

2019, A SUMMER OF SOUTHERLIES

Iain Simpson

(Iain has been a frequent contributor to Flying Fish since writing Song of the Sea (featuring his and Jan's Najad 460 of that name) shortly after joining in 2003. Several articles have been about the 'Simbo Rig' – most recently in Flying Fish 2018/1 – while their Najad 570, Song of the Ocean, made her debut in our pages in 2012/1.

To catch up on previous articles, and learn more about the 'Simbo Rig', visit <https://oceancruisingclub.org/Flying-Fish-Archive>, scroll down to 'Browse Archive by Flying Fish Edition' in the box on the left and enter 'Simpson' under 'Enter place/title to search for' in the box on the right – which also works for all other previous contributors, of course.

Parts of this cruise can be followed on the chartlet on page 116.)

We returned to Kemer, in Antalya, Turkey on 27th April 2019, with the daunting task of preparing *Song of the Ocean* for relaunching in just two days. Such a tight schedule only becomes feasible if the yacht has been comprehensively laid up at the end of the previous season, and even then there is no accounting for equipment that expires for no obvious reason. This befell us on launching when the engine starter battery refused to respond, despite having been trickle-charge maintained. This was followed by the seemingly pristine Mastervolt mass combi charger/inverter also settling for early retirement. Such are the woes of taking a yacht out of commission!

By 9th May we were ready to put to sea, with fair winds and a southerly current, to exit Antalya Bay. This enabled us to make the 55 miles to Cold Water Springs Bay on Kekova, a big step towards completing the remaining 23 miles to Kaş Marina next

day. However, as nice as the marina and its historic town may be, we preferred to capitalise on the favourable winds by continuing past the Seven Capes the following morning in a force 4 southeasterly, to put another 55 miles astern en route to Round Bay, Göcek. The weather was crisp and clear with snow adorning the mountains, a real bonus for those of us able to take advantage of spring sailing.

After a day at anchor, we exited Fethiye Bay under

***Iain in Rhodes
towards the end of
the sailing season***



***Kemer in
spring***

motor for a 40 mile close fetch to Kumlumbük, just south of Marmaris Bay. The area is an active Turkish Navy training ground, lying just south of their naval base at Aksaz Limani, and on several

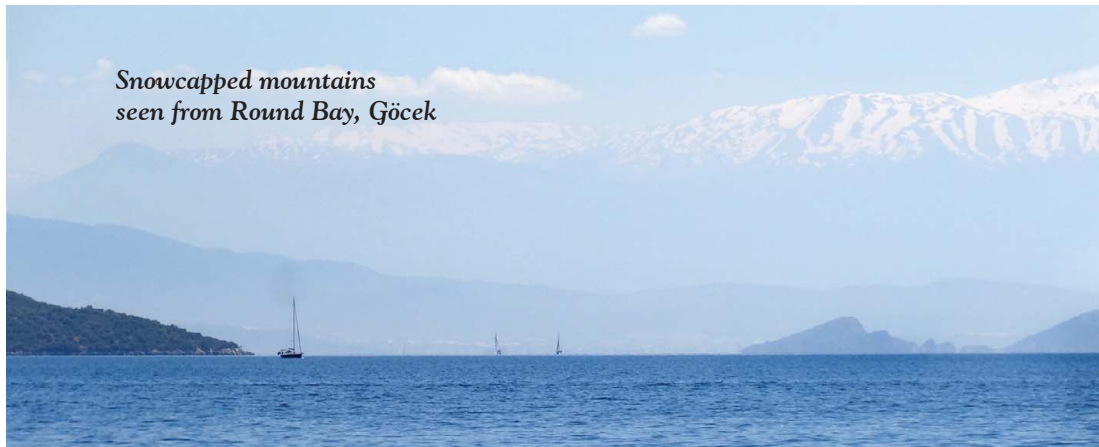


occasions whilst on passage we have been ordered to anchor in Ekincik Koya until naval exercises were concluded. Today, however, we could only hear the distant boom of their guns. We are informed that President Erdogan has his summer retreat in Kumlumbük but for most cruisers this secure anchorage's attraction is the outstanding Chinese restaurant with its pontoon mooring facilities in the southwest of the bay.

On 14th May we tacked down the Bozburun peninsula in a southwesterly force 3 to make the 32 miles to Pedi, which then enabled us to bear off on a reach over a further 28 miles to Knidos at the end of the Datça peninsula. In days of yore this was an important

***Sailing at 8 knots in Finike Bay, with the twin whisker-poles
of the Simbo Rig clearly visible***





trading centre but over the centuries it has fallen into ruins. Nevertheless it is a major attraction for tourists and yachtsmen alike. In the height of the season we avoid this sheltered anchorage but in mid-May we thought we were safe enough. However, in the middle of the night fearsome 40-knot squalls created havoc amongst those who had not paid sufficient attention to anchoring. One such yacht came within a smidgeon of ramming us and, though I tried hard to wake the crew, the yacht careered past us for the rocks. When just 20m off destruction a panic-stricken skipper finally responded to my whistle and fog horn and emerged to save the yacht. (I have come to learn that in the Aegean the standard of seamanship across the full spectrum of the yachting fraternity has to be treated with caution. My advice to anyone entering these waters is to treat others as lacking in experience until proven otherwise, particularly those on high-powered motor yachts and chartered boats. Even with owner-skippered yachts, in some cases reliance on marinas seems to have impacted on anchoring ability.)

We awoke next morning to find that a quarter of the yachts had put to sea during the night. We weighed anchor for a fine fetch towards the northeast tip of Kos and thence to the anchorage of Karainci on the Bodrum peninsula. It affords good shelter but is not a place to linger so the next day we weighed anchor for Kuruerik, a large inland estuary east of Didim. The weather was fair with a westerly force 2–3, which gave rise to a gentle passage and a relaxing day's sail. Our objective was to check out of Turkey at Didim, but we decided to leave the remaining 6 miles for the following day so that we could take full advantage of the marina facilities. Having grown up before the advent of marinas we tend to look to them only for necessities.

After checking out of Turkey on 19th May we enjoyed an invigorating 30-mile reach over to Pythagorion on Samos. On finding the harbour anchorage full we were obliged to book into the marina, which proved satisfactory until the Greek authorities demanded that we anchor in sight of their office window. We offered to provide their officers with a taxi to view the yacht, rather than Jan and I having to move her some 500m to comply with this bureaucratic requirement, but they would have none of it. Fortunately a compromise was reached and we were allowed to bring the yacht over the following morning – whereupon, when asked whether the yacht was in the anchorage, they completed the paperwork without so much as a glance out of the window!

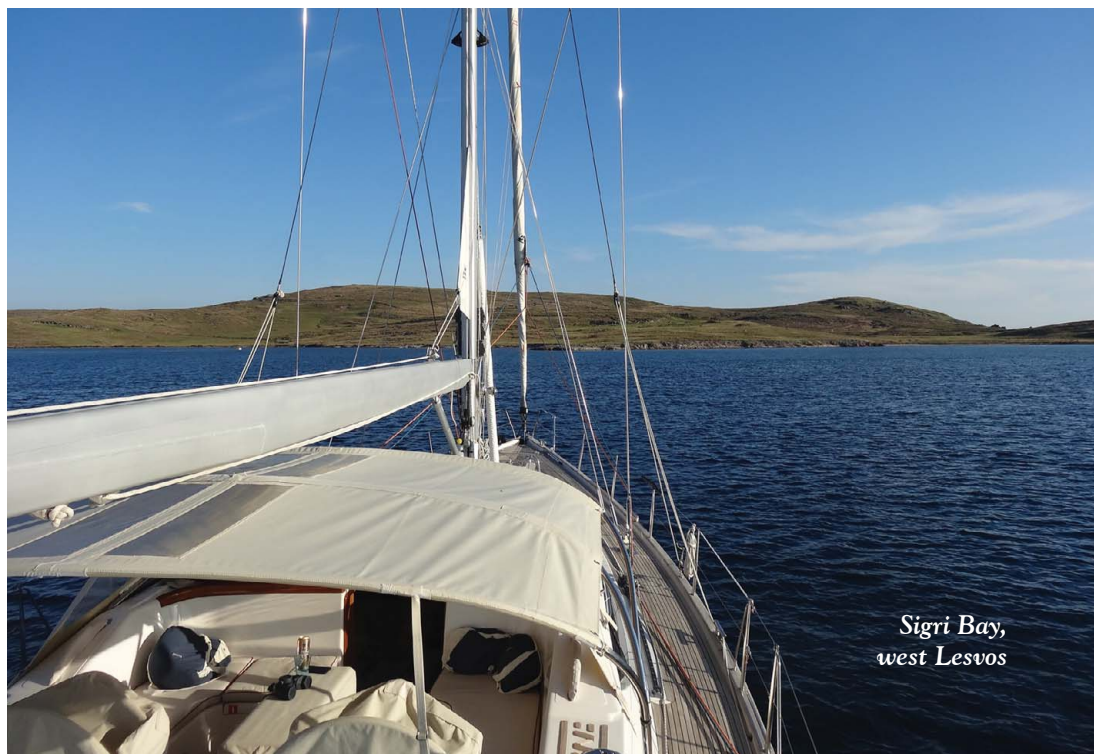
The advent of the Greek cruising tax has impacted noticeably on the attitude of the authorities, who have seemingly become quite officious. Personally we have no

issue with its implementation but do have difficulty in understanding its application. For example, if one's yacht is between 10m and 12m LOA then there is a flat charge of 33€ per month, whereas above that length they charge 8€ per metre LOA, so that a 12.1m yacht is charged 96.8€ (8×12.1)*. We have witnessed port police checking the registered measurements of yachts around 11.9m LOA with measuring tapes!

The other seeming inequity is that the charge is not applied pro rata to the time spent in Greece – ie. it is calculated using calendar months, and if one spends a month and one day in Greece one is charged for two months. We entered Greece on 20th May and departed on 27th June, for which we paid three months tax in advance on the expectation of being in Greece for a part of July. Be that as it may, we paid 92 days tax in all good faith, for only 37 days occupancy. Needless to say there is no 'carry forward' credit into the next season for any unused tax. In future, we shall pay for each calendar month as it transpires. *Caveat emptor!*

Our plan for the season was to head for the northern Aegean, so we lost no time in slipping our lines for Nissos Oinoussa off the northeast tip of Kios. Although the forecast was for strong weather – southwesterly force 6–7 – it was from the right direction and very useful in making the 77 miles to our destination. The only challenge was making it through the channel between Ikaria and Samos where we were confronted with 35-knots squalls. We hastily took double reefs in the mainsail and twin jibs as we surfed at up to 13 knots under Simbo Rig. Once out of the wind conduit conditions settled down to a less demanding 22–28 knots which enabled us to complete the passage by early evening.

* For further information download https://www.aade.gr/dl_assets/etepai/etepai_faqs_en.pdf





Planitis – note the narrow entrance!

Next morning we continued north to Mytilini on Lesbos, another great Simbo Rig run in a southerly force 4 with remnants of the previous day's sea. On arrival we opted for the very reasonably-priced marina, clearly the best option in this expansive commercial harbour. The town is captivating with its Greek architecture and quaint family-run shops – definitely a place to linger longer another time – but after two days ashore we slipped our lines for Sigri on the island's west coast. The 51 miles were covered part motoring and part sailing in a light southerly. We should have liked to explore the inland loch of Kólpos Kallonís but that will also have to wait for another season. On anchoring in a remote bay to the south of Sigri we became quite nostalgic over its similarity to many anchorages of bygone years in the Outer Hebrides.

Our minds were set on a 57-mile passage to Limnos next day whilst the southerly winds held good – the forecast was for the wind to veer northerly later, but not for another 24 hours. We settled on the anchorage of Kontias which lies west of the main port at Moudrou. It used to be a commercial anchorage for landing building materials etc, but now it's just a deserted rural area with a few holiday homes and a bar/restaurant cum village shop.



Skyros

We were now faced with a decision – whether to make for Sykias on the centre peninsula of the three fingers of land running southeast of Thessalonika and be weatherbound for a while with strong southerlies, or to abandon our original objective and make for the remote hurricane hole of Planitis Bay on the nature reserve of Kyra Panagia in the Northern Sporades. Not being ones for punishing passages to weather, and with a helpful northeasterly 3–4, we chose to make for Planitis 60 miles to the southwest. The narrow, rocky entrance is a little challenging, but once inside it opens out into a beautiful, remote, inland bay with many secure anchorages. Following a day at anchor, we departed Planitis to sail 10 miles to the pretty anchorage of Kyra Panaceas only to find it fully occupied, so had to settle for the less protected nearby anchorage of Kokkina. However, as dusk was falling a forecast came though for strong westerly winds during the night, which necessitated our weighing anchor and beating a hasty retreat back to the anchorage at Planitis in the dark and undertaking its challenging entrance without any charted navigation aids. Not recommended!

Although popular, the Northern Sporades has disappointingly few secure anchorages and the congested harbour marinas hold little appeal, so on 29th May we undertook a boring but necessary 56-mile motor-sail across to Skiros to place ourselves in a better position. This was our second visit to this enchanting island but we regret to report that we still haven't visited its reportedly endearing town. For the present, though, we wanted to stay ahead of the weather, so next morning set off in a northeasterly force 4 on a magnificent 67-mile reach down to Andros. The day would have been perfect had we been able to find a truly satisfactory anchorage, but with darkness descending we settled for an open bay on the coast north of Gavrio. Not exactly what we had had in mind, but needs must!

Broad-reaching from Andros to Paros in force 4–5 gusting 6





*Naousa,
Paros, as
seen from
the ferry*

In katabatic winds bowling down the mountain, we lifted anchor at first light to make the 45 miles south to Naousa in the north of Paros. The wind continued unsettled, with northeast veering east force 4–5 gusting 6, followed by periods of calm – all very Aegean! However, such effort is worthwhile when it ends with the wonderful sheltered anchorage of Agio Ioannou, with the vibrant town of Naousa lying south across the ferry-serviced bay. After four days' R&R we weighed anchor for Apokriosis on Kythnos, 55 miles to the northwest. It's more of an overnight stop than anything else, but as we rarely go ashore it makes little difference. Following a day on anchor we set sail for Poros 51 miles to the west, a magnet for holiday-makers whether by land or sea. To some extent it suffers from its own success, but nevertheless remains an interesting port of call.

While passing north of Agio Georgios, which is given over to wind-driven generating stations, we had an unusual experience when crossing ahead of an anchored merchant ship. Inexplicably, it started sounding five blasts on its horns as if to warn us of our position but remained firmly anchored! We duly bore away to round its stern whereupon I called them on VHF, only to be informed by some jocular crew member, 'Oh, sorry, we are just testing our equipment'! No doubt very funny to a bored anchor-watch crew but very tiresome for us. We have always held the Merchant Navy in high professional regard but it seems there is no accounting for maritime behaviour in the Aegean.

The Southern Channel at Poros



*En route from Poros
to Kapari under
Simbo Rig but with
only the weather
whisker-pole deployed*

Following a couple of days in the hustle and bustle of Poros, we left on the 11th June for Kapari, one mile south of Ermioni. This placed us not only in a peaceful anchorage but enabled us to visit the lovely town of Ermioni after the overnight visiting yachts had departed. We spent our time enjoying the delights of the town and having lunch at one of its many excellent fish restaurants, before returning to our anchorage away from the madding crowd. Following that, with a forecast of thunderstorms for



Argolikos Kolpos, we returned to Poros to place ourselves in pole position for the 56 miles to Serifos. With force 5–6 northerlies we made quick work of the passage, but on closing Ak Kiklops at the southwest corner of the island were confronted with 30 knot gusts off the mountains plus a tug towing a merchant ship, both of which we could have done without! However, the end of the passage with its boisterous conditions was in sight and after another three miles we were glad to anchor in the sheltered bay of Koutalas.

Next day we set sail to return to our favourite venue of Naousa on Paros, a passage of 42 miles in a more comfortable northeasterly 3–4. To our amazement we were beset by yet another tug towing a merchant ship. This is such a rare occurrence and yet here we were, with two incidents on consecutive days. I can't recall the last time this happened.

After a couple of days in Naousa we set sail on the 70-mile passage towards Patmos in a northwesterly force 4–5. This started with a reach past Naxos, followed by a glorious Simbo Rig run to the south of Patmos, before making up to Grikos. The normal anchorage was full but we located an alternative in Tragos Sound which will become our preferred option in future. Every cloud has a silver lining, as the saying goes! Next morning we sailed the 35 miles to Pythagorion on Samos. Having grown to like the Samos marina during our earlier visit we didn't hesitate to call again.



Quiet
anchorage
at Kargi Kofu

By now we were entering the final third of the sailing season and confined to the eastern Aegean with an ever-watchful eye on the approaching *meltemi** season. Our next port of call was Xirokampos in southern Leros, but on arrival we found the anchorage very busy so wasted no time next morning in setting sail for Tilos, 54 miles away. That evening we anchored off our favourite watering hole and relaxed in the peace and tranquillity that is synonymous with Tilos.

Two days later we weighed anchor for Rhodes to check out of Greece. On the 42-mile passage we happened across a Turkish warship steaming at full speed west of Symi heading for the Datça peninsula. This, of course, was an illegal entry into Greek waters but it happens all the time. On our arrival into Rhodes marina we were met with the usual lack of docking services, in stark contrast to their Turkish counterparts who take great pride in their docking expertise. On checking our engine room we were alarmed to find water pooled under the engine, which we traced back to a leaking propeller-shaft seal, a problem I've never experienced with previous yachts. On contacting Halyard in the UK I was advised to resolve the immediate problem with light re-greasing and replace the seal before the next season and every five years thereafter.

On 27th June we departed Rhodes on a broad reach for Turkey's Bozburan peninsula, followed by a Simbo Rig run up to Marmaris, a passage of only 26 miles. Marmaris is renowned for its excellent yacht services and as we had several little issues needing attention this was the ideal time to resolve them. We also took the opportunity to have our hydraulics overhauled, as the boom-vang did not appear to be responding quite as

* The *meltemi* is a northerly wind which results from high pressure over the Balkan/Hungary area and relatively low pressure over Turkey. It occurs mainly between June and September and is characterised by katabatic winds, usually in the early afternoon. Typically these reach force 4–5 and die out at sunset, but can increase to force 5–7 during the day and continue at lesser strength overnight before picking back up to force 5–7 again next day, a pattern which can be repeated for up to ten days.

efficiently as it should. A week later we were back up and sailing shipshape and Bristol fashion – in fact so impressed were we with their services that when we return next season we plan to replace our mainsail, which has over 21,000 miles to its credit, and also substitute a stainless steel anchor chain for our current galvanised one.

We made for the sanctuary of Kumlumbük anchorage, some 6 miles from the madness of Marmaris which at this stage of the season was bursting at the seams with tourists. There we were able to gather our senses, and the following morning set sail for Inbuekue at the top of Hisaroenue Koerfezi, a passage of 66 miles. Following a fine fetch down the Bozburan peninsula we reached around the headland before bearing away on a run in the peace of the evening's sunshine. Two days later we tacked back down the estuary for the delightful anchorage off Datça's north beach. Previously we had anchored in the harbour – but never again following this pleasant experience.

Next morning we set off on a 47-mile passage – down the Datça peninsula to round Knidos, then bearing away for the northeast of Kos and into Gumbet Koya to the west of Bodrum, yet another great anchorage. It's so refreshing continually to come across new anchorages! We couldn't linger, however, as a *meltemi* was forecast of which we were keen to keep ahead. We weighed anchor first thing next morning to make back over our tracks but, instead of calling into Datça, we opted for yet another new gem of an anchorage to the south of Kargi Kofu. This provided us with a 41-mile reach in a stimulating northwesterly force 6, followed by another Simbo Rig run once around Knidos. This was followed the next morning by a 42-mile passage past Symi to round the Bozburun peninsula and run under Simbo Rig back to Kumlumbük. All very good sailing which, for us, is what cruising is all about.

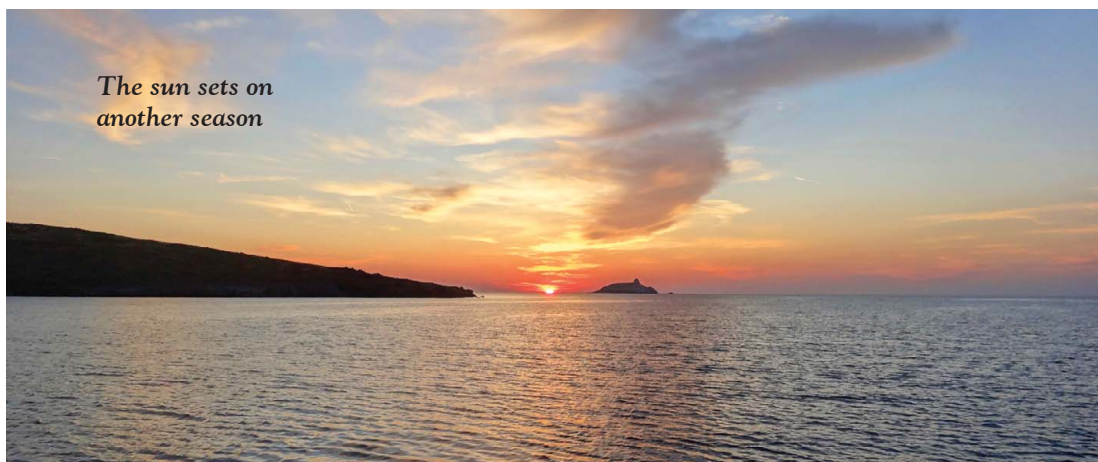
Song of the Ocean's commodious cockpit, at Kumlumbük





The bit between her teeth!

Next day we set sail on a 42-mile run across the Göcek Limani Round Bay, followed by a fine fetch into Fethiye Bay. What a difference the change in season made! In the spring Round Bay had been mobbed with yachts, which forced us to anchor in 35m, but now we were on our own. Two days later we headed across Fethiye Bay on the 58-mile passage east past the Seven Capes for Kas marina. After a couple of days in this glorious old town with its historic Greek architecture we slipped our lines for the 32 miles to Cold Water Spring Bay, Kekova – so refreshing at this time of year with sea temperatures up to 28°C. We were also able to start the decommissioning process of servicing of winches etc, before undertaking the final 55-mile passage across Finike Bay and on up into Antalya Bay for Kemer. Over the season we had covered 1757 miles.



The sun sets on another season