

Sunny Spray's travels, episode 8

Santa Cruz de Tenerife, February 6, 2016, translated into English, Feb 8-9. Sent from Gomera, Feb 9.

Dear all,



Sunrise a couple of days ago in Santa Cruz de Tenerife. We are moored at the head of a pontoon in a tiny marina, called Puerto Chico. For the first time in months we have an uninterrupted view on water, and not hemmed in on all sides by neighbouring boats. Bob is over the moon.

Travel episode nr 8 dated back to December 16, which makes it high time to write a new one. As usual, we went through some ups and downs, but fortunately the ups form the majority.

The biggest up is that the new windvane, the Hydrovane, arrived safely and timely, has been installed, was tested on our crossing to Tenerife on January 18 and functions well.

Also on the up-side are the facts of nearly finishing all the jobs in and around the boat that needed to be done while still in the Canary Islands, of hugely enjoying an active social life in Las Palmas, the surprise visit of friend Regina in January, and the beautiful car and bus trips we made inland on Gran Canaria and Tenerife.

A definite down was the never-ending noise and hectic of Las Palmas, and the sooty air (cars?) that left a greasy black layer on our light-coloured interior.

The largest down, causing us more delays, was me breaking my foot on January 1. More about this later.

The new wind self-steering device, called a Hydrovane, dominated the last two weeks of December and the first weeks of January. Since the makers live in Vancouver, Canada, we had to call late in the evening to speak to them, but contacts were excellent, and reactions on calls and emails nearly instantaneous. Being nearly Christmas when we ordered the device, we had expected much delay, and really did not expect anything to arrive before well into January. To our big surprise the Hydrovane was cleared by customs on the 29th of December, and delivered to us immediately. Great service.



The welder and his helper busy making the brackets that support the Hydrovane. A courageous man, balancing above the water while he could not swim!

Bob needed some days to prepare for the installation, and finally, on Jan 6 and 7, two local workers showed up and welded the different parts together, while we were still in the water. There were some harrowing moments whenever they needed to weld on the hull, since the heat of the welding caused the insulation between hull and interior woodwork to start smouldering. We used many wet towels trying to prevent a fire.



Aligning the Hydrovane in the vertical, using high tech: a piece of cord with heavy screws at the end.



Now finished, the entire installation weighs some 60 kgs and is very impressive. She ends at the top of the red vane that towers above us.



Yves (who had come over from Tenerife to take over my duties during the crossing) and Bob have just put Olivia to work for the first time. Bob looks rather big, but that is just 3 layers of clothing: he was very very cold, and that is of course a sign of seasickness. I was seasick as well (but not that bad).

On January 18 the Hydrovane was put to the test when we crossed to Tenerife. First we gave her a name: because she is this tall, strong and dealing with sailors, we christened her Olivia after Olive, Popey's sweetheart.

Fortunately she performed very well, although it soon became apparent that, as is normal, the boat needs to be trimmed perfectly. The auxiliary rudder steers the boat, while the main rudder is fixed in position. If need be, simply turning the main rudder will override the Hydrovane's rudder. It has also become clear that we need a lot of practice miles before we can use Olivia optimally. But that is something we are both looking forward to.

We left Las Palmas with mixed feelings. On the one hand it was difficult to leave, because we had built up an active social life, and seen many beautiful things. On the other hand we were very tired about the incessant noise and the foul air. In addition, we did not want to fall into the trap of staying too long in one place; before you realize it, you might already be in one and the same place for i.e. 4 months or an entire year!

Because that is the danger when the social life is blooming. We were very cosy with a number of the live-aboards whom we already knew or got to know in Las Palmas: Roy and Caroline we already knew since Gran Tarajal, they stay semi-permanent in the Canary islands. Roy is not only a friend but also a

specialist in electrics and electronics, so we hired him to install the new chain counter (to count how many meters anchor chain has been paid out); he repaired our gas-detector, repaired a broken connection in our navigation lights and also repaired the connection of tankmeter 6, so that we finally know how many liters water it holds.

By the way, it is not very difficult to find specialists in Las Palmas. There is an abundance of Spanish mechanics, ship chandlers, stainless steel shops, carpintries, polyester workshops, sailmakers etc. In addition, a lot of the permanent live-aboards all have their own specialty, and the tam-tam ensures that you quickly learn to whom to turn for what. And if not, you only need to consult announcements put up in shop windows or in such strategic places as the laundry room or the sailors bar. While reading the advertisements, it is very amusing to read how many people are volunteering as a crew member for crossing The Atlantic. In exchange, they are willing to keep watch, cook, clean and sometimes even navigate.

At a Christmas evening outdoor party (bring your own food and drink, and meet others), we met Dutch couple Martin and Yvonne and their 7 year old daughter Mare. Mare is now attending school in Las Palmas, so they will most likely stay for a while in Las Palmas. We also met Kirsten, a Danish solo-sailor specialized in sewing work; Pat, an English teacher who used to have a junk-rigged sailing boat, with his daughter Anna; and Frank and Rita, a Belgian couple sailing in the Canaries for the last seven years. Frank and Rita are the only ones from Las Palmas who are here with us, In Tenerife. We expect to meet them again in El Hierro. A couple of days ago I spent a wonderful day on board their boat, helping Frank with his first steps in painting-land.

And then there were Jo and Do, with the Golden Wind. Very special 70-plus golden oldies, on their way with Golden Wind, a seven meter long junk-rigged boat. We met Jo for the first time in 2014, when he was on a trip in the Mediterrean and moored next to us in Oliva, our home port in Spain. He then had with him Kuro, a Schipperke (dog), and it is said that Schipperkes are the only dogs in the world that are specially bred for ships and whom you can safely take along without feeling guilty. Sadly, Kuro died of old age last winter, during the trip Jo is making now. His wife Do accompanied him on most of his travels, and together they crossed the Atlantic several times, went to the US, the North Cape and many many other places. Unfortunately, Do is quite ill now, so they have both gone home to Germany, leaving the Golden Wind behind in Las Palmas for a later pick-up or transport by boat/over land.

Golden Wind is a beautiful little boat. Jo is a graphic artist, and has made his small boat into a treasure trove. Everything is neat and nice, very cosy, beautiful painted, and heavily illustrated. Inclusive his junk sail, which has been painted top to bottom with scenes from their travels. A sight to behold.

Jo is a Bhoeddhist, and has written several books in which he compares Boeddhist experiences with sailing a junk rig. They left early January, to our great regret. Jo preaches Less is More, but nevertheless he walked aboard Sunny Spray with a big smile, such a large junk boat he had never seen before on his travels (apart from meeting the real ones in China of course).

January 1 I had invited most of the above mentioned friends for drinks and nibbles on board Sunny Spray, serving such typical Dutch dishes as “bitterballen” (home made for the first time in my life, using left over Christmas turkey), home-made apple pie, and the favorite treat, “oliebollen”. Everyone in particular enjoyed the “oliebollen”, although Caroline complained that the last of “her” gin had gone into the ollibollies!

By 7 pm most of the guests had left, and after doing the dishes I walked towards the pontoon with three bags of garbage. For a tiny moment my attention wandered because of a noise on a neighbouring boat, I looked left, forgot to look down and missed a tiny step which, I guess, I must have taken a thousand times the past few years. On my own deck!! I did not even fall, I just stumbled, but sadly, the damage was done, and I broke the 4th metatarsal bone in my right foot.

Fortunately, the traumatologist attending me next morning in the hospital was a very modern one, putting me on a rather new therapy: no plaster cast, only tape around it, and a special orthopedic shoe with a stiff sole, which prevents that the foot will bend when moving. Nothing like sitting still all day and resting the foot up: you have to move around, as much as you can, and you have to put pressure on the foot. But no bending! Rationale: the moving about stimulates the circulation and prevents complications, which often need heparin shots; putting pressure on the foot stimulates that the bones are aligned correctly by the tendons and the muscles, which will work normally.



The new therapy quickly proved to be successful: already on January 16, after only 15 days, the broken bones (shown here on Jan 2) had perfectly aligned and were busily mending themselves. After 1 month I was painfree and had no hematoma. Unfortunately, my Tenerifean general practitioner was not too happy about me being on a rocking sailing boat, so asked me to postpone the trip a bit. We started sailing again after week 5.

Martin upon hearing this story suggested that maybe I could use the bicycle as a kind of stepping device, resting the broken foot on a pedal and stepping with the good leg. I had quite some problems doing this, but during the process I learned that cycling went very well, provided I put the saddle lower. This was a bit awkward at first, but the lowered saddle ensured that with an emergency stop I could quickly put the good foot on the ground, and keep the broken foot on the pedal. This was absolutely perfect: already in the first week I managed the new cycling technique so well that Kirsten and I could go into town, she showing me the safest, not so crowded back streets and hidden cycling paths. I used crutches when walking about, and took the crutches along on the bike, taped with elastic bands to the frame. Perfect! The bike was my ticket to freedom!

Thus, despite my handicap, I could continue making nice outings, although walking was of course out of the question.

Fortunately we had made a number of very nice walks before the broken foot. Traveling by long-distance bus (called guagua) we could often get quite near the starting point of a walk (actually, the bus company gives specific suggestions for making walks and getting there by bus). In this way we walked along the rim of the Bandama crater on December 19. A schoolbook crater, but not with a perfectly smooth rim (as you see in the James Bond movies), but with a realistic rim, consisting of rocks up and indentations down, and very narrow ledges. Thus, despite the short distance, quite a tiring walk! But absolutely beautiful



Bandama crater: rough gravelly tops and indents, and occasionally very small ridges (see central whitish line in right-hand picture).

We also visited the Jardín Botánico, a large botanic garden built on the slopes and floor of a steep ravine, quite near to Las Palmas. It was a delight walking around in the lower garden, and we could imagine very well how the citizens of Las Palmas will escape the city's summer heat and find a nice cool, shaded spot in the shadow of large and old trees. One of the garden's entrances was on top of the ravine ledge, so

our first impression was spectacular, zigzagging down along a nearly vertical, very green and shaded wall.

On Christmas Day we walked, together with thousands of Las Palmerians, along the 6 km white and black Las Canteras beach, situated on the North side of Las Palmas. It gave a holiday feeling.

On December 31 we took the bus through the north side of the island, to end up on the west-side, in Puerto de las Nieves. A tiny town, authentic buildings, all in white and blue, nice small beach, and a lot of ferries to Tenerife. We made a beautiful coastal walk, steep cliffs, and discovered a large cave on the way



Puerto de las Nieves: at the left the unexpected cave. At the right pools with seawater, in the past used as fishing ponds. Now they are public (free) swimming ponds. The surf cascading into the ponds makes for nice current-free whirlpools.

Afterwards we passed a small chapel, dating from around 1560. A large plaque explained that from about 1500 to 1580 Puerto de las Nieves (actually, all the islands!) had become very rich by growing sugar cane, and trading the extracted sugar to eager north-European buyers. They were so rich that they commissioned the best and most expensive painters of that time to paint altar pieces. So now you can find original paintings from 16th century Flemish masters inside a tiny chapel in Puerto de las Nieves!

As of January 1 my guagua-trips and walks were finished because of my foot. Fortunately, a nice event broke the monotony of my days: the fiesta of Los Reyes!! The real fiesta is on January 6, but on the evening of January 5 every town welcomes its own three kings with a parade.

Los Reyes is THE major children's event in Spain: they do not celebrate Christmas with presents, but in its place the kings bring them presents during the night of Jan 5 to Jan 6. And being in the lands of camels, the Canarian kings ride camels! When they pass, preceded by their rather shabbily dressed courtiers, all fathers with children on their shoulders (a king on a camel is high!) push onto the street, and the children give one of the kings an envelop with their wishing list. The kings accept the hundreds of envelopes, which quickly disappear in large Mercadona shopping bags, carried unceremoniously by the king's helpers. Needless to say it becomes very chaotic: the fathers with their children are everywhere, the camels get frightened and nearly collide with the camel coming up from behind, the guards cannot keep up with where to look. In short, very Spanish and hugely entertaining! We had scored a really nice spot just behind the marina, I went with the bike, and Bob and Kirsten accompanied me. We all had a super evening!





Chaos at Los Reyes, but hugely enjoyable!

Equally super was Regina's visit from the 13th till the 18th of January. She had rented a small apartment on the north beach of Las Palmas, as well as a car. Of course the three of us made many beautiful trips inland.

One of the first trips took us inland to the valley of Guadeque (indeed, lots of names in the Canary Islands, in particular on Gran Canaria, start with the word GUA), a 20 kilometers long valley, with high sides and many, many caves. Until the sixties of the last century most of these caves were still inhabited, and the Guadeqians lived very isolated from the outside world. Now, some 170 people still live in their cave houses, mainly earning a living of tourism. It is weird walking along a high wall, knowing there is an entire village but hardly seeing anything! An excellent museum described the geology and ethnographics



Guadeque, a beautiful valley with many still inhabited cave houses. The almond trees were in early bloom (as compared to Spain, were they bloom end of January, early February).

Spectacular was our visit to the South of Gran Canaria. First we visited the Dutch shop in Maspalomas, mainly to stock up on Indonesian soy sauce and spices used in the Indonesian cuisine. We continued taking the narrow GC 604, which, as we remembered from our visit in 1983, bordered a Gran Canyon-type of canyon and running towards the centre of the island.

Our memory turned out to be good enough, but gradually the road became smaller, to finally end completely in a deeply rutted tire track, close to the canyon wall and no protective railing. Both Regina and I thought the track way too close to the abyss, and we squaked nervously about not being able to see anything, and all we did was stare anxiously at the track and being afraid. Fortunately, after a couple of hundred meters, Bob reached the insight that this might well continue for another 30 kilometers, and that the rented Volkswagen did possess absolutely zero heavy terrain qualities! Hurray, we turned back, albeit turning was not easy.



We had to drive back to Maspalomas before we could take another road inland. This road was much better, and the canyons we saw were equally spectacular.

Thus we eventually reached the highest point of Gran Canaria, Roque Nuble, and behind every bend in the road we saw another and yet another breathtaking view. As a bonus the almond trees were blooming, and softening the sharp edges of the mountains.

After this much natural beauty we had to recover a bit, so we stayed in and around the boat. Which gave us the opportunity to visit, on Sunday morning, our favorite Dorama Park. In its Pueblo Canaria we enjoyed the regular performance of Canarian folk dancers and musicians.

Monday morning we left, with Yves, at 5 in the morning for Tenerife; Regina left in the afternoon for Barcelona.

The colourful underskirts are embroidered by hand with wool. The same wool is found back in pompons, adorning the hats and shoes of the women.



So now we are in Tenerife, in a very small marina called Puerto Chico; this marina is situated in the middle of the commercial and fisherman's port Darsena Pesquera, just north of Santa Cruz de Tenerife. We fled the city marina of Santa Cruz because of the incessant engine noise of the numerous ferries and cruise ships, and the accompanying smell of diesel.

Here, in Puerto Chico, it is much quieter, although I got quite a fright the first night we were moored here: in the middle of the night I woke up because I heard a lot of yelling. By the time I managed to get out of bed and to a window, I just saw gliding past (way too close!) the green board lights of a rather big and low boat. We had nearly been hit by an offshore supply ship. Bob never woke up, he was too tired.



It took three tug boats to get this Maersk workshop backwards out of the Darsena Pesquera. From the deck of Sunny Spray we had front row seats.

Santa Cruz is a busy port: on a 6 km length there are more than 4 different commercial harbours, apart from three marinas.

Although Santa Cruz is a beautiful town (much prettier and greener than Las Palmas), staying here is much more complicated. Puerto Chico is about 6 kms away from Santa Cruz centre, and to get there we have to take the bicycle or a bus. If you opt for the bicycle, you make many many kilometers, in particular since big shops are often found in La Laguna, to the north of the city centre. If you opt for the bus, you have to walk long distances in between bus stops. With my limited walking radius I find it difficult to get about. If you do chose the bus, there is a good guagua net, and one of the largest bus stations I have ever seen (the Intercambiador). With the bus I managed to get a couple of times to the well assorted fresh market, the Nuestra Señora de Africa market, and we visited some specialist shops in La Laguna.

Together with Yves and Joanna, we took a rental car to investigate and visit Garachico, a nice, original town in the North, recently equipped with a marina. We all wanted to see the situation, would it be a possible place to stay? It is a good thing we first investigated: the harbor was built with a more than 10 m high protective wall on its outer pier, and even the pier wall had serious damage on the top. In addition, the entrance was nearly in the surf, and the local surf is very very high, being at the receiving end of high ocean waves rolling in from the North Atlantic. No wonder there were hardly any sailing boats to be seen, neither was the roll-on roll-off jetty in use. In short, none of us dared to even think of entering.



Water damage on the pier wall in Puerto de Garachico.

While on this car trip, we also visited the beautiful Anaga mountains, having steep ravines and lush valleys.



In the Anaga mountains, view on Almaciga. Bob, Joanna and Yves climbed, only to be stopped suddenly when they found themselves standing on the ridge of a steep canyon!

As said earlier, Santa Cruz is very green, and that is needed, because on a very small surface there is a city of 220,000 people, and a lot of industry as well. These densely packed industrial areas are very ugly. In the centre of town is a large botanical garden, started in the 18th century in order to acclimatise tropical plants to subtropical conditions: Parque Garcia Sanabria.



At the south end of the main harbour you will find a beautiful auditorium, designed by Calatrava, the Valencian architect who has also designed the buildings and surroundings of the Ciudad des Artes y Ciencias in Valencia. Next to the auditorium is an old round fort, restored. The derelict area where the fort stands was reformed into the Parque Maritimo, an area with round ponds filled with seawater and places to rest or sunbathe. Our old Lanzarotian friend Cesar Manrique designed the park, his style is unmistakable in the white rounded forms and pools adorned with black basalt blocks. Paying 2,50 euros one can swim in the pools or sunbathe on the available sun loungers. Where can one find such a citizen-friendly city!



The restored fort, in the background part of the auditorium of Calatrava. The auditorium's entire glass paneled side-wall flips up, creating an immense, shaded terrace. To our surprise a pint of beer (tanque or jara) costed only 3 Euros on this high-class spot!



The auditorium de Calatrava, in the foreground the Jardin Maritimo, an artsy open air swimming complex.

Next to the Jardin Maritimo is The Palmetum, the world's largest garden devoted to different palm species. It is built on a 40 m high hill, which, until 1983, used to be the city's waste dump. The dump was closed that year, but it lasted until 1995 before they had decided what to do with the dumpsite. An enormous project, because not only was it a matter of depositing earth (there is only a 0,5 to 1 m thick layer of earth), but the biggest job was and still is drainage of toxic liquid and gases still being released by the fermenting garbage inside the hill. Down below is a kilometers long network of tubes to transport the gas.

The palm trees growing in The Palmetum come from all over the world; sometimes they are extinct on their original location, and the only specimens surviving are to be found in this garden. Most trees are grown from seeds (an ongoing process since 1993, since palm trees react badly to being transplanted and transported over half the world. Bob gathered numerous seeds, for whenever we are back home....

The garden is also an eco-garden: irrigation water comes from the municipal waste water treatment plant, while drought loving trees get nothing at all; mulch comes from the pruning of the city's trees.

It took years before the site had been transformed into something green, and therefore the garden opened only in 2014.

In the middle you'll find a sunken, octagonal structure, with numerous waterfalls cascading over the wall, the entire structure meant to represent a tropical rain forest. It houses plants with gigantic leaves, waterfeatures over basalt blocs, and water loving plants and palm trees. The entrance was through a tunnel with a skylight, reminding us very much of the works of Cesar Manrique (true, a posthumous legacy).

We loitered for hours, and in total the three visits took the better part of an entire day.



My favorite palm tree, the Bismarckia nobilis (nearly 30 meters high, raised from seed since 1993); to the right some of the giant-leafed plants found in the Octagon. Below one of the Manrique waterfalls.



It was all equally beautiful, beautiful, beautiful..... but we have caught the itch, we want to continue! To Gomera and to Hierro. To Senegal and the Saloum delta. To the Cabo Verde islands. And also to Surinam and French Guyana, since it is already too late in the season to extensively visit the Caribbean.

Plans plans plans. But as you will have understood by now, plans and boats do not mix very well, the plans have to be changed continuously.

Animal of the month: this large sea bass (¿?), caught at the Mercado de Nuestra Señora de Africa, in Santa Cruz. Caught on camera, that is. Alive, I would leave him alone.



Lots of Love,

Hasta la próxima! (until the next time)!

Helma

You can follow us on www.marinetraffic.com. Ships name Sunny Spray; MMSI: 244780434