Across the Medit

Taking a 40-footer from Port Said to

On November 3, 2001, a Nordhavn 40 began a 23,000-plus-mile circumnavigation of the globe. At the helm was Jim Leishman, vice president and co-founder of Pacific Asian Enterprises Inc. (P.A.E.), builder of the Nordhavn line of expedition-capable trawler yachts.

By March, Nordhavn's *Around the World cruise had taken the boat all the way from Dana Point, California to the Suez Canal. This month, Leishman describes the crew's adventures voyaging through the Mediterranean Sea.*

After a successful transit of the Suez Canal, it was time to push onward into the Mediterranean Sea. Pacific Asian Enterprises' Brian Saunders and friend Paul Grover had been aboard since Singapore, and with the exception of some rough going up the Red Sea, we had been blessed with favorable weather.

photos courtesy of Pacific Asian Enterprises

CAPT. JEFF OR CHEF JEFF? — Nordhavn designer Jeff Leishman took over the reins from brother Jim in Athens. The Nordhavn 40 galley is fully equipped, including a full-size refrigerator, a freezer, a trash compactor, a microwave oven, a three-burner stove and a double stainless steel sink.

Some of us speculated that the Eastern Mediterranean in late March might prove to be the most challenging segment of our leg. The transition from winter to summer can make for some formidable weather that is very hard for the forecasters to predict.

The final passage of our leg was from Port Said to Athens. This voyage of 600 miles would take us on a northwesterly course across the Eastern Mediterranean, passing between the islands of Crete and Karpathos, and then winding our way around the dozens of Greek islands on the Sea of Crete as we made it into Athens.

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the Cape Verde Islands

Around the World in a 40-footer

By Jim Leishman

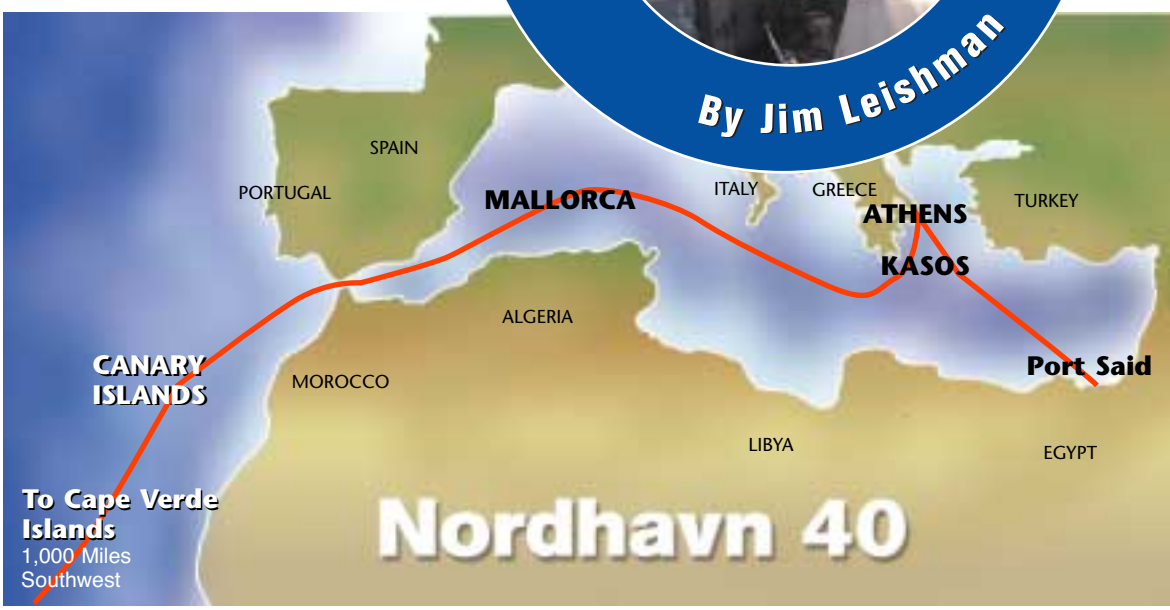
BAD WEATHER, GOOD SPIRITS

We departed Said Yacht Club on Thursday, March 24 and hoped for a passage of less than four days. We had anticipated moderate northwesterly winds coming out of Port Said, and as soon as we cleared the breakwater, we were bucking against 25 knots and steep 8 foot seas.

Pulling the power back to 1,400 rpm, we resigned ourselves to two or three days of discomfort at 5 knots — anticipating we would find relief as we approached the island of Crete. *Nordhavn* designer Jeff Leishman e-mailed me his concerns that the weather might build into gale conditions, and he decided to give our weather forecaster (Walt Hack) a call to get advice.

Jeff had been providing weather forecasting throughout our leg — using numerous Internet sources — but now it was time for him to board a plane, so he could meet us in Athens for his leg of this cruise. Walt immediately confirmed Jeff's concerns and predicted westerly winds to 50 knots. He suggested that our nearest point of refuge was a small island east of Crete called Kasos.

By Saturday morning, we were experiencing sustained southwesterly winds of 38 knots and occasionally higher gusts. We had been recording barometric pressure hourly and saw a pressure drop of 13 millibars — starting at 1,013 and dropping to below 1,000 — in just 24 hours. This was the fastest I had ever seen a barometer fall.



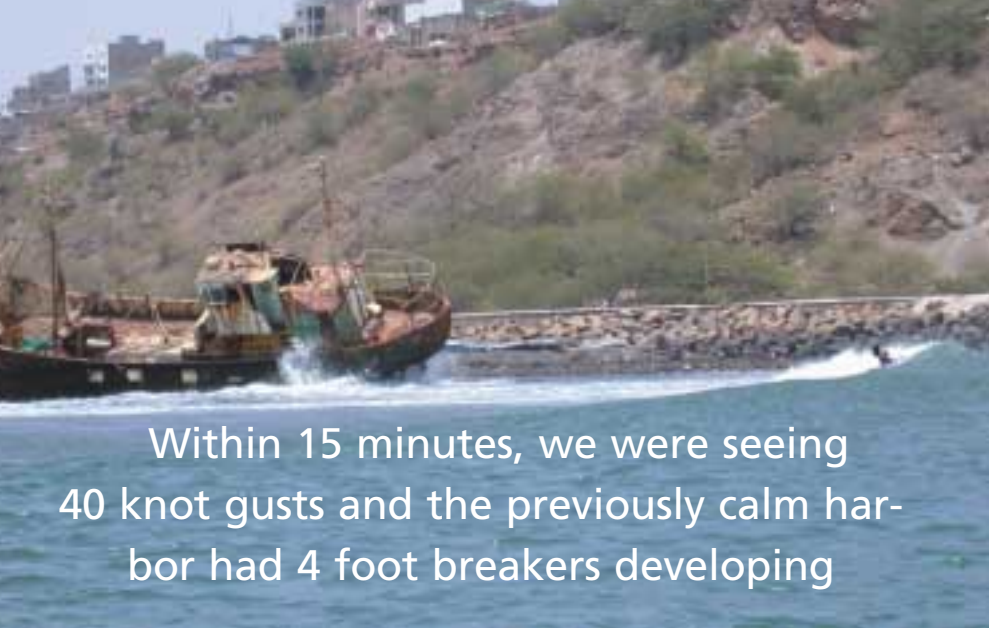
The seas were on our beam, so we were able to keep our speed trying to follow Walt's suggestion of finding shelter no later than Saturday at midnight. We were half way across the Mediterranean, so there was little choice but to push on — and we predicted we could make Kasos just before the storm reached its highest level.

We approached a small cove called Helathros on Kasos's southwest side at around 2 a.m. on Sunday, and despite a good radar return and comprehensive charts, I felt uncomfortable with

IT'S ALL GREEK TO US

the cove's entrance. The chart plotter showed two rocks on the surface at the cove entrance, but I could not confirm them on the radar.

We decided to stand off until daylight, so we ran up and down the relatively calm lee side of the island to maintain steerage and stability. At dawn, we made our entry into a beautiful cove and dropped anchor in about 25 feet of water.



Within 15 minutes, we were seeing 40 knot gusts and the previously calm harbor had 4 foot breakers developing

to maintain directional control, but all went well and the anchor stowed itself in its roller.

Paul watched the chart plotter and gave me direction changes to maintain electronic clearance of the entrance rocks — which we never did see. The amazing thing was the sea condition. The wind was blowing very hard out of the west and it wrapped around the island, bringing the seas right into the cove.

As we cleared the headland and turned east, we felt and saw the full strength of the wind. The seas were not huge, but they were building by the minute. Our anemometer was showing about 50 knots true, and we had numerous gusts up to 60 knots.

photos courtesy of Pacific Asian Enterprises

SPANISH IMPOSITION — (left to right) Jeff Leishman, Justin Zumwalt and Pete Eunson faced strong headwinds as they crossed the Mediterranean Sea on the way to Palma de Mallorca in Spain. A few hours after leaving Palma, a weather threat forced them to divert to the Spanish mainland.

PEACEFUL KASOS

The island of Kasos looks very much like our own California Channel Islands. The islands have extremely rocky, high cliffs, and they are covered with low shrubs, prickly pear cacti, and olive and fig trees.

At the head of the cove, we noticed some ruins of small buildings. As we studied the area with binoculars, we noticed that terraced rock walls covered the entire hillside above the cove. I was amazed at how extensive an area was covered by these stone walls and could not figure out if they were agricultural terraces or the foundations of buildings that existed many years ago. Small blue and purple flowers covered the entire landscape, and the more we looked, the more I appreciated the beauty of this arid, rocky island.

At that point, we were very happy to be off the rough ocean. To celebrate, I decided to make up a nice hot lunch at about 11 a.m. However, just about the time I had the cooking utensils out and the stove going, we got a 30 knot southerly blast of wind — straight in from the ocean.

Within 15 minutes, we were seeing 40 knot gusts and the previously calm harbor had 4 foot breakers developing. It became apparent that we could not stay at Helathros Cove for another minute.

WHILE THE GETTING'S GOOD ... ENOUGH

Brian pulled the bridle off the anchor chain and returned to the wheelhouse. With the windlass pulling and the boat in gear, we moved up on our anchor. I had to use good blasts of power and a fully deflected rudder

The tops of the seas were being blown off and creating a sea smoke that blasted off to leeward. The air was clear, with bright sunshine and a brilliant blue sky, and the wind-whipped foam that covered the sea surface was as white as snow.

Our boat handled the following seas beautifully. On autopilot, we raced down the island at 1,800 rpm, running in excess of 8 knots. Our plan was to go around the island to another port that faced north.

We became concerned about the forecasted northerly winds and the fact that the strong westerly wind we were experiencing might be just as bad on the other side of the island, with its east-west orientation. We considered crossing the channel, over to the larger island of Karpathos (about 14 miles east), but I was concerned about the building seas and how rough the ocean might get in another two hours.

We decided to approach the south-

You Know the Routine — After refueling and suffering the formalities of paperwork in Athens, *Nordhavn* went on to the Cape Verde Islands, the final stop before the last ocean crossing of the circumnavigation.

east side of the island and look for a lee, even if it meant motoring in position and not anchoring. We got lucky as we spotted a cove with very high cliffs, a small beach and a sheltered anchorage with about 50 feet of depth. The wind and sea calmed down as we approached, and we anchored in a beautiful spot. We heard the baying of sheep and looked up to see dozens of them grazing on the shrubs that cling to the rocky cliffs and ravines.

The storm raged on for two more days. On Sunday afternoon, we spotted a small cargo ship on the ragged horizon — rolling from gunnel to gunnel. The ship approached our sheltered cove and anchored in deeper water about a half mile out — still enjoying the lee and calming effect of the vertical cliffs. I spoke with the Greek captain, and at his request, passed on the most current weather forecast that we had received from Walt Hack.

The ship was hauling general cargo from Spain to Rhodes. His destination was only about 100 miles to the east of us, but he complained that even running with the wind and swell, the seas were too rough to continue in his 300 foot ship.

ON WITH THE LEG

Walt finally gave us a green light to proceed on Tuesday morning. We pushed on, in improving but rough weather, up to Greece.

Early the following evening, we arrived at a marina in Glyfadha — a modern yacht harbor south of Athens. Awaiting us on shore were Jeff Leishman, Pete Eunson (Nordhavn 40 production manager) and Justin Zumwalt (Nordhavn 57 production manager). The three of them would take over from us and make the passage from Athens — out of the Mediterranean and across the Atlantic to the island of Barbados — to the west, a voyage of over 5,000 miles.

We had enjoyed a wonderful eight-week leg aboard *Nordhavn*, voyaging from Singapore to Athens — a distance of over 6,000 miles. Although we were elated over our successful and trouble-free voyage, I could feel the pressure Jeff, Pete and Justin were feeling at the beginning of their long trip. After fueling, reprovisioning and going through a difficult and costly clearance procedure, *Nordhavn* departed Glyfadha to transit the historic Corinth Canal and resume westward progress toward the Atlantic.

The Mediterranean showed no signs of settling down, with strong head winds throughout most of the six-day passage to Palma de Mallorca, which was the first stop after clearing the Corinth Canal. Palma (Spain) proved to be a complete contrast to Greece, with easy and inexpensive clearance procedures and very friendly people.

Although the crew of *Nordhavn* wished they could have stayed longer, they departed Palma de Mallorca after only a two-day stop. The next port of call — Gran Canary Island, off the west coast of Africa — was a passage of 1,100 miles.

Hours after leaving Palma, a new weather threat showed itself. Jeff and the crew were diverted to Spain's mainland and the port of Villajoyosa, where they hunkered down for less than a day, waiting for a better weather report.

They put to sea again, leaving port in improving conditions. By the time they approached the Straits of Gibraltar at the Atlantic entrance to the Mediterranean, the miserable weather of the previous two weeks was behind them. Turning southeast and laying a course for the Canary Islands brought classic passage-making conditions, with breezes abaft the beam and warming temperatures as the degrees of latitude wound down.

After a pleasant six-day passage, *Nordhavn* tied up at the Texaco fuel dock at Las Palmas de Gran Canarias and received the same hospitality as previously experienced in the other Spanish ports of Palma and Villajoyosa. After a little sightseeing, refueling, reprovisioning and a couple of nice meals ashore, it was time to depart this island paradise.

Nordhavn put to sea again on April 21. The boat was now bound for the Cape Verde Islands — the last stop before taking on the final ocean crossing of the circumnavigation — the Atlantic.

Located about 1,000 miles south-southwest of the Gran Canaries, Cape Verde is the natural refueling port and stepping off point for the transatlantic passage to Barbados — 2,100 miles to the west. On April 27, after a routine and pleasant six-day passage, *Nordhavn* arrived in Praia on Santiago Island — one of the Cape Verde Islands — to begin the preparation for its Atlantic crossing.

Cape Verde would prove to be the most difficult and troublesome port of the entire circumnavigation.

Next month, Leishman will share the concluding adventures of the Nordhavn 40 round-the-world cruise with Sea *readers. For more details on the voyage and a link to the daily cruise update, go to www.goboatingamerica.com*