

Sunny Spray's travels, episode 6

Arrecife, Lanzarote, October 28-30, 2015

Dear all,

I just noted that the last episode of Sunny Spray's travels dates from September 13, so an update really is due! In a nutshell: the past 5 weeks we have only sailed approximately 30 miles, from La Graciosa to Arrecife on Lanzarote, and spent our time in Arrecife working on the boat. Of the remaining two items that did not work one has been solved: we now have a working radar! The windvane-autopilot is under reconstruction. Apart from that we played tourist and saw a lot. Hence, there is a lot to write about.

But first an answer to a question from John Reynolds: Why did you choose a junkrig in the first place? Answer Bob: because it is a superior rig, and this statement was followed by a lengthy explanation, that basically comes down to this: at the middle and end of the 19th century large private yachts became en vogue and they increasingly needed/wanted a ship with better upwind sailing qualities. This need gave rise to the Bermuda rig. Once racing became popular, this was preferably done with Bermuda-rigged ships because of the high to the wind properties. The Bermuda rig was increasingly influenced by the rules and demands of racing (instead of cruising). Thus, nearly all ships built nowadays are being built to conform to the rules and demands of racing and are Bermuda-rigged. According to Bob, this is comparable to building an everyday car according to the rules and demands of a formula-1 car. Bob decided to go for the rig best suited for long tradewind passages, and therefore chose the junk rig.

Between September 13 to 25, we were still on Isla Graciosa. We cycled, walked, climbed and circled the circumference (at the top) of a vulcano called Montaña del Mojon, and were greatly enjoying ourselves. We also met a very nice couple: Yves, Swiss, born and raised in Mexico, and Joanna, his wife, Korean, born and raised in New York.



Below Playa de las Conchas and the Montaña del Mojon. The orange dot just right of and below the middle is Bob.



During our stay on Isla Graciosa a small red sailboat came in, manned by a solo sailor. A bit a hippy type. The boat was rather unorganized, so I helped him to moor. Talking on the jetty afterwards we exchanged our respective problems with boats, so I explained our problems with the windvane autopilot. He thought for half a minute, and then said quite decidedly that our approach would never work, one can never go against the strength of the hydraulics, on the contrary, one has to take advantage of the hydraulics and make sure that the autopilot connects somewhere else than on the rudder, for instance, on the quadrant of the steering wheel.

His suggestion went way beyond my technical abilities, but I dutifully reported the conversation to Bob, who fell silent for a minute, cried out Eureka, followed by stupid stupid stupid! (although none of the experts we had consulted had ever even hinted at such a possibility), and left for his desk. After three days of sketching and calculating he surfaced with the idea for a new construction, which would allow the ropes of the windvane autopilot to connect to the steering wheel, instead of to the rudder. He built a wooden dummy to illustrate the principle. In short, it comes down to this:

When using the steering wheel, each revolution of the wheel is passed on to a hydraulic pump, which, through an effector (a cylinder with a moving bar), forces the rudder to one side or the other. In our old approach the information from the windvane will be passed on to a pendulum (an additional rudder

blade in the water). The pendulum's sideways swing through the water is transferred, through lines and pulley's, directly to the rudder. However, the rudder was practically unmovable, because the bar of the actuator was pushing against it (although the hydraulics was disconnected from the rudder when the autopilot had to work, sadly enough there remained quite a lot of resistance).

In the new approach the sequence becomes as follows: a change in the position of the windvane is transferred to the pendulum. The sideways swing of the pendulum is transferred, through lines and pulley's, above deck (!), to a stainless steel motorcycle chain. That chain drives a clog with 20 teeth. This clog is connected to a clog with 40 teeth, which also starts to turn. The turning 40-teeth clog drives another stainless steel chain, vertically connected to, again, a 20-teeth clog, this one connected to the axle of the steering wheel. When the pendulum swings maximally sideways, the chains must make the steering wheel turn twice around, either to the right or to the left. These revolutions will, as normal, be transferred to the hydraulic pump, which, through the actuator, pushes the rudder to either right or left.

In theory a fantastic plan, but now for reality: try to get this construction made to measure! We choose to try our luck in Arrecife, the capital of Lanzarote, and left immediately. It was quite difficult to find a mooring, but eventually we managed in Marina Lanzarote. This turned out to be a happy choice, since at the opposite side of the marina is a huge industrial area, which houses the best equipped stainless steel shop Bob had ever encountered, as well as numerous 1-2 person workplaces (talleres), each specialized in a particular aspect of metal or stainless steel work: one taller would only do turning work; another worked only with stainless steel sheets; yet another was specialized in cutting, or in welding. Whatever Bob needed, there was an expert to be found. He loves this, and accordingly walked around with a big grin.

But the set up also had its downsides: a capacity problem. Often, when Bob arrived with a particular job needing to be done, the single owner-employee would have absolutely no time to do any work for Bob, while maybe the next week he would hardly have any work at all. This was the reason why the making of the stainless steel housing took a week; nothing then happened while waiting 12 days for the clogs and chain to arrive from Holland (with an urgent !!! shipment), followed by several days waiting for someone to adapt the clogs to fit the axle of the steering wheel; only after this was done did he have the correct measurements for the clutch, which needed to be made by hand as well. When the clutch was finished, we found we needed to elongate the housing, on which we had to wait for more than a week, etc etc etc. This way the weeks passed by.

On October 24 the entire construction was ready, placed and bolted to the deck. Since then we have made several tests, improvements, changed the ropes for cables, changed the cables for dyneema, non-stretch rope – so far, there is good movement to one side, the other side stubbornly resists. Tomorrow we are going on a test sail, hopefully that with sufficient speed through the water the force on the pendulum will be great enough to move the wheel to both sides. This situation, going from hope to despair to hope to despair, is an awkward one. Irrespective what will be the outcome of tomorrow's test sail, we have decided to move coming Friday for a change of scenery. Maybe that will help. *(the test sail was negative, still only one side workin, no idea what is causing this).*



Sorry for the picture, whatever I try, it does not want to come vertical. So please turn your head.

Nevertheless, during the many days we spent waiting for the various metal specialists to be available, we had a good time.

First, the marina itself. As said, we arrived on Friday the 25th of September. We were assigned a mooring way at the back of the marina, at pontoon D, which turned out to be a disaster; it was very close to a square where every Friday night 5 bars are competing for the clientele of the town's youngsters, all choosing the same method: incredibly loud boom boom music. The first night there was a heavy metal live band as well, which went on to 03.00 am and was followed by the music from the bars .

On Saturday morning we requested another mooring, and were given a place on pontoon K. At that moment nearly empty, but those pontoons were awaiting the arrival of the boats from the Mini Transat Race.



Sunny Spray between the Mini Transat boats.

And indeed, the same Saturday, in late afternoon, the first 6,5 m long Mini Transat boat arrived. During the night 6 others arrived as well, and then nothing for quite a while. In the following week boats would arrive daily, towed inside by a RIB, since they do not have an engine. In total, 75 boats would arrive over the days.

The arrival of one of these boats is an event in itself. The organization knows when a boat is due to arrive, thanks to them having VHF and AIS. Then, no matter the hour, the motor launch departs to tow them inside after crossing the finish line. The contestants that have already arrived gather on the pontoons where the new arrival will land and give every sailor its “15 minutes of fame”: There are film camera’s, photographers, and loud cheering and applause. Very lovely and completely deserved, because this are very small (6,5 m long) boats, and for them the seas are just as high or even higher than for us. The more so since the trip from Bretagne to Lanzarote had led them through the Bay of Biscay, where they had had a very rough time, so most of the arrivals were very glad to be in indeed. As the only Polish sailor to be participating kept saying after his arrival: “Oh my God, I made it, I am still alive, I can’t believe it, I am still alive”. More words are not necessary. Chapeau for their achievement.

In the end 75 boat arrived, of which three skippered by a woman. All the others were men, mostly French, but there were also 5 Brits, 4 Italians, 2 Dutch, 3 Germans, 2 Swiss, 1 Irishmen, 1 Chinese and 1 Guadeloupean.



Helma with Carl.

We befriended the Guadeloupean, Carl Chipotel. Carl is quite a big guy, 40 years old, firefighter by profession, 1,94 m tall and very sympathetic. He is the type of guy who goes to Haiti to help with digging out the earth quake victims (he did). And honestly, who does not want to be saved by this guy!!

He showed us his boat and told us insider stories that normally remain hidden. Their Mini Transat boats are rented or personal property. Participating in the Mini Transat earns them 20 Euros a day spending money, which has to pay for all their costs. No wonder you see many solo sailors daily in the Burger King!! In addition, they all try to find sponsors, so every little boat is covered in logo's on the sides and flags fore and aft. The flags attached to the forestay are from their own sponsors; the ones at the backstay are from the organisation's sponsors.

Despite all this, poverty reigns. The boys hardly have enough to survive on; fortunately, the dried food for the crossing is provided by the organisation. On top of all this, they regularly have to show their faces at sponsor events, such as parties or receptions. Or they have to go sailing with the children of the Lanzarotian elite.

Most Transat skippers left for home on October 8, and now they are returning one by one. On October 31 they leave for the second and final leg of the race, from Lanzarote to Guadeloupe. Once there, the

boats will be transported as deck cargo on a freighter, back to Europe. Carl's boat will stay in Guadeloupe and serve as a training boat for Guadeloupian youngsters.

To make their hardship worse, they sail under strict rules. Each boat is only allowed the following in terms of equipment: paper navigation charts; a GPS for position reading (the same Furuno we have); a VHF for communication; an AIS to avoid collisions; a sextant; a short wave radio to receive weather forecasts (although the quality they receive is abominal – Carl let us hear what he had recorded, and it is only a lot of noise, nothing can be deciphered).; a tiny camping gas bottle. Other equipment is not allowed.

Although neither Bob nor myself have ever raced in sailing, we still found it quite interesting that in the past two years we have visited two types of racing boats: in October 2014 we visited, with the Costa Blanca Yacht Association, the boat of Team Abu Dhabi to be raced in the Volvo Ocean Race. This boat was skippered by Ian Walker and went on to become the overall winner.

And now we visited a 6,5 m long Mini Transat boat, skippered by Carl Chipotel. I can assure you that both boats are equally Spartan. Some nets for personal belongings and supplies; a hard bench with a flat fender to sleep on (Carl's bench is so small he cannot even stretch out to sleep); packages with dried food, which are heated with some water and pretend to be meals (Carl even said some were quite tasty!!). That's it! I would not mind going sailing with one of these boats for an afternoon, but a longer crossing, absolutely not!!



Carl Chipotel in his Mini Transat. With his 1.94 m length, he cannot even stretch out to sleep.

And quite a bit more is going on in the harbor. Tonight a beautiful three-master arrived, sailing under Polish flag. And there are lots of boats. Boats boats boats. Let me explain what is the case.

In 1985 an English sailor, Jimmy Cornell, started what became to be known as the Atlantic Cruising Rally. The idea was to gather a group of boats and to cross the Atlantic Ocean together. What started as a sympathetic idea gradually turned into a mega-event. Now, celebrating its 30th anniversary, the ARC fleet comprises 400 boats, all prepared to pay a quite substantial fee to cross the Atlantic Ocean under guidance of experienced sailors.

By paying their fee, they receive, for two months, a mooring in Las Palmas, Gran Canarias, workshops, advice, guidance, information, parties and togetherness. Nothing against that, one would think. But there are some negative side effects which are never mentioned.

First, the boats leave when the organization strongly advises to do so. This departure date, however, is not always chosen because of consideration such as weather. Often they leave for reasons not related to sailing, but for wanting to have crossed the ocean before Christmas so that trip back home can be made in time, or for economic reasons (having paid in advance for moorings etc). We think that one should never cross because of travel or economic reasons; one should leave when it is possible, with an optimal forecast (see also attached document about electronics and safety). Last year they left mid November, to arrive in the Caribbean before Christmas. That was quite early in the season, so they suffered much headwinds and the crossing took them 28 days, instead of the usual 20-22 days. Had they left one week later, they would have arrived on the same date, but much more comfortable.

The second concern is about safety. Many ARC participants have little experience. By attaching themselves to this organization, I feel they are buying false security: we do what we are told, in the meantime we learn, so everything will be all right. But after they have left, the boats never stay close together, they fan out over a large area, so help or advice will not be as readily available as maybe thought. As our friend Yves remarks: "if you are not ready to cross alone, you should not cross, also not with a group". The ARC phenomenon might explain why nowadays it is so difficult to get boat insurance for a crossing.

The third point is a personal observation: I fail to see the fun (or joy) of crossing if you need others to do so. For me (or, for us), a crossing is part of your personal big adventure. It is all about realizing your own dream, your own wish. I would not like to involve anyone else in that.

The fourth point is something we only realized when arriving here. The ARC-boats arrive in Las Palmas, Gran Canaria, from mid-September onwards. In order to find accommodation for 400 boats, the

organisation rents the entire marine in Las Palmas. With as consequence that other boats cannot moor in Gran Canaria between half September and December 1. Worse: even the boats that are normally moored in Las Palmas have to leave the harbor, irrespective whether there are still free moorings or not. These displaced boats need to go elsewhere, and they fan out over the Canary slands, predominantly going to Fuerteventura, Tenerife and Lanzarote. This creates a lot of capacity problems in other ports and marinas. In particular, since the non-ARC boats that want to cross, such as we, arrive from early-mid September onwards from Northern Europe or the Mediterranean as well.

And if, in the same time period, an event as the Mini Transat is scheduled as well, with 75 small boats and some ten accompanying boats, mostly catamarans (offering sleeping places for the skippers when in the marina), the ports are reaching full capacity.

This is what happened the past few weeks in Arrecife. To make matters even worse, Jimmy Cornell, who sold the ARC organization some years ago, arrived in the marina with 16 large boats, doing the Atlantic Odyssee, an alternative for the ARC. As a consequence, single boats, (not belonging to an organization and not having prepaid for a mooring, such as us), had to leave our pontoon, being put in the empty spaces no one wants. Not nice.

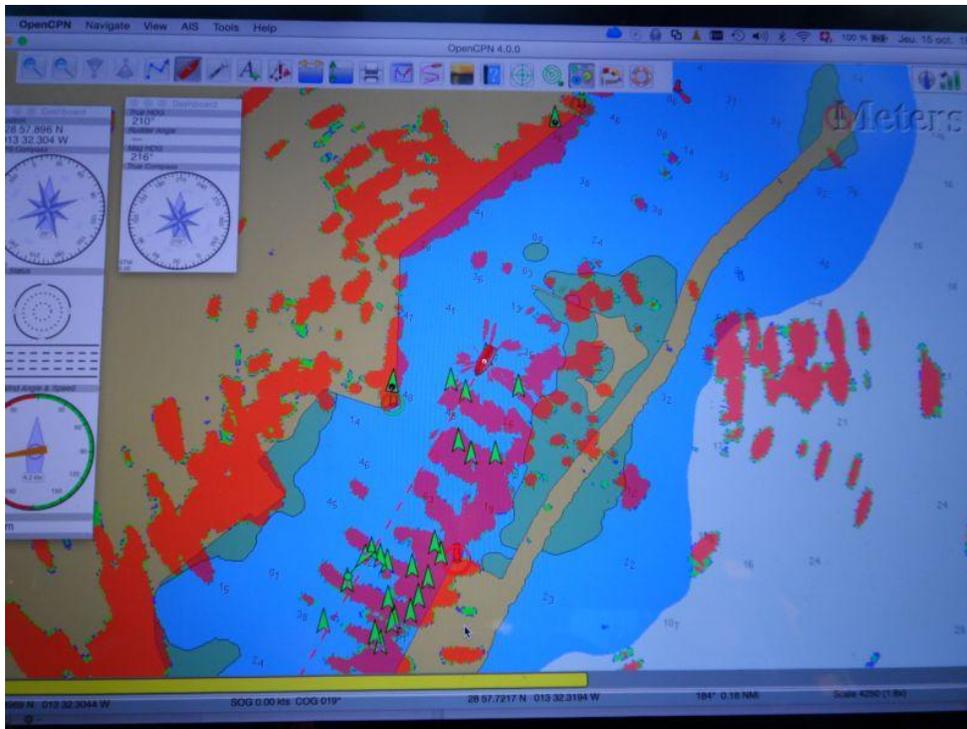
Apart from space and moorings the marina creaks and groans. Because there are so the many boats, pontoons are no longer locked (they ran out of keys), so security is compromised (and that is known to the thieves). After 09.00 am the showers have run out of hot water. Even in the afternoons there is no hot water, as I experienced wanting to take a shower following being caught out in a downpour. The washing machines and driers are overworked. The bakery runs out of fresh bread before 9.00 h. Although personally not too much affected by all this (I have my own washing machine, hang the laundry to dry on board, and if necessary I can bake my own bread), it all contributes to a slightly stressed atmosphere. There is nothing we can do about this, apart from trying to leave as soon as possible looking for a quieter spot. As soon as Bob no longer needs the metal specialists, we will leave. We have set our sights on Gran Tarajal in Fuerteventura. This harbor is not very popular, because the village is quite a long way from the marina. Since we have the bikes, that argument does not hold for us, so hopefully we can spend the busy month of November there until December.

Despite being overcrowded in the harbor, we are having a very good time. This is because of the presence of Yves and Joanna, the large amount of culture to be found in Lanzarote (yes, truly!), the small-scale of the place, the pleasant weather (although we have had a good share of unexpected rain), and last but not least, its unique landscape.

We first met Yves and Joanna in Isla Graciosa, and we are getting along exceptionally well with both of them. As for age, Joanna could have been my daughter, and we are doing quite a few things together. Yves and Bob can get along equally well, both interested in technical things and sailing. With the four of us the evenings often stretch way past midnight, which for us, the younger elderly, is of course way too late.



Best of all: Yves is an independent working software engineer (he is working from the boat and much in demand). It was terribly sweet of him to spend his time trying to get our radar working. After four days (the problems were very persistent!) he finally got the radar going, and, while doing that, also fixed some bugs in the software of the multiplexer. As a result, all problems with the electronics have now been solved. Hurray hurray! With everything working I decided to write a separate file describing what we have and how it functions (see accompanying pdf file). Yves said he had never seen such a complicated set-up on a ship (no wonder we could not get it to work properly!). The picture below shows how all the information gets together and is shown integrated on the screen of our ship's computer.



The ship's computer is connected to a big computer annex TV screen. When in computer mode, it shows, in the programme Open CPN, a sea chart, in this case the marine in Arrecife and its surroundings. Projected as triangles are boats that send an AIS signal: we are the red triangle, all other boats with an AIS are green triangles. The coloured spots are radar images. In pink you see the pontoons of the marina. Red-orange are the buildings in the immediate surroundings. In pinkish red are the reefs outside the harbour. In addition, you see various parameters, such as the meters for the direction and strength of the wind, depth meter etc. All these signals are generated by different measuring devices, but shown together at the same time. It is a great feeling that all the electronics are finally working reliably and together. This compensates a bit for the disappointment and the hope-despair feelings we have with regard to the windvane auto-pilot.

When we are not working on projects or the computer, we spend our time shopping, cycling or touring the island in a rented car.

Because Arrecife is relatively small, everything is quite close together. There even is an IKEA !!, and for the first time in my life I can go to an IKEA by bike. I have been a frequent visitor, since we are continuing our preparations for larger trips and I need a lot of storage bins to accommodate at least one month supplies of fresh fruits and vegetables, handy bags to store items in even the smallest and

strangest lockers, and tall bins to optimally use tall places. So far, I am quite successful, at the moment I even have spare storage space! (which will undoubtedly be filled soon).



Bob drilling ventilation holes in IKEA storage crates for long-term storage of fruits and vegetables. Without a job at hand he is not happy!

Surprisingly, the island is very bike-friendly. The slopes of the volcanoes only start further inland, and the area around the coastline is mostly flat, with the occasionally slight slope. Both Northwards as Southwards there are long walking/cycling boulevards, right next to the coastline, which bring you to white or black sandy beaches, through boring urbanizations or rather pleasing looking tourist villages.

We used the rental car to visit inland. We avoided the crowds that were visiting the National Park Timanfaya, with its dozens of volcanoes and signs of the most recent eruptions. (later we were to visit it extensively). The landscape in the North was equally beautiful, with many colors: slopes coloured black, red, yellow, and greygreen, against a bright blue sky, with some black lava blocks in the foreground. Very scenic, and the pictures have been stored in the folder "inspiration for future paintings".



The oasis of Haria, in North Lanzarote, and the last place where Cesar Manrique lived. Unfortunately it was a rainy day.

The island is littered with art: along the boulevard in Arrecife, at every round-about, or just for fun, in the middle of a remote beach. Public buildings and musea are often quite beautiful and modern. Many monuments and sculptures are by Cesar Manrique (1919-1992), a local artist and contemporary of such artists as Andy Warhol or Roy Liechtenstein (he studied in New York). Upon his return to Lanzarote, Cesar was shocked to discover that his beloved Lanzarote was falling prey to the construction mafia, ready to convert it into a next Benidorm. He was never against tourism as such, but he was against the destruction of the environment and the ugliness of tourist accommodations. He preached that constructions and monuments should fit into nature, enhancing nature's beauty by being beautiful art in itself. Being an original eco-warrior, he was very popular with the general population (not so with the construction mafia). Thanks to his influence, all new buildings on Lanzarote would never be higher than two stories, and many attractions and monuments demonstrate his philosophy. As he said himself, he went from esthetics to ethics. A special person. Sadly, after his death, the higher, uglier buildings are appearing again but fortunately not on the scale as elsewhere.

We visited many musea, with varying success. Arrecife used to suffer greatly from piracy, hence many forts were needed. Two of these forts have been beautifully restored and serve as musea. In the Castillo de San Gabriel, in the old harbor, you'll find the Museo de Historia de Arrecife (historic museum). The

building itself and its surroundings are beautiful, but the content of the museum was way too academic, lots of text and very few interesting items to look at. A pity.



Seen from the Castillo de San Gabriel: a view on the Puentes de las Bolas, in the background the historic centre of Arrecife.

Close to the Marina Lanzarote is a second fort, the Castillo de San Jose, which houses the Museo Internacional de Arte (Museum for Modern Art). Inside there are only two big rooms with modern art from predominantly the years 1960, 1970 (not very interesting), outside some beautiful sculptures placed in a completely black garden, brightened up with green cacti. Below the fort a spectacular restaurant, built in black, wood and glass, with a great view over the harbor. Since the prices were quite reasonable, this became one of my favorite spots to rest a bit after a cycling tour.



The surroundings of the Museum of Modern Art, and the view from its restaurant.

Very worthwhile were the visits to two of Cesar Manrique's creations. First the Cactus Garden, built inside an old stone Quarry. In it a beautiful mix of natural stone sculptures, sprinkled within a garden with more than 150 different cactus species.



Cactus Garden and Manrique's house and swimming pool in Haria.

The second Manrique creation we visited was the Museo del Campesino (Museum of Country Life). A fascinating rebuilt Lanzarotean settlement, built around a patio, with rooms for old machinery, crafts, furniture, wineries, places to work leather, weave cloth etc. In addition there was a room with typical statues depicting the principal activity of a village; one statue for each Lanzarotean village.

Below ground level a typical Manrique design, a round restaurant with a large skylight, flanked by an underground pond. Very beautiful!



The underground pond, and two of the statues in the Museo de Campesino.

And sometimes art is just found on the street, around the corner. In a very ugly corner in the industrial harbor we found the works of a hermit. He recycled old oil drums and oil cans, to convert them into boats, varying in size from key-hanger-small to human-being-big. The latter ones were really used to sail, every Saturday morning, it being a Lanzarotean custom.

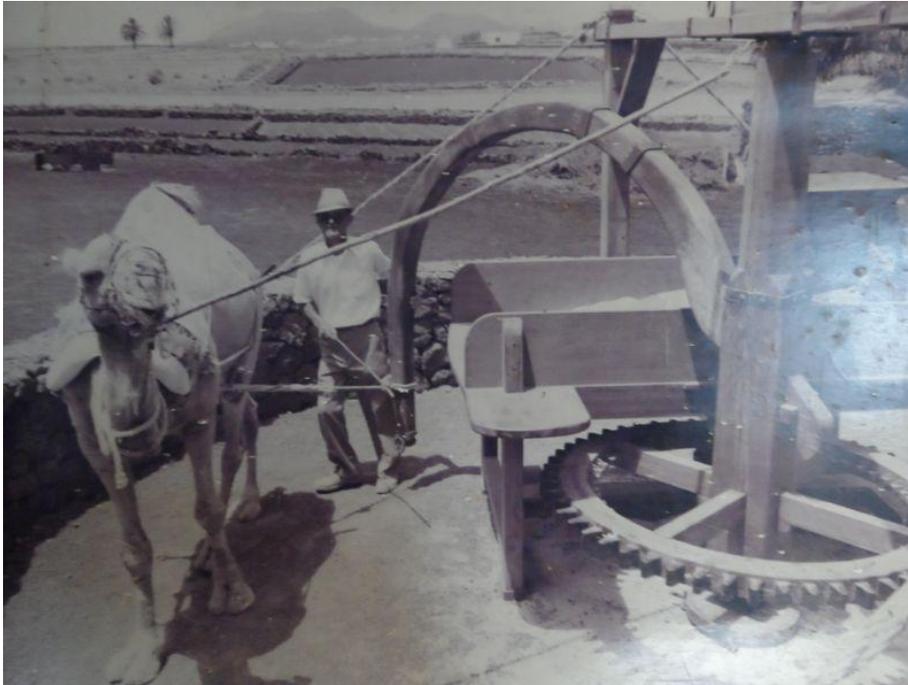


Best of all for us was the Museo Agrícola el Patio (Agricultural Museum). No Manrique creation, for a change, but an old farm, bought and rebuilt by a local doctor. In its glory days the farm was one of the largest on Lanzarote, and until the 1940s it still had more than 17 working camels.

Inside, of course, exhibits of living rooms, bedrooms, kitchens, the winery etc etc. But also a beautiful collection of black and white pictures. Predominantly pictures of people in the 1930's. These pictures were from the archives of the National Geographic magazine: in the early 1930 it sponsored an expedition by large private yacht to Lanzarote, which at that time was practically unknown. The expedition leader was accompanied by a photographer, and together they documented people, their clothes, their way of living, their customs and folklore.

Inside the museum also a large collection of farming tools. These were quite special, because not meant to be used by horses or donkeys, but by camels! Until quite recently camels were not only used as working animals on farms, but also for general transport of people and goods. In fact, everything you

could do with a horse was done here by camels! Below a picture of a photo showing a camel, working a millstone.



The farm was still in operation, albeit on a much smaller scale than in the past. Predominantly for wine, so at the end of the visit we had some wine tasting in its own bodega. There we sat sipping wine, in lovely shade, with chickens around our feet. It was hard to get up and leave this enchanting place.



And at the farm we saw our first camel up close, and she shared her accommodation with chickens and goats. We asked the only farm hand we encountered whether she was still working or not. Oh no, was the reply; she is old and only remains here to be photographed by the tourists! Therefore, this time the camel as **Animal of the Month!**



Too old to work but fit enough to be a photo model!

Hasta la próxima! (until next time)!

Helma

We can still be followed on www.marinetraffic.com

Boat name: Sunny Spray (or Sunnys Pray, although we have checked it and in the AIS programming it really says Sunny Spray!)

MMSI: 244780434

Tip: in case you find us in a weird place, such as Rotterdam: that is an error of Marine Traffic, just send them an email and they will correct it.