

Monday, April 23. 2012

On the right course

Monday, 2012-04-23, 12:00 boat (18:00 UTC), 7:06.2S, 108:53.3W, COG 260, SOG 7kn, Wind 15-20kn ESE, sunny

What a lovely Sunday afternoon we had! Perfect weather, calm seas, good progress. Liz had a nap, then wrote on her book for a few hours. I learned some French, then read more about celestial navigation, and started to code a little iPad game to help me learn French. Liz calls it "French for attention impaired people". Pffff ...

Later we enjoyed a(nother) beautiful sunset with a cold beer in our hand then I took the first watch as the stars came up in a clear sky. Over the last days I had practiced my direction finding by the stars, with the help of the "Emergency Navigation" book and the "Star Walk" app. The book is quite good once you get to the meat. There is a lot of cross-referencing to later chapters and mentioning of different concepts which I find disorienting. I would have liked the book to be more focused on the lesson and hand and more concise overall.

This night I was putting everything I've learned to the test with only a stick, and verified my findings with a handheld compass. To my big surprise I could reliably point north, south, and west with an accuracy of 1 degree over the course of many hours. Only finding south by Scorpio didn't work so well and I was always 10 degrees off towards the east. I think it's easier from the northern hemisphere, where Scorpio is lower in the sky.

After midnight squalls came up and we were busy dodging them. What works quite well for us with this wind and course is to let them come close, almost overhead, then tuck in behind them. This way we avoided the rain and only had small wind changes of 20 degrees. I'm glad the Parasailor is good for up to a beam reach, otherwise we couldn't have done it without changing the sails. As it is, we haven't changed the sails since Wednesday, when we dropped the main and pulled the Parasailor up. We only pull a little at the sheet or downhaul every few hours, or adjust the course when the wind changes to Ethe ast again and it gets too roilly. But I also have to say that the squalls are very small and gentle, the wind never increased to much more than 20kn. Sailing in the Pacific is really nice.

Today the wind is blowing a little stronger than yesterday, 20kn, and changes between 90 and 100 degrees. Not ideal, but not too bad. We are trying not to go much more south for a while because we prefer lighter winds, 10 to 15kn, and the grib files as well as other boats report winds up to 30kn further south. No need for that, the stronger winds don't make the Gudrun go faster, they only put strain on the gear - and the crew. Safety first! And comfort not far behind.

We get frequent updates by email from our friends Gisela and Uwe on S/V Venus, who are a few days behind. And also from Andy on S/V Impiana, who left a day earlier and is 140nm ahead (speed freak!). Andy got punished for his hastiness with a chinese gybe in a sudden wind change, which tore the sheet from the boom. Ouch. Other than that everybody is enjoying themselves and are having a good trip. Gisela always makes my mouth water when she writes about the goodies she pulls out of her fridges and freezer. After eight years at sea they have their priorities figured out

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Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 13:33