Why would you want to make a sailing boat your home and cast off to venture beyond the horizon? Because it is an amazing experience on all levels and the best way to live life to the full – heading to the horizon in every way.

That’s what my husband and I did. We wanted to have our adventure, our taste of paradise, in this life, not in the next. We set sail and lived the life we’d always dreamed of. Our four-day stay in magical Bimini slipped to four weeks. We spent five weeks anchored off the beach at Freeman’s Bay, Antigua, one of the most beautiful anchorages in the world. Why? Because we loved it.

As a well-known pirate of the Caribbean once said: “What a ship is, what she really is... is freedom.”

Freedom from the demands of work.
SAIL AWAY

Freedom from the daily grind of office politics and social one-upmanship, schedules, the normal, the ordinary, school term times, the school run. Freedom from traffic and parking restrictions. Time out to explore on every level. Time out for yourself and your partner. Your boundaries will become the horizons you sail over; your perceptions will change with the tides. Teacher, gardener, lawyer and chef will all merge into a sailor of seas.

How much would you give for perpetual summer? To turn the cold rain and grey clouds into sunshine and blue skies, not for days but for weeks or months in the Caribbean or the Pacific. And then perhaps, having explored in t-shirt and shorts, you may want to go further, to the cooler waters of higher latitudes. The world really is your oyster.

While escaping the humdrum is challenging and doesn’t mean a life of ease, even in the toughest times you’ll be in a place that most call heaven on earth. For weeks on end you’ll be somewhere that most people only visit for their precious fortnight’s holiday and you’ll have the luxury of not knowing which day it is, let alone which week. You’ll be cruising, dropping in and out of the tourists’ world as you wish: part local, part traveller. Or escaping the beaten path completely.

As JRR Tolkien wrote, ‘Not all who wander are lost.’ Whilst writing this book I delighted in emails from contributors starting: ‘sorry for my delay in replying – we’ve been cruising among islands in the South Pacific where internet is pretty much non-existent even today...’ or ‘thanks for your SMS which was received in a very rare moment of mobile phone coverage in Alaska.’

One of the many joys of cruising is the unexpected pleasures – be it the thrill of discovering a stunning, uncrowded anchorage or the exhilaration of feeling free to go wherever you want.

Freedom doesn’t mean release from stress, but it does mean stress on your own time, stress at your command. You will have to fix the boat, but you will be setting the agenda.

DECIDING TO GO

So, what does it take to sail over the horizon? The excuses and good reasons not to go are legion. In the end, it’s about focus, chutzpah and sheer bloody-mindedness. It’s a cliché but it’s true: you have to make a commitment to follow your dream. Book after book, blog after blog, you read that once the decision had been made, the following one, five or ten years, was all about a focus on being able to cruise away, whether it’s in a home-made boat or on a yacht bought with hard-earned money. You need to hold on to the dream day by day and not allow yourself to be distracted or persuaded that it’s a mad idea.

Exploring the world from your own floating home allows for countless unforgettable achievements – those things that you want to do before you die. It is remarkable, having travelled thousands of miles, to sail into Manhattan or under the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Even crossing the English Channel and motoring down the Seine into Paris gives you a fantastic kick. Would you prefer to fly into Antigua and face the airport chaos or sail into English Harbour, one of the most beautiful anchorages in the world?

The first sight of land from the sea after a three-week passage is intoxicating. Equally, be it the Isle of Wight or the continent of the Americas, as the land slips away again, so do perceived problems and issues. The fascinations and concerns of the everyday world become more and more ephemeral the further and longer you sail away.

Many people are happy with a predictable life, year after year, TV series after TV series, football season after football season – for them that’s life as it should be lived. For those who want to live a different life, it’s about watching Spain

TURNING THE DREAM INTO REALITY

I met John when I gate-crashed his party for top advertising clients in London’s Soho. On our second date he said that he wanted to sail around the world one day and asked me to come too. John was in the process of buying a Beneteau Oceanis 311 Clipper anticipating coastal sailing for a few seasons. We named her Serafina in a force 10 gale. On our first sail, dolphins played around us – unusual off the Sussex coast. On our second sail on 5th November, in a force 3 with a harvest moon, we toasted hundreds of fireworks displays a mile off Sovereign Harbour.

A few days later John proposed, and we realised that the ‘one-day’ was now. But, we needed a blue-water boat. We began an extensive search for a suitable yacht for our trip. The Beneteau was sold. The day after we found Moonshine, a Westerly Corsair, everyone in my department was made redundant. The redundancy money paid for the refit. We married in May and sailed in July. 25,000 miles, eight years, two hurricanes and two sons later, I wrote this book.
versus Germany with the locals in Mallorca versus England with the locals in Martinique. How about following the English cricket tour of the Windies under your own sail, island by island? Perhaps you won’t have all your family with you, but you can have your birthdays and Christmas on exquisite warm beaches, or spend New Year jumping around at Junkanoo, a carnival in the Bahamas. Every time you drop the lines there’s a buzz of anticipation about where you are and what’s next. You should be in control of your boat, but not necessarily in control of the life you’re leading. You’re looking for the new and unknown.

If that sounds like you, then this book will give you the information you need to make your life under sail a success. First, let’s look at what you need to think about and know before you go.

### PRACTICAL ISSUES

As with all very big adventures, it’s important to ask some fundamental questions, such as:

- **What makes you think you can sail a boat for a year and a day, and another, and another?** Do you have the aptitude, the knowledge and the skills? Are you physically and emotionally fit enough for the demands of life at sea?
- **What about your job?** Do you take time out when you’re young and fit but risk your career in the process? Are you able to take a sabatical and, if so, for how long? How will you feel if you have an amazing time, only to return and find yourself working for a junior you once trained? Have you considered the effect that leaving your job will have on your identity? Or do you keep climbing the career ladder, hoping for promotion and good investments to buy you expensive holidays for now, and the dream later?
- **How are you going to pay for your travels?** How much of your savings or inheritance can you spend? Would you be willing to go into debt?
- **What about your current home?** If you own your house, are you going to rent it out while you’re away? If you come back early or for a visit, where would you stay? How long could you stay there before you and your hosts would be likely to fall out?
- **Do you want to go as a family or just the two of you?** If you are taking the children, when do you take them out of school? Are you willing to educate them yourself? If they are very young, are you willing to look after them 24/7, day after day, month after month?
- **If you’ve waited until your retirement to sail away, will you cope?** How good are you in high temperatures and high humidity with no air conditioning? Are you fit enough to climb in and out of dinghies every day? Will you want to return to see your grandchildren growing up? How willing are you to be ill or require medical attention far from home?
- **What plans have you made for living on land if you don’t take to living on board?** Even if things do work out, will you feel at ease with your landlubber’s identity after a long time away at sea?

### THE FOLKS BACK HOME

Obviously, as well as making the necessary practical arrangements for them, children, parents and possibly pets need to be cherished and cared for while you’re away. Luckily, communications via mobile phone and email are increasingly good, even in remote places such as the Pacific, so you will be able to keep in touch.

Be prepared for negative reactions from some of those you leave behind. Not everyone will agree with your decision, nor will they be truly interested in your experiences. When you return home, whether for a visit or for good, people will listen for a few minutes and then begin to switch off, their eyes glazing over. You may have lost your connection with them because your experiences are so out of their world. People will eagerly tell you about their flotilla holiday, not realising that as much to do with long-term cruising as rubber bands do with space flight.

One retired couple decided to leave the woman’s elderly mother, who had severe dementia, in a good care home. When the old lady died, the grieving daughter flew home to be greeted by unsympathetic siblings. The couple had been in a remote part of the western Caribbean and had endured a dreadful time finding a safe berth for the boat, securing flights and making an arduous journey to the airport. The siblings who had remained at home vented their grief in the form of long-felt resentment of their sister’s cruising lifestyle. They felt she had abandoned them, regardless of her condition and needs. They did not understand or care what stress on top of distress the couple had suffered en route home. They felt they deserved every mile of discomfort they had endured as penance for their selfishness.

Sometimes there will be news or pictures of a party or gathering that would have been fun to be at but was not worth the disruption involved in flying home. At other times homesickness or a temporary disappointment with cruising can make you find excuses to come back. One skipper was unimpressed with his new partner’s trips home to mother their 19-year-old son who had just started at university.
SAIL AWAY

A LIFE CHANGE OR A STYLE OF LIFE?

There is a vast difference between those who are sailing away and changing their lifestyle completely, and those who continue to work and just take time out on their yacht. Which one are you? Think about how much you want to let go. How much you want to hold on to your career, or the reins of power if you are self-employed.

One workaholic executive who owned a superyacht with another wealthy friend came to deeply resent the fortune he was paying to maintain the boat and the crew, but without the benefits of lounging around his acres of teak deck. His friend viewed his investment differently and made time out from his hectic schedule to spend time indulging in what his hard work had brought him.

Some people argue that it’s better to have a partial experience rather than none. Others claim that a clean break is essential to focus on the new life and that you’re unlikely to fully grasp the cruising experience if you still have business interests at home.

A sad but true example is a successful businessman who set sail on a beautiful yacht, leaving his sons in charge of the firm. He flew back to the UK on business for a few weeks. If you don’t know how to read a chart, give coordinates (latitude and longitude), or understand that CD can stand for chart datum, then it’s advisable for you to go on a course before you go off round the world.

DO YOU HAVE THE SKILLS?

It can take a lifetime to learn how to sail. However, you can learn the basics in just a few months. If you don’t know how to read a chart, give coordinates (latitude and longitude), or understand that CD can stand for chart datum, then it’s advisable for you to go on a course before you go off round the world.

COURSES

In the UK, sailing schools offer the Royal Yachting Association (www.rya.org.uk) courses from Start Yachting to Competent Crew, through Day Skipper, Coastal Skipper, Yachtmaster Offshore and Ocean.

In the USA, a good place to start is US Sailing (www.uussailing.org), based in Portsmouth, Rhode Island. There you can find guidance on information and training all over the USA. The Seven Seas Cruising Association, based in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, was set up for cruisers using power and sail; you can find more information at www.sscia.org.

In Australia, Yachting Australia (YA; www.yachting.org.au) offers training schemes and courses, including those from the RYA. It also sells publications and provides information on regattas such as Sail Sydney in December in the Sail Down Under series (www.downunderrally.com).

In New Zealand, the Coastguard (www.coastguard.co.nz) runs Boating Education (www.boatingeducation.org.nz), with courses from beginner to professional. International Yacht Training (www.iytworld.com) provide information on courses, worldwide. Their website claims that they are ‘the global standard for maritime training and certification’.

If you’re new to skippering, new to your boat or feel that the first leg of your journey is too much of a challenge, you could ask an experienced friend, or even hire a professional skipper and crew, to sail with you for a few weeks. You could view this as an investment, as an RYA-approved skipper can teach you about your boat and assist you in gaining your RYA Coastal Skipper or Yachtmaster certificate. Some new boat owners whose spouses don’t want to, or can’t spare the time to, be actively involved find two or three friends with whom to learn. Seek instruction, use your common sense, and also accept that you will learn quickly along the way.

Some of the most knowledgeable seamen have no qualifications at all. A piece of paper is not an absolute and experience can be just as valuable. There are also scores of books detailing how to be a good skipper and crew.

RESEARCH

If you’re not sure where to sail to first, you could research destinations in sailing magazines, pilot guides, alternatively, experience the world through blogs, (blog.mailasail.com, www.sailblogs.com, www.getjealous.com), vlogs, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or the Ocean Cruising Club’s Flying Fish, or Royal Cruising Club’s Roving Commissions. Entering ‘Sailing’ on YouTube or ‘Sailing’ and ‘Cruising’ on Facebook will lead to numerous sites. A good site to guide you to a wide range of sailing blogs is: https://blog.feedsport.com/sailing_blogs/

At the end of this book is information on a selection of pilot guides that provide solid information on various destinations, offering expert advice on entry into ports, anchorages, marinas and much else besides. They cover your journey from the English Channel to the Baltic, the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, the Caribbean (east and west), the United States and Canada, the Arctic and Northern Waters, the Panama Canal, the Pacific, Australasia and the Far East.

For answers to a wide variety of sailing questions, and to feel part of the online sailing community, it’s worth joining a sailing forum, such as those at Yachting and Boating World, www.ybw.com, www.allatsea.net, www.cruisersforum.com.

The Cruising Association (www.theca.org.uk), based in Limehouse Basin, London, provides information to sailors considering short or long-term cruises. Its illustrated talks, meetings and the members themselves are a fount of experience and information. The headquarters houses an extensive nautical reference library of...
over 10,000 volumes, and the organisation publishes a comprehensive handbook containing chart plans of harbours and anchorages, with sailing directions for the whole of the British Isles. The CA also runs RYA courses and a Crewing Service, which assists skippers looking for crew and vice versa.

The Atlantic Crossing Guide by Jane Russell is an essential reference book which we shall return to. Or for a glimpse of how the rich and famous live, take a look at the Superyacht Services Guides to the Mediterranean and Caribbean (www.superyachtservicesguide.com). As well as inspiring you, they will give you useful information to ground your dream.

HOW LONG & HOW FAR?

Do you actually want to go around the world? How much of your life are you prepared to invest? A circumnavigation can take 18 months on a World Rally, or 18 years at your own pace. Sir Francis Drake in the Golden Hind took two years, ten months ‘and some odd daies beside’. In 1898 Captain Joshua Slocum completed a solo circumnavigation of 46,000 miles in three years, two months and two days. The present record (at the time of writing) is 42 days, 16 hours, 40 minutes and 35 seconds held by François Gabart in a 100-foot trimaran.

Many people who have completed a circumnavigation recommend eight years, which enables you to explore on land as well as taking trips home and allowing time for maintenance – and more maintenance. It also offers you the opportunity to take a berth for at least three winters, whether in New Zealand, Australia, the USA or Europe.

You may decide to opt for participation in a rally, on which there is more in Chapter 8. There are rallies that, for a price, can take you all the way around the world in 16 or 18 speedy months. There are also rallies for shorter distances, such as from the UK across the Bay of Biscay to northern Spain or Portugal. Others cross oceans, from the Canaries to the West Indies, through the Western Atlantic between the Caribbean and the USA, from the Pacific Islands south to Australia, from Australia through Indonesia, and so on into the Indian Ocean. Although you will be sailing by yourselves and you may feel alone, you will be sailing in company, even if the closest yacht is 100 miles away.

Cruising authority Jimmy Cornell, whose books World Cruising Handbook and World Cruising Routes are absolute necessities for long-term cruisers, started the website (now owned by World Cruising Club Ltd) , www.noonsite.com, that is full of information, including a comprehensive list of rallies around the world.

As a taster, you could attend one of the free seminars by the World Cruising Club held during various boat shows. They cover long-term sailing, giving information on the Atlantic and World rallies. They also suggest ways to raise money for your boat and equipment plus costs and routes. Previous rally participants speak of their experiences, and it is an easy way to gather information comparatively inexpensively.

For those who are serious about sailing away, once a year in March the ARC (Atlantic Rally for Cruisers) holds a more comprehensive, two-and-a-half-day ocean cruising seminar, for which there is a small cost. These are run in the UK and Annapolis, Maryland.

If you don’t want to join an organised rally, you can be sure that if there is a route that has to be travelled at a particular time of year because of the winds – for example crossing the Atlantic in December because that is when the easterly winds blow you across – then there will be dozens of other boats with which you can form an informal rally. Local knowledge or cruising associations will give you good advice. Before you depart, check out whether your local yacht club has reciprocal arrangements with yacht clubs abroad, or perhaps join a club that has international connections.

The Ocean Cruising Club (www.oceancruisingclub.org) has a mentoring scheme that pairs potential blue-water sailors with experienced club members to advise on all aspects of preparation.

The course of numerous circumnavigators has been changed by the piracy situation in Somalia and the Indian Ocean. A British couple, the Chandler’s, were kidnapped in 2009, a grim tale that ended after 388 days of captivity in their release in November 2010. In Hostage: A Year at Gunpoint with Somali Gangsters, Paul and Rachel Chandler recount their terrifying ordeal. In February 2011 four Americans on SV Quest off India were shot dead in a failed rescue attempt.

Some cruisers remain in the Caribbean and during their first hurricane season head north to the USA, in the following hurricane season travelling further north to Canada. Alternatively, they explore the western Caribbean, for example Colombia and the San Blas Islands (near Panama) or the ABC Islands (Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao: the Lesser Antilles). One long-term sailor recommended, Yansaladup, Eastern Lemmon Cay in the San Blas as one of the most beautiful anchorages in the world.

For those transiting the Panama Canal, some make an extended Pacific Circuit over two or three years. During the cyclone season, they stay in Australia or New Zealand, then return to the Pacific islands. A few remain in the cyclone belt, for example, in Fiji.

After exploring the Pacific islands, there is the choice of sailing home across the Indian Ocean through the Red Sea, and into the Med, or sailing via the Indian Ocean around South Africa and north into the Atlantic. Some ship their boat home from Australia or New Zealand or the Seychelles, which is an expensive option. Later we’ll meet the Robinsons who spent seven years on the ‘Pacific Eddy’, commuting between New Zealand the Pacific islands and Australia, according to season. Another option is exploring the coast of India.

Two young adventurers, in their late twenties, Peter and Katharine Ingram took a year out. They flew to New Zealand, bought and kitted out a 38-foot yacht. They sailed to the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, through the Federated States of Micronesia, the Philippines and Japan, up and round the Aleutian Islands to Vancouver. They then trucked the boat from Vancouver to eastern Canada and sailed her home back to Spain across the Atlantic.

In their early 40s, Al, an ex-skipper who
SAIL AWAY

West Africa where they explored the River Gambia. Then they went south to the Cape Verde Islands, and across the Atlantic to Barbados from where they enjoyed Caribbean. Amongst their stops were the Grenadines, Grenada, Bequia, St Lucia, Antigua, Montserrat, St Kitts and Nevis, to the BVI’s, and north to Puerto Rico and the Bahamas. They then started the chase of the hurricane season up the US Eastern seaboard from Charleston, through the Chesapeake and to New York, Long Island Sound, Boston and Maine. From here they did not take the ‘usual’ route home but went north to Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, before heading to the West Coast of Greenland and up to the Arctic Circle. And then, with time against them, it was home to Falmouth.

The ‘circuit’ took 400 days of which 32% of the total time was spent sailing. They visited 246 harbours and anchorages and spent 79 nights at sea. On their return Ed returned to working for start-ups and Megan to working as a lawyer for ClientEarth. They would love to go on an extended voyage again, but the fact that they now have a daughter means they may need to go more slowly next time!

To read about their experience and see their beautiful pictures, look up www.flycatcherofyar.wordpress.com.

Suzanne Chappell and her husband David started sailing in their mid-forties, when the children left home. “Launching ourselves into this new way of life, we learned and studied everything we could, taking Competent Crew, Day Skipper, Sea Survival and Ocean Yachtmaster. We decided to change our lifestyle after the eight-year circumnavigation, full of good times and safe passages, with minimal calamities. They were highly praised worldwide when, after a long and arduous passage to New Zealand, they turned around into a storm to rescue a yacht in distress. In Indonesia, again they stepped up, towing a disabled yacht 350 miles. They cruised throughout the Caribbean, the Pacific, Australia, New Zealand, South Asia. As Annabelle says, lightly, “We have sailed mostly everywhere including north of the Arctic Circle.”

Stuart’s thorough understanding of his travels, combined with his gift as a raconteur, come through in his knowledgeable and entertaining contributions to the first edition of this book, emailed from idyllic anchorages along their route from Australia to Thailand. Annabelle sent her delicious recipe, too.

The Gifford family from Washington, USA, spent eight years circumnavigating with their three children. We shall come back to them (along with Irena and Woody and their three children who are starting their life aboard) in the chapter about children.

Ed and Megan Clay met through sailing and have both sailed since they were children. In their mid-thirties they gave up their jobs as an Operations Director and a corporate lawyer to take a year out. Their experience and skill ensured an artificially imposed deadline to deprive you of west."

For those who really want to complete their circumnavigation, it is still possible to do so by sailing the ‘old’ way, around South Africa via the Cape of Good Hope. It is widely agreed that going via the Red Sea and the Suez Canal is not an option while the high levels of piracy continue.

Whichever way you go, it is important – and I repeat this for good reason – not to be in too much of a hurry. Weather, boat maintenance, bureaucratic delays, commitments at home, discovering somewhere gorgeous and wanting to stay longer or an unexpected fiesta – all of these can change your itinerary. Don’t allow an artificially imposed deadline to deprive you of potential opportunities.

THE INGRAM CRUISING DYNASTY

Before their worldwide cruising, Stuart and Annabelle Ingram sailed throughout their lives all over Europe and the Caribbean. They passed their love of sailing onto their sons who we meet in this book with their wives – Peter and Katharine, and Al and Mel. On the next page I describe some wives who sailed the Atlantic: they were led by Annabelle, encouraged by Stuart.

Stuart was a renowned anaesthetist. After taking early retirement, he and Annabelle commissioned eminent naval architect Michael Pocock to design a one-off 44-foot cruising yacht, which incorporated some unusual design features such as a music stand, reflecting their love of music. The yacht, Troubadour, was launched in Lymington, Hampshire. Stuart was appointed Rear Commodore of the Royal Cruising Club in the following year.

Their experience and skill ensured an eight-year circumnavigation, full of good times and safe passages, with minimal calamities. They were highly praised worldwide when, after a long and arduous passage to New Zealand, they turned around into a storm to rescue a yacht in distress. In Indonesia, again they stepped up, towing a disabled yacht 350 miles. They cruised throughout the Caribbean, the Pacific, Australia, New Zealand, South Asia. As Annabelle says, lightly, “We have

now runs ClearSphere, a home technology company in London, and his wife Mel, who danced for Ballet Rambert, and Madonna, and is now a choreographer, took the opportunity to take Al’s parents boat Troubadour on an Atlantic Circuit. They made the decision, and the commitment, and they were off within months. Troubadour knew the way. Al’s parents had made an eight-year circumnavigation with her. Al and Mel with their daughters, 9 and 6, sailed from the UK to Spain, to the Cape Verdes to Barbados, through the Caribbean. Whilst in this sailing paradise Mel discovered they were pregnant with their third child. Mel and the girls flew home from the British Virgin Islands (BVI’s) and Al sailed Troubadour single-handed back to Falmouth, via the Azores.

The Gifford family from Washington, USA, spent eight years circumnavigating with their three children. We shall come back to them (along with Irena and Woody and their three children who are starting their life aboard) in the chapter about children.

Ed and Megan Clay met through sailing and have both sailed since they were children. In their mid-thirties they gave up their jobs as an Operations Director and a corporate lawyer to take a year out. Their search for a yacht ended back at home, buying a half share of Flycatcher of Yar, an S&S Contessa 38 that belonged to Ed’s parents. This gave the advantage of an S&S Contessa 38 that belonged to Ed’s parents. This gave the advantage of preparing a boat that they knew well so, while they replaced the mast and other major jobs before departing, they were confident in the boat.

Ed and Megan’s voyage took them from Cobnor near Chichester to Falmouth, across Biscay to La Coroña, Spain, to Portugal and the Atlantic islands of Madeira and the Canaries. Untypically they did not head across the Atlantic from here, but, to...
A RELUCTANT PARTNER

Most blue-water boats are crewed by a couple. But what can you do when one partner is set on sailing away and the other does not want to follow? Negotiate? Cooperate? Go it alone? Stay and be resentful?

Both a reluctant spouse and a sailor who will not take ‘no’ for an answer are challenges to the relationship. For 20 years, one spouse firmly believed that her husband would never get it together to sail away, but then he did. It caused a deep rift which they finally, after much trial and travail, accommodated by spending half their time ashore and half on the boat.

There are ways of making the situation work. Numerous spouses or partners and children fly out to the Caribbean in early December to celebrate and enjoy time on the boat that their partners have sailed across the Atlantic. A compromise would be to buy a boat in the Caribbean and divide your time between your boat and your home. (See Sue Bringloe’s account, ‘Best of Both Worlds’, in the Chapter 9.)

Or you could follow the example of one crew of wives (mentioned earlier) who had sailed for years with their husbands. They then decided to have a sisters-are-doing-it-for-themselves ocean crossing, which proved a huge success.

Problems arise if the reluctant partner wants to meet the boat at regular intervals for a couple of weeks. This can cause stress for both: it puts pressure on the sailor to reach the destination (often risking a rough passage to arrive in time), and on the spouse to put their life on hold and make the journey to the boat. Does the boat remain in one place and the couple take shore excursions? Do they sail for a short time, with the return to the airport continually in their minds?

A dramatic change in one long-term sailing relationship was caused, ironically, when a reluctant spouse was forced by her husband’s illness to take charge. The couple soon realised that she was the more competent skipper.

Another skipper bought a heavy-displacement yacht which could sail in local waters and oceans. Over a few years of sailing locally his wife fell in love with the boat, and with sailing away. The years gave her confidence in the boat and, critically, confidence in her sailing abilities.

The promise of beautiful anchorages, amazing places to explore or festivals such as Mardi Gras in Trinidad can tempt a reluctant sailor. As with all partnerships, understanding that 70% give, rather than take, on both sides helps soothe hardened attitudes. One skipper scuppered his chances by choosing a fast but uncomfortable yacht. Perhaps demanding Corian worktops is a fuss too far but including your partner in helping to fit out the boat can ease your reluctant spouse aboard.

Understand that, even if you feel exhilarated as the coast disappears over the horizon, your partner may be sick with fear. It’s a natural survival instinct. Take it slowly, ‘training’ sail by sail, and edge towards the horizon.

Seasickness can be alleviated in numerous ways, and there is more on this in Chapter 5.

If you (or your spouse) needs a little further encouragement, consider the Chinese tale of the frog who lived in a shallow well. He proudly boasted to the sea turtle what a splendid place it was to live. The turtle looked down the well and thought for a while, then told the frog about the Eastern Ocean, which was thousands of miles wide and deep and how, even in times of drought and floods, the ocean remained the same. The turtle returned to the ocean. The frog reviewed his shallow well and was no longer quite so satisfied.

Jeanne Socrates is an inspiration, and a tour de force. I first met Jeanne when she was winning one of her awards from the Ocean Cruising Club. We subsequently met after she had completed another circumnavigation, at another awards ceremony at Southampton Boat Show. Jeanne’s a lot of fun but, when it comes to sailing, there is a focus and steady determination which is the reason she has achieved her outstanding accomplishments. So far, she is the oldest (British) woman to sail a non-stop, single-handed unassisted circumnavigation three times.

Jeanne and her husband George learnt to sail, working their way up the RYA ladder. They took early retirement from their teaching jobs, and took delivery of a new Swedish boat a Najad 361. They named her Nereida and cruised for five years, with hopes of many more.

Sadly, George was diagnosed with cancer and died. Jeanne, who admits she was always the motivator behind the couples’ cruising ambitions, decided to sail alone saying that the support of the cruising community helped immensely as she learnt, port by port, how to sail alone.

Jeanne encourages reluctant partners of keen sailors to ‘jump in a dinghy, and learn to sail, and you’ll get more into it. You’ll know more about sailing and won’t get worried in bad conditions. Once you’ve been up and down the Caribbean and been aboard for a time you’ll know how things work. You’ll be doing it as a couple.’

We’ll come across Jeanne later. Look her up on svnereida.com.

A RELUCTANT PARTNER

BEST BEFORE DATE

Like it or not, life has a best before date. We sailed away on a boat which had to be sold because the owner, despite his wife’s best efforts, ignored his body’s warning signs. Too late he realised that, while he could remain living ashore for years, he was not up to the physical demands of cruising. This is a book about escaping the rat race so beware: life throws curve balls and putting it off may not pay off.

Hunter S Thompson, who could be described as pushing the envelope on most of life, and who most readers will know from Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, was twenty when he wrote a letter entitled ‘Man has to be something; he has to matter’:

I’m not trying to send you ‘on the road’ in search of Valhalla, but merely pointing out that it is not necessary to accept the choices handed down to you by life as you know it. There is more to it than that – no one HAS to do something he doesn’t want to do for the rest of his life. But then again if that’s what you wind up doing, by all means convince yourself that you HAD to do it. You’ll have lots of company.

GETTING UNDER WAY

The following chapters in this book will give you numerous ideas on how to make it from dockside to worldwide under your own sail in do-able steps. ‘Saving Up to Sail Away’ and ‘Choosing & Equipping Your Boat’ cover the basics of saving up to make the dream happen, how to choose the right boat and what you need to equip it for your voyage.

Not surprisingly, this leads us into ‘Children on Board’, in which we encourage you to think about who you want – and
don’t want – on board, such as children, pets and guests.

The adventure begins in ‘Time to Go’ and ‘Life Aboard’. Having set off and learnt the mechanics, electronics and histrionics of living on your boat, you can move on to ‘Deciding Which Way to Go’, on the options for major cruising routes. ‘Blue-Water Sailing’ provides a timetable of routes showing when to cross which ocean, what equipment you will require, and how best to prepare yourself and your boat for an ocean crossing.

Before aiming to sail to the Caribbean you may consider sailing north, perhaps to the Baltic or the Western or Eastern Mediterranean? High and low latitudes are becoming popular exploration grounds. In this edition I have include information on sailing in Greenland and the North West passage.

Having gained your Atlantic stripes, you’ll be ready for ‘Cruising the Caribbean’. Do you explore the eastern and western Caribbean and go northwards, or do you have a quick tour of the eastern Caribbean and head home back across the northern Atlantic?

For those who decide to stay in the hurricane belt, ‘Hurricane Season’ is a discussion on hurricanes, the bad and the ugly. The good part is exploring north through the Bahamas chain to the USA, even the Canadian Maritimes. From there it is either ‘High and Low Latitudes’ or ‘The Pacific and Beyond’, through the Panama Canal, the Pacific, Australasia, the Far East and the Middle East, and back to Europe. By that time, you will have circumnavigated or completed your voyage and be ‘Sailing Back’ to life ashore, to readjustment and thinking about starting again.

If you do decide to go on this journey the experience will be life changing. Fellow Skippers Library author, Alastair Buchan (Short-Handed Sailing), summed this up when he said:

Memership of the blue-water cruising tribe is for life and there will be ever present knowledge that all you have to do to reach Narnia is steer for the wardrobe.

Seraphim under sail, Bay of Alcudia, Balearics, steering for the wardrobe