

REVIEW

QUICKSTART CIRCUMNAVIGATION GUIDE – Captain Charlie and Cathy Simon. Published by the author in soft cover by World Sailing Guru, Annapolis, MD [worldsailing.guru] at \$39.95 / £32.95. Also available as an e-Book. 172 216mm x 279mm pages, 154 color pictures, 18 maps, 49 satellite/aerial diagrams, and website links. ISBN 978-1-5304-9197-1

The *Quickstart Circumnavigation Guide* is just that: a well organised, well written, eminently readable basic primer for anyone considering an east to west, tradewind circumnavigation. It includes solid practical advice, both in the introductory ‘How to Cruise the World in a Sailboat’ and in the more comprehensive chapters at the end which focus on passage prep, navigation, routing and crew. For example, under ‘Top Ideas’ the book rightly sings the praises of a bimini and full cockpit enclosure for the protection they provide from sun, wind and seas, the utility of using Google Earth as an aid to navigation in badly charted areas, and AIS. The cruising guide recommendations are spot on. The authors deserve kudos for producing this excellent, concise overview. Anyone contemplating a first-time circumnavigation should consider putting this guide on their shopping list as they begin to plan their journey.

Having said that, the *Guide* describes only one way to sail around the world. The authors circumnavigated as part of the World ARC, which took them around the world in 15 months in company with other World ARC participants. While they visited many wonderful places and their enthusiasm for them is palpable, because the ARC moves so rapidly they also skipped awesome destinations such as Tonga, New Zealand, Indonesia (except for a short stop in Bali) and Southeast Asia. In others, such as the Marquesas or Australia, they stopped only briefly. In wondrous Fiji – one of the authors’ favourite stops – they stayed in a couple of resort areas rather than exploring the many remote anchorages and traditional villages, impossible to do within the ARC time frame yet perhaps the most rewarding aspect of a circumnavigation.

One of the most special things about sailing around the world – or for that matter across an ocean or in a geographic region – is that one can take the time to linger, live locally for a while, make friends in the community, become part of the local fabric. This does not seem possible with a structured rally such as the World ARC, both because of the aggressive timing and because the rally in effect provides its own social world, with local encounters offered only as part of an organised schedule of events.

The authors do posit the ‘Should You Join a Rally?’ question and provide some pros and cons, but these are of necessity reflective of their own choices. The ‘pros’ include assistance with weather forecasting, checking in and out of countries, organising pre-planned tours, camaraderie among the fleet and giving an added sense of confidence to the first-time blue water cruiser. With the plethora of information available to everyone these days

and the many cruising boats out there, it is worth noting that these issues can just as easily be addressed independently. In addition, it may also be argued that with no rally schedule to adhere to, one is better able to choose good weather windows, sailing in company with others – or not – ultimately making for safer, albeit ‘independent’, passage making. Finally, while most circumnavigators may not have all the time in the world, sailing flexibly and taking as much time as possible – whether that is three, five, seven years or more – seems well worth doing, since a circumnavigation, for all but a lucky few, is a once-in-a-lifetime enterprise.

Celebrate, the authors’ Taswell 58, is somewhat unusual in that it is a large boat (with electric winches and a nearly 300 gallon fuel capacity) and they carried additional crew from time to time. While *Celebrate* worked well for them, they point out that most offshore boats these days are in the 40–50ft range and can be handled by a couple.

But with these caveats, the guide is a great tool, with lots of maps and good photographs. The authors clearly enjoyed themselves and know what they’re doing. The book goes geographically from place to place – Panama Canal, Galapagos, French Polynesia and so on, all the way back to St Lucia where they began*, with passage information in between. Each location includes GPS co-ordinates, recommended guides, an overview, information about customs and immigration, marinas or anchorages, shoreside services and ‘Things to Do and See’. Under ‘Passage Notes’ you will find ‘Expected Conditions’, ‘Places We Visited Along the Way’, other possible stops – listing a sampling of places *Celebrate* did not visit – and arrival details. These snapshot overviews of each passage and destination are excellent and give a good sense of what to expect, do and see.

Customs/immigration details change regularly, of course, and it is essential to do one’s own advance homework in this regard but the information is nonetheless handy, if only to provide a flavour of what to anticipate. Similarly, when the authors list possible stops it is important to keep in mind that these are by no means exhaustive lists – for example, they mention none of the lovely anchorages in Australia’s Northern Territory.

But this is not that kind of guide, and shouldn’t be read as such. It is, rather, an excellent first step in planning a circumnavigation, and is well worth buying to get you started.

ZSG (Zdenka Griswold)

* A point worth noting for European cruisers, who will already be some 4000 miles into their voyage.