

Darramy on tour No 4 October 2006

Summer cruising

Hola to you all.

Here we are in now in Lanzarotte. If you are interested read on and see what have we been up to.

Briefly, after our trip to Western Spain and a sail back to Portugal with no engine, we returned to Lagos and to cut a long story short, paid out for a brand new engine to be fitted, the boat yard Soproma were fantastic, but we were let down by the Yanmar dealers in Spain and Portugal who seem to tell lies, however after 6 weeks in the boatyard living on board we were once again afloat, we then had to get 35 hours on the engine to get the warranty. Quite a time was spent motoring around and also running the engine in gear whilst tied up to the pontoon berth. Any way finally in June off we set for the Azores. 6 days and 900 miles later we arrived at Sao Miguel, (which is one of the Eastern group of the Azores), we had a reasonable sail although the wind direction might have been kinder to us.

It was strange to be tied up again, and we received a warm welcome from the harbour staff when we arrived, so after a few days relaxing it was off for a tour of

the island in our hire car which we found we picked up a day early as we had lost a day somewhere and thought it was a Monday, when, yes, you guessed it was Sunday. The scenery was amazing every corner of the island was a contrast, we drove up many steep hills a few thousand feet and down again, we discovered the green and blue lakes alongside each other, very dramatic, the sides of the roads were lined with giant Hydrangeas which gave a really colourful feel to the place, mile after mile of non stop colour, it was amazing to see, and we discovered most of the other islands were the same.



One of the highlights was having a meal cooked in the ground in the hot volcanic sulphur beds, really a tourist thing but we had to try it. The island was most interesting and diverse like going back in time 40 years, even the price of stuff was less than the mainland, and most things are shipped in.

After putting 450 kilometres on the car we handed it back and the hire company were astounded how many kilometres we had done in two days. (Tip: if you are in Sao Miguel don't hire the black Fiesta).

We then set off for our next island Terceira, which is in the central group of islands, this turned out to be our favourite (more later), here it was so friendly, the way of life became pretty slow, and we loved it, we visited all the small villages, it was like Devon and Cornwall in the 50's. One feature we enjoyed were the natural swimming

pools in the rocks, the Atlantic ocean pounding up to the edge of them and we swam in tranquil waters sometimes with fish around, very magical.



We went to Sao George, another island again scenery was quite stunning, and here we saw some of the old whaling boats sailing in the evenings.

It's hard to imagine how these small boats used to chase and harpoon whales 3 times their size, the crew must have drunk Heineken!





Then it was off to the island of Faail, and the town of Horta

here we just had a lazy time mixing with other fellow sailors and enjoying the great way of life.

One major task was to paint our picture on the harbour side, as all other sailors have done for many years, it is considered unlucky not to participate.

Sue did a super picture of Darramy, and really enjoyed a bit of legalised graffiti.



Top of Portugal (Pico)

Sue was also busy trying to find an outfit to wear for Darren and Hoda's forthcoming wedding in September. This was our fourth island, about 30 clothes shops in all had been visited, but alas no dress as yet, but don't worry she went back to one shop about 6 times and eventually found a dress for the wedding, she was pleased, I was ecstatic. But did not admit that I was not going to miss visiting all the shops in



vain, instead a few diving trips were called for and I had a great time diving in the waters around Faail with a superb dive school, they also arranged for us to go on a whale watching trip where we saw some Sperm whales and a mother and calf together, really quite spectacular and they were so big, so we now know what signs to look out for on our travels as we hope to see many more of this exotic species of mammal. The highlight for me though was an early morning ferry to Pico a neighbouring island, which had a volcanic mountain on it, this looked stunning from the distance, and 8000 feet later I had climbed to the summit. This is actually the highest mountain in Portugal, and an experience not to be missed, (make a note pub quiz folks!) back in Horta we discovered all the streets closed and there were BBQs in



the streets, pigs on spits being roasted, band stands etc. There was free food and beer for everyone, the local folk dancers were on stage, and at 10.00.p.m. a 22 piece band struck up, it was amazing, all this was provided by the Millennium Bank who were celebrating 60 years of trading, maybe some of my contemporaries in the finance industry should take note!!

After Faail it was off to Graciosa where we anchored for a few days. This island is really different, and it is only in the last few years that the mode of transport has changed from being grass powered to the internal combustion engine. Here we met some more North Americans, Dick and Ginger who were heading to Portugal for the winter and have ended up in Lagos so we hope they enjoy it as much as we did.

It was time then to return to Terceira where we knew another festival was about to start in Praia de Vittoria, they were preparing for this when we first went there, this was a gourmet festival. Some of the top restaurants in Portugal were representing their regional dishes. On the first day whilst looking around the restaurants we thought we recognised the picture of a restaurateur from Oporto, had we eaten there last year? We asked one of the staff, who misinterpreted our question and the next minute we are being ushered into the place to meet the owner and sample some of his best ports, not a bad start, and we had 10 days of this together with some superb food to look forward to.





Costumes of glamourous

In the evening there were parades through the town, they even carpeted the main street!!, and 4 different stages were set up around the town for different types of music, this was every night, and the last one apparently finished at 6.00am. It was fantastic to wander the streets at 2.00a.m., feel safe, and note that there was no trouble just people of all age groups enjoying themselves.

We then had to dash back to the UK as Sue's dad Cecil had been taken into hospital, and things did not look to good for him, we flew back on the Thursday that there was a terrorist alert in the UK, although we new nothing about it until we got to Lisbon. After 3 flights we arrived in Manchester on time. We spent two weeks in Chester, and flew back to the boat. Cecil had been moved back to the nursing home where he was more comfortable.

We then had to sail to the Canaries where we had booked a marina berth and flights home for Darren and Hoda's wedding. We were sad to leave the Azores, but want to return there some day; we have many fond memories of the islands and the wonderful people who live there. There is so much about these islands I could go on for pages, but Sue has said I should mention the volcanoes, the larva tunnels and the stunning white wine from Pico.



On for the wings.....

When we set off, as usual the wind was in the wrong direction, but also the wind we had was very light so we had a long slow but uneventful passage to Porta Santo a

small island off Maderia, where we stayed for a day then set off to Lanzarote, which



was great as we were now in the North East trade winds, and had some good fast downwind sailing. We arrived here in Lanzarote

in good time for our flight back to the UK. When we arrived home, sadly, Cecil had passed away, the day before we got back, but at least he is now peaceful and no longer suffering. It was a busy week, Sue and her daughters Judith and Sarah sorted out the funeral arrangements, then we went to Darren's wedding which was at Friday island on a lake near Cirencester, a truly remarkable venue with a great tropical feel, it was good to meet family and friends again, a good time seemed to be had by all. We stayed in Chester for another week then flew back here. Amy visited us for a few days, and now we are about to do some cruising around the Canaries for a while, we are not sure whether we will get to the Caribbean this winter as there is so much to do our plans are extremely flexible, we just feel we are going to fast!!

We have received loads of e mails from many of you, but it is really hard to reply all the time, so don't be offended, we love to hear from you and keep up with your news, we will send you an update of our progress from wherever as time goes by.

Love to you all

Brian and Sue