



will

We arrived safely with Zeezwaluw in Cherbourg, mainland France, as you read in the latest [Zeezwaluw Post](#), but in order to get there, we had to sail quite a bit over that large Pond they calling the Atlantic Ocean. Before we tire you with the 2nd part of our Atlantic Ocean Crossing from West to East, first we describe more about our "Interlude" on the Azores.



To-do-list

When the test results of Covid-19 came back negative, we were allowed to move from the quarantine dock to the regular quay in front of the marina office. There we were able to start sorting out the jobs that were necessary because of the "challenges" popping-up during our trip to the Azores. We already described the 2nd forestay is entirely OK again and also the gooseneck is repaired. Both of them of course still had to be installed again.



The installing of the 2nd forestay, Riens just going up and down the mast to attach the stay, went flawlessly. In order to exchange the temporary gooseneck for the repaired one, the folded mainsail had to come off the boom on deck. Only by doing so, we would be able to reach and swab it properly. Again with the necessary auxiliary lines, the job was done in

half a day. While the mainsail was deposited on deck, we could replace the short-term repair of the downhaul with the proper parts, all to our full satisfaction.

The mainsail was inspected too. During our crossing, we noticed 2 (out of 4) battens had disappeared from the mainsail. We can't recollect when this happened. Luckily we remembered saving a complete set of battens from an old sail somewhere between "you never know" material in the (almost) unlimited dungeons of Zeezwaluw. After digging them up, it turned out these battens had the same width. So we only had to cut it to size, round it off nicely and remove the sharp edges. Thereafter we had again 4 battens in our old Dacron mainsail. Cause of the loss? One batten pocket was worn out at the end. The batten had chosen her freedom through the backdoor so to speak. A strong patching with spinnaker tape solved this problem. The other batten had probably just been flipped out of the pocket and flown away. In short, the sail is now perfect again and ready for the next adventures.



The engine was given a 100+ running hour's treat (change of oil filters & oil etc.) while the cooling water pump got new seals so he is happy for the coming years. The necessary (suspicious) deck seams were scratched-out and provided with new caulking kit till both tubes of caulking were empty. Unfortunately only Sikaflex® is available in Horta and in the tropics we had bad experience with that brand. Therefore the rest of the seams have to wait until we are in The Netherlands.

Learning to get-together again

To be honest, we do not have been working all the time on our floating home; we have also had our first visitors on board. Since March 2020 the start of the World-wide Corona pandemic, visitors were not allowed.



All people who enter Horta in the Azores are tested on Covid-19. They only get their freedom to roam around after a negative test result (so no Corona). Also there are no Corona contaminations in Faial therefore you can visit each other without fear. Having to get accustomed again to these "old" everyday activities after such a long time, is a bit of an unreal situation for us. But that was how it was. Fortunately, we soon got used to it again. Gatherings with neighbours are in the Dutch genes, we think.

We weren't partying every day, as it rained sometimes and we had to play inside all by ourselves!



During our stay in Horta, there were many Dutch sailing boats. They sailed from the US or the Caribbean, just like we did, but some have sailed from the Cape Verde Islands. They decided to abort their trip to the Caribbean (as all country borders are still closed for arriving yachts) in order to sail back to Europe to wait for better times to start over again.

Thus parties were once again allowed and gratefully accepted. We already met the "SY Seline" here in the quarantine dock with Marjolein & Jan Paul. 2 days before Horta, we had been "passing-ships-in-the-night". Now we could have a nice chat. The "SY Linde", with Carla and Hans were at anchor and the "SY Zahree" we had digital contact with during the crossing, was already on her way to the Netherlands, just like other boats we know. Later on we met the crews of "SY Aquamarijn", "SY Pien" (Toon & Marij and daughter Wende), "SY Ben-NL" with Mariëlle & Han and "SY Wings" all 4 sailboats had sailed from Cape Verde. The 2 solo sailors Johan with "SY Regina" came from the Caribbean and Camille of "SY Ingeling" from the Netherlands. In short coming from all directions many Dutch sailing boats gathered in Horta.

Ben-NL's Gin & Tonic tradition

In the Cape Verde Islands during lock-down, Mariëlle & Han had started a tradition for the Friday evening sundowner drink; the "Gin & Tonic evening". They had already hosted quite a few due to the fact it was 20-something already when we joined them the first time.

Han



The G&T started around 5 P.M. we were neatly dressed-up and were all-in for a nice evening. We were one of the first guests and had choice of seats. Not much later, the crews of the "SY Wings", Carla & Hans, Camille and Johan and Teri and Tom of the American "SV Paradise" dropped in. As always the cockpit is never too small there is always space for everyone!



Mariëlle

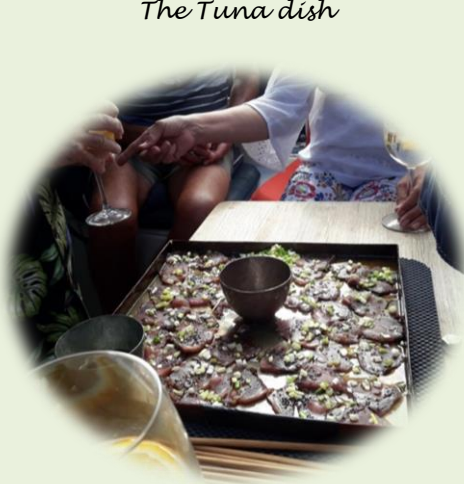


It was nice and busy in the cockpit of the Ben-NL. The chats in the Dutch and American language started quickly and smoothed even better after a few G & T's.

When Teri and Tom stepped out of their dinghy they carried a mysterious plastic bag. Tom and Han quickly disappeared into the galley. Not much later an enormous plate of tuna came out. The tuna was served in a dressing of olive oil and sprinkled with black volcanic salt. After Tom's explanation of the origin of this dish and praising his wife Teri for her "master fishwife" job, we were allowed to attack. The food feast came with a handicap, everyone was given chopsticks! It can be guessed that it took some patience and dexterity before you had a delicious piece of slippery tuna in your mouth..... But then you tasted something really good!!!



Han taking pictures



The Tuna dish



Tom with a G&T

By the way, the entertainer of the evening was the "American-Speech-Waterfall" Tom. He was completely in his element to keep host and hostess as well as the rest of the gathered live aboards continuously entertained with "mischievous" stories. In the meantime, Mariëlle and Han non-stop and tirelessly supplemented the G & T's. But furthermore out of the galley appeared a continuous stream of delightful snacks. Like wonderful home-made Pesto sauce and moon-bread according their own recipe. To us it was an unforgettable and pleasant evening with fellow sailors in Corona-free conditions. But at 11 o'clock we were tired and went on our way back to the neighbouring boat Zeezwaluw.



2 weeks later we invited Mariëlle and Han to join us for a drink. Since it was also a Friday, we surprised them on a G&T evening but yet on board of Zeezwaluw. This time they were spoiled and didn't have to run around to keep the guests happy. With delightful snacks, a drink and good conversation, it was night-time before we knew and were left alone on Zeezwaluw. It felt wonderful to be able to enjoy a visit on board again, just like old times! Unfortunately we don't have a picture of this happy event.

Decisions making and Horta becoming less and less crowded



We were still pondering over where to sail to after Horta, to the Algarve in Portugal or to the Netherlands. Both scenarios had been worked out and looked at in detail.





At that time, the number of Corona contaminations flared up again everywhere and rules were tightened instead of relaxed all over Europe. We already saw a new lock-down in near future or travel bans at the horizon. Portugal too, had more contaminations and the reins were tightened.

As Dutch resident, we are always allowed to return to the Netherlands, our home country. Therefore we decided to choose in these circumstances for the Netherlands. In the event of unexpected symptoms of illness, corona related or not, we would be where we could get the right health care. Portugal would then be more difficult as a foreigner. Dutch healthcare insurers also tended to reject to reimburse Corona-related claims in the event of a second wave, when you are in a foreign country. This decision was difficult, believe us!



*A canal down town of the city
Groningen*

Fortunately, 2 days after our decision to sail to the Netherlands, we already had the certainty of a wintering spot in the city marina of Groningen. We felt that this was an excellent place. Both of us lived and studied in this city a loooooong time ago so we still felt connected.

All shops within walking distance as well as bus, train and hospital. No orange or red coded surroundings during the winter in the Netherlands as it seemed at the time.

In the meantime, the busy anchorage next to us is slowly becoming less and less crowded. One Dutch sailboat after the other choose to set sail towards Europe in a nice weather forecast. Together with Ben-NL, we became one of the few ships at the quay, while the anchorage has become empty except for two ships.



An almost empty anchorage in Horta

Then why are we still there?

We were waiting for a new Monitor hinge (wind steering) from the UK. As the Corona is thriving in the UK, the conditions for sending something by express are still available, but the "express" delivery is called "snail mail" at the moment. The Ben-NL was also waiting for a new part for their electric autopilot from the Netherlands. But around the 20th of September there seemed to be a good weather window. Luckily, both ships had received and installed their parts. We agreed to leave Horta together on 23 August.



As a farewell to Horta and each other, we lunched together at the legendary "Peters Café Sport" on the 21st. We all ordered "fruit du mer" with salad and French fries. The full plates came with a lot of mussels and other shellfish. Unfortunately Ineke is very allergic to them.



But no worry, they helped Ineke getting rid of her shells and loaded her plate again with slices of fried fish from the others. It was an enjoyable and delicious meal and with satisfaction we walked back to the ships. The rest of the afternoon was spent relaxing in the cockpit!

Departure from Horta, a wild start



However, we did not leave on the 23rd, but the Ben -NL did. We wanted to wait another 2 days to give a depression a chance to disappear. Because the Ben-NL needs quite some wind to sail they decided to go. On Sunday morning we waved them goodbye until they left the harbour entrance.

Next we have to go ...



SY Ben-NL leaving Horta

Luckily the weather forecast did not change and our departure on the 25th could continue. The day before our departure we bought some fresh fruits and bread. At 11 o'clock Mr. Perkins woke up and we slipped the lines for the last time in Horta.

Half an hour later the mainsail was hoisted just outside the marina breakwater. At that moment it "gusted" a bit (18-24kn) in the strait between the islands of Faial and Pico. The mainsail was reefed

and the engine turned off again. We sailed quite fast even in the bouncing waves and decided to wait with unfurling the headsail. 2 hours later while steering by hand, we had covered almost 14 miles only on the double reefed main. When we left the passage between Pico and Faial in our wake, the wind became gentler and we could relax again.



At 4 p.m. the headsail could finally be unfurled. In the meantime, departure stress had subsided while the sandwiches (made in advance) were in great demand.

In calmer waters we headed for the north-western Cape of Sao Jorge. This cape was beautiful despite the turbulent waves and the currents on both sides of the island.

The landscape is very rough and varied. At dusk we were close to the south coast of Graciosa, the last island to encounter before Europe.



The NW cape of Sao Jorge



We sailed via the east side of Graciosa. At midnight we are in the lee of the island and with that we also get in the lee of the wind. No more wind at all but still a confused sea while the current moves Zeezwaluw in the wrong direction.

After 4 hours assistance of Mr. Perkins, we have left Graciosa in our wake and picked-up the correct course to Europe. The next 1000+ miles there will be no more land in sight.

Find the differences in crossings

Just as we did in Part I of our Atlantic Ocean Crossing from west to east, we are not going to bore you with day to day logbook data. Boring and it's no fun to read! We like to describe our trip in the differences between the crossings Part I and Part II, which seems much more interesting to us.

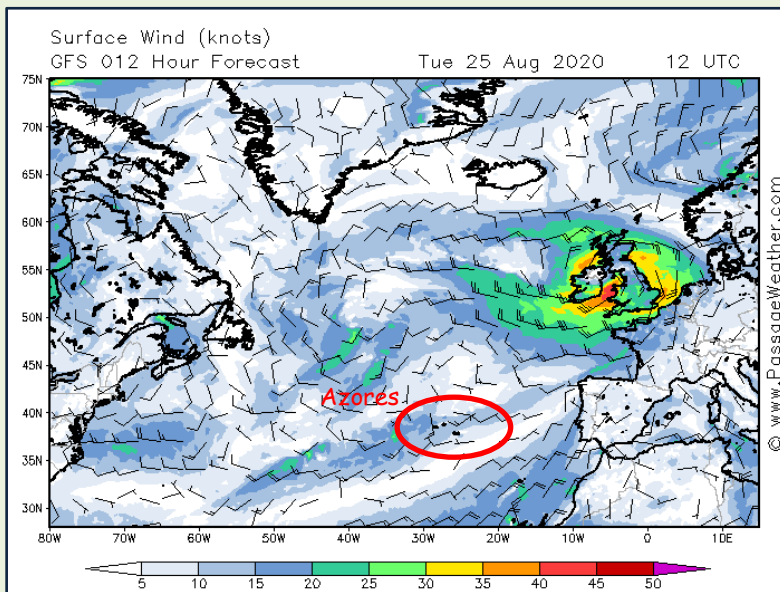
Overall Data

Topics	Crossing Part I Martinique-Horta	Crossing Part II Horta-Cherbourg
Duration of the trip	27 days	12 days
Number of miles sailed	2760Nm	1440Nm
Engine hours	114.25	107.5
"Challenges"	4	None
Daytime average temperature	33°-30°	30°-16°
Weather conditions	Much sun little rain	Much rain little sun
Sail choice	Mainsail + high aspect jib	Mainsail + high aspect jib
Arrival	Middle of the night	Middle of the night

As you can see in the table above, it has been 2 different crossings, in terms of duration, distance and weather conditions. That was not too surprising for us.

Part I of the crossing was completely new to us, but the expected distances and (weather) conditions were perfectly described in Jimmy Cornell's "World Cruising Routes" and could be distilled from the "Pilot charts". With this information and because Riens had been following (and saved every day the predicted noon-winds) the daily weather forecast/circumstances on the ocean for years, we were able to choose our departure time correctly. It was only a bit later in season as normal due to the late formation of the Azores High. Light weather conditions (sail choice, mainsail and high aspect jib) with as a result a long trip, a D-tour in search for wind with quite some engine hours. True wind speeds were

from 0 to maximum 16kn and mostly incoming 120° over portside or starboard.



Part II of the crossing was well known to us. We had already made 3 trips from the Azores to Europe or the Canary Islands. But not sailed to a destination north of Lisbon. Sailing to the Netherlands is more extended and would have more varied weather conditions according to our information.

The most important thing of this crossing (Azores-Europe) is, to start with a reasonably calm weather window without severe, fast migrating depressions. After we had satisfactorily carried out the 4 important repairs in Horta, a weather window came fairly quickly. We postponed the final departure for 2 days because of an overstretched depression on our course line.



Our sail was again with the high-aspect headsail due to the expected beam wind or close-hauled courses as well as higher wind speeds. The true wind speeds were indeed much higher, namely from 0 to 25kn and in gusts towards 30-32kn.

That doesn't sound like much, but beam-wind sailing or at 60° angle to windward with a confused sea and high ocean swell, feels like a lot more and you soon have to reef considerably.

We sailed most of the time with 2 reefs in the main, sporadically with 1 and never under full sail. We tried to let the wind come from the beam or from the backstay. But that didn't always work out. For the first time in our sailing life (since 1989) we sailed with 3 reefs in the mainsail and a tea-towel-like piece of jib. That was rather exciting for us and for Zeezwaluw, but all performed well.

Still, we were tense when the wind really picked up to 25Kn and we took turns sitting stand-by behind the wheel for an hour each to keep an eye on whether the Monitor could handle the strong gusts and high waves. If we would noticed that things were going sideways, we could intervene immediately and take the helm ourselves. This watch system takes a lot of energy if you do both watches for an hour at a time, in confused seas with strange bouncy boat movements. The "off-watch" rested for an hour on a cushion in the cockpit or lay down on top of the bedding fully clothed. There was little real peacetime and quietness with the howling wind, the clatter of the rain showers and the sound of breaking waves. (no photos unfortunately for we do not have a underwater camera)

Luckily, the Monitor (wind steering) withstood this period with flying colours again while regularly frolicked large dolphins jumped out of the waves as a consolation. Our mainsail has 3 reefing points but only 3 years ago we prepared the 3rd reef (with blocks and line) in preparation for this Atlantic crossing from West to East. How happy we were now that we had that 3rd reef and could use it! You take away a large piece of sail which makes such a difference in these kinds of circumstances, unbelievable. We sailed almost 2 full days with 3 reefs and still achieved high day distances (168nm).

Exhaustion

Part I, the Carieb to the Azores took a long time, but due to the downwind sailing it was not harsh, we were able to rest and sleep very well. From Azores to Europe demanded much more of our strength, both physically and mentally. We were always on the alert for wind shifts and weather changes. When we had to change course, we usually jibbed (letting the wind keep coming from behind when you change course by more than 100°). We always did this sailing manoeuvre with the two of us. On Zeezwaluw, the mainsail winches are on deck in front of the sprayhood.



Therefore someone is (on a tether) on deck to make the jibe run "smooth" (lash the main and loosening it again) while the helmsman/woman is engaged in the tack manoeuvre operating the jib and backstays.



If this manoeuvre has to be performed twice or more in close sequence due to an evasive manoeuvre for a cargo ship, then you really are getting exhausted, especially during night-time. The weather conditions also changed a lot faster than in Part I. In combination with the short or broken hours of sleep, it was wearing us down considerably.

Climate change

The first few days after the start from the Azores, it was just lovely sunny weather with some lighter winds. For us it was just sitting outside in our shorts and polo shirts and in the evening after sunset and humidity rose we put on a fleece jacket, like we were used to in Part I of the crossing.

But along the way it became "colder", the thermal underwear (shirt and long trousers) came out of the closet and was put on. Only at night at first, but soon also during the day. Not much later, on top of the thermal underwear, the fleece sweater and trousers followed, finally on top of all that clothing, our complete foul weather sailing gear! We looked at the thermometer and it is "only" 16 degrees, oh how cold we were. Even the fleece gloves and the fleece-lined caps are dug-out of the closet. We quickly got used to the many layers of clothing, only had to widen our tether to be able to buckle over all the clothing. (Note: we are on a tether in the cockpit during our watches ALWAYS)

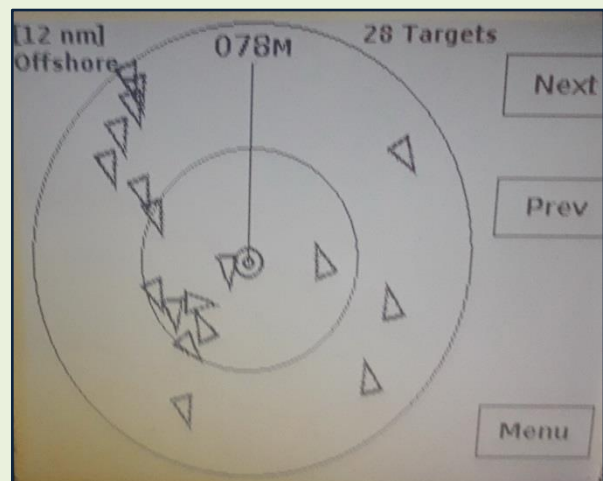


Rain and fog

Likewise, sometimes we had hours or an entire day of rain, which is not very comfy. Especially when it turns out after years of living in the closet, the foul weather gear is no longer waterproof or the rain runs from your cap into your collar in jets. But we don't complain!



By thick fog surrounded



an AIS screen print near shipping lane

For the first time in 6 years we have experienced again what thick fog is. For a day and a half we were sailing in a thick fog and no wind at all. All sails were lowered and Mr. Perkins was allowed to work. We were so happy that we had AIS (Automatic Identification System), because seeing or hearing nothing is nerve breaking. We could see if there were any targets in our area, at what distance, course, speed and what their name was. Miraculously enough, no targets were detected during the whole foggy period.



Of course you have to keep a watch system and a look-out for boats, because not every sailing ship or fisherman is equipped with AIS.

Closer to Europe

Once we are closer to mainland Europe, we are detecting increasingly numbers of fast moving cargo ships (targets) on the AIS. They often follow the same course, e.g. coming from or going towards the Mediterranean Sea or the English Channel.



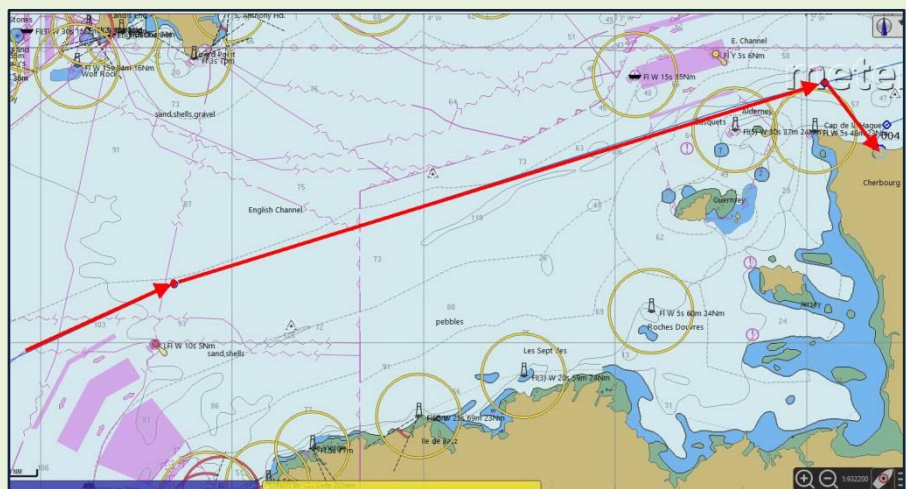
In addition to more shipping, we also notice more and more the strong tidal effect that changes every 6 hours. Sometimes we sailed very fast and sometimes very slow.

In the vicinity of the Channel Islands, in addition to the gigantic currents, we also encounter the first highways for merchant ships. At Quessant, above Alderney and about 70 miles before Calais, commercial shipping is obliged to stay within the established shipping lanes.

Outside these areas they have a little more freedom, but basically every ship goes from lane to lane on more or less the same course. With our course we are approaching the double "highway" some 50 miles above Quessant and will slowly cross it for the next 100 miles. The first impression is as if we are going to cross two herds of stampeding elephants. The AIS brings everything nicely into view while we stay more or less parallel to the routes.

Every broader space that falls into the herd is used by us and slowly we cross the wide "highway" and we neatly reach the south side. Of course this takes place during the night.

The advantage is that the navigation lights of the ships clearly show whether you are already "over" or not. Although commercial shipping has priority in these cases, we notice that they sometimes make more room for us with a small change of course. At one point, our electronic lookout detected 78 targets! These circumstances always happen at night. So another night with broken sleeping hours and periods with 2 people watching out and a lot of "jibbing" to get out of the way or to get past a ship again. Luckily those situations go by and the day after we were able to take it



easy and get some extra sleep. When daylight arrived we see Guernsey on the horizon and the so graceful Shearwaters, who accompanied us from Horta, have made way for the big seagulls as we know them. So, a little homecoming though.



Keep the crew happy with a round belly

We had prepared 5 meals for 4 persons (so 10 meals for us), just as for Part I. Those meals were waiting in Zip-Lock bags and/or trays in the fridge or in the freezer. With the rapidly changing circumstances on this route, we were double pleased with the meals that only needed a little warming up to have an excellent and tasty meal.

This time we had prepared the following 5: Pasta Bolognese, OMNIA dish with minced meat, belly peppers and mashed potatoes, Beef stew with vegetables and potatoes, Chili Con Carne with rice (instead of beans) and ["Hutspot" with meatball](#) (click on this link for this Dutch delicacy comes with a recipe) | On request we will send you the other recipes if you are interested)

The break in France, in the marina of Cherbourg

The break in Cherbourg was prompted by the weather forecast we had received via satellite telephone on 5 September. This time, no strong wind on the sail to IJmuiden, but almost no wind at all. Since we had already sailed 100 hours on the engine, another 2 or 3 days on the engine would not be possible. The diesel tank is not inexhaustible. Taking the risk of continuing and getting "dry" was considered irresponsible.

We also felt that we needed to "rest and recuperate" after all the exercise of the last 12 days of sailing. So we set course to the marina of Cherbourg where we entered at 2 o'clock in the night on 6 September with 20 knots of wind blowing. The current was with us. Through the water our speed was 4kn and on the GPS 10 all the way till after the outer breakwaters of Cherbourg. As a novelty, we saw that the save-water buoy had made way for a virtual buoy that was only visible on the AIS as a target to the leading-light line to the harbour.

Even in the outer harbour with 20Kn the wind was still a bit abundant to lower the mainsail neatly. So as good and as bad as it went, we quickly lowered (more or less dropping) and "tangled" the sail on the boom, before we entered the marina. In the marina we were able to take a nice spot alongside the outer jetty. At the jetty there was little notice of the fierce conditions outside at sea.



After one arrival drink in the cockpit we quickly bunked up! We were even too tired to have the standard arrival snack: hot dog with mustard. Crawling together again under the duvet, to wake up 9 hours later. It is Sunday and it is very quiet in the Marina. In the afternoon at the marina office for

checking-in it turns out that we are still in their system (2003). Consequently checking in was a piece of cake. We paid 4 days in advance for we like to rest for that long!



No questions asked about where we came from or where we will go, paperwork from the previous port or our negative Covid-19 result. Not even insurance or property papers because we were still in the system.....



We got a nice welcoming paper bag (everything is Eco-friendly in this marina) with information about the marina, the city, a map and a booklet of the marina, As icing on the cake 2 packs of petit-four, great. Hello welcome to Europe and a very hospitable Cherbourg in France.

How we experienced Part II



Looking back at this trip, we are very pleased with the comfort of the prepared meals and despite the days with a bit heavier weather that nothing broke down (no "challenges" this time) and of course the convenience of the AIS which has completely replaced the bearing compass. Particularly beautiful are the capes of the Azores Islands, the company of various types of shearwaters that pop up each and every day, the dolphins that are returning from large to smaller European species.

Less beautiful is the fact that we still have to get used to the ice-cold of 20°C.

Riens and Ineke Elswijk at SY Zeezwaluw

