



Snow day passage party

ANAK AELLOAT

BY KIA KOROPP

The Indonesian language is a simple one, with no complicated plurals, gender identifications or multiple-sound enunciations for a single letter. Take the word *child* for instance. In Bhasa, it is *anak*. If you have more than one, it is *anak anak*. Just repeat the word and you have a plural. Simple.

Five years and two *anak anak* after first embarking on our cruising adventures, we've learned the value of simplicity and the importance of urgency. I've seen too many prospective cruisers delay their dreams ad infinitum, with the same boat sitting in the same slip and the same bum sitting behind the same desk year after year. This is further compounded by additional family members who have their

own ties that need to be severed before plotting the chart can really begin. When it comes to cruising with kids, we try to follow two simple concepts: do it now, and do it simply.

RULE #1: DO IT NOW.

As the saying goes, there is no time like the present. John and I took this phrase to heart when we met, and six months after our first introduction we found out we were pregnant. At the same time, we were looking at boats. On my first consultation, I asked the salesperson's opinion about boats and babies, and she told me with no

uncertain terms that the two were incompatible. John looked at me wistfully and said, "Well, there goes our cruising plans." But exploring the globe was something I found a passion for early in life, defining many of my key decisions around it. Now I was pregnant, and I was determined that a baby wouldn't cancel those dreams.

So we did it: We brought both baby and boat together. We bought a sailboat the same week we found out we were pregnant, moved onboard, and three months later started our first cruising season. We departed New Zealand bound for Tonga at 16 weeks pregnant. We have now sailed through two pregnancies and have two children onboard and I couldn't



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have planned it any better. To be a mother and father cruising with kids is the best of both worlds.

When it comes to the topic of cruising with children, there is debate about the appropriate age to take a child to sea. Our son was six months old for his first voyage, a 10-day passage from New Zealand to Vanuatu. Our daughter started cruising at nine months off the coasts of Thailand and Malaysia. I have to say it is a pretty fantastic way to raise kids.

We wake together and remain together every hour of the day, seven days a week. The children get equal time with both

parents, and we, as parents, get the support of a true partnership between one another. We get to travel, explore and discover while appreciating the full experience of family and parenthood. What shore-based environment can beat that?

Kids on boats are a treat. If they are infants you'd be home anyway, or wishing you were, so isn't a traveling abode better than a stationary one? As toddlers, your child is the gateway into society like no other, doted upon by every villager you meet. If you're pondering the viability of cruising with kids, don't wait. Do it now.

RULE #2: KEEP IT SIMPLE.

When we opted to travel with our *anak anak* on board we decided: simple plans, simple structure. Of course, kids themselves can keep things simple. Take my son's and daughter's preferred toys, for example. We have an assortment of store-purchased items, yet their longest-standing favorites are clothes pegs, rope ends and a bucket of water. They read more books than they watch TV, and they would often rather create a new toy than acquire one.



On a yacht, things slow down. You experience a tunnel vision of sorts, where the outside clutter of life filters out and you hone in on the important things: your family, unfiltered. Now, when I talk about keeping things simple, I am familiar with how complicated life can be. With a 2-year-old born with a congenital hand condition and a 4-year-old T1 diabetic, we aren't cruising on a silver cloud. We have

had a number of crises thrown at us that could have crushed our dreams. However, we value this lifestyle for its purity and beauty, its intensity and its simplicity and have held onto the bigger picture through life's sharper edges.

Each day is a fresh, clean slate. Each time you pull anchor it is for an unknown destination full of expectation and promise. So if you are facing the dilemma

of when to cruise and how, remember two simple rules and let the details get sorted: Do it now, and keep it simple. I promise you one thing, neither you nor your children will ever regret it. *ml*

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Braca in crowd in Indonesia

THE BRACARAZZI

SITTING CROSS-LEGGED in the sand next to a Russian evangelist who was doing missionary work in Sumatra, I was enjoying some time with another traveler to chat about our experiences.

"I feel so dreadfully sorry for these poor local women," she said. "Mothers have no babysitters, absolutely no support. They have to do it all on their own. I don't understand how they manage."

I smile at the innocence and ignorance of this comment.

"Ah, but they don't," I countered. "They have more ready-made support in a small local village than an entire American city will offer."

It is impossible to travel through the islands and claim exemption from local custom. You do not own your children--they are the responsibility of the entire community, and with a lighter skin you present an irresistible magnet to the local villagers. The cruising community came to call our local fan club the Bracarazzi, as other cruisers traveling

behind us would be asked in awe by locals if they knew Braca, our son. I once had to chase down a woman who had swooped in on Braca and run as fast as she could into the bush with the screaming baby. When I heard my child's cries and realized what had happened, I quickly took chase. There she was, clinging onto this red-faced toddler clearly in distress, clicking off selfies with a cheek-splitting grin. When I approached she proudly looked up at me, clearly quite pleased with her efforts.

Finding your child is no problem; they are either trailing a long line of enthusiastic playmates or they are at the epicenter of a thick crowd of curious observers. It is reclaiming them than can provide some tricky negotiation. I've often had to clamber through a crowd five deep and watch the faces of disappointment as I've pulled my children away. Child care is by no means difficult to procure, either as a local or as a guest in the community.

While I am not a mother willing to drop my child in the arms of strangers in my own neighborhood, I am more than willing to do so on a small remote island hundreds of miles from home. Indeed, we have done so on many occasions, returning to find our children fully entrenched in whatever activity is going on--dragging a cardboard car across the sand or playing naked in the shallows surrounded by a dozen kids.

Doted on and adored, villagers take children into the fold with no hesitations or reservations. If you want the key to the door of local acceptance, travel with children. I left my Russian friend on the beach with her pity and her misconception. Perhaps she will come back one day as a mother herself and gain a totally different insight into the local culture.

► *To follow Kia on her travels aboard Atea, visit: svatea.com*