

Monday, March 26. 2012

Panama to Galapagos Statistics and Video

So, I shot hours of video on the trip. But unfortunately I lost most of it due to my own stupidity, including all the video diaries, dolphins, and when we crossed the equator. But there was still a little footage left that'll give you an idea how it was. So here you go:

And here some statistics:

We were underway for 8 1/2 days (207 hours). We sailed for 143 hours (70%), drifted 45 hours (20%), and motored 19 hours (10%). Total distance was 950nm, out of which we sailed 765nm, drifted 90nm, and motored 95nm. We used 100 liters of water (mostly for showering and the dishes), which we replaced on the way thanks to the desalinator (Katadyn 160E). The fuel consumption was 36 liters.

There were no damages to speak of, but air in the desalinator intake line, a broken water hose connector, and a clogged up fuel tank vent and diesel filters kept me busy for a few hours.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 11:25

Saturday, March 24. 2012

Photos from the trip

Here are some photos of the trip:

- On my photo-website xlvisuals (high resolution images)
- On Facebook (you don't need to be on facebook to view the photos)

Swallow-tailed Gull looking to land on our mast-top

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 20:03

Friday, March 23. 2012

Arrived in Puerto Ayora, Isla Santa Cruz, Galapagos

This morning 8:45 we dropped anchor in Academy Bay on the south side of Isla Santa Cruz. There are 18 sailboats in the bay, about 10 dive/day-cruise boats, and two megayachts. Three of the sailboats we know already from France, Colombia, and Panama.

Shortly after arrival our friend Andre came over with his dinghy and our immigration agent Irene on board. Irene collected some documents then left to return an hour later with the Navy official who inspected the boat and didn't believe me when I said we have 5 GPS, 4 VHF radios, and 2 satphones on board. Which of course isn't true, counting the phones, tablets, cameras there are 15 GPS units on board. It's vital, so you gotta have spares, right?

I remember when I bought a GPS for my brother in 1994 for his Africa motorbike trip, how something special it was then. And how he lost it when he fell off the bike in a sand dune and only noticed it two hours later and drove back all the way to dig the thing out of the sand. So while my brother is perfectly fine crossing a desert without a GPS and find a little sand hole, I wouldn't be able to find an island in the Pacific without one. A continent, ok. A little island, no way. Maybe I should practice that ...

Back to the naval officer. He also told us in his gravest voice and most serious face that we can only stay a maximum of 21 days. If we stay any longer we are in big trouble. And that we cannot move the boat out of the anchorage. We can't take any trip, but the boat has to stay here until we leave. Which has to be before 21 days are up or we're in big trouble. He repeated that just to make sure we got it. Yessir.

We hope to finish all immigration procedures today, which also includes a "selective fumigation" of the boat so that we don't import any bugs. We'll know more in the afternoon. Overall we paid USD 610 in park-, immigration-, and agent fees for two people.

Then I would like to organize some dive- and photo-tours, and edit the photos and video of the trip. The boat needs a little maintenance as well, but nothing that should keep us more than three days. So we're thinking that maybe in 10, 14 days we're out of here. If there's wind ...

Yesterday a french single-hander who left 6 days ago drifted back into the bay with no diesel left after he ran out of wind on the first day of his trip to the Marquesas.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 12:16

Thursday, March 22. 2012

Are we there yet?

Thursday, 22.03.2012, 11:30 local (16:30 UTC), 0:21.928S, 89:05.144W, 32C, 1007 mBar, SOG 5.5kt, COG 254

Yesterday afternoon more of the same: Barely 4-5 kn of wind, sailing/drifted along slowly. Liz reading in the cockpit and I fiddle with the lines trying to squeeze out every 1/10 knot. I pull the GoPRO camera another time up the mast for more photos and movies. 4pm the wind dies completely and it gets incredibly hot. Liz starts mentioning that it's getting kind of boring now, and I jump into the water to cool off. And yes, there is a ladder on the boat, and I can reach it from sea-level. And I also trail a line behind we I go into the water.

At 18:43 we drift across the equator. We open the present from Mark and Liesbet for that occasion and then we eat all the potato chips that came out, among other things. Thanks guys, you're wonderful! Then we sat in the cockpit with another Gin Tonic, talked, and watched an(other) amazing sunset. But this one was really special. An hour after dark the wind came back, oh joy. Parasailor up and we sail along again. 30 minutes later the wind shifts to the beam: parasailor down again, genoa and main-sail up. We sail along with 6kn on a flat sea. The boat makes almost no noise, only a very low swishing. It's like we're floating.

2am the wind is gone again, but the fog is back. We drift for three more hours, then I start the engine. What little swell there was is dying down, and the sea is taking on an oily look. It's hard to make out the horizon as the sea reflects the sky almost perfectly and blends into it. I always wanted to see this so I'm glad it's happening on the last day. Camera out, click, click, click . Ok, I got the photos. Can the wind now come back please? It really doesn't look like it, I'm afraid we'll have to motor the last 75nm to Academy Bay, Santa Cruz Island, Galapagos. Have to slow down though or we'll arrive in the middle of the night.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 11:32

Wednesday, March 21. 2012

The perfect calm

Wednesday, 21.03.2012, 11:30 local (16:30 UTC), 0:04.820 N, 87:24.280W, 30C, 1006 mBar, SOG 4.2kt, COG 262

Very calm all throughout yesterday and today too. The sea is almost completely calm, only light ripples on the surface and a very long and low swell. We're slowly half drifting, half sailing with 4-5kn towards the Galapagos. Liz says it's her best sailing experience ever.

The wind frequently shifts slightly and the speed drops below 4kn. Then the swell catches up with us and starts banging against the stern and I adjust the sheets to get the speed back up above 4kn, ideally 5kn, but often 4ish is the limit. I'd rather prefer to be busy keeping the speed north of 8kn, but this slow voyaging also has something for it. Very relaxing, once you are in the mindset. I read a lot and shoot a lot of photos, and Liz and I are talking a lot, discussing ideas and the world and making plans about our future. Quality time together. I wouldn't mind if the rest of the Pacific went like that as well. I can go back to sailing fast after we get to NZ.

Only 170nm to the Galapagos. Looks like we'll get there on Friday. It's almost inevitable given the current along the equator.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 11:44

Tuesday, March 20. 2012

Hot!

Tuesday, 2012-03-20, 11:55 local, 0:31.46N, 85:47.87W, 35C, 1006mBar, COG 254, SOG 5.5kn

It's hot! We're glad that we bought some black garden mesh in the "Discovery Center" in Panama, which we cut into rectangles and zip-tied all over the cockpit for extra shade from the sun. Works great, highly recommended.

Contrary to the weather forecast the wind didn't die completely down yesterday and we were moving along at 4-5kn all afternoon and night. In the morning the wind did stop for three hours, and we turned on the engine, partly to keep on moving but mostly to charge the batteries and run the watermaker. It started and run just fine, but when the wind returned shortly past 8am I was happy to turn it off and sail along quietly again. So much better. Today the sky is clear and I hope that we get up to 80% charge again with the solar-panels, but I have to confess that the heat and heal have more of an effect than I had anticipated.

280nm to go, and it's tempting to look at the map every hour and see how much closer we came and calculate how much longer it might take. But nobody knows what the next days will bring in terms of wind, and any estimate is pure speculation. 200nm south of Panama the grib files stopped making any sense, the wind was always different than forecast. So I'm not downloading them anymore and instead just go for the fastest course, or straightest course, to the Galapagos, whatever feels like the right thing to do at the moment.

Instead of downloading grib-files I uploaded that photo yesterday, I hope it arrived. Although tiny in size it took 5 minutes to upload with my iridium satellite phone, and at 1\$ per minute I don't think I'll upload another one anytime soon. Although I have a lot of photos I would like to show, because there is actually a lot to photograph. Sunrise, sunset, clouds, sails, Liz in the cockpit, birds, dolphins, and at night stars and a fantastic blue bioluminescent wake that Gudrun trails behind. But the highlight are of course dolphins, and Liz is always on the lookout for them.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 12:11

Monday, March 19. 2012

Engine trouble resolved

Now that the engine is running (although it's not running, because we're sailing, but it would run if we wanted it to, ...) and the boat's cleaned up again I can write a proper blog entry. But first a photo from today. Taken with a GoPro pulled up on the main halyard:

Gudrun V in the Pacific, with Parasailor up.

The first unexpected thing that happened yesterday afternoon was that the wind died at 4:30pm, two hours earlier than the days before. Doesn't matter, it will be back. We had nice dinner in the cockpit (wraps), watched a pod of dolphins go past, then a flock of birds on their migration go the other way. It's surprising how much life you actually see in the middle of the ocean, when you just sit on one spot for a while. Actually pretty busy out here. We felt happy and privileged and mixed some Gin Tonics and toasted to the great trip so far, and the fact that we were more than half of the way to the Galapagos already. The dreaded doldrums experience of sitting in the heat for days without end and no wind wasn't happening.

Then an hour later the banging started. Big waves against the back, rocking and rolling the boat in a dead calm. So somewhere there must be wind, only not here. Somewhere there was a lot of wind, and apparently all night because the banging and rolling just wouldn't stop. At four in the morning I saw another light on the horizon, and since it didn't move it was either a star or another sailboat drifting. Two hours later it was still there, so it must be another sailboat. Cool.

Guess what happened in the morning? Nothing. No wind. Not even after the sun was up. 9:00am and still no wind. I downloaded some grib files. Not good, the files said there would be no wind all week. I told Liz, and she screamed "Doldrums!", and smiled her big happy smile. Then she thoroughly enjoyed herself sitting in the calm (the banging and rolling had stopped after 14h), watching the sea and the sun and reading. But after 18h drifting I was antsy to get on. As Captain I felt responsible to get my boat and 'crew' to our destination. And we had to meet Andre and his family, who had to leave the Galapagos soon, because his Visa would run out next week. Therefore sitting around for a week and not getting there wasn't what I had in mind.

Liz wanted another hour of peace and quiet, and I was happy to wait for some wind as well. When it wasn't there by 10:00 I started the engine (with the newly repaired starter motor). It started immediately, and smiling happily I climbed into the cockpit to engage the autopilot etc. Then the engine stopped. Surprise! I tried to start it again, and it turned and turned but didn't fire. Thoughts: can only be air or fuel. I opened my "Marine Diesel Engines" book and called my brother anyway to get his opinion before I go chasing in the wrong direction. Yep, air or fuel, but probably fuel.

Four hours later the problem was resolved: it was related to fuel. And air, in a way, as well. The banging and rolling had pushed water into the hose for the fuel tank vent, which is connected to the bilge drain hose. That prevented fuel from getting out of the tank because no air could come. But not before the dirt of 30 years had filled the (20 engine hour old) primary fuel filter. Resolution: drain dirty fuel from the bottom of the tank, clean all hoses, replace all filters, empty the vent hose and run it in a high arc

so that it can't happen again. Busy, busy. Fortunately I carry a set of spare filters. And lots of zip ties! And even more fortunately wind had finally arrived and we were moving along at 4kn without much rolling. I still managed to hit my head on the aluminium frame . Now I have to get rid of a big back of diesel-soaked paper towels. Maybe burn them in the bbq?

All is well that ends well. Especially since we're now sailing along with 6kn, direct course to the Galapagos. The grib files were completely wrong the last days, wind came from SE when it should come from NE, and it was calm when it shouldn't etc. So the best bet is to go the fastest course towards the destination when there's wind, and hope that the periods of calm aren't too long.

Next calm we'll start the engine for a few hours and motor. I want to make sure everything is really working before we enter Academy bay and need the engine, and the batteries and water tanks could use a charge as well.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 23:50

A real doldrum experience and engine fun

Monday 2012-03-19 13:20 local 1:05.3N, 84:13.25W, SOG 4kt, COG 245

We were becalmed for 18 hours, now we're moving again. This morning it didn't look at all like if there would be any wind, and the grib files said it would be like this until Saturday at least. Having an appointment with Andre of "E Capoe", who has to leave the Galapagos soon, we decided to start the engine and motor for a while. Engine started. Then stopped after a minute. Now I'm busy getting it to run again.

Fortunately a little wind did show up around 11 so we're at least moving and not rocking and rolling anymore. More later, back to the engine .

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 15:04

Sunday, March 18. 2012

Doldrums

Sunday, 2012-03-18, 12:00 local (17:00 UTC), 1:31.8N 83:29.7W, COG 220, SOG 6kn, 1008mBar, 30C air, 25C water

We're in the middle of the Doldrums, also called the equatorial trough or the Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ). It's the area close to the equator, between the trade-wind regions of the northern and southern hemispheres. Because the wind is rising up there instead of blowing along the surface it has usually low barometric pressure and no or little surface wind. Usually, but we've picked a good time. At least during the day we're having nice wind, around 9kn, and calm seas because at night the wind dies down and the sea comes to rest again. Which is not so great during the night, but great for the next day. Fast sailing with around 8kn in almost flat sea. Just like on a lake! Only the next shoreline is 500nm in every direction. Which means we're half-way to the Galapagos. Celebrate!

Tomorrow we're hoping to cross the equator and can't wait to unpack the little present that Liesbet and Mark gave us for that occasion. We're also wondering how to celebrate the event. There are a lot of sailory customs associated with crossing the equator, most involving large amounts of sea-water and rum. But knowing us, we're likely just cheer, shout hurray, and move on. Or forget to check and realize it three hours too late.

A word about electricity on the boat: The last three days were mostly overcast, and the solar panels didn't get a lot of sun. The (any) wind generator is useless below 13kn because the blades don't spin fast enough to get over the 13V hump for charging 12V batteries. Our main consumers are the fridge (3Ah), then the autopilot (2Ah), and lastly the navigation instruments (1Ah). The laptops (10Ah) and desalinator (20Ah) too, but those are only plugged in one hour every other day. And we've got LED lights all over the boat and on the masttop, so the lights don't draw much. Many cruisers have a little diesel or fuel generator on board, or run the main engine to charge the batteries, especially when they have a freezer or air condition. We don't, but we have a relatively large battery bank for our boat size (480Ah), 430W solar panels in total, and a 600W wind generator. That means that one very sunny or very windy day is enough to charge the batteries up completely from half empty. Very ecological, I feel incredibly green. Usually we have around 80% charge in the morning and 100% charge in the evening, but as it is now without much sun and wind and the extra load from the autopilot we're hovering around 65% charge in the morning and 80% charge in the evening. Liz asked what happens if we run low on power on the trip and I said that we then have to turn off the fridge and eat all the cheese.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 11:30

Saturday, March 17. 2012

Hi coast guard

Saturday, 2012-03-16, 12:00 local (17:00 UTC), 3:04.6N 82:15.5W, COG 230, SOG 6kn

Everything great on board of Gudrun V. Yesterday we ran the desalinator for an hour to keep our tanks and the solar shower topped up. I've only just installed the thing, and being able to make fresh water underway is just fantastic. The desalinator is with 20A/h small enough that we can run it from the solar panels, but with 25l/h big enough that we don't have to run it for long because it makes quite a racket, whump-whump-whump-whump.

Shortly before sunset we arrived 8nm NE of Isla Malpeno. The small rock belongs to Colombia and is about 1/3rd of the way to the Galaps. We had timed it just right to watch the sun set behind the island while we passed it. Liz went to sleep and unfortunately the wind as well. Fog came up and with no moon it was pitch black and eerie. I fiddled with the sheets for the parasailor but before long the wind was gone completely and I began to take the sail down, while the boat was stomping and rolling in the old swell. Always a favorite that. Then out of nothing a floodlight illuminated Gudrun and the Colombian coast guard hailed us on the radio.

I had heard engine noise for a while, but saw no lights and didn't get an AIS signal either, which is typical for the coast guard. So it didn't come as a complete surprise. But I was nicely entangled by ropes and limply hanging nylon sailfabric on the front of the boat, so it took me a while to free myself and respond. I gave them boat name, home port, country, last port, destination, and our names. Then they asked me to spell everything out for them, which Li said I got mostly right. But they seemed happy enough with it, wished us a good trip, turned off the light and went away again.

The wind didn't return until midnight, but then I set genoa and mainsail eagerly in 6kn of wind from the SE. But the wind only lasted for half an hour, then the breeze was gone again. Just teasing me, eh? We drifted along for four more hours and I drifted in and out of sleep, until finally at four in the morning the wind was strong enough to turn the blades of the wind-generator, which I always take as a sign to pull up some sails. Anticipating the wind to change back to NE I set the parasailor. Then Liz woke up again and I went to sleep until seven.

And so another day at sea is underway and we're wondering what to do other than change the sails now and then and watch out for boats, birds, dolphins, and whales. We've settled on reading and smaller boat projects, like a sunshade for the cockpit, and I started recording some footage for our pacific crossing movie.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 11:21

Friday, March 16. 2012

NW of Isla Malpelo

Friday, 2012-03-15, 12:10 local (17:0 UTC), 4:36.0N 81:07.2W, 1006mBar, 28C, COG 195, SOG 7.5kn

Just a quick one, busy fixing the fresh-water installation which developed a leak after all that rolling last night. That's the problem with improvisations because the right parts are not available, you always have to go back to it. Liz says I shouldn't get upset about it, it was my choice to do this trip on a boat. Hard to argue that. Hope the new improvisation lasts until I can get the right parts. Tahiti maybe.

Other than that we saw dolphins and a bird, and during the night two aircraft passed low over us. Or the same twice, who knows. It's pitch black at night now. But we saw Jupiter and Venus nicely huddled together, even took a few photos. Then the wind increased to 30+ kn and I couldn't remember how to best get the Parasailor down in strong winds. Third attempt succeeded. Now I remember: don't let go of any sheets or downhauls and especially not of the line that pulls the sock down. Just gybe gently and when the sail deflates pull the sock down like crazy until you get to the dynamic pressure wing, then wait for this to deflate and then pull again.

The plan is to pass just east of Isla Malpelo (Colombia) and continue SSW, where the weather forecast says the wind is better. Then turn west after we're through the ITCZ.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 11:52

Thursday, March 15, 2012

Good progress

2012-03-15 17:20 local, 06:15.9N, 80:08.8W

180nm in the last 24h, not bad. In the afternoon we had to take the Parasailor down and unfurl the Genoa for a few hours because the wind was getting up to 30kn and the sea was a little agitated. Rolling left and right, The autopilot can't cope with that, and neither Liz nor I wanted to hand steer. Been there, done that. Now we just reduce sail area, is so much more comfortable.

But then the wind dropped again and we put the Parasailor back up. Now we have 18kn of wind from the back, and heading to 200 degrees at 7.5kn in a very calm sea. Perfect sailing. We keep our fingers crossed that it'll stay like this for a while.

The biggest question now is what we'll have for dinner. Pasta with sauce bolognese (pre-cooked by Liz yesterday) or mashed potatoes with sauerkraut? I love her pasta, but feel very germany-sauerkrauty at the moment :-p

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 16:31

Animal brain

Thursday, 2012-03-15, 11:40 local (16:40 UTC), 6:47.8N 79:53.7W, 1006mBar, 29C, COG 205, SOG 7kn

Second day at sea. We left much later yesterday than we had hoped for, it was 16:30 by the time we had the anchor up. It was one of those days where one trouble hunts the other, and we almost didn't leave at all. But now that we're underway we're very glad that we did. I'm very glad we're out of Panama and on the way. The place, and the incessant work on the boat, was slowly getting on my nerves. Out here at sea, moving, I feel much better than sitting in the same anchorage week after week.

The wind is up, 15 to 25kn, but it often changes around our back so we gybe with the Parasailor every hour. Some swell has also built up and we're rolling slowly left/right. But we're making between 6 and 9kn, sometimes 10kn surfing down a wave, which is very good. Only sometimes the autopilot can't cope and we get pushed 20 or 30 degrees of course and the boat heels heavily. Good thing Liz tied everything down before we left. But 132nm in 19h is not bad at all.

Over night Liz and I alternated with watches and sleep-cycles. Liz, ever the night-owl, stayed up until 1:30 while I slept in the salon, then we switched and I took the rest of the night watch. The temperature dropped to 20C at night, the temperature of the sea around us, and with the wind it felt cold and we added two more layers of clothing. There was also a lot of condensation in the air, and in a short while everything was wet and slippery. The water in the air gets everywhere, even below decks, which is why electronics usually don't last that long. Scott brought us waterproof covers for our iPads and Kindles, so we hope they last anyway.

Sitting in the cockpit and staring at the sea I feel like I should do something, like take photos, shoot a movie, write blog entries, etc. But the last months were so busy with preparations that all I want to do is lay

back, stare at the sea and at the stars at night, read a book, and sleep. Liz says that's our animal brain talking, which is always in conflict our our big brain. The animal brain just wants to do the minimal for survival, whereas our big brain gives us all these crazy ideas of how we have to make use of the time we're given. Today my animal brain wins.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 10:55

Underway

Course 170, speed 6.5kn. Downwind, parasailor up. Great sailing, Liz smiles. Would be nice if it stayed like that all the way.
980nm to go.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 00:39

Wednesday, March 14, 2012

Go go go

What a day, complete fubar, including three jellyfish that got sucked into the saltwater intake for cooling and almost overheated the engine.

Anyway, now we're kind of ready. Last look at the wind forecast ... oh dear, not much. Waypoints for the next three days:

7:53.6N 79:26.7W

5:37.6N 80:20.9W

3:26.7N 82:00.8W

And then we'll probably run out of wind and drift for a while. Turtle-sailing for sure, drifting on the current. Expected duration for the trip will be around ten days.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 15:09

Wind? Who needs wind.

Another day, another weather forecast. This one proves that weather forecasts are usually not good for more than two days, because the weather after Friday looks now very different from before, including a noted absence of wind where we want to go.

The calculated ideal route has changed accordingly:

Only problem is that the route kind of ends a few days out from the Galapagos, with not enough wind to sail anywhere, too far to motor, and in a current that will send us back up north. Which means that we'll probably not take this route, but thanks MaxSea anyway.

Instead we'll probably take a southerly route, which brings us to a current that will move us towards the Galapagos at least, if only by 15-20nm per day. Sailing turtle-style: drifting on the currents .

Crop of the pilot chart with currents (green) and average wind direction and strength (blue)

But for now I'll have to put route planning aside because we're not quite done packing all the stuff away. And then we have to go fill up the water tanks, return the rental car, and mail postcards and a will.

A will, correct. Liz and I were sitting in the Cafeteria next to the dinghy dock when a guy asked us whether we would witness his will. He was about to sail for the Galapagos and wanted to post it, just in case. So we witnessed, and because his boat was sailing an hour later I took it and promised to post it.

So, as of now we're still set on leaving in seven hours. We're really done with Panama, and rather prefer to sit in the Ocean waiting for wind than here. But between now and then the tide will come in. And sometimes the tide washes away all plans.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 07:43

Monday, March 12. 2012

Route planning to the Galapagos

Wednesday we want to leave for the Galapagos. We've managed to clear most items of the to-do list except for:

- Get exit stamp for passports from immigration
- Buy vegetables and some sun cover netting
- Pick up laundry
- Refill water tanks
- Refill dinghy fuel tank
- Prepare food for the first two days
- Check over the starter motor one last time
- Clean the boat
- Post mail
- Plan route to the Galapagos
- Inform agent in Galapagos about expected arrival date

Looks manageable. So what about route planning? One tricky thing about this route is that we have to pass the ITCZ/doldrums, an area around the equator with notoriously little wind. Most boats simply store enough diesel fuel to motor through this area, but it can extend over several hundred miles.

Talking to other cruisers I identified three basic strategies to deal with the ITCZ:

Strategy A: Wait for a good forecast, then sail south close to land until through the ITCZ, then turn west

Strategy B: Wait for a good forecast, then sail straight SW while the wind lasts. Drift or motor the rest.

Strategy C: Ignore the wind, pack at least 500 l of diesel, and motor if necessary all of the way.

Not being very fond of motoring, and only having 60 liter capacity in the main tank, we'll obviously not go for strategy C. But to be save we've also packed a few extra liters of diesel, 140l in total, which will give us a reach of about 300nm.

But let's have a look at the weather:

Wind speed display for Tuesday, Panama to Galapagos, in zyGrib

The weather forecast actually looks quite good. Strategy B might be a viable alternative without having to rely too much on drifting or motoring. To test my theory I had MaxSea calculate an ideal route for us, starting on Wednesday afternoon, with the current weather forecast and a polar diagram of Gudrun V (boat speed at given wind speed and wind angle). And that's what MaxSea came up with:

Calculated ideal route based on the weather and our sailing performance. The weather forecast is only good until the 19th, which is why the route stops there. But it looks quite promising.

Here a polar diagram which is similar enough to Gudrun's performance for this trip. I'll have to record our actual performance and make a accurate one 'one of these days':

Estimated polar diagram for Gudrun for 15kn

I'll be watching the weather forecast over the next two days, and the final decision whether to keep more easterly or not will probably be made only after we've passed the Las Perlas archipelago.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 22:33

Shopping spree

We're shopping, again. Food is cheap in Panama, very unlike in the Pacific. So we're stocking up for good. Andre, who is in the Galapagos already, asked us to bring wine and chocolate.Å

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 15:48

Goodies from the galley

As you can imagine from her latest blog entry, one of Liz' worst fears is being stuck out in the ocean without tasty food. Therefor she has been experimenting over the last week what she can make on the boat: Bread, Yoghurt, Cookies, and now ... Twix.

Boat-made Twix bar.

Naturally I have to test all the food. Testing involves eating samples in representative quantities over a course of several days. In the case of the Twix this has led to feelings of elation at every occasion and , surprisingly, a loss of weight. 100% vote for boat-made Twix bars, I hope they are here to stay.

The recipe can be found here: http://www.melecotte.com/2011/06/homemade_twix_bars_recipe/

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 07:53

Thursday, March 8, 2012

Different side to the fire story.

I told you about the fire on board, right. Now here's Liz take on the story, and as always, her writing is leagues beyond mine.

The whole thing got me thinking: Hull breach and fire on board are the two most dangerous things on a board. Actually, it's the two things that makes boats sink. Everything else like a broken mast or an eskimo roll is a problem, but usually not a terminal one (the latter not so much on a katamaran).

So, I figure: Pretty much everything that is on the boat broke at one point in the past. And I got knocked flat by a freak wave. And I got caught in a force 12 storm and lightning storms. And we ran aground (twice). AND we had a hole in the hull. AND we had a fire on board.

That means now we're kind of through with all that disaster stuff, right? I mean, everything that could possible happen has happened. So now ... let the good times come!

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 09:09

Wasser marsch!

The watermaker is running! Watch as it makes it's first milliliters of fresh water from salt walter and solar power:

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 09:01

Exciting times in Panama

We're busy preparing for the trip to the Galapagos and beyond. We're hearing a lot about how hard it is to stock up in the Pacific and that everything is very expensive, but by now we know that these reports have to be taken with a grain of salt. Information tends to develop a life on it's own once it's passed down the information chain, especially when sailors are involved in passing it on.

But yesterday an email from our friend Andre, who is in the Galapagos at the moment, came in, asking for a shipment of lures, wine, Nutella, and chocolate. He reports prices for wine 4x as much as here, so there is something to it, at least when it comes to wine.

Stocking up on fuel (140l) and water (300l)

While Liz managing the supplies, I'm still working on improvements, upgrades, and repairs for Gudrun. That work experienced a small setback on Tuesday, after I had to fight a fire near the anchor windlass.

Results of a brief cable fire.

The "Up" switch got stuck on the handheld control for the windlass and set it in motion. Only the motion was abruptly stopped a foot later by the anchor chain relieve line which is tied around the chain and a cleat. With the switch engaged but the chain locked in place, something had to give eventually, and it was the cable between control box and windlass motor.

Resolution: Fight fire with extinguisher, wait until smoke clears, take forepeak apart, inspect and replace damaged wires, install a new circuit breaker switch to prevent this from happening in the future. Put everything back together. Now, where can I refill my fire extinguisher around here?

Liz returning a dinghy that had 'escaped' from our neighbors.

When we're not busy with our own boat there is plenty of stuff going on on other boats to keep us entertained. Like dinghies escaping from our neighbors, or outboard engines not starting, which results either in a tow or a hand in repairing the thing. Or both. And then there's the Allbrook mall for shopping. I don't know why but the voices in my head told me to buy a PS Vita.

Despite all those attractions work on Gudrun progresses steadily. Last night I finished installing the PowerSurvivor 160E desalinator, which was the last big project - I hope for a while. Today I'll check over the installation (always advisable after working in the dark), and then we'll run it for a few hours for testing. Very exciting! We also have our Zarpe, so all we need to do before leaving is stock up on food, do the laundry, get the passports stamped ... and wait for the last shipment of spare parts to arrive from Miami. Amongst the shipment is a spare starter motor for the engine, which, given the trouble I've had with that, I consider now essential to have.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 06:31

Sunday, March 4, 2012

Anchorage life

With Scott gone we're back to the usual routine: working on the boat, shopping for supplies, meeting other cruisers in the evening. Having Scott on board and sailing a few days felt like a vacation, and made us realize how little cruisers actually sail, unless it's to go from one place to another. There are maybe 200 boats at anchor around Isla Flamenco, but in two weeks I haven't seen a single boat out despite perfect sailing conditions.

Thursday evening cruiser's regular table at the pizzeria

Saturday Mark and Liesbet came to visit and stayed over night. After a breakfast Sunday morning Mark winched me up the mast so that I could replace the VHF antenna which had broken off during one of the crazy Colombian christmas gusts which reached up to 60kn.

Breakfast

View from the top

Antenna: gone

Hope the new antenna fares better. Actually, I hope that there won't be any more 60kn gusts around.

The plan for next week is to finish installing the Katadyn desalinator, which is the last big project. There are a few smaller things which will take another few days all together, but with the desalinator installed I hope that the big projects are over until we get to NZ. Wouldn't that be nice?

And after next week? Wait for good winds and then head off in to the Pacific proper, destination Galapagos.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 10:46