

Friday, August 31. 2012

Swimming with whales

I swam with whales today, very exciting! The fever was forgotten Samo raced passed Gudrun shouting whaaaaales! I went quickly after him, jumped into the water from my dinghy and swam about 50m to where I thought the whales would pass.

Unfortunately visibility is only a few meters at the moment inside the lagoon because it's been so windy for over a week. Waiting in the water, I didn't see the whales until they almost swam into me. I got very nervous when that big shape appeared suddenly. Fortunately the whales saw me as well and turned away. I was only able to snap off ten very fast shots before they were out of sight again.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 03:28

Thursday, August 30. 2012

Pause

the first backing plate is fitted. Wind gusts of 25kn didn't help with the work, but it's done. The starboard side has to wait however until the little fever I've caught from somewhere is gone. Tomorrow the shrouds are supposed to arrive, and I hope to finish everything over the weekend - health and weather permitting.

First backing plate inside. Vectran rope to measure the required length.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 23:47

Bora Bora in the rain

When I left Tahiti one week ago I was certain to be on my way to Niue by now. Until Bora Bora everything went fine, then four strands of the port bottom shroud broke. Then I discovered that the backing plate and of the starboard shroud was cracked as well, and the mast was beginning to crack. I knew boat repairs would catch up with me again, I just hoped it wouldn't be before I got to New Zealand.

Some emails and calls with Christophe from API Yachting (Tahiti) later we had a solution, and yesterday I picked up new backing plates from the supply boat.

Supply boat being unloaded

Russell from Moonwalker pulled me up to the first spreader and I went to work with drill and Dremel. The hole is cut, today I have to file it into shape.

Then I can measure the length for the new shrouds. I hope he can send them out tonight so I can have them tomorrow morning. It looks like Monday would be a good day to leave for Niue weather-wise.

Gudrun in the rain

Staying here a few extra days allowed me to catch up with friends again, and to dive. Honestly, the diving is not worth it, but chats with the crew of E Capoe, Wet Lady, Contina, Lazy Lady, Moonwalker, and La Luz are totally worth the delay.

Giant manta rays, but bad visibility

Lemon shark

On E Capoe

Merlin's Lego Helicopter

BBQ on Wet Lady

Servicing dive gear on Contina with Wip

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

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 11:56

Monday, August 27, 2012

More whales and a dinghy

I'm in touch with Christophe from API Yachting in Tahiti regarding new shrouds. Saturday morning I send the port shroud to him via Air Tahiti (cost: 6\$).

Unfortunately Christophe doesn't have the T terminals for 8mm dyform, and I don't want to wait until a new shipment arrives. I discovered that on the starboard side the backing plate is cracked, so I have to replace those as well. In the end we decided to go for standard 10mm shrouds with stem ball terminals and new backing plates. So now I'm waiting for the shipment, and then I'll spend a day or two in the mast drilling, filing, and installing new terminals.

Fortunately for me Wip from M/V Contina gave me a dinghy! I had given mine to E Capoe, because their's falling apart and with three kids and they need it more than I do. Kayak's ok for me. But it's been very windy and rainy the last few days, and because I have to run errands now to the distant city Wip brought me his spare dinghy. Thanks so much Wip. Great to have good friends.

Whales: haven't seen them yesterday, but Samo from S/Y Wet Lady gave me his footage and I made a little movie for him:

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 14:12

Sunday, August 26. 2012

Whales

My first whale ever! After almost three years at sea. Very, very happy

Great news: there is a whale with her calf in the lagoon. I sat the whole afternoon in the dinghy with my telephoto lens, just waiting and watching out for the whales to breach. They only came up every 20min or so for a few minutes, but with patience I managed to get a few nice shots with my telephotos.

Mother ...

.... and calf. With cleaning symbionts.

Both together.

Whale cresting. In the background M/Y Contina.

I'm thinking about going out with the kayak and snorkeling gear and try to get some underwater shots. But I don't want to bother them. Hmmm

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 03:08

Friday, August 24. 2012

Arrived in Bora Bora

Friday, 2012-08-24, 14:30, 16:29.454S, 151:45:769W, Bora Bora Yacht Club

Arrived at Bora Bora Yacht Club after 6h trip from Raiatea. Gerd and Ingrid from S/Y Lazy Lady waited for me in their Dinghy at the last free mooring boy of the Bora Bora Yacht Club. What a service, thanks so much friends!

Unfortunately some damage on the way - four strands of the port bottom shroud broke. Not good, can't sail on with that.

Fortunately INgrid had contact details of a rigger in Tahiti (yep, the place I just left) and I called him. We discussed the issue over the phone and he says he's got everything in stock to make two new shrouds for me. Andre then helped me to remove the shroud, which I'll send to the rigger by plane and if all goes well I should be able to sail on end of next week.

Andre, thanks mate.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 23:42

On the way to Bora Bora

Friday, 2012-08-24, 11:30 UTC-10, 16:35.925S, 151:38.785W, COG 310, SOG 5.5kn, Wind 15kn ESE, sunny with occasional showers

Only 10nm to Bora Bora. Unfortunately I'm approaching from SE, and the pass is on the west side of the island, so I have to sail about 18nm in total.

I left the quay at Uturoa at 08:30 this morning in 15kn of wind, unfurled the genoa, and sailed the 7.5nm through the atoll to the north-western pass. At 10:15 I went through the pass and once safely outside I switched the genoa for the parasailor. Apart from the occasional sun-shower the weather is great, and the sea is pretty calm as well. Looks like a day of nice sailing.

Uturoa seems like a nice place to stop over on the way west. Good snorkeling nearby, and the super-market and gas-station are just next to the quay. As is the town-center, but since it's a really small town, there isn't much there. After some provisioning and a quick check-over of the boat this morning I had a coffee with Gisela and Uwe, and we said our good-byes. They are staying in French Polynesia for another season, and we don't know when or if we'll see each other again. Hopefully they come to New Zealand one day. All the best my friends, fair winds, following seas, a cool fridge. And may you never run out of "Eselsmilch" and white-wine.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 16:33

Raiatea

Friday, 2012-08-24, 07:30 UTC-10, 16:43.765S, 151:26.567W

Forecast for today is 15-20kn of wind from the east, and rain. Right now we have 15kn of wind from the east and rain. So it looks like the forecast is pretty accurate. I'll wait for the rain to stop then leave for Bora Bora. Only 32nm, should be there early afternoon.

Yesterday Uwe and Gisela helped me to tie alongside the quay in Raiatea, and then they invited me for dinner on their boat. We chatted until about ten.

Internet here is very good compared to Tahiti, and back on Gudrun I was able to skype with Liz, even with video. Yay! This morning I checked the prop, but it's ok. But the cutlass bearing has a little play, maybe half a mmm, and that causes the noise. Have to replace it next time I haul out. Fortunately there isn't a lot of motoring coming up

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 12:44

Thursday, August 23, 2012

Arrived in Raiatea

Thursday, 2012-08-23, 16:30 UTC-10, 16:43.765S, 151:26.567W

Arrived in Raiatea and moored alongside the quay in Uturoa.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 23:09

Raiatea in sight

Thursday, 2012-08-23, 12:00 UTC-10, 16:54S, 151:10W, COG 295, SOG 5.2kn, Wind 12kn SE, 28C, 1018hPa, sunny with clouds

At 3am in the morning the promised SE wind arrived. Half a day late, but very much appreciated. It continued to rain until 4am, but since then it's nice and the wind steady. Parasailor is up and I sail along at 5-6kn. Not much swell now, very nice sailing actually.

Sailing alone again feels different after sailing with Liz for more than a year. Some things are easier, for example working in the cockpit is a lot easier in a pinch (e.g. sudden rain shower) when there's nobody sitting/lying "in the way all the time", haha. But something's missing as well. When the sails are up and the course is set there often isn't much to do really. Then we used to talk a lot, make plans, laugh, or just smile at each other, happy being together. Books and electronics are a very poor replacement for a good friend. Distance makes the heart grow fonder

20nm to go to Raiatea. It looks like I'll arrive between 4pm to 5pm in Uturo. The plan is to spend the night there, then continue to Bora Bora at dawn to arrive there around noon. I'm looking forward to seeing the crew of S/Y Venus and E Capoe again, good friends as well.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 17:20

very no-windy

Thursday, 2012-08-23 0:00 local, 17:16S, 150:11W, COG 290, SOG 5kn, Wind 2kn S

At 5:30, only thirty minutes after the last message, a big cloud caught up with me and brought rain - and no wind. So much for sailing. Sails flapping, boat rolling, and rain. Liz knows just how much I love it

Except for a brief "windy" two hours (up to 7kn of wind!) between 8 and 10 it's been quiet and rainy. But even then the wind shifted twice from NE to SE, and wrapped the Parasailor around the forestay while I was cooking dinner. Argh. Always fun to undo in the rain. Now the engine is running, but there are vibrations from the shaft which weren't there last time. It doesn't sound bad, just a little rougher than usual, but it can't be great for the cutlass bearing and I'm reluctant to motor all the way. If the wind isn't back in another hour I'll kill the engine anyway and just drift along.

Amazing really: only away from the boat for two months and you already forget how much no fun it is to go sailing when there's no wind. But I'm under way again, and that feels good even if it's slow. And the rain stopped for

now,
the sky cleared, and the stars are out - beautiful.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 06:02

Wednesday, August 22, 2012

On the way!

Wednesday, 2012-08-22, 17:00 local (Thursday 03:00 UTC), 17:27S, 149:42W,
Wind 5-10kn NE, 30C, 1016mBar, sunny with clouds

Sometimes it's best to just go. The weather forecast for today wasn't great (e.g. no wind), and then I got delayed further waiting for the delivery of my kayak that I bought yesterday. Of course the guys didn't show up in the early morning as promised, but only at 2pm. Too late to make it the 150nm to Bora Bora before nightfall next day. Two reasons to delay another day.

But I'm eager to get going. And while I can't it to Bora Bora in this wind, I can make it the 120nm to Raiatea. Which means I'll see Gisela and Uwe from SY Venus one last time before I leave French Polynesia, sweet. So ... bye bye Tahiti!

I cast off at Papeete at 2:30 That was 2 1/2 hours ago, now I'm 10nm further, and so far everything worked perfectly, even the sun came out. What a nice surprise. I was expecting some trouble after two months ashore. Well, plenty of time until tomorrow for things to go wrong. Only downside at the moment is the very light wind and some cross-seas (from the SE and NE), which make the boat roll and the sails flap now and then. But hey ... I'm sailing again! Single-handing in the south pacific. Yaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaay!

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 22:20

Last days in Tahiti

Arrived back in Tahiti on Friday and since then I'm getting the boat ready for the last few thousand miles. We were lucky those last few months since Panama without much breakage, and some pre-emptive maintenance helps keeping it like that. As always the engine receives special attention.

Sunday afternoon Harry and Christine from Moyo next door abducted me to a little hike on the island.

Path-finding at it's best: with a map

Crossing dangerous streams

Lookout. Wind? not much.

I reciprocated Monday morning by taking Harry to a shark dive.

Ball of sharks. The more the merrier.

Seen so many sharks here now, it's getting kind of repetitive. I'm very much looking forward to Manta rays in Bora Bora and Humpback whales in Niue. For almost three years I'm waiting now to see whales. But now's the time and this is the place, so I'm hoping that I do get to see them finally before this voyage is over.

The plan for the next few weeks is to sail to Bora Bora for a few days to meet up with Andre and family (S/Y E Capoe).

Then on to Niue, which should take about seven days. Half-way between Bora Bora and Niue is Palmerston, but I'm not planning to stop there unless something comes up - or there are whales around. After Niue it's about five days to Viti Levu (Fiji), where I've booked a cyclone pit for Gudrun at Vuda Point marina, in case we leave the boat there over cyclone season (Nov to April).

the plan

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 11:41

Sunday, August 12. 2012

A little accident

In the first week after Liz left for Auckland I was very busy with photography and diving. When I wasn't training towards a Megalodon rebreather certification I was at Papara beach on the south of the island, photographing surfers. The surfers were very excited about the photos and asked me to shoot their contest on the following weekend, which I did gladly. But I think once is enough, I definitely don't want to start a career as sports photographer. Standing in the sand/sun all day is hard work, and too boring really.

Then I had a little accident while cutting an apple: a deep cut into the hand. Stupid, yes. Unfortunately it even had to be stitched and the doctor's stern voice instructed me to "keep it dry for two weeks". Which practically ended the diving - and all other boat/beach-related activities as well.

Ouch.

With nothing to do on the boat, and both my and Liz' birthdays coming up I flew to Auckland. I left Tahiti on the 29th at 17:30, and after crossing the date line arrived in Auckland on the 30th at 22:30 ... with 1.5h of birthday-day left. Liz welcomed me with a little birthday cake at the airport which we ate in front of McDonalds. A different kind of birthday.

Birthdayyyy!

Next day we began looking for stuff to help us get our life in new zealand started: An apartment, a car for Liz, and a motorbike for me. Tuesday morning we found the motorbike, and the apartment in the afternoon. Yay!

An orange KTM 990

Liz in our rental apartment, furnished, in Grafton.

We also spent a lot of time with Liz' family, and of course celebrated her 30th birthday.

Happy birthday Liz

Unfortunately it's next to impossible to get around in New Zealand without a car. Everything is so spread out, and the public transport system is not a priority. Liz hasn't driven much in the last 10 years and wanted something small but solid. Eventually we found something, a well-kept 2004 E46. I think it goes very well with Liz new shoes .

We also started looking for a home to buy. Liz read that you should look at 80 to 100 houses before you buy one, so she figured it's best to start early. We looked at two to three houses and apartments every day, all over central Auckland and it's surrounding suburbs (Grafton, Newmarket, Mount Eden, Sandringham, Grey Lynn, Ponsonby, ...). The idea was to find a place that's close to her family in West Harbor and Point Chevalier, as well as close to the center and potential future clients for our IT expertise.

And then it happened: Liz found the perfect home for us. A huge 173sqm loft on Karangahape road, in the center of Auckland. The ideal place to live and work in the city. Cafes, restaurants and shops right on the street, and good connection to the motorway to visit her family.

The timing isn't perfect with the EUR trading at an historical low against the NZD. But that will probably, unfortunately, not change for a while. It might even get worse while our politicians and the rating agencies follow their own agenda. A shame really what went on the last three years. In the meantime the real estate prices around Auckland are only going up and up. Besides, Liz says, it's not about being rich, it's about being awesome! Right. So ... we bought the place last Friday. I don't know if that makes me awesome, it definitely doesn't make me rich. But it's a fantastic place, and we can't wait to move in and start our new life.

In the meantime the hand is healed and I wanted to fly back to Tahiti today to finish the last few thousand miles of sailing. Can't just abandon ship in the middle of the pacific, the voyage is not over yet! But with the new place I have a few papers to sign (and some money to transfer, argh), and so I had to move the flight to next Friday, 17th.

Another thing I did last week was the "immigration medical", a compulsory medical examination before applying for New Zealand residence. Form INZ1007, very official.

It took two hours and included a chest x-ray, blood tests, and a lot of poking and questioning. The verdict: "appears fit and well", and a long list of stats. Nice to know everything is going well in the health department. It's the most important thing on earth - after love.

The rest of this week we'll be busy with wedding planning and paperwork for our new home. Friday I'll fly back to the boat and then hope to sail for Bora Bora within two or three days. Have to clean the hull first, replace two halyards, check the rigging and service the engine. Regular boat life . But thanks to my little accident with the knife our future is now a lot more real. We felt a little adrift those last few months, with the voyage almost over but no idea how the new life might look like.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 19:01