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# Cruising the Med

**IN LATE 2006 AUCKLANDERS LAURIE AND DIANE CRANFIELD PURCHASED THEIR NORDHAVN 46 PASSAGEMAKER ENVOY, BERTHED AT THAT TIME IN ITALY, AND SPENT TEN MONTHS IN 2007 CRUISING ITALY, GREECE AND TURKEY. SINCE EARLY 2008 ENVOY HAS BEEN ON THE HARD IN TURKEY, AND IN APRIL 2010 LAURIE & DIANE WILL RESUME THEIR MEDITERRANEAN CRUISING. THIS ARTICLE COVERS HOW THEIR CRUISING PLANS STARTED AND THEIR GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT CRUISING IN THE MEDITERRANEAN COMPARED WITH NEW ZEALAND. FUTURE ARTICLES WILL FOLLOW THEIR PROGRESS AND DEAL WITH SPECIFIC ISSUES INVOLVED IN LONG TERM CRUISING. LAURIE HAS LOGGED OVER 2,000 DAYS SKIPPERING VARIOUS POWER VESSELS DURING THE LAST 28 YEARS INCLUDING COMMERCIAL AND VOLUNTEER COASTGUARD VESSELS.**

Our Mediterranean experience started in October 2004 when my wife, Diane, and I were relaxing on the foredeck of my brother's 11m yacht Acrobat off southern Turkey. My brother and his partner spent a year sailing Acrobat from Brisbane to Turkey and had invited us to join them for a couple of weeks. We had extensively cruised the Auckland and Northland coasts, but owing to work and family commitments this was mostly up to only four weeks at a time. We had always dreamed of staying at a great destination until we tired of it rather than having to meet a timetable. Now, in a light breeze with cloudless blue skies we were ghosting home across turquoise waters to Acrobat's berth in Finike after several days of exploring the beautiful cruising area of Kokova Roads, with its ancient castle overlooking the fjord-like anchorages. In one of those memorable moments Diane and I looked at each other and said, "We should do this". Then and there we made our decision and commenced our planning.

Two years later in October 2006 we purchased our Nordhavn 46 passagemaker Envoy in Ostia, Italy and completed our arrangements to join Envoy in March 2007 for the start of a nine month adventure, which would see us cruise 2,400NM and spend 251 nights on board. This voyage took us down the west coast of Italy to Sicily and the Aeolian Islands, through the Straits of Messina and north east to Corfu, down the west coast of Greece and the Ionian Islands, through the Gulf of Corinth and the Corinthian Canal to the Saronic Islands and Piraeus and then east through the Greek Middle Cyclades and some of the Dodecanese Islands to Marmaris, Turkey where Envoy is currently located.

In January 2008, with some trepidation we left Envoy laid-up on the hardstand in Marmaris and are returning in April 2010 to resume cruising for an indefinite period.

Looking ahead, we are going to be writing about our Mediterranean cruising experiences

ENVOY AT ANCHOR OFF THE ISLAND OF USTICA, NORTH OF PALERMO.

# Voyage of the ENVOY

## Part one

for PMY, covering subjects such as: destinations, living on-board for months at a time, weather conditions, interesting people, local customs and cuisine, equipment, maintenance, handling emergencies, costs of the cruising life and dealing with regulations.

For now I want to share some of our planning process, our choice of vessel, some general observations about Mediterranean cruising and the first stage of our voyage – Ostia to Palermo.

At the time we made our decision to go cruising I was a working shareholder in a marketing business, while Diane was retired. We had adult children living overseas, no dependent family, no health issues and two cats. We both felt it was important to undertake this experience while our good health and other circumstances permitted rather than wait and risk changes. We thought we had ample boating experience; during 22 years we had owned four power vessels up to the 12m planing launch we still operated as a charter vessel, and apart from charter work and coastal cruising I had over 20 years search and rescue experience with Coastguard. Diane had considerable crewing experience plus her Boatmaster and Radio Operator certificates. We had always worked well together as a boating team and knew that aboard the right vessel we could spend many months together without problems.

During our research we read that in some Mediterranean countries the authorities want to see the skipper's qualifications (which proved to be correct.) I already had a Coastal Yacht Master's certificate and commercial licence (LLO), but decided to obtain the RYA's International Certificate for Operator of Pleasure Craft, which is widely recognised throughout the Mediterranean and well worth obtaining. We both updated our Marine Medic qualifications. Although I had logged considerable sea time, my engineering experience was only mediocre as I had mostly used contractors to carry out maintenance and repairs. In this area I was to face a steep but interesting learning curve.

Our most difficult issues to resolve were what to do about our home and my work situation. We decided to rent our home to help cover living costs; a decision that later proved flawed as our home was badly cared for, and most of the income was needed to restore our home to its previous condition. Having worked closely for 25 years with my four business partners I was able to arrange a period of "sabbatical." This was successful, although it is feasible with widespread Internet and phone access to do some work remotely while cruising, and this is what I'll be doing when we return.

In our planning we also had to consider costs and finance. Generally, it is less expensive to buy most types of boats in the Mediterranean than in New Zealand. The costs of boat ownership are similar except for return airfare costs. (Most cruisers return home for a few weeks of the year and we certainly plan to do so.) Living costs, which were once very much lower in countries like Greece and Turkey, are now very similar to New Zealand. It is the income side of the financial equation which can be very different when cruising, depending on individual circumstances.

Selection of a suitable vessel is a personal decision and within commonsense guidelines there is no right or wrong choice. Exploring the Mediterranean mostly involves coastal cruising and clearly most vessel types are suitable. However, we decided to buy a passagemaker to provide broader options for our cruising after the Mediterranean. We were well aware of the ability of recreational power vessels to do extended cruising and recalled that in 1978 Kiwis Brian and Louise Pearce even crossed the Tasman in a 7.9m Crestacraft. Reading Robert P. Beebe's Voyaging Under Power (a must-read for passagemaker aficionados) reinforced our decision to buy a heavy displacement mono-hull passagemaker.

LAURIE CRANFIELD AND HIS WIFE, DIANE, ON THE FOREDECK OF ENVOY.

ENVOY ANCHORED OFF THE ROMANTIC TOWN OF CEFALU, EAST OF PALERMO. THE TOP OF THE HILL IN THE FOREGROUND KNOWN AS "LA ROCCA" IS THE SITE OF AN ANCIENT CASTLE.

ENVOY ON THE HARD IN OSTIA PRIOR TO DEPARTURE, LAURIE HAS JUST CHANGED THE DECALS TO SHOW ENVOY'S NEW ZEALAND REGISTRATION.

We opted for a Nordhavn 46 fourteen metre passagemaker, being ocean-proven. Nordhavn's brochure proudly states, "the Nordhavn 46 delivers on its promise to safely, comfortably and economically take owners and their families, even those with modest boating skills, anywhere in the world." This is not just advertising bumf, but fact. One Nordhavn 46 has completed two world circumnavigations, two others and a Nordhavn 43 have also circumnavigated while a Nordhavn 40 during 2001-02 became the smallest production powerboat to circumnavigate, taking less than eight months. Countless other Nordhavns have done remarkably long ocean passages including Envoy which crossed the Atlantic in 2004. Of special significance for Kiwis is the Nordhavn 46 Egret that cruised from the Mediterranean to New Zealand via Cape Horn, and has been the subject of previous articles in PMY. One of the factors making the Nordhavn 46 an ideal passagemaker is the A/B ratio (Above Water vs. Below Water) of 2.3:1, meaning that 30% of her total area in side view is below the water line. By comparison, many other pleasure "trawlers" have less than 20%. Other factors we liked were the stabilization and the simplicity of systems: single engine, keel cooling, dry exhaust, shaft drive and cable controls.

To make sure Nordhavn was the best option for us we visited the builders, Pacific Asian Enterprises, in Dana Point, California and saw several models including the 40, 43, 46 and 47. All of these designs were great, but we stayed with our original choice of the 46 based on a combination of size, legendary passagemaking capability, classic lines, pricing and the ability to comfortably accommodate a guest couple.

We located four Nordhavn 46s for sale in Europe, and although there were several for sale in North America we discounted those, wanting a vessel located closer to the Mediterranean and already well-equipped for cruising there. We obtained considerable detail by email about these four vessels and then travelled to Europe to view a short list of two. We immediately fell in love with Envoy, an immaculate vessel owned by a retired American couple who had mostly lived aboard for the last five years. Envoy was superbly equipped for local conditions, and a comprehensive inventory of tools, spare parts and chandlery was included in the sale. In fact the previous owners left us everything on board, extending even to scuba gear and bicycles, and we later needed only to add food and consumables to commence our cruise. Envoy was a USA-registered vessel and to avoid the requirement to pay VAT we changed the registration to New Zealand.

In March 2007 with great excitement we flew to Ostia, travelling via the USA to take advantage of the higher, 46kg per person luggage allowance. Arriving in Ostia we hired a rental car, and during our second night the car was broken into while parked outside the hotel; nothing was in the car was taken, but the car was unable to be locked again. The rental company supervisor was unconcerned and shrugged his shoulders saying, "these things happen in Italy ....don't worry." This turned out to be the only incident of its type we suffered, and at no time ashore during our nine months away in Italy, Greece or Turkey did we feel in any way concerned for the safety of ourselves or our property.

Our intention had been to spend about five days with the previous owners doing some familiarization aboard Envoy, however this did not go to plan. There were delays by the boat yard in re-launching Envoy from the hardstand, and when Envoy was finally launched there was a major seawater leak through the bow thruster sealant. We had to lift Envoy back out of the water and then remove and re-seal the bow thruster before launching a second time. This cost us two days. Because the previous owners had travel bookings this left only one day for the in-water familiarization, which was spent making copious notes about every aspect of Envoy's comprehensive systems.

We spent the next two weeks provisioning Envoy and testing all equipment, as Envoy had been out of the water for the previous five months.

We had a one-day sea trial and on 26 March departed Ostia bound for Palermo, Sicily, where we planned to meet our daughter for Easter. It was a great feeling dropping the anchor for the first time at the island of Ponza in a harbour first used several hundred years BC. The small harbour was full of colourful small fishing boats and surrounded by ancient buildings; it looked very much like the pirates' lair of old, which indeed it is. We were the only boat anchored there, but apparently in the summer it's very crowded and virtually impossible to anchor in.

Our cruise to Palermo went according to plan, and the only worrying part occurred after we heard a gale warning and headed into a small port called Cetrano. On our arrival a man came to assist with our mooring lines as we lay alongside a fairly rough concrete jetty. He introduced himself as Franco and we paid him 40 to spend the night in the security of the marina. By early evening the gale set in and a surge started to build inside the marina caused by large waves breaking at the marina entrance, which faced the open ocean. We had fenders out, but with the combination of strong wind gusts and surge Envoy started to pound against the rough concrete jetty, and we had real concerns that our fenders would burst and the gelcoat would grind against the seawall. I went up to see the Coastguard to see if they could allocate us a calmer position in the marina. They were friendly but little help, but they did mention Cetrano is a free marina. I explained we had paid Franco 40 and that fact got their attention more than Envoy's predicament. They wanted me to make a written statement about paying Franco, but I was only concerned about Envoy's safety. Meanwhile Diane found some old tyres on a nearby wharf, so we borrowed six of those to make additional, tougher fenders. We used the tyres directly against the jetty and hung some wooden planks between the tyres and our fenders. This was all completed by 2300hrs and then we tried to get a little sleep, made difficult by the noise of the tyres pounding and scraping the jetty; but the system worked. We departed at dawn with no damage and wiser for the experience. Used tyres and heavy planks are now part of our standard equipment, and we had cause to use them again some weeks later.

We arrived in Palermo, the capital of Sicily, on 3 April.

Quality fresh water is not readily available in the Mediterranean and many marinas do not have water suitable for drinking; local cruisers generally buy bottled drinking water. This makes Envoy's water maker a great asset and combined with a fuel range of 2,800NM gives us very

welcome independence from marinas. This is important as Mediterranean marinas can be very expensive, ranging from about 10 per night when mooring stern-to a village harbour wall to 40 per night for typical marinas and up to 100 per night for premium marinas.

The overall cruising experience in the Mediterranean can be summed up in one word: "fantastic". The Mediterranean is vast in size measuring roughly 2,000NM from east to west and up to 200NM from north to south. Many cruising areas are spectacular with lots to see of historical interest as well as different cultures and cuisines to add interest. Shelter is plentiful, with short distances between safe anchorages or harbours. Many local skippers in the Mediterranean have an aversion to anchoring overnight and flock to the marinas where they can eat ashore. Consequently the Mediterranean anchorages were considerably less crowded than we expected, with more room in the peak season than most of Auckland's Hauraki Gulf anchorages. So far our experience is only in the eastern Mediterranean and this may not be the case in the west. There is no tide to worry about, with the range being about 300 mm in most areas. The weather is excellent and consistent during the summer months, with virtually no rain or cloud, temperatures in the thirties and seawater temperature in the mid-high twenties. The ultra-violet level is noticeably less than in New Zealand and humidity levels are also low, making the hot climate quite comfortable except when in marinas, which can get extremely hot. Envoy has air conditioning and we found this very desirable in marinas.

For navigation we decided to break with our tradition of using paper charts and follow the previous owners' use of C-Map on a laptop interfaced to a GPS. Envoy has excellent systems redundancy and for backup has a spare laptop with C-Map, a separate chart plotter and three GPS units without plotter. For close to shore pilotage we use the excellent and widely-used cruising guides written by New Zealander Rod Heikell and published by Imray.

In the Mediterranean, cruising boats do not radio in trip reports to the coast stations and that makes the radio relatively quiet. The coast stations monitor both VHF and SSB radio and provide weather forecasts about every three hours in both the local language and English (if you can understand their English) and gale warnings when Force seven (28 knots) is expected. We found no VHF now-casting services and little in the way of continuously available forecasts, although Italy has this service. We mostly listened to the local VHF forecasts and supplemented this on the Internet where there are excellent now-casts and wind and wave forecasts available. Envoy also has Navtext, a system that receives weather forecasts by text message from radio coast stations.

We found there was excellent coverage for our Vodafone mobile phone both on land and in most coastal waters. We also purchased an additional mobile phone to use with local sim cards so that local people could phone us without having to dial via New Zealand. For the Internet we used wireless access where available or a PCMCIA card to link our laptop to the Internet via Vodafone.

There are no issues at all about obtaining food supplies, as even the smallest of villages has the basics. During the summer there are also local people selling supplies from small boats plying the anchorages and although the prices tend to be a little higher, it is convenient to obtain items like fresh bread and vegetables.

In Mediterranean countries the Coastguard are part of the military and both their vessels and personnel are heavily armed, being concerned about terrorist threats, gun running, people smuggling and the drug trade.

Several times Coastguard vessels came alongside us, and officers boarded Envoy to check our documentation such as passports, vessel registration details, insurance policy and boating qualifications. In many cases the functions of Port Police and Passport Control are merged under the umbrella of Coastguard and foreign cruising vessels need a cruising permit that has to be endorsed by Coastguard at each port visited. The inconvenience of doing this is another reason to anchor rather than go into marinas. Coastguard does get involved in search and rescue but we also noticed several private commercial rescue operations.

PMY's next issue will cover manoeuvring and berthing a passagemaker and some of Envoy's experiences cruising from Palermo to Marmaris including the shock of black smoke billowing from the engine room near Erikoussa and a near-collision with a ferry in Poros Harbour. PMY