

A Sicilian Cruise - 20th June to 8th July 2017

After a **slightly** traumatic start - Veuling lost Piers' luggage in Transit - an hour of "agro" at the airport in Palermo, with dire threats about medication, night time breathing machine, etc. Took the bus to the central station in Palermo after assurances luggage would be forwarded to our B&B, which was in Cefalu, so caught the train to there. Glad to be settled for the night. Phone call from Tim and Sue to say they were in Cefalu, so met up with intention of joining the boat the next morning, or as soon as the luggage arrived. Had a meal with them and retired for the night.

Next morning phone call from Sue to say sea was very rough, no chance of getting aboard with the dinghy, so agreed to return to Palermo and meet up there.

Nearly an hour in the train to Palermo and no contact from the lost luggage people. I settled in a little cafe whilst Piers made his way back to the airport - an hour in the bus. Two coffees, a glass of wine and another three hours later, he phoned to say he was in possession of his case and was about to return to the cafe. By this time Tim and Sue had managed to get a berth in the marina.



Bellatrix Too at Palermo Dock, a UK-made Discovery 55

On his arrival, we hailed the first cab we saw and hightailed it to the marina, and got on the boat. What else could go wrong!! Evening meal, bed.

Lovely day in Palermo, exhausted from hours of sightseeing, but amazing history. Good night's sleep. Set off for little bay, breakfast, swim, set sail.

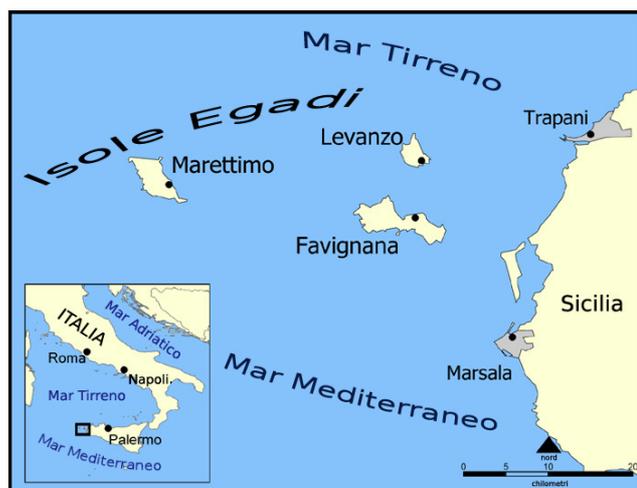
Today I was delighted to be told that they now have permanent internet on board, so looked for my phone to contact family and friends: must have left it on the cafe table where I had been in constant contact with Piers. Reckon that's our three hits, so all will be fine now.

Wed. 21st. Lovely sail to San Vito Lo Capo, small town on the north coast of Sicily. Moored outside the harbour. Next morning, after swim and breakfast, went in the inflatable into town. Split up, Piers into town, Tim, Sue and myself to walk to lighthouse and explore gun emplacement on the headland.

Walked back and into town to meet up with Piers for ice-cream. Very touristy, were here with Martin briefly about 12 years ago - bigger, louder, souvenir shops everywhere.

Thurs. 22nd: Leisurely start, then sail to Esole Egadi, three islands—Levanzo, Marettimo and Favignana. Moored on the latter for the night.

Fri. 23rd: In the morning tiny brown jellyfish everywhere, so moved to a bay close by where there were fewer. *Caribiniere* boat arrived in the morning checking out lots of the boats in the bay but not us. Next, coastguards who went around everyone, got us as well. We seemingly were in protected maritime area, allowed to moor, but only on moorings supplied, and with a permit. Next coastal maritime police, explained we were going to go to a



BBQ Chef

mooring where we would phone to get a permit. Next different coastal police, who had been informed we wanted a permit, came prepared to issue it and accept payment!

They were all actually very nice but I had stayed on board after the third visit when the other three had taken off inshore in the rubber ducky, and the fourth lot arrived with blue lights flashing. Good job Tim had seen them and came to my rescue. With permit in place and a good wind blowing, we decided to get away from jellyfish and police, setting sail for Marettimo.

Good decision, great broad reach, about four hours in 20 knots of wind and I got to helm. Bliss. Moored on a fixed mooring overnight. Swam at 7:30 this morning, gorgeous. No internet connection as we are the wrong side of a hill.



Relaxing, Marettimo

Tues 27th : Very laid back few days. Visited all 3 islands started on Favignana, and finished up in Favignana, being the best for re-victualing. The town of that name comes alive at night - very busy, ferries constantly arriving, car ferries small & large, people ferries, constantly changing, great fun to watch.



Abandoned tuna fishing fleet

Decided to have an evening meal in town since it was so lively. So popular, good restaurants filled up incredibly quickly and we were lucky to get a table as hordes arrived. Amazing, not sure where they came from, but what an atmosphere.

Back to boat where Tim and myself had a wee dram after the others had gone to bed. Castle on the hill lit up and Tim saying I'm going to climb that. Yeah!



Favignana Castle

Wed. 28th : Next morning by the time I was up at 7:30 he was already at the top.

Sue and I paid a visit to the vegetable market for final supplies and picked up Tim in the dinghy, ready for the off.



We were ready to sail. Sue "eye on the anchor" as it had a habit of coming up the wrong way around. Tim on the helm. Sue got distracted when the anchor was being raised, as two yachts near to us had a coming together. They had been closely moored and an anchor chain had slipped. Both boats empty and a third trying to raise the alarm. Mayhem! Even more mayhem when Sue realised the anchor had come and was--- yes you guessed it jammed at the top the wrong way around***##!!

I was below readying for sailing, every button in, nothing going to fall over, you sailors know the drill. Piers was on his way up from hatch shutting duties, so we missed most of the fun. Arrived just in time to hear a very calm Tim say "let's get out of here".

Left the Esole Igade islands with a great 20+ knot winds running, or broad reaching, best speed 9.3 knots. Tim had a go at the anchor but decided to wait until shallower water. Lovely sailing got to Capo Lo Vito in great time, spent an hour outside the harbour defences with skipper doing amazing contortions to unbolt

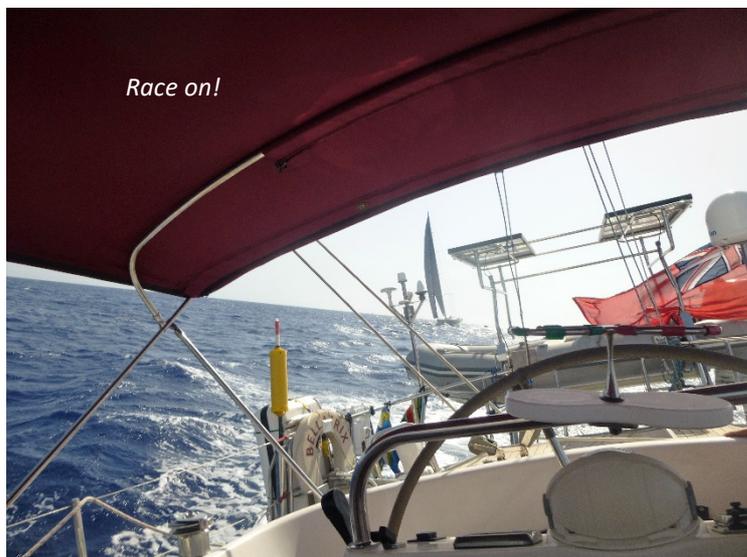
the anchor, lift and twist re-bolt and finally anchor: Sue helping Tim, me supplying sustenance and Piers helping. Team work.



Long day getting to Cefalu, winds very skittish, constantly changing, eventually settled in around midday and had a lovely beat down the coast for about three hours in winds of around 17 knots. It all went pear-shaped again after that, so had to motor for the rest of the way. Arrived and moored just outside the harbour in time for dinner on board.

Thurs.29th : No wind, decided to stay put. Cefalu is very quaint, narrow little streets, bustling, busy, only problem is that the marina is a long hike from the town. As we were picking up bottled water, and lots of other heavy stuff, all of us went around in the dinghy to the town harbour, did the shopping then the boys motored back, and Sue and myself explored the cathedral and wandered back taking in the sights.

Fri. 30th : Still not much wind, but set off at around 10:30 on the motor. Great wind again about midday, 17+ knots all the way to Isola Vulcano on a beat with only one tack near the end. (about 65 miles.) We saw there was a yacht following on the same track about 6 miles back, and on checking it was 92 feet! We managed at best 9.3 knots but they swept up on us like an eagle on a pigeon. We gave them a run for their money though. As they passed to leeward, British, of course, doing the honourable thing, they gave us a raised arms salute. Gorgeous looking yacht, Kevlar sails, fit young sailors, they were even towing a large dinghy as they swept past. "Bastards" said Tim "made us feel small!" He does not like being beaten!



Sat.1st : Isola Vulcano, safe anchorage, stinks of sulphur. Has bubbling mud baths and near the shore streams of bubbles coming out of the seabed.

Early morning, swam in to the shore with Tim and Sue being my good shepherds in case I got tired. Saw the bubbles, smelt the sulphur, swam back, did not trust my feet on the nasty lava stuff. We decided to head

for breakfast somewhere that did not smell so bad. I had a proper shower before we left and when I saw how the water had turned Sue's silver necklace black (sulphuric acid) I reckon I was wise!



Lovely sunset at Isola Upari

Lovely sail to Isola Lipari, found a nice clean little bay in which to swim and eat. Moored on the other side of the bay was one of these obscenely ugly, enormous motor yachts, with every boy's toy, including a helicopter. Had to be either Russian or Arab!

Went sailing again after lunch, big waves, strong winds, beating again. Came across Italy's version of the "Old Man of Hoy" (stone stack in Orkney). Very impressive. Good run to Filicudi Island for dinner and overnight.



Sun. 2nd: Wind came in about 1am. with dark clouds. Big waves made sleeping an adventure. Tim moved up on deck as we had swung towards the shore and he is a vigilant skipper. Sue moved to the cabin as the noise of the rudder and the slap of the waves was very disturbing. I did a little visit with Tim at about 3:30 to keep him awake, played solitaire for a couple of hours and got shoes and coat ready in case of any sudden moves.

Piers is amazing he can sleep through most anything, a visit to the loo, quick check through the porthole and fast asleep again in minutes. Best option as we were in no danger.

Mon 3rd: Mon 3rd: Left to have breakfast on Salina. On a beam reach, floppy sea with quite big waves on the beam, came below to write this episode, when there was a cry of "shit" and shit it was. The big foresail had broken its top shackle and dropped like a ton of bricks, straight down mostly in the sea. I have to say no panic. Tim and Sue at the bow, Piers on the helm keeping going on the same course to make sure it did not go under the boat, me finding ropes for tying up the sail, as the two up-front slowly hauled it in and in general following any instructions from the front like "don't you dare come forward, loosen the jib sheet" etc.



Tim with shackle at top of mast

First time we were waiting for wind to die down. *C'est la vie!* And when it had, the skipper was all set to go up the mast. Tim had a replacement shackle and always manages to make jobs look straightforward and simple. Very reassuring.

Moved to another mooring nearer Salina town and went looking for wifi as with all of us using their gismo for getting Internet on board it went on strike!!

< Gorgeous little town, local bread shops, butchers, fish shops, great ice-cream, which just happened to be the only place for us to get wifi.



Quiet beat on to Isola Panarea, Stromboli sending up Indian-type smoke signals in the background.

Tues 4th: Panarea very rocky, but found a safe anchorage in a little bay big enough for just us with lovely clear water for swimming.

We all took turns at making lunchtime cocktails and spend the first 10 minutes guessing what it is. Must be light in the middle of the day so often contains iced tea, lemonade, fizzy water or any other “filler” available then a splash of vodka, gin, kalua, wine, beer or whatever can be found. Heaven help you if you use the skippers single malt. Did a lot of reading on lazy afternoons.



Stromboli gently grumbling

Wed 5th: OK Stromboli, here we come. Wind continues to be between 15 and 20+ knots most days, so as we move nearly every day, we are enjoying pretty perfect conditions. Only short hops from island to island here but we take side trips whenever there are interesting rock formations, castles or caves often mooring up to swim. What I did not expect to find were villages on Stromboli. Villages!! How can people stay there when it is constantly active?

Moored up for the day on the south side, swimming, eating, reading. Tim and Sue had been there before so knew we needed to set off as it got dark. We spent a night just sailing round the northern side where the activity has worn down the lip which concentrates the activity to that side. The puffs of smoke which we had seen during the day are actually molten rocks being thrown up and little lava flows which erupt about every 20 minutes, yet this is considered a fairly dormant time. You wouldn't find me living there. Moored up in the dark then moved back to Panarea in the morning. Cleaned the boat and made it ready for leaving it for a month in Vibo. Last BBQ, lovely sunset.

Left at 3:30 am for Vibo de Valencia. Great reach all the way over about 60 miles. Went out for a meal and found a great little place with a wood oven that made fantastic pizzas. Bill just €48 including pizzas, salad and drinks. Great last night together.

Caught different trains about 20 minutes apart, ours first at 7:20 am. One taxi managed the four of us plus luggage and we waved each other farewell at the station. Tim and Sue heading for Verona and the opera before returning to UK, us to Naples for one night then back to Valencia.



Booked a B&B in the old centre of Naples as we only had one night. Had to be seen to be believed. Old amazing buildings used as shops, graffiti everywhere, every space graffiti, nothing sacred. A little shop for hand-made jewellery with an amazing church alter and pulpit left intact at the back.

B&B Medea entrance was an historic building with only 5 rooms on the 5th floor and no breakfast, so it was really only a B! Nice people though. We had 3 keys. They closed the enormous metal doors on the street at 9pm. 1st key. On the left iron gate to a lift, 10 cent meter to go up in the lift. A large door at the top 2nd key and the door for your room 3rd key. The good thing was it was very lively in the town, totally different to anywhere I have ever been before, huge numbers around at all times and our room was at the

back with big wooden shutters so we were quiet and safe. I don't think we will be going back.

Uneventful flight home next day.

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