

Sunday, June 17. 2012

To Rangiroa

Sunday, 2012-06-17, 11:30 local (21:30 UTC), 14:59S, 147:29W, COG 278, SOG 6kn, Wind 20kn SE, 30C, sunny

We left Fakarava yesterday afternoon with the destination Rangiroa. We heard that you're almost certain to meet Dolphins when snorkling outside the pass at Rangiroa, and since Liz is such a big fan of Dolphins, we decided to make the detour on our way to Tahiti.

Rangiroa is 150nm NW of Fakarava, within easy reach of an overnight sail. But sailing between the atolls in the Tuamotos is tricky. Obviously you want to leave and arrive during daytime, ideally with some hours safety margin. But because all the anchorages are inside the atolls, and there are only a few navigable passes through the reefs, you also have to pay special attention to the tides. You want to leave and arrive with a favorable current, or ideally during slack water (at high or low tide). The currents through the pass can get up to 6kn, and you can easily loose control of the boat and end up on the reef.

Slack water occurs every six hours at the change of the tide. Days being pretty much exactly 12h long here, there are two chances per day to make it through the pass during daylight. We choose to leave Fakarava with high tide at 2pm yesterday, planning to make good speed in 20kn of wind and arrive in Rangiroa around 1pm, 1 1/2 hours before high tide at Rangiroa at 2:30pm. That'll give us a slight current in the back, and some time for safety in case we take longer than anticipated.

Now we're 9nm away from the pass and doing 6kn - looks like we'll get there spot on at 1pm. Close to the pass we'll turn on the radar to see whether the map in the chartplotter is correct, or whether we have to work with an offset (like in the San Blas). But in Fakarava the Navionics charts were 100% correct, and I that bodes well for here too. Makes going through the channel and around the reefs so much easier! Thank god for technology.

We plan to stay only a few days for snorkeling and diving, hoping to shoot some good photos of dolphins or maybe even a whale. Although it's too early for whales, the dive guides in Fakarava said they generally don't arrive before August. But maybe we'll get lucky and meet an especially fast or eager whale who's here early. Then, probably Thursday, we'll sail on to Tahiti were (hopefully) the new sail and autopilot is waiting for me. One of the autopilot rods broke when we left Hiva Oa, and the spare also sounds like it's on it's last leg. Only one more day buddy, keep up the good work!

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 17:03