

Wednesday, February 17, 2010

Bushings, sails, greenhouses and a new radar unit

On Monday I did a big tour of all the shops in Almerimar with ship-related assortment of goods. At "Inox Almeriar" I ordered a replacement for the Nylon bushing for my wind-vane. Colin, the sail-maker, agreed to put the third reef into the main and patch up my genoa, which had some small damage at the clew (Schothorn). And because everything went so well I let Spencer from Nautico Almerimar talk me into buying a new radar unit plus chart plotter, but that's a different story. Letting my sails dry. The last puzzle piece for my wind-vane! Tuesday morning it was raining heavily. I was pacing in my boat like a caged tiger, waiting for the rain & wind to stop so that I could hoist the sails and let them dry - the sail-maker won't work on wet sails. At 1pm the rain finally stopped, and I jumped out of the cabin and hoisted the sails. After two hours I saw the next rain cloud coming, and quickly took them down and stowed them away before they got wet again. I had just slammed the hatch shut when the next downpour started - whew, close! Today I collected the inox bushing for my wind-vane (that should settle it!), hired a car, dropped of the sails at Colin's, and then explored the immediate surroundings a little. Have you ever wondered where our Oranges are coming from? Every inch from the mountains to the coast which is not city is covered by greenhouses. Look at the pictures and judge for yourself. On the road to the mountains. Greenhouses stretch all the way from mountain to coast. My rental car - a Fiat Panda. Regarding the new radar: In the "good old days" the biggest challenge for a sailor (after the weather) was navigation: He had no reliable charts and no accurate way to pinpoint his position. Nowadays we have very good charts, and we have GPS to tell us where we are. On Vespina I only have a very simple GPS device that just displays the coordinates, so I still use paper charts, compass, pencil and a ruler a lot. But most yachts are equipped with chart-plotters that show your position, course etc. on an electronic chart. There is still a lot of navigation to do, but it has gotten a lot easier. But now there is a new challenge, and it is even more dangerous than being confused about your position: traffic. Modern cargo ships plough through the sea with 25 knots. If I keep a sharp outlook and the visibility is good, I can see them from a distance of 10 to 15nm when I stand in my cockpit. That gives me half an hour to prevent a possible collision at the best of times. That is not much. And at night, it is a lot less. This is where radar and recently AIS come in. Both systems can detect other vessels from a much bigger distance (because the antenna is higher up in the mast, they don't depend on visibility as much and they never tire), and provide information about the course and speed of the detected vessels. Usually the devices also provide the means to set an alarm, should a vessel come inside a certain range or be on a collision course. I really like the "old style" navigation: paper chart, compass, ruler etc. I even have a sextant with me, which I am looking forward to use once the wind-vane is working. Not that I expect to be any good at it, but I just like it - call me a romantic. But the other night, off Cabo de Gata, when it was pitch black and every five minutes a cargo vessel was zooming passed, I really wished for a modern radar or AIS system. Just for the ease of mind, and to be able to get some rest. And of course for entertainment, I am a technology aficionado after all. So when Spencer offered me a great deal on the perfect bundle: GPS Antenna, Chart-plotter, Maps, Radar and AIS all on one display (Raymarine C80), I just couldn't say no. Now I am eagerly awaiting delivery of the package! What I also like about it is the redundancy. Because the new system is just one display, I can keep my old system in place untouched. Should one fail, I still have the other. Then I have a handheld GPS, a sextant, two electronic and three mechanical compasses. Even if both primary systems fail I should be able to find land eventually

Posted by Axel Busch in Vespina at 13:46