

Tuesday, December 29, 2009

## **Maiden Voyage**

Arthur in his 7m l'ImprÃ©vu. Approaching the Spanish coast after 30 hours. What a trip! I set sail on Sunday at 9am, and 20 minutes later, before I've even left the relative shelter of the industrial harbor I had the mainsail on second reef and the genoa furled mostly in. Arthur had left the shipyard half an hour before me. At 2pm I saw him coming the other way. Over radio he told me that the waves outside of the Golfe Du Fos were too big and he was afraid for his boat and the new rigging. I decided to continue on. Later I measured 25kn wind from NW in the cockpit (6 Bft), and I furled the Genoa away completely and set the self-tacking jib. I had no luck with the tiller-autopilot: a wave ripped it's wooden mounting to pieces. I also couldn't get the wind vane to work. So I trimmed the sails until Vespina held more-or-less course with a lashed rudder. Around 8pm the wind dropped to about 4 Bft and I slept for half an hour sitting in the cockpit. Then it was back to work, because the wind began to change frequently up and down the scale, and I was busy reefing and unreefing the main and changing from Genoa to jib to storm-jib and back. With a rough sea (5) balancing on the foredeck in the dark was not very easy, but a cloudless night and almost full moon shone enough light to work with. Needless to say that I was tied to Vespina with my life line at all times. Around 3am the wind changed to S, and in the distance I could see that it brought plenty of clouds. At the time I had the mainsail in the first reef and the genoa furled mostly out. But I had a funny feeling, and decided to put the main into the second reef, furl in the genoa and set the storm-jib. I also doubled-checked that everything was ok and secure inside. Then I ate and drank a little, changed into my warmest jacket, and waited. A little later it became utterly dark and the wind and waves increased very quickly. Vespina was rocked thoroughly and plenty of spray was blown into the cockpit from the sides. I was glad for the shelter that the steel sprayhood provided from the froth that swept over the deck. Earlier I had seen lights of cargo vessels a few miles away to the south and west, but now I couldn't make them out any more. Not being able to see worried me a little, and I turned on the working light, which bathed the deck and the foresail in a harsh light. This way at least other boats had a chance to see me. By this time it was 5am. I realized that I had done everything I could do, and now there was nothing left but to wait it out. For a while I watched the spectacle that happened around me. From the sea state the wind speed must have been well over 30kn, probably a low 8 Bft. I looked at my hand-anemometer, but I was too tired to hold it into the air and so can't say for sure. I felt very secure tied to Vespina, and anyway 8 Bft is pretty uncomfortable, but not something to worry too much about on a ship like Vespina. So I wedged myself tighter into the cockpit, set my alarm to 30 minutes and slept. After 30 minutes I had a look around, but the scenery hadn't changed much: very dark and plenty of water in the sea and in the air. I slept for another 30 minutes, and another ... until when I woke up at 7:30am the night was gone and with it the clouds and the wind. I had just spent my first night ever alone at sea. For half an hour I sat totally mesmerized by the scenery. No sign of land or other ships could be seen. The sun shone, the sky was blue and almost cloudless again, and nothing remained but a pretty rough sea (which annoyed me until well into the afternoon). After a total of 36 hours and 120nm I reached the marina of La Escala at 9pm on Monday night. After docking and checking Vespina over quickly (a little water in the bilge, but everything ok) I prepared my first hot meal in two days. Then I crawled into my sleeping bag and slept for ten hours .

Posted by Axel Busch in Vespina at 11:33

Congratulations! We've been checking to see how you were getting on, very glad you've made it  
We're still doing jobs in Port de Bouc till Caroline gets back, but will hopefully be following you before too long.  
Chris & Pete  
Maid of Mettle

Anonymous on Dec 29 2009, 14:19

Damn, that's exciting!  
Congratulations!!

Anonymous on Dec 29 2009, 21:05

Jeehaa, fantastic report, envy you and same time scared

Anonymous on Dec 30 2009, 05:37

Wir sind eine Segler Familie und lesen Axels Seite seit Anbeginn. Er hat sich seit 53 Stunden nicht gemeldet.  
Wir beobachten auch Wind und Wetter in seiner Region  
und das war nicht so gut in letzter Zeit.(Barcelona)  
Hat jemand etwas von ihm gehÃ¶rt?

Bitten um Antwort!!

VLG Familie Meschkat

Anonymous on Jan 2 2010, 04:54