

TRAVELS WITH TRAVERSAY III

Mary Anne Unrau

(Traversay III is a Waterline 43 designed by Ed Rutherford and built of steel by Waterline Yachts in Sidney, British Columbia in 2000. Cutter-rigged with a roller-furling genoa and hanked-on staysail, she is 45ft LOA with a 13ft 6in beam and 7ft 6in draught.

Owners Mary Anne Unrau and Laurence Roberts have lived aboard Traversay III since 2001 and sailed her more than 120,000 miles, ranging from 65°S on the Antarctic Peninsula to 80°N at the northwest tip of Spitsbergen. Ports of call have included such diverse spots as Pitcairn, South Georgia, Hamburg, Darwin and the Northwest Passage, and many places between. In 2010 they sailed from Dampier, Australia across the Indian Ocean to Mauritius, where we join them as they head for South Africa.

Larry – who took all the photos – is a retired Air Canada pilot and Mary Anne a retired pianist and music educator.)

The idea struck us when we were in Mauritius. We already had an ambitious plan to end up at St Katharine Docks in central London by 1st October 2011. Now we decided we would attempt a side-trip up the St Lawrence in eastern Canada, visiting various friends and relatives who had heard about our adventures for years but had never even seen our boat.

After carrying us from the Strait of Juan de Fuca on North America's west coast to and through the Southern Hemisphere for nine years and 70,000 miles *Traversay* was due for a survey, and we would have to fit in some repairs and new bottom paint along the way. We'd had a terrific time in Mauritius, diving and touring around on rented scooters with some young Norwegian friends we'd met in Australia. The Muslim call to prayer (which was broadcast across the bay every morning at 0615) ensured that we made the most of every day. Various protests had been launched, but such is the

Traversay III in front of the Dickens Inn at St Katharine Docks





Sunset in Mauritius

respect for law and religion that none had ever been successful in silencing the prayer call. The much greater number of Hindu faithful make a yearly pilgrimage to the enormous gilded statue of Shiva, with thousands of followers walking miles uphill to make reverence to the goddess. We made our own pilgrimage to see her but then gave in to more secular pleasures – the market yielded fast meals, fresh spices, delectable produce and hot pickles. The world's last dodo died in Mauritius in 1687 but its likeness has been lovingly carved and sold ever since by local artisans.

I found a cookbook entitled *Eat N Slim the Mauritian Way* by Mansoorah Issany, which provides a microcosm of the wisdom of this tolerant society as she seeks to affirm each person's culture and dietary needs while attempting to correct some of the island's systemic health problems, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension and obesity. Recipes for both vegetarians and meat-eaters are interlaced with messages such as 'A Key to Success', which lists nine ingredients including 220g of understanding, 500g of wisdom, 5tbs of tenderness and 1 bunch of humour.

Our passage to East London was routine, and we were able to make our way around the coast and avoid any confrontations with the Agulhas Current. In Port Elizabeth we were invited to tie up to a large fishing boat, and in Knysna were safely guided in through the tricky entrance after waking



At the Dodo Museum in Port Louis

up a helpful member of the Knysna Sailing Club. We visited wildlife sanctuaries with Mawembe, a guide recommended by the Knysna Tourist Board, and during a tour of his township I met Mrs Dombe, an inspirational Grade 1 teacher. I am a retired primary school teacher and she allowed me to help teach her huge class of 49 Grade 1 students. Many of these children had a great many problems – including alcoholic parents and abuse at home as well as great poverty – but her class was bright and enthusiastic and, like children everywhere, they loved music and dancing. Mrs Dombe was teaching them in the three official languages of that part of the country – English, Afrikaans and Xhosa, their own language as well as that of Nelson Mandela. Her comforting presence is large, loving and warm, and it was a great privilege for me to assist in her class.

We were warmly welcomed into the sailing community and Larry was asked to give a talk about our visit to Antarctica as some of the Knysna Yacht Club members had visions of going there. By Christmas we had moved on to Simon's Town (the former British naval base just around the corner from Cape Town) where we celebrated as we usually do – with Christmas carols aboard *Traversay* with piano accompaniment, but unfortunately we could only accommodate 18 people... For our Christmas we purchased a beautiful piece of art – an African Three Graces carved on a single tree trunk.

The South African crew of *uMoya* had been avid fellow partygoers in Cocos Keeling and generously invited us to stay in their gem of a home in the centre of Cape Town while they visited relatives. We were introduced to and entertained by their father, Tim Sale, a British expatriate who makes his living organising safaris. He designs custom tours for each of the groups of cruisers in Simon's Town to suit the finances and proclivities of each. We felt we had the best tour ever, living like kings for our few idyllic days at Kruger National Park – an experience of a lifetime!

While in South Africa we added an AIS receiver to our navigation panel, an easy

addition which later paid huge dividends in the congested St Lawrence, the Celtic Sea south of Ireland and the English Channel. As we left the warmth of the Indian Ocean behind and set off for St Helena it was startling to discover the lights of hundreds of fishing boats. I had thought that, with out new AIS, an Alarm Would Sound. Of course the fishermen were mostly asleep, not transmitting on AIS and were bobbing around 'not under command'. I would have been held responsible for any collision.

We reached St Helena on 21st January 2011, a 13-day passage. After walking up the 699 steps of Jacob's Ladder we hired a taxi and toured the island, including a visit to Napoleon's final prison – he had slithered out of his previous place of exile on Elba to menace Europe with a second instalment of wars and killings. The

The Three Graces, a Christmas present to ourselves from an art shop in Simon's Town



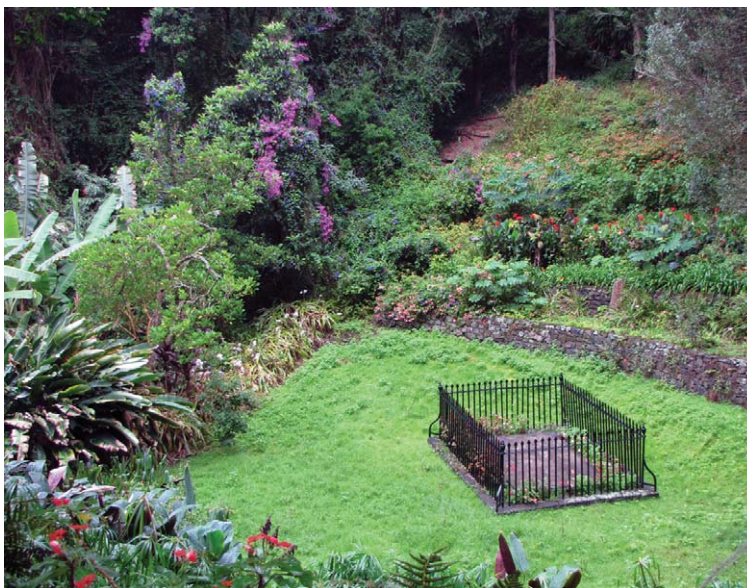


*Jacob's Ladder
at Jamestown,
St Helena*

house and gravesite have been maintained since he died in 1821, even though his actual remains were carried back to France in 1840 by the French military. There he was given a 'proper' burial in Paris.

St Helena is beautiful and we stayed for several weeks, much longer than we'd planned. There are many local industries in addition to tourism, and one enterprising individual uses a copper still to make delectable gin and rum, with local flowers added during the last stage of condensation to lend their delicate flavour to the product. We bought several bottles but by the time we reached the North Atlantic they had all been consumed.

We left on 7th February and had generous treatment from the weather, crossing the Equator on the 21st and arriving in the free port of Sint Maarten on 10th March. Electronics are cheap there and it's possible to buy anything you could imagine needing so



*Napoleon's grave
on St Helena*



*St Maarten airport,
beside Simpson Bay Lagoon*

of course we made a few more purchases than anticipated. *Traversay* felt humble for the first time in our travels, being outclassed by the many huge superyachts on display all over the anchorage. We ate out, sat at the underwater bar and watched an air show of classic and military aeroplanes flying out of the airport tucked in next to the water. (Larry is a retired airline captain and his father flew Spitfires for the Royal Canadian Air Force.)

We left on 27th March after making the improvements recommended by the surveyor and reached Bermuda on 4th April. I left Larry hard at work on the boat while I jetted up to Canada to make sure that our plans to visit family there were all in place, and he enjoyed the hospitality of the other cruisers while I was gone. While in Bermuda we were fortunate to meet Bert and Marlene Frisch from Oberndorf, Germany aboard *Heimkehr*. Little did we know that a year later we would be welcomed to their dock on the Oste River.

Despite our reluctance to leave Bermuda's beautiful climate and beaches, welcoming foods and the warm hospitality of the islanders, on 23rd April we headed out of the narrow exit from St George's. Our reluctance was fully justified – after a few days of enjoying near-Caribbean warmth we were suddenly propelled into the bitter cold of the North Atlantic. As we looked for a place to secure on arrival in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia we realised that the pontoons had not yet been positioned for the sailing season to come. We tied up in front of a boat secured three ways and obviously still 'wintering over'. Tying up necessitated a steep uphill climb from our deck to get ashore, and we also had to re-position our docklines as the tide ebbed and flowed. Customs checked us in by phone, but eventually someone made it over to complete the necessary



A cruise ship leaving St George's, Bermuda

paperwork. We spent a few days getting our bearings and visiting the boatyard where a new *Bluenose* (the champion sailing vessel whose image is stamped on the Canadian 10 cent silver coin) was being constructed. Then we headed north to Peggy's Cove just south of Halifax where our in-laws live. Of course, it was not yet sailing season there either. Nonetheless, we were able to anchor in St Margaret's Bay in front of Bill and Leona Roberts' home, use their wifi, take the dinghy to their dock, and use their car for provisioning.

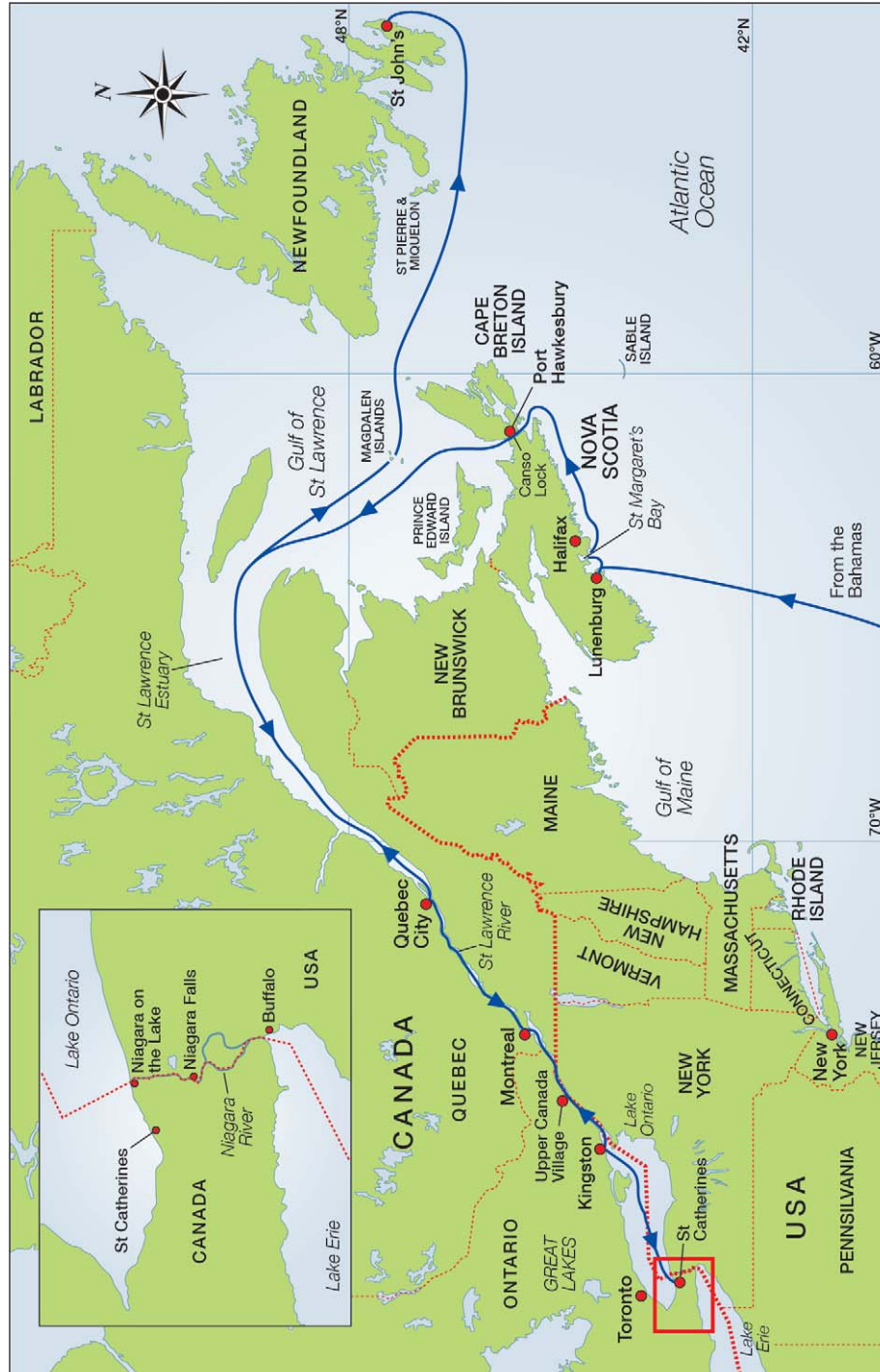
As they left *Traversay* after a meal of reciprocation, Bill's glasses fell off and into the water. This was a tragedy for us, as well as for Bill, as he and Leona were to meet us in Quebec City to help us through the lock system between the St Lawrence and the Great Lakes. Luckily we remembered to press the man overboard button, and next morning Larry attached a small dive weight to a rope with a buoy on top. Using our handheld GPS we took the dinghy out to the recorded position and cast the weight into the water. Larry entered the murky, tannin-filled water in his dive suit and I was amazed when he surfaced, only minutes later, holding the glasses. Apparently the bottom surface was a dark gelatinous layer and the glasses had been sitting in plain view on top of the jelly!



*Bill's glasses recovered from
the bottom of St Margaret's Bay*

The Hotel Tadoussac





*A mural in the
dining room
of the Hotel
Tadoussac*

Bill's glasses retrieved, we headed for the Canso Lock which, unlike the St Lawrence locks, can be managed with a two-person

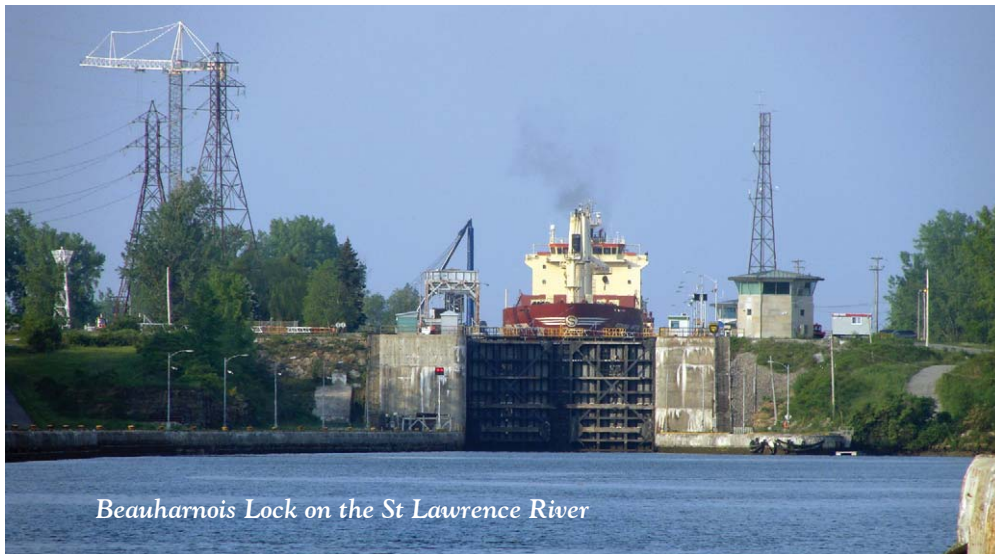
crew. As we turned into the St Lawrence estuary we saw beluga whales, and further on we spotted one of Canada's iconic images – a moose – on the bank. We went for dinner at the Hotel Tadoussac with its authentic cuisine, beautiful murals and antique square piano, and to the Marine Mammal Interpretation Centre where researchers are helping to turn back the tide of whale depopulation. We passed through the locks in Quebec City and tied up to the recently-positioned pontoons, which gave us a grand view of the four-century-old city. An early morning photo shows *Traversay* with the battlements of Quebec in the background.

Bill and Leona arrived and we left Quebec City. At Montreal we entered the series of seven locks which both regulate the flow of the St Lawrence and raise your boat nearly 70m so that you can enter the Great Lakes. The St Lawrence marks the boundary between Canada and the United States and the locks are jointly owned, operated and



Traversay in Quebec City





Beauharnois Lock on the St Lawrence River

maintained by the two countries. At least three people are needed, to fend off from the enormous walls (constructed to accommodate ocean-going ships and barges) and to line the boat up when the water is released and surges into or out of the lock. Bill and Leona stayed to help until we left the final lock. Then they hastened off for a joyful event – a fifth grandchild had arrived somewhat early and they were required for babysitting services.

A trip along the St Lawrence is a Moveable Feast of impressions, scenes and experiences. In Quebec City one can watch costumed actors re-enact battle scenes from the war with Great Britain, catch some action and get a great haircut in Montreal, visit a castle in Ontario's 1000 islands, savour artisanal beers in the old city of Kingston and, after crossing Lake Ontario, try the impossibility of boating on the Niagara River all the way up to Niagara Falls.

Leona on the bow as we wait to enter a lock





Larry and cousin Beth with Grandpa's Model T Ford

We stopped in St Catharines and visited family members, where we enjoyed a spin in my grandfather's old Model T Ford, went to a wedding and reconnected with my 97-year-old former landlady on Howe Island. We made our unsuccessful attempt to go the Wrong Way up the Falls on 4th July but were duly turned back by the masses of water rushing toward us and started our return journey to regain the St Lawrence estuary.

We had a long way to go if we were going to get to St Katharine

Docks in London by 1st October, but we had one more exciting side-trip to make. In Kingston we picked up our daughter, son-in-law and three grandchildren to travel down the St Lawrence to Chrysler Bay Marina with us. The marina is near Upper Canada Village, a town saved from certain destruction many years ago when the area was submerged during the building of the Seaway. The old buildings are now used to authentically reconstruct pioneer times in early Canada.

Larry on Toronto Island near Traversay's anchorage





*St Mawes
Castle, across
Carrick
Roads from
Falmouth*

It is a great place for children, with horse-drawn carriages, a steam train, water-driven

sawmills and vintage foods served by village workers in period costumes. Our grandchildren loved seeing the baby lambs and calves roaming about and available for petting, and watched as their father was selected to act (in a non-singing role) in an opera staged by students. After the family had left us, our niece Michelle arrived to assist in going down through the locks. She stayed with us for our outbound trip along the St Lawrence and tour of the Magdalen Islands, returning to her home in Montreal from Port Hawkesbury.

Having refuelled and provisioned for the passage across the North Atlantic, we left Port Hawkesbury on 11th August just after the east winds died. There was no wind whatsoever so we motored for three days and then, with contrary winds in the forecast, decided to stop in St John's, Newfoundland for more fuel. We anchored in one of two available spots right in the middle of the city. It turned out that the people in the neighbouring boat were acquainted with Larry's friends and relatives from Twillingate, where Larry's father had been the local doctor, so Larry was able to find out about various primary school friends and relatives. Best of all, we were able to get out the piano and our books of Newfie songs. Accordions and singers arrived and we had a fantastic Newfie sing-along.



The White Cliffs of Dover

17th August felt rather late to be leaving St John's to head across the North Atlantic, but we were fortunate in finding a lull between a number of storms – the big storm on the 30th didn't hit until a few days after we



Tower Bridge

reached Bantry. The Irish were so laid-back that document-free entry was done over the radio – “Welcome to Ireland!”. Even though we'd moved to a new country we found the singing, fiddle and accordion-playing had barely changed at all. Everywhere we went people wanted to sing and make music. In Crookhaven an elderly raconteur donned his vivid story-telling duds and practised his slightly off-colour tales. He was preparing to head to a storytelling competition in the Isles of Scilly (the locals *hate* being called Scilly Islanders!). We entertained interesting and friendly local people aboard, including families with children and people completing a Glénans sailing course.

To get to London by 1st October we needed to move on whenever the winds favoured us by coming from the west. We passed close to the Fastnet Rock and by 8th September were in Falmouth. During our passage along the south coast of England there were castles to see, steam trains to catch and docks to tie to or anchorages to try out. Abbreviating our travels, we spent a little time in Falmouth, St Mawes, Dartmouth, Fowey, Weymouth, the Isle of Wight – with Queen Victoria's Osborne House – Dover, Ramsgate and the Medway. On the hottest 1st October in many a year we passed Greenwich and tied up in St Katharine Docks, right next to Tower Bridge.

We had achieved our ambition.

Postscript: Mary Anne, Larry and *Traversay* left London in late March 2013 and reached Victoria, BC in October via the English south coast, the Irish Sea, the Hebrides, Iceland, Greenland, the Northwest Passage and Alaska.

Their most recent voyage began and ended at the Causeway Marina, Victoria from 2nd May 2016 until 1st June 2018. This Pacific circuit included a first stop in Townsville, Australia and continued with stops for scuba diving in the Coral Sea and stays in Sydney, Nelson (NZ), Valdivia and Puerto Natales (Chile), Hawaii and many other memorable locations.

Back in Canada, Mary Anne has spent lock-down writing a book about their travels. Entitled *Around the World with Traversay III*, it is available from Amazon in both paperback and Kindle formats.

