

SLOEPMOUCHE - 46' Norman Cross trimaran - 5' draft – January-February 2019
Subject/ Area: Thailand: Phuket & West coast with Sail Thailand 2019 and at our leisure

Dear SSCA,

After enjoying Langkawi around Xmas time, we were ready to join Sail Thailand rally to finally visit Thailand after hearing so many stories about it from fellow cruisers over the last 25 years!. At time of writing, the Baht was approx 30 to the US Dollar and Malaysian Rm 4 to 1 US. Very helpful references were: the 2016 edition of the South East Asia Pilot and the Sunsail Cruising Guides: “Kradan, Thailand to Langkawi, Malaysia” and “Phuket, Thailand”

Rebak Marina, Langkawi: We had a Meet & Greet with organizer Marieke, her team, and the other rally participants. Sail Thailand is a not-for-profit group and this year's rally is it's 3rd one. With only a dozen boats participating this year (over 20 last year) this rally would be much more personal and for the first time, a mother-ship, sailing catamaran Nyami, will accompany the rally with Marieke and Bert as guests ... Light afternoon snacks & drinks accompanied the briefing that gave us all info needed (we also got an e-publication about rally program). Checking out of Langkawi was painless and free at Kuah Ferry dock where all 3 offices are located.

Ao Pante, NW bay on Koh Tarutao: The 28nm passage from Langkawi was quite nice sailing, close to the wind in seas getting less brown and more blue. We anchored near the red Park moorings. Ashore you will find a concrete jetty at the entrance to a mangrove creek that is navigable for dinghies at high tide for some distance leading to a limestone cave known as the “Crocodile cave”. The cave is officially closed to the public because the walkways have not been maintained and can be hazardous! To go to that cave by dinghy, favor all channels going to the right .. when you pass a old broken house on stilts on your port side, you will find the landing platform leading to the cave, just another 60m to starboard after a bend in the river. The park fees are 200 baht per person for landing ashore and 100 baht for the boat. Other facilities include a small shop, basic restaurant, campsite, library and museum. There is a path leading to a look out point above the anchorage but it can be slippery and takes about 35 to 45 minutes so leave plenty of time to come back before dark. The rally potluck was held at the local restaurant (just buy drinks from restaurant) because the beach is riddled with sand flies :(

We had a fast 46nm passage to **Ko Rok Nok** in 15-20kts East wind. Not the most comfortable anchorage around here. Boats anchored between it and Ko Rok Nai were exposed to wind, swell and currents. We took a Park mooring on the NW side but had North wind, waves & swell in the evening and even when it calmed some at night, it was very roly. The next morning, regretting to miss the beach BBQ planned for the rally fleet that evening, 4 yachts decided against risking another uncomfortable night and so we motor sailed just 16nm to **Koh Muk**, our next stopover.. Less wind than predicted so the upwind passage went easily. We anchored in the south of Koh Muk in front of a beach with a few restaurants & accommodation. The west coast of Koh Muk is worth exploring by dinghy with a secluded beach and before that, the famous Marokot Cave (Emerald cave). Dinghies & kayak are no longer permitted to enter the tunnel to the hong so you have to swim in. Zotke and Zonne had no qualms swimming in the dark tunnel. Two days in a row, we went around 1615 and the last of the tourists were leaving so we had the whole hong pretty much for ourselves! Wild monkeys were excited by these 2 black dogs invading their hong! The whole hong was almost

dry as we went in at low tide so we did not get to see why it is called Emerald Cave yet. For that you would need to go around mid-day with medium to high tide, we suppose. If, like us, you had never heard of a “hong”, it's an area in the natural cliff formations that eroded or sank, forming a kind of secret place open to the sky, that you access by a cave passage or tunnel or narrow opening. There are many around the islets of Thailand, and make fun exploration. The best bet is to visit hong's at mid tide as a general rule. Seawater seems cooler here in Thailand than it was in Borneo and the sun being too low to shine thru the hong sky opening could not warm up! Went ashore for a nice dinner at the restaurant on top of the rocky point on the right side of the beach and had a nice Thai diner at reasonable price. A big RIB with several park rangers came one morning to collect 200 Baht/pers. This permit is valid for 5 days here and 3 smaller islands nearby. Our first 3 anchorages so far have all being different parks, each with their own fees.

After a early morning swim to Emerald Cave (our 3rd time) and a convivial breakfast on s/v Nyami, we had a easy motor-sailing and pure sailing passage to **Koh Lanta**. We anchored just off the Costa Lanta Resort. Best beach landing is in the north corner of the bay between 2 swimming buoyed areas. Good wind but some swell in the anchorage. Next morning, we had some arts & craft activities at the resort and from 330 to 9pm we had an optional Thai cooking class a little further on the island (included transport there). We learned in a fun and entertaining way, how to prepare, and also how to eat correctly real Thai food. We recommend Sukho Cuisine cooking school because Akkapak, the teacher is charismatic, well organized, and teaches you secrets that restaurants would never do for you due to work and cost. He also gives 5% of his earnings to support a school for the blind in his home region, Sukho, in the north. You can buy a local SIM card at the 7 Eleven in walking distance ... Best network seems to be AIS.

With little wind from the side, we ended motor sailing the 46nm to **Phuket** where we anchored near the 1-stop check-in center which is the rounded building on the end of the big pier. Next morning, we went by dinghy to a floating dock in **Ao Chalong** Marina, right near the check in/out round building. Nice to have all 4 offices located right next to each others. First thing is to go in the welcome room where you can use one of 2 computer to create an online ID profile that will be used from then whenever coming in or out. You could also do that online any time before going ashore. The office opens at 9am and it took us only 10min to create our boat profile. After another 30min, going to Port, Customs, Quarantine (no one there so nothing to do) & Immigration, without any fee other than eventual photocopies, we were checked in to Thailand (300 baht fee if clearing in on WE or holidays). Since we came without visa, we were given 30 days from check in date. With about a week to get here from Langkawi and the same to get back to Langkawi later, we could thus spend 6 weeks in Thailand without any advanced visa or fees! And later we were told it was possible to extend another 1 month by applying later at the Phuket town Immigration office (15km away) or in Krabi office. A total of 60 days and 2 weeks! Great!

If you need a money changer, walk the 1km pier from the Immigration to the end ashore (or hop on a tuk tuk – open bus), then continue 800m on a road that is also perpendicular to the sea (slightly off the left from the bus parking lot as you come off the dock). At the end of that road, you are at the main road round-about, turn right and continue walking. Just before the 7/11 mini-mart, right after some banks, you find the best rates booth. From there. Just hundred yards away, we bought a second sim card and even bought a used Samsung Galaxy smartphone. Another 20min walk that way and you end up at the turn off to the Phuket Yacht

Club where the YC hosted a very nice lunch for Sail Thailand. Or you can go by dinghy at mid-to high tide to the YC's floating pier. Nice setting, nice bar, good food. 4 good places to provision for food – fresh as well as processed foods – are Super Cheap, Makro and Food for Foreigners (Tesco was disappointing), (walking distance going west from the round-about when you come out of Chalong Pier) and Villa Market (walking distance going east.) If you turn left instead of right at the round-about, and walk 10 mins, you have Super Cheap, good for local fruit, vegetables, and local bulk and dry goods, another 15 mins you arrive at Makro Supermarket (European food chain) and a modest Tesco (British Supermarket) another 10 mins for Food for Foreigners. If at the roundabout you go sort of across and right you'll find a treasure trove: Villa Market (in the Home Pro Shopping Complex) It has lots of expensive imported food treats you might be craving for! Also some organics, good choice of cheeses, and butcher shop meats in cuts you can recognize!

We needed a good mechanic to fix our 15hp Yamaha as the lower unit made a metal grinding noise. Had Billy ph: 081 7370176 recommended to us. He took the lower unit and asked me why I ran the engine without any oil in the lower unit?? I guess the last time the lower unit seal was changed by a mechanic in Cebu, it had a micro leak that eventually leaked all the oil out! Lesson: check the lower unit more often! Expensive parts needed for repair but it was done well & quickly!

Taxis around Phuket are super expensive and most cruisers rent a car instead (700 baht). Even going on the back of a moto-taxi cost you as much as renting a scooter for the day! (250 baht). There are public buses (old trucks like in the Philippines) but nobody we asked could give us much info about routes and times. But if you see one, just flag them and they will stop to pick you up or drop you (cost you either 40 or 60 baht/ride). If you go to the main market in Phuket town, there are buses waiting around there and it will cost you 60 baht to come back to Ao Chalong pier. Another solution is to rent a scooter for one or more days (250 Baht/day or 200 Baht/more than 3 days at Thachalong Travel & Tour, the travel agency on your right just before you arrive at the main street w/ square with monument over the tunnel when walking to town from Ao Chalong pier.

Our Schipperke, Zonne was due to have puppies, (5) while we were here and we had good assistance at moderate prices at the RTB 24h vet clinic (went there on the scooter with the kennel and Zonne on Jackie's knees :) The facility has the latest in diagnostic and surgical treatment, and a team of young, well, trained vets and assistants. Since dogs usually like to have the puppies in the early hours, the 24 hr feature appealed to us and costs the same as regular hr service. Opposite RTB is also a big pet store, "Shamus" with some top quality dog food, like Taste of the Wild and other Non-grain alternative foods. Non GMO.

Since the anchorage in Ao Chalong bay is quite bustling with traffic as well as wind waves, we moved to the **Beach Bar**, a calmer anchorage. Note that the Beach Bar beach and the next bay, Ao Yon, have no piers so dinghy has to be landed on the beach and pulled many yds up as the bay is shallow and the tide range great :(From there, we took another optional tour arranged by Sail Thailand. On the program: a pearl farm visit, a rum distillery (Caribbean French 'rhum agricole'), visit to the Big Buddha view point (a work in construction for 20 years well worth a visit!) and the grand finale: the Phuket Siam Niramit village and theatre production.. Best to arrive at this last attraction as soon as it opens (6pm) to have enough time to enjoy all the side attractions and a copious, quality, food buffet before the main show (830-930pm). While the show did not compare to Devdan in Bali it was certainly a great show

with amazing decors changing so quickly and a river, and even elephants on stage! A great way to discover the story of Thailand traditional culture.

Our next stop was the beautiful **Nai Harn bay** with lots of tourists on the beaches and lots of sailboats anchored but well-sheltered and not overcrowded. The treat for the Sail Thailand participants was a fabulous, sumptuous breakfast buffet after a yoga class hosted by the Nai Harn 5 star hotel. Well done, the organizers...definitely 5 star! Luckily here, someone rigged a floating pier to the big rocks on the north side next to Nai Harn Hotel so you can leave your dinghy and hop off at any tide. At the top of the walkway from the floating pier is a Mini Mart, a Yacht Club Bar, an expensive, but reportedly good, Italian restaurant, and an inexpensive Thai restaurant. Can also rent scooters (300-350 Baht) from Mini Mart.

The NE trade winds being lively, we wondered about the fun (or lack of it) going now to Krabi (situated NE naturally :) It took some tacking but we had very enjoyable sailing and motor sailing. With 4 days in the program to do the trip, it was easy to find intermediate anchorages. Our first was in the unremarkable but huge, deserted and well protected south bay of Koh Yao Yai. Next day was another enjoyable sailing day with sunny skies, moderate seas and 15-20 kts of winds. We took our time tacking several times sometimes purely sailing sometimes adding a little iron sail to drift less. Covered 34nm to get 10nm towards our nice anchorage at **North Koh Dam Khwan**. Arrived here around 4:30pm when most day tripper boats left this tiny motu beach (a national park). Instead of hundreds people on this tiny beach, we were only a dozen and the rangers did not ask us the 200 Baht/pers fee as they close at 5pm (everyone has to leave the beach), the rangers are stationed just a few hundred yards away on Koh Dam Khwan proper. The reef protects somewhat the anchorage from wind waves and we had another good night ...

Our last leg towards Krabi was only 10nm motor sailing in calmer waters as we were now quite protected by the main land. By following the waypoints we easily found and followed the channel that leads through the shallow area around the inlet of the river and then the almost-hidden entrance to the very narrow channel (short, deep enough & well marked with red/green sticks) leading into the **Port Takola Marina**. Despite being completely landlocked it was well ventilated (unless sandwiched med-moored to the floating dock). The marina offered Sail Thailand free med-moor to the outer wall and we had the breeze almost dead ahead. Sail Thailand had a nice dinner/party sponsored by Port Takola, with music and even 2 baby elephants showing up! This marina is new and still being built, but the single dock is filling surely with local charter boats and cruisers/mega-yachts looking for a quiet place to berth or to haul out. The restaurant was only opened, a few weeks before we arrived, but the food was very good. If you have a powerful dinghy, you can very easily dinghy to Krabi town by following the river in the deeper water. It's about 5-6 km from Port Takola.

We decided to **extend our 30-day visa-on-arrival by a second 30-days at the Krabi Immigration office**. The visa extension goes very fast and much easier here than in the Main Immigration office in Phuket town (1900 baht ea). We had no trouble from officials when we gave Port Takola Marina as our Thai address. Very near, by dinghy, from Port Takola: you cross the river just as you exit the marina channel: on the left, you will see the police dock, the immigration is just inland of it, The Polis might let you tie your dinghy there for a quick run at the one-stop center. If not, you could put your dinghy at the next big jetty, to the right, the big ferry dock, and then walk 1 mile to the office.

We heard from Marieke that Krabi had a great Elephant Sanctuary so we contacted them and dinghied to Krabi town where we tied the dinghy to a big floating restaurant where we had dinner when we came back that evening (use a stern dinghy anchor to keep your dinghy from being pushed on the floating restaurant by boat wake). The Krabi Elephant Sanctuary provides free pickup at the Voque Shopping mall, just 5min walking from that floating restaurant. We saw 3 older elephants who had been overworked either in agriculture or in tourism and now had a golden retirement provided by this volunteer group that provides as many elephants as possible, a sanctuary with the good health, freedom, and happiness they truly deserve. They promote awareness within Thailand and also to international visitors "Elephant Conservation in Action". There is no "show" or riding the animals. The time is spent learning, feeding, making herbal supplements, for them, and taking them to their "spa" (a mud bath and a clean up scrub in the pond). The dramatic Thai mountain setting gives a feeling of returning them to "the wild". See the video on our YouTube.com/sloepmouche channel.

Next activity on the rally was a beach cleanup with local school kids on Koh Yao Noi and a visit of fish farm, so we motor sailed the 22nm .. after a few hours of NE, trade winds we ended up with West wind, go figure! At least we could motor sail close to the wind in calm waters. The entrance to the passage between **Koh Yao Noi** and **Koh Yao Yai** is not very deep so check the tides and favor the south side of Koh Yao Noi to get deeper water. Close to the anchorage is a great sand spit that becomes quite large at low tide. The 2Zs loved it.

Island Exploration in Phang Nga: Next we motor-sailed to **Koh Roi** anchoring facing 2 beaches with a hong accessed by foot from the west beach at all but high tide. Lots of fruit bats high in the mangrove trees in this less touristy spot (no park fees :). Next morning we made a day stop at **Koh Ku Du Yai** where we explore a different hong, this one accessed by dinghy at all but low tide. Then motoring in light wind to **Koh Chang Lat** where we anchored in a very picturesque bay with lots of rocky shoreline to explore by dinghy! Later in **Koh Phanak**, we explored more hong along the west coast. Some you have to walk if entering the tunnel at low tide or you can go by kayak or dinghy at medium tide and if you stay in the hong after it reaches high tide, you might be stuck inside the hong unless you have a scuba tank to come back out!

We anchored in the river near **Phuket Premier Boatyard**, as we had a dinghy parade (filmed by the local Drone club) and a fun meet & greet/workshop day with local businesses with cocktails and lunch there. Even by dinghy you have to time the tide to enter the boatyard channel. The day after, we brought some stuff to repair to the local businesses we had met and talked to: our mainsail was properly re-stitched by Robert Tasker, South East Asia Sails / we had some SS welding done well by "POP" Phakpeetinan / our captain's chair was re-upholstered by Rat Cushions. We also had a free rigging inspection done by David Samuelson of Precision Shipwright Services. We even got complimented on the good shape of our very old rigging! David is a very knowledgeable and competent person, and we appreciated his complementary inspection, honestly done, not to "invent problems" to get work. We then moved to anchor nearer the **Yacht Haven Marina**, one of the big marinas around Phuket. Whoever designed the landscape must have designed penitentiaries before as you will discover looking at the gray, sterile, shore buildings ... The marina offers the usual super yacht and boat services like fuel dock, berths, restaurant/bar and local businesses (ship chandler/marine broker/charter). Despite the prison look, it was loaded with super yachts. Jackie laughs and says, "this is where super yacht owners get an inferiority complex...as soon as one pulls into a berth dwarfing his neighbor, an even larger and more luxurious one berths

making that one look like a child's toy!"

We went by car rental with friends to Phuket town where they extended their visa (With somewhat more waiting and hassle than we had extending ours in Krabi Town). We checked out Wayne's World, Marine Salvage used and new, a kind of Sailor's like in Fort Lauderdale :) At the Boat Lagoon Marina, we also checked out East Marine Asia, the most extensive marine chandlery we've seen since New Zealand. They aim to be the West Marine of this side of the planet., and indeed, the store is reminiscent of one.

The 7th annual Seven Star Phuket Yacht Haven party was the final event of Sail Thailand 2019 rally, and was also open to all sailors around since it is hosted by Seven Star Transport, the company that organizes transport of yachts by cargo world wide. The occasion was a last get together with all the organizers, sponsors and participants. It was a fun "short and sweet rally" that was different from the Sail Malaysia Rally. If you plan to come to Phuket area Mid January to the first half of February, consider joining Sail Thailand. Marieke, of Seven Star Transport, and her husband, Bert and the team put a lot of work into organizing the rally, and we appreciate their efforts. Are thinking of joining again next year! But for now, we can go back to our slow cruising mode :) Whew!

Here are a few highlights of the places we visited during the next 5 weeks:

Koh Phanak: we day anchored on the east side, everywhere about 15ft deep. We enjoyed exploring dry caves with amazing stalagmites, stalactite, old fountains, the entry right under the rocky cliff on the south side of the east coast. Entrance can be seen at all tides but we happen to go close to low tide so saw a deep beach under the overhangs. Take a torch light as it has several chambers and passages you need a light to explore! Then, a little north, just off the small beach pretty much the first one when coming from the south, you can at low to mid-tide walk in a meandering tunnel (bring a good light again) that leads you to another hong. The next beach did not show any passage to any hong, just monkeys. A little further north you will see a beach with four boats and official park information panels (as well as a ranger in attendance) but no hong there either. Further north, we explored another dry cave!

Koh Hong: we anchored NE of it with a stunning view of islands all around us! Koh Hong itself is full of tourists between 1030 and 1600 so best to go early or late to explore the big hong. We went at 8am and had the whole hong for ourselves ... entered by dinghy via a tunnel on the SW side and exited this big hong in the center by the open bay on the East side. Both passages are closed by floating line so no long tail boats get in, just kayaks & dinghy paddling. Marine Park might come to ask you 300 Baht/pers for Park. In former times, before the park and buoy lines blocking the entrance, sailboats could enter for a once in a life time spectacular photo of the boat within meters of cliffs rising a thousand feet out of the sea. We're 25 years too late!

Koh Yang: another very scenic anchorage in front a tall pinnacle. From here we dinghied to

Koh Pin Khan aka James Bond Island from "The Man With the Golden Gun". Lots of tourists during the day. 300 Baht/pers landing fee for Park. Nothing special other than the one view of a nice pinnacle. There is nothing to remind you of the film. Closed after 5pm.

Koh Taluh Nok: a small island full of crevices, caves & hong to explore by kayak/dinghy. Lots of tourists during day, calm at night

Ban Khuan NE on the west coast of Phuket. Other than Nai Harn Bay, this is our favorite anchorage along the west coast because you have the clearer blue water like anywhere along the west coast of Phuket but you have a nice white sand beach with few people and resorts as well as a good protection from the NW wind that seemed predominant in March. Winds tend to swing between West winds to NW and North at night, thankfully not too strong, about

10kts rarely more than 15kts. There is a mangrove river system that was excavated in the tin mining days that can be entered at higher tides in the north end of the bay, and makes a nice dinghy exploration. The entrance is also the most interesting end of the long 5km beach, as the "river" meanders around, creating sand spits and small beaches, and at out-going tides, you can jump in and ride the current back out to sea. There are a couple rocky islets about a mile or 2 from the anchorage where you see tour boats take tourists for snorkeling. The islet rock formations are interesting, and the water is clear compared to Phang Nga bay, but don't expect any coral, or other than a few schools of small fish.

Koh Phi Phi Don South bay: scenic bay, even if soiled by the huge number of tour boats & tourists. This is the famous sand spit that the Boxing Day Tsunami of 2004 washed over causing so much destruction and death made worse because of rampant overbuilding of tourist "traps" without planning or much thought. Today, the sand spit is even more crowded and overbuilt than before, there are also some upscale resorts added. The major difference is that for public safety, "tsunami evacuation routes" are marked thru out the narrow, crowded rabbit warren of shops, eateries and hotels! Gee, I felt a LOT safer! Still, it's a place to be experienced. The natural setting is magnificent even with the development. The must-do thing is climb to the scenic view points, of which there are now 3 (even those were expanded!) Viewpoint number 3 is the nicest and is landscaped with plants and flowers in among the big boulders, and the snack places do not detract from the lovely view of the aqua blue and green waters, the rugged cliffs, and sandy beaches. Far above the hawkers and consumerism, you can ignore the many grossly-over-tattooed "selfie" takers and imagine yourself alone with nature...well, sort of.

Maya Bay on Koh Phi Phi Le: 3 big boat moorings suitable for sailboats in 15-20m during NE season. The east side of the bay, the nice beach filmed in the movie "The Beach" is closed off to public at this time due to overuse. Lots of small moorings for long tail day boats. We left the boat on a mooring and took the dinghy to explore the 5nm coastline around the island with a scenic hong/lagoon, and Viking Cave (off limits due to bird nest collecting area) on the East side and good diving spots on the west side. There are a number of big orange or yellow mooring balls around the island that look feasible for overnight, as they are further out from shore, not where a small boat would go for tourist activities. You could choose a mooring according to season. We did not inquire if there is a fee or if over night stays are even permitted, but next time, we may explore the possibility.

Pimalai Bay on Koh Lanta: nice beach with several resorts. We went again to visit Nee, owner of Costa Lanta, who we met during the Sail Thailand Rally. We made a video with her about her composting and gardening efforts that not only reduces organic wastes, but nourishes the grounds and gets given away to locals. She's gotten several resorts to follow her example and hopefully the video will encourage more folks to realize it's easy, and benefits everyone. As we said before, land the dinghy to the north in front of the public access area between 2 buoyed off swim areas. Less surf and chance of getting rolled over by your dinghy.

Koh Ngai: with forecasted W-SW wind, we anchored off the East coast, near nice beaches with small resorts. We explored the SE point and some of the small islands nearby by dinghy and snorkeled some. The area is National Marine Park, a different one than Koh Lanta or Koh Muk, and more expensive: 400bht/per. So, if you want to get your money's worth, stay a few days and explore. The small islands to the SE are quite interesting, the water clear, and there are sea caves and hidden beaches and rocks to climb and snorkel around. (no coral, but lots

of shimmering schools of tiny fish in among the rocks).

A few general comments of miscellaneous subjects: As far as **internet provider**, we like AIS much better than True Home. Watch out for providers that let different gaming and other services sign you up by default and take credits out of your phone balance, forcing you to cancel each time having to call the provider to complain before getting any credits back! Found a great place to buy **organic and macrobiotic food**: Macrobioticworld.com is about 1km away from the Nai Harn hotel on the road back towards Phuket town. Its a store and a restaurant with a swimming pool and sauna. If you think it's just nuts and seeds and brown rice, try the vegan ice cream and chocolates! You'll never guess it's not sinful! When **renewing their visas in Phuket** main immigration office, several cruisers got denied because they gave their boat as residence!! The official wanted a hotel address, no marinas ... best to explain your situation to one of the expat volunteers first or renew at Krabi immigration office where officials seem more sensible! Voyaging from Langkawi to Phuket and vice-versa, you'll have to anchor mostly in **National Parks** with each time the chance (should we say "the risk"?) to be visited by park rangers coming to collect the park fees: from 200 to 400 Baht/pers + from 0 to 100 Baht/boat; sometimes it is valid for only 1 day, sometimes for 5 days. Each interesting Island seems to be a different park, these are so near each other that you might be hit with this "tax" many times in a row. Nicer to spend that money in local economy instead, like having a meal ashore ... but each day brings its surprises! For a cruiser's budget, Thailand is more expensive than Malaysia but then products & services are sometimes of better quality and availability. And as everyone says, the food is much more complex in flavor and freshness. Langkawi and Phuket being close together, it is no wonder than many cruisers spend years in this area, going back and forth from one country to the other!

We are now back in Langkawi to replenish diesel (2.68 Rm or 0.65USD/liter at Telaga fuel dock or 2.20 Rm if take at any pump station at 20l/day allowance for Jerry-jugs) & gasoline (2.38 Rm or 0.54USD/liter at Telaga fuel dock or 2.10 Rm if take at any pump station at 20l/day allowance for Jerry-jugs) > better quality & price than in Thailand!); get some stuff we had sent to us here in duty-free Langkawi (warning about Ezipoz, their website does not work and since 3 weeks we cannot get any intelligent response to our queries!); and also relax and train & play with puppies on the beach before sailing to Sabang, Indonesia for their 2019 Festival. ... but that will be the subject of our next letter :) By the time the puppies are 8 weeks, they will have already visited 3 countries!

As always, enjoy our weekly videos on www.YouTube.com/sloepmouche

Lifetime Commodores Luc Callebaut, Jackie Lee and 6 Schipperke dogs!.

SLOEPMOUCHE - 46' Norman Cross trimaran - 5' draft – May-July 2019
Subject/ Area: Thailand: Phuket & Islands to Langkawi during the SW monsoon

Dear SSCA,

After enjoying the Sabang Marine Festival and a month in Sabang, Indonesia, we had an easy passage towards Phuket (see previous letter). We landed in **Ko Racha Noi** as this island offers 2 beautiful anchorages during the SW season. Our Schipperkes were very happy to finally swim and play on a beautiful white sandy beach after 1 month of confinement on board in Sabang. Our favorite is the SE beach where tides cover & uncover a sand spit that becomes a nice white sandy beach connecting the shore with a small islet. Tourists boats come daily from Phuket between 10am & 4pm but otherwise you have the place to yourself. This is the first place in SE Asia where we can say water IS really clear!!! The snorkeling is good with areas of nice live corals (although a far cry from some certain areas of the Philippines & Indonesia). Just 2 miles north lies Banana Bay with pretty snorkeling but no real beach. It is also fun to explore by dinghy the small channel just south where the island is divided in 2 parts at high tide. Our next stop was completely different: **Ko Racha Yai**. Small beach and tourist hawkers, on the East side full of tourists, with many moorings way too close to each other and, several boats rafted together on most of them as dozens of day boats of all size & types come from Phuket with 100's of snorkelers, divers, & beach lovers. Thank goodness that a fraction of that number of boats go down to **Racha Noi**.and this time of year we could take a mooring and stay over several days w/o being chased away.

Back in **Phuket**, anchored off **Ao Chalong** check-in jetty, we cleared in again with a free 30- day-visa on arrival that we will be able to extend for another month later in Krabi. In order to travel around, we rented a scooter once again from the very helpful Kwan at Thachalong Travel and Tour, very close to the roundabout as you come from the pier. Kwan is so charming and cute. She helped us many times talking to service people and translating for us on the phone,(even some complex concepts). She researched for us the best way to get one of our puppies to an owner in Bangkok, and gave us discounts on cars and scooters.. At less than 10 US\$/day it beats infrequent public transports & very expensive taxis & moto drivers.

We drove to Boat Lagoon complex to get a new fridge compressor module from Laurent at Cirrus Lt to replace our 20 year old Danfoss. We had replaced the evaporator one year ago in the Philippines so now we replaced the rest of the Adler Barbour Cold Machine that we used in a DIY freezer/fridge box. We also brought our Magnum inverter to be repaired by Monrak of (0894745299) who was recommended for repairs of all kinds of marine electronics (but parts were

not readily available in Singapore so we ended up leaving it there until next year when we plan to return – but he is not good at communicating or following up). We also decided to finally replace our 40-year-old Parkinson Cowan household oven/stove that came with the boat. We found a light model DYNA (Thailand made) at Baan & Beyond. At only 50cm wide, a 4-burners/grill/oven that we could easily bring in through our 57cm wide doors. To get a standard 60cm we would have to break the seals on the hatch situated over the main engine. Fortunately the old Parkinson was just 57cm wide so we could get it out! It turns out that the new appliance works better than our old one but it is doubtful that it can last 40 years like the old one! We found a place that sells Corian-like material made in Korea (Hanamix) (same brand we had our counter tops made in the Philippines): Thai Aek Thong (Maya 098-4454265).

To get our dogs to run on a beach, we went by dinghy at mid to high tide to the Beach Bar beach about 1nm away across the bay. Food provisioning: fresh fruits & veg as well as fish & meat are available every Tue & Fri evenings (4-8pm) a few km west on the main road to Rawai (100m after you pass the first stop lights after Makro) and supermarket food at Makro, Food for Foreigners, Super Cheap, Vila Market and Big C.

We had a nice and quick sailing passage to **Monkey Beach**, on the west side of **Koh Phi Phi Don**. We took a big boat mooring in 20m of water in pretty clear water (a nice change from Ao Chalong!) in front of a nice beach, well frequented by day tours during the day but calm afterwards. Well protected during SW monsoon. Rangers came collect 400 Bahts/pax for 5 days within Koh Phi Phi national park. Went to Monkey Beach, among many day tourists and saw the wild monkeys, not shy and stealing things from these tourists! Next day, we went by dinghy to the nearby bay north of town but it gets very shallow at low water so we ended up leaving the dinghy along the rocky shore and walked at low tide to the main beach, a good exercise for our dogs :) Next day, we motored the 3nm to the **east side of Koh Phi Phi Le**. A little rocky but protected now during SW monsoon.

Next we motored to **Tonsai Bay** back on **Koh Phi Phi Don** and took a marine park mooring. Checked dive centers ashore and learned they all practice the same rates so we chose to go on a trip with The Adventure Divers, who use a comfortable dive boat. Did 2 dives on the East side of Koh Phi Phi Le. Visibility was not great but we saw a few creatures to make it interesting none the less (NE monsoon offers better visibility and more pelagic, which we plan to check next year when we come back).

Had a easy motor sailing to **Krabi** where we anchored 1 night in the river, near the entrance to Port Takola Marina, so we'd have a short dinghy ride to Immigration's backdoor on the river. It's literally just across the river from the

entrance markers to Port Takola. Last time we took the dinghy to the Coast Guard pier, and walked a short way to Immigration. But this time as we were dinghy-ing from the anchorage, Jackie saw some big letters on the river bank that spelled Immigration backwards (because it's supposed to be read by the people who drive into the parking lot from the land side). There is no real dock or landing, but on a mid tide, we could go into a little channel and get ashore dry. We were able to obtain a 1-month extension to our 1-month free visa on arrival. It took only 15min and cost 2,000 Baht/pax. You can apply for the extension even after only a week in the country, and the extension will give you 30 days from the end of the original visa, effectively giving you 60 days total. It's so much easier extending in sleepy Krabi than crowded chaotic Phuket. No fifty questions.

Then we motored, with the current, and anchored right in front of Krabi town next to a seafront public park. The way in is not the easiest with all crazy navigation markers. Best to go on a rising tide at mid tide. Check it out with the dinghy first on a low tide, then you see where all the hazards are.

Further into the river, at about the end of the Seafront Park, there is a floating dock where you can get ashore at all tides. Every day, the fresh market is open nearby from 6-10am. (not great for late risers like Jackie). To get there, go straight inland from the sea on any nearby street til you get to a cross street with Neanderthal statues at the intersection, turn right and walk until you see a long building which looks like a market. Jackie really likes the Krabi market. You find all the veggies and fruit familiar and unfamiliar and all kinds of strange exotic stuff like fermented and preserved foods, mushrooms of all kinds, curry paste and all manner of fresh spices, A large fish and meat selection, and a kind of food court with snacks and hot dishes, take away prepared foods...everything! If you walk from the bathrooms to the farthest end of the market staying along that edge you will find a place that sells beautiful raw and roasted nuts and such goodies in bulk. We got the most beautiful golden roasted (Not fried in oil or salted, tho you can find those too) for only about \$12 us/ kg (not lb). And if you keep going along the edge of the market to the end, you find the vendors that grind fresh coconuts and press out the rich cream fresh for you. Ask them to grind and press it while you are there, and get it home and into a fridge or freeze portions in ziplock bags so you can break off bits or use the whole bag in your dishes that call for coconut milk or cream. Once you've had fresh, you'll never go back to powder, canned, or boxed with all their emulsifiers again.

We took the 5 nm dinghy trip by the mangrove river to go visit the Krabi Boat Lagoon Marina in case we wanted to go there in the future. It's really isolated, but nice. It was the WE so couldn't ask price of haul out.

After a week in Krabi muddy river (during the several rainy days) and

mosquitoes, we were ready to leave the calm water for the outside :) We motor sailed against SW wind to **Ko Po Da Nok** and took a mooring on the East side. The Park rangers seem to collect park fees only if you come ashore at their base. With swirling winds & current, it was best to be on a sturdy mooring than anchored. Internet via Mobile phone is spotty here and varied. Next stop was **Ko Hong** where we moored on the SE side and toured the island by dinghy. We entered the hong via the dinghy passage on the north side since the tide was high enough..

Next we sailed to **Koh Yao Noi** NE side and anchored at **Ao Muang**, in front of a plush resort. Calm in SW monsoon. Next scenic anchorage is just between Ko Yao Noi and Ko Yao Yai, near a very nice sandy beach and a sand spit uncovering at low tide where we could let our 5 Schipperkes loose and have lots of fun! We had a tasty lunch, if not cheap by local standards, at the By The Sea restaurant that has a floating pier you pass near when entering the anchorage.

Next, we motorsailed the East coast of **Koh Yao Yai** and found another small but nice beach at **Bam Laem Hua Lan**, also the site of a local beach restaurant where tourists stop on their bike trip around the island.

Having plenty of things to do back in **Ao Chalong**, we motor sailed the short 15nm and anchored at our usual anchorage near that small conspicuous wreck. The bay is getting very crowded with tourist boat moorings that it is very hard to find room to anchor in deep enough water. We had thought that this anchorage would be exposed during the SW season but actually it was calm as we did rarely experience strong winds.

For fun activities, we took a fun day tour with Real Rafting Adventure that picked us up in Ao Chalong and took us to Phang Nga area to a small waterfall, Monkey Cave, Elephant activities, a surprisingly varied and copious lunch and a very fun 5km rafting trip. We also recommend going to the buffet/show at Fantasea. The Siam Niramit village park was more interesting, showing traditional Thai rural life compared to Fantasea carnival-like atmosphere, oriented mostly to kids activities. Both venues offer a great food buffet and the theater productions were top quality, with Thai dance and theme and indoor "river" and "rain storms". We enjoyed both!

We left Goldie, our second puppy with her new owner, Bob Mott in Phuket and Luc flew Lucky to Bangkok to new owners living in Korat. Our last puppy, Sunny was still looking for a new caring home, so she left with us after 2 months having slipped by around Phuket.

Before we left Phuket, we had 2 of our 20 Lbs US propane tanks refilled at LPG Phuket for 450 Baht (18kgs) and refilled our CO2 tanks (soda stream/fire extinguisher) at Phuket dry ice. You can find several videos on YouTube

showing how to do that.

We really enjoyed Koh Racha Noi so much that we decided to make it our first stop on our way **back to Langkawi**. More fun time in crystal waters and a nice white sandy beach with Sunny and her parents before and after the few tourist boats left for the day! Luckily for us, we have a exhaust alarm because it beeped just after leaving our mooring and we were able to come back to it before the engine overheated! Usual checks for plugged seawater strainer or damaged impeller did not reveal anything so we waited until the next day to examine our entire seawater cooling system: impeller was turning and not slipping, water came out of heat exchanger, but water did not come out of the engine manifold! We tried to flush it with pressure water and air from scuba tank from both water openings, even let a solution of vinegar sit in it for an hour and finally got a flow going on again, fantastic! It is still a mystery as what was clogging it as nothing big really came out ... we will have to examine that in more detail once we are back in Langkawi.(update: we had the same problem happening a few weeks later and the same method solved it!?).

Went back to Ko Racha Yai for the evening so we could connect to internet briefly before continuing to isolated islands where internet wouldn't be accessible ... before heading out early morning for Langkawi.

Sunny's story: It was lucky for Sunny that we got delayed with the plugged manifold, because on that last night when we checked our emails for the last time before leaving Thailand, there was an email from Bob Mott, the guy who really has taken to her: "Where are you guys? Have you left Thailand yet? I have a friend that wants Sunny to be a companion for his handicapped dog." Wow! What a gift from the universe...Sunny will have a home! We contacted Bob's Friend, Garrett, a Kiwi living in Phuket, and arranged to sail the 12 miles back to Ao Chalong, meet him at the YC, and let Sunny meet her new owner. We're sure that Sunny will be a great friend to Garret's dog that was in an accident and was becoming depressed. We left from Ao Chalong that afternoon so happy that Sunny found a new home.

From there we sailed to Koh Rok Nok and were protected on one of many Park moorings in calm water during the westerly wind we experienced. The Park is officially closed (but still manned by a few rangers) so we did not go ashore and no fees were asked. From there we motor sailed in favorable but only about 10kts to the NE side of Koh Tarutao where we found a well protected area between the island and some islets. Another calm anchorage was found 5nm south, near the Park pier. Both places still had internet coverage.

A 16nm sailing passage took us to the North coast of **Langkawi, Malaysia**. Our first anchorage was Hole in the Wall, an all-around protected anchorage with lots of small boat tours passing by during the day but calm at night. We had fun

exploring the mangrove rivers in the area, sharing the river with all these zooming tour boats. Even passed in a navigable cavern! (Some advantage to follow a tourist boat!) If you follow a tourist boat that turns into a branch of the river to the left, just within sight of the anchorage, you may see them feed the eagles and get good photos of them in the trees with a good telephoto lens. Many boats were left in the river, just inside the entrance or on a side channel where there are a series of seafood restaurants. One of the owners rents the moorings. Quite a ways up the river, following the tourist boats, you come to the landing where they pick up and drop off the tourists, in another little side channel is a small local boat marina where folks leave the dinghy and some how make their way for shopping.

Another scenic anchorage just East of here, on your way to Kuah, is next to Pulau Tanjung Dendang in a bay (best entered from the south) with a few small fish farms on the sides. Nice scenic area to explore by dinghy with some small beaches and snorkeling spots just on the Southern point of that island (1nm away). Depending on a line of sight with cell phone towers you might get lucky to get internet coverage!

From here you can sail south to Kuah where you can check in.

Visa run to Satun, Thailand: A visitor cannot stay in excess of 90 days in Malaysia and just taking the ferry for a 1 day (or less) visit to Thailand (or Singapore if near there) is no longer accepted. Immigration in Langkawi want you to be away at least 1 week. Most boats just go to Phuket and spend a month or two there before coming back to Langkawi. A possible alternative if you are not too deep draft (less than 2 m??) is to sail to Satun, a short 25nm from Kuah or 40nm from Telaga. Follow the ferry passage navigation markers at mid-tide, on a rising tide, and you will be able to anchor near the CIQP. First you check-in at Immigration at the ferry dock (you just passed before anchoring), then Port Office (blue building next to ferry dock) then dinghy a little further to Customs.(you will see the Customs boat tied there) Then walk thru to where you see the "Customs House" across the street. No charges when checking in. To check-out, follow the same order (100 Baht Port + 200 Baht Customs).

Make sure to be well lit as there is a lot of long-tail boat traffic from just before sunrise to a few hours after sunset. We even had a longtail banging at full speed on our side ... but by luck our dogs barking plus our yelling when we saw what was to happen, made the driver aware and he veered at the last second so we ended up with scratches and not a big hole in our wooden hull!

We visited a yard recently available to pleasure yachts, a small way further up the river, before you get to the electrical lines. As you go up river, look to the right for an inconspicuous railway, probably with some local fishing boats on the

hard. An expat Aussie, born in Finland, Juha, has rented a portion of the fishing boat yard as an area for yachts to do bottom paint or more extensive work like top side painting and refurbishing interiors, or exterior repairs. The fishing boat yard does the haul out and pressure wash, but the whole thing can be arranged with him. We may haul in Nov. just for bottom paint or wait until next year if the rumors of a new boatyard being established in Sabang, Sumatra are confirmed!

We didn't go into the town of Satun, but according to some, the town is big enough you can even go shopping at Makro...maybe next time.

Back to Langkawi:

As far as internet provider in Langkawi, we recommend Tune Talk for their price plans and good coverage (they actually lease Celcom towers). Better deals than Celcom directly or Digi.

We are now back in Langkawi for a few months to do some small boat projects and take care of our health with a holistic lifestyle ...

Speaking of Holistic Health, We listen to many health conference calls and one made our ears perk up. There is a Scientist in England that found that drinking mineral waters rich in Silicon can pull toxic Aluminum metal out of the body. As you all know, Aluminum is known to be a big factor in developing Alzheimers disease. One of the richest sources (outside of Lourdes, France), is right here in Malaysia, and the water is sold all over the country. It's called Spritzer. Since we need minerals because we drink only RO water, we thought, why not drink it ? By ordering 9.5 liter bottles in quantity, we can get it for less than 2RM (50 cents) a litter. We're here for 6 months, so we're doing a cure.

As always, like our 12K+ subscribers, enjoy our weekly videos on www.YouTube.com/sloepmouche

Lifetime Commodores Luc Callebaut, Jackie Lee and our 2 adventurous Schipperkes!.

SLOEPMOUCHE - 46' Norman Cross trimaran - 5' draft – February 2020
Subject/ Area: Thailand: Phuket to Myanmar border including Surin Islands

Dear SSCA,

During our 3rd cruise in Thailand we decided to explore the area between Phuket and Ko Phayam including the Similan & Surin national parks.

From Langkawi, we sailed to **Ko Lipe** where we spent a few days relaxing in fairly clear water. Friends on another boat told us it was possible to do a full clearance here, so it was perfect for a visa run trip. We didn't verify this, but if true, it's certainly a nice place with relatively clear water to spend a week or 10 days outside of Malaysia. We first anchored on the NW side near Sunset Beach in 15m so have to be careful of being close to boats on moorings when on a long scope. (did not go ashore) and then stayed on the West side of **Ko Adang**, where we had relaxed time with our Schipperkes on deserted beaches. There were also some large moorings on that coast that we saw sailboats tie to. Don't know if they are public moorings or private. We then motor sailed to **Ko Rok Nok** where we spent a night (arrived after 4:30pm and left before 8:00am, so no visit from Park Rangers for fees) before continuing to **Ko Mai Thon**. (swelly with current and wind in conflict) where we only spent the night.

The next day it was only 8nm to Ao Chalong and as usual, we had a quick & easy check-in into Thailand (less than 1 hour). Got 30-day free visa on arrival and no problem having taken 1 week between check-out in Langkawi and arrival in Phuket. The quarantine office was open with a sign advising arriving yachts to check in. Since the Corona virus and Chinese shut down had just recently started, we figured it would be a rigorous affair. But it turned out to be just a one page very simple standard form to fill asking basic info and where we came from.

Rented a scooter to go to the big fresh market of Phuket town and do some shopping at Makro, Vila Market, Super Cheap and Food 4 Foreigners (see previous Phuket letter in the bulletin for details). A special treat for us was to get together for a "Schipperke Gam" at the Phuket Yacht Club! Bob and Garret, the owners of 2 puppies from our last litter frequent the YC, so we brought Zotke and Zonne, the parents to see their daughters, Goldie and Sunny. What a kick to have 4 "little black devils" bouncing around. Seems that G and S have become the Princesses of the YC and the staff love them. So rewarding for us!

Since the Ao Chalong anchorage is crowded and bouncy, we left the next day for more scenic **Nai Harn Beach**. If you don't mind a crowded beach, this anchorage is nice and relatively comfortable unless wind or swell come from the West. The floating dinghy pontoon on the north side of the bay is very

convenient to get ashore at any tide. You have a choice of 3 places to eat and drink, can rent a moped, and shop at the small mini mart. We heard that a dinghy landing fee was re-instituted at 300 b/day, but the fee collector was on holiday the day we were there. We don't mind paying reasonable fees to help off set expenses for the private dock, and we are certainly grateful for the convenience, but 300 is quite steep to us. We told the manager 100 would be more equitable and more people would probably continue to patronize the businesses.

Having planned to only stay 1 month on this Thailand cruise, we decided to quickly get going as far north, near the Myanmar border by going along the mainland, being thus more protected from the NE predominant winds and then to take our time coming down the Surin & Similan islands with good sailing winds abeam or behind.

Our first stop was one of our favorite area to swim & play on a nice beach with our dogs, **Ao Bang Thao**. We wrote about this area in our previous Thailand letter: uncrowded 5km beach, and a fun dinghy exploration in the artificial canal system from the mining days. Our second stop was **Ban Thap Lamu**, well tucked in the river near the Navy Base and the base of most charter boats doing trips to the Similan and Surin Islands. Knowing that Similan permits have to be bought right here at the Park headquarters before going out to the Islands, we walked the 800m to their office to find out details (could not find much on internet anywhere!). Fees to Similan National Park are the following: 500 Baht per day for your boat, 200 Baht per day, per pers, scuba diving fee (you need to be a certified scuba diver and can only stay days you are paying the diving fees! In other words, you must pay the diving fees for the number of days you want to stay whether you dive or not) and then 500 Baht per pers for up to 5 days stay. So for 5 days for the 2 of us it amounted to 5,500 Bahts (about 185 US\$) Permits cannot be purchased in the Similan Island park offices which are on islands #4 and #8. Since permits are for specific days, we decided to come back here after the Surin park visit, get the permits if we still have time and then sail to the Similan from here ...In the end, we gave Similan a miss cause of time restraints, as well as steep fees.

We then motorsailed to **Ko Thuai**, having lucky timing with tides entering this other river area. We enjoyed meeting our friends Roger & Lucie on s/v Catimini, and finally delivering boat parts we had for them since a long time! It is always great to meet old cruising friends and see that the more we travel, the more cruisers we meet again later on! We then had a shorter passage (20nm) to **Ko Luk Kam Tok**, in front of a nice sandy beach bordered by trees. This is a Park area, well cleaned and actually very nice with a cute little bay on the other side

of the sandy arm of the beach. There's a short trail that brings you way up some cliffs with very nice views overlooking the little bay and surrounding area. We could also have anchored in Paradise Lagoon nearby but too many other boats there that day.

After an easy motor sailing close to the wind, we arrived in iconic Buffalo Bay on **Ko Phayam**! We know of several cruisers from all nationalities who like this area so much that they come several months at a time over several years. Perhaps it is the absence of cars on this remote island? Perhaps the multitude of local restaurants/ bungalows resorts that line this nice white sand beach? The laid-back atmosphere while still having a few little stores where food arrives daily by ferry from the mainland is a calm haven for cruisers. There are tourists, but not the masses of Phuket, and the tourists are the kind that seem to just like nature and exploring the small island easily in a day on a scooter without fear of getting run down by traffic. If anyone has to renew his visa, he can go to nearby Ranon to do it and if a trip outside of Thailand is needed, then just a little further you can get into Myanmar! We had nice nights here with cooler air than south of here and rolled just a little with small swells coming in. Nice lunches or dinner at reasonable prices at many choices of beach side restaurants, and 250 Bahts/day scooter rental (got ours at The Sun resort) to explore the island will make your time here go fast!

From here, we sailed back towards Phuket but via the **Surin Islands**. Park fees are 500 Baht/per for 5 days + 100Bahts/day for the boat and 500Bahts /day /scuba diving. A small restaurant with local fare is located in the park office area. Snorkeling is fair but water is clearer than along the mainland. Several nice beaches are inviting and day tourist boats are not as numerous as other parks in Thailand. There are a few moorings for overnighting, but according to another boat we talked to, there used to be more, but the park hasn't got around to reinstalling them yet this year (we are at the height of the season). We did see some small marker buoys but did not know if we could tie to them.

Wanting to attend a lunch/lounge and evening party/drinks/dinner events that our friends Marieke & Bert (7 Star Shipping and yacht transport) were organizing at the Phuket Premier Boatyard and at Yacht Haven Marina we decided to try to enter the **Phuket river from the west and anchor west of the bridge**. That would give us a comfortable anchorage (no wind waves or swell in westerlies that sometimes blow in the evening, only about 3 miles by dinghy and would save us about 70nm going all around Phuket island. And much easier and safer than anchoring north of the airport, drag the dinghy ashore and rent a moped to go to both events (with the worry of dinghy security after dark and a possible rolly night back onboard. The only question: is it possible? We could not find info from anyone who did enter with a sailing vessel before! So we decided to give it a try, trying to find a passage mid-tide and slowly motoring against the current so

we could easily motor backwards and drift out again if too shallow depth over the sand bar. We got there mid-afternoon with good sunlight and mild winds so we could carefully try our luck. After 2 missed attempts, slightly bumping the sand bar, we decided to follow some small speedboats coming in with a draft we estimated to be at least 3 feet. Figuring these tourist boats must pass at all states of the tides, so they must favor the deepest channel no matter the tide level ... So we saw where they entered and we followed that way ... much later than them as we were doing about 1-2 kts against the tide. When I was ready to abandon as we had just 1 foot under the keel (5ft draft), Jackie urged me to continue as she could see the deeper water just ahead .. and we made it! Next, we realized we have to pass under giant power lines! Without knowing the clearance, there is no easy way from the deck to judge space that would be left or not over the mast ... so we anchored just before the power line and I went up the mast to look horizontally and could then judge that there was ample clearance for our 55ft mast height. Better to be sure than running into electrical lines like a friend in the Philippines (that one was uncharted and difficult to see! So, anchor up, and we pass without a problem under the power line and cautiously entered the river, aiming at the calm side outside of the main current. Seeing what could be weeds or floating fish trap ahead, we looked more carefully and saw that these 2 areas were rocks awash! Lucky we did not enter at high tide as they would have been covered and we might have run into them inadvertently! We thus anchored in the perfect spot, away from any dangers and facing a long nice beach where our 2 dogs got to run a few times ! And yes, we made it to the events without troubles by dinghy ... much better solution than plan B anchorage north of airport or a 70nm trip around! Note: we have sent the relevant info of how to get across the bar to the anchorage to Terry Sargent on Vahalla who compiles anchorage info for Philippines and this area. Also see anchorage info at the end of this letter.

Next a few days back in both in Ao Ban Thao and Nai Harn Bay, 2 of our favorite anchorages on Phuket west coast. From Nai Harn, we rented a scooter and a car, (one day each) to refill our propane tanks (LPG Phuket : fast and cheap!, American valve no problem) & CO2 (Phuket Dry Ice) again as well as provision on goodies that can be found in Phuket (not in Langkawi or Sabang). We had also a nice organic lunch and nice afternoon around the restaurant's pool at our friend, Kostas, Macrobiotic World! (see our video on our Sloepmouche channel and go have yummy vegan ice cream, or organic chocolates, or the macrobiotic weekend buffet and enjoy the pool and sauna...a 20 min walk from Nai Harn dinghy dock on rd toward Ao Chalong)

Before sailing back to Sumatra once more to attend this year's Sabang Marine Festival, we spent an afternoon and overnight in **Ko Racha Noi**, a favorite of our 4-legged crew! (and us too!) Our Schipperkes were very happy to finally swim

and play on a beautiful white sandy beach before another confinement on board in Sabang. Little did we know at the time, that they would not be the only ones confined aboard!

After an uneventful motorsailing trip to Sabang, we arrived right at the beginning of the Corona Virus scare and we were told that the Marine Festival had been canceled and that sailors were discouraged to come! Irrational fears and discrimination because sailors were screened by quarantine personnel the same way than tourists arriving by plane! Boats of the 1st edition of the Sumatera Rally were only allowed to stay 2 days to fuel, provision, get internet cards before being kicked out towards the next scheduled port ... with some rumors already that they would not be welcome there either! As we were about to shorten our stay here and sail back to Langkawi (as we had planned to do after the Festival originally), Malaysia closed its borders for 2 weeks. So the authorities let us stay in Sabang as long as we quarantined ourselves on our boats (4 boats here now). As I write this, we hope that we will be able to sail back to Malaysia before our 1-month visa on arrival here in Indonesia expires (non-renewable). Smartly, Sail Malaysia to the East rally has been postponed until borders open again ... We really hope the world will come out of this unprecedented crisis better than it was before it!

As always, like our 42,000+ subscribers, enjoy our videos on www.YouTube.com/sloepmouche

Lifetime Commodores Luc Callebaut, Jackie Lee and our 2 adventurous Schipperkes, Zotke & Zonne!