

Thursday, November 28. 2013

Gudrun V is a Kiwi now

Yesterday I went to the Customshouse to finish importation of Gudrun V into New Zealand. I presented the boat papers, my passport with resident visa, and the sale contract, and after 40 minutes of typing on the computer the friendly official handed over the stamped the "Delivery Order". Gudrun V is now a Kiwi. Cost: none.

The restrictions are that within the next wo years I am not allowed to sell Gudrun V or use her commercially, but that's fine. My plans for Gudrun V look a little different anyway. I would like to modify the interior to comfortably sleep six (two double, two single bunks), so that we can go out with friends and family for the weekend. Next time she's hauled out I want to do some modifications to the cockpit and superstructure to have more protection from the elements and a better ergonomy. They hadn't heared about those things when they built Gudrun in '81. And a new paint job.

A lot of work and money, but still a lot cheaper then selling her and buying a different boat - which would involve taxes and upgrades as well. And I'm much looking forward to exploring the NZ coastline and outlying Islands with Gudrun V.

So, end of the trip. Wow. What's next?

I've started a new software company and am building a business app, as well as some data migration tools and interfaces to my new client's ERP system. Sounds familiar, huh. This could be a similarly big thing to Transporeon, but my values changed a bit over the last years and I don't want to work 80 hrs a week just to make more money. There's too much fun to be had with the people around me, plus they can use my help, and then there's all that diving and photography to be done here as well. And I'm becoming passionate about governmental, economic, and environmental issues. NZ is not doing very well there at the moment, and it's my new home, therefor I care.

Four years on the boat haven't made me into a socialist tree (or dolphin) hugger, I'm still an entrepreneur at heart. But entrepreneurs care about sustainability, the long haul. And what's happening at the moment is not sustainable. It's not about saving the planet. The planet will be all right. It's about saving enough of the planet so that it's current inhabitants (e.g. us) will be all right as well.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 14:52

Wednesday, November 27, 2013

Photos from the trip to Auckland

Cape Brett, Bay of Islands

Dolphins!

Sunset with Rob

Sunset with Axel

Action at the winch

Passing Goat Island

Sailing through the Hauraki Gulf

Auckland ahead. Where?

Arrived, happy but tired.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 13:05

Tuesday, November 26. 2013

Auckland!

Wednesday 15:00

Just passing Auckland waterfront on the way to Westhaven Marina. see us at P71 in a bit. We don't mind the rain, happy to be home at last.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 20:19

Hauraki Gulf sailing

Wednesday 12:00

The last few hours went very well and we're now just passing Huatoa Point (east of Silverdale).Â

Mt. Rangitoto and Sky City are in our sights and it's only 18nm more to Westhaven Marina where we should arrive in about four hours.

I'm very excited about arriving with my boat in my new home after leaving my old one half a planet away four years and three weeks ago.Â

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 18:07

Goat Island

Wednesday 09:15

We had bugged all wind after midnight, and the engine protested against its use with a oil pressure warning. After two changes of oil and filters and some applied wrenchwork didn't change that we could do nothing but drift next to Sail Rock off Waipu all night.

With the sun came the wind again and now we're doing a steady 6kn past Goat Island to SE in 9kn from the E and lovely sunshine and a very calm sea. Yes, sailing can be a nice experience too.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 14:28

Nightfall

Tuesday, 21:30

At 8:30pm the sun went down behind the Tutukaka coastline in a spectacular swirl of red, orange, blue, and black. And within 30min the wind changed from NE 15kn to S 5kn.

5kn is not a lot, but head on and with no swell we can use it. Down goes the cruising chute, up the main and genoa, close hauled, and we're doing 4kn.

That's a little slower than with the engine but it's a lot quieter.Â

Only problem is it's pitch black with no moon up, and we're heading towards Bream Head near Whangarua, approx 3nm ahead. Must not run aground. A hurry for navigation lights and charts. And Â GPS.Â

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 02:42

Tuesday, 18:38

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

Just passing between Poor Knights Islands and Tutukaka. Lovely 15kn from NW and quite sunny, sailing along with the Cruising chute at 7.8kn.Â

We had a pair of common dolphins swim with us an hour ago. Now it's time for some Pasta.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 00:06

Monday, November 25. 2013

On the way to Auckland

Tuesday, 13:00

We left Opuia and are approaching Whale Rock, half way out of the Bay of Islands. Gannets are plunging all around us and we keep a keen eye out for dolphins. Four keen eyes actually.Â

Wind 15kn from the north, hope it lasts a while. But it probably won't take us all the way to Auckland and I expect some motoring towards the end of the 135nm trip.

Time for some left over pizza slices.Â

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 18:52

Saturday, November 23. 2013

Photos from the passage to NZ

Some photos from the trip Fiji to NZ.

Leaving Fiji in light northerly winds close to shore

A different situation off-shore: Rob experiences Force 8 for the first time

Rob gets used to the weather

Spray coming over, all the time

A selfie thanks to the GoPro and a trusty boat hook

View from the main sail towards the sunrise.

Arrived in Opuia

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 17:41

Friday, November 22. 2013

Arrived in Opuia

Saturday, 2013-11-23, 17:30, Opuia Marina

We arrived at 16:01 after 6 days 23 hours and 31 minutes at the customs dock of Opuia Marina after a lovely sail through the Bay of Islands approach, accompanied by the tall ship Essex (Rob thinks). The customs, immigration and biosecurity people were very friendly and cleared us in half an hour. Liz and Rachel were also already waiting for us.

We're now moored at Opuia Marina where we'll stay until Monday before sailing down to Auckland where we've reserved a berth at Westhaven Marina pier P (#71 I think). Looking forward to a shower and dinner with our wives.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 23:12

Fiji to NZ (7) - Land in sight

Saturday, 2013-11-23, 11:30, 34:54.925S 174:19.349E, COG 208, SOG 6.5kn, Wind 20kn SE

27nm to go to Opuia. The sun's out, the waves are down, and we're almost there. We spent the morning in the cockpit taking photos and watching out for land. 29nm out from shore Rob spotted the first mountain top through the haze while I was downstairs making sure we've filled out all forms. It's quite a package, fortunately neatly presented in a plastic folder "New Zealand Border Agency Information". Of all the countries we've visited on this trip NZ provided the most complete and helpful information up front, awesome. And the longest forms to fill out.

In about an hour we'll enter the 12nm zone and will then call ahead to customs. Then it'll be another three to four hours before we arrive in Opuia. Liz and Rachel are coming up from Auckland to greet us, can't wait to see them. We're a little damp and tired but very happy.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 16:45

Fiji to NZ - Almost there

Saturday, 2013-11-23, 05:05, 34:19.925S 174:33.349E, COG 202, SOG 6kn, Wind 20kn SE

Almost there, only 55nm to the entrance to the Bay of Islands and then 10nm more through the bay past Russell and Paihia to Opuia, the official port of entry. The way it's going at the moment we should be there in 10-11 hours = 4pm. That would be just 30min short of 7 days, I'd like that.

Only little has changed since yesterday but they make a difference. The wind's the same but the sea is a little calmer and we have less water coming over. Rob spent a few hours in the cockpit yesterday watching seabirds. We have no more water coming dripping the companionway and the inside of the boat is clean and dry again "I cannot say how much that adds to the comfort level.

The stars came out again last night and Rob had a long look from the companionway, but decided that it's too cold to lie down in the cockpit and gaze up at them. After sweltering hot nights in Fiji this here sure feels like we're almost in the Antarctic. I also only climb out to work the sails and have a good look around every 30-45 minutes. More often now that we're getting closer to shore. Another few miles and we have to look out permanently, but at the moment we're still far out of sight of land.

At 1am we passed another sailboat. It was on a heading of 60 or so, trying to make some way towards east. Very painful, I'm very glad we choose early to make east and can now use that capital. Again "Beginning with the end in mind" has paid off for us and we could avoid getting stuck in an uncomfortable situation (Thanks Dad for your lessons). Rob thinks this is all rather uncomfortable, but when I hear my friends' stories of their passages to NZ I think we got off very easy. One tack all the way, not becalmed, no storm, no high seas, little rain, medium winds (more or less). A bit bumpy and wet but hey, that's all part of the experience.

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

Thanks Ruth for the phone number of the customs guy. My brother and Liz both forwarded me your comment to the blog, which I cannot read at sea. Thanks Ralf and Liz .

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 10:53

Thursday, November 21. 2013

Weather update and arrival plans

Just downloaded the weather files through the sat phone and had a look. There goes my hope of some nice weather for the last day. The low has passed us and its centre is now to the east of us. I had expected that it would stay west and move further south. But now we're firmly caught on the "bad" side. Here's a nice website with wind maps for the area:

<http://www.passageweather.com/index.htm?/maps/oceania/mappage.htm>

If we're lucky the low keeps on moving east, in which case the wind should drop and move back east-ish. And if we're unlucky it moves further south, in which case the wind will come more from the south as we get into the low's last quadrant. Then we might not be able to maintain course, depending on the strength of the wind. That would add a few hours to our trip. But considering we're only a day a way it shouldn't have a huge effect. The question is whether we'll arrive Saturday afternoon or in the night.

I wonder what hours Customs and immigration are working in Opuia on a Saturday. We cannot leave the boat until we're cleared in, and if we arrive too late we'll have to stay at the quarantine dock over night. Better than at sea, but I'd much rather be with Liz.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 19:34

Fiji to NZ (6)

Friday, 2013-11-22, 11:30, 32:42.589S 175:02.000E, COG 196, SOG 6kn, Wind 25kn SE, gusting 35kn.

It feels like we've reached the rinse and spinning cycles of the South Pacific Ocean washing machine, 1400rpm. I asked Rob for his commentary on today's blog entry: "Thanks weather for giving us one last lovely day. I'm clinging on with my fingertips."

The wind is still coming from the south east with 25 to 35kn and we have to sail close-hauled at 40 degrees apparent wind to stay on course to Opuia. For this to work at all I had to put the 3rd reef into the mainsail and change the genoa for the little staysail. A good morning exercise. The waves are properly developed now and pound the boat constantly. I begin to wonder about fatigue on the 32 year old welding seams. Just kidding, I have absolute confidence in the strength of the boat, but the volume and frequency of the bangs are very impressive and make the whole hull vibrate and shake.

The water coming through the companion way slider is a real nuisance, and trying to get rid of it is an uphill battle. Salt water sloshes underneath the floor boards and I'm not looking forward to repairing the damage its doing to the furniture. Cooking is out of the question. For breakfast we had the last of yesterday's the Dal-Kumara-Curry, and I suspect for the rest of the trip it will be muesli bars. Good that its only 153nm to go to Opuia. If the wind doesn't change further South we should get in tomorrow afternoon after pretty much exactly 168 hours = 7 days. That's 164 hours on the same port tack, we haven't tacked or gybed since we went through the pass in Fiji.

I'm pretty happy with our sailing and tactics so far. It would be nice if the wind would ease off a bit for the last day or at least turn North-East so we can get the water out of the boat and make ourselves presentable. But if not, well, then it has to wait until we get into port. We positioned ourselves as best as we could and now we have to deal with what we get. The best part of every passage is always when you reach land, especially when your loved ones are waiting for you.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 17:15

Midnight report

Friday, 2013-11-22 00:00, 31:35.473S 175:29.570E, COG 200, SOG 7.5kn, Wind 20kn SE

Another twelve hours in the tumbling program of the South Pacific washing machine. The cockpit-fillers that are coming over today have a special quality. The first ones ever to defeat the concerted efforts of the spray-hood and closed companionway-slider. They overwhelmed the drainage system and dumped a bucket of water downstairs. Two hours

after I mopped it up another bucket full of saltwater came to say hello. And just now another one. I have to sit on the floor and wedge myself with my legs between the furniture to avoid being thrown around while cleaning it up. And just to remind us who's boss one wave lifted the whole boat out of the water and it slammed down with a fearsome bang. That was just after another wave accelerated us to 12kn for a few seconds. Funny thing is, the waves aren't even big, mostly 2m with the odd one at 3m. But they are steep and fast and maybe a little angry about something.

Meanwhile Rob's gone catatonic in his bunk and leaves it only to pee. He now wishes for the wind not to calm down so that it's all over sooner. He wears a sweater and hat even inside because it got noticeably cooler - 15C water temperature = room temperature. Quite a shock from the balmy 30C in Fiji only a few days ago. No more jumping around on deck in undies and a light rain jacket, now we're wearing proper foul weather gear and thermals underneath.

At ten tonight the clouds suddenly disappeared and all the stars came out. All of them, even the ones that are on day-light duty on the other side of the world. Or so it appears, it's so many of them. I can't get enough of that sight. But now most are gone again because the (recently full) moon came around the horizon and scared them away. It's super bright in that eerie light and we're bumping and bucking towards New Zealand.

220nm to go

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 06:20

Wednesday, November 20, 2013

Fiji to NZ (5) - bye bye Parasailor

Thursday, 2013-11-21, 11:45, 30:13.385S 176:03.840E, COG 200, SOG 7.5, Wind 25kn ESE

Yesterday afternoon was as expected overcast and rainy but relatively calm. Rob cut up a pumpkin and I made pumpkin soup in the pressure cooker - 1/2 pumpkin, 2 little onions, 2 grated carrots, chicken stock, pepper, nutmeg. Cook for 20 minutes then stick the hand blender in. Delicious boat food, especially on a rainy day.

After 3pm the wind dropped to 10kn and came from NE, and with us going SSW it came almost from behind. I took this as a sign that we were entering the NE quadrant of the low and that it's time for the Parasailor to shine (the Parasailor is a symmetrical spinnaker with a horizontal gap through the middle and a dynamic pressure wing like a kite attached to the front. Doesn't need a pole and I've used it from 5kn to 40kn of wind). Together Rob and I prepared the lines and dropped the main, and while Rob furled in the Genoa in I hauled up the Parasailor up and out of its sock. Great team. Then we sat in the cockpit for a while, watched a giant flock of seabirds take off from the sea, and discussed the weather and our further tactics. Suddenly the wind shifted back to E and increased to 20kn. Same grey overcast sky, no idea where that came from. And while we adjusted the trim of the Parasailor the whole thing basically exploded in mid-air. End of life after 3yrs and about 7000nm.

It took a while to drag all the trailing pieces bag on board and stuff everything into the bag. By then the wind had increased to 30kn and the sea was getting rougher. I was just sitting at the tiller and wanted to turn the boat closer to the wind to set the mainsail again when a massive wave hit the bow, reached up to the spreaders, and then came crashing down on me. After we stopped laughing we decided to leave the mainsail down and just go with the genoa for the night. We don't really need a main to go fast downwind in 30kn, it just rolls a bit more without it.

And it rolled a lot. The wind came up to 38kn and turned further South. We were glad that we had made some way to the east over the last days and could sail SW for a while, but it was still the most uncomfortable night so far. Every 20min a massive wave crashed into the boat and filled the cockpit with foamy water, but we stayed below and only poked our heads out to have a look around. Nothing to see though.

Today the wind's down to about 20kn again and we pulled up the main sail. Despite the mugging about with the Parasailor we made another 160nm in the last 24hrs and it actually looks like we can ride this low all the way into Opuia, which means we would arrive Saturday. But then I totally expect everything to change overnight and that we're going to be flopping about in little wind Friday, in which case we might arrive on Sunday.

312nm to go to Opuia

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 16:58

Tuesday, November 19. 2013

Fiji to Nz (4) - half way

Wednesday, 2013-11-20, 11:30, 27:35.155S 177:07.342E, COG 187, SOG 7.0, Wind 15kn NE

All through yesterday afternoon the sea was nice and we were gently gliding along at 7kn in 15kn of Wind â€“ wonderful. For six hours we felt that all the trouble was worthwhile. We even cooked a proper dinner in the pressure cooker â€“ potatoes, carrots, onions, kumara, eggplant, garlic, chicken stock, nutmeg, pepper, a little salt and two cups of water. My favourite. It was a little tricky with the broken oven gimbal but I wedged the oven into itâ€™s nook and tied it down with a rope. The boat smelled delicious of steaming vegetables and then we ate and traded stories.

Of course during the night the wind increased to 25kn and it got bumpy again, but fortunately no thunderstorms anymore. I put the 2nd reef into the main but we were still going at 8-9kn, and so this morning we passed the half-way point after 3 1/2 days. Nice going, another 172nm in the last 24hrs. It got colder too, only 24C. Time to break out the merino underwear .

Now that Robâ€™s got a taste of how nice it can actually be he says he doesnâ€™t mind if it takes a little longer when it means that heâ€™s not thrown around so much or gets a wave in his face every time he steps into the cockpit. Well, looks like heâ€™s in luck: Judging from the way the wind turns north it seems that low coming from the west is slightly ahead and south of us, where I wanted it to be. Which means we should soon get some light northerlies for a while. Perfect Parasailor weather.

Other than a few birds that circle the mast now and then we havenâ€™t seen anything since we passed a rusty Chinese fishing boat on Sunday. Not even a squeak from the radar detector or the AIS signal of another vessel. I kind of like that, the less there is out here the less likely weâ€™re going to run into something.

Iâ€™m expecting a quiet afternoon, although overcast and a little rainy. When the wind shifts another 20 degrees north Iâ€™m going to take the sails down and fly the parasailor. Rob always wants to know how much longer until we get to Opuia, but itâ€™s really hard to tell at the moment. With dropping winds itâ€™s unlikely that itâ€™s only another 3 1/2 days. More likely 4-5 days.

477nm to go to Opuia.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 17:03

Monday, November 18. 2013

Fiji to NZ (3)

Tuesday, 2013-11-19, 11:30, 24:41.041S 177:17.244E, COG 182, SOG 7.5kn Wind 15kn E

Today's my Mum's birthday. Happy birthday Mum! I love you. Thanks for giving me the confidence to do stuff like this.

It's also a beautiful day today. Yesterday and last night were quite rough, with 25kn of wind on the nose and lots of water washing over the deck. Every few minutes a wave would slam into the front of the boat with a mighty bang, and we stayed horizontal as much as possible to avoid being thrown around. But we made 175nm in the last 24 hours and upwind that is quite an achievement for a 39ft boat of 32 years. Double reefed main and genoa.

Today the wind is down to 15kn coming more from the east and that makes for a much gentler ride. We're still doing 7-8kn but the occasional big wave slows us down to 6kn, and with less wind it takes a while to gather speed again. Sometimes too long and then next wave slows us down again.

Food wise we're still relying on an oat bar and some fruit. Today it's water melon. We don't have much appetite, but also the boat rolls still too much to think about cooking. And it's hot without a gas burner. But I expect it to get calmer over the next two days (and colder) as a low moves in from the west and I'm very much looking forward to a decent meal. I'm only worried that my stomach's shrunk already and I can't eat anything, now wouldn't that be a shame.

650nm to go, which means that tomorrow we should reach the half-way point, after four days. If we manage to sneak in front of that low from the west then we can make it in another four, but if not we'll be caught with less wind and it'll take longer. But will also be more comfy. We'll see, out here you get what you get and make the best out of it.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 16:32

Sunday, November 17. 2013

Fiji to NZ (2)

Monday, 2013-11-18, 11:30, 21:47.804S 177:29.830E, COG 185, SOG 7.5kn, Wind 17kn SE

Not much happening on the boat except for hiding from the sun and spray, feeling more or less sick, and thinking a lot. We both miss our wives and Rob vowed never again to be further than 3ft away from Rach. Very cute. There are a lot of thoughts going through my head about the blog entry when I'm lying in my bunk, when when I sit down to write the blog my mind's all blank. Which is partly because the boat is moving so much that it already takes some effort just to sit. Good news is that we finally managed to keep some food down - a muesli bar and a bit of pineapple. Yay! But we're making good speed and course, which is definitely a plus.

Our general tactic is to keep a little east of our target so we have some room to manoeuvre in squalls, or can take a gentler westerly course when the wind turns South. Which will happen eventually, the question is only when and where we'll be at the time, hopefully past Cape Reinga. So we're sailing close-hauled at 30-60 degrees apparent wind and that means a lot of heel, a lot of water coming over, and a lot of movement.

Last night the usual thunderstorms popped up and with no apparent gap to run through and the whole system stretching far across the horizon we hadn't much of a choice but to go for it. The first was quite tame, 30kn and only a little lightning, but it forced us on a SW heading for an hour before we could turn back S. But the second thunderstorm was already waiting for us with 40kn of wind and heavy rain and we took down the mainsail and hid inside for two hours. Not very pleasant, we hope that there'll be less as the water cools, it's only 24C already.

822nm to go

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 16:50

Saturday, November 16. 2013

Fiji to NZ - First day at sea

Sunday, 2013-11-17, 11:33, 19:20.430S 177:28.925E, COG 170, SOG 6km, Wind 10kn E

We left Vuda Point Marina at half past four yesterday and in the 0hrs since then travelled 100nm south. The start was very slow with 6kn of wind from the North, but once we had left Fiji behind and approached a big wall of thunderstorms the wind moved to East and freshened to 15kn. Ideal conditions - if it wasn't for the head swell and lightning. One after the other first I then Rob puked our half digested sausage rolls over board.

We got through the thunderstorms all right without being hit, but it didn't feel good. Now the weather is quite nice, the swells are longer and less steep, and we're making good speed. The boat moves still a bit and there's occasional throwing up but it feels like we're settling in slowly.

Interestingly the water temperature dropped already from 30C in Fiji to 27.2C, and we can slowly see it dropping. I think it's about 16C now in New Zealand, so a drop of 1-2C every day is expected.

Damages: The gimbal of the oven is broken, and the oven is hanging limply in it's box. So not sure if we can actually cook something. But at the moment we both don't feel like eating anything for the rest of our lives . Rest of the boat seems to be ok.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 19:15

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

Friday, November 15. 2013

Go go go

We've checked out, and everything is put away. Ready to go.

I'll try to post a blog entry at noon every day, but no worries if that doesn't happen. It probably means that the Satphone broke or whatever. We're looking at a few pretty nice days ahead of us until that low coming from Australia crosses our path. Then we're looking at some very fast and windy days.

You can reach us at iridium@gudrunv.com, but we probably won't be very good at responding.

Go go go!

Axel & Rob

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 20:22

Ready to go

Last night Tony from Ragin' Cajun accompanied the Reggae Band at the sunset bar and that was extremely popular with everybody. As Rob has been spreading the word all week - including at the nearby First Landing Resort - heaps of people turned up and we had a fantastic time. What a great way to spend the last night in Fiji. Because ... fanfares ... today we're leaving.

Tony and the Reggae Band

Hanging up my (Dwarf8) flag in the sunset bar

There are another eight items or so on the to-do list, but it's getting smaller and the items less important. And it's another few hours until twelve when the officials come to check us out. And then we're off. Weather is looking pretty neat at the moment, 15-20kn from the east. That is right there in the "sailing south very fast" category, awesome. Some time next week a low from the west will catch up with us, and then we'll have to turn a easterly so we don't run into the following southerlies. Tactics bla bla, it's going to be all right. Gudrun sails very well on all points of sail, it's just a matter of how comfortable we'll be while doing it.

Working on the wind vane

Fiji - the country where officials take care of your baby while you do the paperwork.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 12:09

Wednesday, November 13, 2013

Back in the water

Thanks to an epic effort by Baobab Marine and Rob over the last two days we could launch yesterday. The rudder is back in, cutless bearing replaced, winches cleaned, engine serviced, water tanks filled, bilge-pump repaired etc. After the splash we started to fasten the main-sail and during preparations discovered a few nests inside the boom. Took over two hours to get all the crap out again, crazy. But now the mainsail's on and Gudrun looks almost ready to go.

A few things are left to do though:

- climb the mast and check the terminals
- fasten genua
- fasten staysail - looking at the weather forecast we'll need it
- attach wind-vane
- replace some sheets and a halyard
- replace water filters (paper and charcoal)
- stow kayak and solar panel
- tie down life raft on deck
- shop for food
- fill fuel canisters (we have 60l in the tank and take 2x20l in jerry cans)
- check out

Gudrun in the lift

Approaching the slip

Back in the water!

It will be a busy today, but if all goes well we can leave tomorrow (Friday) morning. Which would be great because the weather's looking quite nice. The extended highs that have been sitting over New Zealand the last weeks have brought no wind or southerlies and have been very frustrating for everybody who's left so far. Rita and Ulli from SY Anni-Nad are now 14 days into their trip and have probably two more to go.

But it's changing now, new lows are forming east and west and the high's are moving up and east, and the wind's shifting to east/south-east and should be relatively stable for a few days. Only the waves are still from the south - pretty much head on. With a height of 2-3m we can expect a very bumpy ride. And not the fastest either, so I'm planning with 6kn average which would mean 7 1/2 days. I'd rather add a day to the trip and have it more comfy than blast through and arrive exhausted and with damage to the boat. I haven't consulted with my crew Rob on that but I think he'll agree.

Forecast calculation for next week.

Fiji sunset

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 11:21

Sunday, November 10. 2013

Reports from Fiji - Work on the boat

After the boat was moved to the hard stand I could discuss the work with the guys from Baobab Marine: Welding, sanding, painting, cutless bearing replacement, customizing the tiller, new companion-way boards out of lexan and a few other things.

Welding on the keel

More welding and sanding

While the welders worked on the keel I took apart the boat on the inside and inspected every nook and cranny for bugs and wrongs, so that it can be dealt with while the boat was on the hard. I didn't find any bugs, but a cracked frame that had to be welded and some electrolysis spots on the outside hull which had to be welded as well. Also in order to take the cutless bearing out the rudder had to be removed as well as the prop shaft.

Rudder being taken out]

.... and transported away for cleaning of the shaft.

Half-way through the second week Liz arrived and we had a few wonderful days together. Fiji really is a lovely place. Very pretty, very friendly, and not too muggy.

Liz in the hammock

Fiji sunset

Fiji beach

Then Liz left and Rob arrived - my crew. Rob's my neighbor from Auckland and became a good friend who used to do a lot of dinghy sailing when he was young. When he mentioned that he always dreamed of sailing a passage I invited him to join me. Now we're working on the boat together and play board games in the evening (Lord Of The Rings - The Confrontation). And together we observed as eight guys fought hard for over an hour to get a 100kg pig into a little launch.

Big pig in a little boat

Rob and Gudrun. Thanks for the help, buddy.

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 13:19

Reports from Fiji - aerial photography

I had brought my quadcopter (a SteadiDrone QU4D) with me to take some aerial photos.

First Landing Resport

Vuda Point Marina

That went very well at first, but then the wind picked up to 25kn or more while the drone was up, and it got blown out over the reef. I tried to fly it back home but it was already 500m out and I couldn't really see it anymore. Then the telemetry link failed and with no way to tell it's position and orientation I send it up before flipping the "return to base" switch.

The drone slowly fought it's way back to Uli and me, but when I took over control again trying to land it it got turned around and blown out to sea - again. The camera hanging on the gimbal below the drone acts like a wind-vane and is a liability in these conditions. Impossible to fly by hand. Again I flipped the "return to base" switch, but this time the battery ran out and the drone crashed into the sea. "Noooooo" cries followed from the Marina Restaurant, where a crowd had gathered to watch the flight.

Fortunately the drone fell onto the reef, and the tide was almost out, about 20-40cm of water left. So I grabbed my kayak, paddled over, and began searching, helped by two other guys. 30 minutes later we found the drone and I took it back to the hotel room at First Landing Resort next to the marina to take it apart, clean it, dry it, and treat it with CRC 2-26, an insulating anti-corrosion spray (like Corrosion-X). Don't try this with WD-40 or the like, first of all it'll eat some of the plastics, and second it's conductive and that's not good for a microcontroller board.

Four days later - looks like flight controller and radio etc is still functional. I connected it to battery power and then the computer and everything is recognized and blinks and beeps nicely. But the battery that went down and the speed controller for the brushless motors are toast. I ordered a new speed controller (\$37), which has arrived in the meantime but it requires some soldering and I haven't gotten around to do that yet. Maybe today.

Starting the drone (thanks Uli Pusch for the photo)

Rinsing the drone

Taking the drone apart

Parts treated with anti-corrosive spray and put away.

Vuda Point Marina boatyard

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 12:57

Reports from Fiji - transition to the hard-stand area

The first days after I got back on the boat I was busy cleaning and organising transition to the hard-stand so that work on the keel could begin. The hard-stand area (and all stilts) were occupied by boats getting ready to leave, and although Monday was promised it took until Wednesday until it finally happened. No surprise there.

But I was quite surprised that I met so many people/boats that I knew already. I had thought they had all sailed on, but many had spent the southern winter in Fiji or the surrounding island nations and were now getting ready to sail either down to New Zealand (again), or onwards to Australia, or cross the equator and head for the Marshall Islands. Many evenings (and some afternoons) were spent catching up with old friends - or making new ones. While sailing across the oceans can be quite lonely, when in port, sailors are extremely social.

Fiji sunset

Meeting up with Uli, Uwe, Gisela, and Rita (SV Venus, SV Anni Nad)

New friends Patrick, Tom, Josh, Peter

Gudrun being hauled out of her cyclone pit

Posted by Axel Busch in Gudrun V at 12:49