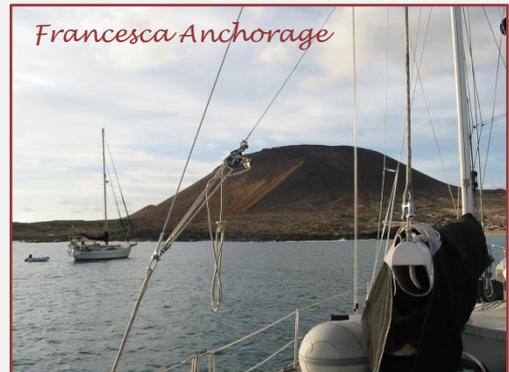


## The Canary Islands Graciosa and Lanzarote

Travel letter 4 - 2011

We left you just after arriving in the beautiful [Francesca Bay](#) at the south side of Graciosa Island, the most NE island of The Canary Island Archipelago. We are once more fortunate to arrive in a place we have never been before, so time to discover new surroundings!

The beautiful bay is packed with sailing boats of which at least 12 enormous catamarans. Some of the boats are waiting for a weather window to sail to Las Palmas at Gran Canaria to join the 2011 ARC-rally, as the huge ARC-flags show. Our first impression of Graciosa Island is fantastic and we are keen to have a look around tomorrow.



### To the top

Next morning our attention is drawn to the nearby volcano cone. It's no more than a few hundred meters off the anchorage. Although it is still early, a large group of people is already climbing along a steep path to get to the top. Our legs start to itch to join them but our agenda is booked for today.



We have to climb to another top, the top of Zeezwaluw' mast! The swiffel of the furling is still high up caused by as you will remember the chaffed-through top webbing. To be able to use the furling again, it has to come down. So Riens goes up in the Top-climber® to persuade the swiffel to come down.

But probably he/she likes it that high up, having a wonderful view and a holiday! In the end we have to persuade the swiffel to come down by means of a pull-down line and some encouraging shoulder taps.

After this job is done, Riens uses his high location to make beautiful panoramic pictures of Graciosa before he also descends. The genoa isn't repaired yet but in the meantime we use our high aspect jib.

*Francesca Anchorage*



### Graciosa, where time stands still

Graciosa is 6,5km long and 3km wide and has 4 round conic low volcanic craters of which the highest is 265m. There are no roads only sand paths through the dunes or along the coastline.



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The only cars are local jeeps for safari tours. As a result, to buy some fresh veggies and bread you have to walk for nearly an hour to the little village Caleta del Sebo at the east side of the island.

### *The Island Graciosa*



However ...it's an amazing walk!

Under a blue sky while the wind is blowing around our head, we wander along a sand trail winding through dunes covered with shrubbery while the distant horizon is lined by 3 volcano cones. The village is more or less a gathering of new houses growing directly out of the sand bottom. Sand streets separate the rows of houses, no paving at all. It feels like stepping back in time.

The outskirts of the village are extremely quiet but it's getting livelier near the "centre" where shops and restaurants encircle the old harbour. Friendly, easy going people, the small shops sell only daily necessities, like veggies, fruit, bread, frozen meat or chicken. No internet-cafe or shop to buy a pay as you go Spanish SIM-card for the internet. Consequently communication will be non-existing until we reach Lanzarote. To be honest, it has its charm, not being interrupted by telephone or being able to access the electronic mailbox.

### **How to interpret weather forecast**

Luckily we have the Navtex for a weather forecast although it's only a 24-hour period; it is superior to nothing at all. It warned us in time of the increase and change of wind-direction so we expected the swell would enter the anchorage for a little while, but would hardly disturbed our sleep. However for the majority of the boat crews it was too much. At first light, all but 5 boats left the anchorage in a hurry to find shelter somewhere else. As a result it became very quick, very quiet around us.

### *The Francesca anchorage with view to the south*





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We were very surprised by the sudden departure of almost all boats because the weather forecast wasn't that bad to explain their panicking stampede.

We stood our (anchor) ground, which was a good choice (in hindsight of course). At the moment most boats were leaving, the swell was already receding while the wind gradually shifted to the northwest, so we had had the "worst of the bad weather" already! However, we are not too comfortable without a 5-day weather forecast in solitude anchorages like this one.



So, that's why we thought it would be wiser to leave Graciosa the next day while the weather was still OK. The light northerly wind would not be a problem to sail around the north of Lanzarote to reach Arrecife at the east side of the island.

So early morning we left the anchorage to motor through the channel between Graciosa and Lanzarote. We entered while a weak northerly blew at Zeezwaluw' nose but the wind increased quickly to 20+kn as soon as we were halfway the channel. Conquering headway in the short steep waves was a challenge, but not too amusing!

After rounding the most NE-promontory of Lanzarote it became lovely again! We were

able to sail on the headsail alone under a blue sky, in a beam wind which altered to downwind 30kn all the way to Arrecife. Underneath the Castillo San Jose we dropped anchor in absolute flat water amidst 10 other boats.



Although [the anchorage](#) is next to the container terminal, it turned out to be very quiet because work stops at 6 P.M. every day.

### Exploration, consternation and solution

For the following 3 weeks we stayed at this exquisite anchorage, whilst we explored Arrecife town by foot and the rest of the island by car.



The next day, our first goal was to obtain a Spanish SIM-card for the phone and a dongle-SIM-card to gain internet access. Well, to make a long story short, to buy SIM-cards wasn't a problem. The installation of the dongle and accessing the internet was. It took us 2 days and 2 very long walks to and fro the telephone shop as well as an hour of assistance by the shop-lady before all worked as it should be on our laptop. We were very pleased for the help we obtained where after we were able to get into contact with the outside world again. Downloading a 7-day weather forecast for planning the upcoming sailing trips was not an issue anymore.

There was another urgent matter we had to attend. We had to find a sail maker to get the genoas top webbing repaired. Surfing the internet learned that there are 2 sail makers on the island. The first one was not too far to the north of Arrecife and the other one was at the south coast in Rubicon marina.



The next morning after renting a car we were able to reach Costa Teguisse before siesta time. But getting there and not able to find the address was annoying! We drove in circles for at least an hour in this little town but could not find the right address, not even with the help of the locals!



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A little disappointed we headed south to get to the other one in Rubicon marina. His shop was found easily but to our dismay it was closed. His next-door neighbour informed us that he was probably sailing, as he did so often!!!!!! Nobody knew when he would be back, but we were given his mobile phone number. For half an hour, sitting in the car in front of his shop, we tried to reach the sailing sail maker. No response at all. It was useless to wait any longer.

So we made the best out of it and decided to drive via a scenic route along a volcanic moon landscape with strange rock formations back to Arrecife. An hour on our way, the sail maker called (probably used caller ID) to let us know he would be in his shop within the hour, could we be there? No way, instead we made an appointment for the next day 9a.m. The last part of our journey that day was through the valleys between the many volcanoes in the middle of the island.



*Sea salt mining in Lanzarote*



*Vineyards in Lanzarote*



The black slopes of these volcanoes are scattered with vineyards, which is surreal! Each and every green grapevine is sitting in a semicircle stone wall protecting it against the strong winds while at the same time the wall seize as much of the rainwater as possible. This is so different from the



vineyards we know of in Northern Europe. However, these volcanic island wines are delicious!

At 10a.m. de next morning, an hour late, the sail maker made it to his office to meet us. We have been gritting our teeth during that period! After looking at our Genoa, he said he could repair it, but..... he was very busy and had no time to do so within the next 10 days. Too busy with sailing probably! We took our Genoa dropped it in the car again and left this uncooperative sail maker.



A day later we were given the address of 2 other sail makers in Porto Calera marina. After arriving there, we found the French guy and explained the problem to him. He was very understanding and had time to patch it up. Quite a different attitude compared with his branch-associate in the fancy Rubicon marina. The following day at 4pm. we picked up the genoa again. He carried out a very good job against a reasonable fee so we were very happy again!



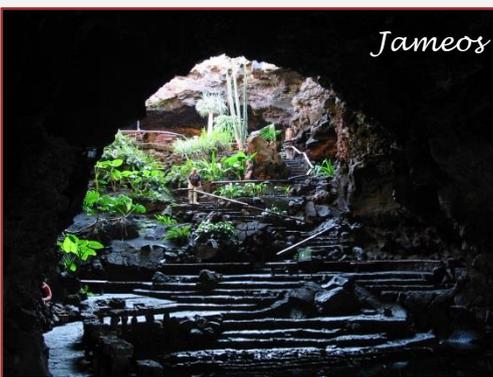
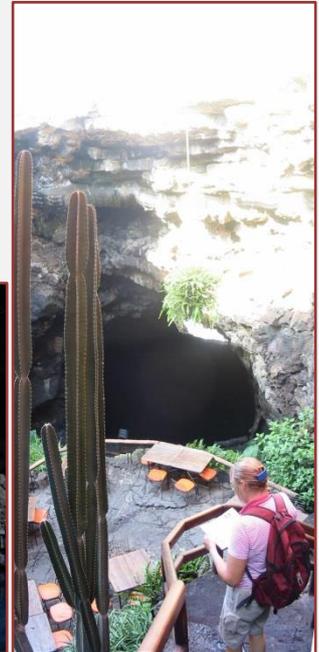
## The Canary Islands Graciosa and Lanzarote

### Lanzarote in a nutshell

Liberated of the sail-repair burden, we start to take real pleasure in the further exploring of the island by car in whatever direction we desire. No appointments or limitations anymore. First we drive along the rough lava west coast to the north.

The first stop is at "Jameos de Aqua" an underground lava-pipe exhibition where rare 1 cm long white crabs live in a natural underground pond.

Several years ago, this natural underground area was artistically remodelled by the local artist Cesar Manrique. Therefore we have to pay today €8,- entrance fee each. The underground space is very remarkable and worthwhile to see but certainly not worth the €8,- fee as we were within 15minutes outside again, without ever seeing a glimpse of the world-famous 1/2cm white crabs!



*Jameos de Aqua*



Our journey went further north to the highest NW-cliff of the mountain ridge. Here we were taken aback by the majestic view over the channel between Graciosa and Lanzarote. We even could see the anchorage (with only 2 boats now) at Graciosa we had been.



*View from Lanzarote to Graciosa Island*



*ploughing the black earth*

Today the sea state is rough too, due to the stiff northerly funnelling through the channel. Opposite our lookout spot, a farmer is ploughing his pitch-black and very dry terrain. We can't imagine something will ever grow there!

From there on we drove south again, along small winding roads through hilly countryside, dotted with small houses and little villages all the way back to Arrecife. Although it's still early in the day we have seen everything worthwhile to see. So after we brought the genoa back onboard Zeezwaluw, we took the hired car back. Once again we have to travel by foot! We walk back to Zeezwaluw by using one of our favourite trails in Arrecife, the one along the beautiful sea-connected inner lake full of little boats.



## The Canary Islands Graciosa and Lanzarote



*The pond at low tide in Arrecife*



*view over the pond at high tide*

### Treating Zeezwaluw

Due to a SE-wind which gave a swell at the anchorage, we took Zeezwaluw further into the large bay and found a suitable spot between boats on moorings. From there it was only a 2 minutes' drive by dinghy to the fisherman's quay was we could leave the dingy.

By coincidence we found a huge hardware shop including a department with boating gear! We got very greedy as soon as we saw that every object was almost half the price as at the mainland in Portugal or Spain.

The most wanted item for the moment was 30m of 10 mm calibrated galvanized anchor chains. It was hard work to get the heavy chain from the shop to and in the dinghy and on deck of Zeezwaluw. But we managed while the old fishermen were observing the whole tiresome procedure. The next day we replaced 15m of bad chain with the new one thereby extended the total length from 60 to 75m. So, Zeezwaluw was ready to anchor again!

But before leaving we have to refill our gas bottles. The pilot advised to take them to the Disa-plant for a refill. The plant is only a 15minutes walk from the anchorage. With 3 empty bottles on the shopping-trolley we knocked at the gate of the huge Disa-plant and asked the porter if it was possible to re-fill them with propane. Not a problem, he said and took the empty bottles to return with the full ones 5 minutes later. 7,5kg propane richer and €7,= less we returned to the boat.



### An unexpected journey and a comfortable winter berth

Walking back from the Disa-plant we got a phone call from Ineke's nice. Her dear Aunt Ge (84) who had been ill for almost a year had died suddenly. Because she was very dear to both of us, we decided Ineke should fly home to be present at her funeral while Riens stayed at Zeezwaluw in a save place.



*Arrecife anchorage*

Surfing the internet for flights to Holland was not that easy so close to Christmas. Going to Holland was not too difficult but getting back was the problem. We did not like to be separated with Christmas so Ineke wanted to be back in time.



The funeral was the December 19 so we searched for a flight back before the 25<sup>th</sup>. In the end we were able to book a flight with Ryanair from Gran Canaria to Bremen (D) as well as a car to drive to the northern part of Holland. The back flight to Gran Canaria was December 23. Good, one problem solved.

But we were still at the anchorage in Lanzarote and had to sail to Gran Canaria to be able to fly from there. Luckily 2 days later we had a good weather window to sail the 120nm from Lanzarote to Las Palmas at Gran Canaria.



## The Canary Islands Graciosa and Lanzarote

The weather was not too bad but we liked Zeezwaluw to be in a marina as long as Riens was on his own. Therefore we sailed directly to [Las Palmas marina](#) at Gran Canaria. They had space enough as the ARC



had left a couple of weeks earlier. Zeezwaluw and Riens are safe and comfortable while Ineke is away for 5 days. [See the Zeezwaluw Post.](#)

This huge marina turned out to be one of the cheapest in the Canary Islands. On top of that, all shops and chandleries are in walking distance as is the city centre and busses. The pontoon we are moored at is safe and very quiet. We like it and therefore we pay for 3 months as a start.

For the crew it's time to relax. No worry about the weather for a while. Read more about [our wintering in Las Palmas](#) or in [Zeezwaluw Post 2012](#).

*Riens & Ineke Elswijk at "SY Zeezwaluw"*



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