The Voyages of Itiki

PART 1: THE REAL THING

There are many people living the dream on yachts of all shapes and sizes, on a broad range of budgets, in a myriad of locations. But as **Lynda Shelley and Keith Logan** discovered, it's one thing to have a dream; it's quite another to make it happen. With their home in Sydney packed up, and preparations for their Fountaine Pajot Helia 44 Evolution Boat *Itiki* almost complete, *Sails* will be following their journey from La Rochelle in southwestern France to La Línea in Gibraltar.

But first, Lynda takes us back to where it all began.

So, *he* said: "Here's the idea, darling.

"You quit your high-powered corporate job. We sell our successful Sydney charter business, get rid of all our wordly possessions, rent out our beloved home to strangers, leave family, friends and beautiful Sydney Harbour, and live on a yacht in the Mediterranean for a few years."

Sounds like a dream come true, right?

The big picture

The day has finally arrived. Keith and I are in La Rochelle putting the final touches on our beautiful Fountaine Pajot Helia 44 Evolution.

We are babes in the woods compared to the scores of seasoned cruisers who have so willingly shared their experiences with us and given their advice through forums, Facebook groups, books and articles. We couldn't have reached this point without their help; there are just so many practical considerations and decisions to be made.

The first of which is, of course, what sort of boat should you choose? Although we both race monohulls, Keith has catamaran blood in his veins. Having raced Hobies in the 70s, he later ran a sailing business on Hamilton Island, taking guests for a high-speed fang on a Nacra 36, complete with trapezes.

Then there is the fact that when it comes to cruising, cats win hands down for space and stability. And although marina fees can be a downside, this is best addressed by avoiding them altogether.

So for us, the choice of boat was a relatively easy decision: upgrade from our current Fountaine Pajot Lipari 41 to the Fountaine Pajot Helia 44. Bigger is better, right?

Our dealer, Multihull Solutions in Mooloolaba, have been fantastic to work with on both our Fountaine Pajots and we can't thank them enough.

Meanwhile, the equipment has largely been the remit of Vice President of Making Stuff Happen (that's Keith). Everything needed to be selected. From the sails and anchor to the watermaker, the washing machine, the RIB. Solar panels, navigation, sonar – the list goes on.

A huge amount of time and effort went into researching and deciding on each and every item; deciding what goes on in the factory and what goes on later; and what we could do ourselves.

While I continued to head to the office each day, working out a six-month notice period, Keith trawled websites and forums, pored over YouTube channels and blogs and spoke to his contacts near and far, piecing together all the advice and recommendations into what we hope will be the ultimate set of choices for us.

As the big picture slowly took shape, he worked his way though more and more of the finer details. Things like courtesy flags and protocols, the size of logos, the registration process and stickers, and how much lanolin, WD40 and gaffer tape to send over.

PURPOSE BUILT
Sitting high in the water and safely under her own power, *Itiki* motors to a nearby berth for final extras to be fitted, ahead of her shakedown cruise.

The fact is when it comes to cruising, cats win hands down for space and stability.

Force 8

I often heard, "You must be getting excited now?"

Actually, I have to admit to feeling more like a deer in the proverbial headlights. And with the departure date drawing closer, the activity level reached Force 8 on the frenzy scale.

A late decision to rent out our apartment unfurnished and change agents meant a rapid – and unwelcome – turnaround. Getting out of the country, handing over a business, redoing wills, rearranging finances … it was hard to stay focused when our heads were already in France.

There were other hiccups too. As I don't hold an European Union (EU) passport, the Schengen zone limitations were playing havoc with our route planning in the western Mediterranean. My stress levels shot up when I read of a couple who were turned away from an EU port in poor weather because they had the wrong exit stamp in their passports!

My relief was palpable when I finally found out that, at least until the United Kingdom officially leaves the European Union on 29 March 2019, travelling with my dear husband Keith (conveniently a British passport holder), affords me the same freedom of movement as him within the EU.

Now, where did I put that marriage certificate?

The real thing

We have planned to spend two to three weeks in La Rochelle for our factory and ex-factory extras to be sorted. With an apartment booked for the first ten days, we will then move on board for the rest of the time.

We will hire a car for the entire time as there are always errands to be run and stuff to be bought, plus the big home stores are out of town. Not to mention taking a few excursions when we run out of boat things to do! We will also take a shakedown cruise to nearby Ile de Re over a weekend.

Then it begins for real. The first leg is from La Rochelle, straight across the Bay of Biscay to A Coruña in Spain. At this time of year, the bay is usually noticeably calmer than later in the year. We expect reaching or running breezes, which means we can check out our gennaker and parasailor.

From then on, we plan to day-hop down the Portuguese coast and into the Mediterranean. We have allowed about 30 days, sailing into port mid to late afternoon. We will spend the night in port, then one full day and another night there before leaving the next morning. We will play it by ear how long we stay somewhere depending how much we like it (or not).

Many people want to get to the Med as soon as possible, but we plan to enjoy it as we are unlikely to come back this way. Also, with twilight, it's light for 13–14 hours during August and September, which gives us plenty of time to explore and enjoy the area.

After so long spent planning, it is an amazing feeling when everything finally comes together and you can realise your dream. ⚓

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LYNDA AND KEITH'S ROUTE

Leave La Rochelle, France, to:

A Caruña, Spain	375 nautical miles	(2.5 days)
Muros, Spain	77 nautical miles	(12 hours)
Combarro, Spain	48 nautical miles	(8 hours)
Baiona, Spain	45 nautical miles	(8 hours)
Viana do Castelo, Portugal	30 nautical miles	(5 hours)
Porto, Portugal	36 nautical miles	(6 hours)
Figueira da Foz, Portugal	67 nautical miles	(11 hours)
Peniche, Portugal	54 nautical miles	(9 hours)
Lisbon, Portugal	56 nautical miles	(9 hours)
Lagos, Portugal	32 nautical miles	(20 hours)
Olharo Faro, Portugal	45 nautical miles	(7 hours)
Cádiz, Spain	80 nautical miles	(12 hours)
La Línea, Gibraltar	80 nautical miles	(12 hours)

(Note: these times are roughly based on six-knot VMG (velocity made good) either sailing, motor sailing or motoring.)