

A stylized illustration of Neptune, the Roman god of the sea, depicted as a muscular man with a long, flowing blue beard and hair. He wears a golden crown with three stars and a blue, scale-like garment around his waist. He holds a golden trident in his right hand, which is raised high. The background is black, and the Neptune figure is set against a backdrop of stylized blue and white waves.

THE GREATEST NEPTUNE adventure

REEFS. ROCKS. MOBS
STORMS. RAIN
DRIFTING

11TH

NONGSA NEPTUNE REGATTA
23 - 28 JANUARY 2023

THE MOST INTERESTING WEATHER
CYCLE AND THE WETTEST NEPTUNE ON
RECORD! BUT THAT DIDN'T DAMPEN
ANYONE'S SPIRITS!

THE NEW ADVENTURES OF KUBLAIKHAN



The gateway to adventure Nongsa Point Marina on Batam Island, Riau Province, Indonesia,.

kick starter

GET IT THERE

22ND Over the weekend of January 21 and 22, participants ccngregate in Nongs Point Marina. As the event coincides with Lunar New Year everyone gets treated to all the New Year Festivities.

GET IT ON

23RD Day One. Nongsa to Benan Island.

24TH Day Two. Benan to Neptune Island.

25TH Day Three. Two stage Equator Race.

26TH Day Four. Day off. Blanding visit.

27TH Day Five. Neptune Island to Mubut Island.

28TH Day Six. Mubut Island to Nongsa.

GET IT HOME

29TH Day Seven. Time to get home, but no one is in a great rush, well a few have to rush back to jobs that they call real after a week of unreal sailing!

Thanks to all the staff at Nongsa Point Marina and support boats - Seadreamer, Rona and Vega. Without their support the 11th Nongsa Neptune Regatta would not have happened.

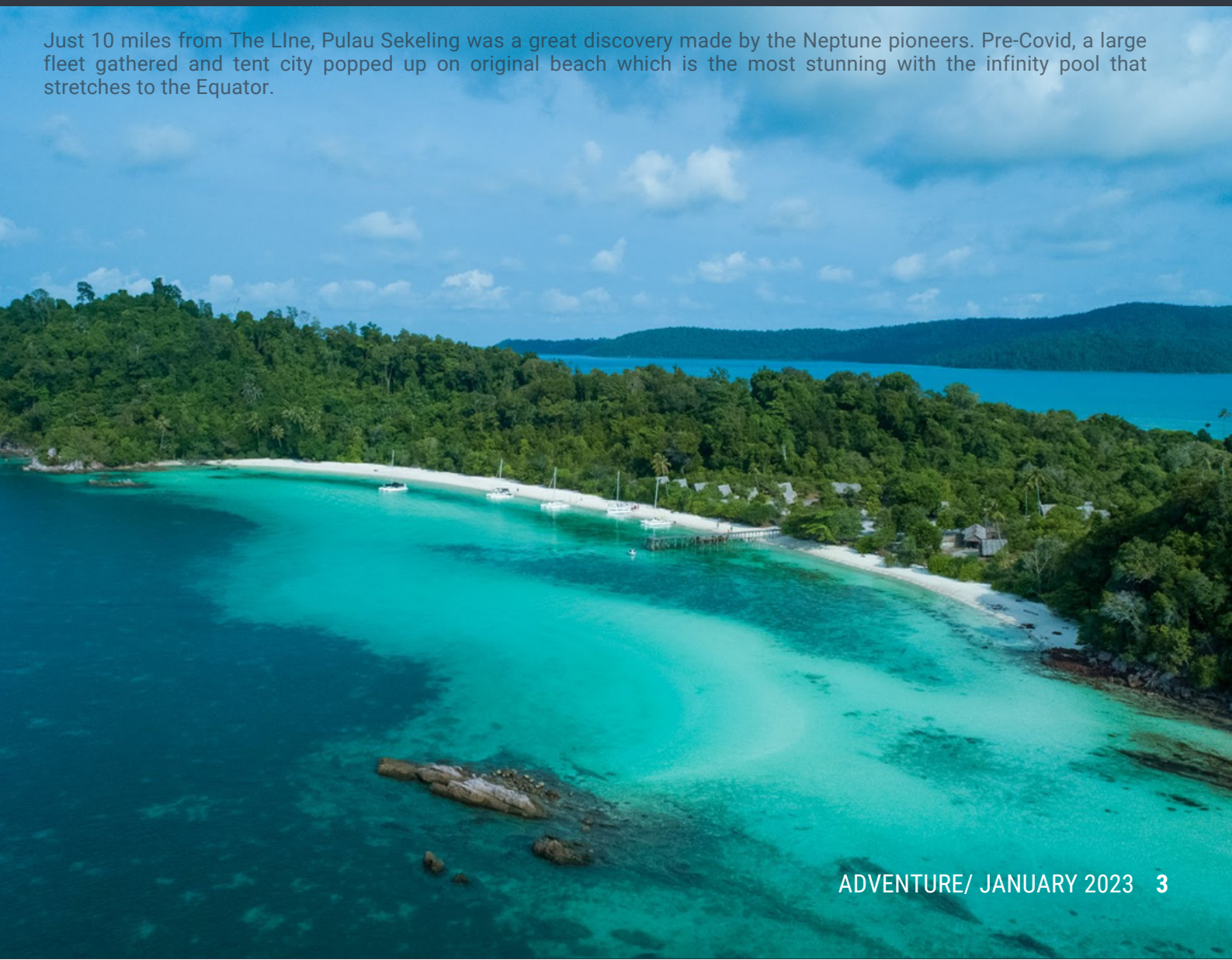


The original jetty used this year, still remains and is a star-gazers paradise.

Back track

The Neptune Regatta was given life by a bunch of expat guys that decided to stick their necks out and create the World's Only Equator Race, which it still is. From the early pioneering group, Alex 'ferret' Voss researched the heck out of it to discover that "300 years of nautical history proved there was always wind at this particular time of the year". Graham Lind provided invaluable support with Sea Dreamer and much needed guidance and did so again in the 11th running. The leading light of Tudor John moved onto other shores and that leaves Prakash Reddy who is now the current Marina Manager for Nongsa Point. Aren't we glad they gave up much of their time to get the Riau on the sailing map.

Just 10 miles from The Line, Pulau Sekeling was a great discovery made by the Neptune pioneers. Pre-Covid, a large fleet gathered and tent city popped up on original beach which is the most stunning with the infinity pool that stretches to the Equator.



For us, the Neptune was the impetus to get our first Corsair Dash 750 as the early Safety Rules dictated "a fixed bunk for every crew, cooking facilities, head arrangement..." The Dash 750 was quick enough to accomplish the original Day One long leg from Nongsa to Neptune Island. Kick off used to be at 7am and we generally finished just after sunset.

The Neptune sparked the interest in our Corsair Fleet and soon we had a One Design 750 Class doing the Neptune. Let's hope those numbers will build up as Covid recedes from our lives!

For the 11th edition, we were the only trimaran entry that is really down from the eight we have had in past versions of the Neptune. In 2022 we acquired a 2003 Corsair 31R and decided to give this a good 'test run'. A good choice for this year!

The Neptune schedule was altered to make it more accessible to a wider spectrum of sailors. The original format of a drag race to the Equator on Day One was altered to take in an overnight stop on private Fishhead Island and most recently Benan Island.

Most folks are unaware, that the Indonesian Archipelago is littered with some 16,500 islands - one lifetime will not be enough to visit them all! The Riau Province sits at the most northern tip of of the Archipelago and is easily accessed from Singapore. Of course the gateway to the Riau Archipelago is Batam Island just 15nm's from Singapore and that's where Nongsa Point comes in.

We are spoilt with such a fabulous cruising ground right at our doorstep and still, people still won't make the effort! Their loss.



The original Dash crew rafted up.



Our original Dash 750
"The Dash" to Neptune



The Telecom Tree on Sekeling! You might get a connection.



'03 in '23

The new adventures of Kublaikhan begin with the '023 Neptune and surely there will be more! We come from a Sport Beach Cat background, the beach is our roots so giving that up is really hard but with the Corsairs we don't have to totally give it up. New (to us) in 2022 was the 2003 Corsair 31R, much larger than our beach cat heritage and even larger than our 750 Dash but with just as much beach access as our former platforms.

The C31 is a great boat and given the weather conditions in this year's Neptune, the right choice. Sadly our new sails didn't make it in time but the extra expanse of the trampolines opened up a new horizon for us with the inclusion of the Takacat 340. This lightweight cat is so portable that it fits in 2 bags but we found it the perfect fit on the wings and became a great bunk at night as well as the perfect place to sit and drive!

'Racing' with the tender on the wing - nice one!



Hitlist

1. THE WEATHER.

The strange weather that has affected most places also turned the Equator Race into the coolest race ever! Wet and with enough wind variation to make it a challenge.

2. THE TIDE.

The Equator is a strange place for tides. It's especially interesting during the Neptune when Lunar New Year forces come into play! The new moon and the collision of the South China Sea and the Java Sea normally collude to produce interesting swirls, overfalls and standing waves that a portion of the race has been nicknamed "the cauldron". Thankfully though this year, the tide was cooperative especially for the northward passages!

3. REEFS

Just about all the islands in the Archipelago are protected by tropical reefs. These are shallow and generally sharper than fiberglass hulls. The reefs in the Riau area have claimed many victims since the early navigators decided to plunder the area. Indeed, one of the richest discoveries in loot was the Nanking Treasure discovery just off Batam! So for the yacht that discovered the reef at Nongsa, you aren't the first and won't be the last.

4. ROCKS

We found a new one! Right at the north entrance to Benan. Had it been in daylight hours we might have just seen the pinnacle - 33 metres to zip in a split second! Not much fun but thankfully we were only doing 5 knots when we found it. It will be marked for future races but probably never make it onto Navionics.

5. CURRENTS

Currents around the Riau Area are swift. On a black moon evening there was a MOB raised from an anchored boat. Quick thinking of a very experienced sailor saved the life of another!

The challenge of nature is very close to us!



Day 1. Nongsa to Benan.

Nongsa Point kick off with a great Lion dance for the Lunar New Year and with the briefing already completed, all that was left to do was get going!

Lunar New Year is normally when the Northeast Monsoon has already set in making the southbound half of the Neptune an enjoyable run down the Riau Straits. Lining up on the 7:55am line, something was wrong! One the wind wasn't exactly strong and two, it was blowing from an odd angle!

Leg one of the Neptune is normally a nice blast reach with the Screecher along Batam's north coast then out into the Riau Straits and swap to the kite. But today it was calling for the kite much earlier. So we dug it up out of storage and popped it up. Kublaikhan started making good progress and way deeper than the monohull fleet that had set off earlier. Things were looking great! The wind built and started clocking around - even better. Then the first decent puff came along and the 2013 kite decided that was enough! So two

kilometers into the biggest race of the year and we'd already run out of kites! So for the rest of the adventure we'd be restricted to the making the best out of the Screecher for any off wind bits.

Simon Piff's First 50' "First Light" started to disappear into the mist. As we turned south, the breeze veered back to the West and so we were back to making good angle again, but that was short lived as the rain set in and the breeze vaporised.

Selat Riau is the straits that separate Bintan and Batam Islands. The current normally rips through here but unbelievably, it was running with us. The time limit according to the Sailing Instructions was set at 4pm each day, and that set the challenge for Day One. Our passage down Selat Riau is normally made in good time but not on this day. By 2pm the tide had swung and was now pushing us back north again. With 30 nm's to go and only 2 hours left, it was time to set the Yamaha. At 9pm we were motoring into the northern entrance into Benan Island for that night's dinner. We watched First Light motor around a headland. That meant that no one finished the race.



0800hrs Start Turi Beach



Bintan Island

Kangboi

Mengkilo

1400hrs Gentlemen
Start your engines

Tanjung
Pinang

Nibum

Rempang
Island

Strong currents exist
throughout the whole
area and only get more
interesting as you go
towards The Line!

Galang Island

2100hrs. Things that go bang
in the night! From 33m to 0
in a split second! We managed
to hit the top of a pinnacle of
rock. Luckily we were doing
less than 5 knots when we
hit. Even so we got thrown
forward with quite some force!



2200hrs Drop anchor
and cook dinner.

PULAU BENAN. Overnight stop
Sadly no one went ashore for the
dinner due to the late arrival.

NOTES:

These are 'uncharted' grounds.
Proceed with caution!
At night, through unknown
channels, remain seated!
Watch out for the floating fishing
platforms that are anchored close
to shore on very long lines!

Mesanak

Teban



Day 2. Benan to Neptune.

Another 8am start then head west below Neptunes Knuckles before turning Southwest to the gap between Pulau Buaya (Crocodile) and Pulau Sekeling.

Numbers were down this year in comparison to the pre-Covid events. So with only twenty boats in the fleet, we were now on mass starts. The wind was up with a good 15 knots blowing and so it was expected that the whole fleet would be able to complete the days 30 nm's.

The wind angle made it a fetch to the first island before we'd have to beat upwind to the next island before turning southwest to Neptune's lair. Luckily for us the first leg allowed us to use the Screecher strapped in and that gave us a nice little break on the fleet. As we headed upwind the faster of the monohulls managed to squeeze by with tighter angles into the breeze. For 2023, we were the only trimaran so got herded into the Cruising Multihull

Class, so apart from the big mono's, we weren't going to have any 'competitors' breathing down our necks!

The breeze freshened and from the Knuckles down to Buaya Island turned into the best broad reach of the whole year! We had issues with the furling on Screecher and so while we were sorting it out the First Light charged away. Probably 20 minutes later we managed to clear the issue and finally set the Screecher. This by far was the best reach we've had on Kublaikhan as we powered along and caught up to Simon and crew on First Light right at the entrance to Buaya Island.

We've been through this gap many times on previous events but coming down to 16.5 knots boat speed right on entry was a really nice feeling! We had in our minds to try to catch Graham on the support boat that had set off before we started the race. We were closing in on them and figured to follow them around the western tip of Neptune Island for the finish line set right up against Second Beach. What a great sail that was!

Abang-besar
Island

0800hrs Start Benan

Benan

Mesana
Island

Mesana

Medang

Teban

This area is known as
The Cauldron. This is where the
Java Sea and the South
China Sea can collide. When
that happens, it can go from
flat calm to a river of rapids!

This leg was the cracker of
the whole adventure. An
uncharacteristic NW wind
kicked up and turned this
into a flaming Screecher leg.
Unlike the stock Corsair set
up that has one fixed Screecher
sheeting point, we use a
tweaker to pull the Screecher
outboard and that was really
helpful on this leg with boat
speed going 20+ knots.
Lovely!

1200hrs Finish at
Neptune Island

Tiempah

Bakung Island

Rush to Neptune to meet
a bunch of pirates!



10 ADVENTURE/ JANUARY 2023

Things to go bump in the night.


For Neptune '023 the HQ was moved from the original stunning beach to a new beach that had better dinghy access but less charm. We normally great straight into the beach and tie up onshore but as we were at an unknown location, we opted to anchor just off the beach. We went ashore for the dinner only to find out that the volunteer chef for the night was still on Ratu Heni and due to the conditions, wasn't going to make the anchorage any time soon! As a quick fill-in, Prakash called in the local fishing village to prepare food. Fresh fish and rice arrived and was delicious. Strangely, we've been asking for this in all the previous adventures and couldn't figure out why we never got it. Well, there story goes that, the local fishing village figured that white folks didn't eat rice and were therefore to shy to prepare meals for us! Well that's fixed for next year.

The tides at the equator do strange things like half tides and full tides in a day or barely any movement. We'd anchored in about 6m of water expecting a 3m drop. The evening progressed well and as the tri' likes sailing around it's tether, we had realized that the anchor chain and rope had been winding itself around whatever coral heads it could find! When the time came to head back to the boat, it was a relatively short walk. Apparently this evening was an ultra-low tide so there was Kublaikhan high and dry strategically placed across half a dozen big coral heads. About an hour wait for the tide to come back in, a big shove and we floated off again. We mis the original beach! The good thing about boats with daggerboards and training wheels, park then on the beach and they don't fall over! In any case, the Neptune is more adventure than regatta so it's all part of the package. And the night after the Equator Race was even more fun.

At the close of the Northbound leg of the Equator Race we were all pasted with a sizable tropical shower that lasted well into the night. We rigged up a great awning over the cockpit and like many of the boats, decided not to go ashore. Close to midnight we heard some commotion but just thought it was revelry and left it as such. Common! Snuggled up in sleeping bags, we drifted off to sleep!

At about 4am I was awakened by Campbell crashing through the cockpit announcing, "**we are sailing, we are sailing**" - Rod Stewart you! Sure enough, Kublaikhan had set off on another adventure heading for Java! Turning around, it took us nearly 3 hours to motor back to Neptune Island but there's nothing like sleeping on a boat that is sailing perfectly! We got back to Neptune at dawn and went straight into First Beach and tied up to a tree! But our adventure into the black was nothing! The commotion as it turns out, was a much darker event.

In the later part of the evening, a chap on one of the boats decided to relieve himself over the transom. On his walk towards the back of the boat, the owner said "**if you're going to the back of the boat, make sure you hold on**". The currents in this area are very strong add to that, it was black moon when the sky and sea are eerily dark. As things would turn out, the chap tripped and plopped overboard. A life ring on a sling at the back of the boat was thrown next to the hapless chap in the water. For reasons unknown, he never grabbed the sling and within seconds, had drifted into the inky blackness.



"Like going camping, with a chance of drowning" - Alisdair Reid

Luckily one of pro's onboard understood the gravity of what was unfolding and tossed another life ring into the water and promptly followed it. Big call! As all that was happening, the Man Over Board was broadcast to the fleet. Prakash on the beach heard the alarm as did many of the boats downstream of the yacht. Flashlights were aimed into the black as Marco and the crew from Epicurean hauled up their anchor and then headed downstream. Great effort as just getting the anchor up takes 20 minutes. Obviously experienced, they proceeded to where they thought the people in the water were.

We don't know how long they were searching but finally they spotted that small amount of reflective tape that is on the life ring! Attached to that was one Fletch, who had leapt in to act as a marker while looking for the MOB. Once they had the ring and Fletch, they made a growing radius around that area. In the expanding search, they finally found the MOB!

Close call, you bet!

Better be prepared for all occasions - that's sailing. Without the quick thinking of Fletch, the Neptune Regatta could have easily turned into a disaster! We all owe Fletch for his valiant effort but there's a lot of valuable lessons in that for the rest of us!

Since that event, no one has pee'd off the back of Kublaikhan. Not even once, and it is true, many a good man has been lost taking a pee off the back!

But all is well that ends well and the story will just become part of the legend of Neptune!



Day 3. The Line.

We've all made the effort to get here and sail across The Line. This is of course some nautical significance for sailors and the chance to answer to the King!

The Equator race is divided into two parts. A southbound leg that finishes at 0'00.000 and then a northbound leg that finishes back at Neptune Island. In between, boats can take as much time as they like to perform initiations!

As the mass start got underway at 1100hrs the racing area was surrounded by weather cells from all quarters. This was going to be a game of sailing pinball. We managed to head south with the screecher and so we were off to a good start with the fleet behind. But the weather front we had been riding faded and the boats behind latched onto the next one heading our way! Then more rain came which made finding the finish boat even more fun in the gloom. Prime Factor sailed a great line and with their kite on finished ahead of us as we were gybing some large angles keeping the screecher happy.

With the breeze fading and a 4pm cut off time, we pretty much turned around and headed back to Neptune hoping to make the most of what wind was left.

Many of the boats sacrificed the time to punish the the unclean polliwogs! Heading north was a quest to finish before the time limit so that we could have the two elapsed times as our race time. But that was thwarted about a mile from the finish as the wind died out and was instantly replaced with a heavy downpour!

At 6pm that evening everyone gathered on the beach for the arrival of Neptune who looked decidedly similar to one of the skippers.





explore

A DAY OFF

Day four has always been the lay day and it used to be that all the crew enjoyed the time swimming in the infinity pool that it was wintry, it was far too cold for a swim besides, we were tired out from our night sailing!

Tying up on first beach is exactly what the Neptune is about. This vast pool stretches from here to the Equator. The water is so clear and the sand so soft and the best bit, you will believe you are there, alone!

This is the first time we've ever gone racing with a dinghy onboard. Having said that, the TakaCat 340 can fit 4-6 pax but weighs only 35kg and can pack up into 2 bags. It's ideal even on a small boat! The Air Deck doubles as a SUP so overall it's a brilliant package.

What's not in the brochure....

Once we realized that the 340 fits perfectly on the wing net, it had other benefits. During 'racing' we slightly deflated it so that it wouldn't bounce as much and then, it became the perfect perch to helm from. But the real goodie, deflate one pontoon more than the other and you can create a perfectly level bed! Throw a sleeping bag on it and your done!

The Taka is light so easily manhandled on deck. Installing the motor while the Cat is on the wing is also much easier than battling to do it on the water. Having a dinghy made island life great fun to just float around the shallows and have a look at Neptune Island like we haven't seen it ever before.

Sekeling Island is uninhabited until the Neptune crew show up. Many things in remote Indonesia haven't really changed. The fishing boats use Sekeling as a place to rest. Coasting around it's shoreline are fisherman still doing it the same old way!

A blue sailboat named 'Windflirt' is shown from the side, sailing on a blue sea. Two crew members are visible on deck; one is wearing a red jacket and sunglasses. A yellow lifebuoy is mounted on the side. In the background, there are green islands under a clear sky.

Day 5. Neptune to Mubut Darat

A long day, so it decided that the start should be on the north side of P. Buaya. That would put most of the fleet ahead of the tide that squeezes between the island and out into the open air.

While we all motoring out the Race Officer decided not to lay a start line as that would delay proceeding further and so it was **"radio us your time when you cross 0' 10.000"**. That was a really good call and would kind of become the format for the following days race.

It was beat long beat up towards the Knuckles and First Light punched their way out into the lead - great boat with a lovely wardrobe of sails.

About an hour and half into this beat and just as it crack off a little we spotted a little blue dot ahead of us! We'd seen them on the start line of Day one and they had shadowed the fleet all the way down. Mostly arriving later at night and leaving before anyone else even woke up. Wind Flirt, the smallest boat in the event earned the Seamanship Award and definitely deserved it!

As they popped astern we knew it would be a long day for us but "Wind Flirt", we salute you!

So having start and finish transit lines is really great under these circumstances as it keeps the smallest and biggest in the event. Great idea Race Comm' plus we get to choose our wake up time when we're not night sailing of to Java in our pajamas!

Mubut Darat is a fairly long way north in Selat Riau right about where the tide starts compressing between Batam and Bintan. If you don't get to the finish before the tide swings, you'll be out there for another 5 hours. There were a couple of gates to pass on the leg but the best decision was to have a transit line finish set at 00' 04 00. With the way the wind was that was head north on port tack. A long way but just keep going! We just made the cut off time finishing at 1531hrs. Had the Race Officer maintained the finish line at the island, there would have been no finishers for the day.

A photograph of a tropical coastal scene. In the foreground, a small wooden boat with a yellow outboard motor is on the water. In the background, there are several buildings on stilts, some with green roofs, and a dense line of palm trees under a clear sky.

Day 6. Mubut Darat To Nongsa

Another long day in Taka' but just to help things along, it was 8am and the wind was already 20-25 knots. Nice, thanks Neptune. The transit line start make it easy for everyone. First get as far west as possible then lay into it on a port tack and keep going.

One thing about sailing with Dacron sails is, it's kind of like having auto-reefing included. Gusts hit and it's as if the wind passes right through the sails without upsetting anything! Pulling on the mainsheet had no bearing on the leech, the boom simply got lower to the deck! But heck, at least they were going to get us there.

Back on First Light the Beneteau First 50 machine, the Genoa delaminated. They changed down as the breeze built, blew out the No. 2! No. 3 was hoisted and a shirt time later, blew that out too, with Irish saying "I never retire" for which Simon says, "that's enough and besides, I'm out of headsails"!

We were in the narrowest section of Selat Riau. In our favor was the tide. Working against us, it was wind against tide and that was kicking up some nice sloppy chop. In comparison to doing the same stretch on our Corsair Dash 750, the C31 is long enough to smooth out all but the biggest bumps that came along. Thoughts went back to Wind Flirt who would have to go right through the same stuff!

Initially we were a bit apprehensive about going through the narrows with a big breeze on as the last time we visited, the wind stayed above 30 knots and the chop was really sharp. But that was on the 750 and it's a whole lot easier on a longer boat.

The transit finish felt like it was way out near the shipping lane but it only felt like that as land was obscured from sight.

We crossed the line within the time and the only boat visible was 'Team Euro' Marco and the life savers. They did sail it into the channel only so they could reach back towards Nongsa Marina pegging the Beneteau rental at 11 knots two-sailing it!



Back@base

The great Neptune Adventure came to a close at Nongsa Point Marina. Pak Gerald the new General Manager has made a good impact since taking office and this, the first of a post-Covid event was very encouraging to see. The momentum should continue and we expect to see more boats line up for the adventure next year.

Nongsa always turn on a good show and 2023 was no different except for one missing tradition! In all past events, everyone had ended up in the pool right after the trophies were awarded. Often, this meant a visit to the medic by someone or other but in '023 it just didn't happen! Seems as though being soggy and wet for week meant no one was interested in swimming!

As with all yachting events there are always a lot of people in the back ground that make it all possible notably Prakash for ensuring that it happened. Pak Gerald especially for throwing in the support of Nongsa Point Marina and then all the staff that are always so welcoming and especially for the surprise cake!

No doubt, 2024 will be an even better adventure than 2023 and we are ever so glad that it's up and running again.