

BOOK REVIEW

Ocean Sailing: The Offshore Cruising Experience with Real-life Practical Advice

with members of the Royal Cruising Club, Ocean Cruising Club, Cruising Club of America

BY PAUL HEINEY

PUBLISHED BY THE RCC PILOTAGE FOUNDATION
AND ADLARD COLES NAUTICAL (AN IMPRINT OF BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING PLC), 2019

Review by Amanda Balasubramanian, Great Lakes Station

As we were preparing for our first significant offshore passage in 2013, I read every book about ocean sailing I could find. There were a few very helpful books full of technical information, but I longed for personal stories from those who had gone before us. I spoke to as many people as I could about their personal offshore experiences but, living in Toronto, offshore sailors are few and far between. When I opened *Ocean Sailing* by Paul Heiney a few weeks ago, I realized that I had finally found the book that I had been looking for.

In *Ocean Sailing*, the author sets out to provide practical advice about the realities of ocean sailing. With many anecdotes and stories from cruisers with extensive blue-water experience (at least seventeen of whom are CCA members), he covers topics that most sailors wonder or worry about before a significant offshore passage. The book opens with a review of the world's great ocean passages, with details and personal stories from cruisers who have sailed those same miles. He discusses in depth the pros and cons of the various offshore boat designs and shares sailors' stories about what they chose and why it was (or wasn't) right for their adventures.

So often, financial concerns keep the would-be ocean sailor on the dock or close to shore. The book provides an analysis of the costs of full-time cruising, with some reference points on how to keep costs down and plan for contingencies. It's "not a question of asking if you can afford it," the author writes, "but making sailing plans that fit into the money that you already have."

Several families share their feelings about the positive effects of voyaging on both children and adults. Having spent a year cruising with our children when they were seven and nine, I found these stories to be honest reflections of the joys (and challenges) of offshore sailing with children.

Paul Heiney also addresses a question we all may ask ourselves at some point: Am I too old to go to sea? Stories from sailors who have accomplished significant ocean passages in their senior years provide an encouraging backdrop for the

premise that, "providing you feel like it, and you're fit enough for it, there is no reason why age is any barrier to successful ocean sailing."

Practical chapters on communications, general engineering, and physical well-being are followed by individual accounts of mishaps—good information for preventing or preparing for similar situations on your own boat. Each of the sailors reveals what they did right or wrong in difficult circumstances and suggests ways to avoid the particular situation in the first place.

The author concludes the book with a topic that isn't often discussed—what it's like when the adventure is over and you are back at the dock. The poignant accounts of returning to life on land will be familiar to those who have experienced the end of an incredible adventure. Our own return was heavy with emotion and a sense of loss of freedom, so these stories hit home. But as Paul Heiney says, the sadness is tempered by appreciation for the life-changing adventure you just accomplished, which is the "tricky bit because, without the slightest shadow of doubt, you will want to do it all over again."

Ocean Sailing recognizes that there is no one way to cross oceans—it is as individual as it gets. Each skipper is the captain of her own ship and needs to make the decisions that are right for her boat, her crew, and her course. As you read through the many firsthand accounts, you feel as though you are sitting in a cockpit sharing a sundowner with friends, exchanging ideas and experiences. If you take a little from each story, you will find yourself well-armed with ideas and that much closer to your dream of crossing oceans.

