.*

and Readiness. By understanding and respecting these aspects, we can significantly improve our safety while at sea.

### *Using Facts Appropriately*

Facts, measurements and information are abundant on board. At times, they can be completely overwhelming. With all the technologies that are available to us we can find our position within feet, identify vessels around us by name, measure speeds and distances with accuracy, track weather systems and consult with the Internet on almost everything else. Nothing seems to be out of reach. So where is the problem? Selection, distillation and interpretation of the facts are the challenges of today.

A sailor needs to reduce abundant facts to a relevant and manageable set that applies to the decision situation at hand. The approach is not tunnel vision, just a reminder to deliberately focus on facts that are pertinent to the decision. They could include, for example, the speed and course of an approaching vessel, the direction and strength of the wind or the latest track forecast for a hurricane – all pertinent variables! Having information thrown at us at an ever-inflationary pace should not obscure the fundamental facts that drive a decision. In summary, we need to deliberately focus, select, validate and not get caught in a sea of superfluous information. Relevant facts are the foundation of any decision.

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## SAFETY AT SEA

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### *What Time is the Right Time?*

Timing is also an important element of the decision making process. When to reef? Can we safely cross if we tack now? These are common questions when sailing. One could argue that the time dimension is part of the facts surrounding a decision, but in reality it has its own quality.

We all probably have examples of too-little-too-late or over-anxiously premature decisions and actions. Sometimes, all decision parameters are correct, conclusions are drawn accurately, alternate scenarios are weighed, but ultimately it just took too long to commit and seize the window of opportunity for the decision.

What can delay this step? Perhaps it is the time to acquire facts, such as a bearing or a fix, or to move the decision process forward by timely notification of the skipper. Even if our vessels move slowly, the world around us does not. We need to be conscious of the “when” and “how long” of any decision and its consequences, and cannot assume implicitly that there is plenty of time or, conversely, too little time to decide and act!

### *Be Ready!*

Readiness to make decisions is perhaps the most amorphous and interesting dimension. It is often found at the core of a decision gone bad. Even when we fully understand the facts and realize the importance of acting ‘now’, many safety issues can arise simply out of hesitation.

Underlying the absence of readiness could be the actual or perceived lack of knowledge or sufficient facts; a low degree of confidence in one’s own ability to decide with a high-enough degree of certainty; or what could be termed the sailor’s ‘conditioning’ to decide. An actual lack of facts that are critical to a decision is very real and cannot be easily overcome. A sailor may ponder the situation, may seek more facts that support a decision or decide to trust their gut feeling, but ultimately such a lack may persist. A perceived lack of facts, on the other hand, can spiral quickly into analysis-paralysis!

It is important to remember that there will rarely be total certainty about all facts surrounding a decision. The sailor should try to gather sufficient certainty about the relevant facts and then move on to a readiness to decide. A good example is the determination if two vessels are in Risk of Collision per the COLREGS: gather observations, analyze and, if any doubt exists, assume that the risk exists. Decision made! Decision paralysis, on the other hand, has led to many maritime disasters.

A skipper who steps back from the noise of a situation can dramatically improve his or her situational awareness and readiness. This cannot be said so easily about a low degree of confidence in abilities or authority to execute. By the time a critical decision needs to be made, it is generally too late to improve on this aspect! Confidence is built on knowledge, experience and an underlying self-awareness that has to grow over time and through formative experiences. New sailors need time on the water to develop these aspects of readiness.

Sometimes the toughest decisions are as benign as skipping a destination, avoiding a lee shore for the safety of a less-popular anchorage or staying outside of a difficult harbor entrance at night. We all have lessons in our back pockets that have hopefully improved our readiness to decide!

### *Experience is Irreplaceable*

Conditioning, on the other hand, is something that can be built more actively. Training on what-if scenarios, for example during classes and training cruises can create the right mindset. The ASA recommends person-overboard drills for that very reason: to build confidence and condition the crew to act quickly and without hesitation.

During sailing classes we run through a number of these what-if drills: a fire on board, a critically injured crew in deteriorating condition, steering failure, a collision ... all great trial scenarios that are best exercised before they become reality. We all understand that ultimately the readiness to decide is the critical third element in bringing facts and timing together towards the best quality decision.

A sailing vessel at sea is indeed a complex environment! We as sailors, skippers and crew, are constantly challenged to expand our skills, our knowledge about boats and equipment, and about ourselves as critical factors in the improvement of safety at sea.

As we mature in our sailing careers it may be worthwhile, in a quiet moment, to ponder what happens around us and inside of us as we are facing critical decisions ... and to do that perhaps on land in safety and comfort! Safe voyaging when you are on your next adventure!

*Capt. Christoph A. Winter has been an ASA Sailing Instructor for over 17 years, teaching more than 1,000 students mostly in advanced courses and navigation. He is a USCG-licensed captain and received three ASA Outstanding Instructor awards. He holds a doctorate in nuclear physics from the University of Goettingen, Germany. A special thanks to Martina Edgerton, Phoebe Long, Capts. Andrew Seligman and Dave Doles, and my son for their inspiring suggestions and comments. This article is dedicated to my late friend Paul DuBois, a great sailor, teacher and gentleman. Fair winds, Paul!*



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