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To-Point

CRUISING SOUTHEAST ASIA, 7,500 MILES FROM HOME

Story by Bob Arrington Photos by John & Trevor Brice



A happy John Brice explores the area around Phuket, Thailand.

boat now safely in the Philippines, John and his partner Angie Magtulis were at the doorstep to explore a tropical island paradise.

The Philippine Archipelago consists of approximately 7,600 islands, of which only 2,000 are regularly inhabited. The island group is fairly compact, with no island more than 120 miles from the next, and most within sight of each other. If you can get here, these islands are the perfect setting for a tropical coastal cruising itinerary.

Beginning in Manila, John and Angie prepared *Restless* to head south through the protected waters of the Sibuyan and Philippine seas. This leg of their adventure would take about two months. They spent an entire week anchored in Puerto Galera on the island of Mindoro. After a few one-night stops following Mindoro, they arrived at the Island of Cebu, and stayed for a week at the Cebu Yacht Club. It was becoming obvious to John and

Angie why *Traveler* magazine's Readers Choice Awards ranked three Philippine Islands among the top five island destinations in the world.

Sitting at the edge of The Pacific Ring of Fire and the confluence of four major seas, the Philippine Archipelago offers some of the greatest biodiversity in the world. Islands within the group, both large and small, have unique habitats above and below the water. John and Angie wanted to visit them all. Their longest stay in this leg of the adventure was at the Ocean View Marina on Samal Island, where they spent a month enjoying the new resort and its surroundings.

The Adventure Continues: Indonesia

From Samal Island, *Restless* headed south to join an organized rally of 20 boats to Indonesia. Their last stop in the Philippines was Port Patuco on the southern Island of Sarangani.

Indonesia defies description. The lone fact that over 700 languages are alive and in daily use indicates the diversity of its people and cultures. It is the largest nation of islands in the world, with over seventeen thousand islands under its domain. It spans the equator by 750 miles north to south and is bordered by the Indian and Pacific oceans. John and Angie hoped to taste as many of its delicious spices as they could.

The rally organizers scheduled their stops to coincide with local island festivals and made arrangements to participate in several of them.

Their first Indonesian stop was in the village of Tahuna on the Island of Pulau Sangihe. Pulau Sangihe is a mountainous volcanic island that is surrounded by coral reefs and situated at the edge of the Celebes Sea. The fleet arrived in time for their first festival, and village children were all smiles to see the visiting boaters.

Continuing on to North Sulawesi, their next stop was Manado, the scuba diving capital of Indonesia. The clear waters around Manado are protected within the Bunaken National Marine Park

which draws divers from around the world to see its countless collection of tropical sea life. The rally's longest stop was in the Sulawesi village of Talamuta. Here the participants were honored at a meeting with the provincial government's Regent, and were dazzled with displays of fire walking from costumed dancers.

Life Happens

Even while cruising, life happens, and John and Angie needed to conduct some business off the boat. They said goodbye to their rally friends and took *Restless* to the Indonesian port city of Sarong. Once there they decided to have a captain and crew relocate the boat for them. They rejoined the boat a month later on the Northern Indonesian Island of Batam. Their adventure continued from Batam north toward the Malay Peninsula.



RESTLESS AND CAPABLE

North Pacific Yachts designed the 49 Pilothouse to be a long-range coastal cruiser. With 800 gallons of fuel and an economical single engine, *Restless* has an 1,800-mile range. With solar panels, watermaker, and redundancy in critical components, the boat is capable of extended cruising and long rests in remote anchorages.

As the coastal cruiser category of boats is growing, so too are the adventures owners are taking with this capable and versatile style of boat. And it doesn't take long looking at a world map to realize there are a lot of coasts to cruise.

When John Brice was about to take delivery of *Restless*, a North Pacific 49 Pilothouse, he thought of all the places he could see aboard his new boat. John and his family were experienced boaters, having spent years cruising the coastal waters of the Pacific Northwest from their home in Vancouver.

John may not be your typical new-boat owner, given that he helped his son, Trevor, start North Pacific Yachts. What began as a quest for their own perfect coastal cruiser led to the creation of the first boat and subsequent formation of the company.

For this trip, though, John was just a customer taking delivery of a new boat. Knowing his boat was being built near the warm, clear water and tropical islands of Southeast Asia, he wanted to take the opportunity to see the area before it shipped anywhere else for final delivery. As the owner of a company importing Asian products to North America, John was familiar with business in the area, but pleasure boating there was going to be an entirely new experience.

The Adventure Begins

Arrangements were made to have the boat transported from the factory near Shanghai to the southern Chinese city of Hong Kong. John understood his new boat's capabilities well—he knew it was designed as a coastal cruiser, but a stout one with good range. *Restless* was built with active stabilization for safety and comfort during open-water crossings. With careful planning and an experienced crew, he prepared the boat to cross 640 miles of the South China Sea, from Hong Kong to the Philippines. At an average cruising speed of 8.6 knots, they ended a successful crossing at the Manila Yacht Club after 74 hours at sea. With the



Above Left: *Restless* gets a piggy-back to Hong Kong. Above Top Right: *Restless* on a mooring at Koh Hong Island, Thailand. This Photo: The approximate route taken on *Restless*; a westbound route from Hong Kong and ending in Phuket, Thailand, and the Andaman Sea.

Photo by Trevor Brice

Photos by John & Trevor Brice



This photo: A night time festival on wheels. Right: Regent and District representatives at Boalemo, Indonesia.



The Malay Peninsula

Extending south from the continent of Asia is the Malay Peninsula, on which you will find the countries of Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore. These three countries host more tourists than all of the rest of Southeast Asia combined. Known for their stable governments, friendly people and rich cultures, they also make up the hub for cruising yachts in the area.

John and Angie knew this type of cruising would come with as many challenges as adventures. Crossing the Singapore Strait between Batam and Singapore proved to be one of the greatest. Three thousand ships pass

through the strait every day and a ship docks in Singapore every 12 minutes, 24 hours a day. It was across this short but very busy 12-mile body of water that John and Angie needed to take *Restless* to continue their voyage. John said, "I never could have imagined having a dozen red AIS collision warnings intersecting on the chart plotter screen at one time. It was at once a harrowing and exhilarating experience."

Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand

John and Angie were welcomed to Singapore at the award-winning One°15 Marina, a modern resort marina and yacht harbor in this vibrant and culturally diverse state. What was originally planned as just another stop along the way turned into a two-month stay: Singapore had cast its spell over them. Located 1° in latitude north of the equator, Singapore is a unique city-state and the only one in the world that is an island. The city embarked years ago on a "greening" policy, creating hundreds of acres of parks and natural reserves. Singapore is regarded as one of the safest cities on the planet, which encouraged John and Angie to tour the city every day. John adds: "There is so much to see and do in Singapore—despite its size, we could stay for six months and not see it all." They even purchased folding bicycles and used them with the subway system to expand their range of travel. It was difficult to pull themselves away, but they knew more adventures lay ahead. They reluctantly released their lines and continued north along the peninsula's western shore.

Restless would make seven more stops in Malaysia and Thailand before ending at the Phuket Yacht Haven (PYH). PYH is conveniently situated in the city of Laem Phrao on the northeast coast of Phuket, Thailand's world-renowned island retreat, also infamous for enduring a devastating tsunami in 2004.

Restless will stay in Phuket for a short period. John and Angie plan to explore and enjoy this area for the coming months. Within a 45-minute cruise of the marina, they can anchor in dozens of uninhabited coves. The protected waters of the Andaman Sea make for easy cruising in a naturally beautiful setting, all of which is secure under National Park protection.

Having recorded more than 4,000 nautical miles in their trip log, John and Angie have had an amazing adventure since departing Hong Kong. They are now in the planning stages to ship *Restless* to the Mediterranean to continue their coastal cruising adventures in Europe. ■

CONNECTING THE DOTS

Readers can easily imagine cruising from port to port along North American coasts, summers exploring the Great Lakes and Canadian Maritimes, and winters in the Bahamas or even Cuba. But don't let your imagination stop there. Look at a map; coastal cruising destinations are everywhere. If the limiting factor of where you take your boat is open water or land in between your planned destinations, consider shipping it to your new destination. There are several shipping companies dedicated specifically to transporting boats, and you may be surprised at how affordable it can be. Phuket, Thailand, is one of the most popular destinations in the world for off-loading cruising yachts. While John and Angie were in Phuket, one of the shipping companies hosted a cocktail party where the couple answered boat owners' questions and helped with shipping plans.

Consider when buying a new boat that European car manufacturers have for many years allowed North American customers to pick up their cars at the factory and enjoy the area before shipping it home. If your new boat is being built in the Pacific Northwest, New England, Nova Scotia, Florida, Turkey, or Taiwan, imagine enjoying it in one of those beautiful cruising destinations before shipping it home or elsewhere.