

MARATHON TO THE MARQUESAS



Barefeet is taking Erin and Chris to the other side of the world...

ERIN AND CHRIS LEFT NEW YORK IN SEPTEMBER 2006, ABOARD THEIR ANTARES 44 AND ROAMED THE CARIBBEAN SEA BEFORE PASSING THROUGH THE PANAMA CANAL. THEY TELL US HERE ABOUT THEIR PASSAGE BETWEEN THE GALAPAGOS AND THE MARQUESAS ISLANDS.



Erin and Chris at Ua-Pou : a couple who are happy to be at sea, but just as happy to arrive at the stopovers...

Chris and Erin Miller left their home port of Barrington, Rhode Island in September of 2006 and are well on their way to sailing around the world aboard their Antares 44. This is an excerpt of their trip from the Galapagos Islands to the Marquesas Islands of French Polynesia. Currently, they are in Australia waiting for the cyclone season to subside. For a full transcript of their ongoing journey, link to their website at www.notallthosehowwanderarelost.com

After a month of discovering the Galapagos we are ready to go, stalk of bananas and all. Pulling up the anchor from Wreck Bay was a bit more white knuckle than desired thanks to 25 knots of wind in the full anchorage with 150 feet of chain out...if only the wind would continue beyond the islands. Off we went to begin the 3000 mile passage to the Marquesas Islands of French Polynesia. The islands will be a nice reward for the distance but what a distance, 20-30 days at sea. Sure enough the wind all but disappeared just offshore and we had to motor. Motoring is quite the careful calculation at this point because we do not have enough diesel for even one-third of the trip. Cruisers that have

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left ahead of us say that motoring for the first 1-3 days is necessary until you get far enough South to get some wind, at which time the wind should fill in and provide a sail the rest of the way...sound like a good game plan.

Just out of the gate,

we tried several different sail plans; reefed main and jib, main and screecher, full main...but finally admitted that motoring was in fact the only option (moving ahead with only the port engine at 6 knots for fuel conservation). Our daily routine glides into the night watch shift rotations. The toughest part of night watches for Erin is the first shift (7-10pm) after sunset but before the moon rises. It is so very black, as if a



At Fatu-Hiva, Erin enjoys the anchorage.

Day 10 started with our fishing line being pulled nearly all the way out...then another lure snatched...



Barefeet is an Antares 44 built in Canada by Antares Yachts. A choice that the couple really do not regret!



The 'friends' in the Galapagos, where the wildlife is very well protected.



During the crossing, the fishing was good, but many lines were lost in the water...

blanket has been draped over the boat. There is absolutely no sea to horizon line and sounds take on a new dimension. The radar provides some perspective, but sound is not always in-sync with the radar - quite spooky. Oh, and whales sleep on the surface of the ocean, hit one of those and yikes, who knows what happens next?!

A bit of excitement occurred at 3am (when else do things happen for us?) when I heard a strange cry behind the boat. With flashlight in hand and harness attached I found a bird was caught in the fishing line, yes, a bird. It looked like a small albatross. I woke Chris and together we worked on the bird; Chris held him with gloved hands (seems he did not appreciate our help and showed his displeasure with beak snaps and pecks)...Chris said it felt like holding fragile egg shells (because of the hollow wings that allow long distance flight) while I gingerly untangled the wings from the fishing line bit by bit.

There is little consistency from one day to the next, but what is constant is our daily quest for fresh fish. If only the fish were aware of that, too. Day 10 started with our fishing line being

pulled nearly all the way out...then another lure snatched...hhmmm...maybe these lures are attracting fish that are too big?! Quickly re-rigged and the line was back in the water. Holy cow - we got something on the line AND we reeled it all the way in and brought it aboard, a female mahi mahi. Pretty nice specimen, too. Great, now Barefeet is on the scoreboard; fish 5 and Barefeet 1. Dinner was catch of the day in a butter/olive oil/Santa Maria seasoning mix with rice, avocado/orange salad and of course Chris's fresh bread.

Maybe it was too soon to celebrate yesterday's catch?! All was quiet when suddenly whizzzzzzz the fishing line went crazy! Chris ran over and removed it from the rod holder, tightened the drag and still the line flew out. A bit worried about what might come next Chris put the rod back in the rod holder and whizzzzzz...wabam...the rod, reel and rod holder tore off the stanchion they were bolted to and flew into the ocean. Seems the fish have upped the ante on this fishing game. No fun to lose the equipment but much better than Chris being yanked into the water. Plus, I was not excited to clean and filet what must have been an ante-



The Antares' aft seat is one of the nicest places aboard the catamaran both at sea and at anchor.



After a 24-day passage from the Galapagos, seeing a bit of green in the Marquesas Islands is a real pleasure.



Erin and Chris in Daniel Bay, waiting to set off again to discover the other jewels of Polynesia.

lope! Good heavens...what keeps hitting our line?! Oh well, now it is just the hand line to drag behind.

I volunteered to be the Marquesas net controller (8134 USB at 1600 zulu), not too complicated but a time for cruisers heading to the Marquesas to check in with their position, wind speed & direction and miles to go as well as any other news or comments...nice way to look out for each other...and find out what lures the fish are biting. There are approximately two dozen boats checking into the net. Once a boat arrives at the islands they drop off and new ones are always being added as they start the passage. Official duty done, now it is time to celebrate passing the half way point (1500 miles)!! We blew the air horn, rang bells and had a feast, tunes cranking and chili lights sparkling!! We were wing on wing with spinnaker and jib with calm seas and mellow winds...party on!

Day 24 and Fatu Hiva of the Marquesas is in view! Holy cow – Bay of Virgins really is a beautiful sight (and not just because we have spent 24 days anticipating it)...lush green blankets of palm and other tropical trees covering steep, jagged

hillsides with black volcanic rock underneath. The smell of wet earth and a light fragrance of flowers with roosters crowing ashore are almost too much to believe.

Later, we scooted five miles around the corner to Hakatea Bay on Nuku-Hiva. The entrance is a bit hairy because you cannot see the anchorage...just a stretch of enormous cliff walls (1600 feet) that do not seem to have an opening...but sure enough, the opening materialized just in the nick of time. We anchored in 15 feet with eight other boats in what felt like a mountain lake.

In addition to the peaceful calm of the anchorage there is a waterfall after a 2.5 hour hike ashore. The narrow waterfall is 2000 feet high and supposedly the third highest in the world

The hike was a stone path surrounded by lush vegetation: mango, breadfruit, lime, and pamplemousse fruit trees; white, yellow and pink flowering and fragrant plumeria (or is it frangiapani) trees; bougainvillia in shades of red, yellow and pink; and hibiscus in all colors of the rainbow.

A few days later, we reluctantly pulled anchor and left our "mountain lake anchorage" and head-

ded to the Tuamotu islands...less than 500 miles, or 3-5 days...a welcome relief from the last passage of 3000 miles. We began the journey with dozens of dolphin swimming in the bows and birds flying overhead as Ua-Pou faded into the distance.

It was a banner day! We had enough wind to turn off the engine and finally sail. And Barefeet caught a fish! It was a big eye tuna...not too big but good for a sushi dinner a deux. And with a bit of chilled white wine and some tunes...it never ceases to amaze us...here we are bobbing around the South Pacific in our home! Oh yeah, then the night shift schedule kicked in...that is different from home.