



# Power Trip

After **230,000 miles** under sail, this cruising couple bought a trawler and never looked back.

story CAPT. MARK TILDEN | photos JOËL MARC



## Power Trip

**Left:** Jade at the Torii Gate, the entrance to the Itsukushima Shrine on Miyajima Island near Hiroshima, Japan. **Facing page:** A massive king penguin colony, believed to be the world's largest, at St. Andrews Bay, South Georgia Island, which Marc visited under sail in 2001. **Previous spread:** At anchor in her namesake Jade Harbor in Prince William Sound.

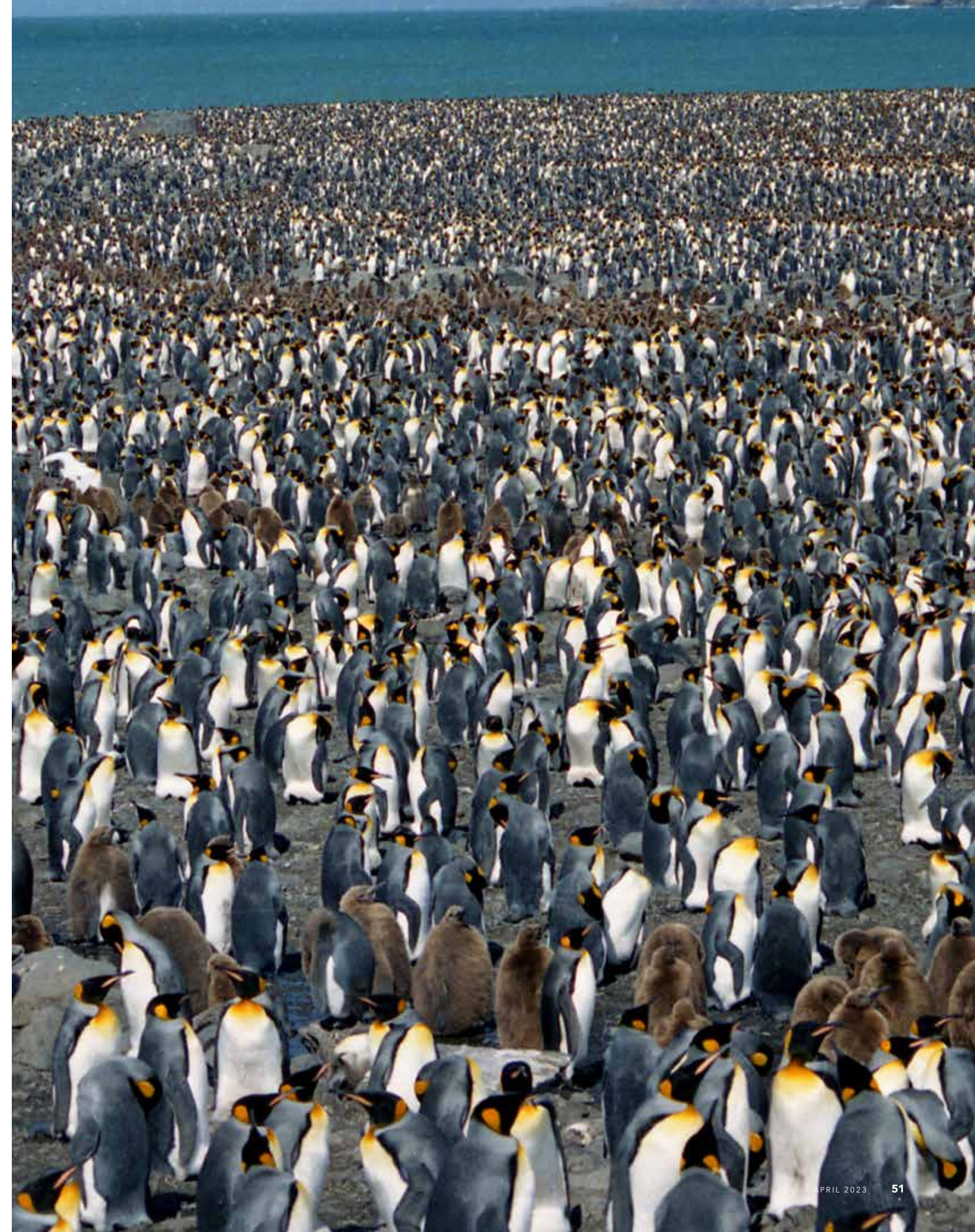
## Have you noticed

how many trawler owners started out as sailors? Everyone's story is unique, but there are a few common threads. Many sailors eventually find that they, their partner or both want a bit more comfort and space than even the best cruising sailboats offer. Handling sails and heavily loaded lines becomes more challenging as we age. A trawler's comfort, safety and ease combine for an attractive alternative.

Many sailors start the transition by fully enclosing the cockpit of their sailboats. Eventually, they realize they're spending more time motoring than sailing, and they succumb to the siren's song of a comfortable trawler with all the amenities of home, including big windows that offer a front-row seat to the beauty that surrounds us while cruising.

I still love sailing, and kept a small sailboat even after we purchased our Selene trawler. I day-sail on Puget Sound in the warm summer breeze. But for cruising, it's hard to beat a heavy, seaworthy, long-range trawler.

My friend, Joël Marc, after more than 36 years of cruising under sail, transitioned to power as well. His boating career began in his homeland of France with a 43-foot fiberglass ketch-rigged sailboat. Only a few years after he bought his first boat, Joël moved



**From left:** Milford Sound is part of the stunning, but unforgiving, Fjordland coast on the South Island of New Zealand. Joël cruised *Jade* here shortly after purchasing her and getting her ready for longer-term cruising; Mount Yasur is on Tanna Island in Vanuatu. It's among the world's most accessible active volcanos. *Jade* visited in 2015 on a voyage from New Zealand to Japan; The waterfall at Red Bluff Bay on Baranoff Island.



**“When we pass a sailboat motoring in the rain and I’m in my slippers in the pilothouse with a warm cup of coffee... I don’t miss sailing at all,” says Joël.**



**Clockwise, from left:** Joël on *Jade*’s swim platform, next to an 85-pound halibut he caught off Baranof Island; A remote river north of Honshu, Japan; Hidden Falls Salmon Hatchery on Alaska’s coast is frequented by fishing bears. **Below:** At high tide, Itsukushima Shrine appears to be floating.

## Power Trip

to the capital of New Caledonia (just east of Australia) to take a job as chief of radiology at a private clinic. In his case, moving included sailing his boat 13,000 miles from France: across the Atlantic, through the Panama Canal and across the Pacific. Along the way, he stopped in the Canary Islands, Panama, the Galapagos, Marquesas, Tuamotus and Cook Islands, just to name a few.

For the next 23 years, Joël owned three more sailboats: a 47-foot aluminum sloop, a 55-foot aluminum center-board sloop, and, finally, a semi-custom Amel 55. He explored Australia, New Zealand and the surrounding islands. His adventures took him to the Southern Ocean and Antarctica. He rounded Cape Horn eight times, cruising extensively around Tierra del Fuego, Argentina, and the Falkland Islands, including a visit to South Georgia Island, about 1,200 miles east of Cape Horn.

In 2003, when Joël was sailing along the East Coast of the United States and Canada, he and his wife, Dominique, stopped in Newport, Rhode Island, and toured a Nordhavn 57. Dominique was already leaning toward a switch to power, but Joël wasn’t quite ready, so they sailed on to France. Instead of buying a trawler, they purchased their last cruising sailboat: the semi-custom Amel 55 *Marianne*. They took delivery in 2005 and sailed her 60,000 miles for the next 10 years. In all, Joël sailed more than 230,000 miles before he made the switch to power.

In June 2013, Joël found and purchased a well-cared-for Selene 66, *Ocean Green*, in New Zealand. He spent a couple years getting to know the boat and making improvements for long-term cruising. He renamed her *Jade* and did some shakedown cruising around the North and South Islands of New Zealand, including the challenging Fjordland coast in the southwest corner.

“For me, a trawler is not a big change from a sailboat,” Joël says. “I’m used to the relatively slow speeds of a sailboat, so the trawler’s speed—around 8 knots—is comfortable. I also value the very low fuel consumption and the huge range so that my cruising options are essentially unlimited.”

Two years later, Joël left New Zealand aboard *Jade* and headed to Vanuatu, Micronesia and Japan. *Jade* spent two winters in Japan, and cruised extensively around each of the main islands, eventually ending up on the northern island of Hokkaido.

In June 2017, Joël and his crew headed northeast for Petropavlovsk, Russia, and spent 10 days exploring the volcano-ringed city. From there, they crossed the North Pacific and Bering Sea for the Aleutian Islands. Joël’s experience on this cruise was a major influence on our route-planning for the cruise I took a year later aboard the Selene 53 *Mystic Moon*, following essentially the same route (see “Into the Great Beyond,” published in August 2022 at [passagemaker.com](http://passagemaker.com)).

During the pandemic, *Jade* was moored in the Pacific Northwest’s San Juan Islands, and Joël was able to explore Puget Sound. That’s where I met him in person for the first time, when he anchored in our beautiful little bay in Gig Harbor, ahead of a cruise up to Ketchikan, Alaska.

Joël’s extensive cruising history brings me back to the original question: Why do so many sailors eventually switch to power, and often to a trawler?

“I was 66 when we purchased *Jade*,” Joël said. “Even though I was in good health, I was reaching an age where concerns about handling large sails and heavy rigging made me consider a change. I also had some limitations due to a work-related injury and deteriorating strength in





Last year, *Jade* cruised from Sitka, Alaska, down the Inside Passage to Washington state. In four months of cruising, they covered 4,500 miles.



**Above:** A pod of humpbacks preparing to bubble net in Tebenkof Bay, off Kuiu Island in southeast Alaska. **Facing page:** This small river delta empties into Jade Harbor.

## Power Trip

my right hand, so handling lines for sailing was becoming more difficult.”

Even with the advances of powered winches and roller furling, operating a sailboat still requires more strength than operating a well-designed, full-displacement trawler. The larger the sailboat and the more creature comforts it offers, the larger the sails and rigging have to be to generate the required power.

In addition, balance becomes more of a concern as we age. As Joël said: “My Selene has excellent walkaround decks with high bulwarks that make me feel secure, even in larger seas. We rarely leave the comfort and protection of the beautiful pilothouse and saloon underway, but in the rare situations when we do, the high and very strong railings make us feel very safe, even on the bow.”

As for Dominique, he says: “She loves how comfortable *Jade* is at sea. We’ve never had any reason to doubt *Jade*’s seaworthiness, but she’s also beautiful, with extraordinary woodwork and beautiful furnishings that match our tastes perfectly.”

*Jade* has a 5,000-nautical-mile range, so Joël calls her as a “no-limits cruising boat.” To address onboard power needs, he added 13 solar panels on the hardtop and pilot-house roof. In most situations, the panels keep the house

batteries fully charged without running the generator. With a 5,000-watt inverter, most systems can run on the house batteries. The only exceptions are the washer and dryer, and the larger of two watermakers.

That kind of quiet mimics the silence of sailing: “One obvious difference is the noise of the engine, though the Selene’s engine room is extremely well insulated, so it’s very quiet even under power,” he says. “When we pass a sailboat on a warm summer day making good way under sail, I remember how much I enjoyed sailing. But when we pass a sailboat motoring in the rain and I’m in my slippers in the pilothouse with a warm cup of coffee... I don’t miss sailing at all.”

As I write this, Joël is 75 years old. Last year, he cruised *Jade* from Sitka, Alaska, down the Inside Passage to Washington state. In four months of cruising, they covered 4,500 miles. *Jade* is now back in Roche Harbor, in the San Juans, while Joël is at his home in New Caledonia. He’ll be back next year for more adventures in the Pacific Northwest.

Will he ever take the boat back to New Caledonia? “Probably,” he says, “but spending the warm summer months in the Northwest U.S. and the warm winter months in the Southern Hemisphere is pretty attractive.”

I find his reasoning hard to dispute. ☼