

ARC 2013

Why do the Rally?

In its 27th year, the popularity of the Atlantic Rally for Cruisers has never been higher. 2013 marked the first-ever ARC+ rally, which saw 43 boats take the starting line in Las Palmas 14 days ahead of the larger fleet, and sail south to the Cape Verde's for a brief stopover before crossing the Atlantic in the heart of the Trade Wind belt.

ARC+ came about as a way to meet the increasing demand from sailors wanting to sail in the ARC – the waiting list of boats wishing to join grew so long, that an entirely new route option suddenly became feasible. As it turned out, though unexpectedly, almost 60% of ARC+ entries were from former ARC participants who wanted to see a new part of the Atlantic before making the crossing. Boats like the catamaran *Easy Rider* and the OVNI 445 *Hanami II*, ARC veterans, looked at the new rally as a way to even further expand their horizons, which has always been World Cruising Club's goal.

Even so, there remains that elusive question of what, exactly makes the rally so popular to so many people. We trawled the logs and talked with crews on the docks in Saint Lucia to get the answer.

For most, the ARC represents that once-in-a-lifetime moment, an unforgettable adventure

that takes time, money and an enormous amount of emotional resources to even make it to the starting line in Las Palmas. Not to mention completing the 2,800 nautical mile ocean passage. The majority of the 230+ yachts in the fleet are family cruisers on sabbatical from 'normal' lives ashore, with houses, cars, pets and mortgages – in short, responsibilities. Yes, there are also the racing boats with professional crew on board (*Caro*, who set a new ARC racing record this year is the best example), but they are the exception, not the rule (though in fact, having those few big boats makes the ARC that much more exciting – how often does a family cruiser get to rub elbows at the same parties as some of the best sailors in the world? After all, the ocean is the great equalizer – out there, the conditions are the same for everyone).

For the American flagged Hallberg-Rassy 40, *Windleblo*, the ARC passage has been the culmination of a lifelong dream. Skipper Jack Hoopes bought his boat in Sweden several years ago and has been cruising Europe in anticipation of finally taking her to his home waters in America. As they neared the end of their 3-week Atlantic crossing, the reality of it all began to sink in.

"It is bittersweet that the end is in sight," Jack wrote in his blog. "This journey was so many years in the making – the dreaming, the planning, the scheming, and now our first major ocean crossing is nearing completion."

Of all the sailors we spoke to on the docks, the British-flagged Hylas 46 *Adina*, who are continuing around the world, provided the best insight into just what it is about the ARC that makes it so special.

"I think for us, the key thing was we'd never been across an ocean," they said. "Usually we're quite happy doing independent travel, but we thought, 'alright, we need some really good help.'"

Tom and Susie from *Adina* are used to taking breaks from real life and going on grand adventures. This is the third time that they have taken a lengthy sabbatical, but the first that they had attempted something as challenging as an Atlantic crossing.

"The preparation in the handbook was just brilliant. I mean we'd been reading it since a year ago," they said. "And we always said, 'if we can get the boat through the ARC inspections, it was good to go around the entire world.'"

For *Adina*, like much of the fleet, the ARC started long before the gun went off in Las Palmas. They left the UK in March and wanted to have as much of the preparation of the boat done before they left. The ARC support staff was there during the entire process.

"It was simple things like the ARC used Jerry the Rigger, so we knew who to call" they said.



1 Nov



10 Nov



They contacted him to inspect the boat before they left the UK and when they got to Las Palmas, Jerry came by a second time, recalled the boat, and was able to go over the rig once more, with the benefit of having already been familiar with it.

"We talked about it when we were at sea, we talked about 'Jerry's Checks,'" they said. "Because there's a face on it, it brings it all to life."

But it was the safety equipment requirements that really forced the *Adina* crew to stop and focus.

"We actually went out and we tested all of the safety equipment," they explained to us in Saint Lucia. "I think that was a really important part – getting all the safety stuff right, and actually testing it, understanding it and knowing how it works."

Finally, *Adina* admitted that through all of the equipment checks, all the boat preparations, and all the work involved in making it to Las Palmas on time, it is the friends they have met along the way that will be in their strongest memories of the ARC.

When they got to Gibraltar en route to Las Palmas, *Adina* hoisted her ARC flag for the first time. Almost immediately they realized they had company.

"*Millport* came in opposite us with their ARC flag up," they recalled. "Next thing there was another boat down the pontoon from us, *George*, and

he got his banner up. Within 24 hours, we'd got them all on our boat for drinks, and they've since become lifelong friends."

When *Adina* left Gibraltar, they had a problem with their gearbox, which failed shortly after their departure. *Millport* came out and towed them back.

"You make lifelong friends in this, and *Millport* crew will be friends forever," said Tom.

When *Adina* crossed the finish line, having never before been into Saint Lucia or Rodney Bay Marina, before, they were not sure where they were supposed to go. They had their marina map, and had gotten berthing instructions from the Yellowshirt team, but were still unsure.

"And Alvaro, one of the Yellowshirts, just came back on the radio and said, 'Tom, look at the welcoming party, all those people cheering. That's where you're going!' That just made it for us. It's a lifetime highlight."

"You know, some people get slightly sceptical about rallies, and say 'do you really need it?'" Tom added as he finished up his story. "And I would look at this and I would just a thousand times recommend it to somebody and say, 'you know, an ocean crossing is a big deal, and you need to have your boat in the best state possible, and the ARC will help you do that.'"



One thousand trees planted in ARC Forest

Sailing allows us to travel long distances with relatively low carbon emissions, but the reality is that all yachts burn diesel for motive power and to generate electricity. Conscious of this impact, World Cruising Club has teamed up with a local non-profit forestry organisation in Gran Canaria to develop and sponsor a carbon offset project, planting trees where they are most needed, to help offset the carbon emissions created during the ARC crossing.

Since 2010, over 1,000 native trees have now been planted by ARC volunteers on a deforested site in the mountains above Las Palmas de Gran Canaria; not only helping to offset carbon emissions, but also helping to recreate one of the most threatened eco-systems on Gran Canaria. As part of a five year commitment, paid for by World Cruising Club, the ARC Forest will eventually cover a hectare of land (10,000 m²), improving bio-diversity, reducing soil erosion and mitigating flooding. Managing the project is the Canaries based environmental charity Foresta, ensuring that the small trees planted by crews will grow to become a true sustainable forest, linking areas of historic indigenous woodland to make a "green cordon" around the mountain tops and restoring the native cloud forest eco-system.



17 Nov



19 Nov

Safety on the high seas - the ARC safety equipment check

World Cruising Club take the safety of our participants very seriously, and require ARC boats to carry specific safety and communications equipment. It is also important that crew on board to have undertaken training in using the equipment, sailing in heavy weather and managing emergencies. The safety equipment inspection is one of the few mandatory aspects of the ARC - all yachts must pass before they are allowed to start the rally.

All skippers have information about the mandatory and recommended safety equipment before they join the ARC, and World Cruising Club provide lots of advice and information in the comprehensive Rally Handbook. Lots of crews contact World Cruising Club by phone or email to discuss any questions, or visit the team at boat shows or training seminars too, which are held throughout the year.

As part of the preparations in Las Palmas, the team of experienced safety equipment inspectors visit each boat and check equipment before the start of the rally, spending time to help crews to talk through decisions about safety and communications at sea and ensuring that boat is well prepared for the ocean crossing.

Rob Gaffney of Hamble School of Yachting has inspected hundreds of ARC boats over the years, and explained, "The safety check is all about



helping skippers and crews to prepare for an emergency. Having the right kit on board is part of the process, the other is knowing how to use it. We spend time during the check talking about how to respond to an emergency, and most skippers find the whole inspection process very useful." Taking around an hour, the safety check begins on deck, with inspection of lifelines and jackstays, guard rails and navigation lights. Our safety team have sailed many thousands of ocean miles between them and happily explain to crews what they are looking for, common problems, and plenty of top-tips to consider whilst they prepare for the ARC. Liferafts and man overboard equipment are also checked, and the emergency steering is tested.

Next the inspector will move to the cockpit for a check on the equipment stowed there including the dates on all the flares and making sure that the correct quantity are on board. This is usually followed by asking to see the EPIRB, the Emergency

Position Indicating Radio Beacon. All ARC boats must have an EPIRB, but we find that often skippers do not know how to test them, a task that should be done at least once a month.

Below decks we will check stowage of heavy equipment to ensure it is properly secured, galley safety and review the medical kit, before checking lifejackets. There are many different types of lifejacket on the market but they must all be in good condition and have

on them: the name of the boat, a whistle, a light, retro-reflective tape, crotch straps, a sprayhood and also a harness line.

The safety equipment requirements are quite detailed and often yachts fail on some aspects during the first check. Typically have insufficient flares, or are missing spray hoods or crotch straps from lifejackets. Lots of these items can be bought from Rolnautic and other outlets in Las Palmas, so it is a simple process for the safety team to come back to recheck that the extra kit is on board and installed. It is rare that more fundamental problems are encountered, as most skippers are well-prepared long before they arrive in Las Palmas. Links to the complete ARC safety equipment list are in the rally brochure or via the members area of worldcruising.com.



19 Nov



20 Nov



Putting the Plus into ARC + Cape Verde

Launched in late summer 2013, the ARC+ was the first time in the 27 year history of the rally, that there have been two route options. Whilst both started from Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and finished in Saint Lucia, it was the addition of a five day stopover at Mindelo in the Cape Verde, which put the "plus" into ARC+.

Almost immediately, ARC+ attracted returning ARC veterans, keen to explore the Cape Verde on route to the Caribbean, amongst them was Pekka Karlsson on *Corona AQ*, who also took part in the very first ARC in 1986.

By splitting the crossing into two legs, each with shorter time at sea than the direct route, ARC+ especially appealed to double-handers and cruising couples. The typical boat size at 13.80m (45'3) was a little lower than on the direct route at 14.23m (46'9), and around 15% of the boats were multihulls, compared to 10% in the ARC.

The Cape Verde archipelago lies in the North Atlantic, just over 300nm off the coast of West Africa, on the same latitude as Senegal to the east and the Caribbean islands to the west. Ranging between 14°-18°N and from

22°-26°W, the country is a horseshoe-shaped cluster of ten islands, of which nine are inhabited, geographically separated into two groups: the Barlavento (windward) Islands and the Sotavento (leeward) Islands.

Our host for the visit was Marina Mindelo on the Barlavento island of São Vicente, around 860nm SSW of the Canary Islands, a passage of typically 5-7 days. This first marina in Cape Verde is a



haven for sailors, offering a sheltered position with plenty of on-site services. Constructed just in front of the old town of Mindelo, the capital of São Vicente, the Marina is able to host more than 120 boats, and offers all the facilities expected of a modern marina.

As well as using this mid-Atlantic pit-stop to refuel and repair minor breakages, the attractive market offered fresh provisions for the crews



after a week at sea. The marina soon developed a buzzing atmosphere, as ARC+ boats arrived and crews reconnected in the friendly Marina Bar, enjoying top-quality home-made food and live music. The friendly Cape Verdeans mixed and mingled with the visiting sailors, some offering services and goods on the docks and others just enjoying the spectacle of so many ocean-going yachts filling the marina.

Taking advantage of the secure moorings, many crews took one of the organised tours on offer, to discover something of São Vicente and the neighbouring mountainous island of Santo Antão. After witnessing some truly breath-taking scenery; craggy cliff tops, tropical green valleys and impressive volcanic craters, the buses ventured deep into the heart of the island, navigating steep ridges and meandering through traditional villages clinging to the sides of mountains, before gather for a delicious barbeque on the stunning Praia Norte beach. "Now I understand why it's called ARC+ - Wow!" said Erik Roede, of yacht *Oda* on his return.



A Family Affair

The ARC has always been a family affair, with cruising families from all backgrounds coming together for this annual transatlantic migration. Typically each year the ARC has around 20 boats sailing with children aboard, often using the rally as a launch-pad for a year or more of live-aboard cruising.

ARC 2013 maintained the tradition with 28 young sailors under 16 taking part. Each year most "family boats" are docked together before the start, helping build friendships between the families, and the special children's programme gives parents some time-off to help prepare their boats.

One of the great things about sailing with a rally like the ARC is the opportunity to discuss the practicalities of cruising with a variety of different sailors who have overcome similar challenges themselves and share lots of advice.

There are certain logistical issues involved in taking older children and teenagers out of school to go sailing for a year or more and ARC boats cope in different ways. For example on board *Starship*, an Austrian boat, Florian (13) is taught by his grandmother, while his mother supervises the schooling of his younger siblings Lukas, 10 and Katharina, 9. On board each day they have 3 hours of lessons, but after working hard during the crossing they did enjoy some 'school holidays' when they arrived in the Caribbean!

On Swiss yacht *Antares*, 'school' also took place every day but during the preparations in Las Palmas Sarah, Muriel and Laura (9, 12, 13) were

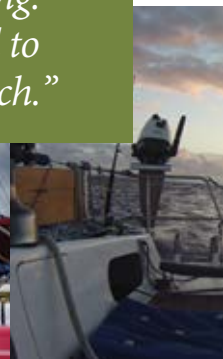


more interested in understanding everything that happens on board their boat. So while their ARC Safety Equipment Inspection was taking place they sat with big eyes and even bigger ears, in order to avoid missing anything. By happy coincidence, *Antares* met the American yacht *Edelweiss* in Helgoland on their way to the start of the ARC. Mason Read (11) and Lyell Read (13), on board *Edelweiss* and the three girls from *Antares* soon became fast friends and have met up in many ports on the way to Las Palmas.

Sven Hecker from Cologne and his family on board *Heckogecko* have taken a year out to sail across the Atlantic. His children are 3 and 9 years old. The older son Jenne is home-schooled using the German Distance Learning Programme, which will qualify him for high school when he returns to Germany. It costs over €300 per month, but Sven says: "I give so much money for the boat and repair. So it is only fair that I invest in the future of my son, so he has the opportunity to see as much as possible of the world."

Aboard *Privilege* 495 Arkouda, with 850 nm to go, the crew seemed to really have settled into the life and sea and wrote with awe about the nature they had been so close to for so long.

"The seas are building in size, and it is beautiful to watch them roll in, under, and away. The crests are starting to rise up and break, a little like waves the surfers ride. The sun hits this crest just before the white water, and it glows a magnificent teal blue. The early morning sun and the moon at night cast a metallic shadow on the water, turning it into molten silver. It is beautiful, awe inspiring, humbling. I feel so privileged to be allowed to watch."



28 Nov



Remembering Nicholas Achy

28 November: It is with great sadness that the ARC fleet learnt about the passing of Nicholas Achy, at sea on board his boat *Alayat 3*, following a suspected heart attack. This news was especially poignant, as Nicholas had previously sailed in ARC 2010 with his wife and children, leaving lasting impressions with all who met them.

Unusual Weather Pattern Challenges 2013 ARC Fleet

Year to year, the dock-talk among ARC crew in Saint Lucia inevitably turns to the weather, and 2013 was certainly no different. With the range of conditions that most crews had to deal with, the 2013 ARC was one of the most challenging years for weather in recent memory.

Traditionally, the end of November marks the finish of the north Atlantic hurricane season. By leaving Gran Canaria in late November, ARC boats are crossing at the start of the tradewind season, and arriving in time to spend Christmas in the Caribbean. But this can sometimes mean less settled Atlantic weather, as 2013 showed.

ARC weatherman Chris Tibbs briefed captains before departure about a developing low, which would be the dominant feature early on. Many of the racing skippers, especially those on fast boats, were excited by this news, since it opened the door to the longer "northern route" and the prospect of record breaking crossing times. Winds circle a depression counter-clockwise, blowing from west to south of its centre, and from east to north. If any of the racers could sail sufficiently far north, and fast enough, then they would be able to sail down the western side of the low, and take advantage of strong winds and excellent sailing angles to slingshot them towards Saint Lucia. But it would be a gamble. For *Caro*, the gamble paid off – the 65' newly built racer-cruiser took line



honours and set a new ARC record, completing the 2800-mile course in under 11 days.

However, as the ARC is a cruising rally, most captains followed Chris Tibbs' advice, and took a more cautious route close to the Cape Verdes, before heading west; the route jokingly referred to as "sail south until the butter melts"! With the developing low several hundred miles away disturbing the tradewinds this route looked likely to mean lots of light winds and plenty of motoring hours early on. As predicted, the westerly winds on the south side of the centre of low effectively cancelled out the usual easterly tradewinds, caused by the clockwise rotation of the Azores High.

"This pattern of low pressure mid Atlantic is not unusual and has occurred on about 50% of recent ARC crossings" explained Chris Tibbs. "What was unusual was how long it persisted for and its extent, with one low giving way to the next one.

Usually boats pass well to the east and south of the low staying in tradewinds, but this year the low was so extensive that it slowed the trades making for a slow passage. Although it was compensated for later with strong tradewinds and a full moon."

So whilst a later departure date is likely to give more consistent tradewinds, it is not always the case. Though the ARC+ yachts departed two weeks earlier than the main ARC fleet,

the ARC+ fleet enjoyed a much more typical tradewind passage after their brief stopover in the Cape Verdes.

David Smith of *Easy Rider*, sympathized with the main ARC fleet. "Having heard some stories, I feel very lucky to have had some of the weather we had from the Cape Verdes."

"It was a very difficult passage," said skipper Samuel Brenko of Hanse 575 *Lady Mila*, after they arrived at Rodney Bay following a 17-day ARC voyage. They took a more standard southerly route, but still never quite found the tradewinds.

Thankfully, the pattern did finally break. The Azores High, the generator of the tradewinds, re-established itself to the north of the rhumb line, allowing return of winds from the ENE in the 20's right the way across the Atlantic.



ARC 2013 Wraps up in Rodney Bay

The ARC 2013 wrapped up with the final Prizegiving Ceremony held at the Gaiety nightclub in Gros Islet, Saint Lucia. Whilst, it was the end of a special transatlantic adventure, it also marked the beginning of new adventures, exploring the Caribbean and further afield.

What sets the ARC apart from other sailing events is the combination of sailing competition and those playful special prizes that make it a rally for cruisers. With 213 ARC boats having finished and another five yet to arrive, the Prizegiving saw plenty of trophies awarded. For the first time ever, the ARC awarded prizes for 10th place and 5th place in each class, a way to diffuse the competitive part of the ARC and award what essentially are fun, random prizes.

"You can't really try to get 10th place," explained World Cruising Club's Andrew Bishop from the podium, to a cheerful applause from the audience.

Another playful prize that happened completely by accident, was the prize awarded to the yacht Magic, which was the 130th yacht to cross the finish line. Their local finishing time was December 15, at 15 hours, 15 minutes and 15 seconds, and they were recognized for the feat on stage.

Every year the Arch Marez Trophy is awarded to the yacht that best displays the partying spirit that Rodney Bay Marina founder Arch Marez embodied. This year the Norwegian yacht *Liberté* received the award, appropriately enough dressed in Christmas regalia and smiling all the while.

As always, the Spirit of the ARC award, the highlight of the evening, was saved for the end. Each year it is awarded to the yacht or crew that best displays the general spirit of goodwill and enthusiasm that the rally strives to create amongst the fleet.

"We'd like to honour tonight, someone who year after year has supported the ARC with their enthusiasm," said Andrew Bishop. "This year he selflessly racked up a sizable, sat-phone bill passing weather information

on to the fleet, and was on the docks greeting boats long after his own boat arrived."

A stunned and humbled Ross Applebey of *Scarlet Oyster* was called on stage to accept the award.

"I don't know what to say," Ross offered. "I'm completely humbled by this experience. Thank you so much." It was all Ross could do to keep from breaking down as he shook Andrew's hand to large applause.

Full results and lists of prize winners are available on the rally website at www.worldcruising.com/arc



Caro breaks the ARC course record

Crossing the finish line in Rodney Bay Saint Lucia on 5 December at 10:10:10 UTC Max Klink's *Knierim 65 Caro* earned her place in the history of the ARC, breaking the course record by 08 hours 07 minutes and 20 seconds.

Sailing across the Atlantic from Las Palmas de Gran Canaria to Rodney Bay, Saint Lucia in 10 days, 21 hours, 25 minutes and 10 seconds, the eight man crew were delighted to have beaten the ARC record which previously stood at 11 days, 5 hours, 32 minutes and 30 seconds, set by Italian *Maxi Capricorno* in 2006. Opting for a longer route north of the rhumb line, *Caro* covered approximately 2985NM, but benefitted from stronger winds produced by a mid-Atlantic low pressure system, to drive them south. Their average speed 11.45kts, with a top speed of around 25kts.



5 Dec



13 Dec



14 Dec



The last ARC boat on Christmas Day

The last ARC boat to arrive in Saint Lucia after 31 days at sea made its way into Rodney Bay Marina on Christmas Day to a warm welcome on the docks. Over 100 ARC crews came away from their Christmas festivities to join the ARC yellowshirts and greet the double-handed crew from *Beagle*, Uli and Alice Zenneck.

"We thought we would quietly slip into Rodney Bay unnoticed whilst everyone was enjoying their Christmas lunch" said Uli, quite moved by the welcome they received. "We couldn't have been more wrong, this has been overwhelming" he explained.

Speaking later, Uli expressed how he and Alice had enjoyed their passage and were happy with the boat and how it all went in general. They had provisioned for 30 days and had plenty of water on board so were not concerned by their long passage time. They were becalmed for nearly 4 days at one point unable to find wind, but kept positive and eventually found the breeze that propelled them to the Caribbean.



Serious Seamanship

Arguably the worst damage to any boat in the ARC occurred to *Pollux*, and Chloe Gautier and Antoine Gloanec, the double-handed crew displayed great determination as seamanship in the way they handled the situation. When just 140 nm miles away from landfall in Saint Lucia, the Pogo 8.50 was dismasted in a heavy squall. The top half of the mast, above the single-spreaders, had given way and went over the side. But the bottom section remained. Chloe and Antoine ingeniously rigged a windsurfing sail as a jury jib, and fashioned a makeshift mainsail by hoisting the clew of the sail and using what used to be the foot as the luff, sheeting it as best they could to the end of the boom. Remarkably, they made over six knots under jury rig and crossed the finish line on the morning of December 14, not far behind their original ETA!

Ocean Crew Link – connecting sailors

Since the ARC began, sailing enthusiasts from all walks of life and from all over the world have made their way to the Canary Islands in search of a yacht which will sail them some 3,000 nautical miles across the Atlantic Ocean to the warm waters of the Caribbean and each year, captains often need a reliable extra pair of hands to help them make the crossing more comfortable and share duties on board. Previously, prospective crew needed to physically walk the docks in search of that spare bunk, and owners were faced with the last minute rush introduce a new crew member to the boat.

OceanCrewLink.com, developed by World Cruising Club, has been designed to offer a simple online networking service connecting boat owners looking for crew, and crew looking for boats. It specialises in opportunities for ocean sailing, asking key questions about experience and abilities along with the expectations of duties and roles on board. Since its launch, over 4,000 users have signed up to the service and around 40 new ocean sailing opportunities are advertised each month.

Marsail is a Hallberg-Rassy 41 owned by Italian Massimo Marrone. This was Massimo's first ARC, having wanted to sail it on his own boat for many years. Needing crew, Massimo turned to OceanCrewLink.com where he found Lauryn, Javier, Julie, Gerard and Larissa.

Massimo said "Thanks to OceanCrewLink.com, I was able to not only find suitable crew but get to know them through Skype calls and emails back and forth before finally meeting in Las Palmas. I feel I know my crew very well already. It is a reassuring feeling."

Inviting new crew onto your boat, or joining a new boat as crew is exciting and can lead to long and fruitful friendships but, as with all preparations for an ocean crossing, planning crew early is often key to finding harmony on board. For tips about taking on crew, or joining a boat, plus links to a network of sailors and boats visit www.oceancrewlink.com, where ocean sailors connect.



21 Dec



17 Dec

