

2024 Newsletter - SY MAYONA II

13.01.2024, Newsletter 1/2024

Lots and lots of patience and a 4-day festival dedicated to the holy Amaro in Madeira



On our return to our ship in Madeira, unfortunately not all the work we had ordered had been completed, so it quickly became clear that our onward journey would be delayed by at least 2-3 weeks. We were particularly worried about the replacement gearbox/clutch, which was ordered far too late by the shipyard and could no longer be delivered by the first supplier. A replacement gearbox has now finally been found in Holland and will arrive here in about 2 weeks with "express service"... so much for the logistics sector.

We can now take care of the remaining maintenance and repair work on site!

But Madeira is not a bad place to spend some time. As soon as we arrived, we were amazed by the intense and colorful Christmas lights and the many nativity scenes.

Here in Santa Cruz, a 4-day festival in honor of Saint Amaro takes place at the end of

the Christmas season from January 12-15. Tradition explains that it is this day of Santo Amaro that ends the Christmas season in Madeira with the "sweeping of the cupboards". This sweeping is carried out by groups armed with the traditional and symbolic heather broom, who go singing from house to house to collect the last delicacies left over from the festive season. So it is also clear that this festival is celebrated with lots of "street food", music, processions and various performances! St. Amaro was an abbot and sailor who, according to Christian legend, reached earthly paradise by crossing the Atlantic in the 16th century! The legend portrays Amaro as a noble Christian man from Asia in search of earthly paradise. No matter who he asked, he found no answer, which brought him to the brink of despair, until one night God appeared to him and instructed him to build a boat and follow the path of the sun across the Atlantic Ocean. Where exactly he was led, however, we do not know. But this morning at the market in Funchal, the selection of vegetables, fruit and fish was indeed very heavenly! But hopefully we too will soon be sailing westwards again! Best wishes from a rainy day in Madeira!

Lukas and Mayumi



16.1.2024, Newsletter 2/2024

The uglier the more digestible?



Espada

Probably the ugliest fish - black scabbardfish (Peixe Espada Preto) - is a specialty, cult and symbol of Madeira Island. It lives in the deep sea at a depth of well over 1,000 meters off Madeira. The second known fishing location for a very closely related fish (tachiuo) is off Japan.

The fish was discovered by chance over 100 years ago by a fisherman in Madeira who had fallen asleep in his boat.

The black scabbardfish (*Aphanopus carbo*), which lives in the deep sea, is called "Espada preta" in Madeira, Portuguese for "black sword" or "black scabbard". It is a popular edible fish. The black color is not original but comes from the rapid and deadly change in pressure from the great depths after being caught on lines that reach down to 1500 meters. In their natural habitat, these predatory fish are copper to purple in color. They are built like moray eels. However, their caudal fin is tiny compared to the rest of their body. Their head is long and pointed and there are numerous large fangs in their mouth.

Peixe Espada Preto does not taste like fish at all. The fillet is very tender, white and almost fat-free. The fillet literally melts in the mouth. There are more than a hundred recipes for preparing espada. The best known is espada fillet with banana. This is probably because Madeira grows extremely aromatic bananas. We can only recommend this dish to all fish lovers and those who want to become one! Enjoy your meal!

27.1.2024, Newsletter 03/2024

Challenges in paradise



We have now been on the wonderful island of Madeira for 3 weeks, with a daytime temperature of 20 degrees, great landscapes, a unique market with fruit, vegetables and fish that you can only dream of - a real land of milk and honey. Not forgetting the many great levada (we call them bisses) hiking trails and the many friendly people. However, we already knew when we arrived that not all the maintenance and repair work had been completed and I was pleased to be able to accompany some of the work. For example, I learned a lot from the erection of the mast with the new and partially reinforced shrouds and stays. Our new sprayhood (spray hood) and the lazybag ("bag" for stowing the mainsail on the boom) were also delivered and fitted correctly - even cheaper than agreed.

I had much more trouble with our clutch/gearbox, which was not ordered in time by the shipyard and when it was finally delivered, it was a completely wrong model. But in the end, after almost 3 weeks, everything was ready, and we simply had to wait until the crane had successfully completed its annual inspection. So we were finally able to get back into the water on 24.1.24 at 18.00 and chug comfortably towards Funchal (capital of Madeira) under a full moon.

A quick dinner in the harbor restaurant and "e Guete gsonde Schlof" rounded off the day. In the morning when I woke up and staggered into the kitchen to make coffee, I stumbled over a floorboard... and there was a lot of water underneath... We immediately started pumping and called the shipyard, who sent a mechanic over in the early afternoon to inspect the leaks in some screws on our freshly overhauled centerboard. But they also realized that this could only be repaired on dry land. So we chugged another 2 hours back to the boatyard where 4 men worked for 4 hours to seal everything perfectly and then let us back into the water at 19:30.

As we want to stay in Funchal for a few more days anyway to wait for a suitable weather window for the crossing to the Canary Islands, we have enough time to completely dry and clean the inside of the boat again.

On Tuesday 30.1.24 we will set sail for the Canary Islands and take the great excursions and encounters on the paradise island of Madeira with us in our hearts!

29.1.2024, Newsletter 4/2024

Musical cultural life in Madeira



Madeira has a very international and mixed population as well as many tourists. A high growth rate - also of retired people - also helps to maintain an exciting cultural life. Over the last 3 weeks, we have been able to enjoy one of these concerts from time to time.

The Coimbra Fado concert was certainly traditional. Fado singing is known to carry the Portuguese soul within it. This is expressed all the more clearly by the Fado de Coimbra, the music that makes the pulse of this student city beat faster. Fado de Coimbra, which is closely linked to academic traditions, originated spontaneously among students who moved to the city to study and brought their Portuguese guitars with them. The tradition is still alive today. Fado de Coimbra, which is sung exclusively by men, also includes a certain dress code: the musicians and singers wear their student costumes over their pants, a black overcoat and a hat.

Chamber music is played every Sunday in Funchal. On January 20, we heard the Madeira Chamber Orchestra with accordionist Márcio Faria in Piazzolla's Tango Sensations, which was very impressive, even if the chamber orchestra still had some room for improvement. (We are also at sea level).

Last night's program was violin with Alissa Margulis and Lily Maisky (daughter of our favorite cellist Mischa Maisky) on the piano. Wonderful pieces by Schumann and Brahms were rounded off with a Hungarian dance at the end. Then came the big surprise. Mischa Maisky came on stage and played two more pieces with his daughter and the violinist.

What a great ensemble acoustically and visually!

Weather and communication on board

(sorry-today it gets a bit technical)



Sailing has become much safer in the last 50 years, not only because meteorological forecasts have improved massively, but also because we are now able to get meteorological data (GRIB files) on board at any time and thus predict weather developments relatively reliably.

In the past, weather forecasts were mainly broadcast via radio signals (short, medium and long waves) as hard-to-understand voice messages at predefined times.

NAVTEX was set up at the end of the 1970s. It is still used today in worldwide shipping to disseminate safety and weather information and is a sub-service of the worldwide "Global Maritime Distress and Safety System". The range of this system is several hundred kilometers. We have such a system on board and if a ship gets into trouble somewhere, we can receive a corresponding text message depending on the filter settings (e.g. fire on a ship in the port of Sevastepol or refugee boats here off Tenerife). We can also receive rudimentary weather news worldwide.

Radio stations (amateur radio equipment with restricted frequencies) have also proved

very useful for a long time. However, these are relatively energy-hungry but allow unrestricted voice communication with other ships with the same equipment. Supplemented with a Pactor modem (2400 baud), GRIB files can also be received, allowing convenient and accurate weather forecasts. However, it is somewhat complex to operate and requires some talent (I am still working on it).

Satellite devices are a big step forward. They make it very easy to create convenient weather forecasts and nowadays even weather routings. The data throughput is very limited here, so that only simple text messages can be transmitted in addition to weather forecasts.

However, we are now seeing more and more Starlink (Elon Musk's satellite system), which allows high-speed internet over large parts of the ocean. This luxury variant is not yet cheap, but it is a good thing for people who cannot tolerate a digital detox! Another disadvantage is the high-power consumption.

We will now set off from La Palma on Tuesday and are looking forward to arriving in Barbados!

Everyone can follow our current location via our satellite service. The previous AIS only works near the coast.

See you in Barbados!

Lukas and Mayumi

2.3.2024, Newsletter 6/2024

The big blue togetherness or those who have the sea need less!



22 days and 8 hours or 2938 nm we enjoyed the big blue togetherness on the way from La Palma to Saint Lucia. Just open sea with no islands in between and hardly any shipping traffic. We only saw one sailing ship on the whole trip and that was at midnight. It was a very special encounter as this sailing ship was Gitana 17, a 30-meter trimaran, which was taking part in a Nonstop solo race around the world with 5 other so-called Ultim Trimarans and crossed us in 1.5 miles. Charles Caudrelier, the skipper, was in the final sprint from Cape Horn to Brest and finished this race around the world as the winner with a time of 50 days and 19 hours. It was a pity that this encounter was at night, and we could only see the lights whizzing by.

Our days at sea were otherwise very unspectacular. Daily tasks included various checks on the equipment and the boat, small repairs and maintenance work, throwing stranded flying fish overboard, enjoying the sunrise and sunset, downloading the latest meteo (twice a day) and planning the route accordingly, personal hygiene (saltwater showers in the cockpit), checking the fresh produce, cooking, eating (without alcohol), fishing from time to time, etc. Cooking on the boat is very demanding.

Cooking on the boat is a very demanding task, because the rolling of the boat has to be constantly compensated for and the woman has to make sure that the plates and pans don't run away and empty, which can be very dangerous, especially in hot water. But Mayumi is a master of her trade here too!

In between, there was plenty of time for chatting, playing and reading books. I've probably never read so much in such a short time. I read a total of 8 books.

- Nino Haratischwili, The Eighth Life, A Family Saga from Georgia
- Colum McCann, Apeirogon, A novel by two men, one Israeli and the other Palestinian, whose daughters have perished. They are friends and tell their story in an exciting way, so that the whole Palestinian conflict unfolds in all its history and complexity. Strongest sentence: The hero turns his enemy into a friend! (S. 661/1304)
- Iko Andrea, The Voyage in a Cocktail Shaker, A couple sails from Bremen to the Caribbean and back in a 9m boat
- Leonardo Padura, Like Dust in the Wind, A story about what just happened in Cuba
- Richard C. Schneider, The thing with Israel, A history of the whole Israel/Palestine conflict
- Claudia Clawien, Jonathan Buttman, Seven Colors Blue, How a little time out on a sailing boat turned into a seven-year adventure
- Pascal Mercier, The weight of words
- Hanya Yanagihara, A little life, a story of a special friendship between four men

At night, we check the sail settings and the wind regularly (every 30 minutes to a maximum of 2 hours, depending on the situation). Nevertheless, we sleep very, very much. You have to be especially careful in the second half of the Atlantic, because there are regular squalls that are not visible in any meteo. These are small local rain clouds that suddenly clear accompanied by strong winds. These clouds are usually visible on the radar, which we switched on from time to time to check.

Once, 2 birds accompanied us as black passengers for a whole night. They scared me half to death in the first moment at night and as a thank you, the whole deck was covered in shit in the morning.

Nevertheless, enjoying nature, letting yourself drift forward with the wind, with the wide view over the sea and the big swells is just great - sometimes accompanied by dolphins.

Definitely - those who have the sea need less!

5.3.2024, Newsletter 7/2024

Why sail across the Atlantic when you can row...



Dear sailing friends

Many thanks to all of you for your congratulations.... which have made us very happy. But there are still some real adventurers! Why sail across the Atlantic when you can row - at least that's what Louis Margot from Vaud thought.

He set off alone in mid-December to row across the Atlantic from the Canary Islands... (full story in the NZZ of 4.3.2024 or <https://humanimpuls.ch>). After 76 days, he landed in Martinique - exactly one day before we arrived here too... Unfortunately, we haven't yet met our compatriot in person (he's probably sleeping in) to congratulate him, but at least we've already admired his rowing boat. But no wonder, his journey continues. He also wants to cross the ocean and then cycle back to Morges by land..... in less than 3 years. Now such adventures - whether necessary or not - deserve respect and esteem! Louis congratulations

13.3.2024, Newsletter 8/2024

Marie Galante



There are many islands that exert an irresistible attraction on me. Which island and for what reason can often only be explained in terms of depth psychology. However, these islands almost all have one thing in common. They are almost impossible to reach - even by sailing boat...

There is the island of Pitcairn, for example, where the descendants of the mutineers of the Bounty still live today.

There are the two Diomedes Islands in the Northwest Passage - one is American and the other is Russian and in between there is not only the national border, but also the International Date Line. This means that on one island you can see the people of tomorrow and on the other island the people of yesterday...

Then there's also Bora Bora on this list, which simply symbolizes the dream of the South Seas and for me is associated with Paul Gauguin and Jacques Brel - and the brother of a friend of mine built a villa worth millions there and then went off with the nanny.....

Tristan da Cunha between South Africa and South America on the mid-Atlantic ridge

with its 2000 m high volcano is geologically exciting. The now British island has around 300 inhabitants but no airport - so it can only be reached by boat, although it is around 3000 km from South Africa and South America.

Anyone who knows the story of Anne of Green Gables must also visit the Prince Edwards Islands in Nova Scotia. (There is also an entertaining Netflix movie adaptation). The Japanese women love this story and are a big tourist group there.

Last year we planned to visit St. Kilda, the most westerly island in Scotland.

Unfortunately, the weather didn't cooperate, so we couldn't visit this historic place.

However, it is worth reading a book about life and the special challenges on this remote island until its evacuation in the 1930s.

Something very special is North Sentinel Island in the Andoman Islands in the Indian Ocean. A people live there who reject all contact with the outside world and speak their own language. The last person to visit this island never came back!

Fortunately, there are also friendlier islands on my list that offer a warm welcome and are easier to reach. So a few days ago we called at Marie Galante - for me the island with the most beautiful name and a circular shape (which stands for perfection in mathematics) - like so many islands here, this one was also discovered by Christopher Columbus on his second voyage in 1493!

This island became famous for its rum! I learned from a documentary that rum is transported here to Europe in Bordeaux barrels on a sailing ship... and then sold in bottles as "green and sustainable rum"!

Today this island impressed us deeply with its tranquillity, its particularly nice people and all the rain!

24.3.2024, Newsletter 9/2024

Density stress in paradise



Now for many, the Lesser Antilles in the Caribbean are a dream destination. In fact, it is a great and relatively easy sailing area with a super climate, constant winds and many varied islands. Each island has its own character due to its history and topography. By far the majority of the inhabitants of the Lesser Antilles are descended from those who were taken as slaves from West Africa. As a visitor, you should bear in mind that the great-grandfather of the dignified elderly gentleman you are talking to may have been born as the personal property of a European. Fortunately, the locals don't let you feel this.

In the meantime, many islands have geared themselves towards a very one-sided economy of tourism. As a result, restaurants serving pizza, sushi or kebabs have replaced Creole cuisine in many places - what a shame! Many large cruise ships call at various islands here and let their guests shop in the duty-free zones.

However, one of the big businesses is certainly yacht tourism. Countless charter boat providers have a sailing or motorboat to suit every taste and budget. It is also one of the preferred areas for the super-rich Americans with their mega yachts from 100 feet to 100 meters. There are dedicated islands with airfields just for smaller planes (such as Saint Barth) where small planes or helicopters land almost every five minutes and fly in the owners of the mega yachts, while "their" army of employees polish the boats to a high shine every day and chill the Veuve Cliquot and buy caviar and foie gras in the supermarket. The even better ones, of course, have their own helicopter on board. Of course, almost all of these yachts are registered in the tax haven of Georgetown (Cayman Island). It will be interesting to see how many of them we might see again in the last paradise - then probably without a mega yacht!

There aren't quite as many bays and islands here as in Croatia, so you rarely have the pleasure of anchoring alone in a bay or on a beach in turquoise waters. In Martinique, we were in a bay with a harbor where there were supposedly 2000 ships at anchor or moored at the pier!

Well, even paradise has its challenges!

Now we continue towards the Dominican Republic (Santo Domingo has barely a handful of harbors for guests), Jamaica and then Cuba, where we sailed 10 years ago. There is definitely no congestion there and there is no yacht infrastructure for repairs, with all its advantages and disadvantages.

The Greater Antilles



In addition to a few smaller island groups, the Greater Antilles include the four islands of Puerto Rico, Hispaniola, Jamaica and Cuba. We have many exciting impressions and experiences to remember...

Puerto Rico is de facto part of the American territory, and we left it to the right, as we could not/would not apply for a visa to enter the country with our ship. Unfortunately, a simple ESTA visa is not enough.

So, after 3 full days at sea, we sailed from Saint Marteen directly into the (very dirty) port of Santo Domingo. Now the marina in Santo Domingo is very small - we were the only guest ship. But the people there were incredibly nice, and the old colonial town was incredibly pretty and inviting. The big event was meeting the daughters of a good friend who lives in Switzerland. We spent a wonderful evening and had a great exchange and conversation - although our Spanish and their English skills are not so good. The modern translation programs on the iPhone are a great help here.

A few great anchor bays with inviting beaches quickly made it clear to us why the tourism boom in the Dominican Republic is experiencing such gigantic growth.

The Dominican Republic is located on the island of Hispaniola and shares the island with Haiti! Nowhere is hell and paradise closer than here (see NZZ 26.3.2024). In any case, we were happy to leave Haiti on the right and sailed directly to Jamaica in stealth mode (without active AIS). There we moored in a beautiful harbor (Port Antonio). As it was Easter Sunday, the entry formalities took almost 24 hours, and we were not allowed to leave the ship. Our ship's neighbors provided us with the "world-famous" "Jerk Chicken" in the takeaway version. Our lasting impression of Jamaica is the very nice people, even if you don't feel safe everywhere and a great natural landscape, extremely loud music everywhere - but not just reggae - and a few stoned rastas. The further crossing to Cuba was without any problems and the arrival in the harbor there was unexpectedly easy and pleasant... everything else about Cuba will follow...in the next newsletter.



10.4.2024, Newsletter 11

In the queen's garden



In Santiago de Cuba, in the very south, there is a very small harbour, which is a bit run-down, but the people here are so friendly, reserved, lovable and content, even though they have nothing and everything is subject to bartering.

Clearing in was no problem at all. Even the satellite phone, which is forbidden here, was no big problem.

We soon met our friends from Switzerland, who were joining us here and whose knowledge of Spanish made contact with the locals much easier. After a joint visit to Santiago, we soon set off to round Cabo Cruz and enter a spectacular sailing area, whose archipelago 'Los Jardines de la Reina' is a highlight. There are over 900 islets here, no marina or other significant human presence - and of course no mobile phone or wifi network. The islands here are small islets with mangrove forests, sometimes small sandy beaches and an infinite number of coral reefs that often reach dangerously close to the surface. On the very first day, we set our boat on one of these coral reefs and fortunately managed to free it again with just a few scratches under water. Sailing in coral reefs, we still have a lot to learn...

What we have already learnt is that Cuban chart material cannot keep up with the high standards of the western world. But sailing here is a dream. The water is always turquoise blue, a maximum depth of 20 metres, hardly any waves, certainly no other boats and if you keep to the right routes, you can greatly reduce the risk of reefs. Even fishing is possible. However, our only catch so far has been a barracuda measuring 1 metre in length, which we released. These predatory fish harbour a great risk of being contaminated by ciguatera. This is a neurotoxin that comes from destroyed corals. This poison is absorbed by small coral fish and then concentrated in the predatory fish at the top of the food chain. But we are lucky, because we soon come across fishermen who don't sell us a few fish (sierra), but give them to us - more than we can eat at once!!! Naturally, we give them some of our Cuban barter gifts (soap, cooking oil, Nutella and rum are very popular).

In Cienfuegos we meet people again and an old, beautiful colonial city. Revolutionary slogans (such as Mi Moral Revolucionaria Tan Alta Como El Turquino), Fidel Castro and Che Guevara are omnipresent. But the majority of well-educated people are in a bad way, there is nothing to buy and bartering for everything is flourishing. When I asked what the country would look like in 5 years, the honest answer was: 'We don't want to imagine that!' - and I can't imagine it!

Tax havens that couldn't be more different



After our great time in Cuba, which is still without personal taxes, we are not travelling via Belize and Central America to Cartagena (Colombia) as originally planned but are sailing directly south. This has to do not only with the prevailing winds, but also with the pirate attacks that have increased off the coast of Nicaragua in recent years. Such an encounter is definitely not on our to-do list.

So instead of Belize and Roatan (Honduras), we make a stopover in the Cayman Islands. Grand Cayman is best known for having 4 times more letterboxes (most of which belong to bogus companies) than inhabitants! In addition, 70% of all hedge funds are apparently based here. Many beautiful villas adorn the shore and the many artificial canals of this tax haven. A real tax haven with 60,000 inhabitants and one of the highest gross national products per capita, which as a British overseas territory was of course blacklisted as a non-cooperative country after (!) Brexit.

As the name suggests, there are also real pointed crocodiles here (but we haven't seen any yet). All the reefs are great for diving. Apart from the letterboxes, there seem to be mainly diving centers here.

The population is very mixed and lives together very peacefully. Nevertheless, we were surprised when a Nepalese man served us in the restaurant last night, as the temperature here is unbearably hot during the day.

As mentioned in an earlier newsletter, many mega yachts and expensive sailing ships are registered here in Georgetown for tax reasons. I am now somewhat surprised to learn that there is no harbor here that these ships could call at on the Cayman Islands, as the only harbor's that can be called at here are behind a coral reef with a maximum water depth of 2 meters! In other words, many of these expensive luxury yachts have probably never seen their home harbor.

But to be honest, our ship has never seen its home port of Basel and probably never will - but Basel and Bern are not yet a real tax haven!



13.5.2024, Newsletter 13/2024

The conclusion is not easy, but Cartagena is always worth a trip!



From Cayman Islands we had a rather challenging crossing of 680 nm to Cartagena. The wind was not quite from the predicted direction and various technical problems, including engine failure, were more challenging than we expected.

But the entrance to Cartagena was breathtaking. The scenery could hardly be more spectacular!

At the Club Nautico, where we docked, we received a friendly and helpful welcome. First we explored this UNESCO World Heritage jewel. A city that you simply have to like if you can stand the heat and humidity!

After a few days it was so hot in the ship that we rented a room with AC in a nearby BnB.

But our most important task was to find a place where our boat could be stored safely for about 7 months. This proved to be a much bigger challenge than expected. They don't live by and for sailors here, even though there are numerous great islands. The San Blas Islands (Panama) are rumored to be the closest thing to paradise. We are already looking forward to this section.

In the end, we decided to summer the boat 100 kilometers north of Cartagena in a brutally deserted resort in the countryside! But first everything has to be washed and cleaned. We also buy a black net (Poly Sombra) to reduce the sunlight during the 7 months. Puerto Velero, the name of this nest, is a holiday resort that has probably never really got off the ground but looks well-kept. The marina says that it will one day have space for 500 boats. A huge 100 tons crane lifts our boat out of the water and a very large crew parks our boat very professionally on land - right in front of the Armada Nacional barracks - it couldn't be safer - especially with all the barking dogs on the site!

And now we are travelling to Bogota for a few more days and will return to Switzerland at the end of the week!

We look forward to seeing you again!