

## **Time To Go N43 Prepares to Go the Distance**

**June 13, 2007**

By Jeff Merrill

Culminating one of the longest passages ever by a Nordhavn 43, Eric and Christie Grab arrived two weeks ago to the Marquesas Islands. Having left Dana Point on April, the Grabs conquered the nearly 3,000-nm passage without problem and now are enjoying the island life of the South Pacific. Joined, coincidentally, by another 43 Special Blend, which made the same trip just days earlier, the Nordhavn owners are currently indulging in some serious exploring by foot.

It all seems easy enough. Have Nordhavn, will travel. It's a great idea if you have the boat and can clear out your calendar, but how do you really know when it is time to go?

Preparing your own ship for a transoceanic voyage is a full-time job, and not just a matter of simply affording all the gear and equipment. You also need to understand how to operate it. Even the best preparation still can't guarantee that you will enjoy your voyage, but the successful teams plan, write check lists, organize, test and ultimately find a time – the *right* time – to go.

Even setting a departure date is tenuous at best. You do want to have the boat ready, but you also want to set sail into an acceptable weather window, and weather forecasting at sea is even less precise than what we are used to at home. (Just look at the what the [Med Bound](#) boats have gone through!) Many voyagers have their boat ready for weeks before they confirm that the weather finally has opened up enough to make a good safe run.

April 21st was the target departure date for Kosmos, the Grabs' Nordhavn 43. The trip itinerary called for a San Diego departure, a 2,900-nm or so first leg with land fall in the Marquesas Islands, at Nuku Hiva. This decision was made about a month prior and the target date was a realistic goal based on the amount of boat projects left to complete and the projected weather. Crew member (and fellow Nordhavn 43 owner) Richard Burkland was standing by to fly down from Portland, OR and was attending to all of the home-based preparations required to take a month of sea leave. And Eric and Christie, freed from the bonds of the real world and their employment careers, were in a fast-forward making calls, scavenging the web, driving to stores and finding places to stow everything so the when the day arrived Kosmos would be ready.

By mid-April the official departure date was pushed back a week and invitations were sent out for a noon send off on Saturday the 28th – the extra week added in to the countdown to allow just a little more time and to take advantage of improved weather conditions that were being predicted.

The amount of thought and planning required to leave your life on shore and settle down at sea is incomprehensible to anyone except those who have done it. I've been following along and offering advice to Eric and Christie for over two years in preparation for this momentous event, and it makes me exhausted to think about all that they have done to get to this point. Every week

there was something new to figure out and something else to do. As Eric wrapped up his real job and prepared to take leave, his work's receptionist was inundated daily with packages containing "essentials" that Eric had ordered online – assorted gear and equipment that you can't leave home without (after all your credit card may work at sea, but timely deliveries are less reliable). I had to give him credit for leaving no stone unturned. speculate and marvel.

In the last week before departure I tried to check in with Eric every other day on his cell phone at which times he was busy taking on 1100 gallons of diesel at the fuel dock, checking out of the local bait and tackle store, even finishing up his SCUBA diving certification.



[Unplugging from civilization for awhile.](#)

Life in the fast lane: shop til you drop, go to bed late, wake up to write something down (another thing to do/buy/eat) and then wake up early to repeat the whole process again.

The day before leaving, Christie ran into a snag with her bank and automatic bill paying. She was meeting with the branch manager to straighten it out and hopefully avoid yet another delay in departure. Less than 24 hours before family and friends were going to gather to wish the crew of Kosmos a bon voyage and still loose ends needed to be knotted. Rather than delay the party, Eric considered going through the motions of the send-off by leaving the harbor and then turning around to wait out the weekend. I went to sleep that night unsure what to expect.

I called Saturday morning en route to the party in San Diego and asked Eric how it was coming together. I could tell he was juggling a dozen things to countdown as the years, months days and hours were now being compressed into a precious few minutes. To everyone's relief Christie had resolved the banking issue and was now out busy doing some last minute shopping. I was diverted at Eric's request to the West Marine in Newport Beach where they had the only Fridge Cool fans in Southern California. I reminded Eric that he was bound to leave home without something and even PAE's own Dan Streech once left on a delivery of a new Nordhavn 62...forgetting food!

The dock was busy at 11:30 with Eric, Christie and crewmate Richard Burkland giving tours, explaining features and stowing last minute provisions. It was hard to believe that a month ago we had done a three-day [training mission](#) as a final shake down and now they were going to take off. All guests were handed a log sheet with waypoints, mileage and other trip details and encouraged to call the sat phone and send emails (no attachments please!).

A little before noon Eric started up the engine and as Kosmos warmed up, Eric and Christie acknowledged family and friends from the foredeck, thanked all for coming and reassured that



[Eric and Christy Grab address their friends and family who have come to wish them Bon Voyage](#)

they were truly ready. It was time to go.

A number of things Eric said were quite memorable, but the line that sticks with me was, “It has been a real adventure so far, and we haven’t even left the dock”.



[Kosmos heads out to sea!](#)

At approximately 12:05 Kosmos backed out of her slip at the Kona Kai marina, sounded her horn and the crew waved back and blew kisses while stowing the fenders and coiling the dock lines. Fifteen minutes later we waved again from the Customs dock park and Kosmos sailed out of San Diego Bay. I called Eric on the cell phone and could sense his relief and excitement. The trip should take close to close to 3 weeks and will be the longest voyage ever attempted by a Nordhavn 43. This will be the first leg of a planned two-year circumnavigation for Kosmos and the first leg will be the longest. It was very satisfying to see the crew was clearly ready for this adventure.

You can follow along by going to [www.kosmos.liveflux.net](http://www.kosmos.liveflux.net).

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