

Thursday, May 24, 2012

2x Eternity

Liz posted a new blog entry about our 23 day passage from the Galapagos to the Marquesas. Her observations always make me laugh. They also make me feel slightly guilty of nerdyness. Am I really that obsessed? Enjoy!

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 16:05

Wednesday, May 23, 2012

Aranui 3

We're still in Hakatau, Ua Pou. Today the "Aranui 3", part supply-ship part cruise-ship, is expected to arrive. I wake up at 5am, hearing her engines from afar through the water and the hull of our boat. I look outside. It is still dark, and the Aranui 3 a small speck of light in the distance. I grab my camera, climb into the dinghy, and drive ashore.

A few people have already started gathering on the breakwater. A Landrover and Toyota SUV are parked on the edge, reflected in the puddles on the muddy ground. I walk over and watch Aranui 3 approach. She's going slowly, timing her approach with the sunrise. A little boy sits down on a stone and looks out over the sea. We wait.

Every three weeks the Aranui 3 comes to Ua Pou, bringing important supplies for the 2000 inhabitants of the small island. And a few tourists. She can carry up to 200 passengers, and all the island artists gather in the communal building on the beach to display their pendants, tikis, and other carvings. The visit of the Aranui 3 is probably the most exciting thing that happens all month.

She's now entering the breakwater. A small boat is launched into the water with one of her two cranes. The launch runs ahead, checking the anchorage. As I follow the launch with my eyes I see that it heads straight for Gudrun V. Oh, not good. I run to the dinghy and jump inside. Full throttle. I can see Liz standing on the deck, talking to a guy in the launch. As I approach he signals me to move Gudrun closer to the beach. I jump on board, ask Liz to start the engine, and start pulling up the anchor chain. Then I ask him how far we have to move. He shouts "Cinq metres". Five meters? Are you kidding me? I stop pulling in the anchor chain and instead let it all out. Then I go to the cockpit, and pull in the stern anchor line instead. Five meters, no problem.

After the little exercise I stand with Liz on the bow, watching Aranui 3 come into the anchorage and tie to the dock. Two launches run back and forth between ship and dock, carrying heavy mooring lines. Everything looks fast and efficient, very professional.

I scan the decks, looking for my friends. On the way from the Galapagos I've learned that Joachim and Rosi will be passengers on this trip. What a coincidence! We met first on a hike up Kilimanjaro, and three years later we meet again in the Marquesas, one of the remotest places on the planet. I spot Rosi on the aft deck, step into the dinghy and drive over. We greet and arrange to meet on the beach after breakfast.

We meet and start walking through the town, catching up on what happened in the last three years. Later we visit Gudrun, then they show us around Aranui 3.

At eleven we head back into town for a marquesan dance show. We like it a lot. Then the crew invites us to join our friends for lunch, which we accept gratefully.

After lunch it's already time to head back to the Aranui 3 and say our good-byes. Unloading and loading is completed, and departure is only a few minutes away. The mooring lines are cast off one by one, and the local kids swarm the one remaining line. Then the Aranui 3 pulls out of port. The dock empties, and life returns to normal. Tomorrow there will be fresh vegetables in the little supermarkets, we can't wait!

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 16:56

Sunday, May 20, 2012

Life in Hakahau

What a lovely, protected, anchorage here in Hakahau. After three months of constant rolling it's so nice to be able to just put a cup of coffee or glass of water down and not having to hold on to it at all times. Big improvement as quality of life goes!

Kids jumping off the dock in the anchorage

At the beach, in the background the communal house. There is always a party going on and people bring their mattresses

The volcanic spires are the landmark of Ua Pou

The bakery with great baguette is helping, too. Every morning at 5:30 I pick up Andre on his boat E Capoe and we dinghy to shore, then walk the kilometer along the beach and up the main road. Back in the dinghy we distribute the bread among the five boats in the bay, and everybody is happy. One baguette is 66 Centimes, about 0,50 EUR.

The bakery. Come early, there is only one batch of bread

Merci pour le pain

Back on Gudrun I jump into the water for a swim and to clean the hull, before the sun rises over the mountains and it gets too hot. Until three we usually stay inside the boat, because it's too hot for us outside, then we walk through town, or visit other boats. Henry from Ashanti asked Liz what excellent sun-screen we are using, because we're not sun-burned at all. It's called "boat hull". No preservatives, and one package lasts forever. Not exactly cheap, though, and it doesn't fit into a backpack.

On our stroll through town yesterday we bought some fruit (Mango, Bananas) and a Tiki from a local artist, Tekohu. His full name is Tahiatututapu Norbert. We communicated with a mix of English and French, and he explained the meanings of all the carvings and wrote it into Liz notebook. Tekohu has high hopes to sell a few more pieces on Wednesday, when the Aranui 3, a supply ship which is part cruise liner, arrives.

Liz and Tekohu, a local artist.

The church of Hakahau

The last two nights I had funny dreams about the boat. In one dream we had tied it to a dock. When we came back construction work on the dock had started, and the boat had been moved to the hallway of a house for protection. Unfortunately the mast was cut off to fit it. In another dream we took a flight somewhere, but ran out of fuel on the way back. The pilot landed on one of the islands with a military base where he could refuel, but after landing we learned that the base had been abandoned two days ago and there was no fuel for the airplane on the island.

No idea what the dreams mean, but I think we should get going to New Zealand. We've decided to stay here until my friends come with the cruise ship next week, then head for the Tuamotots and skip Nuku Hiva.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 13:24

Friday, May 18. 2012

Art

My friend and favorite artist Matthew Beall created another wonderful painting. I shamelessly copy the photo from his blog, because I know few people follow links. But I want you to see this:

Matthew Beall - Being on the Open Sea

The painting was inspired by the blog entries from our pacific crossing. I love it. I admire Matt as an artist for his ability to reduce and focus on the essence. I couldn't have helped myself and put a sun and some clouds in the painting. I do it all the time with my photographs. He left them out. I guess he knows them for what they are, ornamentation. Maybe you'll follow this link now.

Not sure if he sells this one. If he does, I want it. I just assume having inspired it gives me the right of first access. But check out his other art, the photography too, it's great stuff. Put a real, unique, Beall on your wall. Not the mass-market crap from furniture/department stores. They make great gifts, too.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 16:07

Ua Pou

Ua Pou, Thursday, 2012-17-05, 9:21.5S, 140:02.8W

We weighed anchor in Hiva Oa yesterday at 6pm, planning to sail the 70nm to Ua Pou through the night. Half an hour later the autopilot stopped working - thank god for the spare! Then the wind didn't come, at all, and we had to motor through the night and into the morning. Well, at least the batteries are full now ...

Ua Pou in the distance, just after sunrise

Just before sunrise we got visited by a pod of dolphins. Liz said to always wake her for dolphins, so I did, but they were hard to make out in the dark. Or maybe her eyes weren't open properly. She went back to bed again, and the dolphins went away. Then the sun came up. And the dolphins (or their friends) came back, yeah! I woke Liz, again, and we watched them for an hour. Liz stayed in the cockpit and I went down to edit the photos (lots, and lots of photos). When I came back up we had passed our destination and had to turn around. Not far, only 2nm. But still .. hehe.

Dolphins!

and a brown booby.

The bay we're at (Hakahau bay) is small but beautiful, especially the rock formations in the center of the island are spectacular. Reminds me of the game "Far Cry". Hiking should be good, and apparently there a number of small shops as well where we can reprovision. And, surprisingly, there is even internet to be had. I guess we'll stay here for a few days. We still have to clean the hull, I'll try to fix the autopilot, and then there is the solar eclipse in three days.

Inside Hakahau Bay. Very good holding in sandy bottom.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 01:30

Wednesday, May 16, 2012

Bye Hiva Oa

Hiva Oa, the second largest of the Marquesas Islands, is famous for having been the final home of Paul Gauguin (painter) and Jacques Brel (singer), and both are buried in the city of Atuona, which is an hour walk away from our anchorage. The anchorage itself is famous for being very rolly and rainy, which is something that we can only confirm. Today was the first rain-free day in five days, and for a change the boat is not swinging from left to right like a metronome. The dinghy dock, a concrete jetty, is a hazard to boats and people alike. Frequently somebody slips and falls, dinghies get scraped up on the concrete, and anchor lines are cut or anchors jam in the rocky bottom below murky, shark-infested water. We've lost two dinghy anchors in one week.

But despite all that we enjoyed our stay here very much. Rolling boats, wet bottoms, and lost anchors are just a part of the cruising life like icy winter roads are a part of northern Europe. A very positive thing about Atuona is that the people are incredibly friendly and cheerful, and the shopping is very good. We've refill our supplies of fruit and veggies and even have cheese and meat on board, something we haven't had in the last two months. Fantastic. Now if only the sun would stay out so that we can keep the fridge running. Saturday I went on a hike up with Richard from "Vulcan Spirit" and Michael from Barfly, and of the 10h it took us to go up and down 1270m high Mount Temetiu we walked 7h in pouring rain.

But it's time to move on anyway. Tomorrow we want to sail further north-west to the island of Ua Pou, where we'll meet E Capoe again. After that we'll head north to Nuku Hiva before leaving the Marquesas for the Tuamotu atolls on the way to Tahiti.

Here some impressions from Hiva Oa:

A common sight: Polynesian with outrigger canu

Another common sight: lines at the gas station, which is always short on diesel fuel

Taking a tour across the island

Saturday soccer match

Eating pampelmousse (pomelos)

A tiki site

View of the bay from half-way up Mt. Temetiu.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 00:26

Wednesday, May 9, 2012

Atuona, Hiva Oa

This is such a lovely place. It's so different from South America that you really feel you've crossed an ocean. The first big difference to South America when checking in: Super friendly, helpful, uncomplicated officials. The officer checked in three boats at the same time in 15 minutes. Unimagineable in South America! And it didn't cost anything. Also unimaginable . And only one form, too! Put your name here, your boat details here, and don't bring your firearms to shore. Why firearms I asked? Pour la chasse! For the hunt. lol, those French ...

Tonight we're only hunting for Pizza. Made a reservation at a lovely place for ten people - the crew of Gudrun, Venus, Moin, Vulcan Spirit, and another british boat. All arrived yesterday. Then tomorrow we'll clean the boat, Friday fix some things, and for Saturday we've booked a guided tour.

Tahauku Bay, Hiva Oa

Pointe Papaoa

Buying fruit

.... and baguette!

No doener though . Well, you can't have it all! Piiiiizzzaaaaaaaaa

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 23:33

Tuesday, May 8, 2012

At anchor

Arrived 14:30 local. At anchor at 09:48:422S, 139:01:952W

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 22:50

Land in sight

Day 24, Tuesday, 2012-05-08, 11:45 boat (17:45 UTC), 9:49S, 138:40W, COG 275, SOG 4.5kn, Wind 12kn NE, overcast

Only 20nm to go, in about 5 hours we'll arrive in the Baie des Traitres in Hiva Oa. After 23 days and 9 hours at sea, the longest for me so far (2 days more than across the Atlantic). From here to New Zealand the trips between the islands are not longer than a week, a fact Liz is very happy about. Yesterday I proposed to sail on to Tahiti straight away, but her comment was only: "Another few days at sea and I'll jump overboard". So Hiva Oa it is. Also we're running out of veggies and fruit. And I'm still getting my hopes up for a doener kebab, although Liz keeps telling me I shouldn't. It's French, not Turkish Polynesia.

Yesterday went very well, we had plenty of wind and made good speed until the squalls came at night. Then a mix of too much and too little wind from all directions, and rain. Almost the same thing every night for the whole trip. I have to admit I won't miss it. Sleeping through a night without having to stand in the rain and tend the sails every few hours is definitely something that 'landlubbers' don't value high enough in their lives. On the other hand, the mosquitos will be back. For three weeks we were safe from flies and mosquitos, but I've read that it's supposed to be quite bad in French Polynesia. Zzzzzzzzzzzz, that horrible sound. So there you go, good and bad, as usual. My advice: deal with the bad, but focus on the good. The mosquito nets are ready near the hatch and companionway.

To my surprise there are still no boats on the horizon yet. In my mind I imagined that there must be a steady stream of sailboats arriving. But of course there are only a few dozen boats crossing at any time, spread out over 3000nm. And no shipping lanes near either. No surprise we haven't seen another vessel in two weeks. Only some birds, and the occasional flying or jumping fish. I wonder what makes those big tunas jump. Maybe the same that makes us sail across the ocean: curiosity, and because we can.

Thanks to everybody who followed us across the Pacific on the blog, and who sent the occasional email. I hope it was a little entertaining, though I can imagine everyday the same reports about wind and sea must be getting a little boring. Just like it got a little boring for us on the boat. So hey, it's almost as if you've been on board

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 12:55

Monday, May 7, 2012

167nm to go

Day 23, Monday, 2012-05-07, 11:30 boat (17:30 UTC), 9:35S, 136:13W, COG 265, SOG 7, Wind 15-18kn E, sunny, 167nm to go

Hey, almost there now. Yesterday was quite nice. Good speed, not too roly, only one squall. I'm pleasantly surprised that we didn't have any breakage so far. Only the starboard spinnaker halyard seems to chafe somewhere up top, and I cut 20cm off the end of it. Have to climb up and check where it chafes when we get to port. But it can't be very bad, considering that I've used that halyard most of the time all the way from the Canary Islands.

There's a lot more things to check over on the boat when we arrive, and to clean too! But I hope that we can get it done quickly and that there won't be any nasty surprises. I'm very much looking forward to some diving and photography trips, and Liz can't wait to find a nice cafe where she can sit for hours, writing and watching people.

We keep our fingers crossed that the wind holds up so that we make it tomorrow before nightfall. Otherwise we have to sail in circles until the sun comes up again

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 12:42

Sunday, May 6, 2012

Three weeks at sea

Day 22, Sunday, 2012-05-06, 11:45 boat (17:45 UTC), 9:19S, 133:47W, COG 260, SOG 5, Wind 10kn E, sunny but leaning towards muggy

Three weeks (and four hours) ago we left Isla Santa Cruz. As is customary we had a very fast start, with up to 196nm per day, and now a very slow finish (slowest was just under 60nm). We've gotten used to that, it was the same on all passages so far. Now it's only 310nm to go. Usually a trip of two days, but in this wind more likely three, so we're planning with landfall on Wednesday. We're very excited about what it will be like in French Polynesia!

Yesterday I've learned that two friends of mine, Joachim and Rosi, are going on a cruise around French Polynesia this month. I very much hope to meet them, and from there itinerary it looks like Nuku Hiva might be possible. Last time we met on the Kilimanjaro, wouldn't it be just awesome to meet on one of the remotest islands?

It looks like it's going to be another very hot day today, fortunately with a little more wind. Yesterday it was so calm that we had to start the engine. But then it got so hot that we quickly turned it off again after a few hours. The heat from both the sun and the engine was unbearable. Fortunately the wind had picked up again just enough to fly the Parasailor, and we sailed with around 3kn most of the day.

The positive side of going so slow is that it's very comfortable. Not much movement on the boat, almost like at anchor. So you get more out of the day, instead of just holding on or lying down. Then in the evening we experienced the most spectacular sunset ever. Deep blue sea, dramatic clouds, the sky in all shades from deep purple above to a bright red on the horizon. And at the same time the full moon rose just behind us, not as dramatic, but very majestic. We stood in the cockpit for almost two hours, and turned from west to east and back to west and couldn't get enough of it.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 12:56

Saturday, May 5, 2012

Under motor

Day 21, Saturday, 2012-05-05, 12:00 boat (18:00 UTC), 9:32S, 132:03W, COG 280, SOG 5.5kn, Wind 7kn E, overcast

Sunset is our special time. During the day both of us are busy with boaty things or our interests, or sleep alternatively and don't get to talk a lot. But before sunset we cook dinner and, weather permitting, have it together in the cockpit. Then we watch the sun set, and the stars come up, and talk about our thoughts. Very special. When Liz asks me, what we get out of this trip, I often think that this time together is one of the most important things, and that I will remember those evenings in the cockpit as the best part of the trip. Sure, exotic islands and a little taste of adventure is nice, too. But having time for each other is real special.

Last night, a few hours after dinner, Liz went back to her writing, and I took my laptop into the cockpit and coded underneath the 90% full moon. Then the wind started to drop below 10kn and shift, and I was busy with the lines trying to keep the boat speed at around 5kn. In the morning we heard a call on the VHF radio: "Sailing Yacht that just crossed my port side.", repeated a number of times, but no answer. Apparently the captain of a commercial vessel wanted to have a chat with a sailor, but the sailor wasn't listening. I know a few cruisers who, when night falls, close the hatch and sleep until the morning, trusting in god, good luck, and the vigilance of others to see them through. Maybe this was one of them. Well, the sea is big, traffic is scarce, and a sailboat is small and slow, so chance is on their side. But still ...

Out on the ocean and away from shipping lines we also sleep for up to an hour without looking around. But at least we have all our electronic eyes and ears turned on, and we get warned half an hour before a possible collision above the water. The aluminum hull is also a very good resonator, and a number of times I've heard the noise of another vessel below decks before I've seen it on the horizon. But now that we're approaching the islands and there is more traffic to be expected, we look around at least every half hour. And no sleeping within 50nm to 100nm of land, depending on the approach.

This morning the wind dropped below to 6kn, and we were barely making 2kn through the water. No surprise, given the thick forest of growth on our hull. I took the sail down and started the engine, we've only run it for 10h so far on the trip. Then I tied a big scraper to an aluminium pole and started working on the side of the boat from the deck down, to get at least the waterline clean. You have to wait until the side comes out of the water as the boat rolls, but it works quite well. Now we're moving with 5 to 6kn, and the desalinator is running. Unless the wind comes up to over 10kn we're going to go like this all day, filling up the water tanks. We used about 30l a day, but only made 60l every third day, so we have some catching up to do. Better do it out on the ocean than close to land.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 13:53

Friday, May 4, 2012

Voices

Day 20, Friday, 2012-05-04, 12:00 boat (18:00 UTC), 9:37S, 129:58W, COG 265, SOG 7.3, Wind 20kn E, sunny

Not much to report, really. Days go round in circles. Yesterday we did some more washing while the sun was out. Then some rain came, followed by sun again and the laundry dried. The sun went down and the moon up. With almost a full moon it was very bright all through the night. No need for a lamp to work the sails. What a difference to the first week of the trip! With no moon, and the clouds, it was so dark that we often couldn't even see the big white sail a few meters in front of us without a light. Or the horizon, or anything else for that matter. Much better this way, and I had timed the departure from the Galapagos so that we would arrive in the Marquesas with plenty of moonlight. The worst is to approach a new landfall and not seeing anything. Not that we're ever going near a coast in the dark. But just knowing it is not far ahead (compared to several 100 miles), and not being able to see anything, makes you very nervous.

17:30 UTC today I heard a call on the VHF for the boat "Happy Bird", but I didn't understand the caller. Means there is another boat within sth like 60nm of us, nice. We haven't seen a boat in a long time. Also nice to hear another voice. Not that I don't like Liz' voice! I'm just saying it's nice to hear more voices (as long as they are not in your own head, that is).

Only 530nm to go!

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 12:53

Thursday, May 3, 2012

Just sailing

Day 19, Thursday, 2012-05-03, 12:10 boat (18:10 UTC), 9:21S, 127:34W, COG 290, SOG 6kn, Wind 14kn E, partial clouds

It's great to be moving again. But yesterday was especially nice. Sunny, light but steady winds, calm seas. We sailed along with 4 to 5kn, ran the watermaker and filled the tanks, cooked, wrote, and coded. In the afternoon Liz baked Pumpkin-Ginger-Muffins and we had tea. Then we danced in the cockpit to music we got from Cuba. In the evening we showered and dressed up for dinner (just pasta) - which means we actually put more on than our underwear. We toasted the sunset with Vodka and Cranberryjuice, then lay in the cockpit for hours, talking and listening to music.

Today there is a little more wind, around 15kn, and we're making good speed. The boat moves more - don't leave stuff lying around and watch out for those mugs of tea!

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 13:44

Wednesday, May 2, 2012

Wind!

Day 18, Wednesday, 2012-05-02, 12:10 boat, 9:13S, 125:37W, COG 280, SOG 6kn, Wind 10-15kn E, sunny

Yesterday afternoon we were lying unmoving (again), n 2kn of wind, but at least with a little sun. The sea was a deep blue, not a fish or fin in sight. I went into the water to have a look at rudder and keel, and see how the anti-fouling is doing. Rudder and keel are still there, unchanged. Antifouling is probably also there, but it's hard to say because the hull is completely covered in growth, some kind of mollusc, an inch long. There's so much I didn't even start scraping them off, it would take half a day, and the boat was still moving and rolling.

Back on the boat I pulled the main-sail up to let it dry. Liz thought I had turned on the hose, so much water came splashing out of it. And then ... wind! 4kn. 6kn. We're moving! I quickly unfurled the genoa and we sailed for a bit. And just as the mainsail was dry a raincloud came. So ... dry sail or more speed? Stupid question. Half an hour later the wind was gone again, and the sail wet again. Ah well, something to do.

Fortunately as night fell the wind came for real. A nice steady 10-15kn from the east. We sailed through the night with the Genoa, and first light I pulled up the Parasailor. Now we're moving ahead at 6kn, what a joy!

And just in time, too! Our friends Gisela and Uwe on SY Venus (syvenus.wordpress.com), who left two days after us, had almost caught up with us. At one point we were 500nm apart, yesterday only 90nm! The lucky two had steady 20kn of wind all the way from the Galapagos, incredible. I'm very happy for them, and it's a joy to read their happy emails. I hope the wind stays with them (and us, too), the rest of the way. Only 790nm to go.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 13:29

Tuesday, May 1. 2012

Same old, same old

Day 17, Tuesday, 2012-05-01, 12:00 boat (18:00 UTC), 08:54S, 123:50W, COG 280, SOG 0.9kn, Wind 3kn N, muggy with patches of sunlight

Wow, we came 58nm yesterday! 27nm sailing, the rest drifting. A new record - lowest distance in 24h ever! But at least it's a little sunny today, not like the last two days. We spent most of the time below deck because it was raining so much, and at one point I counted 9 individual squalls at the same time on the horizon. They are already encroaching heavily on the last patches of sunlight. Let's hope the forces of light manage to fend the evil dark clouds off for a little while longer, at least until we had lunch!

Liz is cooking pumpkin soup with our last pumpkin (half of it). There's still onions, potatoes, tomatoes, kiwi, limes, apples, pears, oranges and garlic left. So we're still some way from opening cans.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 13:38

Same old, same old

Day 17, Tuesday, 2012-05-01, 12:00 boat (18:00 UTC), 08:54S, 123:50W, COG 280, SOG 0.9kn, Wind 3kn N, muggy with patches of sunlight

Wow, we came 58nm yesterday! 27nm sailing, the rest drifting. A new record - lowest distance in 24h ever! But at least it's a little sunny today, not like the last two days. We spent most of the time below deck because it was raining so much, and at one point I counted 9 individual squalls at the same time on the horizon. They are already encroaching heavily on the last patches of sunlight. Let's hope the forces of light manage to fend the evil dark clouds off for a little while longer, at least until we had lunch!

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