

Sunny Spray episode 3, August 7, 2015

Dear friends,

By now it is nearly three weeks ago since the last report, so, high time for a new one! And just like with the previous one, I am writing this episode while at anchor on a river, this time the wide Guadalquivir. Although we have been here before, we only yesterday discovered that behind the dyke/levie we are looking at Iles a nature park, more specifically a bird sanctuary. To visit it necessitates a bit of planning, because the river is characterized by very fast currents and a substantial tidal difference, thus, when you go without planning (as we did yesterday), you can encounter a very fierce countercurrent when having to row back to the boat. Amazingly, when struggling with the current, three very pink flamingos flew low over the boat and over our heads. And while navigating the river we keep meeting large amounts of ibises and storks. We will visit the bird sanctuary tomorrow, with proper allowance for wind, tide and current.



The past few weeks were very eventful, and not always of the nice kind. But that seems to be the case with most longer-time trips. But let's start with the nice things!

Monday July 20 saw us leaving early from the laguna of Sancti Petri, heading for Cadiz. The days prior to leaving I had done all kinds of rope work, which I love to do because first it is fun to do, and second it makes the boat really looking nice and is necessary and very useful. Bob had managed to re-cable the wires of the AIS watchbox (which appeared to be wrongly connected), so we were very happy: now at least we get a piercing alarm whenever we are on a possible collision course with another ship sending out AIS signals. One more item of not-working electronics that can be scrapped from the list!

On our way to Cadiz we experienced too little wind to sail but an uncomfortable sea, so we motored once more. I nearly hate to say so, but once more we were accompanied by dolphins, in this instance the regular Flipper-type, approximately 2-3 m long. They made beautiful jumps, like you see in a dolfinarium, two side by side and simultaneously out the water etc. It was very beautiful, a private show just for us!!



By now we have seen three types of whales/dolphins: the pilot whales, the flipper dolphins and white bellied ones. According to a folder I picked up in a hotel there are 5 kinds of whales/dolphins to be seen in these waters, so two more to go. One we have not spotted yet is orca's. They are more frequent here in April and October, since they follow the big tuna fish that is then entering the bay. But maybe we will be lucky next time!!

We arrived early afternoon in the Bay of Cadiz, which is a very large bay with two good anchorages and 4 marinas. We chose the one closest to Cadiz town, since we wanted to visit Cadiz itself. A nice marina, all types of facilities, but unfortunately situated on an industrial site, thus lacking in atmosphere. But very quiet, for a change

In the afternoon we made a first trip into Cadiz using the folding bikes, and that turned out to be THE way to visit this town, since in the heat you don't get as tired as when walking, but still you can cover some distance and see a lot. We liked Cadiz so much that we returned the next day, which is telling, since in particular Bob is not one fond of visiting towns.



So, why is Cadiz this pleasant? First of all, it is very green. Cadiz is built on a peninsula, has on one side a lot of beaches, and on the north-west side a high sea wall. And all around is a big avenue/avenida, offering many parks and always room for pedestrians and cyclists to move about and enjoy the scenery. Hardly any cars, and if they are there it is local, rather slow traffic. The centre is compact, and from it you can always reach the seafront in 5-10 minutes. Streets are narrow, with tall buildings, so even when it is hot, you are mostly walking or cycling in the shade, and plenty of small squares with rest areas etc..



There is no overwhelming architecture, it is all rather small scale, but what there is is well maintained, well laid out, there is a large, very nice covered market hall with original tapas, and, very important to me: a lot of attention to art!!

The city boasts various small and larger theaters, theater academies, stage management schools, and a large art academy. The city fathers obviously like art, because a lot is to be found outside, on the street. Some examples:

The outside of the market hall is normally a bare wall without arches or windows. Here, they had commissioned 12 very large, 2.5 x 2.5 m oil paintings, rather modern ones, depicting rooftop views of the city. Beautiful, so I spent some time photographing them all, and storing them in a folder called "inspiration for painting". The photo-taking was quite amusing, since many people were sitting at tables under the hung paintings, and only when I maneuvered in between the tables did they notice that they had been lunching under all this art!!

Another example: at the opposite end of the bay is the commercial marina Puerto Jerez, and there you find two examples: the entire sea wall, built on the outer pier for protection, is painted very colourful; and on the wharf (varadero), they have constructed 6 very large walls with holes,, rising approximately 15 m high, painted with modern art. Later we learned that these walls were not there to hide ugly wharf items, but solely for protection against the fierce easterly winds (Levantes).

After two days of Cadiz we moved to the already mentioned Puerto de Jerez, which charged us less than the so called provincial harbors! The difference being that the provincial harbors charge us by our width (4.45 m), which means we have to pay for a ship of 15 meters length; the commercial harbor charges by length, which is max 12 meter, so a much lower tariff!!!

This marina is super: new, clean, a nice and well occupied hotel at the premises, and at three easy bike-kilometers of the nice little town of Santa Maria, a scenic Andalusian village. Cycling to the village is a delight, because there is no road, just a dedicated cycling lane, on one side bordered by a beautiful white sandy beach with palm trees, and on the other side a large forest with tall shady pine trees. For those of you that camp: in the middle of this route is a beautiful campsite, beach at 10 meters and all sites below the pine trees.



After two day in this marina we decided to save some money and move to the anchorage bordered by the white sandy beach described above. But when wanting to drop anchor, nothing happened (we use an electric winch), so we returned with great haste to the marina, where it was found that the winch had blown a fuse. Although Bob carries a good dozen or so spare fuses, there was no fuse for 100 Amps, and besides, he was not very happy with this arrangement, preferring to have a relais with a switch.

Fortunately, once outside our pontoon, we saw the van of a local nautic shop, and thus made the acquaintance with a very nice but overly busy mechanic. They had a relay in stock, he came down to Sunny Spray at 21.00 hr to see what needed to be done, told Bob he would have to install the relais himself but that he would help to make the cable connecting to the battery. And so this nice mechanic made these cables at 10 in the evening, next morning Bob needed a couple of hours to install everything, and now it is all working perfectly again, with a better system, so ultimately we gained from this mishap.

Next morning we filled the fuel tanks with 300 liters diesel (gasoil), and we left at 07.00 h for Chipiona, at the mouth of the river Guadalquivir.

There was a lot of wind on the nose, and worse, a turbulent sea, so for the first time in her career Sunny Spray took over a lot of water. After two hours struggling we decided to return and anchor up in a nice anchorage we had seen on our way out of the bay.

The afternoon started peacefully enough, but gradually the wind increased, until in the evening we were rolling and bucking behind our anchor. Around midnight the wind meter read 25 knots at anchor, so we did not sleep at all. Strangely enough, neither one of us had thought of hoisting up the anchor and leaving for one of the four ports lining the bay!!!! ???

Since we were awake anyway, we tried again early next morning. As on the previous day little wind and heavy sea, but gradually the wind and sea eased off a bit, and the wind direction was a bit more favourable, se we persevered and reached Chipiona by early afternoon.

Again, we were quite charmed by this little town. It has beautiful beaches, frequented by Sevillanos who try to escape the summer heat. They all arrive carrying a foldable blue-white striped beach chair and a colourful parasol. The picture gives you a good idea how this looks, and I like it so much that this one is going into the folder "inspiration for painting" as well, the subject should make a really nice painting, the blue sea and all the colorful dots, like a real-life Pollock!!!!



In the evening we had a visit from our Spanish neighbors, which was not only nice but also very informative, since Luis mailed me on the spot information about sailing the river Guadalquivir, and advised us to forget about mooring off in Sevilla itself but instead go to a small port about 6 km south of Sevilla, called Gelves.

Monday July 27 we entered the river proper, which is very wide, very muddy, has a big tidal difference all the way (45 miles) to Sevilla, with a lot of current. The river has sufficient depth for cargo ships, of which you encounter 2-3 per day. There are hardly any pleasure craft to be found.



We had decided to take it easy and to anchor up for a leisurely afternoon, only to discover that the heat was intense and that we were being pestered by hundreds of flies. I took out the klamboos (anti mosquito bed netting), but Bob had had enough: we are turning around and go back to the lower part of the river, where it is cooler.



So we did, dropped anchor again, and stayed for a couple of days to work on permanent anti-mosquito defenses covering windows, portholes and hatches. However, making them to measure is a slow job, so after two days we had only finished 5, out of a total of 25 that need to be done!! Plans changed once more, we would start to move once there was a forecast for less heat in Sevilla.

That forecast came on Thursday, so we immediately left up river, and had an uneventful but very nice sail (not a fly to be seen!), arriving late afternoon at the Puerto de Gelves.

Where we encountered a nearly empty pontoon, a nearly empty interior harbour, not a soul to be seen, an office with opening hours only in the morning, and a tiny bar that ran out of beer after we had ordered a beer each. Where was everyone??? Later we found a sleeping marinero in a tiny watch tower, with a blaring TV.

Despite the emptiness and sparse facilities it was a very good port. The big attraction is its closeness to a bus stop, from where you can catch a bus to the centre of Sevilla every 20 min for 1,55 euro per person. Fantastic!!! Later we learned that most boats move to the sea shore for the summer, it being too hot to navigate close to town. Or the boats go on the shore for maintenance. In fact, in high summer the port has the appearance of wintertime, while in winter it seems to be very busy with local sailors and long distance sailors overwintering.



Sevilla, what a beautiful town! Very widely laid-out, imposing architecture, beautiful setting with the river crossing town, along the river boulevards with cycling and walking paths, in fact, you can cycle and walk along the riverfront for kilometers!, Many car-free streets, and a lot of horse-drawn carriages,, used principally for tourist tours. A very relaxed atmosphere, with nice barrios (neighbourhoods), where we had very good tapas in the shade. My favourite was a dish of garbanzos and spinach, delicious! It is very hot though, and even on a so-called cool day the temperature can easily reach 38-40 degrees. We visited Sevilla twice, and spent most of our hours watching tourists from a shaded terrace.

A major attraction of Puerto de Gelves is that opposite the pontoon where we were moored lies a nature park with roaming horses and sheep, who regularly come to the shoreline for a drink or to bath their feet. Everyday they came and sometimes it was quite a spectacle. The picture below shows a brown and white horse walking sedately from right to left, while the sheep are walking from left to right. All of a sudden ferocious barking from the sheepdog (we never saw the shepherd). No reaction from horse nor sheep. More barking, even louder. Still no reaction from sheep nor horse. Next a lot of commotion, loud barking, a brown figure moving towards the horse, horse whinnying, runs off alarmed, dog snapping at his heels, all the other horses flee in a panic between the trees, all whinnying as well,

and it took awhile before it had all quieted down. The sheep, meanwhile, never gave a single sign of distress, they calmly walked on, trusting the antics of the dog, obviously!



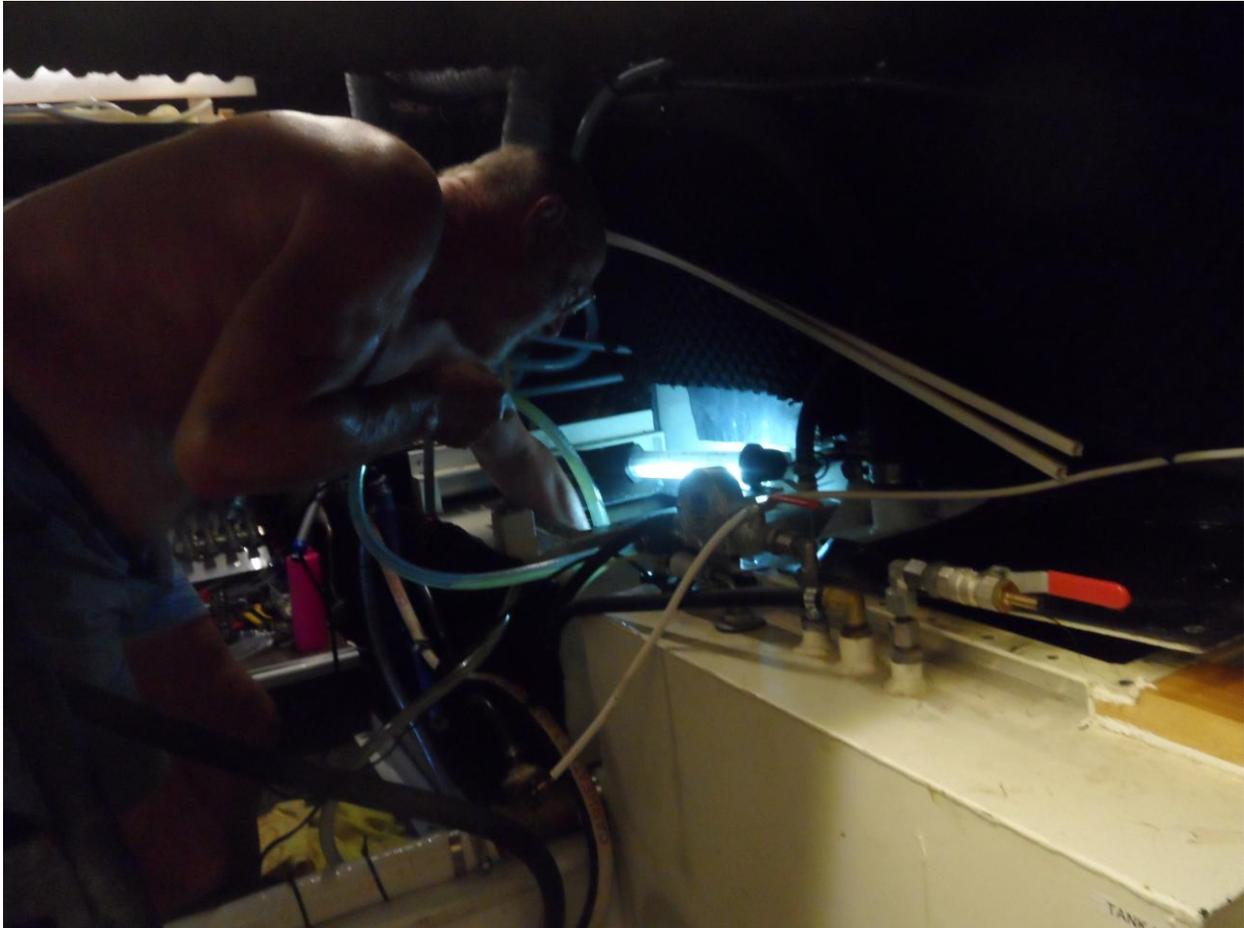
We had planned to move downriver again last Saturday, so on Friday evening Bob decided to top up the water tanks. After half an hour he asks me how much we have filled, but I see no movement of the meters, which does not raise the alarm because these meters are notoriously unreliable (they are on the bad electronics list).

Fifteen minutes later still no movement, so I go to the inlet tubes to hear water running downwards. But hear nothing. I report this to Bob, several seconds silence and then a mighty swearing: he had been filling the fuel tank with water!!!!

How to get the tanks empty in a port without facilities! Friday evening was spent improvising flexible tubes, a stainless steel rod and a small mobile pump to make an installation that could reach the bottom

of the tanks (water separates from oil and sinks). We collected that night 200 liters water, in empty water jerrycans, which, once we saw that the water was reasonably clean, we emptied in the river.

The next day was more difficult, we now had to remove 300 liters contaminated oil. A mariner of the Puerto helped us to find 16 old canisters of 20-30 liters, which we pumped full of diesel, which was easy enough, but then had to be transported by hand and foot until on the wharf, where we could transport them further into a corner. (where they are still waiting for further transport, we will get a bill for that)



The next stage was cleaning the tanks, but to reach one of the three Bob had to completely dismantle the hot water installation, so now, in the heat, we did not have an engine nor water. The cleaning itself was easy enough, we could reach all corners with a household mop, but after that came the job of filling the tanks up with diesel!!! No facilities in the harbor, no gas station or supplier to be found to come with a truck to pump up a couple of hundred liters, no taxis willing to transport diesel oil. So in the end it was down to hand and footwork again: I managed to buy one 10-liter canister at the local hardware store, one 10 liter can at a Chinese shop, and we had one of 5 liters ourselves. And so, with capacity for 25 liters, we saddled the bikes and pedaled out of town to the nearest gas station to fill the jerrycans, cycle

back to the Puerto, carry them by hand down the steps and the pontoon and fill the tanks. Five times we made this trip, which ultimately gave us 125 liters, enough to run the engine for a couple of hours as a test and to make the return trip downriver.



By now we have arrived safe and sound back on our favorite anchorage on the river, and we are taking it easy. So are the flies, so the project making the anti-mosquito and fly protection is again at the forefront.

So, what are the plans? We still have Madeira and the Canary Island in our sights, but we would very much like to get some of our electronics working (the multiplexer now functions, but the Linux computer cannot see or read the data). Another Must Be Fixed is the wind pilot. We have decided to add some tackles and change the rope into one that does not stretch. We are trying to order new rope (it is not regular rope, but Aramstar) in Cadiz, but if that does not work we will order it in Denia and have it sent. After that we'll see, we are still not in a hurry, the season to cross the atlantic toward the Caribbean does not start until November.

We'll keep in touch!!

Love, Helma

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Sunny Spray Or.....Sunnys Pray (that seems to be a new name given to us, try it if you have troubles, but mind, I will change it back at the earliest opportunity)

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