

*Choisi* cruises in Glacier Bay, Alaska. The Krogen 55' Expedition averaged 6,437 kilometers (4,000 miles) on a 7,571-liter (2,000-gallon) tank of fuel.



# LESSONS FROM A LIVEABOARD

The Gebhard children experience the benefits of being “boat-schooled” on their family’s Kadey-Krogen yacht

Learning about the Spaniards' route across the Isthmus of Panama in the 1700s from a textbook is one thing, but when you have an opportunity to explore the region by boat, history lessons come to life.

That’s just one chapter in an encyclopedia’s worth of experiences for the Gebhard family. In 2014, Peter and Sara embarked on a trip of a lifetime, giving their daughters, Charlotte and Frances, the opportunity to be home-schooled, or “boat-schooled,” aboard a Krogen 55' Expedition. It was a 22,684-kilometer (12,249-nautical-mile) journey lasting 425 days filled with real-life learning experiences and adventure.

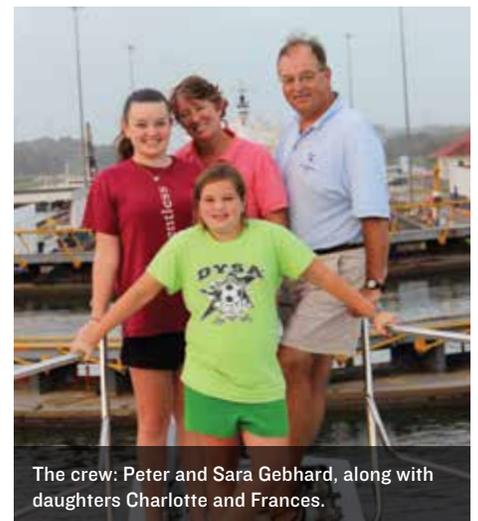
“We had heard about a couple who traveled the Big U from Alaska to Maine and thought to ourselves, ‘well, that’s kind of interesting.’ At that moment, the idea was born that it would be a really cool thing to do with

our girls during their 5th and 7th grade academic year. The timing just made sense.”

Two years before their departure, the Gebhards began putting the plans in motion to make the trip a reality. “Peter and I have been sailors our whole lives. We had a J44 that we sailed for 16 years in Narragansett and Buzzards Bay. When we decided to do this trip, we opted not to do it on a 44-foot (13-meter) sailboat but on a trawler. That’s what precipitated the decision to sell our J44 and buy a new Kadey-Krogen,” explains Sara.

The Krogen 55' Expedition embodied many features needed for offshore long-range cruising, including a full-width salon and a spacious engine room with twin PowerTech™ 4045AFM85 engines. “I am really happy to have John Deere engines on board,” says Peter. “The engines are easily accessible, and that’s critically

important when doing engine room checks at sea. Such things as easy access to the oil dipstick and the ability to inspect the water pumps are important.”



The crew: Peter and Sara Gebhard, along with daughters Charlotte and Frances.



Twin Power Tech™ 4045AFM85 engines each consume 12.5 liters (3.3 gallons) of fuel per hour running 9 knots at 1850 rpm.



One of the highlights of the trip was a transit through the Panama Canal. Line handlers guide *Choisi* through the first set of locks behind a tanker.



The Gebhards' 425-day trek aboard *Choisi* began in Alaska and took them southward along the Pacific coastline through the Panama Canal and then northward along the U.S. East Coast to Maine.

The Gebhards also liked knowing they would have the support of the John Deere network of marine dealers along the coasts. "As a powerboat owner, having that kind of support through the John Deere dealerships is very important. The ability to get spare parts and service — no matter where we were during the trip — was critical."

Like all Kadey-Krogen yachts, the Krogen 55' Expedition is a semi-custom yacht, and the Gebhards customized their vessel to make *Choisi* a comfortable aquatic home for the foursome at sea. The yacht's VIP suite was turned into two separate identical cabins so the girls could have their own space. They also installed state-of-the-art electronics, including satellite internet and telephone services, so that the Gebhards could communicate with friends and family, including their two other children in college, and keep tabs on their businesses.

Once the vessel was completed, Kadey-Krogen Yachts delivered the vessel to the Gebhard's point of departure in Juneau, Alaska. "We just packed up our kids, their math textbooks, and 19 bags, and got on an airplane and flew to Juneau," recalls Sara. They also brought along their cat, Leo.

What they did leave behind were their geography and history textbooks. Those subjects would be taught first-hand throughout their travels to Mexico, Costa

Rica, Panama, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, the Turks and Caicos Islands, the Bahamas, and the East Coast of the United States via the Intercoastal Waterway (ICW).

### The ultimate study abroad

"The education they received was so unique," says Peter. "They learned Spanish, and they learned to play baseball because every village in Mexico has a baseball diamond. Charlotte will tell you that we dragged her and her sister through countless museums, Spanish forts, and historical sites. As we traveled further north along the U.S. East Coast, we learned about the Civil War and the Revolutionary War. From a history and geography point of view, the trip was a living textbook for them."

A trip highlight included a transit through the Panama Canal on January 4, 2015. "It was a long day, but it was definitely a phenomenal experience to go through that incredible piece of engineering in a single day, underneath your own power," recalls Sara. "We had hired an agent, so we had line handlers onboard. It was a beautiful day. It all worked perfectly, and we didn't have any problems."

The 425-day trip was chock-full of on-the-water adventures, yet the quiet moments aboard *Choisi* were treasured. "I handled

the 5 a.m. to 10 a.m. watches," reminisces Sara. "That's when the sun comes up and I'm in the pilothouse, and the boat is quiet. It's a magical moment to be out at sea at daybreak. It's spectacular. I also remember anchoring in Georgia in the Intercoastal Waterway and watching a bald eagle swooping at sunset. It takes your breath away."

**"I am really happy to have John Deere engines on board."**

— Peter Gebhard

Peter recalls watching a sunset and the rising of a full moon within minutes of each other off the coast of Mexico. "I remember that big orange orb setting in the west as the sun takes that final dip into the ocean, leaving those vibrant oranges, purples, and pinks in the sky. A half hour later, a big orange orb ascends slowly out of the ocean. It's just magical."

Call it a lesson on the solar system, or simply a special moment in time. Either way, these real-life learning experiences are some that the Gebhards will likely never forget.

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