

Atlantic Crossing (Canaries to the Caribbean) - January 2013

This Atlantic crossing must be said to have been the antithesis of our previous crossing west-to-east in June 2012. If you are expecting to read of hurricanes and gales, read no further. The single word which best would summarize most of this 2864nm leg of our trip is "GENTLE." Unfortunately that also translates into "SLOW." Expecting to take 23 days to cross to the Caribbean, the trip took 29 days, primarily due to an obstinate low pressure system which stalled between the Bermuda and Azores highs, leaving us windless. Some of the trip highlights are listed below.



8 January 2013: Day 11 – On early morning watch, Jeanne spotted our first flying fish. Not too many days later a 9" flying fish sailed onto our decks during the night - - who said that we didn't fish whilst sailing? Although a bit bony, flying fish made a nice complement to breakfast. Now that we were below latitude 22 plus having seen our first flying fish, we felt as though we were really into the Tropics. However, night watches still required two jumpers and days only allowed precious few t-shirt hours. Thank goodness the sea boots, socks and shoes were relegated to the lockers, as we were at least back to bare feet!

9 January 2013: Day 12 – Housekeeping was the theme of the day. We sorted all of the fruits and vegetables and repackaged them for longer shelf life, using clean, dry green Stay Fresh bags. The bananas, peaches, grapes, pears, broccoli and asparagus were depleted, but still in inventory were heaps of fresh fruits and veggies. Surprisingly, there were still two chocolate bars in the refrigerator.

11 January 2013: Day 14 – We expected this to be our Halfway Day celebration occasion, but it was not to be. The barometer had dropped from 1016 to 1012hps the evening before, so we reefed the main before dark. Another drop to 1007hps worried us a bit, but we still had no sign of pending gale - - no clouds and no swell. An authority on sailing, *Chapman's Piloting*, states: "It is generally true that a rapidly falling barometer forecasts the development of strong winds." By afternoon of Day 14, we took in the sails and drifted in flat, rolling seas which looked like smooth, rolling, marine blue sand dunes, with no wind whatsoever.

Since conditions were so benign, we enjoyed the pleasure of our first warm shower since the Canary Islands, courtesy of the solar hot water shower hung on deck from the aft bimini support. Colin also had time and conditions to do a thorough battery check with the hydrometer, and determined that we'd have to have a serious look at replacement batteries for the house system when we reached port.

Between night watches, just at midnight, a light wind returned. We set sail and continued towards our halfway point - - 1432nm from Lanzarote and the same distance ahead to Grenada.

12 January 2013: Day 15 – Light southerly winds combined with reaching latitude 20 north, meant that the air temperature finally felt warm. We had to open cabin hatches for ventilation, especially when cooking dinner. Night watch only required one jumper, whilst small, playful, black dolphins provided interesting sound effects in the moonless late night. Two days later we spotted a huge, ancient turtle which looked like a floating raft with its own eco-system trailing.

17 January 2013: Day 20 - No wind. We spotted our first whale. Then, with the sails furled, we decided to go for a swim. It was a delightful day, but no progress towards our destination was achieved.

19 January 2013: Day 22 – Our wedding anniversary! We celebrated both the special occasion and the return of easterly winds (after 8 days of slow progress) with a glass of white wine and dinner of salmon steaks, mashed potatoes, snow peas and carrots. Dessert was Cadbury chocolate and Danish biscuits. No jumper required for night watch as we were now south of 16 degrees north latitude, and almost directly north of the Amazon!

21 January 2013: Day 24 – The 30+ knots of wind astern, combined with large breaking waves made us feel as though we were now truly on an ocean passage. Due to problems with the pump out of our holding tanks, Col had rigged an outside WC using the stern swim ladder combined with ropes and safety harnesses for the user. As he was taking advantage of the facilities, a huge wave broke astern – or should we say “dumped” - filling the cockpit with seawater and providing a full wash for him. Thankfully, shortly before the event, Jeanne had dogged down the aft hatches over our bed!

With such large swells, all of the ports and hatches had to be closed. For 6 weeks we had been seeking warmth, it was inappropriate to complain now of the heat!

25 January 2013: Day 28 – It had been 17 days since last we saw signs of human activity (a ship on the horizon). With a 24 hour watch, day and night for nearly 2000nm, we saw no evidence of mankind on earth – no ships (not even revealed with an occasional check on the 24 mile radar scan), no planes, not even any rubbish on the water. This, to us, was amazing. Today Col spotted a fishing boat to the north, and in the afternoon, a large container ship passed close astern.

Dinner was fresh veggie stir-fry with rice. Red and green capsicum, Brussel sprouts, carrots, zucchini, onion, garlic - all still lovely!



27 January 2013: Day 30 - After 2864 nautical miles of rolling ocean, the lush hillsides and calm waters of Prickly Bay, Grenada were a very welcome sight and a marked contrast sight and a marked contrast to the stark volcanic landscape we left behind in Lanzarote. At least 100 yachts were at anchor in the bay, representing most of the countries of Europe and North America, plus two from Australia. We launched the dinghy and ran ashore to clear customs.

Next on the agenda was a short run to Hog Island for the Sunday evening BBQ. We were able to rendezvous with friends for a cold beer, but only lasted until 7 pm before we were “out for the count” with a much needed 12 hour sleep.

Various purchases and repairs were then initiated, with the primary purchase to be new house batteries - - - “gotta” keep that white wine and beer cold, and food fresh in a chilled frig!

