

# The Larrikin

## Fountaine Pajot He'lia 44

■ GORDON COATES

My wife Louise and I were fortunate to have the opportunity to sell our Fountaine Pajot Orana 44 in Australia and upgrade to the new replacement He'lia 44. Multihull Solutions of Mooloolaba are our agent/brokers and facilitated the factory pickup in March of 2013 in La Rochelle, France. With the voyage ahead to sail into the Mediterranean for two summer seasons then to cross the Atlantic we installed equipment such as watermaker (AquaBase 12V), Victron inverter, small Fischer Panda 5000i generator, washing machine, 800W of solar and a suite of Raymarine navigation equipment including transponding AIS and radar.



main pic far left:  
*The Larrikin*  
under ParaSailor  
approaching the  
finish line at Marin,  
Martinique.

left: Louise and  
Gordon on the dock  
at Puerto Calero  
Marina, Lanzarote  
(Canary Islands).

Our plan is to balance life between cruising on board *The Larrikin* with regular trips home to spend time in Australia with our family and friends. In our first year we were away for seven months and then home for seven months. In that time at home we had another grandson born (we did not want to miss out on that!) and a family wedding to attend. We feel fortunate

that we can do both, since we just love the time that we spend cruising but also feel it is important to keep up with the people we love and the special events in theirs and our lives. We will eventually get the boat home to Australia but it may take a few years. We are making it up as we go!

Our 2013 cruising year took us into the Med and during the seven months

we visited France, Spain, Portugal, the Balearic Islands, Sardinia, Corsica and the west coast of Italy. It was then a non stop sail to Marmaris, Turkey – a total of just over 4,000nm.

We hauled out leaving the boat in the excellent care of Offshore Sailing at Albatross Marina, in Marmaris for seven months and on return in June 2014, we cruised Turkey, Greece, Sicily, Sardinia

and back to the Balearics, Gibraltar then Lanzarote in the Canaries to join up with the Cornell Sailing Group organised Atlantic Odyssey.

We were aware (through reading in magazines/internet) that the Odyssey was leaving during the period we were contemplating crossing the Atlantic and since we had our good friend Phil joining us, we needed to establish a departure meeting point and a date. So the Jimmy Cornell group provided the perfect match for us providing excellent pre-rally support with seminars on many cruising issues, a safety rescue demonstration, medical lecture and many social functions where we got to know the other participants. The island of Lanzarote is a fascinating place with its volcanic landscape and friendly community. The support given by the people and businesses of Lanzarote was outstanding and the brand new Puerto Calero Marina, on Lanzarote's southern coast, was excellent and a pleasure to use. Provisioning in the Canaries was easy with everything in good supply. The supermarket even provided boat delivery on the day before our departure and on that same day a fresh local market proved to be a great place to source fresh fruit, vegetables and local produce. They too delivered to the boat if requested.

On November 16 we departed Lanzarote with 33 other boats. A mixture of catamarans (9), and yachts (25). The Odyssey Team and many other spectators were there to wave us off as we crossed the start line with our ParaSailor flying. It was the beginning of an adventure that we will remember for the rest of our lives.

**top right: Louise and Gordon as they approached Marin, Martinique on the mid bridgedeck helm, showing the good protection provided by the adaptable clears.**

**right: Med mooring in a picturesque inlet near Goecek, Turkey.**



**Gordon showing off the 2.1m Blue Marlin caught in the warm, blue waters of the mid Atlantic.**

The conditions were light as we set out. However, through observing the latest weather forecast (downloaded with our IridiumGo) it was decided that after sailing south of the Canary Islands we would head west to meet up with a pressure system that would push us south on a reach. We were confident that *The Larrikin* would sail comfortably and fast on such an angle in the predicted 25-30kt wind. Within a couple of days we lost sight of the other Odyssey boats but we could keep track of their progress as the Odyssey Team sent daily position reports by email. These positions we plotted each day on the chart under plastic on our dining table.

Friends had told us, and it was also reinforced in the discussion groups with Jimmy Cornell and the Odyssey team, that if you had sufficient fuel it would be wise to use it to get yourself as close to the trade-winds as quickly as possible. So we motor sailed west for a day and a half until the front kicked in. And we certainly knew when it kicked in! It was a strong wind, initially around 20kts, and from a direction that allowed us to sail at a wind angle of 65-70°. Before long we were doing 8-9kts in a strong, consistent wind that did build over the next few days, but was very manageable and felt good in the He'lia 44. We felt like we were flying and after six days we were into the trade-winds at a position 20N and 30W which is about 250nm from Cape Verde. We took down the main and headsail and sailed for

## PANTAENIUS NEW ART?



above: *The Larrikin* in company with *Mahe 3* as they crossed the line together in Marin, Martinique (it's not a race!)  
 below: Our view on board each evening whilst in the 'trade winds', flying the ParaSailor.

the next 11 days on just the ParaSailor spinnaker. What an amazing sail!

The ParaSailor setup on the He'lia makes for very easy management underway and is a sail that Louise and I have found to be very versatile and easy to handle when it's just the two of us. On the crossing we sailed downwind with the wind angle ranging between 120° either side and dead downwind, and we were comfortable leaving the ParaSailor up day and night. We did experience two or three squalls where the apparent wind built to 30kts+ in which case we simply eased the bow downhauls a metre or so to release some of the pressure. The boat was sailing well and we saw a top speed of 15.5kts.

Once downwind the crew were able to be more relaxed as we settled into a good routine for our night watches and daytime activities. Dinner was usually around 7pm. First watch was Lou 8-11pm, Phil 11-2am, Gordon 2-5am then Lou again 5-8am. By that stage Gordon and Phil were up for the day and Lou generally caught another few hours sleep. The days were fine, the wind around 15-20kts and our average speed 9-10kts. We did two 200nm days in a row. Then the wind dropped slightly but it was still consistent as the miles

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disappeared and our destination got closer.

We saw dolphins, flying fish (by the hundreds) and sea birds. One of the highlights of the trip was when we were joined by two Minke whales that swam around our boat for about two hours. That was special! In the lighter conditions we trolled a lure and were rewarded with a few Mahi Mahi and a magnificent 2.1m Blue Marlin. The biggest fish I have ever caught! Life on board for the three of us was busy but very relaxed and lots of fun. The food that was being prepared in the galley was plentiful and delicious as we love the galley setup on the He'lia 44. The ample refrigeration and storage areas make it very easy to provision for a long passage. Across the Atlantic we enjoyed freshly baked bread (made in the bread maker) and banana bread and muffins were a big hit too.

Throughout the passage we were making our own water for drinking,

**The downwind finish, *The Larrikin* with *Mahe 3* in Marin, Martinique.**



bathing and washing clothes in the Bosch front loader washing machine. The Aqua Base water maker is a 12V unit producing 65 litres of water per hour that we have found to be highly efficient and reliable.

The 800 watt solar panels kept the 750 Amp house bank of batteries charged during the day and we ran the Fisher Pander generator for a few hours each morning to top up the battery

charge because of the high usage overnight from navigational instruments, radar and auto pilot as well as running two fridges and a freezer.

We carried around 600 litres of fuel and arrived after crossing a distance of 2946nm with 150 litres remaining. We did use the engines periodically for heating the water and motor sailing during the light wind periods. The boat performed beautifully with no breakages



or major problems. We now have a total of just under 10,000nm at the end of our second year (13 months) of cruising.

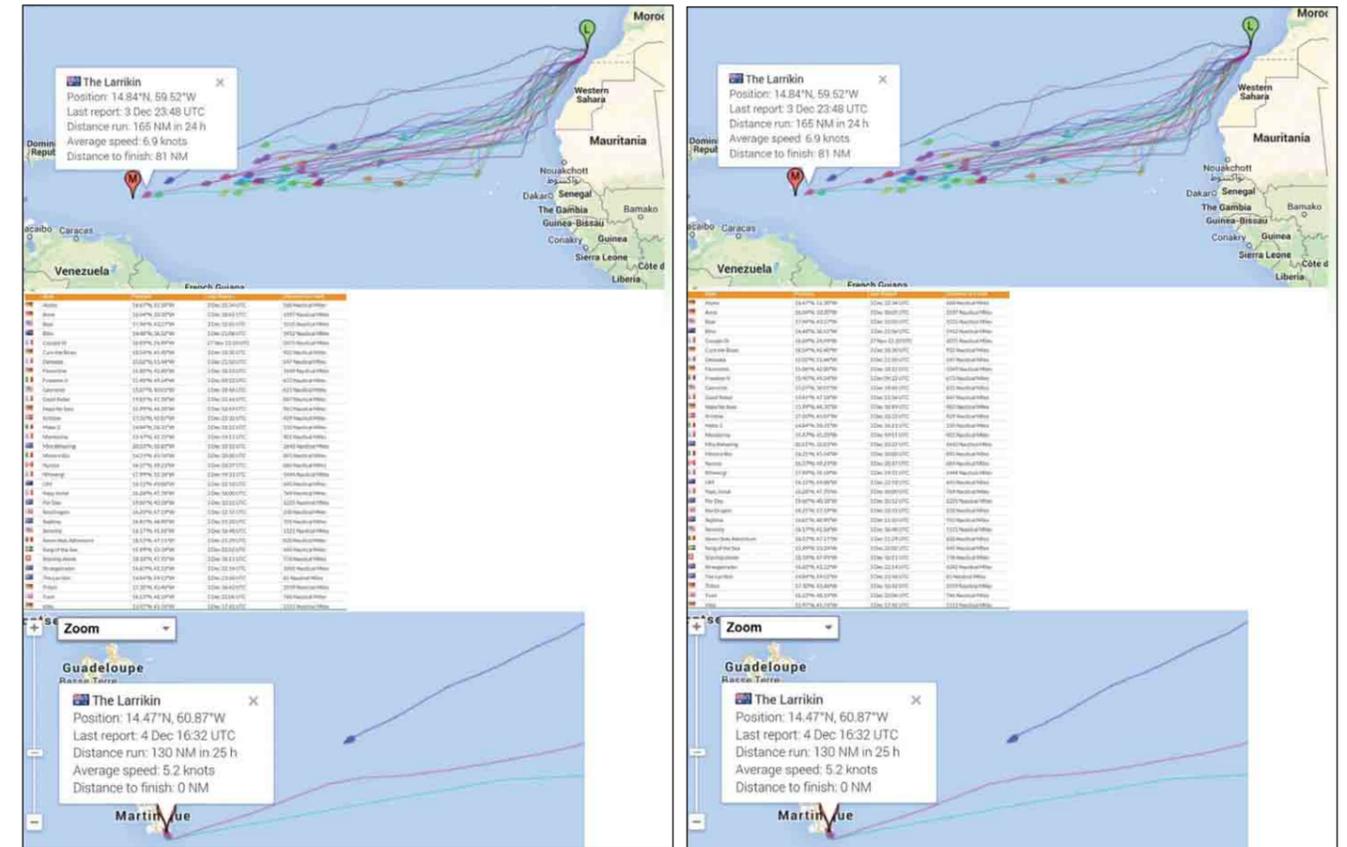
The IridiumGo on board satellite router is amazing. With it we can email, txt or talk using our iPad or smartphone from anywhere on the boat. During the crossing we downloaded weather gribbs every 12 hours. To view the weather details we used the Weather4D Pro app, which we found to be very accurate. We also communicated daily by email with Cornell Rally control, and other boats in the Odyssey group. Emailing family and friends when we were in the middle of the Atlantic was so exciting as it allowed us to share our adventure with them. When we are cruising, we feel it is very important to keep up to date with what's happening at home in Australia, and incredibly, now with the IridiumGo we can do it easily.

On the final day as we approached Martinique we had visual contact with another boat that had been chasing us for the last 17 days – *Mahe 3*. There was much excitement and friendly chatter over the radio as we approached the finish line and it was decided with the Italian owner of the German Frere 53 (Hallberg Rassy built) that 'in the spirit of the Odyssey' we would cross the finish line together. Both boats flew their spinnaker for a spectacular finish. We were the first boats to arrive in Martinique with the bulk of the group arriving some five to seven days later!

As the rest of the fleet joined us at the Marin Yacht Harbour Marina we heard

above left: The start (it's not a race!) in Lanzarote, Canary Islands. *The Larrikin* was third over the line with *Sephina* (Lagoon 400, a fellow AUS flag catamaran) and *Nyctea* (Beneteau Oceanis 46, Canadian flag).

left: Our downwind start made easy with the ParaSailor.



stories of rough conditions, seasickness and breakages. It was then that we realised what a dream run we had. Our boat was extremely comfortable for an ocean passage such as this and although we had our wet weather gear out ready to use if need be, we didn't have to. Most of our sailing was done in board shorts and t shirts! The factory fitted clears kept us dry and well protected from the elements. The helm and sheeting setup on the He'lia meant that we were comfortable and safe throughout the passage.

For us it was a great way to do our first Atlantic crossing and we sincerely thank Jimmy Cornell and the Odyssey Team for their professionalism and enthusiasm. It was an experience we will never forget and so enjoyable that we are keen to join the group when we are ready to go through the Panama Canal and onto the Pacific.

In the mean time, there is a wonderful playground for us to explore in 2015 – The Caribbean, the BVI's and the Bahamas!

above: images from the Cornell Odyssey website where family and friends could track our progress.

**Information taken from the Atlantic Odyssey website – <http://cornellsailing.com/sail-the-odyssey/atlantic-odyssey/>**

- The Atlantic Odyssey is an annual transatlantic rally for cruising yachts which sails from Lanzarote or La Palma in the Canary Islands to Martinique in the Caribbean
- Jimmy Cornell has launched this new transatlantic rally with the aim of returning to the spirit of his earlier rallies; that of a non-competitive event for cruising sailors, with the emphasis on safety and the enjoyment of participation in this kind of amateur event
- Participants in the Atlantic Odyssey will take part in ecological projects and share the goals of the other Odyssey events by conveying the message 'The Ocean – Our Future'
- Supported by generous sponsors on both sides of the Atlantic, we are able to offer participants in the Atlantic Odyssey at a most reasonable price everything that sailors planning to cross the Atlantic could wish for
- Sailors have a choice of departure ports as well as start dates, leaving from Lanzarote in November, or La Palma in January, arriving in Martinique in the Caribbean.