

Ocean Award 2026
Laudatio
verfasst und vorgetragen
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Helena und Steve Neal - Noforeignland

Liebe TO'ler, liebe Gäste,

Ich freue mich, heute Abend die Laudatio für den - bzw. in diesem Fall die - Preisträger des Ocean Award 2026 zu halten.

Nun sind wir ja alle international unterwegs oder unterwegs gewesen und daher hoffe ich, dass es in Ordnung ist, wenn ich jetzt ins Englische wechsle. Unsere Preisträger würden die Laudatio sonst nämlich nicht verstehen.

Why do we set sails and head out to sea? Not just because we like to sail, to experience the vast blue ocean, follow our dreams and enjoy a bit of freedom. We are also curious about foreign countries, want to discover their landscapes and nature - and, of course, we like to meet the people with their often unfamiliar culture, customs, food and language.

Before making landfall on a foreign shore, we need nautical information - for example, about harbours and anchorages, as well as ports of entry, visas, and so on. This information we usually have on board. But once we've arrived, other questions arise, such as: Where can I find the government offices for clearance and in what order should I visit them? Where can I safely land the dinghy and leave it? Where can I exchange money? Where can I find places to shop, get technical assistance or find such simple things like a washing machine?

Some two decades ago, there were just sailing guides available which mostly answered the navigational part only; but on shore, we were often "flying blind" unless we could get in touch with a TO support point or a regional SSB-radio forum or we knew somebody who had already been there and could contact him or her in advance.

Of course Internet already existed, but access was limited to Internet cafés on land or required the purchase of a local SIM card.

As technology advanced, satellite radio became increasingly affordable for blue-water sailors, and meanwhile since introduction of Starlink, satellite-based internet communication has become part of a sailor's daily life. But still it is quite an effort to get the information we need to know.

So many of the bluewater sailors surely have asked themselves: How could the existing amount of information be made available to the international blue-water sailing community - quickly and easy accessible and always up to date?

Our award winners have been living on their sailboat AMALIA since 2014; they've sailed the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, and the east coasts of the U.S. and Central America, and are currently moored in Panama… They are "liveaboards" and therefore know the challenges just described from personal experience. They also asked themselves this question and set a goal:

-> **Make a foreign land no foreign land anymore!**

So they started in **2017** with a **website** for long-term sailors. Users could mark their own boats on an interactive map and share reports on anchorages, marinas, and local services.

Sailors were also given the opportunity to document their voyages directly with photos, videos, and linked blog posts to keep family and friends up to date.

In **2020**, the **app "Noforeignland"** was released for Android and Apple devices to make navigation and mobile use easier. Reports and map content were optimized for offline use, since an internet connection was often unavailable on high seas.

Over the past two years, additional focus has been put on community and flotillas. For example, for Atlantic crossings in the 2025/2026 season, the fourth edition of a WhatsApp group - which already existed on a small scale as a private project - was integrated as "Finding Dory IV."

Recently, our award winners expanded location-based interaction. Using smartphone GPS data, sailors can now not only track boats but also view real-time group chats and conversations from boats in their immediate vicinity, which makes it easier to meet fellow sailor spontaneously in an anchorage or port.

So today, with their app our award winners bring together sailing guides from around the world, information on country-specific clearance formalities, infrastructure at ports and anchorages, boat groups and social chat features. The Noforeignland-app is currently the most widely used platform of its kind for the international blue-water sailing community. And all of this is completely free of charge, easy accessible and ad-free – truly made by sailors - for sailors!

Much of this may seem obvious. But - the point is, *you have to do it*.
The winners of the 2026 Ocean Award did it!

Wir begrüßen die Preisträger des diesjährigen Ocean Awards:
We now welcome this year's Ocean Award winners:

Helena and Steve Neal

