

Love What You Love Podcast

Episode 25: Sailing Around the World with Kika and Dan

November 17, 2020

Hey, I'm Julie Rose. Welcome to *Love What You Love*. I'm an author, creator, and enthusiast, and I've always been intrigued by the things that people are super into, so every week I'll introduce you to another fascinating human who's into really interesting stuff.

Welcome back! Or, Welcome! It is so good to be back here with you. It's been, um, quite the couple of weeks since we were last together on October 27th. That was like, what, 37 years ago or something, right? I mean, I didn't even know I had this many emotions. But even though I'm still feeling pretty wobbly, I do have a lot of hope. A lot. We'll get our sea legs soon enough.

Speaking of, let's meet this week's guests. Have you ever dreamed of just selling everything and sailing around the world? Were you perhaps dreaming about it, like, a week ago? Me too. Well, six years ago Kika and Dan actually did it. They post videos weekly on YouTube so you can follow along. Thus far, they've sailed over 18,000 nautical miles and have visited 22 countries, all on the 36-foot sailboat they renovated themselves.

In this conversation, we chat about getting to know countries up close and personal, navigating life in close quarters, learning as you go, and so much more. So find out why Kika and Dan love sailing around the world and why you might learn to love it too.

Julie: Hello there! Thank you so much for joining me today!

Kika: Hi! It's a pleasure to be here.

Julie: Awesome. So, you guys do something that's so interesting to me. You have retrofitted a 1972 Pearson 36 sailboat, and you are basically sailing around the world... the Atlantic and Caribbean to start. You've gone to 22 countries and have traveled over 18,000 miles, which is absolutely insane. Have you always had wanderlust? What was the real catalyst for you guys to get on this boat and start traveling the world?

Kika: So, the reality is, I don't even think there was a true catalyst. It's not like we woke up one morning and decided that our life needed to change or anything. I grew up on a Caribbean island; I grew up in Haiti, so I've always loved the ocean. I've always loved going to the beach and just being in the water. So for me, I've always been drawn to that, but I never knew that it was going to lead me to a sailboat. I just knew that I wanted to travel at some point in my life.

Dan: Indefinitely.

Kika: Exactly. And then Dan and I met in architecture school. At the end of our graduation we... If you want to call it a catalyst, we kind of realized that we didn't want to get stuck in the 9-5 lifestyle. We never really liked working in an office and we wanted to find a way to prioritize working for ourselves and working nomadically.

Dan: I think we both had a bit of wanderlust growing up. I traveled around the United States quite a bit because I was homeschooled a lot as a kid, so we'd travel a lot more than I think normal kids would. But yeah, I don't think either of us had ever dreamt of, like, living full-time internationally wandering. But when we started looking into ways of doing that, the sailboat just, sort of, became the right tool for the job.

Julie: So it wasn't like, "Oh my gosh, I love sailboats, I love sailing, this is amazing."?

Dan: Not at all.

Julie: Interesting! So what was the process of, like... I know it took you two years to retrofit the boat, but how on Earth did you go about learning how to sail and learning how to do all of this?

Dan: I think mostly just Google.

Kika: And YouTube.

Julie: [laughs]

Dan: During college, since we were in architecture school, we actually paid for a decent amount of it by working while we were in school, renovating houses. It started out like painting windows and moving furniture, and by the time we graduated we had a full trailer of tools and we were renovating entire houses. So we weren't necessary afraid of the construction side of it, getting our hands dirty and using power tools. But we had never set foot on a boat, we didn't even know what the interior looked like when we started googling them. We had no idea you could live on a boat, but we figured, you know, we could build a bed, and we could get some sort of toilet, and put a camp stove in it.

And then the next google search later we realized that "Of course boats have interiors, and beds, and stuff." It was just such an obvious, like, "Duh!" They're just like RVs or caravans, just with sails, and you don't need diesel fuel to move from point A to point B." So yeah, after that it was just figuring out... It was a crash course and hit-the-ground-running, so to speak, with boat renovation. We had no idea what fiberglass was, or how to work with it, or what any of the sailing terms were.

Julie: What was your first trip on the boat and how did that feel?

Kika: Our first trip wasn't really the most epic sailing.

Dan: No. It was... I think we'd have to go back a little bit. Our first trip... We bought the boat in Boston on the northeast coast of the United States, and our first trip was *supposed* to be motoring down the intercoastal waterway to Florida because we bought the boat in October. It's almost going on exactly six years since we bought the boat. Then within a month of buying the boat up in Boston we realized that, like, the motor didn't work and things were in much worse shape than we were expecting them to, and it started to snow, and they were shutting down the marina.

So the first trip the boat took - without us on it - was on the back of a truck to Florida. We used our last bit of savings to get the boat to Florida so that we could actually start working on it because up in the northeast they shut down the marinas. We wouldn't have been able to return for six months while we were paying them a whole bunch of money to keep our boat in a parking lot while we couldn't touch it. So we moved it to Florida and that's where we spent the first year-and-a-half, like, renovating it, and putting it back together, and fixing the keel, and figuring out what it takes to build a safe boat, and putting it in the water, including figuring out a way to spin the propellor because our diesel motor that came with the boat was seized and the diesel motor we bought to replace it didn't work. [laughs]

So, with all of that backstory filled in, we ended up building an electric motor from some used golf cart parts and a forklift motor found on eBay, just enough to spin our

propellor. Up until the 1960s sailboats didn't have engines in them anyway, so we figured if they could do it, we could do it. So, our very first trip we didn't even have the electric motor hooked up. We just, sort of, drift-sailed out of the marina and underneath a bridge, and we made it about 400 meters out into the ocean and the wind just died. So we just bobbed around for four or five hours, like, drinking beer and eating food. We had a friend with us and we were just so happy we made it into the ocean. Then the tide turned, and the wind filled in, and we sailed back into the marina, and it was just the best afternoon for our first sail. It was great.

Julie: When did you know you were 'all in'? I mean, like, obviously you spent a bunch of money and you renovated it, so you'd better be all in, but how did you know, like, "Yeah, *this* is it."? What was that moment?

Kika: I think for me is the day that we... Even before we stepped onto the boat, the day that we officially moved out of the apartment and had everything we owned in a tiny minivan and we were ready to drive almost 2,000 miles up north to move onto the boat, I think that moment for me is when I realized, "You know what? This is it. We have no ties to anything else and we are starting a new lifestyle and I'm all in."

Dan: Yeah, I think it was when they approved our offer. It was right around that same time. It all happened really fast. We had just graduated from college in May and we spent three months renovating a house and got a check at the end of it for \$10,000 for that three months of work for the two of us. We turned around and... the boat, I think, when we originally saw it was like \$21,000 or something, and we were like, "That's going to be our second boat. We can't afford that now." And then they dropped it down to, like, 16, and then when we finally saw it, it was like \$11,000 or something. So when we got that \$10,000 check were we like, "Okay, we can rent a car and get to Boston for about \$1,000. Let's put an offer in for \$8,000."

And they accepted it, and then we're like, "Oh geez... Okay. That wasn't supposed to happen on the first try." And then when we found out the diesel motor didn't work they were like, "It's okay, you can back out of the deal." But then we offered them \$3,000 because we found a refurbished motor for \$3,000, so we were going to save a little money to ship it up there and everything, and they accepted that offer. So when the broker texted us saying, "Yep, you can have it for 3," we were like, "What have we done??" [laughs]

Julie: I find it really interesting that you were in architecture school, and you were refurbishing houses, and now you have a boat and you don't want to be settled. I'm super interested in the psychology behind two architecture students who don't want anything to do with a settled life. What's that about?

Dan: That's a good one.

Kika: Well, the thing is, I feel like when we were in architecture school, all the cities that we liked were all on the water anyway, so that aspect of being on the water, I think, drew us more and more. We knew we wanted to travel, and for us, especially in architecture... In architecture school you don't really learn a lot about every specific culture. They teach you that when you graduate you're going to design skyscrapers, and renovate houses, and the beautiful architecture projects.

Dan: Like you see in magazines.

Kika: Exactly. But for us we wanted to do something a little bit more, something that had more impact on our community and on a global scale, but we knew that we couldn't really jump into those projects without learning what the world was and how it works. For us, the solution to that was to travel more.

Dan: Yeah, the best way to learn about a new place is to live there.

Kika: Yes.

Dan: That was definitely one of our driving goals. We like to say, "Travel and live sustainably," but not necessary the 'sustainably' that people talk about with, like, 'green', and 'off-grid', and 'carbon free', that sort of sustainability. For us it was the ability to live, and travel, and move full time without stopping, *that* definition of sustainable, where we could continue to do it. And that again sort of led us back to the boat, and since then, yeah, those 22 countries, each one has been their own sort of educational experience in their own right.

Julie: So I'm interested to know, if you're willing to share, what these larger dreams are that you want to achieve when you take a break or travel less.

Dan: I wouldn't say we have, like, larger, grand-scheme goals necessarily, not specifics. But the ability to find and learn... to immerse ourselves in a place long enough to learn what sort of catalyst project could be achieved and, sort of, set up a chain reaction... It's always good to donate money to a charity or something like that, but that only goes so far. But the ability to be in a country long enough to learn what would really, actually help, not just build a bunch of houses, or install a wind farm, or a school, whatever the thing is... Actually schools are pretty good examples. But in the long term, I think it would be something along those lines, but it takes a long time to get there, and to learn what that even looks like, and how to recognize it, and what to do with it once you have it.

Kika: Yeah, it's a very slow process. But we also... our goal right now is to observe as much as we can, and to explore as much as we can, and to learn, and to share what we learn with the world if possible, which is one of the reasons why we have a YouTube channel, to be able to give back what we've learned to those people that can't travel and learn for themselves, if that makes sense.

Julie: Yeah, that makes total sense. That's one of the things that's so interesting about your channel is being able to, you know, armchair travel and learn the real things.

Dan: And not with the filter of a CEO, and an executive, and an advertising agency. I think one of the best parts about running our own YouTube channel and running our whole thing is it's *our* creative direction, it's our lenses, it's our cameras, it's the way we see it, our experiences, and then turning around and sharing those with people in the most raw and authentic way you can without recording 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Kika: Exactly.

Dan: I think it's beneficial because when we were first starting out we didn't know anything about sailing and we learned a lot about it through sites like YouTube, so we're giving back in a way where... I think when people see that something is possible it makes it okay; it's not just a dream or a goal they don't want to talk about with their friends or something. But showing that you don't have to do a typical 9-5 if you don't want to and you can pursue something else. I think when people see that it's possible it helps spark

their own goals and ambitions in their own mind, whether it's the same, or different, or some other avenue.

Julie: So far you've been to 22 countries. What has been... I don't want to say your favorite, but what's been the most interesting, or where did you learn the most interesting things so far?

Kika: We might have different answers, but...

Dan: You're not allowed to say Haiti. [laughs] But it might honestly have been Haiti for me.

Kika: Well, I grew up in Haiti so I kind of knew that culture already. But what opened my mind even more is the fact that when we visited all the other islands in the Caribbean, all the popular islands in the Caribbean that are so touristy, and every single one of them, when I set foot, I look out and I'm like, "Wow, this looks exactly like Haiti." The same culture, the same taxi driver, the style is exactly the same. So it makes me realize that the countries that have the most marketing budget for tourism are the ones that get the most popular views.

Dan: I think that was definitely one of the bigger lessons that we learned, especially for me too. I grew up in Canada, I traveled a bunch in the United States, I went to France for a week in high school. Those were my travel experiences. So the first country in the Caribbean that I got to visit was Haiti, and sure, there were some roads you'd drive down where they look sort of like the ones you see on the news, like, "Yeah, this is Haiti," but then the rest of the country's absolutely beautiful. I was like, "Why haven't I ever seen pictures of this before?" There's massive pine forests, and caves, and mountains, and waterfalls, and beaches. It's beautiful.

And then we went to the other countries and you realize... We sort of have a running theory on our boat and how we film things. We consider our camera to be sort of like a flashlight, and whatever we shine the light on is what people get to see. It's unfortunate that some countries, the only light that gets shone on them is, you know, NGOs trying to make a profit off of poor people and the worst-case scenarios, whereas the country right beside it they're trying to make money off of tourism and off-shore bank accounts, and the countries look identical when you're on the ground. But one gets a bad reputation and one doesn't just because of how people choose to portray that country. And rather than seeing it for what it is, they kind of go there with a preconceived idea and only show that. That's been unfortunate, I think.

Kika: Yeah, and that was also a big lightbulb moment for us too because Haiti was the first country that we sailed to. I grew up on land in Haiti so I've never seen it from a water perspective, if that makes sense. So that motivated us to even show more about what we see and what we experience because it's a different way of experiencing something, and it's a way that not a lot of people knew about of a certain country. So if we could do that for more countries, show the realistic versions of it and other aspects than what's in the news, then other people can take away something that we give out.

Dan: I think it's always unfortunate if the only information you get about another place in the world is what you see on the news, then it's a very biased and misrepresented view of that place. Hopefully by us going to some of these places and making videos about them, people might get a better idea of what it's actually like out in the world.

Julie: So you've crossed the Atlantic, which was a harrowing set of videos, I have to say.

Kika: That was a challenge.

Julie: I bet! So you're currently in Norway. Do you have a plan set out, or is it kind of like, "Here's our three options, let's just see what feels right."? How do you guys decide where you're going?

Kika: We always have loose plans, if that makes sense. We have an idea of where we want to go next, but we try not to focus too hard on the long term. In reality, what matters is the weather. So if the weather leads us somewhere, we're not going to force to go against it. We're just going to either wait for it to be favorable, or we're going to change direction to where it is favorable for us to go. So, we've changed our plans almost on a daily basis over the course of the last five years.

We were planning to cross the Atlantic almost four years ago, and then our plans changed, and then three years ago our plans changed, and then finally two years ago we made the... we started going north a little bit every day, and then finally the weather was perfect for us to cross, so we crossed to England and stayed there for almost a year. So yeah... Now we sort of have loose plans to be in Norway for a while, and either to go east to Russia next summer or west and south to Iceland, and then back into the Mediterranean. But again, we don't even know.

Dan: Yeah, we've learned a few important lessons over the last four years when it comes to sailing. To go back to one of those earlier slogans, "in no hurry to go anywhere, ever" is definitely one of them. Anytime we start to feel off, or rushed, or stressed, or anything, we realize that it's because we're trying to push too quickly to some destination and we're not slowing down and enjoying where we are. So, we just slow down even more, and slow down even more, and slow down even more. The more we slow down the more we enjoy the place that we're in.

Even why we're in Norway is because of one of those plans. We were trying to get to Iceland this summer and we were sitting in the northern islands in the Netherlands and the wind just was not cooperating, not cooperating, not cooperating. So we finally looked at each other and we were just like, "Where *can* we sail with this wind, because we're obviously not going to get the wind that we want anytime soon, and it's getting late in the summer, and we want to sail north." So we were able to get to Norway, but not all the way to Iceland, so we're like, "Let's sail to Norway and we'll wait for better weather, and then we'll sail to Iceland."

Then we got to Norway and I think as soon as our anchor hit the mud at the bottom of the bay we looked around and were like, "Yeah, I think we should stay here for a long time. This is really pretty." I think right then and there we decided to stay all winter. Our plans for the spring are very fluid at this point.

Julie: How do you winterize or toughen the boat to deal with those long, cold, dark winters?

Kika: The cool thing about Norway, unlike a lot of other countries that deal with winter, is that the water itself doesn't get too cold. There is winter, but it's still warmed up by, like, the current.

Dan: Yeah, the Gulf Stream actually makes it all the way up the Norwegian Sea, so the ocean up here doesn't actually freeze in the winter.

Kika: Exactly. And the cool thing about Norway too is there's so many anchorages, and so many ports, and so many marinas to choose from that, you know, you can plug in and have... We have an electric heater on board, so if we do plug into a marina then it's like

you're in the house, nice and toasty. And if you do decide to spend some time in a remote anchorage, then we have our wood stove. It's a very tiny wood stove but it's just enough to heat up our entire tiny boat.

Dan: Our tiny boat joke is that we live in a closet.

Kika: Exactly. [laughs]

Dan: And we carry about a week's supply of firewood on the boat, and then also, last year or maybe a year-and-a-half ago before we crossed the Atlantic, we ripped everything out of the inside of the boat up against the hull and put in a layer of insulation as well; not necessarily to help with temperature, but more so to help with condensation so the inside of the boat stays dry. It's kind of the opposite of a cold glass of water on a hot summer day, the inside of the boat sweats a lot in the winter. We put a bit of a beer koozie on the inside of our boat. It helps a lot to keep things dry, which is quite nice. We also have a bunch of down jackets, and sleeping bags, and Gore-Tex.

Kika: I think it goes with the plans that we have for sailing. We never prepared the boat for, like, a circumnavigation at one point. When we started, we prepared the boat to sail the Caribbean, so we didn't need insulation, we didn't need a heater, we didn't need jackets, or shoes. And then when we knew we were getting ready to cross the Atlantic our list kind of got a little bit bigger. We knew there was some safety equipment we needed before we crossed. Then after we crossed we knew that we were going to spend the winter somewhere where it's cold, so our list got upgraded again to getting the proper gear that we needed for the cold. I've never spent a proper winter, ever, in my life. So you'll have to ask me that question in spring of next year, but I think we're pretty prepared for a cold season.

Dan: But the nice part about Norway, to come back to what Kika was talking about at the beginning, because the Gulf Stream actually does come all the way up here a little bit, the ocean doesn't freeze unless you're very, very deep into a fjord. So, the coastal climate, all the way north, all the way up to Tromsø is relatively mild compared to what people think it should be. It usually hovers around freezing, sometimes a little bit warmer, sometimes a little bit colder, but rarely below -5°C. And there's a little bit of snow but mostly it's up in the mountains. So it's not Antarctica, or Greenland, or someplace where it's -40° or -60° and the wind's blowing. It's a lot more mild than I think a lot of people realize.

Julie: This is kind of in the weeds here, but what is the process of docking, or tying up in a marina? Do you have to reserve upfront? Do you just show up? Do you have to show a passport? What's that process when you come into a port or to a mooring?

Dan: How much time do you have?

Julie: [laughs]

Kika: Marinas are actually pretty interesting because not until we crossed the Atlantic, or we were getting ready to cross the Atlantic, we never really visited marinas often.

Dan: Very rarely.

Kika: For one, because in the Caribbean a lot of places you can just anchor. You just drop your anchor, and it's free to drop your anchor anywhere. So you find a good protective harbor and then you just anchor for how long you want. Also we couldn't afford marinas in the Caribbean, so we just never did.

Dan: We couldn't afford anything in the Caribbean.

Kika: No. [laughs] But then once we crossed... If you go into a new country, you clear in with customs. It's not necessarily the marina or the dock, but when you show up for the first time, sometimes you have a number that you call or an office that you physically visit, and then you go with your passport and your boat information. Sometimes they come to your boat and get the information. It depends on the country.

Dan: Sometimes it's one office, sometimes it's six, depending if there's customs, immigration, harbormaster. There's a bunch of different people that you sometimes have to go and see.

Kika: Yeah, and the process of clearing in is about the same as if you fly in. They check your visa, they check your passport, they stamp you in normally, and then when you leave sometimes you stamp out, sometimes you don't.

Dan: Because it takes a day or two instead of five minutes.

Kika: Yes, but once you're clear in you can explore wherever you want to go in that country before you leave. So the process of actually docking the boat is a bit new for us.

Dan: Yeah, we never really spent time in marinas. I think we pulled up to a dock less than a dozen times in the first three years of sailing. We also didn't really have a reason to because our boat was powered by solar panels. We were collecting rainwater. We have an electric motor so we didn't need diesel fuel. There was no real reason for us to pull into a dock except to, like, pick up friends or do boat work. That really was the only time we went into a marina was to spend a month, you know, running power tools and stuff. And marinas, down in the Caribbean and in Florida, were probably around \$100 to \$150 a night for us to put our boat in. Very expensive.

Julie: Oh my god!

Dan: Yeah, it's a five-star hotel, only you're bringing the hotel. [laughs]

Kika: BYOH. [laughs]

Julie: That's right!

Dan: Once we crossed over to the UK, and most of Europe unless you get down to the Mediterranean, boats aren't really considered a luxury item like they are in the US, so marinas are very, very affordable. I think here... In the UK they're usually around \$30 a night or so. In the Netherlands they were less. Here in Norway they're around \$15 to \$20 for the night, so we find ourselves plugging in to the marinas a lot more because now that means charging our batteries, we can get water from the hose, we can take a hot shower, we can plug in the electric heater and get all nice and toasty warm. Most marinas here have laundry so we can go do laundry. It makes the \$20 a lot more worth it.

Julie: You guys spend a lot of time together. What do you do... or how do you find time for yourselves?

Dan: We're basically alone together, we always say.

Kika: Yeah. [laughs] I think ever since... Even before the boat, we worked together, and lived together, and studied together for almost two or three years, so we were already used to being in close quarters 24/7, so that aspect of our lifestyle didn't really change when we moved onto the boat. It's just more of it, I guess.

Dan: I think it was a little bit more stressful too at the beginning because a boat floats and your lives are literally in your hands, so it definitely adds more pressure to make sure that we actually could communicate well and... I mean, we're used to living in small spaces, but driving a car to work or going to school, it's not really a high-stress, high-pressure environment like it was the first couple of times we went out sailing.

Kika: Yeah, we always joke that in the sailboat it's like dog years in a relationship. We've been together for almost seven years now and it would be as if you've been together with someone for 50 years in a normal relationship.

Dan: Yeah, they say sailboats are pressure cookers for relationships and it either makes or breaks them. So yeah, it's worked out well for us but it doesn't work out for everybody, I guess.

Kika: No, but I think the cool thing about us is we're used to each other so much as well that I think at this point we're almost co-dependent, and we like it.

Julie: [laughs] So in this pressure cooker environment, what have you learned about yourselves and what have you learned about each other?

Kika: Dan is the cook in the family. He cooks and I eat. It's a really good combination. But there's not a lot of space for two people to work at the same time in a lot of places on the boat.

Dan: Yeah, we renovated our boat with that in mind so we're never really in each other's way. If Kika's working at the nav desk I can be in the galley, or... We actually just renovated the nav desk so we can both sit at it, so we can sit across from each other and have, like, a proper dinner sitting at a table. But also, I think when you're living in a house that has more than one door it's very easy if you get mad at each other or get in a fight to, like, go into another room and "cool down." But I think that actually is probably more damaging in the long run because then you have all this pent-up frustration, and you're in there having conversations in your own head with your partner or whatever that they're not part of but you're always winning.

There's so much that you don't end up talking about because you're both just steaming in some other room or, like, getting in a car and going for a drive, or going and getting drunk at the bar or something like that. Whereas in a boat, like, we don't... People always ask us to film more of the drama on board because we don't ever show it in our videos, but we're like, "There is no drama," because there's no point getting mad at each other in a place this small, when you're a thousand miles from land, and there's *nothing* you can do about it. Like, you either get over it or you talk it out because there's just no point steaming up, and getting frustrated, and yelling, and screaming, and actually being dramatic about it because there's just no point. The boat's too small; life's too short. Just figure it out or get over it.

Kika: Yeah, it's better to learn to communicate with each other than to, like, let that pressure cooker take over, so to speak.

Julie: So obviously you've learned tons of new skills. What are the new skills you've learned that you're most proud of?

Kika: Aside from the whole sailing part...

Dan: It was really cool to make it across an entire ocean under wind power, knowing that, like, we're the ones that renovated the boat, we're the ones that learned how to sail it,

and how to navigate, and then actually making landfall on the other side of an ocean and realizing that that's an actual possibility. That is a really, really cool thing to check that box.

Kika: Yeah, it gives you a sense of accomplishment knowing that we can physically take your own boat across an ocean by ourselves.

Dan: It makes the world a lot smaller, actually, in some ways.

Kika: But I think one of our proudest accomplishments as well is the boat itself, because we've transformed the boat, like, from nothing to what is now our home. Every aspect of this boat we changed to make it more comfortable to us, and every time I look around inside the boat I see the sweat, and tears, and effort that we put into that boat.

Dan: I think it would be hard to pinpoint as specific skill or a specific thing we've learned, but as a whole collaboration, a whole set of things, everything that we have now, we never would've even dreamed of seven years ago when we started dating. The boat, the ability to sail it, the ability to make all of our income online from multiple different streams, the ability to film it... None of that, we had no knowledge of any of it when we started and now we've gotten quite good at all of it. As a complete package, I think that would probably be the biggest thing, but it's also all of those things. That's probably a cheating answer.

Julie: You know, in all of this time, what would you say was your scariest moment and then your best moment?

Dan: Fear is usually just a tool to let you know where your knowledge base is lacking. The things you're afraid of are the things you know the least about, I think. So any time that we feel fear, we just start researching it. Why are we afraid of sailing at night? Why are we afraid of docking a boat? It's like, "Because we've never done it before," Okay, so what is there to worry about? What's different about this than what we already do?

But there was one time very early on when we were sailing, when we were relatively new to navigating, relatively new to understanding weather forecasts, our boat was sort of barely put together enough that it would float, and we were sailing out of Haiti, out of the Port-au-Prince area, back north and around. We knew the wind was going to be strong but we'd never sailed in wind that strong before so we didn't really have any recollection or comprehension of how strong 30 knots of wind was. And we had no life jackets on board, no AIS, no life raft, none of the safety stuff you're supposed to have. But we had one harness, like a chest harness that you wear and you can clip it into the boat so that if the boat... if you slip or if the boat rolls you're still attached to the boat.

The biggest rule on a boat is, "Don't fall off the boat." Rule number one, the only rule that matters: Don't fall off the boat. But we only had one of those harnesses, and we didn't have autopilot so we had to take turns helming. I remember Kika coming out from inside and, sort of, sitting in the companionway just in front of the helm, and I was steering, in the dark, in 30 knots of wind, with waves we couldn't see crashing over the bow. And she looked at me and was like, "I wish we had two harnesses." [laughs] That was, like, the defining "scariest" moment because that was the biggest, like, "Yeah, a lot could go wrong right now."

Since then we've solved 99% of those issues so they won't go wrong again, but I think that was probably the first time... because it was the first time we were really in nasty, rough weather. We were sailing into, like, an uncharted bay, and it was dark, and the

moon hadn't... All the things that could potentially go wrong were just lined up waiting to go wrong. And when Kika was like, "I wish we had two harnesses," that was her version of...

Kika: Like, "I'm a little nervous right now." [laughs] Especially this passage, because that little cut is called The Windward Passage. It's very known to be... it can get pretty hairy there, especially on the wrong day. So we went there knowing... We *thought* it was going to be a pretty good passage but we didn't really take into account that there was also current that goes through that. So the wind was good but the current was pushing against the wind, which means that the waves were just, like, mountains.

So we did something... When we realized that, "You know, this is a little bit on the uncomfortable side," we did something called 'heaving to', which basically means you put the boat in neutral. You adjust the sails so that the boat just doesn't move anymore, and it kind of turns itself to be a little more comfortable with the waves. So we did that and waited for the moon to come out so we could at least see where the waves were coming from.

Dan: And see the bay that we were sailing into within the mountains. We needed to wait for the full moon to come out.

Kika: And as soon as the moon came out a few hours later, we put ourselves back where we were supposed to be, and then we just sailed into the bay. And then we slept. [laughs]

Dan: For a week. Yeah, that was a rough passage.

Julie: There's so many good life lessons from sailing. Don't keep fighting against something that's not working. Go with the flow. Don't push it.

Dan: I think one of the biggest lessons from sailing it just not being complacent. When you live in a society where most of everything is taken care of or protected, where you have insurance, and police, and fire, and ambulances, and hospitals, and self-driving cars, there's just so little you actually have to worry about. But on a boat out in the middle of the ocean, it's you. It's you, your crew, your boat, your skills. That's it. There's nothing else out there. You're far enough away that even if you push a panic, or emergency, or EPIRB button, like, it's going to be days before somebody gets there.

So it's cool... I think that would tie into the happiest moment, when we crossed the Atlantic and we sailed into Southampton in the UK and got off the dock. Because we had spent five years learning, and planning, and prepping, and figuring out what we needed, and getting it right, we made it there and it was a huge accomplishment to make it across the ocean and we felt amazing that we actually did it. We also felt like we could just turn around and do it again because everything went well, nothing broke, the planning was perfect.

Everything went the way it was supposed to. We did everything right, and then we were like, "Oh yeah, we could top up our water tanks, and take a shower, and turn around and do it tomorrow." We weren't exhausted, we weren't beaten, we weren't crying, we weren't sad, we weren't like, "We're never doing this again." Everything went well, like, "Oh, planning, and preparation, and taking your time. It all works out." I think that was a pretty high moment, for me at least.

Kika: Yeah.

Julie: Are there any misconceptions about sailing, or about...

Dan: Probably. [laughs]

Julie: [laughs] ... or working for yourselves that you would just be like, "You guys, that's not how it is."?

Kika: Yeah, the first one is thinking that it's always beautiful weather, and rainbows every day, and bikini life. It's not... There are moments that are like that, definitely, but it's harder work than people think it is.

Dan: Especially on social media where everyone just wants to post their highlight reels, and the best of the best, and the prettiest, and the most color-graded and epic photos, where in reality it's, like, once a month. It's not every day.

Kika: Exactly. We do try to stay realistic as much as we can in our videos and show how our lives actually are, but we put up about 15-minute videos once a week. So it's 15 minutes out of week. That's a very, very tiny percentage of our lives.

Dan: Like 1% or something.

Kika: Yeah, and we try to... It's still a highlight. No matter how we show it, it's still a highlight, and there's a lot of things that we don't show as well. So, a lot of times people think that the sailing lifestyle is, you know, luxurious, champagne every day, and margaritas, but it's just not true. You do need to be prepared, you do need to have your life lessons, so to speak, and know what you're doing, and know how to plan a passage.

Dan: And that's just the sailing side of it. Being able to do it long term and in a financially sustainable way is a whole other side of it because every day that we're not sailing, we're working. So for us, every day is really more like a Monday because it's all work all the time, but it is enjoyable. Our office does have a really nice view, and if we don't like our neighbors we can move.

Kika: Yeah, exactly.

Dan: But yeah, it's like running your own business anywhere. It looks good from the outside, but unless you do it, it's hard to really understand just how much pressure and how much stress is actually involved with running your own thing.

Kika: Think of it as a ballerina. You go to a ballet and you see this dancer doing these beautiful flips, and pirouettes, and whatever you call it, and you're like, "That looks so easy! She looks like she's floating." But behind the curtains you know that her feet are bleeding from that.

Dan: And she spent five or ten years perfecting that maneuver.

Kika: Yeah. It's a lot of work, but it's worth it. We absolutely love it. If you asked us when we plan to stop, our answer is always, like, "As long as it makes us happy, and as long as we enjoy what we do, we don't see a stop to it."

Dan: No. We definitely enjoy what we do.

Julie: So you named your boat *Uma*; 'number one'.

Kika: Yeah, like the 'First Something'. It started that way... because for us, *Uma* was the first step towards a bigger journey, or the first boat. "The First" was kind of a big deal for us.

Dan: She was the first of a lot of things.

Kika: Yeah, so we named her *Uma*. And we were also looking for a boat name that was simple and internationally recognizable.

Dan: Easy to spell and easy to say.

Kika: Yeah, because there are some boat names that are interesting, like *Aylinda Cruiser*, but if you go to a country that doesn't speak English and you have to say the name of the boat under a bridge and have to spell it out, it takes a while. So for us, yeah, having a three-letter word that could just summarize the boat that mean something to us was, kind of, the big point. But then it grew to something even more because when we started our social media and our channel, we received emails and messages of people from other cultures that tell us what *uma* means in their culture.

Dan: There's a lot, actually.

Kika: It's so amazing. I think in one Polynesian island, *uma* is the birthing hut.

Dan: Yeah, the women's birthing hut is called *uma*. I think somewhere in India *Uma* is the goddess of fertility or something like that. There's quite a few that have been rolling in, and they're always good. For some reason, they're always like, "Ah! That's amazing! That's so cool!" It's not like, "*Uma* means this awful thing. *Uma*'s a swear word we call our..." [laughs] It's always been good. It's been really cool, actually.

Julie: So do you have advice for people who want to take their own first step? Whether or not it's sailing, someone who wants to take their first step into something that might be scary, or just a big change; what would you say to them?

Kika: Like you said, the first step. The first step is always the hardest one, right? So we always tell people... at least we try to explain the message: stop getting overwhelmed by the bigger idea, because saying, "We're going to circumnavigate the world," could be very scary and very daunting.

Dan: You'd never do it. There's too much planning, and too much money, and too much everything.

Kika: Exactly. So instead of focusing on that big picture, focus on smaller goals, smaller steps, like sailing to the next horizon, because that's only a few miles away. Once you make it there you realize, "Oh you know what? The last few miles wasn't that bad. I can do another horizon." And then from there you keep going. I think that message, we even try to listen to it ourselves all the time. When we have a giant to-do list, for instance, a lot of boat work to do, we make the list and we realize that it's so much, it's so easy to get overwhelmed. So we erase the entire list and we just write the one we have to do next.

Dan: Yeah, "What do we need to get done today?"

Kika: Exactly. I think that would be the message that I would say. Try to focus on one little step at a time and not a giant leap.

Dan: That's why we call our videos 'steps' instead of episodes or something like that, because it sort of started from the very first one. The hardest step is the first one. The quote, I think, in our first video is... You know "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step," right? The way we translated that was into, sort of, the horizon thing. "If you can sail to the horizon, you can sail around the world," because all it is, is just continuing to sail to the horizon for a year, or two, or three, or however long you want. And it doesn't really take any more skill to get to the horizon, which is five or ten miles

away, than it is to sail across an ocean. It's the same things you need to know to do the little baby step as you need to know to do the whole thing.

Julie: That is fantastic advice. You guys are full of good life advice. This is excellent.

Kika: These are our life lessons that we had to learn the hard way, so we're happy to be able to share them.

Julie: Thank you both so much for being so generous with your time and taking the time to share your wisdom and your dreams with us. This was really exciting. Thank you again for joining me.

Kika: Thank you so much for having us. It was a pleasure to chat.

It was so cool to talk with them. I actually put a little sign up over my desk after we talked that says, "Sail from horizon to horizon." That's pretty good life advice, I think.

You can find Kika and Dan on YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook, @SailingUma. I'll of course put links in the show notes as well.

Just a reminder that you can find the podcast on Instagram [@LoveWhatYouLovePod](#), and on Twitter, [@WhatYouLovePod](#), and the website is [LoveWhatYouLovePod.com](#). Also, our lovely guests want to answer your questions. If you have a burning question, or even a not-burning question, from one of the first 25 episodes, @ me on social media or send an email to [LoveWhatYouLovePod@gmail.com](#). I'll compile the answers and share on social media and on a future episode.

I'd love it if you would support the podcast by leaving a rating or review on [Apple Podcasts](#) - even if that's not where you listen. Or you could also spread the love and share about the podcast on social media. Thank you to everyone who has rated, reviewed, or socialized already.

Zeke Rodrigues Thomas at Mindjam Media provides amazing editing assistance every week. You can find Zeke at [MindjamMedia.com](#). Also, just a reminder that all of the transcripts for *Love What You Love* are available for everyone on the website. Thanks to the wonderful Emily White, as always, for the fantastic transcripts. If you need transcript assistance, reach out to her at [HireEmilyWhite@gmail.com](#). The music for *Love What You Love* is called "Inspiring Hope" by Pink-Sounds. A link to that artist is included in the show notes.

Okay y'all, go out there, love the hell out of whatever it is that you love, and try to stay sane. Thanks for listening. Let's hang out again soon.

Links:

Find Kika, Dan, and Uma on [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Patreon](#), and [SailingUma.com](#)

My favorite nonprofits:

[FairFight.com](#)

[World Central Kitchen](#)

Additional editing by [Mindjam Media](#)

We're on [Patreon](#)

Hang out with me on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#)

Check out my books at [JulieKRose.com](#)

LWYL Music: [Inspiring Hope by Pink-Sounds](#)

Transcribed by Emily White: [HireEmilyWhite@gmail.com](#)