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The Unexpected Circumnavigation

Part 2 – Australia to Oman by Christi Grab

Book review by Jeff Merrill

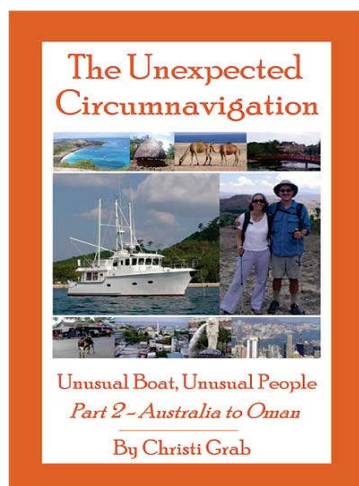


May Day, May Day, May Day – in this case a reference to the three year anniversary for one of Nordhavns' more notable adventures. On May 1st, 2009 the Nordhavn 43 Kosmos returned to San Diego, CA successfully completing a two year circumnavigation.

Kosmos, the first 43 to circle the planet, joined a half dozen other Nordhavns completing this extraordinary feat and adding more distance to the gap between the Nordhavn brand and all other off shore power boats.

This is the second in a planned series of four books to describe the adventures of Eric and Christi Grab aboard *Kosmos* and the 450 pages published by www.lulu.com actually came out at the end of 2011, but I thought it would be more fun to post a review on the anniversary of their successful circumnavigation.

Eric and Christi Grab are among the youngest to complete the trip in a power boat (should we really count the rash of young teenagers in their sailboats?) and showed the world that with talent, planning, preparation and the right boat the dream of crossing all of the global oceans is possible. Their blog drew a worldwide following and became a daily must read for thousands of arm chair sailors.



Part 2 starts off in Australia. Having crossed the Pacific and island hopping south bound you may recall from Part 1 that the highs and lows of the trip were pretty extreme and serious consideration was given to selling the boat. For Nordhavn, it may not seem like this is the type of “message” they would like to convey to potential clients, but Christi’s straight forward prose truly tells it like it is (since we know this is book 2 of 4 and that they completed their trip safely there is an ultimate very happy ending) so hearing about the “bumps in the road” make the lessons of the adventure and the read even more compelling.

Traveling up through Indonesia to Singapore (with a side airline trip to Hong Kong) then through Malaysia, Thailand, India and the Maldives are all wonderfully described and clearly fascinating areas with bountiful cruising and exciting places populated with interesting people. Arriving in Oman a cruel twist from the “real world” interrupts the dream and leaves us hanging at the end of the book about what will happen next.

There is a very well written prologue that outlines many of the steps in the extensive planning Eric and Christi took prior to taking off. Talking about sailboats vs. powerboats presents some interesting points and often an informative “in retrospect” provides the benefit of hind sight thinking to enhance journal summaries.

I appreciated some reminiscences that highlight the bonus of traveling the seas in your own floating home.

*“Because of time constraints and bad seas, we’d chosen to moor **Kosmos** at a different island and fly to Tanna. The hotel we stayed in was adorable, but it didn’t have electricity or running water (though it did have plenty of bugs!). We looked back at that hotel experience fondly – but we were only there one night. Eric thought that if we’d had to live like that for any longer, we both would have been unhappy. He reminded me of how we felt when we got back home to **Kosmos**, and how much we appreciated our own bathroom and bed. The whole point of this journey, he argued, was to go places off the beaten tourist path. Without **Kosmos**, we would rarely leave the beaten path because we wouldn’t want to sacrifice any creature comforts.”*

Another similar insight:

“What kept us going was that we absolutely loved the land destinations. We had stopped in eighteen places between San Diego and Cairns. Two of the islands were physically impossible to get to without a private boat – they were almost magical. Most of the others were extremely difficult to get to without a private boat, and these too were unspoiled paradises. Obviously these remote islands had limited hotel accommodations, if any. The few places that were easy to get to and had plenty of hotels, such as Tahiti, didn’t wow us.”

Understanding more about yourself and your boat is a natural product of time spent aboard. You learn about weather, sea conditions, etc., and also consult others about their experiences and get

a lot of great advice, but what someone else says or experiences doesn't always mean the same thing...

“First thing this morning we headed out to sea. The winds were blowing twenty knots, and several people had warned us that it would be a hideous ride in such big winds. At first this worried me, but then Eric reminded me about a lesson we've learned multiple times now: Perspective was everything. We had learned the hard way that we needed to understand the perspective of the person giving the advice before we could decide if it applied to us. Most of the people at Lizard Island had never been outside the Reef, so their idea of “hideous” was vastly different from ours.”

Lessons learned and cruising tidbits are peppered throughout this volume. Sharing *Kosmos* with others was also rewarding. Not only did they have friends come to visit (interesting revelations about getting entry stamps and visas provide some humorous detours), but they also enjoyed the camaraderie of other cruisers, mostly sailors.

*“This morning a fellow cruiser in the marina knocked on our door and asked for a tour of our boat. He and his wife had been cruising for decades and had written several books about cruising. After seeing *Kosmos*, he said, “This is the most honest boat in the marina. All the sailboats around here mostly use their engines.” We were both surprised and relieved by his statement. Usually with sailors we had to defend our choice to not have a boat with sails. It was satisfying to have such an experienced and influential cruiser validate our opinions.”*

The joys of being at sea and also exploring under the surface (both Eric and Christi really enjoyed SCUBA diving on their trip) are also recounted throughout Part 2.

“We suited up yet again. Shortly after we jumped in, a few graceful mantas glided along the ground below us. We also saw four mantas in a row, swimming in a wavy, loop de loop pattern – one of the most elegant games of “follow the leader” we had ever seen. A couple more entered the game, and suddenly we were looking at six mantas.”

“Around 0300, I noticed the moon was red. I went out to the bow to get a better look. The moon was setting, and just like the sun at sunset, it turned red as it neared the horizon line. I was mesmerized; I'd never seen anything like it before. I sat outside to watch the whole “moonset”. Once the moon dipped below the horizon, the stars came to life. The sky was a black velvet backdrop for millions of bright, tiny lights...As I sat underneath the blanket of vibrant stars and watched the lightning in the distance; I was filled with awe at the power of Mother Nature. She could make the seas calm or violently tumultuous, make the moon glow red and the stars shine bright, make lightning storms and volcanoes erupt. And there was nothing people could do about it.”

Some of the roughest passages and most glorious sunsets occurred during Part 2 and the book is really an enjoyable and informative read. When not at sea Eric and Christi enjoyed meeting the locals, talking about world events (and the perception of the US from a more worldly view) and seemed to always find some special events and/or museums and religious shrines to broaden their understanding of the cultures of those who live in the lands they were visiting.

On March 22nd 2009 *Kosmos* notched a major milestone on their trip – they reached the halfway point of their around the world trip– and Eric quickly calculated they had run 14,727 nautical miles during 105 days at sea. The biggest revelation at that time was that each mile traveled from now on was one more mile closer to home.

One side project that is currently being developed is a workbook tentatively titled “*Recipe for Success: What Cruising Aboard My Own Boat Will Cost Me*” that is a collaborative effort with a few very experienced Nordhavn cruisers and some key marine industry veterans to try to help future cruisers get a handle on what it really takes (expenses to budget for) to cut loose and go exploring.

An even bigger project has taken over the lives of Eric and Christi with the arrival of Keith Frederick Grab on March 16th, 2012. The blog entries (still active) have switched from rough seas, sunsets and cool places to eat around the world to how to equip a Nordhavn 43 with “baby aboard” necessities.

The *Kosmos* blog is <http://Kosmos.liveflux.net/blog/> which includes a great selection of photos to supplement the stories in the books.

Selling trawlers and working with the clients and spending time at sea has provided me with an incredible job which I love doing. So it is very humbling to admit this, but I feel I’d better make some mention in the way of a disclaimer that I am extremely honored and a bit overwhelmed by the incredible endorsement of having this book dedicated to me. Eric and Christi have become very good friends ever since we met and it is my great pleasure to have been of assistance to them in their great adventure.

I encourage you to order Book 1 and Book 2 if you have plans of traveling afar by trawler.

Lastly, I’d like to point out that there are a great number of incredible Nordhavn 43s available today on the used market if you would like to follow in the wake of Eric and Christi there are several marvelous choices to consider.



Jeff Merrill enjoys traveling on Nordhavns and has done so literally all over the world amassing over 11,000 Nordhavn sea miles. Jeff takes great pleasure in visiting different locations for sea trials, surveys, cruising and training on all sizes of Nordhavns and other trawlers. Jeff did a three day training run with Eric and Christi before they took off on their circumnavigation and also flew to Panama to join them on their Canal transit. If you would like to know more about the Nordhavn 43 or preparing for your own circumnavigation please contact Jeff directly by emailing him at Jeff.Merrill@JMYS.com you can follow him on Twitter – @merrillyachts or better yet, you can call or text him on his mobile phone, +1 949.355.4950. *Note: This review originally appeared on the Nordhavn website in May, 2010 and has been updated.*