

Tuesday, January 31. 2012

Changes to the blog

I haven't blogged a lot in the last months. So much was happening, and I was simply busy keeping up with real life and didn't have a lot time left for this electronic life. Which I guess is a good thing. It's also busier now that Liz is on board then before, and I spend more time with her and less in front of the computer. Although with photography, learning about repairs, ordering parts, planning the trip, and staying (more or less) in touch with home I do spend an awful lot of time in front of the screen. Anyway, I've set up my blog now so that I can make posts easier by email, including photos, and I hope that this way I will be able to keep the blog more up to date. I've also updated the design a little bit and did some general maintenance like removing content that was out of date. Over the next few weeks I'll add some general content, like how, who, why. I hope to start something like a tips & tricks section, basically so that I have a way/motivation to write down what I learn on the way.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 05:39

Successful haul-out

Everything worked fine and Gudrun V is now on the hard. One shock was when I asked the travel lift operator about the weight, and he said 10 tons. Last time I hauled out in Las Palmas it was 8 tons. But that was with empty tanks, no sails, no solar panels, no dinghy, etc. Since then I added a lot to the boat and this time I filled up all the tanks and jerry cans before getting into the lift. The boat is also filled with food, so this is the real cruising weight. 10 tons, wow. After haul-out I've managed to change the hose from the galley sink and it now goes straight down instead of through half the boat. Today I will try to remove two old thru-hulls that I don't need anymore now. I hope that works, but I expect the stainless steel bolts to be corrosion-welded to the hull, and the hulls are not very accessible. If I can't get them off, then I'll have to seal them with epoxy putty and 5200. That will work as well, but it's not as clean. After that I can drill the hole for a the new head outlet. Drilling holes in your boat always feels completely wrong. Like why would you drill a hole into something that is supposed to keep you afloat. But sealing two inaccessible holes with old, leaky, thru-hulls and replacing them with one new very accessible one is definitely a good thing. Here some photos from the haul-out action:

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 05:20

Monday, January 30, 2012

Panama

The capt'n taking a well-earned rest in the shade. Monday, 2012-01-30, 05:00 local, 9:22.7N, 79:57.4W, Shelter Bay Marina, Colon, Panama

Last week Monday we said good-bye to Irie and left the San Blas archipelago to sail to Colon, Panama. Here we wanted to haul-out and prepare for the canal passage and the Pacific. Unlike the sail from Colombia, the weather was next to perfect. Winds of 10-20kn and only 2-3ft waves (within the sheltered archipelago 1/2ft). Actually the archipelago is so sheltered because of the outlying reefs that sailing there reminds me of Lake Constanze, only with palm trees instead of apple trees. We wanted to arrive in Colon in the morning, so we left in the early afternoon for the trip of 100nm, all on a starboard tack. Liz had made plenty of pasta salad in advance so we didn't have to cook, and we spent the whole time lying in the cockpit sleeping, talking, reading, watching out. We arrived almost to the minute at 9am in the Marina. I called the dock master over the radio and he gave us a slip - C6. We docked and high-fived for a perfect trip from lifting the anchor to tying off the knots. Yes, sailing can be nice, too.

MS Queen Elizabeth entering the first lock to Lake Gatun. From Tuesday until Friday we were busy with paperwork and arrangements for immigration, canal passage, haul-out, local sim-cards, and following up on shipments that I've ordered before leaving Colombia. But Friday morning everything came together: First the measurer arrived to inspect the boat for the canal passage, an hour later I got the OK to haul out on Monday, in the afternoon the date for the canal passage was confirmed, and in the evening the big shipment from Warehouse Marine arrived - anti-fouling, Katadyn desalinator, wind generator, solar panels, new thru-hull fittings, and a ton of hoses, valves, and connectors. That will keep me busy for a while. Saturday we cleaned the boat and prepared it for haul-out as well as guests for dinner (Michele and Mark from Reach), and yesterday we could just relax. I played a round of "Legends of Yore" in the morning while Liz wrote, and in the afternoon I went out with Michele and Josie from Jedi to take photos while Liz met Mark on Reach to play guitar together.

Chestnut-headed oropendola in a few hours we'll haul out. The plan for today is to clean the hull, then take out the floorboards and remove the hoses from head, galley and the thru-hulls. When the previous owner changed the location of the head from fore to aft he didn't change the thru-hulls but just rerouted the installation in a way that now both the galley and the head have a few meters of hose and too many bends, which causes a lot of complications. Also the thru-hulls are very inaccessible and two actually can't be quite closed anymore due to electrolysis in the thru-hulls (made of stainless steel and aluminium). That is reason enough to move and replace them with marelon thru-hulls and seal the old holes. But it won't be fun. Fortunately we managed to get a hotel room in the marine hotel while we're hauled out. So we can move some stuff to the hotel room to make space for working, and have a clean place to sleep while work is going on.

Posted by Axel Busch at 04:48

Saturday, January 21. 2012

Another palm-tree studded island

Paradise! Saturday, 2012-01-12, 07:00 local, 9:30N, 78:37W, at anchor east of Olosicuidup island

The last week we were at anchor in front of Waisaladup, a very small island maybe 20m long and 10m wide with high palm trees surrounded by a white beach. It doesn't get much more picture perfect than that. Liz wrote on her book and I worked on the boat and went diving, and in the evenings we met up with Mark and Liesbet from Irie for drinks and dinner. Now and then another boat would come by, but most of the time Gudrun V and Irie were on their own. Then Irie ran out of water and had to go to a few miles south to a Kuna village to stock up. Upon their return we lifted anchor and intended to sail together to the next group of islands, the Coco Bandero Cays. Another set of palm-tree studded picture perfect postcard islands.

Liz shopping for "molas", patterned cloth panels
The sailing together part didn't quite work out, because we had some trouble lifting the anchor and it took as half an hour until we could leave the anchorage. The chain on Gudrun V runs into a plastic tube instead of into a chain locker, and when I let out more than 20m of chain there is always trouble getting it back in because it fouls up inside the tube and then wraps around the anchor winch and is a lot of sweat and trouble to free. Though, Liz noted, I stopped cursing when things like that happen and just work on it quietly and patiently. So maybe something good is coming out of all that, but personally I'd rather have things running smoothly. It's not only more comfortable, it's also safer. So we have another big project on the to-do list there. The previous owner installed all kinds of ingenious solutions on this boat which, like the plastic tube, sound fine in theory but don't quite work in practice. I call it "Catalan Engineering", because he's from Barcelona and proud of it, and so far it has kept me busy with fixing things every other day since I bought the boat in July 2010.

By the time we were ready to go Irie was far ahead, and because it's only a one hour sail there was no way we could catch up. The sailing was great though. 15kn of wind on the nose in flat water due to the protection of the reefs. Perfect conditions to set Gudrun at a very sporty 30 degree angle to the wind and sail along with a lot of heel and a lot of fun. She is a race-boat after all. The fun stopped for a minute at the only tacking point. The dinghy and kayak we were dragging behind slowed the boat down enough during the maneuver that we didn't make it through the tack, and were caught in irons (pointed at the wind, not moving). Not a good situation with a reef only a few boat-lengths to the lee, so it got a little hectic until we had started the engine to help us through that rather embarrassing situation.

When we reached the cays Mark came out in the dinghy to guide us in. This was only our second "reefy place", and while we're starting to gain trust in our judgement of water depths by color, it just takes a while to feel comfortable running into a unknown rocky place with a 2.5m draft. Until then I'd rather ask a friend for help than foolishly run aground due to misplaced sailor's pride. Thanks Mark. For a sundowner we dinghied over to an outlying island, Orduptarboat, which is just big enough for two palm trees.

The island is only 50m south of the long reef that protects the cays from the Caribbean sea, and just north of the island a broken wreck of a coastal barge is lying on that same reef. Mariners beware. The plan is to spend today here then sail to Shelter Bay Marina in Colon, Panama, for haul out. Later today I have to call the marina and re-confirm the haul-out for the 25th. They weren't sure because of the arrival of boats for the World ARC, many of which needed to haul out as well before their passage through the canal on the 30th. I kind of expect that our haul-out will be delayed, but then we just spend a few more days here among the picture postcard perfect palm tree islands. What a life.

Posted by Axel Busch at 06:39

Monday, January 16. 2012

San Blas islands

Waisaladup, Gudrun V Monday, 16.01.2012, 04:00 local, 9:28.21N, 78:38.18W, at anchor

It's beautiful here in the San Blas. Hundreds of tiny little islands covered in one to many coconut palm trees. But don't go picking one! All the coconuts belong to a Kunda indian, and they get royally pissed if you just harvest their source of income for free. Reminds me of the "Obstbauern vom Bodensee", the orchard farmers from around lake Constanz. They also get quite angry when you pick an apple from their trees while cycling along. But quite unlike their south German counterparts the Kunda indians travel with dug-out kanus from islands to island, to catch coconuts and fish and lobster. Then they travel from boat to boat trying to sell them. A few have outboard engines, but most simply paddle, or use a sail downwind. So every day, depending on the weather, you can expect a knock or two or hey! hey! calls and visitors grinning up at you.

In the eastern caribbean that is often a hassle, since the locals don't leave you alone unless you buy something. And then they come back the more for it. Here it's more relaxed. No gracias and off they go. Since we arrived the wind has been blowing quite a lot and the sky is overcast. Without a working wind generator that is less than ideal, and it looks like tomorrow we'll have to turn off the fridge. When we wanted to dinghy over to Irie for dinner on Saturday the outboard engine failed to start, so we rowed. Rowing back against the wind was especially funny, and a little alcohol and the fact that Liz and I each wanted our own paddle had a lot to do with that. But we made it, eventually, guided by Mark and his powerful flashlight because we had forgotten to turn on the anchor light on Gudrun and it was pitch dark.

Kuna indians in an ulu Sunday Mark and I took the outboard engine apart and found that the air intake flap of the carburetor was corroded in place. On a one year old outboard, great. I'm also less than impressed with the maintenance friendliness of the Mercury engine. Should have bought a Yamaha. Unable to make it rotate freely we've twisted it into a semi-open position so that the engine still starts and runs reasonably well. But the output seems only about half of the nominal 15hp.

The next few days we'll hang around here some more. Hopefully the weather clears up and we can go swimming and snorkeling. Despite the wind the water is very calm because we're anchored between shoals. So the boat doesn't roll. But with only a few boat lengths of depth around us we're always worrying whether the anchor holds, because if it doesn't we'll end up on a reef very quickly. Navigating the reefs is tricky work, especially because the charts are hopelessly wrong. On the way to our current anchorage we had to run over three charted shoals and two islands in order to not end up on the reefs. And now we're anchored right on top of one - only it's 12m deep here. Two boats that came in Saturday trusted their charts more than their eyes and ran aground. And yesterday a big katamaran came straight at us (and a reef), then last minute realized that something must be wrong because of all the breakers and stopped. So between meals and drinks with Irie, the islands, the Kunas, fixing things on the boat, and crazy navigation action around us we have our entertainment here

Posted by Axel Busch at 03:59

Saturday, January 14. 2012

Ankerbier

anchor, starfish.

Saturday, 14.01.2012, 12:00 local, 9:28.21N, 78:38.18W, at anchor

Yesterday was nice sailing. We arrived at the eastern entrance of the San Blas archipelago at four in the morning, 2 1/2 hours before sunrise. So we turned around and sailed back for 1 1/2 hours and turned around again. The San Blas are a few hundred islands, some of them not bigger to hold a single palm tree. Some of the islands are inhabited by the native Kuna indians, who largely preserved their old way of lived. Enriched by cell phones and outboard engines, and trading with cruisers. By 0900 we were anchored in front of SV Irie (Mark and Liesbet), just south of Green Island. A postcard scenery from paradise. Unfortunately the palm tree postcard scenery didn't care much for Irie's wind generator (our Silent Wind still isn't working), so we relocated a little further away from the island. Our Navionics gold charts by the way are of limited use here. According to the charts we drove over shoals three times, and anchored on the beach. In reality the water was 10m deep and we were 30m from shore. We don't know how long we'll stay here, maybe a day or two. There is nice snorkeling in the reefs and a few things to fix.

Posted by Axel Busch at 11:26

Friday, January 13. 2012

To Green Island

Friday, 13.01.2012, 12:00 local, 9° 48' N, 77° 42' W, HDG 256°, 6.7kn sleeping in the cockpitThe sea is much calmer today and since 2am we have the main sail up. At first in the second reef, after dawn full. Now we're sailing along nicely and feel both well. Mark and Liesbet have send us their co-ordinates in the San Blas islands and we changed course and are heading there now (9° 29' N, 78° 38' W). Unfortunately we won't make it before sunset, and we don't want to navigate the reefs in the dark. So we're going to hang around in the open sea and enter the archipelago in the morning. Yesterday we sailed slower than necessary. We only had the genoa up and could easily have increased our speed with the main sail or the parasailor. But we were both a little apathic from seasickness to do more than what was absolutely necessary and slept most of the day. Interesting. Well, no surprise really. Seven months on shore and then a force 8 on the first day out. But now we're back on track. It's great to be out again. I've missed it.

Posted by Axel Busch at 11:23

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

Thursday, January 12. 2012

SMS from 881631634938@msg.iridium.com

10D 35M N, 76D 13M W. Liz is better. had 38kn wind in the night. now 20 to 25kn. sunny. rough sea. but so blue! going slow under reefed genoa for comfort.

Posted by Axel Busch at 10:45

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

Wednesday, January 11. 2012

SMS from 881631634938@msg.iridium.com

left st marta at 10. destination san blas. 30kn wind 2m waves. liz seasick, hope it passes. if not cartagena.

Posted by Axel Busch at 11:01

Tuesday, January 3. 2012

Anti-fouling or no anti-fouling?

Growth on the hull. Four weeks after last scrubbing. We're back in Santa Marta, preparing the boat to be sailed again after seven months in the slip. And preparing for the Pacific as well, since shopping in Colombia is significantly cheaper than in Panama. If you can get what you need ... So we have a long list of things to do, and about one more week until we want to leave. Time to think about the next steps. I enquired at Shelter Bay Marina (in Colon, at the north end of the Panama canal) for a slip and haul out, but no reply so far. One of the reasons for hauling out is to replace the anti-fouling, which prevents growth, barnacles and other stuff from attaching to the hull. I asked marine warehouse in Panama for a quote and here's the reply: 3 gallons of Trilux 33 anti-fouling: 675.00 Ocean freight: 65.00 Insurance: 8.00 Local delivery: 25.00 Customs: 10.00 = US\$ 783.00 Add \$400 for hauling out plus other expenses and I'm looking at US\$ 1300. A lot of money, but worth it if it keeps the hull clean until we reach New Zealand. A clean hull makes for faster sailing. And for the 3000nm from the Galapagos to the Marquesas I want every half-knot of speed to make it across as fast as possible. More speed means less times on the water means less chance of hitting bad weather. The problem is that based on my previous experience I have reason to doubt that the hull will stay clean that long. The last antifouling, applied in September 2010 in Las Palmas, was basically gone by March 2011. 6 months. From then on I had to scrub the hull with a scraper every two weeks. And the warm south Pacific will be worth than the relatively cold Atlantic. With an expected two to three months stay in the Galapagos it's questionable whether there will be antifouling left for the 3000nm trip to the Marquesas in May. Unfortunately Panama (January) is the last chance to haul out until New Zealand. The reason why the anti-fouling is that bad (and expensive), is because it has to be compatible with my aluminum hull. Unfortunately you can't put good and cheap copper-based antifouling on an aluminium hull. Electrolysis would eat the hull. I have an epoxy layer to prevent that, but it still is risky. So I have to get more expensive and less effective anti-fouling. Or not, because for US\$ 1300 I can as well pay somebody \$50 every second week to clean the hull. Or dive myself like last year and spent the 50\$ on a good meal to recover my lost strength. Because scraping the hull up to 2.5m deep is hard work. And nasty ... all those little shrimps and barnacles and stuff that crawl over you and stick in you hair. It's definitely easier to clean the hull when there is a layer of anti-fouling on it, independently of how effective it is. Looks like a bad case of being caught between a rock and a hard place. What would you do?

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 11:05