



ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/OLIVER MALMS



CRUISING LIFE

HEADING OVER & OUT

I NEVER THOUGHT A BOAT WOULD MAKE ME CRY. But there I was, watching from a distance as the trawler that my wife, Wendy, and I had lived in for three years left American waters — without us. *Amusant*, our 52-foot Krogen Express, was hanging 50 feet above the harbor in Jacksonville, Florida, slung over a transport ship en route to Europe. A range of emotions swept over us. Sorrow to see her go. Excitement that our long-awaited European cruise was about to happen. Worry because (*gulp!*) our European cruise really was about to happen.

BY DAVID PAISNER
AS TOLD TO ROBERT STEPHENS

WHAT THE HECK ARE WE doing? That's the question people ask when they're about to bungee jump or adopt triplets. It also crept into my mind as Wendy and I idled out of the harbor at Burnham-on-Crouch along England's east coast. Our destination: Oslo, Norway, over the North Sea and a little out of our comfort zone. A trip of about 650 nautical miles, one way, but more than three times that distance when factoring our scenic return cruise back. Perhaps a casual distance for some adventurers, but for us it would be our longest trip ever on *Amusant* (French for *amusement*, which honestly didn't quite seem fitting at this point).



Understand, we were still relatively new to open-water cruising. We bought our 52-foot Krogen Express after having only a few years' experience in a 20-foot runabout with navigation lights that only worked occasionally. Yet that little boat inspired us to talk about the idea of retiring, buying a bigger boat and cruising around Europe for 10 years.

One hurdle was Europe itself. It was a new continent for us, with different languages and different boating protocols. (During a shakedown cruise around the north coast of France, we were scolded by a lock attendant, which was doubly embarrassing because I couldn't understand a word he said, only that he wasn't happy.) As we headed away from the U.K., the questions kept coming.

Did we bring enough milk? Would we be able to find more Ben & Jerry's? Is the North Sea friendlier than a French lock attendant?

The answer to that last question came immediately. A few miles out we had to change our plans.

"These waves are beating us up," I said into the empty salt air around us. Wendy and I had both seen the marine forecast that morning, and 5-foot seas were not in it.

"We have to divert," I said.

Our original plan was to go around the Frisian Islands and make Cuxhaven, Germany. But the weather persuaded us to cross the narrow southern end of the sea and port in Den Helder, Netherlands. It was an early lesson about adapting on the fly. And what happened next was nothing short of amazing.

IT NEVER WOULD HAVE HAPPENED had the satellites not been looking down upon us. At the



dock in Den Helder, ready to take our lines, were two Dutch friends, Hans and Thea. They're also Krogen Express owners and had been following our progress and our game change in live time on *marinetraffic.com*. We had instant dinner companions far from home. And we had help.

During dinner Hans could sense my misgivings about conditions between here and Cuxhaven.

"We'll take the canals," Hans said.

He said "we," as in he'd come with me. We'd leave when the canals opened in the morning. (Wendy and Thea would take a car and meet us in Cuxhaven.)

I found out it's a long slog through the locks and canals in the Netherlands, and that was before we were caught by double red lights in the middle of nowhere. The long slog got longer.

After finally reuniting with Wendy and saying goodbye to Hans and Thea, we marched onward, up the 61-mile Kiel Canal, along the fringe of the Baltic Sea and, two nights later, into Flensburg, Germany. We noticed later that when we mentioned Flensburg anywhere in Germany, people would smile a guilty smile. Turns out, this town on Germany's northern border is home to the computer database for all driving violations in the country, and every German knows it — and is probably in it.

Part of the fun of cruising through Europe is the crossing of borders. It's like coming to a new state while driving through North America, except here you enter new countries and different cultures. So, when we crossed into Denmark and came to its second-largest city of Aarhus, it was immediately clear that we weren't in Germany, or anywhere near Rhode Island, anymore.

When Krogen Express released its 52-foot yacht more than a decade ago, it didn't break the mold — it kept it. The 52 became the only model Krogen Express has built since then. The couple in this story live on their 52 because of the broad living quarters and solid fuel efficiency (she burns 4 to 5 gph at 9 knots). As they say: "She's gotten us through some crazy situations."

WE FOUND MARSELISBORG MARINA in Aarhus, no problem; but the way Danes view boats here presented a big problem for us. Maneuvering in the marina almost necessitated a helicopter and boat sling. The dead-end fairways are tight. They're built for 32- to 40-foot sailboats, and even those owners have to push off pilings to turn around.

I wish maneuvering had been our worst issue.

At the dock I flipped the breaker for our macerator pump to empty the black-water tank. Nothing. Our 100-gallon tank was full. The marina pump-out wasn't available. The macerator wasn't working. Suddenly, no one wanted to speak English.

Down the dock I saw a man with the name "Kim" on his shirt. A repairman. He spoke perfect English, even when the subject was our black-water problem.



DAVID PAISNER

CRUISING LIFE



1.

DEN HELDER, NETHERLANDS: SURPRISE
A change in weather early in the cruise led to this unintended stop, and a chance encounter.



2.

AARHUS, DENMARK: EMERGENCY
Beautiful architecture, yes, but a full black water tank and faulty macerator were distractions.

“I’M NOT SURE WHAT HAPPENED NEAR BORNHOLM, DENMARK. IF I’D DOUBLE-CHECKED OUR ROUTE AS I USUALLY DO, I WOULDN’T HAVE RUN AGROUND AT 16 KNOTS.”

— DAVID PAISNER



THE TRIP IN A NUTSHELL

Time at Sea: 82 days

Total Nautical Miles: 2,184

Operator Errors: Speeding tickets, filling the water tank with diesel, arriving at bridges and locks off-schedule



3.

SKAGEN, DENMARK: TOTAL AWE
This long, stunning beach is formed by shoaling sands where the Baltic and North seas meet.



4.

OSLO, NORWAY: LAND CRUISE
The marina is across from a castle. Then it’s a walk to the city square or a bus ride to waterfalls.

LEFT TO RIGHT: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/DOMINIQUE LANDAU, DENNISJIM, SANNEBERG, EUNIKASOPOTNICKA, OPPOSITE: DENMARK TOURISM



5.

NYHAVN, DENMARK: MOST ELECTRIC WATERFRONT



OUR 3 STEPS
TO BECOMING
“HOMELESS”

1.

BOUGHT OUR FIRST BOAT

We bought a 20-foot Shamrock 15 years ago. At that time we had two homes, one in Boston and one in Newport, Rhode Island.

2.

TOOK PRACTICE CRUISES

The idea of retiring and cruising convinced me to charter trawlers and see if my wife, Wendy, would be up to the longer trips. She was.

3.

SOLD OFF THE HOUSES

In 2008 we sold our Boston house and bought *Amusant*. After a cruise last fall we sold the Newport house. The boat is our home.

“WE PLANNED TO CRUISE EUROPE FOR AS LONG AS WE WERE ABLE AND HAVING FUN. AT THIS MOMENT WE’RE PLANNING TO CIRCUMNAVIGATE WESTERN EUROPE BACK TO LONDON. AND TO THINK, I HAD NEVER EVEN BEEN IN A BOAT UNTIL I WAS 30 YEARS OLD.”

THE 3 TRIPS
THAT MADE US
NOT MISS HOME

1.

EUROPE

The sites and the people made us return for more — three times. One of those trips inspired me to tell the story on these pages.

2.

TURKISH COAST

We took our time cruising the Rhine, Main and Danube rivers and around Turkey for an incredible four months.

3.

U.S. EAST COAST AND THE BAHAMAS

This is how we cut our teeth on *Amusant*, traveling from Maine to West Palm Beach, Florida, and over to the Abacos.

The author says one mistake he made on this European cruise was being too time-conscious. “We marched past some incredible places,” he says.

A short time later we had a new high-speed Jabsco and a fresh ... mood for our next leg to Skagen.

Who would have guessed that one of the most beautiful beaches we’ve ever seen would be found at a latitude farther north than Nova Scotia? Here, at the tip of the Jutland Peninsula, the Baltic Sea and North Sea push sand into the shape of a humongous arrowhead. It must be a welcoming landmark, because in town we mingled with Swedes and Norwegians who’d traveled for miles to take advantage of low prices on fish, wine and salami. Unfortunately, we found no deals on ice cream.

Worse, we started to pay closer attention to time. So instead of cruising the west coast of Norway and visiting its charming, once-in-a-lifetime villages, we hustled *Amusant* up a fjord to the castles and waterfalls of Oslo, our northernmost point.

It would all be downhill from there.

THE BOHUSLÄN COAST OF SWEDEN is unlike anything I’ve seen, and not necessarily in a good way. Imagine a handful of pebbles and a handful of golf balls in a pie tin. Only the silver part at the bottom of the tin is safe. That’s what navigating this water along Bohuslän is like — a quagmire of hull-crunching obstacles. Needless to say, the autopilot was off. My eyeballs were on.

When we finally reached obstacle-free water and picked up the pace, we decided to make up time by running right by more of those interesting coastal villages on the route so we could reach Copenhagen — a decision that, in hindsight, was a mistake.

We took a break in Copenhagen. In fact, we returned to Newport for two months. And during the respite I thought of all the things we might have done differently. Visiting the smaller towns. Bringing more ice cream. But mostly I missed being on *Amusant*. She was our home.



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ROLLS OF TOILET PAPER

Full supermarkets are rare in marinas, so David would roll his suitcase to big markets. Fortunately, the boat has lots of dry stowage for paper products.



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PINTS OF ICE CREAM

Finding their favorite ice cream was tough. David and Wendy brought as much Ben & Jerry’s as possible. It was a bad day when they ran out.

WHEN WE RETURNED TO COPENHAGEN we moved the boat to another side of the city, Nyhavn, so we could be in the heart of the action — and enjoy it for a while. Here the streets are lined with cafes and, hallelujah, gourmet stores for provisioning.

Full of culture and food stocks, we left Copenhagen one morning at 4. I’m not quite sure what happened. Maybe I was too relaxed from the good times in Nyhavn, or maybe I was back in “rush” mode. I typically check our route on the chart plotter and take a look at Google Earth. This time I didn’t. If I had, we wouldn’t have gone aground at 16 knots.

A rescue boat pulled us out of that mess, one of two big ones that occurred on our way to London. The other came after a long, tense trip across an angry North Sea, on the small island of Helgoland. Exhausted, I started filling *Amusant* with diesel. After about three minutes I realized what I was doing — delivering fuel into one of the water tanks.

It was like a hammer over my head. The attendant assured me no one on the island could deal with my mess. The trip was over.

As a last resort, I shut off the one water tank loaded with 60 gallons of diesel (there are two 150-gallon water tanks) and hoped Wendy hadn’t used any water in the interim. Then, I turned on the faucet. Clean water. We could still do this.

The rest of the way was disaster-free, leaving us to discover cultural tidbits like the legendary nature of Lubeck, Germany’s city gates, and the fact that most people in Amsterdam don’t pull their blinds at night. We learned it’s OK to slow down and glance, but not to stop and stare. That’s the opposite of the lesson we learned from cruising more than 2,000 nautical miles: It’s better to take the time to stop and stare at every opportunity, because a passing glance will only make you wish you’d slowed down for more. 🍷

Our Top Destinations: yachtingmagazine.com

TRANSPORTING A YACHT: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

● **WHEN TO DO IT** You want options, so find the most popular time of year for transporting yachts to destinations (to the Caribbean in the fall, for example). Some companies don’t even own transport ships — they charter them during busy seasons.

● **HOW THE YACHT IS TREATED** At the Miami International Boat Show, yacht owners told us Dockwise Yacht Transport (now owned by Sevenstar) was easy on boats. Its ships work by lowering the main deck into the water, allowing yachts to float on board.

● **IT’S A DIRTY RIDE** At sea the transport ships are allowed to burn a high-sulfur diesel. The wind can blow the exhaust onto the deck, and onto your yacht. It can take weeks to clean. So we negotiated to have our yacht shrink-wrapped for the trip.

● **BE FLEXIBLE** Our loading point was supposed to be Riviera Beach, Florida. It changed to Jacksonville, 250 nautical miles away. Our drop-off point at trip’s end moved 170 nautical miles. Just remember, you’re moving a yacht, not a kayak. — D.P.

ISTOCK PHOTO.COM/LIQUID IMAGE, SAMI SEET; (OPPOSITE) DAVID PAISNER