

Monday, March 12. 2012

Route planning to the Galapagos

Wednesday we want to leave for the Galapagos. We've managed to clear most items of the to-do list except for:

- Get exit stamp for passports from immigration
- Buy vegetables and some sun cover netting
- Pick up laundry
- Refill water tanks
- Refill dinghy fuel tank
- Prepare food for the first two days
- Check over the starter motor one last time
- Clean the boat
- Post mail
- Plan route to the Galapagos
- Inform agent in Galapagos about expected arrival date

Looks manageable. So what about route planning? One tricky thing about this route is that we have to pass the ITCZ/doldrums, an area around the equator with notoriously little wind. Most boats simply store enough diesel fuel to motor through this area, but it can extend over several hundred miles.

Talking to other cruisers I identified three basic strategies to deal with the ITCZ:

Strategy A: Wait for a good forecast, then sail south close to land until through the ITCZ, then turn west

Strategy B: Wait for a good forecast, then sail straight SW while the wind lasts. Drift or motor the rest.

Strategy C: Ignore the wind, pack at least 500 l of diesel, and motor if necessary all of the way.

Not being very fond of motoring, and only having 60 liter capacity in the main tank, we'll obviously not go for strategy C. But to be save we've also packed a few extra liters of diesel, 140l in total, which will give us a reach of about 300nm.

But let's have a look at the weather:

Wind speed display for Tuesday, Panama to Galapagos, in zyGrib

The weather forecast actually looks quite good. Strategy B might be a viable alternative without having to rely too much on drifting or motoring. To test my theory I had MaxSea calculate an ideal route for us, starting on Wednesday afternoon, with the current weather forecast and a polar diagram of Gudrun V (boat speed at given wind speed and wind angle). And that's what MaxSea came up with:

Calculated ideal route based on the weather and our sailing performance. The weather forecast is only good until the 19th, which is why the route stops there. But it looks quite promising.

Here a polar diagram which is similar enough to Gudrun's performance for this trip. I'll have to record our actual performance and make a accurate one 'one of these days':

Estimated polar diagram for Gudrun for 15kn

I'll be watching the weather forecast over the next two days, and the final decision whether to keep more easterly or not will probably be made only after we've passed the Las Perlas archipelago.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 22:33

My only advise is to leave soon. I have made the trip in March and it was a pleasure. I have also made the trip in May and it is awful!
<http://www.sailblogs.com/member/eauvivecrossing/>

Blog Export: S/V Gudrun V, <http://www.gudrunv.com/>

Anonymous on Mar 13 2012, 15:39