

## Episode 24, the adventures of Sunny Spray

**Pedreguer, Alicante, Spanje, December 31, 2017**

Dear all,

It is now Friday, December 29, and finally I am ready to sit down and write the last episode of *Sunny Spray's* travels. By now we have been at home home for two nearly two months, and we were overwhelmed by the many things that needed our attention, needed to be solved, living ashore again, getting all types of things started again, visits from and to friends, visits to doctors and clinics, government offices, searching for a new car (today we bought a Skoda Fabia Combi Like, has arrived now), and, not to be forgotten, getting used to house and garden. The house looked fine when we returned, but the garden needs a lot of work. That will keep us occupied for the next couple of months!

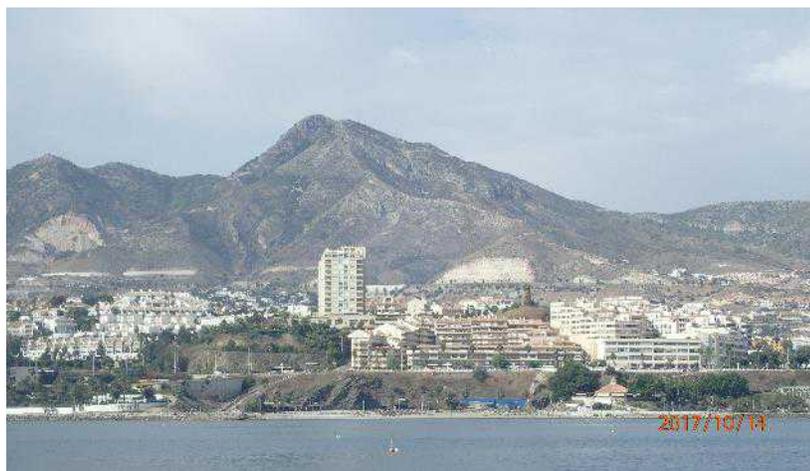


And then there is Max: for some weeks now our new, four-pawed companion. He had been brought by gypsies to the animal shelter in Denia, being very ill with the Parvo virus, and we met him at a friend's house where he needed to recover from the Parvo after having been treated at an animal clinic. The next day he had to be returned to the animal shelter, and maybe we....? In the first instance we said a clear "no", he was not exactly our type, in fact, we had been looking for a nice, 2-3 month old blond female labrador puppy. But as things go, he chose us, and at the friend's house he continuously sat at our feet, sending his most lovable looks. So we said "yes", had him on a trial period for 10 days, and then adopted him officially. Max is trying his utmost to be lovable to both us and the three cats. Unfortunately, the cats do not think he is that lovable, so with regularity there is a mighty chaos in our house. We think that will sort itself out in the coming weeks and months, already there are signs of improvement. But it all gives a lot of work, raising an energetic 6-month old puppy. All reasons why I did not get around to writing the final report. But today I am determined to start writing, I still owe you a report from our last trip along the Spanish coast, and an end of trip evaluation.

The last report ended in Sotogrande, a marina in a classy resort with permanent and holiday apartments, just 11 nautical miles (nm) north of the Rock of Gibraltar. We left Sotogrande on Saturday October 14, embarking on the final trip that had to bring us home, to Denia. The weather was not really bad, but the sky showed very black clouds, while the radar showed heavy showers. To our great pleasure we were accompanied up to four times that day by groups of dolphins; in fact, all the coming days we would see a lot of dolphins, much more than on the Atlantic. Meeting dolphins is always uplifting, and our spirits needed a boost, because the sight of the Costa del Sol from seaward is something to down your spirits: the entire coastline is one long strip of buildings, often very ugly high rises.



*The Costa del Sol: we left from Sotogrande (11 nm above Gibraltar) and made stops in Benalmadena, Almunacar and Almerimar. Fortunately, behind the ugly coastline there are beautiful mountains.*



Sunday October 15 we arrived in Benalmadena, a marina that we had also visited on the outbound journey. Benalmadena and surroundings look awful from seaward, but once ashore and having found out where one can walk or cycle it is not that bad after all. We took the bicycles and dodged between the masses of tourists. Our

berth in the marina was very bad, and for the first time during all our travels there was such a heavy swell inside the marina that our anchor regularly touched the quayside, despite numerous lines backwards.

Thus we left Monday morning the 16<sup>th</sup> as soon as possible, to a sea with a high swell but not much wind. We kept the engine running all day, and arrived after some calls and map searching in the late afternoon in Marina del Este (Almunhacar). It looked like quite a nice marina with a small shop, a restaurant and a terrace, but apart from walking about the quayside there was not much to be done: without motorised transport the marina is completely isolated in hilly terrain.



Wednesday the 18<sup>th</sup>, again under threat of heavy black clouds, we continued, to arrive late afternoon in the marina of Almerimar. Again, we had already visited this marina during the outbound journey, and we like to tip this marina as the place with the nicest employees one could possibly find anywhere in the world. In most marinas special requests are impossible; in Almerimar anything is possible. Due to a major refit of the quays they were short of space, but the staff combined their creativity and managed to come up with a really good alternative. At the head of a just repaired pier we found a makeshift berth, and even better, with the head of *Sunny Spray* into the 30 knot winds! Chapeau! Almerimar borders a nature park, and the resort itself has a Mercadona supermarket, so we could fulfill the two things we wanted to do most: stretch the legs on a beautiful walk, and buy all our “regular” Spanish products.

Nevertheless, the South-Spanish coast is not the most beautiful one, so we continued our trip, to arrive Saturday October 21 in Cartagena. We knew the harbour and marina from an earlier trip (in 2005 we sailed our previous ship *Fint* from the West of Ireland to Oliva), and had good memories of our stay. Because the marina was full (wherever did we meet for the last time a marina that was not full?), they found a place for us alongside a public quay. Not exactly a spot you would chose yourself, anyone could have easily come on board, but the marina guardsmen regularly peddled by on their bicycles, traffic was some distance away, and Cartagena is not exactly a place overrun by the bad guys. So, eventually, we enjoyed this quayside berth very much, also because major historical attractions where not more than 50 meters away!



Cartagena is a beautiful town, with an overwhelmingly amount of ancient history. The Picts, the Phoenicians, the Cartages, the Romans, the Arabs, the 15<sup>th</sup> century explorers: all favored its natural, very well protected harbour, and its strategic location as a centre of trade for all corners of the Mediterranean basin. This impressive history is depicted very nicely in a brand new, modern Maritime Museum, on the boulevard and adjacent to the marina. The history is told by means of three ships wrecks, found in the bottom of Cartagena harbour.

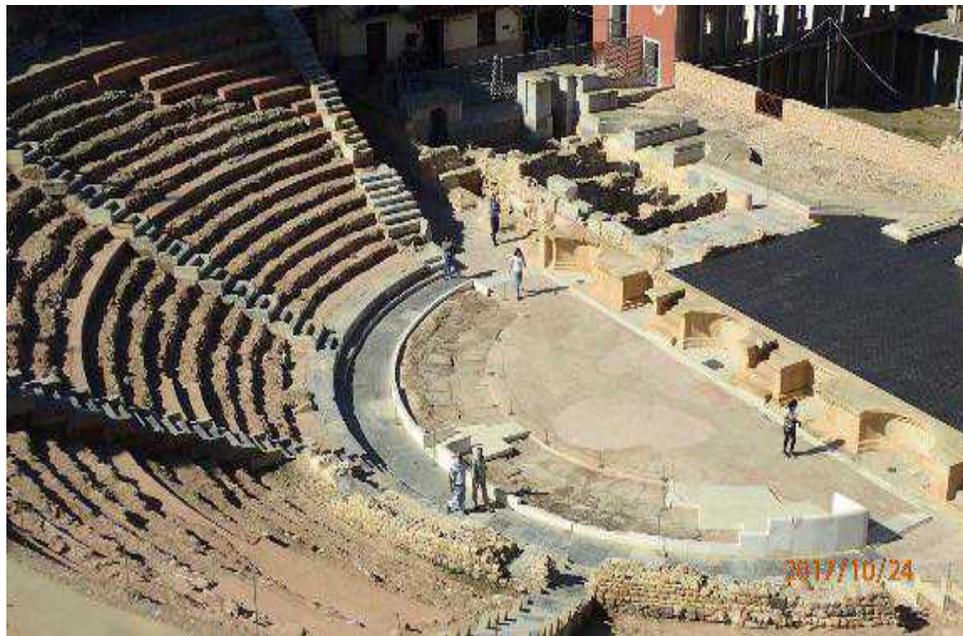


*Left, exhibit at the Maritime Museum. Right: an incredibly ugly apartment building housed amongst its foundation the well-preserved remains of a Roman villa (pictures below).*



*By putting furniture in, the remains of the villa came to life even better. The entrance of the villa opened to a cobblestoned street, which was still in a very good state. Imaginative 3D modeling and projection gave us a good idea how the rest of Cartagena would have looked from the street. Bob and Regina enjoying the sights.*

Equally successful was a visit to the Teatro Romano, a Roman amphitheater which is only open to the public some ten years. To bring the amphitheater to the surface, an entire fishermen's neighborhood needed to be torn down, since it had been built over the ages smack on top of the remains of the Roman buildings.

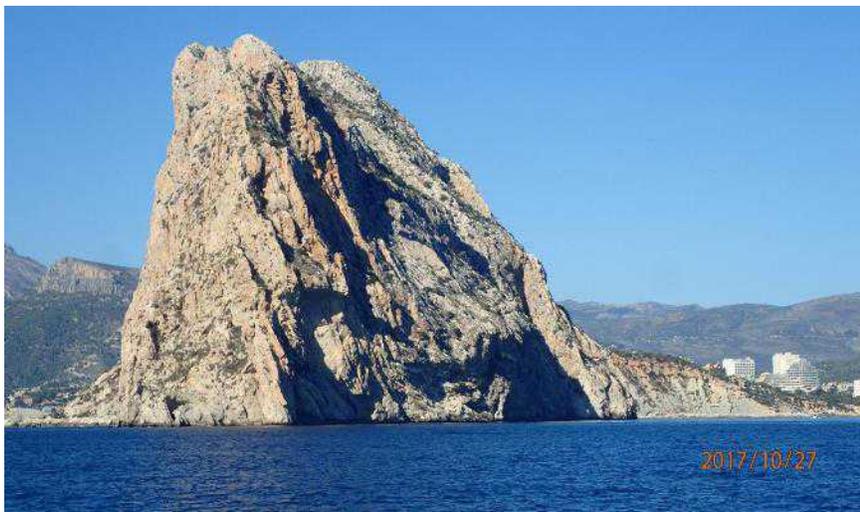


In addition to these two major attractions (the museum and the amphitheater), there are numerous smaller digs, such as Phoenician remains found inside a Roman wall, or the remains of a Roman villa, that had belonged to a wealthy trader. Sometimes these remains are found in unlikely places, and that was also the case with the Roman villa. We eventually found it, tucked away under the foundation of a hideous looking 20<sup>th</sup> century apartment building.

Apart from all the beautiful things Cartagena has to offer, we also had a very cozy time with friends. In the marinas of Cartagena (there are two), we found Regina, our friend from Denia, who nowadays lives there on board her motor yacht *Giba*. We also found our Belgian friends Frank and Rita, whom we had met in the Canary Islands, on board their yacht *Zagaia*. And to make the party even merrier, our friends Claire and Fritz (and dog Flocke) made the 300 km journey from La Nucia to Cartagena with their camper van.



No wonder we stayed a few days and had a very good time, but on October 25 we gave in to a restless feeling and left for the last part of our trip homeward. We made a stop in Torre Vieja, where we anchored in the outer part of the harbour. The next day saw us berthed in the marina of Villajoyosa. We knew both places well, either from visits with the *Fint*, or from previous car or camper van trips.



*Penon de Ifach, passing Calpe.*

The last stretch became a joyful homecoming. Every bay we passed we knew; every mountaintop we saw was enthusiastically photographed, because being mountain walkers we know all these mountains and tops very well.



*Approaching the piers of Denia harbour. In the background, to the right, our “house mountain”, the Segaria.*

Because we sailed very close to the coast (mostly motoring, there was not much wind during that trip), we had excellent mobile reception and were therefore in frequent contact with friends. In particular those living on the coast, such as Moraira or Jávea, sms-ed us that they saw us sailing past, or sent a note to say they were on their way to Denia harbour.

On Friday October 27 we arrived at 16.00 h in Denia harbour, after 385 nm from Sotogrande, to be greeted on the piers by friends. Although we are far from sentimental people, we were very pleased by such an enthusiastic reception, and we were equally pleased by the numerous visitors we had that afternoon and the coming days.





*Many friends came to visit. To the left Yvonne and Louk Juergens, to the right the doggies of Marlo de Laat.*

We were less enthusiastic about the reception received from the marina's office employees. Not only were we treated very haughtily, but we had also been lured to the marina by a very reasonably priced quotation for a lengthy stay. Upon arrival, though, it was found that the quotation was "in error" - not a tiny bit, which can happen, but major: the rectified quotation was 3 times (!) as high as the one we had received by email. No "we are sorry", no leniency, just take it or leave it. So we left.

On Monday morning we drove to our old marina in Oliva, where the employees treated us like long lost friends (which we were!), and did their utmost to find a spot for us (again, the marina was full). They shuffled some boats around, put one rental boat on the dry, and hey presto, they had created a suitable transient berth for *Sunny Spray*. Fortunately, we had stayed members of the Club Nautico during our travels and paid our annual membership fee, so that we could get the berth for a very reasonable price. We also joined the waiting list for a regular, non-transient berth.



*Sunny Spray back in her old marina at the Club Nautico in Oliva. Just 20 m away from our previous boat, Fint.*

Our current berth is just five places away from our old berth, still occupied by our old boat *Fint*, which we had sold locally. *Fint*, of course, has sailed thousands of the same nautical miles we sailed this trip with *Sunny Spray*, but never visited South America, the Azores or the Algarve.

On November 1 we said (temporarily) goodbye and thanks to *Sunny Spray* and moved back into our own house, where we are still adjusting to the enormous amount of space!



*And for those of you who don't know where we live: we are close to the coast of the Western Mediterranean basin, between Valencia and Alicante. Our house is at the foot of beautiful mountains, with good walking. Within a week of being home we had started our weekly routine of a Sunday morning walk in the mountains!*

### **Some statistics**

We left Oliva on July 5, 2015, and arrived back in the same marina on October 27, 2017, after 11,533 nautical miles (21,359 km). Our average speed was a bit above walking speed, some 4,5 nm (8.3 km) per hour.

Thus, we were gone for 28 months, and spent all those months in subtropical or tropical areas. By now we are totally accustomed to 35 degrees Celsius or more, and we find Spain in winter very cold indeed, in particular during the night or early morning (at night temperatures easily hover around freezing point, but around 1 pm temperatures can rise again to the low 20s Centigrade).

Those 28 months we spent on average €2,200 per month. The majority of our spending was for the boat, and in particular our large purchases (new self-steering device, new outboard engine, new cooling compressor, sail repairs, new battens) made significant dents in our budget. Also very denting were the high repair bills we got from the numerous mechanics we had on board trying to solve our engine problems (in which they were unsuccessful). Berthing fees were another substantial cost, one of the reasons we tried to anchor as much as possible (but also because we prefer to be at anchor).

Between September 2016 (leaving Suriname) and April 2017 (arriving in Point à Pitre in Guadeloupe), we were at anchor non-stop. This means that all those seven months you are completely self-reliant with respect to energy management (solar panels or using the engine), while your water needs are met by either hauling water in jerry cans or filling the tanks with rain water (Bob made a dedicated rain water collection system, using the curved roof that serves as a sun shade over the cockpit). In Point à Pitre we spent one month in the marina, and after that we were at anchor again for a long time. Only after arriving in the Azores (July 2017) did we start spending time in marinas again.

### **High points and low points**

So, how do we look back on our travels?

First and foremost, it was a fantastic experience, and we are very happy that WE DID IT! We experienced a lot, have seen many most amazing sights, and met many, very nice people.

It is impossible to say what was “the best” or “the worst”. It is, however, possible what we liked a lot, and what we detested a lot. Immediately after arriving in Oliva we made a list, combining our experiences. You can find it as annex 1 at the end of this report.

In the category “good experiences” it is noteworthy that we both chose locations sparsely visited by sailing yachts (Western Africa, all three the Guyanas). Equally striking is the fact that we found our social contacts and new friends predominantly among long distance sailors, who often were already on the road for many years. The big exception are Carl and Bruno, since Carl is a racer who sped solo over the Atlantic Ocean in a 6.50 m sailing boat. We had relatively few contacts with the local population (apart from the contacts we had with mechanics, boat specialists and the like). By traveling as much as possible by public transport we increased our encounters with local people.

Good experiences are also often related to easy access to nature. When living on a boat it is absolutely delightful (and necessary) to stretch the legs, and walking in a rain forest or in the mountains is a fantastic opportunity to get to know a country. Needless to say that encounters with animals are high on our list of positive experiences.

Our bad experiences are always related to overcrowding: lots of noise, overcrowded anchorages, and marinas and harbour areas that are used for days, weeks or sometimes even months as locations for fiestas with accompanying music noise.

As for costs, the very expensive locations (Caribbean, French Guyane) are countered by very cheap locations (Canary Islands, Western-Africa, Azores, Portugal). The largest expenses were for the boat: berthing fees in marinas, fuel, repairs and expensive purchases. We spent very little on ourselves: daily food and drinks, occasional visits to doctors and buying medicines (we were not insured for medication and visits to general practitioners, our insurance only covered large expenses such as hospitalisations). Sometimes a hairdresser, occasionally a rental car, regular some drinks on a terrace, hardly any clothes bought.

We hardly ever went out for lunch or dinner. Nevertheless, I am very fond of buying local produce and trying out new dishes. Our biggest find was the maracuya (passion fruit): absolutely delicious, very refreshing, and happily for us we found maracuya juice nowadays available in our local Mercadona. We did not like coconut juice (too bland), nor local spirits such as rum. We skipped the traditional Caribbean “oil down” (hour long cooking of very fat meat).

We hardly bought souvenirs. In most places you only encounter cheap Chinese stuff. We bought several wooden plates and cups in Senegal, and in Portugal beautiful woollen rugs in bright colors. But those count as items for daily use, not as souvenirs.

The sailing of the junk rig eventually gets a high mark. When we just set out, we were very inexperienced with respect to the junk rig and made many mistakes, costing us sail repairs and new battens. However, the longer we were under way, the better we could handle the sail, and by now we are very positive about it. It is easily handled, also solo, and in particular reefing is as easy as pie.

Our sea experiences are equally positive. By good planning we avoided bad weather as much as possible. During our ocean crossings we had only twice heavy weather with storm force winds. We used the Jordan multi drogue (the sea anchor employed to get the speed out of the boat) only once. Along the West-African coast we had a lot of strong winds and very high waves. The fact that we could not receive a weather forecast while on a long trip did not bother us: even with a weather forecast you cannot escape what is coming at you, you have to sit it out and handle it as best as you can. Twice we asked a ship for a weather forecast. In both cases we did not profit from the relayed forecast: either the time period given was too short, or the forecast turned out to be completely wrong.

For daily living the boat is absolutely fabulous. What a stable ship, what a comfort. It is amazing how little green water we got on board: we mostly got it over the bow, which decidedly is too low for an ocean-going ship. Only once did we get some green water on the after deck.

During every trip, either short or long, I easily managed to cook a fresh meal. We ate at the deck house table, from normal earthenware, and drank from normal glasses. What a difference with our experiences with *Fint*, when out of necessity we had to eat from stainless steel dog bowls.

We also appreciated our large storage water tanks (approx 1,000 liters, we do not have a water maker). It made it possible to shower every day and to run a washing machine.

Cooking was on gas, and in most countries we managed to get our bottles filled.

And after two-and-a-half years' very close living quarters, we are still together!

Of course, we suffer from the occasional irritation, but that does not occur more often than "ashore". It is a matter of give and take, you are both in the same boat, so you understand quite well what the other is going through, is feeling, and that makes it difficult to get or remain angry.

Very important is respect and trust. You need to have respect for each other's skills, because your life may depend on them. And with respect comes trust, because without, it will be impossible to leave the boat's care in someone else's hands. You also need trust that the one having watch will wake you up and ask for advice, no matter how irritating it is that you will be woken up during your scarce moments of uninterrupted sleep (and how irritating it is if you have to admit that you don't know any more, and that you need the other's advice). At the end of the day you always sail undermanned. We had an invisible, imaginary crew member, who was occasionally called into action. How lovely to call someone else to account and blame if one of us was behaving particularly stupidly!

## **Annex 1. The good, the best, the bad, the worst**

### **The longest trip:**

Crossing the Atlantic from the British Virgin Islands to Flores, Azores

### **The prettiest trip:**

(1) River delta off the Maroni, French Guyane (2) Essequibo

### **The most adventurous trip:**

(1) Sine Saloum in; (2) Essequibo out

### **The most difficult trip:**

(1) Loose mast from Sine Saloum to French Guyane; (2) moving masts around Cabo de Gata outward bound

### **Most difficult sailing area:**

Grenada to Guadeloupe, nothing but headwinds and strong currents between the islands.

### **The best/nicest sailing area:**

(1) Algarve; (2) Sine Saloum; (3) the Azores; (4) BVI's

### **The easiest clearing formalities:**

Nearly everywhere very easy;

### **The most difficult clearing formalities:**

Unnecessary formalities in Spanish marinas;

### **The best banks/money affairs:**

Nearly everywhere good

### **The worst banks/money affairs:**

Suriname (no valuta)

### **Ever been seasick?**

Bob never; Helma a little bit homeward bound near Tarifa, Strait of Gibraltar

### **Ever been scared?**

(1) presumed encounter with possible pirates at Venezuelan coast; (2) Leaving the Essequibo.

### **The nicest encounter:**

(1) old farmer with cows in Dominica; (2) Ineke in Suriname; (3) sailing friends at the dock in Kourou;

### **The worst encounter:**

(1) Stubborn Dutch sailor without knowledge or skills in Horta, Faial;

### **The prettiest/best marina:**

(1) Waterland Suriname; (2) Sotogrande Spain

### **The most terrible marina:**

(1) Las Palmas Gran Canaria (very crowded, day and night noise from traffic (highway at 50 meters); (2) Santa Cruz de Tenerife (noisy and smelly fishermen's harbour); (3) Le Marin Martinique (too crowded, too large, lack of opportunity in the surrounding area);

**The most expensive marina:**

Lagos, Portugal

**The cheapest marina:**

(1) Almerimar Spain; (2) Dakar; (3) Las Palmas Gran Canaria; (4) all marinas in the Azores;

**The best/nicest anchorages:**

(1) Charlotteville Tobago; (2) Side rivers Maroni; (3) Essequibo; (4) Tobago Cays; (5) anchorages BVI; (6) Alvor; (7) Guadiana and Guadalquivir

**The worst anchorage:**

(1) Scarborough Tobago;

**The best purchase:**

(1) new wind self-steering device; (2) Yamaha outboard engine;

**The worst purchase::**

(1) first wind self-steering device; (2) water cooled cooling unit refrigerator;

**Best place to stock up on food:**

(1) Las Palmas Gran Canaria; (2) Le Marin Martinique (3) Dakar/Ndangane (fresh produce); (4) St Martin/Sint Maarten (groceries)

**The worst place to stock up:**

(1) BVIs (heavily coloured fresh produce (lasts less than a week), very expensive.

**The best trips inland:**

(1) with Francois to Oyapoc, Brasil; (2) Suriname, canoe trip on river; (3) from Ndangane by bus to Dakar; (4) sailing on a Santoise with Carl on Guadeloupe; (5) interior of Grenada visited with Rasa and Egoi; (6) hiking on Dominica, Flores and other islands; (7) public transport by small buses on many of the islands;

**The most disappointing trips inland:**

(1) lack of walking opportunities and public transport in Le Marin Martinique; (2) no shore activities in the BVI's (exception The Baths).

**The biggest disappointments:**

(1) noise everywhere, in particular boom boom music; (2) hardly a location that is not crowded (exceptions Senegal, Frans Guyane, Essequibo, Suriname); (3) problems with the engine; (4) problems with the mast;

**Friends for life:**

Yves and Joanna; Carl and Bruno; Corinna and Jim; Marc, Daniela and kids; Francois; Rasa and Egoi; Rita and Frank;

**The cutest/nicest animal of the month:**

(1) monkeys in zoo (and outside on the cages) French Guyane; monkeys on Isles du Salud; (2) migratory birds on Guadalquivir; (3) dolphins; (4) leguanas; (5) every stray dog we met....!!