

August 27 2015, Puerto Sherry.

Sunny Spray's travels Episode 4

Dear friends,

Today finds us again, for the second time, In Puerto Sherry, across from Cadiz. This is a beloved marina, where we are waiting for two rubber connections for our Mercedes cooling system (not to be had here in Spain within a time frame of at least 10 days!). Three days ago we found out that there was a nasty rip in one of these connections, and accordingly we spilled quite a lot of water. This morning the parts arrived with DHL from Holland, and Bob is mounting them now. The idea was to repair these connections and then leave as soon as possible for Madeira and the Canary Islands, but that is not to be, as you will learn further on. Nevertheless, this marina is an excellent base to make final preparations, and we are quite happy here.

We did not experience great adventures the past few weeks, so for a change this episode might become a relatively short one!

Let me continue where I left off at the end of episode 3: tomorrow let's go bird watching. That wish was borne after we discovered we were anchored up, on the rio Guadalquivir, right next to a bird sanctuary! Since it was quite tricky to reach the shore, we moored Sunny Spray, as close as possible, upstream from a tiny pier. With the outgoing tide (there is quite a current and tidal difference on the Guadalquivir!) we got into the dinghy and let ourselves more or less drift towards the rickety pier, and two hours later, after the walk, the tide had turned, so we could do the reverse and let ourselves drift upriver to Sunny Spray. Yeh, when you get older and less strong it's the brains that have to work harder, not the muscles! (we do have an outboard, but it is a 2 hp electric Minn Kota, very quiet and cute, but totally inadequate to go against a strong current, so we have to manually row).



The bird sanctuary was rather small but quite nice with a wonderful name: Salinas de Bonanza de Monte Algaida. There was a big and instructive panel with pictures and drawings of all birds to be seen, labeled in Spanish and Latin, so with my (Dutch) Bird Guide, which also gives Latin names, and a pair of binoculars we set off.



We saw loads of flamencos, regular and black storks, herons, spoonbills, and avocets. I did not see the fish eagle, but saw another bird of prey which I could not identify. Right at the moment we were on our way back, the Real Fernando arrived with a fresh load of tourists, so our timing had been perfect.



The Real Fernando is a ship we were to see daily until we left the river. It is the only way to see something of the Natural Park Doñana, starting from the right side of the river. It leaves twice daily from Sanluca de Barrameda, at the mouth of the river, for a river trip with a short stop in the park itself and a stop at the bird sanctuary. We found it quite an amusing boat, that reminded us of a 1950s comic strip called "TinTin in Africa".

This natural park is one of the largest of its kind in Spain. The name comes from a noble Spanish lady who lived some centuries ago and owned large tracts of land in the south of the province. She was, centuries before it is all en vogue, already quite involved with environmental protection: Doña Ana!

The Park features predominantly pine trees, and according to numerous websites hosts many animal species threatened with extinction, including Europe's only wild cat, the lynx. We had already been informed that the lynx would be difficult to spot, and this will not improve in the future: it was reported that two lynxes had gone outside the park for a walk, and were killed on the road. Que lastima!



One of the reasons to go back to the anchorage near the Bird Sanctuary was our need to find a lonely (and gratis) anchorage, where Bob would be able to saw and grind to his heart's content; after all, if we were to win our battle against flies and mosquitoes we needed to make a grand total of 25 insect screens.

This now was a job we had already been planning for a long time, but had always postponed because of the time involved. We had, however, brought all the material with us, including plaques of white lexan for the frames (bullet proof plexiglass, how handy in these troubled times!), and insect screen cloth, which can easily be bought in Spain.

Since nearly all frames were of different sizes, much time was spent measuring and sawing and measuring and grinding. Noisy work, resulting in clouds of fine white particles, that still surface everywhere in the boat. On average we managed to make two screens a day, with sanding, gluing and stretching the cloth being my tasks.



Honestly, I have to say: the result is great, they are nearly invisible put in an open window or hatch, easy to look through, and most important: highly effective! This last is all the more needed because I am being bitten terribly: one day I counted twenty bites on my left leg alone, and stopped counting when I saw that my right leg and arms were equally covered. So we were talking about suffering 80 plus insect bites per night, which, literally and metaphorically, makes me sick! Bob, of course, hardly suffers a bite a all.

During our 'screentime' we have not stayed at the same anchorage all the time. Once we sailed back to the marina of Chipiona,, because I needed to do some shopping and wanted to get rid of the garbage. Also, I needed a site with free wifi, since I was offered to download Windows 10, but that programme needs 3 GigaBytes to download! (in the end we tried it in several places and bars, but always half way the process stopped. On board the boat I ran my smartphone as a hot spot, started the process after midnight and found next morning it had downloaded correctly, great, but costing me an arm and a leg for mobile data).

Since it would have been quite asocial to disturb our neighbors with sawing and grinding, we spent a lot of time shopping, cycling and generally taking it a bit easy.



Much fun was had watching the seagulls. In every marina or harbor there are numerous seagulls, they screech horribly, are very territorial and impudent towards humans. Hardly had we arrived or we saw a Spanish lady from one of the boats running after a cheeky gull, who had stolen some fish from her plate!!

The second night in Chipiona, when still daylight, a small yacht with a broken mast was towed inside and moored close to us. That is always a nasty moment, but the more so once we discovered it concerned our neighbor from behind us in Gelves! Only two days before he had passed us on the river, waving genially, and now his dream was broken.



I spent a bad night, could not sleep at all, and realized to the full that accidents can easily happen. Thus, before going on the ocean, we had better check, check and double check!! Which we did, and this proved immediately successful: we found the nasty rip in the rubbers, but also discovered that one of the bolts of the engine mounting had come loose (with thanks to the wharf in Holland, which had not even used self tightening nuts).

Another pastime in Chipiona was working the computers. Fortunately, that turned out to be time well spent, because combined with numerous calls and emails we have now managed to solve some of our electronics problems. Using an app called sailtracker and a (finally functioning) multiplexer, we can now see our boat speed, wind direction and wind speed, GPS position and AIS environment on our new tablet, without having to be online!, and occasionally Bob even gets to see the whole lot on his big

computer screen. Because of the 'now and then yes, now and then no' component, we think the computer needs more fiddling and fine tuning, but the problem of receiving no signals at all seems to have been solved. So now we seem to have circumvented the need to buy pricey data viewers and terminals, we see charts and relevant data on our own computers and tablets!

And the problem with the water tank meters, which were malfunctioning, has been solved as well: one of the tanks had no electric wire at all! If only all problems were to be solved that easily!!

So gradually we are getting through our list of not functioning electronics. The only piece of equipment still not working (because it still has not been connected!) is the radar. Bob's head and attention span is absolutely not on the radar right now. Maybe, once we have more free time in the Canaries, he'll get started on that one.

After three days in Chipiona we moved back to the river, but choose an anchorage close to Bonanza, at the side of the Doñana Natural Park. Every day the Real Fernando passed really close, packed with tourists, and since that boat loudly plays a tape with all kinds of information about Doñana and the river, we picked up quite a bit of nice but trivial knowledge. Thus we learned that the exact spot where we were at anchor was the same spot where Magellaen had anchored with his six ships before setting off on the first ever round the world sailing voyage! That bit of information gave some extra shine to where we were.

In the meantime the insect screen work progressed nicely. Occasionally, when the legs became stiff and in need of a walk, we took the dinghy to go for a long walk on the beach of Doñana. Once we anchored up close to the (fishing) harbor of Bonanza and I landed on shore in between the fishing ships. That was not difficult, but so dirty and smelly that I never did it again.



In the meantime it was noticeably getting later in the season: fewer tourists, lower temperatures! At night around 20 degrees Celcius, during daytime around 28-30 degrees. Those are my temperatures!

Another nice occurrence: apart from the Real Fernando, there was another old ship plying the river: an hourly ferry from the beach of Sanluca de Barrameda to the Doñana beach.



No docking please and just hurry up! The ferry sails onto the beach, unloads its passengers, at the same time taking returning passengers back on board, while the captain has a bit of a task keeping the boat and the loading ramp against the beach, due to the strong current. Imagine this happening in the USA, before entering the boat you probably would have needed to sign dozens of waivers with the lawyers standing by! Again, this hourly scene reminded me strongly of Africa.

On Tuesday August 18 we had finished with all the material to make the insect screens and had managed to complete 22! Hurray! We spent one more day at anchor, placing additional blocks at the rudder to facilitate the wind vane self steering, but unfortunately, the rudder can still not be moved by hand or wind.

Thursday August 20 we left in the morning for Rota, the last of the four towns with marinas in the Bay of Cadiz that we still had not visited. There was hardly any wind, so circumstances were unfit to try out the altered system with the rudder and the windvane.

Rota turned out to be a lovely town, with a (nearly car free) old centre. The marina was right next to the old town, so to our heart's content we could walk and cycle. Many shops, a good place to stock up for a long trip, a beautiful castle and a very relaxed and friendly atmosphere.



Apart from necessary shopping I went to the hairdresser (not bad!), we visited a botanical garden and a Park Atlantico, or a beach side forest with predominantly pine trees. Beautifully laid out, with tall trees, and instead of paths they have made raised walkways everywhere, thereby enabling wheelchair bound people or parents with baby strollers to use the park as well.



Wheelchair accessibility was a prominent feature in Rota: everywhere ramps, and along the beach a miles long boulevard, with numerous wooden walkways leading to a covered area, specially for wheelchair users. All this added to the friendly and relaxed atmosphere..

Nevertheless we left this superspot, because the harbor fees were above our budget, and it was quite noisy at night. So Saturday afternoon we left for a nearby anchorage, which turned out to be even noisier! As you know, the Spanish in summer start their events quite late, and nearby our anchorage a well visited open-air flamenco performance took place, starting at 11.00 pm. It lasted to three o'clock in the morning, and was followed by two hours of noise coming from departing cars and enthusiastic singing visitors. This, combined with a nasty swell on our anchorage, led us to leave next morning, physically broken, for Puerto Sherry.

Which is where we still are. A nice pontoon, quiet port, showers nearby, nice and helpful marineros. In the Control Tower we found the new steering wheel, sent there by our tenant, Mariano. Close by beautiful pine forests and blinding white beaches. There are worse places in the world to spend some time!



And that is what we will do here, spent some time. Originally it had been our intention to use Port Sherry as our last port of call before leaving this week for Madeira. However, following our check check double check inspection, some defects surfaced, which we need to solve first.

While we were having a mechanic on board, Bob showed him the set up with our rudder and the self steering windvane. He agreed that the rudder went way too stiff, and his advice was to put the boat dry for a good inspection what is causing this, and what can be done about it.

We have decided to take that advice, and have booked a travel lift for next Monday. We have no idea how long we will be out of the water, all this depends on what they'll find and what needs to be done next. In the meantime Bob can work on minor defects, and I can continue, but at a slower pace, with preparing for Madeira and the Canary Islands.

Since we are not allowed to sleep on the boat while on land, we have toured the town trying to find a hotel room or pension. That turned out to be quite difficult and very expensive. In the end we managed to rent a bungalow on a nearby campsite. Not only is that a much nicer option than staying in a small hotel room, it also turned out to be the cheapest option. Justice at last! We have rented it for two nights to start with, and we'll see if we need more nights.

So, hopefully everything will work out fine and we'll be able to cross to Madeira and the Canary Islands using the windvane. Next report will be from there (I hope). Then also more about the sails and the rigging, as per request!

Many greetings and love,

Helma

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www.marinetraffic.com or www.shipfinder.com

Naam: Sunny Spray (if not successful, then try Sunnys Pray)

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