

SAIL THE WORLD – Erick A Reickert. Published in soft covers by CreateSpace Publishing and available via Amazon at £29.00. 286 216mm x 279mm pages, with a sprinkling of good quality colour photos. ISBN 978-1-5441-2143-7

This is most definitely a book about a particularly 21st century style of bluewater sailing. It describes the purchase and fitting out in 1996 of an Oyster 55 Escapade and, in great, indeed exhaustive detail, the author's experience of worldwide cruising aboard her including a circumnavigation. It will intrigue and I suspect infuriate (or maybe just amuse) many sailors with bluewater experience. The author has some very definite views about how to go about sailing around the world and evidently very deep pockets. Parts of the account will bring the reader up short. On his Atlantic crossing east to west, he tells us that all six crew members had a hot shower every day. He later tells us that during the 14 years the book covers he flew back to his home in the USA four times every year and always for Thanksgiving and Christmas. He also tells us that during the circumnavigation he had a full-time, paid, qualified crew member aboard and a chef 'most of the time'. Another example of his approach to cruising is that on a passage northwards on the East Coast of the USA he paid a student to shadow the trip by car and meet him with it at the dockside for each stop.

The boat itself seems to redefine the description 'lavishly equipped'. She carried, amongst many other things, three air-conditioning units, a washing machine, microwave oven, powered winches, in-mast power furling of the main, a collection of communication and navigation instruments to outshine the USS Nimitz and a tonne of diesel (enough for 1000 miles). The power required to run all this would give many yachtsmen nightmares, but we are assured it was ably coped with by a separate diesel generator and a very large battery bank.

The book has a tedious amount of detail, including a year's log entries transcribed verbatim, a challenge to read. It reveals that, in the year 2002, 1289.9 hours were spent underway, the main engine running for 780.32 hours or 60.49% of the time. The precision of these figures illustrates the author's meticulous approach, but leads the reader to question whether this qualifies as cruising under sail.

However, fair's fair, you might say – the author is an engineer by profession and has had a successful career at a senior level in the automobile industry. He's entitled to spend his cash how he likes and indeed to sail his boat how he likes. He is also clearly skilled and industrious enough to maintain all the machinery in good working order and effect complex repairs without outside help. All admirable, one might say ... or at least one might accept that if it were not for the fact that he seems to believe that his way is the only way to do it. He maintains that 46ft is the minimum safe size for an offshore boat and six the safe number of crew.

Just a few years before the cruise of Escapade, I set out on a similar venture in my old Moody 36. Over a period of about ten years I covered a similar area of the globe

including Alaska (although I omitted the Mediterranean and did venture around one of the Great Capes). I shudder to think what Erick Rieckert would have thought about my venture had we met, especially as most of the time I was on my own. I managed with just a VHF radio and, when they got cheap enough, a couple of GPS sets, and paper charts. I had great fun position-fixing with a plastic sextant and two cheap digital watches. I even suffered my sundowner warm after my fridge packed up!

The author was evidently sufficiently senior in the motor industry to name-drop Henry Ford himself, who is reputed to have declared, 'History is bunk'. The reader is entitled to wonder whether the author shares this belief, and how familiar he is with his compatriot Captain Joshua Slocum who first had the idea of sailing around the world for fun in the ancient and engineless 37ft Spray, and whose navigation equipment consisted of sextant, compass, log and an old alarm clock with the minute hand missing. If there were any justice in the world, Erick Reickert's dreams would be haunted by the spirits of Eric and Susan Hiscock and their beautiful 30ft sloop Wanderer III, who did so much to awaken land-bound sailors to the thrill of bluewater cruising.

The author's view about minimum levels of equipment is easier to forgive than his apparent indifference to the importance of the psychological barriers which these pioneers overcame. Were it not for them and many others (including many OCC members) who caught the imagination of the world, Erick Reickert would probably never have considered the notion of sailing around the world in a pleasure boat and been quite happy spending his declining years on the golf course.

Nevertheless I would recommend this book, mostly because of the questions it raises about what bluewater sailing and the OCC is about. If you are lucky enough to have a couple of million to spend you will find lots of good advice here. If you have a tighter budget it's probably prudent to look for advice elsewhere.

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