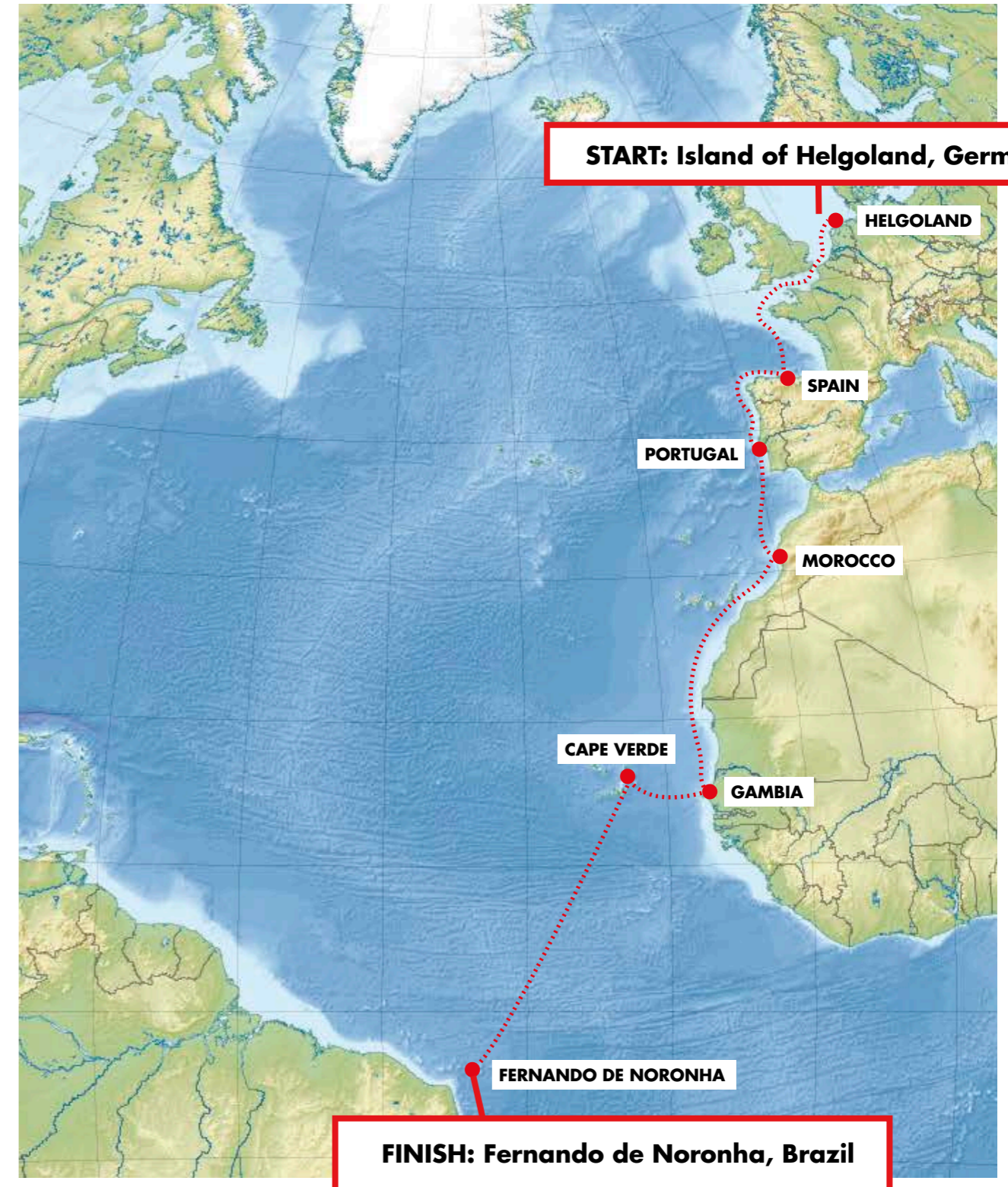


Across the Atlantic in Eight Days

Words and Photos by Kevin Katzke

Kevin Katzke and his wife Laura recently embarked on an unforgettable voyage across the Atlantic Ocean. The two of them set off from Mindelo, Sao Vicente in the Cape Verde Islands in a 49-foot trawler aptly dubbed *Hakuna Matata* without any crew or support boats and completed the crossing in eight days, ultimately landing in Brazil. They also set a record of sorts by being the first seafarers to cross the Atlantic aboard a Selene ocean trawler.



The adventure initially kicked off from the island of Helgoland, an island about 60 nm off the German coastline. From there the couple piloted *Hakuna Matata* to the Netherlands and then across the English Channel to explore the British coastline. They then made their way across the Bay of Biscay, down the European west coast, briefly stopping over in Spain and Portugal before cruising over to Morocco. After indulging in the interesting and unusual Moroccan culture, customs and culinary delights, they set off to the Canary Islands, then to Dakar in Senegal, and then to Gambia and up the Gambia River. They spent some time enjoying an abundance of bird- and wildlife on the banks of the Gambia River, before finally navigating back up to the Cape Verde Islands from where they would commence their epic Atlantic crossing.

Kevin says the ultra reliable 330 HP QSL9 Cummins engine, which they had duly christened "Hercules", required 3 848 litres of diesel for the crossing, but performed impeccably. He also had high praise for their trusty Selene trawler with her 2.54 A/B ratio, cruising stern, deep cruising keel and large airfoil rudder; all coalescing to make her superbly stable and safe in the various seaways they encountered on the passage. He also commended the fitted Naiad active roll stabilisers, which ensured maximum comfort even with the big swells they encountered on occasion. Here follows a day-to-day account of the magnificent journey, as documented by Kevin Katzke.

Day 1

We're having a grand old time so far on *Hakuna Matata*. The weather served up rough following seas and 20-knot winds shortly after leaving

Mindeló, but the seas have since calmed considerably to a 1.5-metre following sea and light 17-knot winds since dawn. *Hakuna Matata* had a slow first 24 hours due to the excessive weight we are lugging around in fuel and water (5 300 litres in fuel and 1 500 litres in water), but we should start to make headway as we burn off fuel and use water. Today I will transfer the 380 kg of fuel from the auxiliary fuel tank which is situated in the aft Lazarette to the main starboard and port tanks. This weight aft is causing *Hakuna Matata* to squat a bit, so it is a priority to transfer the weight as soon as possible. This morning I had to clean up the starboard deck of at least 50 flying fish which had met their demise on our deck. I've heard they make for good eating and I shall have to put that rumour to the test for breakfast tomorrow! ▶



Day 2

We are happy to report a wonderful 24-hour run without so much as a hint of a problem. The sea state and winds were exactly as predicted by our weather router, and it seems the further south we travel the better the conditions are becoming. We are a bit concerned about the unpredictability of the ITCZ (Inter-tropical Convergence Zone), though, as it seems to be moving north very quickly and widening at the western quarter to nearly 200 nm across. But we will cross that proverbial bridge when we get there.

Laura and I have had lots of sleep, have eaten like kings, and are really enjoying the TV series "Revenge." *Hakuna Matata* is really hitting her stride now that she's shed a bit of weight. We've used quite a bit of water on a few refreshing showers and have burned 779 litres of diesel as we're averaging two litres per mile – pretty good for a 34 ton trawler! Distance covered in 24 hours: 181 nm.

Day 3

We've started making plans for our graduation from landlubbers to "shellbacks" when we cross the equator. This is our first equator crossing, so we will consider ourselves "real" sailors when we do this. We passed our first test when we rounded the Cape of Good Hope, but everyone knows the equator is the big one and we're excited!

You may think us somewhat superstitious, but we intend to make very sure we placate Neptune and the other ocean gods, so Laura is fashioning a 'Neptune crown' out of tin foil, which she will wear on the crossing. After which we will toast the four wind gods, North, South, East and West with four tots of Aquavit. Hopefully this will be sufficient appeasement of all the pertinent deities.

There were no flying fish to be found on the deck this morning and there will be no fishy breakfast, sadly. We also haven't yet put out a line to

catch a tuna or a Dorado as our deep freeze and fridge are still overflowing with food.

We've had a splendid 24-hour run with 11 knots of wind and calm following seas of less than a metre in height and long wave periods of 10 to 12 seconds. We even had a braai on the flybridge last night – what a treat!

An amazing thing happened at 10H00 (Z) this morning. A type of sycamore seed landed on our foredeck! Laura and I both saw it landing and we stared at each other in awe. It once again shows the wonders of this incredible planet we have the privilege of living on.

This seed is such a clear demonstration of how these islands in the middle of the oceans get life to start on them and how this life has evolved over millions of years. Probably out of thousands of seeds that get taken aloft by jet streams, maybe one land on an island or in a place where it can start life. We can just marvel at the complex design and ▶



beauty of it all.

In other respects, all is well. We covered 181 nm in the last 24 hours while enjoying lots of rest, good movies, good books and good food!

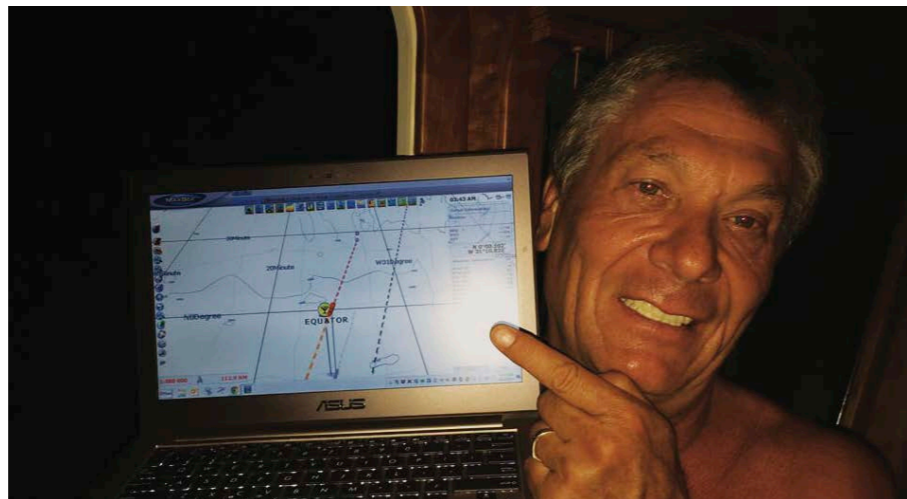
Day 4

We've encountered several floating "islands" of Sargasso weed. I check the engine sea strainers regularly for blockages, but luckily we haven't had any issues. Here again is a demonstration of my subject of yesterday. These islands are used by sea-going creatures as "life rafts" to hitch a ride from one part of the ocean to another to start new life.

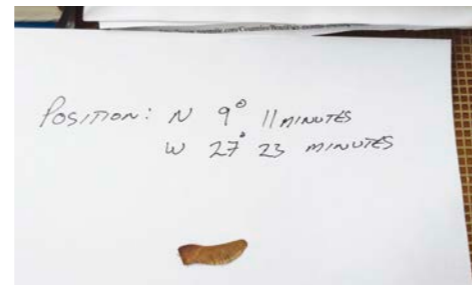
Also living under the islands are schools of juvenile fish which I suspect are living off the thousands of tiny crabs and shrimps that inhabit the Sargasso, and then there are Dorado and other game fish patrolling the outskirts of these islands – an entire eco system therefore, all starting with a little seaweed.

We're loving this crossing thus far. I have never in all my life felt so relaxed or felt such inner peace as I have during the last four days. There is no better teacher, in my opinion, than crossing an ocean for instilling in one the most important fact of life which most people often forget, and it is simply to live in the present, and make the most of the 'now'.

Seas have mostly been flat with long northeast swells and two knots of wind from the east. We passed our halfway mark at about 06H00 Z this morning and ran the Cummins at 75% power for 15 minutes to get rid of any build-up of soot in the cylinders due to the long period of running it on a low power setting. Distance covered in the past 24 hours: 179 nm.



Flying fish on the breakfast menu!



A Sycamore seed somehow made its way onto our deck!



Tiny crabs hitching a ride on the Sargasso weeds

Day 5

Wow! How rapidly things change at sea! *Hakuna Matata* took a bit of a pounding during the past 24 hours and her passengers endured quite an uncomfortable ride as a result. The winds had picked up shortly after my last report to 25 knots SSE and the swells veered to come directly at our bow at two meters with short periods. There was a lot of pitching, as you can imagine, so we slowed down and only covered 148 nm over the past 24 hours.

We also had to deal with an incredible number of squalls for the first 12 hours. I have never seen anything like this before, but then I suppose I have never been in the ITCZ before. We were surrounded by hundreds of cells – as far as our 48 nm radar could see. The cells eventually converge into large cells as they join forces. It was incredible to witness, and something I will never forget. It was like being on another planet.

Fortunately, we are out of the seriously active ITCZ by the looks

of things. We have clear skies with 1.5-meter swells on our port bow quarter and 14 knots of wind from the south-southeast. I predict the going will still be slow over the next 24 hours but not quite as sluggish as before. We are glad to finally be out of that 100% humidity and 35°C heat as it was almost unbearable!

Day 6

We were dealt a pretty good soaking over the previous 24 hours in the ITCZ. I kept wondering if there was a huge dam above the clouds because surely the sky could not carry so much water!

Since then it has mainly been clear skies with wisps of cumulus clouds forming every now and again and then dissipating. We enjoyed the same clear and clean skies last night and Laura and I decided to lie on our backs on the flybridge deck to admire the heavens which was strewn with millions of stars like we've never seen it before. We saw red stars, blue ones, and bright white ones with the occasional "shooting star" space

debris burning up in the ionosphere. Unbelievable. We were transfixed and only realised how late it was when the full moon showed up after midnight.

We planned to visit the Peter and Paul rocks mid-ocean but on second thought decided to give the rocks a wide berth after some research and advice from other cruisers on the net. We wanted to go there and see the place and perhaps get a few pictures of these curious rocks in the middle of the Atlantic. However, going there appears to be too risky.

Apparently, the pelagic fish stock for about 50 nm around the rocks is abundant because of the rise of the Atlantic floor crust there. Resultantly, at any given time of the year, long-liner fleets fish the waters with a fleet of six or more boats.

They put out long lines with hundreds of baited hooks. On one end of the 10-mile line, a fancy floating buoy is attached that will set off a signal when the line gets heavy with fish. On the other end they attach a GPS homing device, ▶





which allows them to drop oodles of line into the ocean without hanging around, and then retrieve them when they are full of fish.

It is therefore not a good place for *Hakuna Matata* to be because of the potential for prop snags from miles of seriously thick fishing line.

However, we officially became shellbacks as of 02H55 GMT this morning! We captured our equator crossing on camera and, as planned, we appeased the four wind gods and Neptune, giving them all a stiff shot of Brazilian cane spirits off the flybridge.

Distance covered over the past 24 hours: 151 nm.

Day 7

We had a great 24-hour ride with the one-metre head sea swell stretched out to around 15-second periods, making for a gentle rising and falling of our bow. We had two rain showers last night after which the cover cleared at around midnight to reveal another amazing star-studded sky with the waning moon's light reflecting off the gentle swell. What a sight!

We had a heart-stopping moment yesterday afternoon. I went down to peep into the engine room for my hourly inspection. I was horrified to

find the engine room had turned into a steam bath! On closer inspection, I saw a jet of water spraying all over the engine and the electronics. The fresh water pump's outlet hose from the pump in the engine room had burst and was emptying the fresh water tank into the engine room.

I shouted to Laura who turned off the pressure pump switch on the breaker panel. Phew! What a mess to clean up! Anyway, I replaced the pipe, and we were good to go once more.

We are terribly excited as we have only one more night at sea and expect to drop anchor in the bay at Fernando late tomorrow afternoon. Our course over the ground is 211 M and our speed over the ground is seven knots.

Distance to go: 180 nm. Wind: East at 16 knots. Temperature: 30.5° C.

Day 8

We had a bit of a bumpy ride during the last 24 hours with slightly turbulent seas as well as the occasional big guy slapping *Hakuna Matata* on her port beam, giving her a good shudder and causing the repeated flinging of objects across the galley. Still, it was a great 24 hours' run. We are well rested and well fed – Laura baked the most delicious rolls yesterday.

We have mixed feelings about making landfall. We have enjoyed the crossing so much with the shutting out of the world for eight days and living on our own blue planet. We will miss it. But, on the other hand we are so excited to see and explore "the new world." The continent of South America is one of few places in the world we have never been.

We have 35 nm to run! I am so excited with the prospect of having a full eight hours of sleep tonight instead of the four hour shifts of our watch system.

Land ahoy! We dropped anchor four hours later in the calm bay at Fernando de Noronha and I was smiling from ear to ear. We are thrilled with our achievement and filled with great joy and satisfaction in making such a fantastic choice in the purchase of a Selene trawler. We were also thankful for our good weather window.

If anyone would like to know more of the finer details about our sailing adventures or our magnificent Selene 49 *Hakuna Matata*, please feel free to email me at kevin@yachtHM.com or you can contact me on my Facebook at facebook.com/kevin.katzke where you can find all my stories on *Hakuna Matata* since we purchased her. **18**

