

Because It's There

A JOURNEY AROUND CAPE HORN ABOARD AN OUTER REEF 880 COCKPIT.
BY SIMON MURRAY PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW ULITSKY





Argo's owner, Paul Hawran, left, and his brother-in-law, photographer Andrew Ulitsky, share a moment on their voyage around the Horn.



"Off Cape Horn there are but two kinds of weather, neither one of them a pleasant kind." — John Masefield



Crew member Mike Shaughnessy pilots the tender, leading the way for Argo through the picturesque Patagonian waters.

The edge of the world is not for the faint of heart. It challenges the best-intentioned traveler, and swallows whole the ones ill-prepared for such a voyage, or simply those with a sudden stroke of bad luck. In that way it can be like Mount Everest. The International Association of Cape Horners, founded by a ragtag group of crazy Frenchmen in 1936, consider a rounding of the horn—the southern tip of the southernmost island of the archipelago where South America finally gives out—to be a passage from 50 degrees South in the Pacific to 50 degrees South in the Atlantic. For those few adventurous yachtsmen who accomplish this feat, it is indeed their Everest—the supreme test of seamanship and a crowning achievement bedeviled by roaring winds and savage seas, icebergs and cyclonic williwaws.

For Paul Hawran, the dream was to arrive at Cape Horn aboard his Outer Reef 880 Cockpit, *Argo*. His journey aboard *Argo* started with a shakedown cruise to Alaska, and proceeded south to San Diego; Puerto Vallarta, Mexico; and Los Sueños in Costa Rica. Clearing into Chile at Puerto Iquique, Hawran and his crew explored Patagonia over a period of approximately 30 days; continuing to Puerto Williams, and then finally to the rocky promontory where an albatross statue commemorates the sailors' lives lost at the very bottom of the world—Cape Horn. We caught up with the intrepid crew shortly after their South American adventure.

Paul Hawran:

What do you guys want to know? How I got this bug up my ass? It probably happened in 2003 or so. I was thinking about my retirement and I just so happened to pick up a book on Patagonia. As I started reading through the history and looking at the pictures, it just seemed like an incredible place that no one really travels to. I said to myself, Gee wouldn't it be great to take a boat down to Patagonia and around Cape Horn?

Andrew Ulitsky, photographer, and Hawran's brother-in-law:

[Paul and I] have known each other for about 50 years. We grew up in Brooklyn and Queens, and Paul—even as a young kid—always had an interest in boating. His first boat, which he kept in Sheepshead Bay, was a little runabout. Even back then he had big dreams of boating.

Hawran:

Now, obviously, the waters around Cape Horn are pretty treacherous. In fact, two days before we got there, the lighthouse officer told me they had sustained winds of 175 mph! As I was getting closer to retiring, I started thinking about what kind of a boat I would need for the trip. At that point I owned a 94-foot West Bay SonShip, which was great for coastal cruising, but I didn't feel safe going down to Cape Horn with her. So I started looking around.

I went to the Ft. Lauderdale Boat Show with my surveyor, who I had known for about 20 years at that point, and he and I started looking at various boats. We took a look at Outer Reef, Nordhavn, Ocean Alexander, Offshore, Cheoy Lee—we even went to see a couple steel boats that were up for sale.

One of the concerns I had about a full-displacement boat was, what happens if the stabilizers aren't working? On a Nordhavn, one of the things I asked the captain to do was shut off the stabilizers. That sucker rolled like you wouldn't believe. Frankly, when you're out in the middle of the ocean you have to assume things are going to break down on you. I just didn't care for the way the Nordhavn handled itself; it seemed a little too top heavy, as well.

The other boats were okay, but I listened to my surveyor, who really liked Outer Reef's mechanics; he also liked the keel on the boat. In 2012, I commissioned Outer Reef to build a boat for me with the idea that I was going to be heading south in some pretty nasty seas.

Jeff Drucek, President and CEO of Outer Reef:

Paul came to us a number of years ago to build a boat. We didn't get together on the first, but he came back a number of years later and he had done a lot of research. He said, "I'm looking to build a boat to do my dream cruise," with the culmination of that cruise rounding the Horn. I worked one-on-one with Paul for about a year and a half, and it took about another year to build it.

Hawran:

Jeff is a fellow New Yorker, and I guess I sort of trusted the guy more than anything else. In fact, when I signed the contract with Outer Reef, Jeff and I both agreed we could put the contract away and never have to look at it again. I take him at his word on what needs to be done. I look for his advice and counsel.

Drucek:

He's been using the boat exactly as he said he was going to use it. We outfitted it the way he wanted it outfitted for this trip. As they say, he's living the dream right now.

Hawran:

When the boat was finished in March of 2015, I wanted to have a real good shakedown. That's why I ended up going to Alaska. We went as

far as Valdez and then headed back down in September, and brought her to San Diego. *Argo* stayed there for a while. We gave her some repairs and tweaked some things; by that point, we had been on her for a couple thousand miles. Then in January of 2016 I brought her down to Mexico.

I hired a great outfit in Chile called South Americans Super Yacht Support (SASYSS). They're essentially agents down here. I don't speak a lick of Spanish, and anyone coming down to Chile, I can't imagine them not using either an agent or this organization in particular—they've been great. With their help, I ended up pulling an itinerary together that I sent to friends and family, and when I finally got to Costa Rica I said, okay, let's pull the trigger.

Ulitsky:

None of us were fluent Spanish speakers. [The SASYSS team] was invaluable to us because obviously they were local, they knew the waters, they were all mariners. So they would intercede if we were having trouble with a local armada [the Chilean Navy] or police; they were able to translate for us and helped us along the way.

Hawran:

I think it might have been a harbinger of things to come, but as I was leaving Costa Rica I was in touch with an organization called Weather Routing Inc. (WRI), located up in New York. They do weather routing for commercial yachts. As I was ready to leave Costa Rica, they told me there was a hurricane that was coming off the Caribbean. Rather than take a diagonal shot to South America, they wanted us to head straight west for about 200 miles or so, because they wanted us out of the hurricane's path. Once we were out 200 miles, we made a left turn and headed south towards Chile.

Drucek:

When they came down from Mexico, they were in some very serious seas. They were offshore about 200 miles because WRI had routed them around the storm, but I don't think they were all the way around it. They were in 20- to 30-foot seas for days, not even making any way. It was so rough; they were just keeping a heading. [Paul told

me] the guys got banged up, but the boat held up really well.

Ulitsky:

The most memorable thing for me when I went aboard *Argo* in Valparaíso, Chile, was when we ran open ocean in the Pacific and it was three days of just pounding. You pick up all the wrong stuff in that part of the Pacific: the currents are running north; the winds are coming from the southeast; and the swells are 10 or 12 feet with maybe six or seven seconds of separation. So my first impression was, *Oh God, this is just awful.*

Let me add that Paul is especially proud of *Argo*. The boat is fantastic. It's just solid. It's got big stabilizers and it's very beamy. It's comfortable. It's got a long range. So we were able to put up with the pounding.

Hawran:

Everyone on the boat was a family member or friend. You had Mike Shaughnessy, a mechanic and fix-it kind of guy and friend of ours who had never actually spent time on a boat like this before. Andy, my brother-in-law, has been with me on virtually every boat I've been on. He flew down here for a couple of months to do the cape with me.

Ulitsky:

For most of the time that I was on the boat, [the crew included] Paul and our friend Mike. He was not a formal crew member but he has become very knowledgeable about the boat. He's a 20-year friend of ours from Southern California. Paul had also hired a captain from Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, an expatriate Canadian named Kim McDonald. Occasionally SASYSS would send someone for a couple of days out of curiosity or out of necessity for some port issue.



An old wooden Jesuit church stands ready to offer sanctuary to travelers (above). Magellanic penguins (left) gather in large nesting colonies on the coasts during breeding season. The Patagonian wilderness is a sight to behold (opposite) for the lucky few who round the Horn.

hard to get parts in any quick kind of way. And a box you'd get from Amazon would cost something like \$650 from the States. So, she's right. It was nice to get a care package every once in a while. But if it came from the States you'd have to have a lot of patience.

Paul has a saying, "Two is one and one is none" and it's so true. Because when you're that remote and that far away from civilization—even if you needed parts—it would take days and weeks to get them there.

Hawran:

We were on Chiloé Island on Christmas day, walking on the beach checking out the penguins and birds when we got into a 7.5 earthquake. We jumped into a truck and started to head back toward the boat 30 minutes away. At that point I get a call from WRI, which alerted me to a tsunami warning that had just been posted. They told us to get back to the boat, get off the dock, and obviously get back into the middle of the water.

There were trees that had fallen onto the road, and people running all over the place. It was a lot of vibration. You knew you were in the middle of something—even though we were 50 miles from the epicenter. My concern at that point was getting *Argo* off the dock, because the dock was made for a 30-footer and I knew my boat would crush the dock in a second. I pulled her toward the middle of the bay, and they canceled the warning two hours later.

The farthest port you hit before Cape Horn is Puerto Williams. Now obviously by then I had a real respect for WRI. I told anyone who wanted to do the Horn with me that they better look at a one-week window, because unless WRI tells me it's okay to go I'm just not going.

Ulitsky:

You get a general sense after a while which way the winds are blowing, but they have these weird winds farther south that are called williwaws. They just pop up out of nowhere and it's like a water tornado. So, you'd get these windswept, mini tornados spinning around, and you'd have to consider that when docking at a *coleta*—or a bay—at night.

Hawran:

When I sent that itinerary out to family and friends, I also sent it to Jeff. He wrote back to me saying, "I've got to go to Cape Horn with



Hawran:

As a U.S. boater, there are a few things I found really unusual about Chile. One is, for the most part, they don't have yachts here, so a lot of the facilities at these ports are just commercial piers for fishing boats. I never even thought about not having a floating dock. Also, there's no such thing as shore power around here, so we were using batteries and gensets most of the time.

Ulitsky:

I don't think we saw but one other motoryacht in three months. We were a curiosity to a lot of folks. Every time we took a dinghy in or docked, there would be a whole group of people to greet us. The local police, park rangers, and anybody who ran a restaurant would ask us to come and have a meal with them; some people brought us to their homes for meals. It was like that everywhere we went. Quite frankly I've traveled around the world, and I can't think of another country that's as warm and welcoming.

Helen Ulitsky, Andy's wife and Paul's sister:

My brother has a satellite phone and other means of communication, but maintaining a physical tie to people back home was also important. They were able to connect with SASYSS, so if they needed any parts or even a food item from Costco, we'd be able to send boxes down for them and get it on board.

Ulitsky:

Getting spare parts in a place like Chile is extraordinarily difficult. There are very few local places, and when Helen sent something from the States it would have to go through customs in Chile. It was very



Shepherds drive their flock along public roads—Patagonia's grasslands are among the world's foremost sheep-farming areas.

you.” And I told him, just pick the place where you want to meet me and we’ll go from there.

Druek:

I’ve cruised with clients in the past, just not that length of time—usually an extended weekend for a rendezvous or a short jaunt. I was very happy to see how comfortable they were. When I came on board, one of the first things I did very discreetly was walk through the boat as the builder to see how well it held up. I looked at certain parts like the joinery and all the margins around the cabinet doors and drawers, searching for any cracks in granite or tile, anything showing stress or fatigue. That boat looks like it did the day it came out of the factory.

Hawran:

As you head farther south, you go from kind of a lush, green setting to more of a glacier, bare-mountain one. By the time you get down to Cape Horn, there are a few trees on some of the islands, but for the most part you’re looking at stone mountains and glaciers that are just unbelievable.

Ulitsky:

The animal life was amazing. There were whales in the Straits of Magellan that would pop up. There were seals that would be jumping

out of the water near us and dolphins riding our bow wave. I had never taken pictures of dolphins totally out of the water before.

Druek:

Cape Horn is pretty imposing. Typically, when you round the Horn, you come up on the back side. But you don’t anchor back there, because for hundreds and hundreds of years people have been trying to do that only to lose their anchor chains and cables. So you just leave your captain on the boat and let him idle around and loiter until you’ve done your business. So we get up and go to the lighthouse.

Hawran:

There’s only just the lighthouse keeper and his family there. Really nice people. Apparently the lighthouse keepers are all navy officers and they have one-year stints at this place. I don’t know how anyone can stay there.

Druek:

They say in Florida, “If you don’t like the weather now wait 15 minutes.” Well, they say in Cape Horn, “If you don’t like the weather now wait 15 seconds.” When there’s a high-pressure storm front floating over the Andes, as soon as the pressure drops, it comes up over the top of the Andes and barrels down the other side. The



Anchoring with both bow and stern lines was an integral part of docking at night in coletos, or bays, due to extreme fluctuations in weather.

lighthouse keeper said it’s like a freight train—you can hear it coming. There are stories of people being in anchorages in dead-calm wind and 10 minutes later its blowing 100 mph. It’s pretty unforgiving. If you’re not prepared, you can get your ass kicked pretty bad. You can quote me on that.

Hawran:

Essentially you run down there in between fronts; there’s always a front coming through there. The 20 or 30 years I’ve been boating kind of prepared me for it, but I’ll tell you the truth: When I first started this journey I honestly believed that 30 knots of wind was serious. Now, 30 knots is a spring breeze.

Druek:

I didn’t really think of it as a bucket-list item until I was heading home and I said to myself, *Holy mackerel what a trip!* I couldn’t imagine not going. Every boater or sailor [would agree] this is the pinnacle of cruising achievements. I consider myself very lucky to have done it; to do it on one of our boats is the icing on the cake.

It was a very proud moment for us as a company. But it was extremely humbling to see my client there and the look on his face, a smile from ear to ear that said, *I did it*. That, to me, was a very humbling experience. □

Practical Matters

ADVICE FROM THE CREW OF ARGO THAT CAN HELP MAKE ANY VOYAGE A SUCCESS.

There’s an old saying: “Calm seas don’t make a good sailor.” Well, I probably have to buy that now. To prepare for anything that comes your way, my advice would be to make sure your boat is sound. The rule on *Argo* is the boat comes first. That’s our safety. And then obviously the crew comes second, but you need to keep the boat together more than anything else. Down in Patagonia the weather is a real big issue and you really need to keep an eye on it. —Paul Hawran

There were times the satellite went out; there were times the engine went out; there were times the computers went out. I always remind people to take paper charts. A lot of people get spoiled with their computers, and Paul has got redundancies on every possible system, but without a paper chart and a good map and a channel 16 phone, a trip like this would be impossible. —Andy Ulitsky

When things turn bad, they turn bad quick and you have to be prepared. You almost have to cruise in a preparatory mode, so to speak. You’re always anticipating something is going to go wrong, and you have that next anchorage ready in case something comes up. As we would cruise, Paul would be looking ahead 15 minutes, 30 minutes, 45 minutes, always in search of a possible anchorage if we needed it. It’s a very rugged piece of the world. —Jeff Druek