

Monday, May 31. 2010

Fuerteventura

FuerteventuraFuerteventura is the next island from Lanzarote, and after Tenerife the second largest of the seven major canary islands. It is best known for it's awesome beaches on the east coast. With fine white sand that was blown over the water from Africa. My friend Michael and his family had arrived in Fuerteventura a day before I've arrived in Lanzarote. The closest port to his hotel is Morro Jable, at the southern end of Fuerteventura and we wanted to meet there. The distance from Puerto Calero to Morro Jable is 65nm, or about 14 hours sailing with Vespina. When I left Puerto Calero the weather was fine and the forecast good. Then the wind quickly increased to a force 7. As usual . Nice for sailing, but not so good for anchoring. Especially not on this coast it seems. I had hoped to be able to anchor over night on the way south, but the descriptions in my cruising book where little promising: ... in calm weather ... approach in good light ... daylight stops in settled weather ... unwise to stay overnight ... Well, the weather didn't settle and it stayed far from calm. So I had the choice of either turning into one of the few suitable harbors on the way (Puerto del Rosario Castillo, Puerto Castillo), or sail through the night. I was a little close to the coast for my comfort, but I hadn't encountered any other vessel on the way. And so it seemed safe to sail through the night. I furled most of the genoa away to slow down because I didn't want to arrive in Morro Jable before dawn. Morro Jable. Horrible, isn't it .During the night I passe done vessel, but again with ample warning from my AIS and radar. And at about half past nine I entered the harbor of Morro Jable. The cruising guide advised to lay alongside the fuel pontoon to check in. But when I approached that, the harbor master came out of his office and waved me away, pointing to the smaller pontoons which were mostly empty. After I've secured my boat to one of these, another guy came along and send me off again, pointing to the far eastern corner of the harbor. On the way there I used the rocky ground to scrape away some weed from my keels before tying Vespina to one of the two remaining pontoons. The third had apparently lost it's chains and had snuggled up to the breakwater. I grabbed my papers and wallet and wanted to step off from the pontoon, only to realize that there was no bridge (anymore). But there was one on the other pontoon. So I cast off again, and secured Vespina to the other pontoon. Then I walked to the harbor master's office, where I waited for two hours because the guy was around and about somewhere. But at least it's cheap - 3 EUR/day. The rest of the day consisted of reading and sleeping, as often after a sail through the night. Saturday morning the Reuther family picked me up with a rental car to show me their Fuerteventura. It was a beautiful road trip through the barren, desert-like interior of the island, the rocky western coast and the sandy eastern coast. And at the end we were all very tired and everybody but Michael fell asleep in the car. Fortunately Michael was the driver . On tour with the Reuther family A popular surfing spot on the west coast.Anybody care to anchor here?The caves were used as dry-docks for submarines in WW2. Jule fearlessly exploring the caveMysteries of the world: What is waiting beyond the next dune?Niklas!Daddy has to carry the shoes Birgit and MichaelJule and NiklasOn Sunday we all went sailing with Vespina. Niklas steered her out of the harbor and then Michael unfurled the genoa. At first there wasn't much wind, but it picked up as we approached the lighthouse at the south-eastern tip. We didn't make it quite that far however, because one by one they got seasick, and I steered Vespina back into the harbor among a lot of retching and fish-feeding. Only Jule, the youngest, remained totally unimpressed. Hehe. Now the question is whether to stay here a littler longer and enjoy the beaches, or sail west to Gran Canaria, where I would have wifi and showers. Hmmm ... the beach wins

Posted by Axel Busch in Vespina at 07:03

Thursday, May 27, 2010

Lanzarote

Driving along the east coast. The last two days I've been exploring the island of Lanzarote. I didn't bring a guide book with me, but the island is not big, and the rental car company gave me a map with places of interest clearly marked in green letters. Upon closer inspection it turned out there are quite a lot of them! So I stopped at the tourist information and the friendly elderly (German) ladies picked the best ones for my two day stay. How very nice of them! But first I had to get food supplies for the boat and a cruising guide for the islands. The search for the latter turned out to be an odyssey through all the ports of the island which lasted my entire stay. My last stop was Playa Blanca in the very south. And here, in the Marina Rubicon, did I finally get my sailing guides. I was so relieved that I picked up all the other cruising guides and maps for my future route that I could get my hands on: Capo Verde, Brazil, Barbados, and St. Lucia. Better safe than sorry, and it is not safe to depend on the electronic charts alone. Typical landscape The island offers many spectacular sights, most of them related somehow to the volcanic activities of the past. Which is not very surprising, because the whole island is one big ash- and lava-field dotted with volcanoes and craters. In between nice little villages, and along the coast not so nice tourist centers. Because of frequent pirate raids the original inhabitants lived far inland, and only in the 19th century did the development of the coasts really begin. Today I will leave Lanzarote and sail south towards Fuerteventura, where I will meet Michael and his Family on holiday. Castillo de Santa Barbara A poser. Entrance to Jameos del Agua Blind albino crab in the Jameos del Agua Jameos del Agua Driving in the north. Rocks! The marina Puerto Calero Crater next to Montana Negra. La Graciosa to the north of Lanzarote

Posted by Axel Busch in Vespina at 01:53

Tuesday, May 25. 2010

News regarding the keel

Yesterday I did some research online, and found several references that people had changed the keels on their Reinke Yachts. Some had removed the bilge-keels and put center-keels on instead. And others had done the opposite and traded a center-keels for bilge-keels. Both had the unique chance to compare the different effects of the two keel shapes on the same hull. These are their findings: With bilge keel: • less draft • less drift towards lee • hard to hold on course • problems with autopilots With center-keel: • more draft • sails better to luv • holds course steadily It looks very much like their experiences match up with mine. Which puts my mind at rest, because it means that it was not a fault of mine that the boat behaves the way it does. And there might be a cheap way out for me. As a result I contacted Reinke Yachts, and asked them for information on a center-keel for my boat type. I am also in touch with a broker who has some interesting alternatives for me. Funny enough it seems the guy is almost more keen on getting a hand on my Reinke, then on selling me one of his boats! Looks like Vespina's type is very much in favor.

Posted by Axel Busch in Vespina at 03:39

Monday, May 24. 2010

Results of the "passage test"

I've mentioned in my last entry, about my sail to the Canaries, that this trip was to be a test for me and Vespina. So how did the 650nm (1200km) and 7 days turn out? Personally: wonderful. I had no problem at all with being on my own for a week, and being far away from shore and help. Actually I loved it! I also found out that while sleep periods of 10 minutes are a little short in the long run, periods of 20 or 30 minutes are all I need to stay fresh. Far away from the coast and shipping lanes, and with the help of Radar and AIS, that should also be safe to accomplish. Vespina: she did also fine, except for two things: Speed and stability. An average of less than 100nm per day is slow. More speed is not only more fun, it is also safer. A faster passage means less risk of running into foul weather (or no wind). You also need less supplies. But I knew that Vespina was no record-breaker before I bought her. I bought her because she was a strong boat. And for my first voyage I thought it would be wise to be rather safe than fast. But on the way I learned that while strength does provide a lot of safety, it does not go all the way. Speed, to an extent, increases safety too. But even more so does stability, especially in stronger winds. When I discussed the design of Vespina with other people before I bought her, the general understanding was that she would heel quickly to about 20°, but then remain stable. To me that sounded stable enough, and since she scored high in all other areas of importance to me (especially the budget department), I took my chances. And Vespina did very well on the 2000nm (3600km) from Heidelberg to Cadiz. The bilge-keel with only 1,15m draft was a blessing on the canals, which were low on water. And her strength carried me safely through the many storms I encountered on my way through the Med. I will never forget that one time north of Ibiza where the wind howled with 63 knots. But most of all I love the 360° vision through the saloon windows. This wonderful feature sets her quite apart from other boats, and it is a joy to sit inside in foul weather and still be able to see everything that is happening around me without getting wet. As long as the wind-vane or the autopilot is working, and as long as she doesn't get pushed over by waves. And this is where it looks like my gamble didn't turn out so well. Vespina is a great boat in a certain environment, where her bilge-keel is an asset. But I'm sailing her in a different environment and with a different mentality, and for me the bilge-keel is more a liability. Because of her very low draft she lacks in stability and as a result I get thrown around inside a lot as she jerks suddenly from one side to the other, and the wind-vane and the autopilot only work in a small range of wind speeds and angles. Furthermore I have to reduce the sail area early and she doesn't sail to luv very well. The former means I'll be always sailing rather slow, and the latter could be necessary to bring me out of trouble. Well, here we are. Of course I could remove her two small keels with a grinder and weld a deeper one to her bottom. But I think this is the point for a business-like decision: Accept the state of the product as it is and stop complaining, or cut my losses and find a different boat for the rest of my voyage. Because giving up is of course out of the question. This is just another lesson on the way, this time in ship design. But for the next few days or weeks I'll enjoy the Canary Islands on Vespina. Which is, incidentally, what she was built for. I've heard this area is supposed to be great for diving too. Maybe it's about time I make a license!

Posted by Axel Busch in Vespina at 08:08

My first ocean passage

Vespina, Ocean. Finally out in the ocean, water of the deepest blue. Sailing to the Islas Canarias was to be the test before the crossing of the Atlantic. Alone on Vespina for a week, with nothing around me but the ocean and the sky. A test for the ship, for sure. How will Vespina sail in the Atlantic? Will the waves be different from the Med? Will the wind-vane work? The autopilot? How useful is the solar panel ...? And a test for myself, too! Will I have to sit at the rudder again all the time? How will I handle the solitude? How will I sleep? Will I get sick? Will I enjoy the trip or get bored silly and hate it all the way? Have I maybe overestimated my endurance? It was important to get the answers to these questions before setting out to Brazil or the West Indies. But the questions were not at the top of my mind when I left Puerto Sherry. Despite my initial skepticism I had grown very fond of Puerto Sherry, and I can recommend it most warmly for anybody on his way in or out of the Med. And like in Almerimar and on Ibiza before, I had made many good friends there. But unlike in the other ports, these had not been other yachties like me, but locals. Which is not very common for such a short stay as mine, and I feel honored and thankful for the hospitality that I have received. So my heart ached at the thought of leaving them and lovely Andalusia behind. Topping lift having an affair with the wind generator. But Vespina has a charming way of freeing my mind from such troubles. As I was hoisting the main-sail one of the reef lines caught at the end of the boom. As I pulled on the halyard the end of the boom got lifted up together with the main sail. As a result the topping-lift (holds the boom level when no sail is up. German: Dirk) wasn't tight anymore and flying out to the rear, where it quickly wrapped itself tightly around the wind-generator. So I went back to the welcome-pontoon and spend an hour freeing the "Dirk". Great start! I left the port again, hoping that none of my new friends had seen the embarrassing incident. For a few hours everything looked fine. Beautiful weather and a perfect

force 5 easterly. And even the wind-vane was working! But in the evening the wind quickly increased to force 9, and the wind-vane started making trouble again. A spanish AEGIS frigate. Tiring conditions. The original problem of the slipping cogwheel had been solved by my modifications in Puerto Sherry, but now new problems had come up. As the sun set and I reached the latitude of Cabo Trafalgar I was hanging out at the back trying to convince the wind-vane to do it's job. My new position added ferocious waves coming with the wind out of the Strait of Gibraltar to the fun, as well as a lot of commercial traffic, going both east and west. The prospect of threading my way through the lines of vessels at night was not great, but it had to be done. Fortunately the AIS display, which shows the speed and direction of vessels around me, proved to be every bit of help that I had hoped it would be. Traffic going in and out of the Strait of Gibraltar. Vespina in the middle. It was stressful nevertheless, and I grew tired quickly. But well after midnight there were still too many ships around to rest for a minute. I had to fight my way further south before I could even think of sleep. By four in the morning I was finally far enough away from the traffic to get some rest. I dropped the sails and went down to sleep for an hour, while Vespina danced in the waves. Would the whole trip be like that? I desperately hoped not. I love cable binders! When I woke up the situation hadn't changed much: lots of wind and lots of waves. But during the morning the wind dropped gradually as it changed to north-east and settled around force 5, plus-minus 2. Which meant I got to reef and un-reef quite a lot. Between reefing exercises I continued to fiddle with the wind-vane. Gradually I was able to eliminate each of the new problems with the simple help of string and cable-binders. And then I got incredibly lucky. I had gone down for a minute to get a tool. After descending the stairs I had closed the door behind me, which I always do when the weather is rough. Just as I had grabbed the hand-holds on the stairs to climb up again a wave hit Vespina from the side. Amidst a mighty clatter of pots and other things Vespina got tipped over heavily to starboard and the cockpit flooded all the way up to the winches. I stood completely baffled and looked out through the acryl door as Vespina righted herself again and the cockpit drained slowly of incredible amounts of water. Had the wave hit only seconds earlier or later I would have been thrown around down below, or out in the cockpit, and would have very likely hurt myself badly. Instead I was standing in the dry laughing. As the sun set I celebrated my luck and my success with the wind-vane with a drop (or two) of Macallan Whiskey and a chocolate bar. Then I reduced the sails and let the wind-vane steer for the rest of the night, while I settled into my routine of 10-minute-sleep/5-Minute-watch cycles. Wednesday was pretty much the same. North-easterly winds between force 3 and 7, and the wind-vane steering, which made me happy. But I was not totally satisfied. First of all there was still one issue with the wind-vane: It only works when the boat is not going much faster then 4 kn. If I put more sail up, Vespina develops a strong weather-helm (tendency to turn into the wind) and the wind-vane is unable to cope. And secondly I was still brooding over last day's lucky escape. If that wave had been much stronger, or followed by a second one, Vespina would have been rolled over just like Jeff's Beneteau a month ago. I took out my books about trimming, seamanship and boat construction and started reading. I read on through the night, and Thursday morning I felt a little wiser. I had read the books before, but now after 2600 nm (4600 km) on board of Vespina it made a lot more sense. After a little sleep and breakfast I grabbed my toolbox and went to work on the rigging. First I wanted to see if I could do something about the strong weather-helm. I tried all combinations of sail-area, and when that didn't improve the situation I tipped the mast forward and I bent it backwards and every time I tried again with the most promising sail configuration. But nothing helped. As soon as Vespina heels over, which she does very quickly, all chances of using the autopilot or the wind-vane are gone. They only have a chance if I have just the genoa up and furled away so that Vespina doesn't heel over too much and the weather-helm is well below 10°, on the tiller. That gives me a speed of 4 to 4,3 knots. If I put more sail area up to go faster she heels more, which produces a weather-helm of 20° and more on the tiller. That is too much for the wind-vane and the autopilot. So it looks like Vespina likes it slow. Well, one thing I've learned in my life is that it's no good to argue with a lady. Slow it is then. Sailing ever onward. During the night to Friday the wind dropped well below force 3, which made all thoughts about speed academic anyway. The autopilot did a great job of steering, and I put all troubles out of my mind and relaxed. The sun was shining, the sky clear, and the sea a deep blue. Vespina was slowly but steadily making her way towards my destination, and I didn't have a care in the world. I sat on deck and enjoyed the scenery (or lack thereof), and suddenly an incredible feeling of peace and happiness settled over me. It lasted, and lasted. And the memory of all the trouble I went through from my start in November to this moment only made it the sweeter. As did the memory of all the friends I've made. It is a feeling that I have never experienced in this intensity before, and the solitude only makes it stronger. I begin to understand why some people sail around the world alone again and again. It is a feeling born of the ultimate solitude on a vast and apparently lifeless ocean. A feeling that cannot be found in a crowd, or on any other path walked upon by man. This I will carry forever in me. Saturday not much happened, except that the wind dropped for a few hours and I had to start the engine. The V-belt (Keilriemen) began to squeal and I tightened it. I cooked curry with tuna and rice, squashed some oranges, read a little, slept a little, studied Spanish, and wrote the first part of this entry. I also proved the theory that any organism will expand until it has consumed all available resources: I had cooked enough curry for two days, but manage to eat it all in only six hours. AIS info screen for a vessel. Cool, ey? In the night to Sunday I was very tired and tried something different: I hadn't seen any ships in two days, and decided that I could risk it to let the radar and the AIS look out while I sleep a littler longer: 30 minute intervals. I set a "safe zone" of 2nm radius around Vespina, and a "time to safe zone" of 24 minutes. That means the system should alarm me 24 minutes in advance if another vessel will pass within 2nm of Vespina. I was excited like a child and surprised that I could sleep at all. Around four in the morning a slight fog settled, and my vision was reduced to only a few hundred meters. "This thing better work", I thought. And it worked! At half past six the alarm woke me in the

middle of a half-hour sleep period, because a ferry was on collision course. But far out still, and time enough for me to change my heading without stressing out. I would have seen the ferry in another 15 minutes myself without the alarm, because the fog had lifted again. But I was very relieved to find that it is actually working. And 24 minutes warning is better than 15 minutes. Awesome. Blister & dwarf power!Poser!The wind was still very light on Sunday, and it is about time that I got to test my Blister (cruising chute). The five times I had pulled it out of the bag so far, the wind had either increased or died completely, and I always had to put it back. But not today, and 20 minutes later I was sailing for the first time in my life with a Blister. Wow . Unfortunately it turned out that the wind was too light for the wind-vane to work. And also the autopilot had big troubles with the Blister. So when the sun got too hot and I wanted to get into the shade I had to put the Blister away again and start the engine. And still 65nm to go. I hoped that the wind would increase again soon, because I am not very fond of motoring. Approaching Puerto CaleroIn the evening the wind picked up again, and I set the genoa and sailed through the night. I was closer to land again, and I could smell the volcanic ash in the air. And feel it under my soles as it settled into the cockpit. I kept a tighter watch for fishing boats and ferries, but the night was very quiet. After dawn the wind died again, and I motored the last two hours into Puerto Calero. I've arrived on Lanzarote and successfully completed my first ocean passage. And surprisingly ... I didn't even break anything! Levantine Shearwater. I love my "Seabirds of the World" book.Unfortunately I didn't see any whales or dolphins on the way. But I saw a few turtles (which look from a distance like old plastic bags), Black Terns, Seagulls of course, and a wasp (!). No idea how she made it 100nm off the coast. But on the same day I had half a dune of sand in my cockpit, so maybe she had hitched a ride.

Posted by Axel Busch in Vespina at 06:03

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

Thursday, May 20, 2010

SMS from 881631634938@msg.iridium.com

half-way there! the weather is great and the sea is beautiful. i'm very happy

Posted by Axel Busch in Vespina at 11:04

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

Tuesday, May 18. 2010

SMS from 881631634938@msg.iridium.com

Last night was not so nice. 45kn wind, big waves, and lots of traffic near the strait. Today is better. And many turtles!

Posted by Axel Busch in Vespina at 07:50

Friday, May 14. 2010

Preparing for the longest cruise

My time in the Bay of Cadiz is coming to an end. The weather forecast is very favorable for sailing to the Canaries, so unless something comes up today I will leave tomorrow. In the morning a regatta starts in Puerto Sherry, and the plan is to sail out with the other boats. That way I can take some parting pictures of my new friends Antonio, Louis and Cesar on their boats before heading towards the Canaries. Mounting for the spinnaker pole. Over the last days I emptied all lockers and looked behind every panel to make sure Vespina is in good shape for the trip, which will be my longest non-stop trip ever. I also tested all the electronics gear, climbed the mast and checked every line and fitting. The spinnaker pole was so far tied to the fence, and it was a pain to untie it and to tie it back on alone. Because I expect to have to do this quite frequently from now on, I added proper mountings for the pole to the fence to make it easier. And to remove an excuse for not using the pole. Ideally the spinnaker pole would be fitted to the mast, and one end just lowered when needed. But in my case the box of the fluxgate compass is in the way. Bay of Tarifa had a wonderful time here in the Bay of Cadiz. Much of it thanks to Antonio Luque from Vespaluz, who lend me his scooter and showed me around the place. Especially memorable was the hospitality and easy-going attitude of the people here, the trip to the MotoGP race in Jerez, the Feria del Caballo, the many evenings in the "Taberna del Marinero", and a visit to Tarifa last weekend. In Tarifa I also met Beat and Mitchel. Together with Antonio they are the team behind the Dwarf8 movement, The beach in front of Beat's apartment. The idea behind the movement is to build a community of individualistic people on a mission. And by setting examples to inspire other people to find their own mission in live. The little dwarf symbolizes the free spirit on a mission. According to Beat he is the happy 8th brother of the seven dwarfs, the one who didn't stay in the little hut with the little beds and the little forks. Instead he set out into the world despite his smallness to complete his mission. Which is secret of course . You gotta love it, don't you! Axel dwarfed-up We had a great time at the beaches of Tarifa, watching the kite surfers and talking about the movement and the impressive followers it already has - adventurers, race drivers, surfers, skaters, sailors. All of them cool people on a mission, and many of them world-champions in their choosen sport. I especially like this guy, who drives his little Vespa all the way through Africa to the soccer world cup to cheer on his team. I'm not a world-champion, but as you have probably guessed I'm now a Dwarf8 follower myself - a little dwarf on a sailing mission . Go Vespina, go!

Posted by Axel Busch in Vespina at 04:05

Solar Power

My new solar panel. Installation instructions were in finish, so maybe I put it the wrong side up. Solar Power on the roof! The roof is not the ideal place, because I can't angle the panel 90° to the sun. But I don't want the panel on the frame at the back, because I would feel obliged to keep it aligned to the sun perfectly all day. What a bother . And the roof is the 2nd best place. It's a rather small panel too - only 45 Watts of rated output. But it should be just enough to balance the power consumption of the navionics equipment and the stereo. The rule of thumb is that on a sunny day you need 3x your power consumption in rated panel output. To cover the Ultrasonic Antifouling, Autopilot and Radar I would need another five panels of the same size . But as Jens pointed out to me, I should run my engine anyway every couple of days for an hour under load to make sure it stays in shape. Which also charges up the batteries. And the solar panel together with the wind-generator should nicely cover for the time in between. The good thing about my panel however is that it has 36 cells. This is important, because the voltage output of a panel is proportional to the number of cells. And unfortunately the voltage also depends on the temperature inside the panel. On any day in the tropics, or very hot days elsewhere, the temperature inside the panel can easily reach 50°C. Then the output voltage of the 30- and 33-cell panels drop below what is necessary to charge the batteries. I learned that from my beloved book, the "Boatowners Electrical and Mechanical Manual", 2nd edition. If you can only take one technical book on a cruise, take that. It covers everything in exactly the right detail. I have a couple of others that also got five stars on Amazon, but Calder's is the only one I use.

Posted by Axel Busch in Vespina at 04:02

Wednesday, May 12, 2010

Getting ready for the Atlantic

A look at the weather map shows that a new high is establishing at the Azores. This should bring perfect conditions to sail to the Canaries for the weekend, and so I'm getting ready to sail on Friday. I estimate that the trip to Porto Calero on Lanzarote will take about 8 days. The wind will be from the back all the time, so I know from experience that the wind-generator will be pretty useless. This is because as the boat is pushed along by the wind from behind, the apparent wind speed on board is not enough to turn the generator fast enough to charge the batteries. I have 216 Ah of charge in the batteries, which is enough to run the GPS, Navtex, VHF Radio, Iridum and iPod four to five days. But if I have to turn on the Autopilot and Radar, then the batteries can be drained in 36 hours. Either way the batteries won't last until I reach the Canaries. So I either turn on the engine now and then to recharge the batteries. Or I get a solar panel. Well, I guess it really is like Matt commented a few days ago: "Must haves are always a must! The nice-to-haves will soon become musts". Looks like the solar panel just made it into the must have category. Fortunately my favorite ship-chandler here, Nautica Sherry can supply one until tomorrow. 50 Watts only, but it should be enough if I don't have to use the Autopilot too much. I am really looking forward to the sail. I'm sure it will be something very different from the trip through the Mediterrean. Not only will it be with 600nm twice as long as the longest trip I sailed so far (Ibiza to Almerimar). But instead of 50nm to the next coast it will be more than 100nm (the Moroccan). Quite a distance if something goes wrong. Jeff did an eskimo roll with his boat and lost the mast. Like it did for the french boat in the berth opposite of Vespina's. They were on their way to Canaries one month ago, when a freak wave hit them in the night and turned the boat through an eskimo roll - 360°. Fortunately everybody was secured with their life-lines. But the mast snapped, and so did a lot of other stuff. They made it to Rabat in Morocco with their engine after pumping the water out, and now they are back here where they fit a new mast. I talked to the skipper Jeff about the incident, to learn what can be learned. He said they only had half of the genoa up when it happened, and didn't see the wave coming in the night. It suddenly crashed down on top of them from the rear quarter. But he doubted that he could have done much in any case. Maybe turn the boat directly away from the wave, so that they might have had a chance to ride with the wave instead of being hit from the rear quarter. Fortunately the whole thing happened very quickly and the boat was up again after only a few seconds. Unfortunately the hatch wasn't fully closed and so quite a lot of water made it into the boat. So I'll make sure I have my hatch closed tightly when conditions get rough. And I wear my lifeline and have it picked in all the time anyway. Don't you worry, I'll be fine.

Posted by Axel Busch in Vespina at 04:52

Monday, May 10. 2010

Voy a ir a las canarias!

Friday evening I met Pocholo and we talked a long time about how to create a sustainable business from his popularity, and not just one-timers. He is a fast thinker, a very energetic person and a fountain of new ideas. And I was surprised how well developed and thought through the ideas were. But he's an overflowing fountain actually, and his attention span is very short. Not easy to deal with. He clearly needs a marketing company who collects the ideas from him, and grills him patiently (oh, so patiently) about all the little details he has already thought of. Then add some more meat to the story and screen the whole thing for common sense, feasibility and profitability. If the results are positive, go and use his connections and popularity to market the stuff and cut Pocholo in on the revenues. Do I see any takers out there? Then Pocholo can do what he's best at: Come up with new ideas, fascinate people and get attention. Unfortunately not all of this attention is positive. Like this Saturday evening, when he lost his driving license for a year. Well, so much for the trucking through Spain . We put the truck on the yard of a construction company, and I'm afraid it's going to stay there for a while. Which means that I'm free to sail off to the Canaries this week, as soon as the wind changes from it's current southerly direction and picks up again. Yeah! Go Vespina, go!

Posted by Axel Busch at 04:57

Friday, May 7. 2010

The ultimate movie: 6 months compressed into 10 minutes

Friends, this is it: The highlights of the voyage - from Heidelberg to El Puerto de Santa Maria. Including so far unpublished footage from the river journey. Enjoy Background information: The footage was shot with a Lumix DMC-FT1 and a Canon EOS 7D in 720p High Definition. The movies so far were edited with iMovie. But that is unfortunately not a very reliable program, especially version 9. It crashed frequently and didn't always save all changes. So I switched to Final Cut Express 4 now for the post-production, and use iMovie only to render some special effects like the globe map. The learning curve is a little steeper in Final Cut, but it is well worth the effort. Finally a piece of software that actually behaves as expected, does not crash, and does only do what you tell it to. Most of the audio adjustments I can do right in Final Cut too, but sometimes I switch to Audacity. For video conversion I use Quicktime and the iSkysoft Video Converter. Last but not least a big thanks to you my friends for all the feedback on my movies. I am still a beginner, and your constructive critique helps me to improve my skills and videos.

Posted by Axel Busch in Vespina at 15:16

Feria del Caballo

Caballo y Caballero! This week Jerez celebrates the "Feria del Caballo" - the horse festival. Antonio said the festival is muy espectacular, and he invited me to go together with him. He left me his scooter in the Marina, and on Wednesday afternoon I drove to Jerez where we met at his office. The festival was indeed muy espectacular! The horses looked magnificent, and the carriages were beautifully adorned. I don't know a thing about horses, so the full beauty was probably lost on me, but I was very impressed nevertheless. Not only by the horses, but also by the people. The riders and the ladies especially. All the ladies had dressed up in special costumes, and everywhere there was singing, clapping and dancing going on. Check out the video! Thanks a lot to my host Antonio for showing me around and explaining everything. La Playa de la Caleta Hehe Thursday I had the scooter again, and went to have a look at the city of Cadiz, on the other side of the bay. Cadiz was originally founded by the Phoenicians 1100 BC. With over 3000 years it is the oldest continuously-inhabited city of all western Europe. The fact that the city is surrounded by Spain's most beautiful beaches might have had something to do with that. Columbus sailed from Cadiz on two of his voyages, and the city was the home port of the Spanish treasure fleet, which brought gold, spices and other valuables from the new world into Europe. The city's wealth made it a favorite target for Spain's enemies, particularly the English, who attacked and blockaded it many times. Most renowned is the raiding of the city by Sir Francis Drake in 1587. Cadiz is the same size as my home town Ulm. But due to its location, architecture and historical importance it feels very differently. Especially for a sailor. Unfortunately I was very tired today from all the partying at the Feria yesterday, so I had little energy for taking pictures. But it was too hazy for spectacular pictures anyway. Me, Bili, flying Waiter Antonio! In the evening I had dinner with Antonio again. Antonio is a very special man. He is a wonderful host and very generous - I can hardly move anymore because Vespina is laden with whole pallets of "Dwarf8". No idea how I have deserved that. But what strikes me most is his amazingly balanced personality. A guy like the sea. Amazing. Because I hang out so much with him and his friends my Spanish is also improving rapidly. A chat with friends is a much better motivator to learn a language than shopping or asking for directions.

Posted by Axel Busch in Vespina at 03:08

Monday, May 3, 2010

A new crewmate

Dinghy. Blae. During the last few days I have used my dinghy to paint the sides of my boat where they were rusty. While the dinghy provides a pretty comfortable platform for painting, it is very awkward in all other regards. Although it's with 2,5m a short dinghy, it is already pretty bulky and heavy. Getting it in and out of the water is a real effort. And once on deck, it is in the way. It also loses air slowly. It became quickly obvious: Vespina is too small for me, my ego and my dinghy. One of us has to go. After a brief discussion I pulled rank on the dinghy and removed it from the crew list, together with the outboard engine, which is still not working. I've tried everything the owner's manual asked me except changing the spark plug and bringing it to an authorized dealer. Since both are too young to go into retirement, Antonio has agreed to look out for them. This of course creates a vacancy on Vespina. I need some way to paint the sides of her in the future, and I also need some way to get to the shore and back when at anchor. And the life-raft is just a little too posh for that. Shopping at Decathlon. In my mind a small surfboard, canoe or kayak seemed like the right thing. So I rode with my BMX to Santa Mario to see what "Decathlon", a huge sports store, has to offer. And I found what I was looking for. It's a sit-on-top kayak, 3m long, 80cm wide, weighs only 21kg and it is blue. It also has a platform at the back which I can use to strap stuff to, or lie on it and push the kayak with my feet (preferably with flippers on them). But how to get it back the 10 km to Vespina? Not on the BMX. I called a Taxi and made sure to mention "Una persona, una bicicleta y una kayak!". 5 minutes later the Taxi came - a sedan. Sigh. The driver looked at the heap on the ground incredulously and shook his head, and I asked him to call un taxi mas grande por favor. 5 Minutes later a Peugeot 308 (5 door) arrived and the driver magically managed to squeeze everything inside, including myself and his own considerable bulk. Wow. Kayak + Vespina =

Posted by Axel Busch in Vespina at 13:41

Yachts and Motorbikes

Saturday was a beautiful day for a day-sail, plenty of sun and 20 knots of wind. Because it was 1st of May and a national holiday, the bay was packed with Yachts and Surfers, a couple of regattas were under way too. I joined the fray to test my wind-vane. There was only little swell, but the wind was strong enough to get an idea whether my latest modifications had improved the effectiveness of the wind-vane. At first I only let it steer Vespina while motoring, to see whether it works at all. And it did! Then I unfurled the genoa and tried all angles to the wind. Close-hauled and on a reach the wind-vane worked extremely well, and the pins I had inserted prevented it from getting mis-aligned. I sailed along for about an hour like that - wonderful. Then I changed course downwind. There the wind-vane didn't hold the course as steady. But if I don't set the main-sail and thus avoid the threat of a chinese gybe, then it should be good enough. Quite happy I returned into port and had a nice seafood dinner at the "Taberna del Marinero" before taking a taxi to Jerez to look at the hundred thousand motorbikes that were expected for the race on Sunday. Insane. I-n-s-a-n-e. It really got me motivated to watch the race on Sunday. Most visitors arrived on their bikes, of course. Ups. Helping hands. Sunday morning I went to the race-track in Jerez early to see the 125cc race, where Pol Espargarol, the guy I've met on Friday, competed. The Circuito del Jerez is a very fast track, with many high-speed corners and plenty of opportunities for overtaking. And boy, did they make an exciting race out of it. The crowd went wild. And when in the end Pol won the race, I was very happy. It's not often that you meet the future winner before a race, and it adds a nice personal touch to the whole experience. Thanks Antonio, for making that possible! Pol kissing the trophy. Nasty, nasty! After that was the Moto2 class race. All bikes share the same powerful 600cc engine, which keeps costs down and the performance of the bikes comparable. As a result the starting grid is huge - 42 bikes, the bikes stay close together during the race, and the positions during the race change often. I didn't know any riders, so I felt a little detached. But the lead changed so often during the race, that it was dramatic anyway. Nice silver pants. Aussie Stoner finished 5th. Then the MotoGP class with famous riders like Valentino Rossi, Dani Pedrosa, Casey Stoner etc. The deafening noise, pure power and ridiculous speed of the bikes is enough to have the blood boil with adrenaline. Pedrosa was in the lead for the most time, and managed to gain a small lead over Rossi and Lorenzo. Eight laps before the end of the race Lorenzo began to attack his teammate Rossi on 2nd in earnest, and managed to pass him with five laps to go in the race. But would he be fast enough to catch up with Pedrosa in the remaining time? Everybody was on their feet. Lap after lap Lorenzo gained on Pedrosa, and it looked like he might just make it - or just Rossi finished third. not. With one lap to go last year's second caught up with last year's third, and the bikes locked in a battle that stretched across five corners. And Lorenzo came out victorious, to race to his first victory in the season. The guy was so happy that he got off his bike during his celebration lap and jumped into a pond, lol. I've been to a number of races before, mostly Formula 1 and DTM. Formula 1 is faster, but MotoGP is so much more exciting because there is a lot more action on the track. Anyway, check out the movie: I couldn't make out any public transportation after I've left the race-track. The few

hitchhikers were completely ignored, and so I just walked for two hours into Jerez, where I finally found a taxi at a gas-station. Back in Puerto Sherry I met Antonio in the "Taberna del Marinero", where we concluded the evening with a can of his awesome Dwarf 8 bio-drink, served on ice and mint-leaves. So, really a nice weekend for me. I missed my friends, but I guess you can't have it all. The plan for today is to replenish my provisions and plan the trip to the Canaries. I hope the weather let's me leave soon.

Posted by Axel Busch in Vespina at 04:29

Saturday, May 1. 2010

Something completely different - Moto GP

Yamaha team event. This weekend the Moto GP Championship visits the city of Jerez. Because Spain is motorbike crazy, this is going to be a huge spectacle. Jerez is only 20km from where I am, but a little bit of the action came on Thursday to my Pontoon in the Marina: the drivers of the Yamaha team went out for a joyride on waverunners. Of course TV and long-legged ladies in tight outfit were also present. Not that I would be interested in such things. In the evening I went to the showers, where I met a hyper guy that calls himself Pocholo. We talked a little and then he dragged me along for a beer with his friend Antonio and some girls. Antonio and Pocholo. The girls were primarily occupied with their cigaretts, but talking with Pocholo and Antonio was a lot of fun. And just watching Pocholo, the guy is a crazy combination of hyperactive nutcase & deep thinker. Besides he is also a very popular DJ in Spain, and is here to do some DJing at the race. His friend Antonio sells Aprilia and Vespa motorbikes, runs an events company, and is getting a new bio soft-drink on the market - Dwarf 8. Wow, surprise. I was even more surprised when they invited me to join them at the race. Cool! Well, the things you say over beers. Not so here, shortly after noon on Friday Pocholo called out: "Hey Axel, grab your camera and wallet. We leave in ten minutes". Antonio gave me VIP ticket for the weekend, and off we went. Which one would you take? A ticket to the paddock! In style of course. And as you would expect from a crazy guys as Pocholo, his ride is as crazy - a big old 15ton heave and 5m high off-road truck, from the roof of which he does his DJ-ing. The ride to the race-track was a happening in itself. The truck is well-known, and everywhere people screamed "Pocholooooo!" and waved their hands. The original idea was to set up the truck and play some music at the race-track. But in the life of Pocholo change is as constant as the ringing of his mobile phone. 5m high, 15 tons heavy, 90.000 Watt stereo system on the roof. Team bosses posing behind paella. So after we arrived at the race-track he had to go to a Foto-shooting with some top brass of the Guardia Civil, and dropped me off at the gate. Antonio produced a special ticket for the paddock, where we met up with another Antonio, who is the Andalucia Manager of Aprilia. After some food in the VIP area we visited his team as it got the bikes ready, and talked to Pol Esparagaro, who finished fourth in the Championship last year. Hopes are high he will win the Championship in the 125cc class this year. I'll keep my fingers crossed. Derbi's Box. Pol Esparagaro Friday practice. A crane for the truck. Me, Pocholo. After Pocholo was done with his interview we met him outside and set off towards the city and Antonio's garage. For a future event the truck needs a lift at the back for Motorbikes and Jetskis, and we all set to work. That was great fun too. My Spanish is absolutel lousy, and so was the English of the mechanics, but we got along splendidly. Later Antonio gave me a lift back to the Marina, where I reviewed the pictures and made a little movie: My VIP ticket is also valid for today and tomorrow, and I'm really tempted to go. Today I'll have to do some more work on Vespina, and would also like to test the wind-vane in the bay. So I probably won't make it to the race-track for the qualifying. But seeing how motorbike-crazy everybody in Spain seems to be, including the King Juan Carlos, I shouldn't miss the race on Sunday.

Posted by Axel Busch in Vespina at 02:48