



The nonprofit Salty Dawg™ Sailing Association (SDSA) hosted its ninth Fall Rally to the Caribbean with 69 boats participating. Monohulls made up 67% of the fleet, but the 23 multihulls taking part in the rally made this the largest fleet of multihulls ever to depart the U.S. in an organized event!

Captains in this year's rally, which departed Hampton, VA on November 2, could choose from two arrival ports—Antigua or Eleuthera, Bahamas. Both locations welcomed the sailors with open arms and a week or more of planned activities. These "Safe Arrival" celebrations honored everyone's offshore accomplishments with happy hours, yacht club receptions, an official Safe Arrival Dinner and much more.

Twelve boats made landfall in Harbour Island, Eleuthera, Bahamas or nearby, after heading offshore and across the Gulf Stream. Most made the trip in 4-5 days. Pink sand beaches, welcoming marinas, safe anchorages and world class diving all awaited. Planned activities included dinners, a raft up and BBQ, beach days, a pool party, and a "bar crawl." A local pilot guided the boats through Devil's Backbone, Eleuthera's most infamous reef. This was the first time that Eleuthera hosted the Salty Dawgs.

The majority of the Salty Dawg rally fleet pointed their bows to the beautiful Caribbean island of Antigua, the sailing capital of the Caribbean, where, for the third year, the island rolled out the red carpet. Along with a "Safe Arrival" dinner and cocktail parties at the Admiral's Inn, crews of this year's rally were welcomed with a free party that included rum punch cocktails, a full Caribbean barbecue and wine with dinner, by the National Parks Authority, overlooking the fleet tied up in historic Nelson's Dockyard, the only working Georgian dockyard in the world. Minister Fernandez, the Minister of Tourism, addressed us at a special complimentary reception at The Antigua Yacht Club. AYC also hosted a special member/guest Thanksgiving feast to make us feel welcome. A local art gallery, Rhythm of Blue, even had a free rum and reggae party. North Sails Antigua hosted what was probably the most original event, Hermit Crab Racing, to the delight of the Dawgs, complete with plenty of Carib beer and snacks. The week of events, many free, was capped off by a special toast from the British Royal Navy Tot Club of Antigua and Barbuda. "Plans are well underway for the arrival of the fleet next November and it promises to be even better." Says Bob Osborn, Salty Dawg Rally Port Officer for Antigua.

The boats in this year's rally hailed from seven different countries and ranged in size from 30-70' with the majority in the 40-49' range. There were 10 kids aboard six different vessels and plenty of family-friendly events made this rally special for them. Crews ranged in age from 5 to 81 years. A third of the rally participants were female.

An amazing 42% of sailors in this year's rally had participated in a previous Salty Dawg rally, coming back for the fun and camaraderie that a SDSA rally provides.

Salty Dawg boats that had spent hurricane season in the southern Caribbean were welcome to join up with the rally boats in Antigua to enjoy all of the planned activities. Many of them will consider sailing back to the U.S. in the SDSA's Spring Rally to the U.S., which will depart in early May of 2020. For more information and to join the Salty Dawg Sailing Association, visit the SDSA website at www.saltydawgsailing.org.