

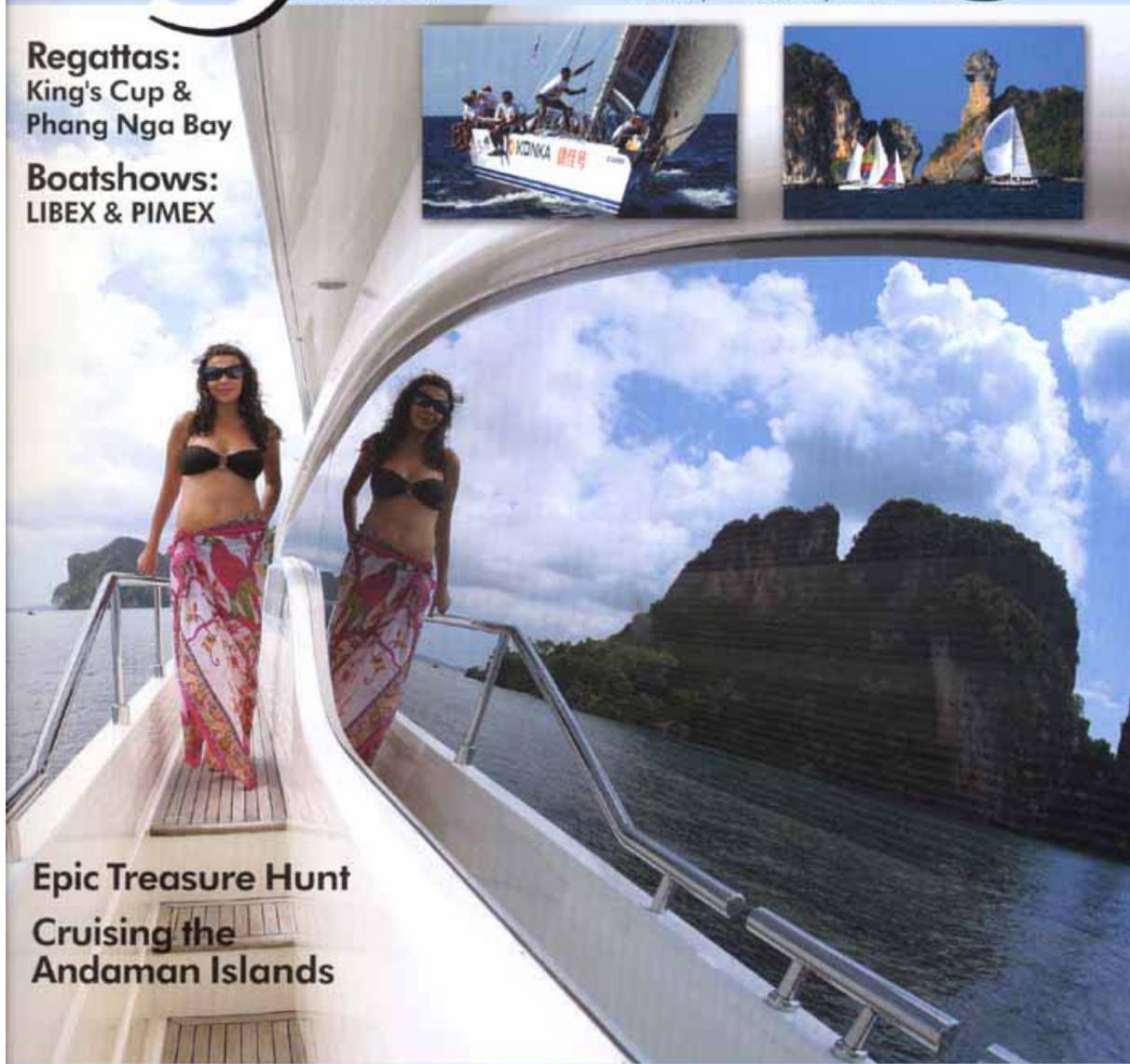
# SEA YACHTING

Vol. 2 No.1

January - February 2007

**Regattas:**  
King's Cup &  
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**Boatshows:**  
LIBEX & PIMEX



**Epic Treasure Hunt**  
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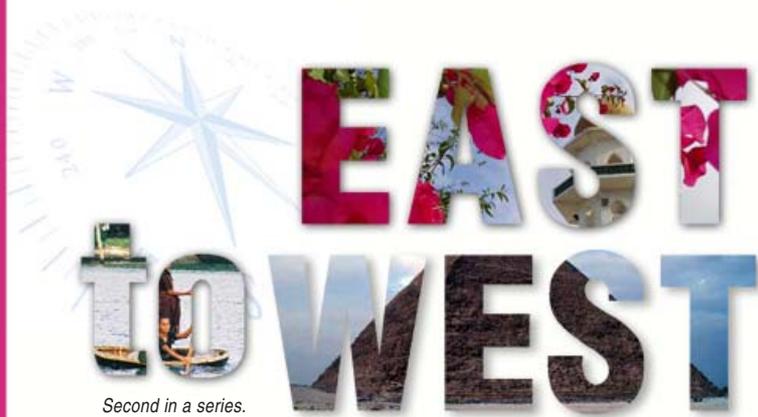
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Photo Essay by Senad Svraka,  
Skipper SY Alea

A journey from Southeast Asia through the Red Sea to the Mediterranean

The northeast monsoon season is the right time for the east-west journey across the northern Indian Ocean. Indeed, from December to February many cruising boats leave Southeast Asia bound for the Red Sea. The weather will not be a concern - at least until you enter the Red Sea - but what will be a bother are piracy matters in the Gulf of Aden and the treatment you will get in some of the world's most remote countries. Read on for some fresh information and a few words of warning.



Massawa



Mersa Dudo

## Eritrea

Eritrea has two ports of entry, Asab in the south and Massawa in the north, both of which receive visiting yachts. The country is just emerging from a 20-year war with Ethiopia and the military is often present in some anchorages and will ask to check your papers.

There are some signs of recovery and Western investment in Eritrea, but it is still a poor country. The main point of interest here is the beautiful natural sights. Anchorages in Eritrea resemble the surface of the moon, and the wilderness has little or no human presence. There is plenty of wildlife to be seen, particularly birds and fishes. The Red Sea used to be full of sharks, but it seems that their numbers have diminished.



Massawa anchorage

The water in the southern Red Sea is murky, and attention is required when entering anchorages or sailing anywhere close to the coast or the reefs. The Swiss boat *Miou de Mer* hit a reef at Beraisole Bay and damaged her rudder beyond immediate repair. A military patrol boat agreed to tow her to Asab, but the amount was so substantial, there is chance you may still see the unfortunate *Miou de Mer* tied to the military pier. It is possible to get fuel in Asab, but the procedure, as explained in the *Red Sea Pilot*, is lengthy.

Massawa is a bigger town than Asab, and the anchorage here is very well protected. The authorities in Massawa are friendly, and the formalities are easy to get through. Some provisions are available, particularly cheap gin and beer. This is the place to stock up on alcohol, as the journey up the Red Sea will be long, and you might want occasional refreshment.

Massawa is also the place where you will start getting more northerly winds. The *Red Sea Pilot* treats this matter in detail, so I will only add a word of advice: if the wind blows more than 25 knots, find shelter. Many good shelters exist along the Eritrean and Sudanese coasts, and they are often beautiful natural sites, so it would be a shame to keep suffering on rough seas.

# Sudan

You can check in and out at either Sawakin or Port Sudan. The *anchorage* at Sawakin is better protected, but the town is small and has very little to buy. In Sawakin, agent Mohammed will take care of the paperwork. He might ask for a substantial amount, so be prepared to negotiate. He will respect his word, however, and will deliver what he can in terms of water and fuel. The water is delivered by donkey cart, and although it's supposedly drinkable, I didn't load water here. It's also best to be very careful when eating out in Sudan.

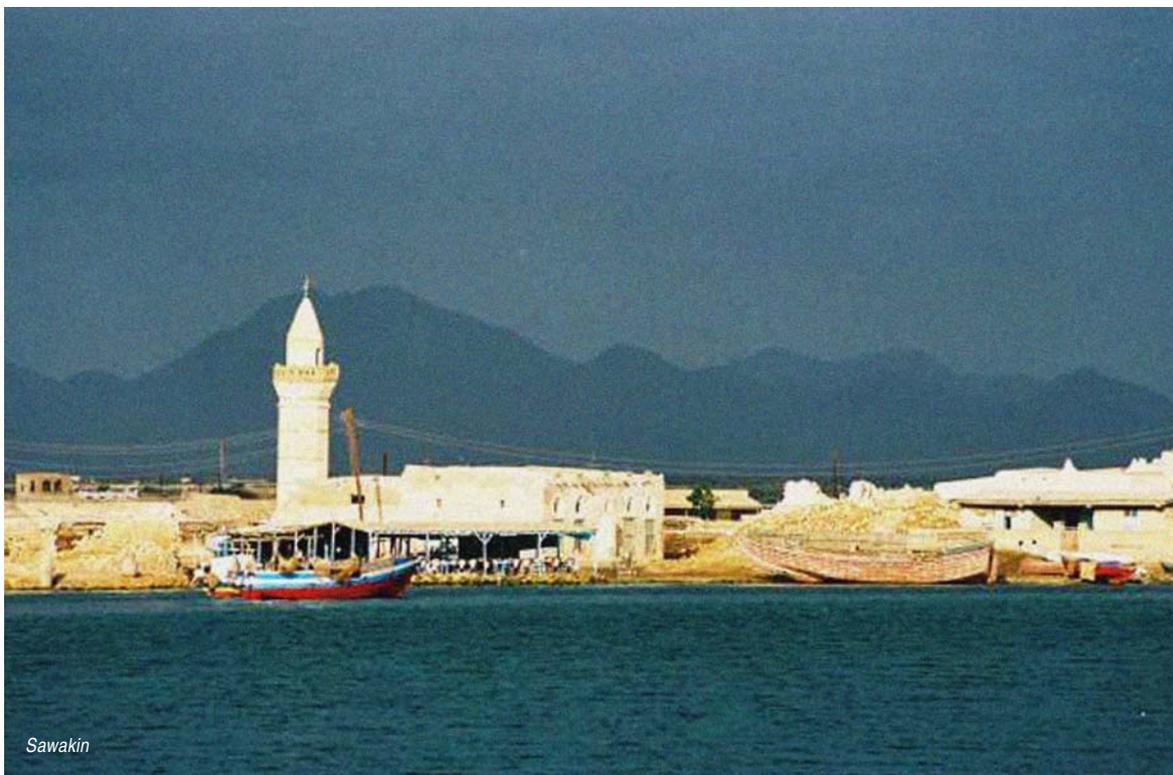
Port Sudan offers much more in terms of food and hardware. The market is well stocked with greens, and the American yacht *Equs* managed to find new batteries for her home bank, 700amp/hours all together - giving her plenty of power to enjoy a cold beer in some remote desert anchorage.



*Alea at Khor Nawarat*



*Sanganeb Reef*



*Sawakin*

# Yemen

Being late in the season, I only stopped for two days in Aden and two days in Al Mukalla. But I do regret not being able to visit more of Yemen. What gives the country charm is the ease with which you make friendly contacts. Very often you will come across a local who will want to treat you to a meal or take you home to dinner.

The authorities in Aden are the most relaxed and easy-going I have met in my short sailing career. Perhaps it's because of the traditional skirt called a *lungi* that they wear, or the qat they chew all day long.

When entering the bay in Aden, call the harbour master on VHF channel 16. He or she will ask you a few questions - the name and the flag of the boat, the number and nationality of the crew and so on. You will still need to register with immigration and customs, both of which sit within the harbour, but the process is quick, easy and free of charge.

Many cruising boats visit Aden harbour. The anchorage is slightly encumbered with some old installations, but is reasonably safe. Cheap, good-quality fuel is available at the fuelling dock across from the refinery. It is possible to buy many supplies, but it can require some research. Taxi drivers offer services at the gate of the harbour. The fares are negotiable.

On departure, you need to go to the port control tower to pick up your clearance from the harbour master. It is a 30-minute walk or a 5-minute taxi ride from the harbour.

As I was going in the opposite direction, I checked out from Yemen and my port clearance read Salalah. This was not a problem for stopping at Al Mukalla. Once I arrived there, an agent took care of the formalities, settling on a fee of US\$25 per boat for a fleet of 20. He delivered fuel for the 20 boats in two days and brought a water tanker to the dock where we could fill water without a separate charge. As in Aden, it is best to call port control on VHF channel 16 on arrival and departure.



# Egypt



Suez market



Port Ghalib



Ismailia fishermen



Suez canal Sentrancev



Port Fuad canal and mosque

The southernmost harbour I called at in Egypt was Port Ghalib, a brand-new marina and hotel development in the middle of the desert. The marina is well sheltered from the prevailing northerly wind, and access through a buoyed channel is easy. It is located in Marsa Mubarak, mentioned in the Red Sea Pilot. The customs clearance is valid for one month and will be issued by the marina manager and the harbour master. The coast guard and other authorities will request a customs clearance if you are controlled in Egypt - and you will be controlled if they manage to get to you (in Egypt the coast guard has neither boats nor uniforms, so don't be surprised if someone wearing civilian clothing come to ask for your papers). A new decree was approved in 2005 to simplify the procedures for visiting yachts, but the decree cannot determine the amount of agent's fees. And although you are not legally bound to use an agent in Egypt, in practice you might find difficulties getting through without one.

In Port Ghalib, you will deal directly with the marina manager, so you don't need to worry about agents. If you have your cruising permit from Port Ghalib, you can proceed directly to the fancy El Gouna marina, 20 miles north of Hurghada. It is particularly important to specify to the marina staff that they should not give your papers to an agent (this is what they routinely do), and it may be best to keep them for yourself and just give away the copies. If they insist on having the originals, ask to talk to the manager.

Thirty miles south of Suez lays a small marina. It is conveniently placed in a region where you will meet all kinds of difficulties: strong contrary winds, heavy shipping and oil rigs. The marina, Dome marina, is not marked on the charts, but it is situated at 29°26N and 32°29E. If you approach by day,

it is clear of dangers. Approach by night is also possible because the entrance is apparently well lit with red and green lights, but it is not something I can recommend.

For the Suez Canal, you will have to deal with a shipping agent. It will be either Felix or The Prince of the Red Sea. Both are expensive. One week before my arrival on the Mediterranean side of Port Said I sent an e-mail to Felix informing them about my intended arrival. The manager, Nagib Latif, replied promptly, asking me to fax him the usual details about the boat, the crew and our ETA. The Felix staff met us at the Port Fuad Yacht Centre. Altogether, the canal fee, the agent's fee, the government's share and three day's stay at Port Fuad came to \$450 for a 29-foot boat.

Navigation in the Suez Canal is not a problem. I recommend breaking the transit in Ismailia, where a new marina makes for convenient place to leave your boat for a trip to Cairo, the pyramids and the Egyptian museum. If you are not too picky, you can take the Peugeot microbus to Cairo, about 120km away from Ismailia, for a mere \$1.20.

You can buy plenty in Egypt, especially at El Gouna and the port cities of Suez and Port Said. But, remember you are bound for Europe and all its magnificence, and the yacht centre in Port Fuad is so inconvenient you will want to move your boat out of it quickly.

Now you're almost there. If you left from Europe and are closing your circumnavigation, you will find that little has changed during your absence. If you are a Kiwi or an Aussie coming to Old Europe to search for your ancestor's roots, you will notice that she appears as old as she did at the time of Captain Cook. But who cares for all that - because what a magnificent journey you've made.