



PEGASUS TAKES FLIGHT

AN ODYSSEY BEGINS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AS ONE SAILOR SETS OUT TO BRING HIS NEW BOAT HOME.

BY LYDIA MULLAN

At a little table outside of the train station in Narbonne, France, my friend Derick set two glasses in front of me, one with emerald liquid, the other a deep amethyst. We'd spent several days picking our way by train across the southern coast of Spain and France on our way to the Cannes Yachting Festival. We had precious few days left together before I had to get to work, and he had to catch a flight.

Derick asked the elegant older ladies at the table next to ours what the deep green beverage they were drinking was, and they sent him back to our table with two glasses: one green and one purple. Derick, who is a playwright with a keen sense of mischief and whimsy, set the glasses down in front of me and said, "Choose one: delight or joy."

After a moment, I picked up joy (pomegranate soda), he took delight (mint soda), and we toasted to adventures and good company. And though I didn't know it yet, more of both were in store for me before the trip came to an end.

After the boat show in Cannes, I joined the Pegasus 50 *Sine Finis* and her new owner, Nico Jonville, for a couple days at the start of their odyssey from the factory in Slovenia halfway around the world home to California. Nico would be splitting the trip into many legs, crossing first the Med, then the Atlantic, then traveling up from the Caribbean to New England for the fall boat shows (look for the boat in Newport and Annapolis this year), then back down and around to finally arrive in California sometime in 2026.

Our crew for the first bit of this trip would be Nico, his friend Mark, and myself. Nico is a joyful, cheeky sailor hailing originally from Paris but bucking every stereotype about Parisian aloofness. As a child, he'd been taught by his grandfather to sail on the Med, and his love for being on the water has never waned.

Mark, who was not a sailor himself, was a cheerful if somewhat more mellow compliment to Nico's lively energy. Their partners Jena and Bobbi—charming and effortlessly cool best friends since their college days—had accompanied them as far as France but were sitting out the first leg of the trip in favor of mountain air and local spirits.

Our itinerary was to leave Cannes on Monday morning and sail out to one of two islands where we'd spend the night before continuing westward, finding some place to anchor overnight, and then finally arriving in Cassis on Wednesday.

It was not a strenuous schedule, less than a hundred miles, but we found ourselves completely skunked the first day. As we motored towards the islands, a government-issue powerboat zipped out to meet us. Their brusque demeanor shifted upon hearing Nico's fluent French, and after a brief conversation they left, Nico shouting, "Tu es gentil, tu es trop gentil!" after them.

Then he turned and beamed at us. "He said I have a beautiful boat! Also, they are doing military exercises where we planned to anchor tonight, so there will probably be explosions."

We instead anchored in a sweet little cove on the next island over, Port Cross, and did indeed hear occasional shots firing off throughout the evening.



At Mark's suggestion, we went for a swim in the clear, bracing water, and I headed beneath the boat to get a good look at the Pegasus' unusual tandem keel arrangement. The bulb is supported by two keels fore and aft, or what looks like a standard bulb keel with a second fin aft that connects to the aft end of the bulb itself. (For more on this and other aspects of this intriguing new Top 10 Best Boats 2026 nominee, stay tuned for the full review in an upcoming issue.)

We swam until we'd had our fill—and a mean looking jellyfish drifted by—and then climbed out to prepare dinner.

Sitting in the cockpit, I was tasked with bread and cheese, slicing half of a soft camembert wheel into wedges, while Nico—no lower than my elbow or farther than an arm's reach when standing in the open galley—prepared spears of asparagus for roasting.

As might be expected of French cheese, the camembert was the star of the show, and after trying some, Mark sighed and said, "Oh my God. It's so good, it's so buttery."

"What!" Nico exclaimed with a theatrical French indignation. "Buttery! How can you say that? Butter is plain, this is complex, it's flavorful, it's so much better than 'buttery!'"

Mark defended while Nico insisted, and I laughed along with their playful banter.

The next morning, we were due to have breeze. Overjoyed to finally be sailing instead of motoring, Nico raised the main (by himself and in a matter of seconds) and rolled out the jib. The boat was set up so that he could handle everything and bring whomever



he liked without having to worry about whether they could help him. We easily tacked the Pegasus between the coast and the islands all morning, gradually making our way east.

For anyone who hasn't brushed up on their Greek mythology, you may primarily remember Pegasus as the winged horse who was a companion to Hercules in the Disney movie. As the myth goes, Pegasus is the child of Medusa and Poseidon, who is himself the god of both the seas and horses. It's hard to imagine a more fitting boat to cruise the Mediterranean in, and I won't spoil the upcoming review, but the Pegasus 50 was a titan.

Nico will hate to read this, but the first word that comes to mind to describe helming *Sine Finis* is "buttery," being as smooth and rich as it was. However, having learned my lesson the previous night at dinner, I will also add that there was just enough feedback that you never forgot the consequence of the boat you were helming, while

PHOTOS BY LYDIA MULLAN

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Clockwise from top left: Mark, Nico, and the author enjoy a Mediterranean sunset; the hotly contested camembert; Sine Finis docking out on the first morning of the adventure; and the squall closing in on day two.

also being easy to steer and so precisely balanced that, in combination with the meticulously engineered hull shape, it cut through the water exquisitely (some might say...like a hot knife through butter).

There is no such thing as a truly light 50-foot cruising boat, but with carbon infrastructure throughout, the Pegasus strikes an excellent balance between saving weight and not feeling like a plastic toy bobbing in a bathtub. It still felt consequential, even as it skimmed through the water, a joy to helm. I'm waxing poetic at this point, so I'll end with this: Given the caliber of craftsmanship that results in that kind of driving experience, the minds behind the Pegasus have proven themselves as much artists as they are naval architects.

It seemed Aeolus had finally really opened his bag of wind, and

CANNES

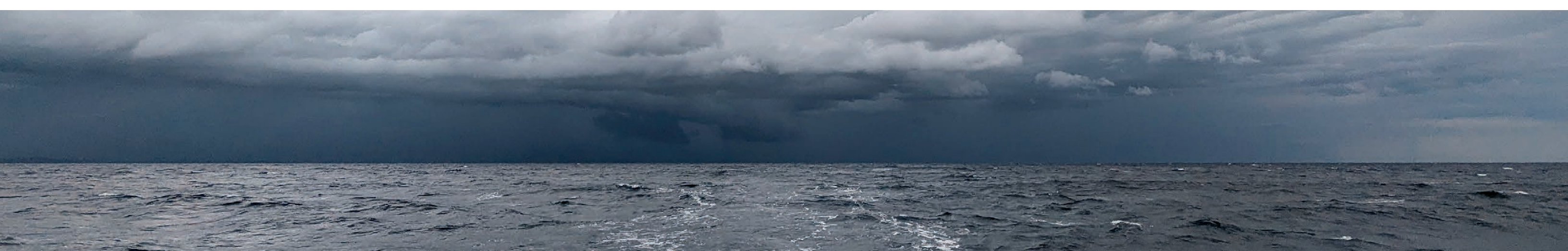
Cannes is a beautiful seaside city in the French Riviera best known for luxury shopping and film festival. It's worth the steep hills of the older side of town to tour the quintessentially French architecture and narrow winding streets studded with restaurants that come alive with soft light and lively chatter in the evenings. Another notable event in their calendar (and on mine) is the Cannes Yachting Festival, which brings almost every builder imaginable to two different campuses on the Cannes waterfront. There are many new boat debuts there each year, and the show is so massive that the logistics are mindboggling.

From Cannes, Monaco is a popular day trip, but I chose a quieter destination for my lay day: Île Saint-Honorat. Recommended to me by someone I was traveling with, the island proved a spiritual respite from the blazing sun and bustling docks at the show. Less than an hour from Cannes by ferry, Île Saint-Honorat is home to a monastery and an



order of monks who grow grapes and make wine. You can easily walk the circumference of the island in a few hours, even with stops to visit any of the quiet, rugged beaches or monastic chapels and outbuildings. Though you cannot traipse through the vineyards themselves, they were often visible and lovely in the late summer sunshine. By happenstance, I was there on the day the monks were consecrating two new church bells, and at the abbey, a throng of people mingled, chatting and lining up to ring the bells before they made their way to their new home in the bell tower.

a front was approaching from the east, projected to fill in the early morning and bring gusts in the low 20s. No problem. But it filled late, and we were also headed east, so it took hours to catch us. All morning the purple bruise on the horizon swelled until it was a wall of dark clouds looming behind us. We had started the day with a few other boats out and about, but now all that was left were three powerboats, two lurking on the southern horizon and one





The sun split through the clouds to shine on the cliffs of La Ciotat after many hours of grey and squally weather.

screaming in our direction from the north.

As it got close enough to take shape, Nico identified them as the Gendarmes Maritime, the French equivalent to the Coast Guard. They crossed our stern and continued to the first of the powerboats, then the second. Then they returned to shore.

Nico laughed. “They aren’t worried about a sailboat in the squall. It’s the powerboaters that they don’t trust to handle it.”

We weren’t supposed to see much more than 20, but suddenly it was getting awful close to 30 and the rain was spitting down on us. Mark closed the dodger, and Nico rolled the jib.

Suddenly the wind pitched up to a howl, and the rain stung on my cheeks. I glanced up at the instruments to see 38 knots true.

“Nico!” I shouted over the weather. “Do you want to put a reef in?”

“Oh! Yes, let’s do that!” he said, just starting to struggle with the helm. (You read that right: We had the full main up in 38 knots, and only then did we feel a need to put a reef in.)

Nico rounded the boat up into the wind, and it wasn’t until we were there that I remembered Mark, who was half sitting, half standing in the cockpit, a look of horror on his face.

“What should I do?” he asked.

“Sit,” Nico said.

Mark sat.

In hindsight, it’s easy to imagine how he was seeing it all unfold. The dark wall of clouds, the fierce wind, the boat suddenly swinging up, the sails going slack. Nico and I, not yelling but urgent and loud against the wind, squaring off against a Gordian knot of reef-



ing lines and sheets at the transom.

It’d been awhile since I’d been in his shoes, watching with trepidation as other people managed a situation, knowing that I was totally at the mercy of their abilities. Contending with the beginner’s helplessness is one of the most difficult parts of being a new sailor, and there’s no way out but through.

Still, explaining what we were doing would’ve gone a long way. Later he recalled, “it was crazy when we went out of control like that and spun around!”

In retrospect, that we were heading up into the wind *on purpose*

CASSIS

The Parc National des Calanques lies between Cassis to the east and Marseille to the west with an easy bus ride connecting the three. Cassis is a holiday town filled with restaurants by the boardwalk and little boutique shops. If you’re considering a day trip from Marseille, remember that everyone else is planning to leave at the end of the day too, and buses back to Marseille do fill up.

From the city center in Cassis, the national park is a manageable walk away and free to enter. It’s filled with hiking trails winding their way through the steep and rocky calanques—seaside ravines that extend into the ocean, making for pristine (if crowded) pocket beaches at the bottom of each. Though the trails are sheer with none of the guardrails or signage that an American tourist might expect from a national park, the views are breathtaking, the water stunning, and the sweat well worth it.



definitely would’ve been worth mentioning.

We got the reef in just in time for the worst gusts to have passed through, and though we didn’t see 38 again, it remained spicy for a while longer. With it all came a rainbow so spectacular that I spent an hour trying to get a photo that looked half as good as it did in real life.

We had the option of stopping overnight in the shadow of a peninsula near Bandol, but since the storm didn’t seem to be kick-



The author takes a turn at the helm of the Pegasus 50 and finds the driving smooth as can be, above. Despite a little awkwardness getting in to the tightly packed dock, Cassis made for a gorgeous stopover, right.



ing up any more trouble, we forged onwards. As a reward, we were treated to a burst of astounding late afternoon sunshine on the cliffs of La Ciotat as we made the final approach to Cassis.

So many boats had sought safe harbor from the storm that there were no slips available in Cassis. Instead, we anchored a little way east and were treated to a spectacular moonrise over the bluffs.

The next morning, Nico sweet-talked us into a spot in the harbor.

“But we will have no one there to greet you.”

“We don’t need someone to greet us! We’ll be fine!”

“...Are you sure?”

“Of course!”

As we headed into port, we laughed about needing a welcome party at the dock, but the joke was on us. The only spot available was at the end of a narrow dock where we had to balance the boat side-to, out of the channel, and away from the other boats. It took us an embarrassingly long time and a heap of fenders. In retrospect, some help from the pros might have been a good idea.

Still, as we were working, passing boats were slowing down and their crews calling out to us, “C’est beau, c’est magnifique!!”

I’ve sailed quite a few boats in my seven years at *SAIL*, but never one so rapturously complimented by the coast guard and other sailors alike. I playfully accused Nico of paying people to say nice things about his boat while a reviewer was onboard, but he just laughed and said she gets this response everywhere she goes.

After a happy luncheon rendezvous with Jena and Bobbi, we said our farewells and each set off for the next leg of our respective journeys. They were headed for Barcelona, while I was doubling back to Nice to catch a flight home after nearly a month abroad—their odyssey beginning as mine was ending.

Just as we’d toasted on that day in Narbonne, I’d found more than my share of adventure and good company along the way.

I had, after all, chosen joy. 🌊